

The Aquarian Theosophist



Volume V, #6

SUPPLEMENT

April 17, 2005

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ARCHIVE: <http://www.teosofia.com/AT.html>



WHY I DO NOT RETURN TO INDIA

[This Open Letter from Madame Blavatsky was sent to India by the intermediary of Bertram Keightley who left London for India, at H.P.B.'s special request, in the Summer of 1890, reaching Bombay August 31, 1890

Written to the Indian members of the T.S., in the last year of Madame Blavatsky's life, it is a karmic vision that both interprets the past and prophesies the future — and will yield a message for all Theosophists wherever and however situated. Since it is addressed to individuals, and was not written as a tract on Theosophy, this letter contains declarations very rarely made by H.P.B. — statements which can be made only to those who are so firmly grounded in the philosophy that they will not mistake them for “claims,” “dogmas” or “delusions of grandeur.” In short, the student is told what attitude must prevail if one is to grow under the guidance of a Guru or Spiritual Teacher.]

TO MY BROTHERS OF ÂRYÂVARTA,

In April, 1890, five years elapsed since I left India.

Great kindness has been shown to me by many of my Hindu brethren at various times since I left; especially this year (1890), when, ill almost to death, I have received from several Indian Branches letters of sympathy, and assurances that they had not forgotten her to whom India and the Hindus have been most of her life far dearer than her own Country.

It is, therefore, my duty to explain why I do not return to India and my attitude with regard to the new leaf turned in the history of the T. S. by my being formally placed at the head of the Theosophical Movement in Europe. For it is not solely on account of bad health that I do not return to India. Those who have saved me from death at Adyar, and

twice since then, could easily keep me alive there as They do me here. There is a far more serious reason. A line of conduct has been traced for me here, and I have found among the English and Americans what I have so far vainly sought for in India.

In Europe and America, during the last three years I have met with hundreds of men and women who have the courage to avow their conviction of the real existence of the Masters, and who are working for Theosophy on *Their* lines and under *Their* guidance, given through my humble self.

In India, on the other hand, ever since my departure, the true spirit of devotion to the Masters and the courage to avow it has steadily dwindled away. At Adyar itself, increasing strife and conflict has raged between personalities; uncalled for and utterly undeserved animosity—almost hatred —has been shown towards me by several members

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of the staff. There seems to have been something strange and uncanny going on at Adyar, during these last years. No sooner does a European, most Theosophically inclined, most devoted to the Cause, and the personal friend of myself or the President, set his foot in Headquarters, than he becomes forthwith a personal enemy to one or other of us, and what is worse, ends by injuring and deserting the Cause.

Let it be understood at once that I accuse no one. Knowing what I do of the activity of the forces of Kali Yuga, at work to impede and ruin the Theosophical movement, I do not regard those who have become, one after the other, my enemies—and that without any fault of my own—as I might regard them, were it otherwise.

One of the chief factors in the reawakening of Âryāvarta which has been part of the work of the Theosophical Society, was the ideal of the Masters. But owing to want of judgment, discretion, and discrimination, and the liberties taken with Their names and *Personalities*, great misconception arose concerning Them. I was under the most solemn oath and pledge never to reveal the whole truth to anyone, excepting to those who, like Dâmodar, had been finally selected and called by Them. All that I was then permitted to reveal was, that there existed somewhere such great men; that some of Them were Hindus; that They were learned as none others in all the ancient wisdom of Gupta-Vidyâ, and had acquired all the Siddhis, not as these are represented in tradition and the “blinds” of ancient writings, but as they are in fact and nature; and also that I was a Chela of one of them. However, in the fancy of some Hindus, the most wild and ridiculous fancies soon grew up concerning Them. They were referred to as “Mahâtmas” and still some too enthusiastic friends belittled Them with

their strange fancy pictures; our opponents, describing a Mahâtma as a full Jîvanmukta, urged that, as such, He was debarred from holding any communications whatever with persons living in the world. They also maintained that as this is the Kali Yuga, it was impossible that there could be any Mahâtmas at all in our age.

These early misconceptions notwithstanding, the idea of the Masters, and belief in Them, has already brought its good fruit in India. Their chief desire was to preserve the true religious and philosophical spirit of ancient India; to defend the Ancient Wisdom contained in its Darśanas and *Upanishads* against the systematic assaults of the missionaries; and finally to reawaken the dormant ethical and patriotic spirit in those youths in whom it had almost disappeared owing to college education. Much of this has been achieved by and through the Theosophical Society, in spite of all its mistakes and imperfections.

Had it not been for Theosophy, would India have had her Tukaram Tatya doing now the priceless work he does, and which no one in India ever thought of doing before him? Without the Theosophical Society, would India have ever thought of wrenching from the hands of learned but unspiritual Orientalists the duty of reviving, translating and editing the Sacred Books of the East, of popularizing and selling them at a far cheaper rate, and at the same time in a far more correct form than had ever been done at Oxford? Would our respected and devoted brother Tukaram Tatya himself have ever thought of doing so, had he not joined the Theosophical Society? Would your political Congress itself have ever been a possibility, without the Theosophical Society? Most important of all, one at least among you has fully benefited by it; and if the Society had never given to India but that one future

Adept (Dâmodar) who has now the prospect of becoming one day a Mahâtma, Kali Yuga notwithstanding, that alone would be proof that it was not founded at New York and transplanted to India in vain. Finally, if any one among the three hundred millions of India can demonstrate, proof in hand, that Theosophy, the T.S., or even my humble self, have been the means of doing the slightest harm, either to the country or any Hindu, that the Founders have been guilty of teaching pernicious doctrines, or offering bad advice—then and then only, can it be imputed to me as a crime that I have brought forward the ideal of the Masters and founded the Theosophical Society.

Aye, my good and never-to-be-forgotten Hindu Brothers, the name alone of the holy Masters, which was at one time invoked with prayers for Their blessings, from one end of India to the other—Their name alone has wrought a mighty change for the better in your land. It is not to Colonel Olcott or to myself that you owe anything, but verily to these names, which, but a few years ago, had become a household word in your mouths.

Thus it was that, so long as I remained at Adyar, things went on smoothly enough, because one or the other of the Masters was almost constantly present among us, and their spirit ever protected the Theosophical Society from real harm. But in 1884, Colonel Olcott and myself left for a visit to Europe, and while we were away the Padri-Coulomb “thunderbolt descended.” I returned in November, and was taken most dangerously ill. It was during that time and Colonel Olcott’s absence in Burma, that the seeds of all future strifes, and—let me say at once—disintegration of the Theosophical Society, were planted by our enemies. What with the Patterson-Coulomb-Hodgson conspiracy, and the

faintheartedness of the chief Theosophists, that the Society did not then and there collapse should be a sufficient proof of how it was protected. Shaken in their belief, the fainthearted began to ask: “Why, if the Masters are genuine Mahâtmas, have They allowed such things to take place, or why have they not used Their powers to destroy this plot or that conspiracy, or even this or that man and woman?” Yet it had been explained numberless times that no Adept of the Right Path will interfere with the just workings of Karma. Not even the greatest of Yogis can divert the progress of Karma or arrest the natural results of actions for more than a short period, and even in that case, these results will only reassert themselves later with even tenfold force, for such is the occult law of Karma and the Nidânas.

Nor again will even the greatest of phenomena aid real spiritual progress. We have each of us to win our Moksha or Nirvâna by our own merit, not because a Guru or Deva will help to conceal our shortcomings. There is no merit in having been created an immaculate Deva or in being God; but there is the eternal bliss of Moksha looming forth for the man who becomes *as a God* and Deity by his own personal exertions. It is the mission of Karma to punish the guilty and not the duty of any Master. But those who act up to Their teaching and live the life of which They are the best exemplars, will never be abandoned by Them and will always find Their beneficent help whenever needed, whether obviously or invisibly. This is of course addressed to those who have not yet quite lost their faith in Masters; those who have never believed, or have ceased to believe in Them, are welcome to their own opinions. No one, except themselves perhaps some day, will be the losers thereby.

As for myself, who can charge me with having acted like an impostor? with

having, for instance, taken one single pie from any living soul? with having ever asked for money, or even with having accepted it, notwithstanding that I was repeatedly offered large sums! Those who, in spite of this, have chosen to think otherwise, will have to explain what even my traducers of even the Padri class and Psychical Research Society have been unable to explain to this day, *viz.*, the motive for such fraud. They will have to explain why, instead of taking and making money, I gave away to the Society every penny I earned by writing for the papers, why at the same time I nearly killed myself with overwork and incessant labour year after year, until my health gave way, so that but for my Master's repeated help, I should have died long ago from the effects of such voluntary hard labour. For the absurd Russian spy theory, if it still finds credit in some idiotic heads, has long ago disappeared, at any rate from the official brains of the Anglo-Indians.

If, I say, at that critical moment, the members of the Society, and especially its leaders at Adyar, Hindu and European, had stood together as one man, firm in their conviction of the reality and power of the Masters, Theosophy would have come out more triumphantly than ever, and none of their fears would have ever been realised, however cunning the legal traps set for me, and whatever mistakes and errors of judgment I, their humble representative, might have made in the executive conduct of the matter.

But the loyalty and courage of the Adyar Authorities, and of the few Europeans who had trusted in the Masters, were not equal to the trial when it came. In spite of my protests, I was hurried away from Headquarters. Ill as I was, almost dying in truth, as the physicians said, yet I protested, and would have battled for Theosophy in India to my last breath, had I found loyal

support. But some feared legal entanglements, some the Government, while my best friends believed in the doctors' threats that I must die if I remained in India. So I was sent to Europe to regain my strength, with a promise of speedy return to my beloved Āryāvarta.

Well, I left, and immediately intrigues and rumours began. Even at Naples already, I learnt that I was reported to be meditating to start in Europe "a rival Society" and bust up Adyar (!!). At this I laughed. Then it was rumoured that I had been *abandoned* by the Masters, been disloyal to Them, done this or the other. None of it had the slightest truth or foundation in fact. Then I was accused of being, at best, a hallucinated *medium*, who had mistaken "spooks" for living Masters; while others declared that the real H. P. Blavatsky was dead—had died through the injudicious use of *Kundalini*—and that the form had been forthwith seized upon by a Dugpa Chela, who was the present H.P.B. Some again held me to be a witch, sorceress, who for purposes of her own played the part of a philanthropist and lover of India, while in reality bent upon the destruction of all those who had the misfortune to be *psychologised* by me. In fact, the powers of psychology attributed to me by my enemies, whenever a fact or a "phenomenon" could not be explained away, are so great that they alone would have made of me a most remarkable Adept—independent of any Masters or Mahâtmas. In short, up to 1886, when the S. P. R. Report was published and this soap bubble burst over our heads, it was one long series of false charges, every mail bringing something new. I will name no one; nor does it matter who said a thing and who repeated it. One thing is certain; with the exception of Colonel Olcott, everyone seemed to banish the Masters from their thoughts and Their

spirit from Adyar. Every imaginable incongruity was connected with these holy names, and I alone was held responsible for every disagreeable event that took place, every mistake made. In a letter received from Dâmodar in 1886, he notified me that the Masters' influence was becoming with every day weaker at Adyar; that They were daily represented as less than "second-rate Yogis," totally denied by some, while even those who believed in, and had remained loyal to them, feared even to pronounce Their names. Finally, he urged me very strongly to return, saying that of course the Masters would see that my health should not suffer from it. I wrote to that effect to Colonel Olcott, imploring him to let me return, and promising that I would live at Pondicherry, if needed, should my presence not be desirable at Adyar. To this I received the ridiculous answer that no sooner should I return, that I should be sent to the Andaman Islands as a Russian spy, which of course Colonel Olcott subsequently found out to be absolutely untrue. The readiness with which such a futile pretext for keeping me from Adyar was seized upon, shows in clear colours the ingratitude of those to whom I had given my life and health. Nay, more, urged on, as I understood, by the Executive Council, under the entirely absurd pretext that, in case of my death, my heirs might claim a share in the Adyar property, the President sent me a legal paper to sign, by which I formally renounced any right to the Headquarters or even to live there without the Council's permission. This, although I had spent several thousand rupees of my own private money, and had devoted my share of the profits of *The Theosophist* to the purchase of the house and its furniture. Nevertheless I signed the renunciation without one word of protest. I saw I was not wanted, and remained in Europe in spite of my ardent desire to return to India. How could I do otherwise than feel

that all my labors had been rewarded with ingratitude, when my most urgent wishes to return were met with flimsy excuses and answers inspired by those who were hostile to me?

The result of this is too apparent. You know too well the state of affairs in India for me to dwell longer upon details. In a word, since my departure, not only has the activity of the movement there gradually slackened, but those for whom I had the deepest affections, regarding them as a mother would her own sons, have turned against me. While in the West, no sooner had I accepted the invitation to come to London, then I found people—the S. P. R. Report and wild suspicions and hypotheses rampant in every direction notwithstanding—to believe in the truth of the great Cause I have struggled for, and in my own *bona fides*.

Acting under the Master's orders, I began a new movement in the West on the original lines; I founded *Lucifer*, and the Lodge which bears my name. Recognizing the splendid work done at Adyar by Colonel Olcott and others to carry out the second of the three Objects of the T.S., viz., to promote the study of Oriental literature, I was determined to carry out here the two others. All know with what success this has been attended. Twice Colonel Olcott was asked to come over, and then I learned that I was once more wanted in India—at any rate by some. But the invitation came too late; neither would my doctor permit it, nor can I, if I would be true to my life-pledge and vows, now live at the Headquarters from which the Masters and Their spirit are virtually banished. The presence of Their portraits will not help; They are a dead letter. The truth is that I can never return to India in any other capacity than as Their faithful agent. And as, unless They appear among the Council *in propria persona* (which They will certainly never do now), no advice of

mine on occult lines seems likely to be accepted, as the fact of my relations with the Masters is doubted, even totally denied by some; and I myself having no right to the Headquarters, what reason is there, therefore, for me to live at Adyar?

The fact is this. In my position, half-measures are worse than none. People have either to believe entirely in me, or to *honestly* disbelieve. No one, no Theosophist, is compelled to believe, but it is worse than useless for people to ask me to help them, if they do not believe in me. Here in Europe and America are many who have never flinched in their devotion to Theosophy; consequently the spread of Theosophy and the T.S., in the West, during the last three years, has been extraordinary. The chief reason for this is that I was enabled and encouraged by the devotion of an ever-increasing number of members to the Cause and to Those who guide it, to establish an Esoteric Section, in which I can teach something of what I have learned to those who have confidence in me, and who prove this confidence by their disinterested work for Theosophy and the T.S. For the future, then, it is my intention to devote my life and energy to the E. S., and to the teaching of those whose confidence I retain. It is useless I should use the little time I have before me to justify myself before those who do not feel sure about the real existence of the Masters, only because, misunderstanding me, it therefore suits them to suspect me.

And let me say at once, to avoid misconception, that my only reason for accepting the exoteric direction of European affairs, was to save those who really have Theosophy at heart and work for it and the Society, from being hampered by those who not only do not care for Theosophy, as laid out by the Masters, but are entirely working against both, endeavouring to undermine and counteract the influence of the good work

done, both by open denial of the existence of the Masters, by declared and bitter hostility to myself, and also by joining forces with the most desperate enemies of our Society.


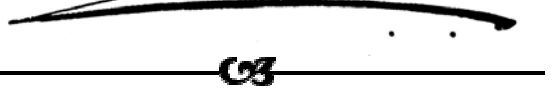
Half-measures, I repeat, are no longer possible. Either I have stated the truth as I know it about the Masters and teach what I have been taught by them, or I have invented both Them and the Esoteric Philosophy. There are those among the Esotericists of the inner group who say that if I have done the latter, then I must myself be a "Master." However it may be, there is no alternative to this dilemma.

The only claim, therefore, which India could ever have upon me would be strong only in proportion to the activity of the Fellows there for Theosophy and their loyalty to the Masters. You should not need my presence among you to convince you of the truth of Theosophy, any more than your American brothers need it. A conviction that wanes when any particular personality is absent is no conviction at all. Know, moreover, that any further proof and teaching I can give only to the Esoteric Section, and this for the following reason: its members are the only ones whom I have the right to expel for open disloyalty to their pledge (*not to me*, H.P.B., but to their *Higher Self* and the *Mahâtmic aspect of the Masters*), a privilege I cannot exercise with the F.T.S. at large, yet one which is the only means of cutting off a diseased limb from the healthy body of the tree, and thus save it from infection. I can care only for those who cannot be swayed by every breath of calumny, and every sneer, suspicion, or criticism, whoever it may emanate from.

Thenceforth let it be clearly understood that the rest of my life is devoted only to those who believe in the Masters, and are willing to work for Theosophy as they understand it, and for

the T.S. on the lines upon which they originally established it.

If, then, my Hindu brothers really and earnestly desire to bring about the regeneration of India, if they wish to ever bring back the days when the Masters, in the ages of India's ancient glory, came freely among them, guiding and teaching the peoples; then let them cast aside all fear and hesitation, and turn a new leaf in the history of the Theosophical Movement. Let them bravely rally round the President-Founder, whether I am in India or not, as around those few true Theosophists who have remained loyal throughout, and bid defiance to all calumniators and ambitious malcontents—both without and within the Theosophical Society.

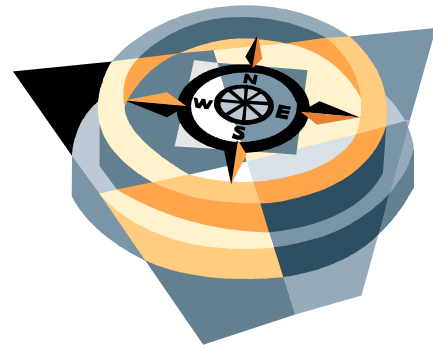



The Reincarnating Ego

The world in which blossom the transitory and evanescent flowers of personal lives is not the real permanent world; but that one in which we find the root of consciousness, that root which is beyond illusion and dwells in the eternity.... I mean by this root the thinking entity, the Ego which incarnates, whether we regard it as an "Angel," "Spirit," or a Force. Of that which falls under our sensuous perceptions only what grows directly from, or is attached to this invisible root above, can partake of its immortal life. Hence every noble thought, idea and aspiration of the personality it informs, proceeding from and fed by this root, must become permanent.

Unless a God descends as an *Avatar*, no divine principle can be otherwise than cramped and paralysed by turbulent, animal matter. Heterogeneity will always have the upper hand over homogeneity, on this plane of illusions, and the nearer an essence is to its root-principle, Primordial Homogeneity, the more difficult it is for the latter to assert itself on earth. Spiritual and divine powers lie dormant in every human Being; and the wider the sweep of his spiritual vision the mightier will be the God within him.¹

¹ From *The Key to Theosophy*, P. 180., — Ed., A.T.



POINT OUT THE WAY

LXII

Chapter XIV

III. — Kali Yuga, Cycles and The Calendar

Question: — With the death of Krishna began the cycle of *Kali Yuga* What cycle, then, began with the death of H.P.B., since both must have been Teachers of like nature?

Answer: — We often confuse the clock with the event. To say that a meeting is at 6:15 p.m. does not mean that the *clock* causes a meeting at that hour. The statement is that *Kali Yuga* — which lasts, by the way, for our race for 432,000 years — began with the death of Krishna at midnight between the 17th and 18th of February, 3102 B.C. **Thus, it was exactly 5,000 years later, one-half of a decimillennial cycle, when H.P.B. came.**² Another 5,000 years, and according to *Isis Unveiled* we may expect to see Krishna again *in propria persona*.

Now, 5 is half of 10, as 4 is half of 8, as 3 1/2 is of 7, and as 4 1/2 is of 9. We have here a clue to many things in connection with cycles. Every single digital number is capable of being made the central point of the cycle; that is, there can be a dual cycle, a triple, a quadrennial cycle, a cycle of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

² Emphasis added.

and 10. Ten is the first decimal cycle, and when we use the number 5, that is half of it.

If we take, then, as a key, the fact that cycles, no matter how discussed, refer in every case to the *descent* from the highest to the lowest state, and the *return* from the lowest state to the highest once more, plus whatever may have been gained, then it is clear that in a decimal cycle of any kind, 5 marks the turning-point. So, if *Kali Yuga* were divided into cycles of 10,000 years each, there would be 43 wheels to *Kali Yuga*, 43 great descents of masses of mankind from Spirit to the depths of materiality, and their return to the highest state again. If we recall that the first cycle of 10,000 years started with Krishna, then the bottom of that cycle was reached when H.P.B. came, and we are on the reverse arc. That is, the next 5,000 years will mark for the Aryan Race an advance and not a retrogression. **H.P.B. inaugurated the return half of the cycle.**¹

Question: — Is it possible to prevent alternating cycles of prosperity and depression?

Answer: — Not for others, but we can for ourselves. How? By stepping outside the vicious circle of self-interest of which these two words, *prosperity* and *adversity* mark the opposite poles. Suppose you take Christ as the type of a true sage — or Buddha, or Plato. Plato will be a first-rate illustration, since he was recognized during his life as the greatest philosopher in all Greece. Yet when Plato was a middle-aged man with a very high reputation, the King, or the Tyrant as they called him then, of Syracuse, sent to Athens and invited Plato to come over to teach his son how to be a real ruler, to tell him how to rule rightly among his people.

Plato left Athens and came to Syracuse, and Dionysius had an interview with him. He said, "I don't want you to forget that my son is a King's son, and you must deal with him accordingly." Plato said, "King, there is no royal road to knowledge." The King became very much dissatisfied with Plato, and dismissed him.

Plato took passage back to Athens — mind you, he was a world-known philosopher then — and the boat was wrecked. The captain, the crew and Plato were landed on some inhospitable shore, and the captain, in order to raise money to pursue the voyage, sold Plato as a slave. But when the man who bought Plato found out who he was, he fell on his knees and begged Plato's pardon, supplied him with funds, and sent him back to Athens.

The point is, do you suppose that Plato was a bit different when he was walking in the groves of the Academy at Athens, talking with his students or questioning Socrates; when he was called to Syracuse to become the tutor of the King's son; when he was a passenger on the ship and the ship was wrecked; when he was sold as a slave; when he came back to Athens honoured of all people — do you suppose that all that made a bit of difference to Plato? Not at all.

Now, if *we* had been put through the same course of events, we should have thought were in a cycle of enormous "prosperity" when we were invited to Syracuse, and we should have treated Dionysius' son very respectfully. When the ship was wrecked, we should have thought we were in a cycle of the very worst kind of "depression" until we were sold as a slave, and then we would have raised our voice to high heaven and cursed the gods. Don't we see that it is all in our mind?

¹ Emphasis added.

It is hard for us to realize that, yet it is possible for a man so to detach himself from the body while alive that, so far as he is concerned, it is as if he had no body. It is possible for a man so to detach himself while alive from everything we call pleasure and from every thing we call pain, that they no more affect him than as if he were dead and out of our sphere of existence.

What does it mean to detach oneself from pleasure and pain? It means to cease to identify Self with the body, to cease to identify Self with either the good side or the dark side of life. Self is not the good side, or the dark side; Self is neither prosperity nor pain. Pain and pleasure come from identification of Self with what is experienced. The moment the identification is cut off, the body is here if we choose to use it, and pleasure and pain are here if we choose to experience them; otherwise, we are outside their sphere of influence. It is difficult for us to get this view, but that is the very purpose of our struggle on earth.

Question: — How would you say that Karma is connected with the Law of Cycles?

Answer: — We are too apt to think of cycles solely from a chronological or time standpoint, and we are too apt to think of Karma only in terms of effects — especially, in terms of effects as experienced by *us*. The word *depression* has one meaning when it visits my neighbour; it means some thing altogether different when it roosts in my house. We have to get over that.

Suppose we say, then, that Mr. Judge is giving us a gentle hint that all Karma, as we understand and experience Karma, rises from memory, and memory has its own distinct law of association; that is, like seeks like. We are creatures of will and Yoga, that is, of

will and knowledge; whereas the opposite half of Nature is not will and knowledge, but memory and impulse, memory and desire. Desire is nothing but awakened memory.

Cycles refer to the successive steps in the waking of sleeping life, and since that life can't waken itself, we who descend into matter, or incarnate, as we call it, wake that life up and that is where we experience Karma. Now, we incarnate only under special circumstances. A boat that draws a very little water need pay no attention to the tides; it can come in and go out at low tide just as well as at high tide. In fact, it can go out better at low tide than at high tide, because at low tide the water is receding from the shore while at high tide it is piling in. But if you have a vessel of deep draught, then you have to watch the tides.

That is why great beings like Krishna incarnate, says H.P.B., once in a decimillennium, once in 10,000 years. Why? Because the rising tide of human consciousness reaches its flood only after many, many incarnations of ordinary egos. Then, when it has reached its flood, a great being like Krishna incarnates. Again, when it has reached the very bottom and men are in utter despair, crying, "Who will save us? Lord, send us a saviour" and following whoever cries, "Lo here" or "Lo there" — then, a great Being, out of his Will and Yoga and regardless of the condition of mankind, incarnates, and we have the pair of opposites thus indicated by the incarnation and form of Krishna.

Question: — Pages 132-3 (p. 124 Am. Ed.): "The Chinese always were a nation of astronomers . . . but as they belong to an old race which is doomed to extinction . . . their conclusions will not be correct for the Aryan races." Now, mathematics wouldn't change, would it? Two plus two

equals four for the Chinaman as well as for the American.

Answer: — Don't you think we have to take into account that there is a law of acceleration and a law of retardation? The Chinese, a dying race, are under a law of acceleration downwards, which is a law of retardation from the standpoint of progress, while a young race is exactly the reverse. A geometrical progression and an arithmetical progression are two totally different things as are addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Question: — Why did Mr. Judge mention the Metonic Cycle?

Answer: — Our Gregorian calendar is a correction of the Julian calendar. The Julian calendar was a correction of Meton's calendar, and Meton's calendar was the same thing as is attempted today and as can be attempted by any one. Meton attempted to reconcile solar and lunar time, and the possibility of reconciling them is just as true today as it was in his day. Solar and lunar time coincide; in other words, they have a least common multiple, and that common multiple is 18 years and some odd months.

Question: — Just why is it possible to accomplish more in *Kali Yuga*.

Answer: — Don't you think we could put that in moral terms? The contrasts are far sharper, far more sheer, in *Kali Yuga* than in any other age, and we learn by contrast. Furthermore, Mr. Judge says that *Kali Yuga* has the momentum of all the other ages behind it.

Question: — How can there be differentiation from that which is homogeneous?

Answer: — How can there be differentiated parts *except* from an undifferentiated Whole? The question

answers itself; if we have a part, it is obvious that there must be a whole from which it is derived.

Question: — It says in the Chapter that the Red Indian is just coming out of the Stone Age and we are in *Kali Yuga* What is the difference between the Stone Age and *Kali Yuga*.

Answer: — Well, take George Washington as a child with a hatchet and George Washington on the night of December 13th, 1799, and there is the difference. George with the hatchet was in the Stone Age — he was just beginning to chip his way into experience; but at the end, on December 13th, 1799, he was an old man dying of a bad cold.

We are at the end of our tether in a Manvantaric sense; the Red Indian is just renascent. You know, we ought to turn back from this chapter on cycles, and study thoughtfully Chapters II and III, and then take the succeeding chapter, XV, on Evolution — all in the light of this chapter. Chapter XIV is the key chapter of the whole book, because the whole *Ocean* is about cycles.

Question: — What is the story of the Zodiac?

Answer: — The story of the Zodiac is many, many thousands of years old. According to *The Secret Doctrine* there are Zodiacs in existence that were painted 7,000 or 8,000 years ago. Taking it roughly, that is, in round numbers, it takes the earth 360 days to make its circuit around the sun, doesn't it, and that circuit forms a complete circle. It is divided into 360 degrees, corresponding to the 360 days, and we know that in the year there are four seasons. Divide 360 degrees — artificial divisions of the circle, which represent seasonal stages of the year — and you have four right angles defining the four 90-degree segments of

the circle. We also, on the basis of the lunar year, speak of it as being 12 months. Divide 360 by 12 and you have 12 signs of 30 degrees each. That is the story of the Zodiac.

Question: — You asked us how many days there are in the year and our answer is $365 \frac{1}{4}$, instead of 360.

Answer: — Yes, but we have to distinguish between time in the sense of the period required for any given stellar body to make its circle and time as regarded by us; that is, time as kept by a calendar. You can count time by the North Star and construct a calendar on that basis — the Mayas did. You can construct a calendar on any of the constellations because every star, every constellation, is in constant motion, and, as a matter of fact, there is no such thing as what the astronomers call secular motion. All motion of a physical body is cyclic, so that it is represented by a circle.

We in the West — and in fact, the whole Aryan Race, for that matter — count time in two ways: one is from the motion of the earth around the sun, which is called solar time; the other is by the motion of the moon around the earth, lunar time; and there is no convenient combination of those two systems. Take the actual motion of the earth around the sun: reduced to terms, it is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and $4.6 \frac{2}{5}$ seconds. Lunar time, a complete nodal cycle of the moon is $29 \frac{1}{2}$ days less $\frac{1}{5}$ of a day.

In order to find a combined cycle to include both the lunar cycle and the solar cycle, you have to find the least common multiple of those numbers with their fractions, and there is no easy dividing of that. That is the origin of the Metonic Cycle; of the so-called Julian calendar, and, as far as that is concerned, of our Gregorian calendar also.

You know, it is no trouble to remember what you see. Take the Atlanteans: they had a calendar which wasn't at all like ours — they divided the months into tenths, but nevertheless there were the same sun and the same moon in the sky, and Meton, 425 or 430 years before Christ, began to calculate whether there was not some way literally to cipher out those cycles and reconcile solar and lunar time.

Consider our own lunar cycle around the earth, which takes $29 \frac{1}{2}$ days. The moon presents four phases, and for convenience sake, we divide those into 7 days each, which makes 14 quarters of the moon — 28 days — and that's the easy computation of a lunar cycle, no matter what you name it. But in fact, it is $1 \frac{1}{2}$ days "off," because the cycle is more than 28 days long. On that basis, how long will it be till there is a new moon again on the same solar date? It isn't hard to figure: figure it on the basis of 28 days instead of $29 \frac{1}{2}$ — there are $1 \frac{1}{2}$ days out of the way. How many years will it take the moon to catch up with herself again? Why, $29 \frac{1}{2}$ divided by $1 \frac{1}{2}$ will give us 19.6, and that's the Metonic cycle. Take 19 years and 7 months and multiply it by $1 \frac{1}{2}$ and you get the lunar cycle.

Meton corrected the Greek calendar in the same way, solar and lunar time, after this fashion. Counting it 7 days to the quarter, it means that a lunar year is 364 days; 52 weeks of 7 days each, 364 days. But in round numbers a solar year is 365 days; so there is a day's difference. The moon's whole cycle is 28 days; how long will it take for the sun-day and the moon-day to come together again? Why, as many times as the difference between the lunar year and the solar year will go into 28. The solar cycle, therefore, is 28 years, and in fact, Meton was "off" about a quarter of a day — he disregarded the fraction.

By the time of Julius Caesar, the calendar of the actual time computation was off a quarter of a day per year for about 450 years. In other words, there was a difference of 93 days, so that, as a matter of fact, what is the 21st of June was the 21st of March. Caesar reconciled that by lengthening some of the months, shortening some of the others, and sticking in some months — one for himself and one for Augustus.

Question — What can be said about the adoption of the 13-month calendar?

Answer: — Meton fixed up the calendar in this way: out of this 19-year-cycle, the Metonic cycle of the moon, he figured out a 12-month lunar year for 12 years, and for the other 7 years, a 13-month lunar year. So, 12 out of the 19 years had 12 months in them, and 7 had 13 months — lunar months — and that reconciled the calendar within 60 seconds.

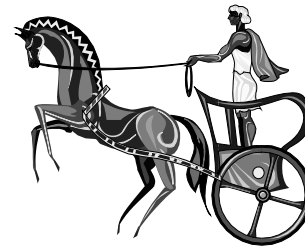
Actually, there isn't any reason why we shouldn't have a 13-month calendar and a 24-hour clock.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

The Silent Helpers

There are few persons in [India], who, being in search of the ancient Aryan Philosophy, have obtained control over the bodily passions which trouble ordinary men beyond measure. Fewer still who like one now living in India, whom I dare not mention, are known. Almost all who have thoroughly studied or are studying that ennobling philosophy, keep themselves out of the public view in compliance with wise and inexorable rules. It is not through selfishness, as too many imagine. Though unseen, they none the less are continually working for the good of humanity. In thousands of cases what they effect is ascribed to Providence. And whenever they find anyone who, like themselves, has an ambition above the mere pleasures of this world, and is in search of that Vidya which alone can make man wise in this as well as happy in the next, they stand ready by his side, take him up in their hands as soon as he shows his worthiness, and put in his way the opportunities to learn that philosophy, the study of which has made them masters of themselves, of nature's forces, and of this world. —D.K.M.

The Theosophist, January, 1880



DNYANESHVARI

LXI

[The *Dnyaneshvari* is mentioned many times by Madame Blavatsky, always in glowing terms. The following rendition is extracted from Manu Subedar's translation. The great Sage, Dnaneshwara Maharaj sang this work to his people when he was quite young. He did it in their native language, Marathi, about 700 years ago. It is his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*.]

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Wisdom (Dnyana) assures salvation (Moksha), but who can acquire this Dnyana? In order to digest it, absolute purity of heart (Chitta) is required. Without renunciation wisdom will not abide. I will mention to you who will get the spontaneous feeling of renunciation. Just as a man on being informed that the food is poisoned gets up from his meal, so on the realization that all worldly things are ephemeral, the feeling of renunciation arises. Worldly life is comparable to a tree, as you will see hereunder.

In search for the true nature of Self, the greatest obstacle arises from what appears to be the universe. Really this is not a world but a tree. It is, however, different from an ordinary tree, which has a root at the bottom and branches above. In an ordinary tree, if the root is cut away and burnt out, the whole tree falls to the ground, but the worldly tree is more difficult to get rid of. It has its root on top and it has its expanse underneath. It is like the rays of the sun reaching us down here, while the sun is in heaven.

The single tree, as it were, embraces everything, which is seen in this world just as the sky is filled up with water at the end of the creation and the night is filled with darkness at sunset. There are no fruits to taste. There is no smell to the flowers of this tree. What there is, is the tree itself. While mainly the roots are above, the roots, instead of going down into the ground, go above. There are also roots underneath. It is like the Pipal tree that is spread out indefinitely. While most of the branches are spread underneath, there are also branches above. The sky is merely a creeper running on this tree. The wind is merely its extension. This is the tree which causes the threefold condition. This tree has been known as Ashwattha. Having regard to the unity of all things, it would not be right to describe the upper and lower part of this tree. But if the upper part were discussed by itself, it is Brahman. He whose note is the source of all sounds, who has the fragrance that is the origin of all fragrances and the spontaneous joy that arises without the experience of any objects of sense, is here.

In this world He is away from Himself, seen by Himself, but nobody sees Him. Brahman, when broken into two, when attired in duality receives a name and a form, spreads out in the world. He is the seat of pure wisdom (Dnyana), in which there is pure joy undiluted by the differentiation of what is known, the knower and the process of knowing. He neither acts nor is acted upon. He is neither dual nor one. He alone knows Himself. What is called Maya (illusion) does not exist and is merely known like children of a barren woman. It is neither true nor false. It leaves no room for thought and yet it has been known in this world to be eternal.

It is as it were a box containing numerous elements, a shape of a cloud in

the form of this world, or a folded packet of cloth in the form of this universe. It is the seed, of which this universal tree is the product. It is the screen on which the picture of the universe shows itself. It is that, which lights up knowledge, other than the knowledge of Brahman. This is Maya, which is attached to Brahman and yet is not part of it. It is lighted up by the luster of Brahman. Sleep, which has been brought by oneself, takes away consciousness. The wick of the lamp itself can put out the lamp. It is like a young woman in her dream, waking up her consort for an embrace, but the consort has not been there. Such is the Maya with reference to Brahman, and it is the root of the tree of this world. The non-wisdom that has the form of Maya is attached to Brahman. Pure non-wisdom is the intermediate condition between sleep and dream. Both sleep and dream are the result of this intermediate condition. Such is the description of Maya in Vedanta. In one word it is the root of the tree of this world. There is a four-fold expanse from this main root. The tender leaves are in the form of the tendencies towards wisdom. Then there is a sprout in the form of pride (Ahankara), which goes downwards in three directions. This is Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Further, consciousness arises therefrom and increases the feeling of "I" and "You." Then comes the offshoot in the nature of the mind. When this has taken firm root, the water of doubt (Vikalpa) brings forth further branches. Then come the five-fold elements, that is earth, water, wind, light and space. Then come the five senses in five corresponding objects. Then comes sound, which fills the air and increases the desire for hearing. Then comes touch, which brings with it the desire of various forms of enjoyment. Then comes form and the eyes are bewitched with the variety of forms. Taste brings with it corresponding search, and smell

stimulates the olfactory. In this eight-fold manner, the tree is spread out as a tree. It is like the waves of non-wisdom on the ocean of Brahman. Just as a man who is dreaming of his relations is nothing but himself, so the expanse of the universe is merely a dream of non-wisdom. The growth of this tree is called Aswattha (downward). There is no constancy in this world. In a second clouds will have different colors. Lighting will have traveled a huge distance. Water will not stay on a lotus leaf that is in motion. The mind of a man who is frightened will wander. So it is with this tree, that is called Ashwattha, changing from moment to moment. The description of the Pipl tree by the way of Ashwattha in popular parlance is not correct. In the form of vapor, the clouds take over the water of the ocean. The water of the ocean is returned to the rivers through rains. Therefore, the ocean is constant. It appears always full, but this is all due to the relative functions of clouds and the rivers. So the birth and death of this tree is so quick that it is impossible to determine. Hence, it has eternal quality. When a carriage is moving quickly, the movement is not detected and it appears to be stationery. The branches of this tree in the form of living beings, etc., with the passage of time, come down and millions of new sprouts come up again. But when one complete set of branches has disappeared and another has come in, it is difficult to know like the movement of clouds in the monsoon. At the end of the age this tree, in the form of universe, drops down and at the beginning of a new age, it rises again. One age of Manu after another follows one dynasty after another. It is like the growth of sugar cane. At the end of the Kali age, this tree will abandon one of its barks and a new bark will grow. At the end of the year another year follows. At the end of the day another day follows. It is like the movement of the wind, not capable of being detected.

What has gone is quickly replaced in this tree of the universe, like the stream of a river in which the water is constant. In the twinkling of an eye, a million waves pass over this universe. It is only the man who lacks wisdom (Dnyana), who thinks it constant. The crow turns a single pupil very quickly, giving the impression that he has two pupils. A top when it turns on the ground very fast appears to be fixed on the ground. A glowing torch when turned round in the hand, appears in the form of a wheel. So is this universal tree subject at every moment to the succession of birth and death, and regarded as constant only by the stupid. In an ordinary moment, this universal tree has a million movements. Whoever has seen that, knows its transitory nature. It has no real existence and only those who lack wisdom think of it as real. Those who, on the other hand, have realized that beginning from the root right up to the fruits, this tree is unreal are the men of wisdom (Dnyana). They are worthy of reverence. They reach the final goal of Yoga. Their greatness is indescribable. The branches of this mundane tree shoot out above as well as below and those who shoot below acquire new roots that again sprout in their turn.

The branches produced in this manner join up with one another, according as they find scope. What guides them is the dominant attribute (Guna). Along the branch of Rajas moves one race of human beings after the other and in this sprout of Artha and Kama, enterprise (Purushartha) produces the fruit of the momentary worldly happiness.

In the branch of activity through greed, good and bad actions, grow and when the sap of merit (Punya) does not flow anymore. The branch of the body comes to an end and new branches grow then. The wind of Rajas shakes the whole tree at all times. Then the terrible blizzard of Tamas comes up in the human

branch when mean desires sprout up producing evil. Error then multiplies and from the roots of evil action, a new branch of rebirth comes up. The human branch gets fixed up in the lower regions with other species. Similarly, there are branches of this universal tree representing the vegetable, mineral, earth, stone worlds, etc. All this is regulated according to the law of Karma and the lower roots are in human life. Really speaking, therefore, human life is the center of this tree. **The fact to remark is that it is the center, viz., human life, which is most important.** The roots send support to the center and so do the branches. The human body is, from this point of view, the most important, as it is from this body that action both good and bad comes, which in its turn produces definite fruits. The human body is the root of that branch of the universal tree which leads to activity.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



Book Review

Hunch Power

By David Brooks¹
New York Times Book Review
Sunday, January 16, 2005

[*Blink, The Power of Thinking without Thinking*;
by Malcolm Gladwell, 277 pp., Little, Brown &
Company, \$25.95]

Malcolm Gladwell has written a book about the power of first impressions, and every review, including this one, is going to begin with the reviewer's first impression of the book.

Mine was: Boffo. [*i.e.*, outstanding].

Gladwell opens *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* with the story of a *kouros*, an ancient Greek statue of a youth that came on the art market and was about to be purchased by the Getty Museum in California. It was a magnificently preserved work, close to seven feet tall, and the asking price was just under \$10 million.

The Getty did all the normal background checks to establish the authenticity of the piece. A geologist determined that the marble came from the ancient Cape Vathy quarry on the island of Thasos. It was covered with a thin layer of calcite, a substance that accumulates on statues over hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. After 14 months of investigation, the Getty staff concluded the thing was genuine, and went ahead with the purchase.

But an art art named Federico Zeri was taken to see the statue; and in an instant he decided it was fake. Another art historian took a glimpse and sensed that while it had the form of a proper classical statue, it somehow lacked the

¹ David Brooks is an Op-Ed columnist for The Times and the author of "On Paradise Drive."

spirit. A third felt a wave of "intuitive repulsion" when he first laid eyes on it.

Further investigations were made, and finally the whole scheme unraveled. It transpired that the statue had been sculptured by forgers in Rome in the early 1980's. The teams of analysts who did 14 months of research turned out to be wrong. The historians who relied *on* their initial hunches were right.

THERE is in all of our brains, Gladwell argues, a mighty backstage process, which works its will subconsciously. Through this process we have the capacity to sift huge amounts of information, blend data, isolate telling details and come to astonishingly rapid conclusions, even in the first two seconds of seeing *something*. "*Blink* is a book about those first two seconds," Gladwell writes.

Well, I'm impressed. Here we have a guy who has already written one of the best and most successful nonfiction books of the past few years, the ubiquitous "Tipping Point." He's the author of dozens of unfailingly fascinating articles in *The New Yorker*. And he's opened his new book with a crisp anecdote that suggests each of us possesses a hidden power, which we could use to improve our lives if only we knew how to tap it more fully. That's the essential formula for self-help-book greatness.

I'm ready to be sucked in.

And indeed, *Blink* moves quickly through a series of delightful stories, all about the backstage mental process we call intuition. There is the story of the psychologist John Gottman, who since the 1980's has worked with more than 3,000 married couples in a small room, his "love lab," near the University of Washington. He videotapes them having a conversation. Reviewing just an hour's

worth of each tape, Gottman has been able to predict with 95 percent accuracy whether that couple will be married 15 years later. If he watches only 15 minutes of tape, his success rate is about 90 percent. Scientists in his lab have determined they can usually predict whether a marriage will work after watching just three minutes of newlywed conversation.

Gottman believes that each relationship has a DNA, or an essential nature. It's possible to take a very thin slice of that relationship, grasp its fundamental pattern and make decent prediction of its destiny.

Gladwell says we are thin-slicing all the time — when we go on a date, meet a prospective employee, judge any situation. We take a small portion of a person or problem and extrapolate amazingly well about the whole. A psychologist named Nalini Ambady gave students three 10-second soundless videotapes of a teacher lecturing. Then she asked the students to, rate the teacher. Their ratings matched the ratings from students who had taken the teacher's course for an entire semester. Then she cut the videotape back to two seconds and showed it to a new group. The ratings still matched those of the students who'd sat through the entire term.

"We are innately suspicious of this kind of rapid cognition," Gladwell observes. We assume that long, methodical investigation yields more reliable conclusions than a snap judgment. But in fact, "decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good as decisions made cautiously and deliberately."

This book is only 277 pages long, but there are dozens of stories about thin-slicing. There's one about a Pentagon war game. There's one about New Coke,

which seemed to test so well, but flopped in the marketplace. Gladwell shows how the New York City police officers who killed Amadou Diallo made a series of horrendous snap judgments.

Gladwell has us flying around the world and across disciplines at hectic speed, and he's always dazzling us with fascinating information and phenomena. Take priming, for example. Two Dutch scientists asked their subjects to play a demanding game of Trivial Pursuit. They asked one group to think beforehand about what it would be like to be a professor and the other group to think about what it would be like to be a soccer hooligan. The people who were in a professorial frame of mind did much better than the "**hooligans.**"

One group of African-Americans was asked to take a test without identifying their race on the pretest questionnaire. Another group was asked their race and "that simple act," Gladwell writes, "was sufficient to prime them with all the negative stereotypes associated with African-Americans and academic achievement." The African-Americans who identified their race did much worse than the people who didn't. The number of questions they got right was cut in half.

MY first impression of "Blink" — in blurb-speak — was "Fascinating! Eye-Opening! Important!" Unfortunately, my brain, like yours, has more than just a thin-slicing side. It also has that thick-slicing side. The thick-slicing side wants more than a series of remarkable anecdotes. It wants a comprehensive theory of the whole. It wants to know how all the different bits of information fit together.

That thick-slicing part of my brain wasn't as happy with "Blink," especially the second time through. Gladwell never tells us how the brain performs these

amazing cognitive feats; we just get the scattered byproducts of the mysterious backstage process. (There have been books by people like Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner that go deeper into the brain chemistry of it.)

The thick-slicing side isn't even sure what this book is about. Is it about first impressions, or intuition, or that amorphous blending of "what is" with "what could be" — that we call imagination? In some of his stories, it's regular people who are making snap judgments; in others, it's experts who have been through decades of formal training. In some experiments, the environment matters a great deal; in others, the setting is a psychologist's lab. In some, the snap judgments are based on methodical reasoning — as with a scientist who has broken facial expressions into discrete parts, in others, the snap-judgment process is formless and **instinctive**. In some, priming is all-important; in others, priming is disregarded.

Moreover the thick-slicing part of my brain is telling me that while it would be pleasing if we all had these supercomputers in our heads, Gladwell is overselling his case. Most of his heartwarming stories involve the lone intuitive rebel who ends up besting the formal, bureaucratic decision-making procedure. Though Gladwell describes several ways intuition can lead people astray, he doesn't really dwell on how often, that happens. But I've learned from other books, notably David G. Myers's more methodical but less entertaining "Intuition," that there is a great body of data suggesting that formal statistical analysis is a much, much better way of predicting everything from the outcome of a football game to the course of liver disease than the intuition even of experts.

The thick-slicing part of the brain reminds me that not long ago I read Michael Lewis's great book, "Moneyball," about a baseball executive who used-rigorous statistical analysis to clobber fuzzy-minded old pros who relied on their gut impressions. Now I'm reading *Blink* on how impressions can be as reliable as data. This part of my brain wants to know how I should reconcile Lewis with Gladwell. What is the relationship between self-conscious reason and backstage intuition? Which one is right more often?

For example, if I have to cast my vote for either George "I go with my gut" Bush or John "I deliberate until the cows come home" Kerry, how should I evaluate their rival cognitive styles? Most important, that thick-slicing part of my brain, which is blessed and burdened by self-consciousness, wants to know the meaning of what Gladwell is telling it. When he is talking about the cognitive powers of the brain, he's not just reviewing a cool piece of software. He's talking about us, the thinking process that is the essence of who you and I are.

I am perfectly willing to accept that the brain processes huge amounts of information on a subconscious level, thus freeing up conscious neurons for major tasks, like writing, gossiping or remembering humiliating moments from the distant past. I am willing to accept that we are all to some large extent strangers to ourselves, unaware of how we make the decisions that shape our lives.

But I am not willing to assume, as Gladwell sometimes seems to be doing, that our brains are like computers — uniform pieces of hardware that can be tested and reverse-engineered by scientists or psychologists in a lab. Isn't it as possible that the backstage part of the brain might be more like a

personality, some unique and nontechnological essence that cannot be adequately generalized about by scientists in white coats with clipboards?

Blink is part of a wave of books on brain function that are sweeping over us as we learn more about the action inside our own heads. This literature is going to have a powerful effect on our culture, maybe as powerful as the effect Freudianism had on our grandparents' time (the last time some-body tried to explain the brain's backstage process).

WE should be a little wary of surrendering this field to the scientists. Philosophers ranging from Vico to Michael Oakeshott to Isaiah Berlin were writing about thin-slicing (which they called "wisdom") long before the scientists started picking apart our neurons, and long before psychologists started showing people snippets of videotape. And much of what they observe is more profound than anything you can capture with some ginned-up control group test in a psychology lab.

I'm sure Gladwell knows all this. Perhaps it's unfair to expect him to write a book that encompasses Isaiah Berlin and the "love lab." It's just that in the general culture the psychiatrists and neuroscientists are eclipsing the philosophers, and that's horrible.

If you want to trust my snap judgment, buy this book: you'll be delighted. If you want to trust my more reflective second judgment, buy it: you'll be delighted but frustrated, troubled and left wanting more.

Or just go to the bookstore, look at the cover and let your neurons make up their own damn mind.

A GENIUS EXPLAINS

Saturday February 12, 2005
The Guardian

Daniel Tammet is an autistic savant. He can perform mind-boggling mathematical calculations at breakneck speeds. But unlike other savants, who can perform similar feats, Tammet can describe how he does it. He speaks seven languages and is even devising his own language. Now scientists are asking whether his exceptional abilities are the key to unlock the secrets of autism. Interview by Richard Johnson

Daniel Tammet is talking. As he talks, he studies my shirt and counts the stitches. Ever since the age of three, when he suffered an epileptic fit, Tammet has been obsessed with counting. Now he is 26, and a mathematical genius who can figure out cube roots quicker than a calculator and recall pi to 22,514 decimal places. He also happens to be autistic, which is why he can't drive a car, wire a plug, or tell right from left. He lives with extraordinary ability and disability.

Tammet is calculating 377 multiplied by 795. Actually, he isn't "calculating": there is nothing conscious about what he is doing. He arrives at the answer instantly. Since his epileptic fit, he has been able to see numbers as shapes, colours and textures. The number two, for instance, is a motion, and five is a clap of thunder. "When I multiply numbers together, I see two shapes. The image starts to change and evolve, and a third shape emerges. That's the answer. It's mental imagery. It's like mathematics without having to think."

Tammet is a "savant", an individual with an astonishing, extraordinary mental ability. An estimated 10% of the autistic population — and an estimated 1% of the non-autistic population — have savant

abilities, but no one knows exactly why. A number of scientists now hope that Tammet might help us to understand better.

Professor Allan Snyder, from the Centre for the Mind at the Australian National University in Canberra, explains why Tammet is of particular, and international, scientific interest. "Savants can't usually tell us how they do what they do," says Snyder. "It just comes to them. Daniel can. He describes what he sees in his head. That's why he's exciting. He could be the Rosetta Stone."

There are many theories about savants. Snyder, for instance, believes that we all possess the savant's extraordinary abilities — it is just a question of us learning how to access them. "Savants have usually had some kind of brain damage. Whether it's an onset of dementia later in life, a blow to the head or, in the case of Daniel, an epileptic fit. And it's that brain damage which creates the savant. I think that it's possible for a perfectly normal person to have access to these abilities, so working with Daniel could be very instructive."

Scans of the brains of autistic savants suggest that the right hemisphere might be compensating for damage in the left hemisphere. While many savants struggle with language and comprehension (skills associated primarily with the left hemisphere), they often have amazing skills in mathematics and memory (primarily right hemisphere skills). Typically, savants have a limited vocabulary, but there is nothing limited about Tammet's vocabulary.

Tammet is creating his own language, strongly influenced by the vowel and image-rich languages of northern Europe. (He already speaks French, German, Spanish, Lithuanian, Icelandic and Esperanto.) The vocabulary

of his language — "Mänti", meaning a type of tree — reflects the relationships between different things. The word "ema", for instance, translates as "mother", and "ela" is what a mother creates: "life". "Päike" is "sun", and "päive" is what the sun creates: "day". Tammet hopes to launch Mänti in academic circles later this year, his own personal exploration of the power of words and their inter-relationship.

Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, director of the Autism Research Centre (ARC) at Cambridge University, is interested in what Mänti might teach us about savant ability. "I know of other savants who also speak a lot of languages," says Baron-Cohen. "But it's rare for them to be able to reflect on how they do it — let alone create a language of their own." The ARC team has started scanning Tammet's brain to find out if there are modules (for number, for example, or for colour, or for texture) that are connected in a way that is different from most of us. "It's too early to tell, but we hope it might throw some light on why we don't all have savant abilities."

Last year Tammet broke the European record for recalling pi, the mathematical constant, to the furthest decimal point. He found it easy, he says, because he didn't even have to "think". To him, pi isn't an abstract set of digits; it's a visual story, a film projected in front of his eyes. He learnt the number forwards and backwards and, last year, spent five hours recalling it in front of an adjudicator. He wanted to prove a point. "I memorised pi to 22,514 decimal places, and I am technically disabled. I just wanted to show people that disability needn't get in the way."

Tammet is softly spoken, and shy about making eye contact, which makes him seem younger than he is. He lives on the Kent coast, but never goes near the

beach — there are too many pebbles to count. The thought of a mathematical problem with no solution makes him feel uncomfortable. Trips to the supermarket are always a chore. "There's too much mental stimulus. I have to look at every shape and texture. Every price, and every arrangement of fruit and vegetables. So instead of thinking, 'What cheese do I want this week?' I'm just really uncomfortable."

Tammet has never been able to work 9 to 5. It would be too difficult to fit around his daily routine. For instance, he has to drink his cups of tea at exactly the same time every day. Things have to happen in the same order: he always brushes his teeth before he has his shower. "I have tried to be more flexible, but I always end up feeling more uncomfortable. Retaining a sense of control is really important. I like to do things in my own time, and in my own style, so an office with targets and bureaucracy just wouldn't work."

Instead, he has set up a business on his own, at home, writing email courses in language learning, numeracy and literacy for private clients. It has had the fringe benefit of keeping human interaction to a minimum. It also gives him time to work on the verb structures of Mänti.

Few people on the streets have recognised Tammet since his pi record attempt. But, when a documentary about his life is broadcast on Channel 5 later this year, all that will change. "The highlight of filming was to meet Kim Peek, the real-life character who inspired the film Rain Man. Before I watched Rain Man, I was frightened. As a nine-year-old schoolboy, you don't want people to point at the screen and say, 'That's you.' But I watched it, and felt a real connection. Getting to meet the real-life Rain Man was inspirational."

Peek was shy and introspective, but he sat and held Tammet's hand for hours. "We shared so much — our love of key dates from history, for instance. And our love of books. As a child, I regularly took over a room in the house and started my own lending library. I would separate out fiction and non-fiction, and then alphabetise them all. I even introduced a ticketing system. I love books so much. I've read more books than anyone else I know. So I was delighted when Kim wanted to meet in a library." Peek can read two pages simultaneously, one with each eye. He can also recall, in exact detail, the 7,600 books he has read. When he is at home in Utah, he spends afternoons at the Salt Lake City public library, memorising phone books and address directories." He is such a lovely man," says Tammet. "Kim says, 'You don't have to be handicapped to be different — everybody's different'. And he's right."

Like Peek, Tammet will read anything and everything, but his favourite book is a good dictionary, or the works of G. K. Chesterton. "With all those aphorisms," he says, "Chesterton was the Groucho Marx of his day." Tammet is also a Christian, and likes the fact that Chesterton addressed some complex religious ideas. "The other thing I like is that, judging by the descriptions of his home life, I reckon Chesterton was a savant. He couldn't dress himself, and would always forget where he was going. His poor wife."

Autistic savants have displayed a wide range of talents, from reciting all nine volumes of Grove's Dictionary Of Music to measuring exact distances with the naked eye. The blind American savant Leslie Lemke played Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, after he heard it for the first time, and he never had so much as a piano lesson. And the British savant Stephen Wiltshire was able

to draw a highly accurate map of the London skyline from memory after a single helicopter trip over the city. Even so, Tammet could still turn out to be the more significant.

He was born on January 31 1979. He smiles as he points out that 31, 19, 79 and 1979 are all prime numbers — it's a kind of sign. He was actually born with another surname, which he prefers to keep private, but decided to change it by deed poll. It didn't fit with the way he saw himself. "I first saw 'Tammet' online. It means oak tree in Estonian, and I liked that association. Besides, I've always had a love of Estonian. Such a vowel rich language."

As a baby, he banged his head against the wall and cried constantly. Nobody knew what was wrong. His mother was anxious, and would swing him to sleep in a blanket. She breastfed him for two years. The only thing the doctors could say was that perhaps he was understimulated. Then, one afternoon when he was playing with his brother in the living room, he had an epileptic fit.

"I was given medication — round blue tablets — to control my seizures, and told not to go out in direct sunlight. I had to visit the hospital every month for regular blood tests. I hated those tests, but I knew they were necessary. To make up for it, my father would always buy me a cup of squash to drink while we sat in the waiting room. It was a worrying time because my Dad's father had epilepsy, and actually died of it, in the end. They were thinking, 'This is the end of Daniel's life!'"

Tammet's mother was a secretarial assistant, and his father a steelplate worker. "They both left school without qualifications, but they made us feel special — all nine of us. As the oldest of nine, I suppose it's fair to say I've always

felt special." Even if his younger brothers and sisters could throw and catch better than him, swim better, kick a ball better, Daniel was always the oldest. "They loved me because I was their big brother and I could read them stories."

He remembers being given a Ladybird book called Counting when he was four. "When I looked at the numbers I 'saw' images. It felt like a place I could go where I really belonged. That was great. I went to this other country whenever I could. I would sit on the floor in my bedroom and just count. I didn't notice that time was passing. It was only when my Mum shouted up for dinner, or someone knocked at my door, that I would snap out of it."

One day his brother asked him a sum. "He asked me to multiply something in my head — like 'What is $82 \times 82 \times 82 \times 82$?' I just looked at the floor and closed my eyes. My back went very straight and I made my hands into fists. But after five or 10 seconds, the answer just flowed out of my mouth. He asked me several others, and I got every one right. My parents didn't seem surprised. And they never put pressure on me to perform for the neighbours. They knew I was different, but wanted me to have a normal life as far as possible."

Tammet could see the car park of his infant school from his bedroom window, which made him feel safe. "I loved assembly because we got to sing hymns. The notes formed a pattern in my head, just like the numbers did." The other children didn't know what to make of him, and would tease him. The minute the bell went for playtime he would rush off. "I went to the playground, but not to play. The place was surrounded by trees. While the other children were playing football, I would just stand and count the leaves."

As Tammet grew older, he developed an obsessive need to collect — everything from conkers to newspapers. "I remember seeing a ladybird for the first time," he says. "I loved it so much, I went round searching every hedge and every leaf for more. I collected hundreds, and took them to show the teacher. He was amazed, and asked me to get on with some assignment. While I was busy he instructed a classmate to take the tub outside and let the ladybirds go. I was so upset that I cried when I found out. He didn't understand my world."

Tammet may have been teased at school, but his teachers were always protective. "I think my parents must have had a word with them, so I was pretty much left alone." He found it hard to socialise with anyone outside the family, and, with the advent of adolescence, his shyness got worse.

After leaving school with three A-levels (History, French and German, all grade Bs), he decided he wanted to teach — only not the predictable, learn-by-rote type of teaching. For a start, he went to teach in Lithuania, and he worked as a volunteer. "Because I was there of my own free will, I was given a lot of leeway. The times of the classes weren't set in stone, and the structures were all of my own making. It was also the first time I was introduced as 'Daniel' rather than 'the guy who can do weird stuff in his head'. It was such a pleasant relief." Later, he returned home to live with his parents, and found work as a maths tutor.

He met the great love of his life, a software engineer called Neil, online. It began, as these things do, with emailed pictures, but ended up with a face-to-face meeting. "Because I can't drive, Neil offered to pick me up at my parents' house, and drive me back to his house in Kent. He was silent all the way back. I thought, 'Oh dear, this isn't going well'.

Just before we got to his house, he stopped the car. He reached over and pulled out a bouquet of flowers. I only found out later that he was quiet because he likes to concentrate when he's driving."

Neil is shy, like Tammet. They live, happily, on a quiet cul-de-sac. The only aspect of Tammet's autism that causes them problems is his lack of empathy. "There's a saying in Judaism, if somebody has a relative who has hanged themselves, don't ask them where you should hang your coat. I need to remember that. Like the time I kept quizzing a friend of Neil's who had just lost her mother. I was asking her all these questions about faith and death. But that's down to my condition — no taboos."

When he isn't working, Tammet likes to hang out with his friends on the church quiz team. His knowledge of popular culture lets him down, but he's a shoo-in when it comes to the math questions. "I do love numbers," he says. "It isn't only an intellectual or aloof thing that I do. I really feel that there is an emotional attachment, a caring for numbers. I think this is a human thing — in the same way that a poet humanises a river or a tree through metaphor, my world gives me a sense of numbers as personal. It sounds silly, but numbers are my friends."

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/weekend/story/0,,1409903,00.html>



The SELF

Once you get rid of separateness then you also get rid of location as well -- and past and future too! but you don't get rid of the PRESENT, or the mystery of self-direction — whether it be a cell or a

buddha — so what ever we have as self we get it from the ONE SELF, and the type or span of our perception is regulated by the vehicle. It is our "achieved spot of competence in the river of evolution" which had no beginning and will have no end. "Spirit has to pass through the ordeal of incarnation and life, and be baptized with matter before it can reach experience and knowledge. After which only it receives the baptism of soul, or self-consciousness" or CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE ONE SELF. When that stage is reached the choice between the two polarities, spirit-and-matter cannot be escaped and is summed up in the phrase "bliss immediate (form, matter, vehicle) or bliss deferred (consciousness in widening circles, or spirit)."

Or as remarked in *Point out the Way*:

If there were actual separateness, a man could think of Self as identified with nothing and with no one. He can't do that. Unless he thinks of the Self of all, he is bound to think of the separate Self. Who is in those forms? When we say "ourselves," we are identifying ourselves with what we see, or with what we hear, or taste, or touch, or smell; so, the answer is there.

Another way of looking at it is this: If we take the highest possible conception of Self, it is of Self as the seer, as the perceiver. The moment we take the conception of Self, "I am that which sees," then, what is it that I see? That is Self in the opposite hypostasis. That is why The Secret Doctrine says that Spirit and Matter ought not to be conceived as separate realities; they are but the opposed phases or aspects of one and the same reality. The moment we postulate a seer, then we postulate the seen. Spirit is a collective term to designate the perceiver, the seer; matter is a collective term to designate that which is seen.

What is it that sees? It is Self, which we name Spirit. What is it that is seen? Self, which we name Matter; and the Seventh Chapter of the Gita calls the Self which is seen the inferior nature; and the Self which sees and knows, the superior nature. Why is that? Because the Self, the Knower never changes; but Self, the seen changes all the time as we change direction of our vision. That's why the changing Self is inferior and the unchanging Self — the Perceiver — is superior.



Exposing The Myth Of Dark Matter

By David Talbott

At an estimated 50 million light-years from Earth, astronomers found a large mass of hydrogen a hundred million times the mass of the Sun—a galaxy of sorts, but containing no stars.

Hydrogen gas releases radiation that can be detected at radio wavelengths. Using radio telescopes in England and Puerto Rico, a team of investigators detected the massive cloud in the Virgo Cluster. They named it "VIRGOHI21."

The challenge they faced began with the fact that the cloud is rotating way too fast, in apparent defiance of gravity. Without some other force acting on the cloud it should fly apart. The astronomers assumed this force must be gravity. As reported in the BBC story on

the discovery, "there must be a stronger gravitational force acting than can be accounted for using visible matter." But this is the same problem posed by galaxies: they rotate too fast for gravity to hold them together. Due to the similarities in rotational dynamics, the investigators of VIRGOHI21 concluded that the remote cloud is a starless "galaxy," held together by the same invisible stuff that they now claim holds all galaxies together — "dark matter."

To give their mathematical models of galaxies integrity, astronomers envision a universe of invisible matter at least five times as voluminous as visible matter. So they've applied the same theories to the hydrogen cloud, except that the proportions of dark matter are much larger. The theorists were not constrained by any consideration other than the calculation of invisible "mass" using their gravitational equations. In this case, however, adding just a little dark matter would not suffice. According to Dr Robert Minchin, of Cardiff University: "From its speed, we realised that VIRGOHI21 was a THOUSAND TIMES more massive than could be accounted for by the observed hydrogen atoms alone." (emphasis ours)

One might have thought the investigators would pause in the face of such proportions. To get the results they were looking for, they posited a thousand times more invisible matter than visible matter, with the freedom to place the invisible stuff wherever it is needed for their gravitational equations to work. Is such a leap of faith permissible? The investigators' confidence was undimmed. As reported by Dr Jon Davies, one of the Cardiff team members "The Universe has all sorts of secrets still to reveal to us, but this shows that we are beginning to understand how to look at it in the right way. It's a really exciting discovery."

It sounds as if a leap of faith produced an "exciting" scientific breakthrough. But this is the kind of "breakthrough" that causes plasma cosmologists to wonder aloud about the state of science today. They know all too well that it does not take "dark matter" to produce the rapid rotation of a vast hydrogen cloud. Even the weakest electric fields imaginable can routinely achieve such results over vast distances. And since magnetic fields and filamentation — the most direct pointers to electric currents — appear everywhere we look in space, the experts on plasma and electricity are growing increasingly impatient with a "science" unwilling to consider the obvious.



The Bright Side of Saturn

Golden Age, Aquarius Era and the Ringed Planet

Carlos Cardoso Aveline¹

In the last paragraph of one of her books, H. P. Blavatsky suggests that the earth could be "a heaven" in the 21st century, if compared to 19th century.²

For those who are accustomed to the usual content of newspapers and television networks at this beginning of 21st century, to be confronted with such an optimistic view of the future may be rather startling — if not altogether unacceptable.

But life is far more surprising than present-day journalism — or fiction. Writing in 1887, the founder of the

¹ A Brazilian journalist and author, Carlos translated and edited the *Mahatma Letters* in Portuguese language.

² *The Key to Theosophy*, Theosophy Company, India, 1987, 367 pp., see p. 305.

modern esoteric movement gave the dates and duration of recent astrological ages, indicating that the year 1900 was to be the starting point for the new Aquarian Age.

HPB wrote that "one of the several remarkable cycles" coming to a close in the end of 19th century was "the Messianic cycle of the Samaritan (also Kabalistic) Jews of the man connected with *Pisces*". And she explained: "It is a cycle, historic and not very long, but very occult, lasting about 2,155 solar years, but having a true significance only when computed by lunar months. It occurred [in] 2410 and 255 B.C., or when the equinox entered into the sign of the *Ram*, and again into that of *Pisces*".³

Geoffrey Barborka commented her statement:

"Since 2155 years is the time-period for the duration of each of the cycles of the age of Aries and Pisces, and as the Piscean age began in 255 B.C., the date of the beginning of the Aquarian age is 1900 A.D."⁴

HPB saw that the expansion of higher mind brought about by the new age would be dramatically painful at first. She added, referring to the equinox:

"When it enters, in a few years, the sign of *Aquarius*, psychologists will have extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter into a great change."

The transition of astrological ages is a complex process, though, and its effects may take a few hundred years to become perfectly visible. One of the occult time-

³ *Collected Writings of HPB*, TPH, India, Volume VIII, p. 174, footnote.

⁴ *Secret Doctrine Questions & Answers*, by Geoffrey Barborka, Wizards Bookshelf, San Diego, USA, 2003, 197 pp., see p. 100.

cycles mentioned in the *Mahatma Letters* corresponds to 107 years¹, and only in 2007-2008 we will have completed this first and smaller cycle since the beginning of Aquarian age.²

The 21st century is a strong numerological figure which equals 3 times 7 – and HPB made, even in her difficult days, a bright prophetic statement as to the karmic content of this period:

“(…) Error is powerful only on the surface, prevented as she is by Occult Nature from going any deeper; for the same Occult Nature encircles the whole globe, in every direction, leaving not even the darkest corner unvisited. And, whether by phenomenon or miracle, by spirit-hook or bishop’s crook, Occultism must win the day, before the present era reaches “Sani’s (Saturn’s) triple septenary of the Western cycle in Europe, in other words – before the end of the twenty-first century ‘A.D.’ Truth is stranger than fiction. It may any day, and most unexpectedly, vindicate its wisdom and demonstrate the conceit of our age, by proving that the Secret Brotherhood did not, indeed, die out with the Philaletheians or the last Eclectic School, that the Gnosis flourish still on Earth, and its votaries are many, albeit unknown. All this may be done by one, or more, of the great Masters visiting Europe and

¹ See the last paragraphs of Letter 48 (chronological edition, TPH, Philippines) or Letter 47 in the previous, non-chronological editions of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (TPH-Adyar or TUP-Pasadena).

² It seems worthwhile to register that Uranus, the regent of Aquarius, has been for some time now in an interesting celestial and astrological dialogue with Neptune, the regent of late age of Pisces. Neptune has been in the sign of Aquarius for some time, in a long visit. In the end of 2003, after a short visit, planet Uranus has entered the sign of Pisces for a long-term stay, up to 2011, speeding-up the combination and transition of energy-patterns characteristic of Pisces and Aquarius ages.

exposing in their turn the alleged expositors and traducers of magic.”³

Strong words, indeed, and the fact that HPB mentions Saturn in these lines is not entirely casual. From an astrological point of view, Saturn is the stern Master of the *lower quaternary* or *basic self* in human beings. That is not a problem, though. The *upper triad* or spiritual soul has nothing to lose from the slow, powerful movements of that planetary spirit whose physical vehicle was called by Camille Flammarion the “marvel of the solar system”.

When we think of this planet – which has 31 moons and seven rings, according to present-day astronomical data – we must bear in mind that there’s a great difference between its body and spirit. HPB wrote:

“Saturn, ‘the father of Gods’ must not be confused with its namesake – the planet of the same name (...) . The two – though in one sense identical, as are, for instance, physical man and his soul – must be separated in the question of worship.”⁴

So the material planet Saturn is the *vehicle* of the mythological Saturn. Although there is a clear difference between material and spiritual aspects of this planet, the interaction between them is very much like the relationship between physical man and his soul.

This planet is the Master of Karma, Time and Structures. It presides over our karmic harvest (Prarabdha karma), but it is also the regent of *Kriyamana* Karma, the new karma we choose to plant at each and every present moment in our lives.

³ *Collected Writings of HPB*, TPH, India, volume XIV, p. 27.

⁴ *Collected Writings*, HPB, TPH, India, volume XIV, p. 334.

Hence Saturn helps us create and make use of opportunities for attaining true happiness.

Master of concentration, Saturn has an important role to play in the ladder to heaven taught in the Mythraic Mysteries of ancient Rome. It is said that this ladder has seven steps. The first one corresponds to “the sky of Saturn”, that is, the spirit of that planet.¹ In any sacred ladder, the first step upward presides over the transition between the lower ground and the way to heaven.² The first step makes us confront the *borderline* between the material and divine dimensions of life.³ Thus, astronomically, Saturn is the planet of the rings and it establishes the limit between the “lower” or “domestic” section and the “higher” or “galactical” section of our solar system.

Mythologically, this planet-spirit also corresponds to the Jewish-Christian god Jehovah. Chronos/Saturn, the stern God in the Paradise’s Golden Age, tries to preserve spiritual life by preventing the personal ego from prematurely separating itself, at the end of the first races. It “devours” its children (personal egos) back into an undifferentiated unity, until the right time has come. When separation/differentiation prevails, then there is the severe and solemn warning from the Saturnian Lord, who sends

¹ *Mitologia Grega*, Junito de Souza Mourão, Editora Vozes, Rio de Janeiro, ninth edition, three volumes, see volume II, pp. 60-61. See also *Mithras, Mysteries and Initiation Rediscovered*, by D. Jason Cooper, Samuel Weizer, Inc., USA, especially Chapter 5, pp. 113-140.

² Writing about the seven chakras in the human body (which can be seen as a ladder to higher consciousness) T. Subba Row establishes a connection between the first chakra, Muladhara, and Saturn. See *Esoteric Writings*, T. Subba Row, TPH, India, p. 555.

³ However, we should keep in mind that *Muladhara chakra* is precisely the one HPB warns her pupils against. Raja Yoga deals only with the pituitary and the pineal, which awaken or change the heart polarity. — Ed., A.T.

Adam (third root-race) away from the Garden and into the hard world of dualistic life (Genesis, 3).

Saturn has many names, and in *Isis Unveiled* we read:

“Ilda-Baath, the ‘Son of Darkness’, and the creator of the material world, was made to inhabit the planet Saturn, which identifies him still more with the Jewish Jehovah, who was Saturn himself, according to the Ophites, and is by them denied his Sinaitic name. From Ilda-Baath emanate six spirits, who respectively dwell with their father in the seven planets.”

These are, as HPB explains, Saturn, Mars, Sun, Moon, Jupiter, Mercury and Venus: “In their functions and description as given, these seven planets are identical with the Hindu *Sapta-Locha*, the seven places or spheres, or the superior and inferior worlds; for they represent the kabalistic seven spheres.”⁴ And they are the same celestial bodies that form the Mitraic ladder to heaven.

HPB acknowledged Saturn as the king of golden age⁵. In many different traditions there is a direct relationship between the awakening of the higher mind and the emergence of golden ages. In Buddhism and other religions, gold (or yellow) is a symbol of divine consciousness and spiritual soul. Any golden age is an age of *buddhi-manas* or spiritual intelligence, and there is a direct connection between this higher mind and Saturn.

We find inspiring information in Arthur Cotterell’s *Encyclopedia of Myths & Legends* (my own interpolated words are underlined, in brackets) :

⁴ *Isis Unveiled*, HPB. T.U.P., USA, Volume II, p. 294.

⁵ *Isis Unveiled*, volume II, pp. 216-217.

“Saturn, like Kronos, was regarded as the ruler of a distant Golden Age, when life was easy and peaceful. During this age, he taught people how to till the fields and enjoy a civilized way of life. As early as the fifth century BCE Saturn’s temple stood in front of the Forum at Rome and acted as the treasury. His festival, the Saturnalia, took place in December [at the entrance of the Sun in Capricorn] and lasted seven days. During the revels [feasts] people ate together [celebrating universal brotherhood regardless of their rigid system of social classes] and exchanged gifts at a public banquet at the Forum.”¹

Present-day Christmas is also celebrated in December and under the sign of Capricorn, whose regent is Saturn. It is a time for celebrating universal brotherhood, too, and for exchanging gifts; a time which goes on for little more than seven days, from 25 December through January 1st. As to our week, Saturn-day is the the seventh day, the day originally dedicated to rest, prayer and harmony.

Mythological Saturn was exiled in Rome, and the poet Ovid wrote in *Fasti* 1-235-238:

“(…) In this land Saturn was received, when he was expelled by Jupiter from the celestial realm; hence the name of the saturnian people, used for a long time by our folks, as also his land was called Latium, because here the god hid himself.”

Indeed, according to ancient etymology the very word *Latium* (modern *Lazio*, hence *Latin*, etc.) comes from *latere*, “being hidden”, and refers to Saturn.

¹ Marshall Editions, London, 1989, 259 pp. 23 cm x 30 cm, see page 157, “Saturn” entry.

The exiled god established himself in the Capitol, the birthplace of future Rome, and founded a fortified city which in some mythological versions is called Saturnia. He was received by Janus, a much older god in Italy, who also had come from Greece. The two gods peacefully shared power in the *Latium*. Janus ruled his own city and Saturn ruled the fortress Saturnia. Hence in our yearly cycle the zodiacal sign of Capricorn and its regent Saturn preside over most part of January, Janus-month.

The coming of Saturn to Italy brought about the *aetas aurea*, golden age, when, as says Ovid in *Metamorphoses* (1-107-10), “springtime was eternal and the gentle breezes caressed with their smooth breath the flowers born out of no seed.”

Virgil writes of this golden age: “Sometimes there were rivers of milk, and sometimes of nectar [*the drink of gods*], and the land produced everything with no effort from the peasants. Everything belonged to everybody and there was a deep peace”. And Virgil adds in his *Georgics*, 2, 538-540:

Thus was life on Earth when golden Saturn ruled;

There was no sound of battle trumpets yet,

Nor the tinkle of swords in the hard anvil.

Much later, the Roman *Saturnalia* festival celebrated that Saturnian Paradise where every man was just, peaceful and free, and there was no carcel, no war nor death.²

In the 21st century, Saturn’s influence and lessons help us recover at least parts the golden consciousness which leads to a golden society. In our present cycle, it means the awakening of

² *Dicionário Mítico-Etimológico da Mitologia e Religião Romana*, Junito Brandão, Ed., Vozes, Rio de Janeiro, 1993, see p. 268-271.

the sixth, intuitive sub-principle of fifth, mental principle, or simply the rebirth of a spiritual intelligence, a higher level of consciousness from which the next series of civilizations must emanate.

It will be a natural process in the new age, to rediscover the bright side of Saturn. It is already the proper time to remember that this beautiful ringed planet was for many centuries the astrological regent of Aquarius¹ – before Uranus was discovered in 1781.

Being the co-regent of Aquarius sign, Saturn shall have an ever inspiring role during the new age, a time when the *law of brotherhood* taught by the Mahatmas and Sages can be better understood and respected.

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CCA: Ver mais detalhes do diálogo Urano-Netuno, citado aqui em NPP número 5. São embaixadores da galáxia. O diálogo também traz ilusão e esperteza. Pesquisar duração dos ciclos dos dois planetas. Netuno: 164,7 anos terrestres para translação. Urano: 84 anos.



¹ *Enciclopédia de Astrologia*, by James R. Lewis, Makron Gold Publisher, São Paulo, Brazil, 1998, 622 pp., see p. 475.

Plotinus on Narcissus and Ulysses

In his magnificent and widely discussed essay “Le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin,” Hadot shows that, for Plotinus, Narcissus represents a failure of spiritual ascent, a complacency that leads the soul to allow itself to be fascinated by its corporeal reflection, to fail to see that the reality of the body comes from the soul, whose light animates the body. Narcissus is a symbol of the poverty and wretchedness of those human beings who never go beyond the beauty of the body, who are sunk in the “dark depths hostile to Intellect.” Against the Gnostics, Plotinus does not make Narcissus a cosmological symbol, since he does not believe that the sensible world originates as a result of some narcissistic defect. In itself, the sensible world is a good thing, a universal and normal phenomenon of nature. Narcissus represents a moral and spiritual state, the result, after the constitution of the sensible world, of what transpires when the soul *directs its attention toward the body*. To the figure of Narcissus, Plotinus opposes the figure of Ulysses, whose flight consists in discovering, first, that the body is only the reflection of a prior light which is the soul itself and to which we must return; in the next stage, the soul recognizes that its own light is also only the reflection of another light, which is that of Intellect or Spirit, finally, Intellect appears to itself as the diffraction of the light of the primordial One. This flight of Ulysses, these stages of conversion toward the light, correspond, for Plotinus, to a total change in our mode of vision: we must exchange one way of seeing for another, which, Plotinus says in *Ennead* I, 6, 8, 26,” everyone has but few use. ...

Plotinus' understanding of the self, ... prohibits any toppling over into subjectivity.

Here is the passage, long but extraordinary, in which Hadot shows us how Plotinus' conception of the self is incompatible with the charge of autoeroticism.¹

Indeed, one must understand well the reasons for which Plotinus is called to speak of the "self" and what the "self" means in this context. We have said that for him it is a question of provoking a reversal from the "narcissistic" tendency that makes the individual take an interest only in what he believes to be his self, that is, his own body. The essential point of this method therefore consists in making the soul discover that the "self" is other than the body. We have described above the stages of what one could call the flight of Ulysses. It is a question of reascending toward the principle from which the corporal reflection emanates: this principle is recognized successively as soul, as Intellect,² as primordial Unity. The exercise consists therefore in turning consciousness away from the attention to and exclusive concern with the body in order to return it inward, that is to say, at first, toward the "self" as a free and independent subject (as a pure soul).³ This coming to consciousness of the "self" is already an ethical movement, it is already a purification that brings the soul back to its pristine purity, to the state of form disengaged from matter. But if this purification is to be perfectly

¹ R. Harder, a well-known Plotinus scholar had raised the question in viewing Plotinus' opposition between Narcissus and Ulysses, whether one might not appropriately apply the term *autoerotic* to the Plotinian ascent.

² A rough, or working translation of the Plotinian terminology, might be this: The word "Intellect" is used as we use Buddhi-Manas in Theosophy, and the word "soul" to Kama-Manas, while primordial "Unity" would correspond to the Higher Self. — ED., A.T.

³ The lower mind, the Kama Manas begins to purify itself, to universalize its attractions. — ED., A.T.

realized, this perform also has to reveal itself as pure thought. This means that the self raises itself from the level of the soul to the level of the Intellect⁴ In the whole description of this movement of conversion, Plotinus is quite compelled to situate himself in the perspective of the "self," since it is a question of dissolving a false "self," the corporeal reflection, in order to make a true "self" be born, the soul raised to the level of Intellect. But this true "self" transcends the common and usual notion of "self." The Intellect, for Plotinus, is nothing other than the thinking of the All.⁵ It is precisely in reaching this level that the "narcissistic" soul will be perfectly given up. Indeed, the soul passes from a vision that is partial, external, misleading, and anguished to a vision that is total, internal, true, and peaceful. To raise itself to the level of Intellect, of the thought of the All, properly and precisely to surpass the limits of individuality,⁶ of that concern for the partial that brings on the state of narcissism of the soul. In the works of Plotinus, individuality and totality are radically opposed, they mutually repudiate one another: "In becoming 'someone,' one becomes not-All (that is to say, the naught of individuality[personality]), you become larger. If you set that aside, the All will be present to you." In arriving at the level of Intellect, the human "self"

⁴ That is, from "ratiocination" to contemplation of what *The Voice of the Silence* designates as "that which in the KNOWS for it is KNOWLEDGE." — ED., A.T.

⁵ Love becomes universal and formless, bringing with it a stream intuition. — ED., A.T.

⁶ In theosophy the term is *personality*, and "individuality" is reserved for the Higher Ego. Does a swimmer who leaps into the water to save a drowning man have a personality? No, but there is a unit-of-work, a kernel of karma specific to itself, so we give it a word: Individuality. If the Ray forgets itself and works for that which surpasses it, which gave it birth, then the Higher Ego begins to shine through and act upon this lower plane of personality for it now has a purified vehicle to manifest through. It's never a question of annihilation. The drained swamp did not disappear but it's polarity changed. — ED., A.T.

arrives at a universal and total vision of reality, in which every particular point of view must give way. Can one speak of the "self" at this level? That will only be possible if one understands by the "self" not individuality[personality] entrenched in itself, but the interiority of consciousness that, as soon as it apprehends itself as interiority, accedes to the universality of the thought of the All. There is therefore no æsthetic and erotic complacency for the "self" in the texts that we have cited above. "To see one's own beauty" does not mean: to see a beauty that pleases "me" because it is "my self," but to see in my "self," that is to say, thanks to my conversion¹ toward interiority, the Beauty that is nothing other than the All in its noetic necessity. Arriving at these transcendent levels, the human "self" no longer knows if it is a "self."²

I know of no more powerful description of the Plotinian ascent, no clearer narration of the transformation of oneself required to go from a partial, anguished vision to a total, peaceful one. The soul's ascent does not culminate in an experience, an emotion, that has the individual self for its object, rather, it experiences a transcendent presence with which it sees itself becoming identical. At the summit of this ascent, there is not so much an experience of self as an experience of an Other than self, an experience of oneself becoming Other, that is, of uniting with the One. That is why, at this level, the human self no longer knows if it is a self;³ its own most

¹ *i.e.*, change of polarity. — Ed., A.T.

² When one is in conscious communion with their Higher Ego, Hadot's phrase seems quite apt. — Ed., a.t.

³ How precise and true is Plato's expression, how profound and philosophical his remark on the (human) soul or EGO, when he defined it as "a compound of the *same* and the *other*." And yet how little this hint has been understood, since the world took it to mean that the soul was the breath of God, of Jehovah. It is "the *same* and the *other*," as the great Initiate-Philosopher said; for the EGO (the "Higher Self" when

profound interiority is at the same time its own self-transcendence, its accession to a universality liberated from every limitation.

In *Ennead* I, 6, 9, Plotinus presents the figure of the sculptor and his statue:

Go back inside yourself and look: if you do not see yourself as beautiful, then do as a sculptor does with a statue he wants to make beautiful: he chisels away one part, and levels off another, makes one spot smooth and another clear, until he shows forth a beautiful face on the statue. Like him, remove what is superfluous, straighten what is crooked, clean up what is dark and make it bright, and never stop sculpting your own statue, until the godlike splendor of virtue shines forth to you. . . . If you have become thus and seen it, and become pure and alone with yourself, with nothing now preventing you from becoming one in this way, and have nothing extraneous mixed within yourself, but wholly yourself, nothing but true light, not measured by dimensions, or bounded by shape into littleness, or expanded to size by unboundedness, but everywhere unmeasured, because greater than all measure and superior to all quantity; if you see that this is what you have become, then you have become vision. Be confident in yourself: you have already ascended here and now, and no longer need someone to show you the way. Open your eyes and see. This alone is the eye that sees the immense Beauty.

merged with and in the Divine Monad) is Man, and yet the *same* as the "OTHER," the Angel in him incarnated, as the same with the universal MAHAT. The great classics and philosophers felt this truth, when saying that there must be something within us which produces our thoughts. Something very subtle; it is a breath; it is fire; it is ether; it is quintessence; it is a slender likeness; it is an intellection; it is a number; it is harmony. . . ."(Voltaire).[SD I, 88-89]

Pierre Hadot is well aware of the fact that the Plotinian journey of the soul is, as often as not, viewed suspiciously nowadays, as though the call to the mystical is a deceptive invitation to mystification. Warning us of the threat of mystification, of the possibility of allowing mysticism to lead to mystification, he also insists that Plotinus' lived experience was not a means of escape, not a way of evading life but of being absolutely present to it. If we ignore those dimensions of human experience that include the "mysterious, inexpressible, and transcendent" (113), we shall succumb to another kind of mystification, one that is "just as tragic, although more subtle" (112).

Hadot closes this book, perhaps surprisingly to some readers, by invoking Wittgenstein's remarks on the mystical. He has written that "the mystical" seems to correspond, for Wittgenstein, to an existential and lived plenitude that escapes all expression." And he has also claimed that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is a spiritual exercise. On Hadot's reading, "Knowledge, for Plotinus, is always experience, or rather it is an inner metamorphosis" (48). As Wittgenstein says in *Tractatus* 6.43: "The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man." How can we effect a self-transformation that is experienced as the appearance of a different world, a new life? How can philosophy be a lived exercise? (Extracted from *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, Pierre Hadot, translated by Michael Chase, pp. 9-15; published by The University of Chicago Press, 1993)

DESIRE AND WILL

In ordinary life the will is not man's servant, but, being then guided solely by desire, it makes man a slave to his desires. . . . The system of Patanjali postulates that *Ishwara*, the spirit in man, is untouched by any troubles, works, fruits of works, or desires, and when a firm position is assumed with the end in view of reaching union with spirit through concentration, he comes to the aid of the lower self and raises it gradually to higher planes. In this process the Will by degrees is given a stronger and stronger tendency to act upon a different line from that indicated by passion and desire. Thus it is freed from the domination of desire and at last subdues the mind itself. But before the perfection of the practice is arrived at the will still acts according to desire, only that the desire is for higher things and away from those of the material life.

—W.Q.J.

