



## HPB on the lucid zone of mortals

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### THE NEGATORS OF SCIENCE

[from *Lucifer*, Vol. VIII, No. 44, April, 1891, pp. 89-98]

As for what thou hearest others say, who persuade the many that the soul, when once freed from the body, neither suffers evil nor is conscious, I know that thou art better grounded in the doctrines received by us from our ancestors and in the sacred orgies of Dionysos, than to believe them; for the mystic symbols are well known to us, who belong to the Brotherhood.

PLUTARCH, "*Brotherhood*"

Of late, Theosophists in general, and the writer of the present paper especially, have been severely taken to task for *disrespect to science*. We are asked what right we have to question the conclusions of the most eminent men of learning, to refuse recognition of infallibility (which implies omniscience) to our modern scholars? How *dare* we, in short, "contemptuously ignore" their most undeniable and "universally accepted theories," etc., etc. This article is written with the intention of giving some reasons for our sceptical attitude.

To begin with, in order to avoid a natural misunderstanding in view of the preceding paragraph, let the reader at once know that the title, "The NEGATORS of Science," applies in nowise to Theosophists. Quite the reverse. By "Science" we here mean ANCIENT WISDOM, while its "Negators" represent *modern materialistic Scientists*. Thus we have once more "the sublime audacity" of, David-like, confronting, with an old-fashioned theosophical sling for our only weapon, the giant Goliath "armed with a coat of mail," and weighing "five thousand shekels of brass," truly. Let the Philistine deny facts, and substitute for them his "working hypotheses:" we reject the latter and defend *facts*, "the armies of the one living TRUTH."

The frankness of this plain statement is certain to awake all the sleeping dogs, and to set every parasite of modern science snapping at our editorial heels. "Those wretched Theosophists!" will be the cry. "How long shall they refuse to humble themselves; and how long shall we bear with this evil congregation?" Well, it will certainly take a considerable time to put us down, as more than one experiment has already shown. Very naturally, our confession of faith must provoke the wrath of every sycophant of the mechanical and animalistic theories of the Universe and Man; and the numbers of these sycophants are large, even if not very awe-inspiring. In our cycle of wholesale denial the ranks of the Didymi are daily reinforced by every new-baked materialist and so-called

“infidel,” who escapes, full of reactive energy, from the narrow fields of church dogmatism. We know the numerical strength of our foes and opponents, and do not underrate it. More: in this present case even some of our best friends may ask, as they have done before now: “*Cui bono?* why not leave our highly respectable, firmly-rooted, official Science, with her scientists and their flunkys, severely alone?”

Further on it will be shown *why*, when our friends will learn that we have very good reason to act as we do. With the true, genuine man of science, with the earnest, impartial, unprejudiced and truth-loving scholar—of the minority, alas! we can have no quarrel, and he has all our respect. But to him who, being only a *specialist* in physical sciences—however eminent, matters not—still tries to throw into the scales of public thought his own materialistic views upon metaphysical and psychological questions (a dead letter to him) we have a good deal to say. Nor are we bound by any laws we know of, divine or human, to respect opinions which are held erroneous in our school, only because they are those of so-called authorities in materialistic or agnostic circles. Between *truth* and *fact* (as we understand them) and the working hypotheses of the greatest living physiologists—though they answer to the names of Messers. Huxley, Claude Bernard, Du Bois-Reymond, etc., etc.—we hope never to hesitate for one instant. If, as Mr. Huxley once declared, soul, immortality and all spiritual things “lie outside of [his] philosophical enquiry” (*Physical Basis of Life*),\* then, as he has never enquired into these questions, he has no right to offer an opinion. They certainly lie outside the grasp of materialistic physical science, and, what is more important, to use Dr. Paul Gibier’s

felicitous expression, *outside the luminous zone* of most of our materialistic scientists. These are at liberty to believe in the “*automatic action of nervous centres*” as primal creators of thought; that the phenomena of *will* are only a complicated form of reflex actions, and what not—but we are as much at liberty to deny their statements. They are specialists—no more. As the author of *Le Spiritisme (fakirisme occidental)* admirably depicts it, in his latest work:

A number of persons, extremely enlightened on some special point of science, take upon themselves the right of pronouncing arbitrarily their judgment on all things; are ready to reject everything new which shocks *their* ideas, often for the sole reason that *if it were true they could not remain ignorant of it!* For my part I have often met this kind of self-sufficiency in men whom their knowledge and scientific studies ought to have preserved from such a sad moral infirmity, had they not been *specialists*, holding to their specialty. It is a sign of relative inferiority to believe oneself superior. In truth, the number of intellects afflicted with such gaps (*lacunes*) is larger than is commonly believed. As there are individuals completely refractory to the study of music, of mathematics, etc., so there are others to whom certain areas of thought are closed. Such of these who might have distinguished themselves in . . . medicine or literature, would probably have signally failed in any occupation outside of what I will call their *lucid zone*, by comparison with the action of those reflectors, which, during night, throw their light into a zone of luminous rays, outside of which all is gloomy shadow and uncertainty. Every human being has his own lucid zone, the extension, range and degree of luminosity of which, varies with each individual. There are things which lie outside the *conceptivity* of certain intellects; they are outside their lucid zone.\* . . . .

\* [Huxley, Thomas, “On the Physical Basis of Life,” sermon delivered at Edinburgh, Nov. 8, 1868, published subsequently in the *Fortnightly Review*. See *Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews* of Prof. Huxley, 1880 ed.—*Compiler*.]

This is absolutely true whether applied to the scientist or his profane admirer. And it is to such scientific specialists that we refuse the right to sit in Solomon's seat, in judgment over all those who will not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears. To them we say: We do not ask you to believe as we do, since your *zone* limits you to your specialty; but then do not encroach on the *zones* of other people. And, if you will do so nevertheless, if, after laughing in your moments of honest frankness at your own ignorance; after stating repeatedly, orally and in print, that you, physicists and materialists, know nothing whatever of the ultimate potentialities of matter, nor have you made one step towards solving the mysteries of life and consciousness—you still persist in teaching that all the manifestations of life and intelligence, and the phenomena of the highest mentality, are merely *properties of that matter of which you confess yourselves quite ignorant*,† then—you can hardly escape the charge of *humbugging* the world.\* The word “humbug” is used here advisedly, in its strictest etymological Websterian meaning, that is, “imposition under unfair pretences—in this case, of

\* *Physiologie Transcendentale. Analyse des Choses*. . . . Dr. Paul Gibier, Dentu, Paris, (1889) pp. 33, 34.

† “In perfect strictness, it is true that chemical investigation can tell us *little or nothing*, directly of the composition of living matter, and. . . it is also, in strictness, true that we KNOW NOTHING about the composition of any body whatever, as it is.” [See p. 129 of Thomas H. Huxley's *Lay Sermons, Addresses, & Reviews*, London, Macmillan, 1880; *italics* and capitalizations are H.P.B.'s.]

science. Surely it is not expecting too much of such learned and scholarly gentlemen that they should not abuse their ascendancy and prestige over people's minds to teach them something they themselves know nothing about; that they should abstain from preaching the limitations of nature, when its most important problems have been, are, and ever will be, insoluble riddles to the materialist! This is no more than asking *simple honesty* from such teachers.

What is it, that constitutes the real man of learning? Is not a true and faithful servant of science (if the latter is accepted as the synonym of truth) he, who besides having mastered a general information on all things is ever ready to learn more, because there are things *that he admits he does not know*?† —

\* This is what the poet laureate of matter, Mr. Tyndall, confesses in his works concerning atomic action: “Through pure excess of complexity. . . the most highly trained intellect, the most refined and disciplined imagination *retires in bewilderment from the contemplation of the problem*. We are struck dumb by an astonishment which no microscope can relieve, doubting not only the power of our instrument, but *even whether we ourselves possess the intellectual elements which will ever enable us to grapple with the ultimate structural energies of nature*.” [Tyndall, John, *Fragments of Science*; 1870 Lecture on “The Scientific Use of Imagination,” pp. 153-154, N.Y., Appleton, 1872.] And yet they do not hesitate to grapple with nature's spiritual and psychic problems—life, intelligence and the highest consciousness—and attribute them all to matter.

† And therefore it is not to such that these well-known humorous verses, sung at Oxford, would apply:

“I am the master of this college,  
And *what I know not*  
*is not knowledge*.”

A scholar of this description will never hesitate to give up his own theories, whenever he finds them—not clashing with fact and truth, but—merely dubious. For the sake of truth he will remain indifferent to the world's opinion, and that of his colleagues, nor will he attempt to sacrifice the spirit of a doctrine to the dead-letter of a popular belief. Independent of man or party, fearless whether he gets at logger-heads with biblical chronology, theological claims, or the preconceived and in-rooted theories of materialistic science; acting in his researches in an entirely unprejudiced frame of mind, free from personal vanity and pride, he will investigate truth for her own fair sake, not to please this or that faction; nor will he dislocate facts to make them fit in with his own hypothesis, or the professed beliefs of either state religion or official science. Such is the ideal of a true man of science; and such a one, whenever mistaken—for even a Newton and a Humboldt have made occasional mistakes—will hasten to publish his error and correct it, and not act as the German naturalist, Haeckel, has done. What the latter did is worth a repetition. In every subsequent edition of his *Pedigree of Man* he has left uncorrected the *sozoura* (“unknown to science”, Quatrefages tells us), and his *prosimiae* allied to the *loris*, which he describes as “without marsupial bones, but *with placenta*” (*Pedigree of Man*, p. 77), when years ago it has been proved by the anatomical researches of Messrs. “Alphonse Milne-Edwards and Grandidier . . . that the *prosimiae* of Haeckel have no decidua . . . no

*placenta*” (Quatrefages, *The Human Species*, p. 110\*). This is what we, Theosophists, call downright *dishonesty*.

\* [ . . . “a diffuse placenta,” according to the New York, Appleton & Co., 1884 ed.—*Compilers.*]

For he knows the two creatures he places in the fourteenth and eighteenth stages of his genealogy in the *Pedigree of Man* to be myths in nature, and that far from any possibility of their being the direct or indirect ancestors of apes—let alone *man*, “they cannot even be regarded as the ancestors of the zonoplacental mammals” according to Quatrefages. And yet Haeckel palms them off still, on the innocent, and the sycophants of Darwinism, only, as Quatrefages explains, “because the proof of their existence arises *from the necessity of an intermediate type*”!! We fail to see any difference between the pious frauds of a Eusebius “for the greater glory of God,” and the impious deception of Haeckel for “the greater glory of matter” and—man’s dishonour. Both are *forgeries*—and we have a right to denounce both.

The same with regard to other branches of science. A specialist—say a Greek or Sanskrit scholar, a paleographer, an archaeologist, an Orientalist of any description—is an “authority” only within the limits of his special science just as is an electrician or a physicist in theirs. And which of these may be called *infallible* in his conclusions? They have made, and still go on making mistakes, each of their hypotheses being only a surmise, a theory for the time being—and no more. Who would believe today, with Koch’s craze upon us, that hardly a few years ago, the greatest authority on pathology in France, the late Professor

Vulpian, Doyen of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, *denied the existence of the tubercular microbe?* When, says Doctor Gibier, (his friend and pupil) M. Bouley laid before the Academy of Sciences a paper on the tubercular baccillus, he was told by Vulpian that “this germ now, having been hunted after for so many years!” *could not exist,* for “had it existed it would have been discovered *before* Just in the same way every scientific specialist of whatever description denies the doctrines of Theosophy and its teachings; not that he has ever attempted to study or analyze them, or to discover how much truth there may be in the old sacred science, but simply because it is not modern science that has discovered any of them; and also because, having once strayed away from the main road into the jungles of material speculation, the men of science cannot return back without pulling down the whole edifice after them. But the worst of all is, that the average critic and opponent of the Theosophical doctrines is neither a scientist, nor even a specialist. He is simply a *flunkey* of the scientists in general; a repeating parrot and a mimicking ape of that or another “authority,” who makes use of the personal theories and conclusions of some well-known writer, in the hope of breaking our heads with them. Moreover, he identifies himself with the “gods” he serves or patronizes. He is like the Zouave of the Pope’s body-guard who, because he had to beat the drum at every appearance and departure of St. Peter’s “Successor,” ended by identifying himself with the apostle. So with the self-appointed flunkey of the modern Elohim of Science. He fondly imagines himself “as one of us,” and for no more cogent reason than had the Zouave: he, too, beats the big drum for

every Oxford or Cambridge Don whose conclusions and personal views do not agree with the teachings of the Occult Doctrine of antiquity.

To devote, however, to these braggarts with tongue or pen one line more than is strictly necessary, would

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*\* Physiologie Transcendentale. Analyse des Choses, etc., Dr. P. Gibier, pp. 213 and 214.*  
 be a waste of time. Let them go. They have not even a “zone” of their own, but have to see things through the light of other people’s intellectual “zones.”

And now to the reason why we have once more the painful duty of challenging and contradicting the scientific views of so many men considered each more or less “eminent,” in his special branch of science. Two years ago, the writer promised in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 798, a third and even a fourth volume of that work. This third volume (now almost ready) treats of the ancient Mysteries of Initiation, gives sketches—from the esoteric stand-point—of many of the most famous and historically known philosophers and hierophants (every one of whom is set down by the Scientists as an *impostor*), from the archaic down to the Christian era, and traces the teachings of all these sages to one and the same source of all knowledge and science—the esoteric doctrine or WISDOM-RELIGION. No need our saying that from the esoteric and legendary materials used in the forthcoming work, its statements and conclusions differ greatly and often clash irreconcilably with the data given by almost all the English and German Orientalists. There is a tacit agreement among the latter—including even those

who are personally inimical to each other—to follow a certain line of policy in the matter of dates,\*

\* Says Prof. A. H. Sayce in his excellent *Preface* to Dr. Schliemann's *Troja* . . . : "The natural tendency of the student of today is to post-date rather than to ante-date, and to bring everything down to the latest period that is possible." This is so, and they do it with a vengeance. The same reluctance is felt to admit the antiquity of man, as to allow to the ancient philosopher any knowledge of that which the modern student *does not know*. Conceit and vanity!

of denial to "adepts" of any transcendental knowledge of any intrinsic value; of the utter rejection of the very existence of *siddhis*, or abnormal spiritual powers in man. In this the Orientalists, even those who are materialists, are the best allies of the clergy and biblical chronology. We need not stop to analyze this strange fact, but such it is. Now the main point of Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* is to prove, by tracing and explaining the *blinds* in the works of ancient Indian, Greek, and other philosophers of note, and also in all the ancient Scriptures—the presence of an uninterrupted esoteric allegorical method and symbolism; to show, as far as lawful, that with the keys of interpretation as taught in the Eastern Hindu-Buddhistic Canon of Occultism, the *Upanishads*, the *Purānas*, the *Sutras*, the Epic poems of India and Greece, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the Scandinavian *Eddas*, as well as the Hebrew *Bible*, and even the classical writings of Initiates (such as Plato, among others)—all, from first to last, yield a meaning quite different from their dead letter texts. This is flatly denied by some of the foremost scholars of the day. They have not got the keys, *ergo*—no such keys can exist. According to Dr. Max Müller no pandit of India has ever heard of an esoteric doctrine (*Gupta-Vidya, nota bene*). In his Edinburgh *Lectures* the Professor made

almost as cheap of Theosophists and their interpretations, as some learned Shastris—let alone *initiated* Brahmins—make of the learned German philologist himself. On the other hand, Sir Monier-Williams undertakes to prove that the Lord Gautama Buddha *never taught any esoteric philosophy (!)*, thus giving the lie to all subsequent history, to the Arhat-Patriarchs, who converted China and Tibet to Buddhism, and charging with fraud the numerous esoteric schools still existing in China and Tibet.\* Nor, according to Professor B. Jowett, the Master of Balliol College, is there any esoteric or gnostic element in the Dialogues of Plato, not even in that pre-eminently occult treatise, the *Timaeus*.† The Neo-Platonists, such as Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, Porphyry, etc., etc., were ignorant, superstitious mystics, who saw a secret meaning where none was meant, and who, Plato heading them, had no idea of real science. In the scholarly appreciation of our modern scientific luminaries, in fact, science (*i.e.*, knowledge) was in its infancy in the days of Thales, Pythagoras and even of Plato; while the grossest superstition and "twaddle" reigned in the times of the Indian Rishis. Pānini, the greatest grammarian in the world, according to Professors Weber and Max Müller *was unacquainted with the art of writing*, and so also everyone else in India, from Manu to Buddha, even so late as 300 years B.C. On the other hand, Professor A. H. Sayce, an undeniably great paleographer and Assyriologist, who kindly admits such a thing as an esoteric school and occult symbology among the Accado-Babylonians, nevertheless claims that the Assyriologists have now in their possession all the keys required for the right interpretation of the secret glyphs of the hoary past. Methinks, we know the chief key used by himself and his colleagues:—trace every god and hero, whose character is

in the least doubtful, to a solar myth, and you have discovered the whole secret; an easier undertaking, you see, than for a "Wizard of the North" to cook an omelette in a gentleman's hat. Finally, in the matter of esoteric symbology and Mysteries, the Orientalists of today seem to have forgotten more than the initiated priests of the days of Sargon.

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\* See Edkin's *Chinese Buddhism*, and read what this missionary, an eminent Chinese scholar who lived long years in China, though himself very prejudiced as a rule, says of the esoteric schools.

† See Preface to his translation of *Timaeus*. [*Dialogues*, Vol. III, p. 524 in Oxford ed. of 1875.]

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## CASTE IN INDIA

BY DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR,<sup>1</sup>  
F. T. S.

No man of sincerity and moral courage can read Mr. G. C. Whitworth's Profession of Faith, as reviewed in the April *Theosophist*, without feeling himself challenged to be worthy of the respect of one who professes such honourable sentiments. I, too, am called upon to make my statement of personal belief. It is due to my family and caste-fellows that they should know why I have deliberately abandoned my caste and other worldly considerations. If, henceforth, there is to be a chasm between them and myself, I owe it to myself to declare that this

alienation is of my own choosing, and I am not cut off for bad conduct. I would be glad to take with me, if possible, into my new career, the affectionate good wishes of my kinsmen. But, if this cannot be done, I must bear their displeasure, as I may, for I am obeying a paramount conviction of duty.

I was born in the family of the Karháda Maháráshtra caste of Brahmins, as my surname will indicate. My father carefully educated me in the tenets of our religion, and, in addition, gave me every facility for acquiring an English education. From the age of ten until I was about fourteen, I was very much exercised in mind upon the subject of religion and devoted myself with great ardour to our orthodox religious practices. Then my ritualistic observances were crowded aside by my scholastic studies, but, until about nine months ago, my religious thoughts and aspirations were entirely unchanged. At this time, I had the inestimable good fortune to read "Isis Unveiled; a Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Religion and Science." and to join the Theosophical Society. It is no exaggeration to say that I have been a really living man only these few months; for between life as it appears to me now and life as I comprehended it before, there is an unfathomable abyss. I feel that now for the first time I have a glimpse of what man and life are—the nature and powers of the one, the possibilities, duties, and joys of the other. Before, though ardently ritualistic, I was not really enjoying happiness and peace of mind. I simply practised my religion without understanding it. The world bore just as hard upon me as upon others, and I could get no clear view of the future. The only real thing to me seemed the day's routine; at best the horizon before me extended only to the rounding of a busy life with the burning of my body and the obsequial ceremonies rendered to me by friends. My aspirations were only for more Zamindáries, social position and the gratification of whims and appetites. But my later reading and thinking have shown me that all these are but the vapours of a dream and that he only is worthy of being called man, who has made caprice his slave and the perfection of his spiritual self a grand object of his efforts. As I could not enjoy these convictions and my freedom of action within my caste, I am stepping outside it.

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<sup>1</sup> We are repeating this article in the present issue as It is an eloquent statement about the caste system in India, which even today is a detrimental practice. If any of our Brothers in India would like to express themselves on this topic, their comments will certainly be welcome—ED., A.T.

In making this profession, let it be understood that I have taken this step, not because I am a Theosophist, but because in studying Theosophy I have learnt and heard of the ancient splendour and glory of my country—the highly esteemed land of Aryāvarta. Joining the Theosophical Society does not interfere with the social, political, or religious relations of any person. All have an equal right in the Society to hold their opinions. So far from persuading me to do what I have, Mme. Blavatsky and Col. Olcott have strongly urged me to wait until some future time, when I might have had ampler time to reflect. But the glimpse I have got into the former greatness of my country makes me feel sadly for her degeneration. I feel it, therefore, my bounden duty to devote all my humble powers to her restoration. Besides, histories of various nations furnish to us many examples of young persons having given up everything for the sake of their country and having ultimately succeeded in gaining their aims. Without patriots, no country can rise. This feeling of patriotism by degrees grew so strong in me that it has now prepared my mind to stamp every personal consideration under my feet for the sake of my motherland. In this, I am neither a revolutionist nor a politician, but simply an advocate of good morals and principles as practised in ancient times. The study of Theosophy has thrown a light over me in regard to my country, my religion, my duty. I have become a better Aryan than I ever was. I have similarly heard my Parsi brothers say that they have been better Zoroastrians since they joined the Theosophical Society. I have also seen the Buddhists write often to the Society that the study of Theosophy has enabled them to appreciate their religion the more. And thus this study makes every man respect his religion the more. It furnishes to him a sight that can pierce through the dead letter and see clearly the spirit. He can read all his religious books between the lines. If we view all the religions in their popular sense, they appear strongly antagonistic to each other in various details. None agrees with

the other. And yet the representatives of those faiths say that the study of Theosophy explains to them all that has been said in their religion and makes them feel a greater respect for it. There must, therefore, be one common ground on which all the religious systems are built. And this ground, which lies at the bottom of all, is truth. There can be but one absolute truth, but different persons have different perceptions of that truth. And this truth is morality. If we separate the dogmas that cling to the principles set forth in any religion, we shall find that morality is preached in every one of them. By religion I do not mean all the minor sects that prevail to an innumerable extent all over the world, but the principal ones from which have sprung up these different sects. It is, therefore, proper for every person to abide by the principles of morality. And, according to them, I consider it every man's duty to do what he can to make the world better and happier. This can proceed from a love for humanity. But how can a man love the whole of humanity if he has no love for his countrymen? Can he love the whole, who does not love a part? If I, therefore, wish to place my humble services at the disposal of the world, I must first begin by working for my country. And this I could not do by remaining in my caste. I found that, instead of a love for his countrymen, the observance of caste distinction leads one to hate even his neighbour, because he happens to be of another caste. I could not bear this injustice. What fault is it of any one that he is born in a particular caste? I respect a man for his qualities and not for his birth. That is to say, that man is superior in my eyes, whose *inner* man has been developed or is in the state of development. This body, wealth, friends, relations and all other worldly enjoyments, that men hold near and dear to their hearts, are to pass away sooner or later. But the record of our actions is ever to remain to be handed down from generation to generation. Our actions must, therefore, be such as will make us worthy of our existence in this world, as long as we are here as well as after death. I could not do this by observing the



customs of caste. It made me selfish and unmindful of the requirements of my fellow-brothers. I weighed all these circumstances in my mind, and found that I believed in caste as a religious necessity no more than in the palm-tree yielding mangoes. I saw that, if it were not for this distinction, India would not have been so degraded, for this distinction engendered hatred among her sons. It made them hate and quarrel with one another. The peace of the land was disturbed. People could not unite with one another for good purposes. They waged war with one another, instead of devoting all their combined energies to the cause of ameliorating the condition of the country. The foundation of immorality was thus laid, until it has reached now so low a point that, unless this mischief is stopped, the tottering pillars of India will soon give way.

I do not by this mean to blame my ancestors who originally instituted this system. To me their object seems to be quite a different one. It was based in my opinion on the qualities of every person. The caste was not then hereditary as it is now. This will be seen from the various ancient sacred books which are full of instances in which Kshatriyas and even Máhárs and Châmbhárs, who are considered the lowest of all, were not only made and regarded as Brahmins, but almost worshipped as demi-gods simply for their qualities. If such is the case, why should we still stick to that custom which we now find not only impracticable but injurious? I again saw that, if I were to observe outwardly what I did not really believe inwardly, I was practising hypocrisy. I found that I was thus making myself a slave, by not enjoying the freedom of conscience. I was thus acting immorally. But Theosophy had taught me that to enjoy peace of mind and self-respect, I must be honest, candid, peaceful and regard all men as equally my brothers, irrespective of caste, colour, race or creed. This, I see, is an essential part of religion. I must try to put these theoretical problems into practice. These are the convictions that finally hurried me out of my caste.

I would at the same time ask my fellow countrymen, who are of my opinion, to come out boldly for their country. I understand the apparent sacrifices one is required to make in adopting such a course, for I myself had to make them, but these are sacrifices only in the eyes of one who has regard for this world of matter. When a man has once extricated himself from this regard and when the sense of the duty he owes to his country and to himself reigns paramount in his heart, these are no sacrifices at all for him. Let us, therefore, leave off this distinction which separates us from one another, join in one common accord, and combine all our energies for the good of our country. Let us feel that we are Aryans, and prove ourselves worthy of our ancestors. I may be told that I am making a foolish and useless sacrifice; that I cut myself off from all social intercourse and even risk losing the decent disposal of my body by those upon whom our customs impose that duty; and that none but a visionary would imagine that he, even though chiefest among Brahmins, could restore his country's greatness and the enlightenment of a whole nation, so great as ours. But these are the arguments of selfishness and moral cowardice. Single men have saved nations before, and though my vanity does not make me even dream that so glorious a result is within my humble grasp, yet a good example is never valueless, and it can be set even by the most insignificant. Certain it is that, without examples and self-sacrifices, there can be no reform. The world, as I see it, imposes on me a duty, and I think the most powerful and the only permanent cause of happiness is the consciousness that I am trying to do that duty.

I wish it understood—in case what has preceded has not made this perfectly clear—that I have neither become a Materialist nor a Christian. I am an Aryan in religion as all else, follow the Ved, and believe it to be the parent of all religions among men. As Theosophy explains the secondary human religions, so does it make plain the meaning of the Ved. The teachings

of the Rishis acquire a new splendour and majesty, and I revere them a hundred times more than ever before.



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**"She has no need of any man's praise; but even she has need of Justice."  
— William Q. Judge—**

## Laotzu's tao and Wu Wei

Prepared by Dwight

Goddard and Henri Borel] <sup>1</sup>

### Introductory Note

I love LaoTzu! That is the reason I offer another intepretative translation, and try to print and bind it attractively. I want you to appreciate this wise and kindly old man, and come to love him. He was perhaps the first of scholars (6<sup>th</sup> century b.c.) to have a vision of spiritual reality, and he tried so hard to explain it to others only, in the end to wander away into the Great Unknown in pathetic discouragement. Everything was against him; his friends misunderstood him; others made fun of him.

Even the written characters which he must use to preserve his thought conspired against him. They were only five thousand in all, and were ill adapted to express mystical and abstract ideas. When these characters are translated accurately, the translation is necessarily awkward and obscure. Sinologues have unintentionally done him an injustice by their very scholarship. I have tried to

peer through the clumsy characters into his heart and prayed that love for him would make me wise to understand aright.

Scholarship that would deny his existence, or arrogant erudition that says patronizingly "Oh, yes, there doubtless was some one who wrote some of the characteristic sonnets but most of them are an accumulation through the centuries of verses that have similar structure, and all have been changed and amended until it is better to call the book a collection of aphorisms." — such scholarship is unworthy of notice.

There are three great facts in China today that vouch for Laotzu. First, the presence of Taoism, which was suggested by his teachings, not founded upon them. This is explained by the inability of the scholars, who immediately followed him, to understand and appreciate the spirituality of his teachings; Second, Confucian dislike for Laotzian ideas, which is explained by their opposition to Confucian ethics. Third, and the greatest fact of all, is the characteristic traits of Chinese nature, namely passivity submissiveness and moral concern, all of which find an adequate cause and source in the teachings of Laotzu. An interesting fact in regard to the thought of Laotzu is this. Although for two thousand years he has been misunderstood and derided, today the very best of scientific and philosophic thought, which gathers about what is known as Vitalism, is in full accord with Laotzu's idea of the Tao. Every reference that is made today to a Cosmic Urge, Vital Impulse, and Creative Principle can be said of the Tao. Everything that can be said of Plato's Ideas and Forms and of Cosmic Love as being the creative expression of God can be said of the Tao. When Christian scholars came to translate the Logos of St. John, they were satisfied to use the word "Tao." It is true that Laotzu's conception of the Tao was limited to a conception of a universal creative principle. He apparently had no conception of personality, which the Christians ascribe to God, in connection with it, but he ascribed so much of wisdom and benevolence to it that his conception fell little short of personality. To Laotzu, the Tao is the universal and eternal principle which forms and conditions everything; it is that intangible cosmic influence which harmonizes all things and

<sup>1</sup> This rendition by Dwight Goddard and Henri Borel is out of print and copies are quite rare. We think you will find it a rewarding experience!—ED. A.T.

brings them to fruition; it is the norm and standard of truth and morality. Laotzu did more than entertain an intelligent opinion of Tao as a creative principle, he had a devout and religious sentiment towards it. "He loved the Tao as a son cherishes and reveres his mother."

There are three key words in the thought of Laotzu: Tao, Teh, and Wu Wei. They are all difficult to translate. The simple meaning of Tao is "way," but it also has a variety of translations. Dr. Paul Carus translates it, "Reason," but apologizes for so doing. If forced to offer a translation we would suggest Creative Principle, but much prefer to leave it untranslated.

The character, "Teh," is usually translated "virtue." This is correct as a mere translation of the character but is in no sense adequate to the content of the thought in Laotzu's mind. To him, Teh meant precisely what is meant in the account of the healing of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' robe" Jesus was conscious that *virtue* had passed from him." The includes the meaning of vitality, of virility, of beauty and the harmony that we think of as that part of life that is abounding and joyous. The third word is the negative expression, "Wu Wei." Translated, this means not acting," or "non-assertion." When Laotzu urges men to "do "wu wei," he is not urging them to laziness or asceticism. He means that all men are to cherish that wise humility and diffidence and selflessness which comes from a consciousness that the Tao is infinitely wise and good, and that the part of human wisdom is to hold one's self in such a restrained and receptive manner that the Tao may find one a suitable and conforming channel for its purpose. The title of Laotzu's book, *Tao The Keh King is carelessly translated, The Way of Virtue Classic, or The Way and a Virtue Classic. This is very inadequate. The Vitality of the Tao is very much better.*

Most commentators think that Laotzu's teachings fit in especially well with Buddhist philosophy. This conclusion is arrived at by the common interpretation of "wu wei" as submission that will logically end in absorption of the spirit in Tao as Nirvana. This understanding of *wu wei* which Henri Borel shares in a measure, is, we believe,

incorrect, inasmuch as Laotzu consistently teaches a *finding of life* rather than a losing of it. Laotzu's conception of Tao as the underived Source of all things, whose Ideas and Forms of Goodness, Truth and Beauty radiated outward as spiritual logoi in creative activity through Spirit, Soul and Nature to the farthest confines of matter.

While it is true that Laotzu's teachings would find little in common with the Old Testament anthropomorphic autocracy, and would find almost nothing in common with the modern Ritschlean system of ethical idealism which has for its basis a naturalistic evolution of human society by means of philanthropy, laws, cultural civilizations, and human governments backed by force of arms, nevertheless his teachings are entirely in harmony with that Christian philosophy of the Logos, which is a heritage from the Greeks, through Plato, Philo, St. Paul, Plotinus, and Augustine, and which is the basis of the mystical faith of the Christian saints of all ages. While Laotzu would find little in common with the busy, impertinent activities of so-called Christian statesman building by statecraft and war, he would find much in common with Apostolic Christianity which held itself aloof from current politics and refused to enter the army, content to live simply, quietly, full of faith and humble benevolence.

#### **All we know about Laotzu**

SZE MA-CH' IEN (136-85 b.c.) wrote that Lao-tzu was born of the Li family of Ch'u-jen Village, Li County, K'u Province, Tch'u State. His proper name was Err, his official name was Poh=yang, his posthumous title was Yueh-tan. He held the position of custodian of the secret archives of the State of Cheu.

Confucius went to Cheu to consult Laotzu about certain ceremonials; Laotzu told him: "The bones of these sages concerning whom you inquire, have long since decayed, only their teachings remain. If a superior man is understood by his age, he rises to honor, but not being understood, his name is like a vagrant seed blown about by the wind. I have heard it said that a good merchant conceals his treasures, as though his warehouses were empty. The sage of highest worth assumes a countenance and outward mien as though he

were stupid. Put aside your haughty airs, your many needs, affected robes and exaggerated importance. These add no real value to your person. That is my advice to you, and it is all I have to offer.”

Confucius departed and when he later described to his students his visit to Laotzu, he said: “I understand about the habits of birds, how they can fly; how fish can swim; and animals run. For the running we can make snares, for the swimming we can make nets, for the flying we can make arrows. But for the dragon, I cannot know how he ascends on the winds and clouds to heaven. I have just seen Laotzu. Can it be said, he is as difficult to understand as the dragon? He teaches the vitality of Tao. His doctrine appears to lead one to aspire after self-effacement and obscurity.

Laotzu lived in Cheu for a long time; he prophesied the decay of that state and in consequence was obliged to depart, and went to the frontier. The officer at the border post was Yin-hi, who said to Laotzu, “If you are going to leave us, will you not write a book by which we may remember you? Thereupon Laotzu wrote a book of sonnets in two parts, comprising in all about five thousand characters. In this book he discussed his conception of the Vitality of the Tao. He left this book with the soldier, and departed, no one knows whither.

As you read these verses, forget the words and phrases, poor material and poor workmanship at best, look through them for the soul of Laotzu. It is there revealed, but so imperfectly that it is only an apparition of a soul.

But if by it, vague as it is, you come to love Laotzu, you will catch beyond him fleeting glimpses of the splendid visions that so possessed his soul, visions of Infinite Goodness, Humility and Beauty radiating from the Heart of creation.

DWIGHT GODDARD

### What is the Tao

The Tao that can be understood cannot be the primal, or cosmic, Tao, just as an idea that can be expressed in words cannot be the infinite idea.

And yet this ineffable Tao was the source of all spirit and matter, and being expressed was the mother of all created things.

Therefore not to desire the things of sense is to know the freedom of spirituality; and to desire is to learn the limitation of matter. These two things spirit and matter, so different in nature, have the same origin. This unity of origin is the mystery of mysteries, but it is the gateway to spirituality.

### ii

#### Self-development

When everyone recognizes beauty to be only a masquerade, then it is simply ugliness. In the same way goodness, if it is not sincere, is not goodness. So existence and non-existence are incompatible. The difficult and easy are mutually opposites. Just as the long and the short, the high and the low, the loud and soft, the before and the behind, are all opposites and each reveals the other.

Therefore the wise man is not conspicuous in his affairs or given to much talking. Though troubles arise he is not irritated. He produces but does not own; he acts but claims no merit; he builds but does not dwell therein; and because he does not dwell therein he never departs.

### - III

#### - Quieting people -

Neglecting to praise the worthy deters people from emulating them; just as not

prizing rare treasures deters a man from becoming a thief; or ignoring the things which awaken desire keep the heart at rest.

Therefore the wise ruler does not suggest unnecessary things, but seeks to satisfy the minds of his people. He seeks to ally appetites but strengthen bones. He ever tries by keeping people in ignorance to keep them satisfied and those who have knowledge he restrains from evil. If he himself, practices restraint then everything is in quietness

- **iv** -

- **tao without origin**

- The Tao appears to be emptiness but it is never exhausted. Oh, it is profound! It appears to have preceded everything. It dulls its own sharpness, unravels its own fetters, softens its own brightness, identifies itself with its own dust.

- Oh, it is tranquil! It appears infinite; I do not know from what it proceeds. It even appears to be antecedent to the Lord.

**U**

**IMPARTIALITY**

Heaven and earth are not like humans, they are impartial. They regard all things as insignificant, as though they were play things made of straw. The wise man is also impartial. To him all men are alike unimportant. The space between heaven and earth is like a bellows, it is empty but does not collapse; it moves and more and more issues. A gossip is soon empty, it is doubtful if he can be impartial.

- **vi**

- **the infinitude of creative effort** -

The Spirit of the perennial spring is said to be immortal. She is called the Mysterious One. The Mysterious One is typical of the source of heaven and earth. It is

continually and endlessly issuing without effort.

**Vii**

**hUMILITY**

Heaven is eternal, earth is lasting. The reason why heaven and earth are eternal and lasting is because they do not live for themselves; that is the reason they will ever endure. Therefore the wise man will keep his personality out of sight and because of so doing he will become notable. He subordinates his personality and therefore it is preserved. Is it not because he is disinterested, that his own interests are conserved?

**viii** -

**The Nature of Goodness**

True goodness is like water, in that it benefits everything and harms nothing. Like water it ever seeks the lowest place, the place that all others avoid. It is closely kin to the Tao.

For a dwelling it chooses the quiet meadow; for a heart the circling eddy. In generosity it is kind; in speech it is sincere; in authority it is order; in affairs it is ability; in movement it is rhythm.

Inasmuch as it is always peaceable it is never rebuked.

**IX**

**- moderation -**

Continuing to fill a pail after it is full, the water will be wasted. Continuing to grind an axe after it is sharp will soon wear it away.

Who can protect a public hall crowded with gold and jewels? The pride of wealth and position brings about their own misfortune. To win true merit, to preserve just fame, the personality must be retiring. This is the heavenly Tao.

**- X -**

**- What is possible -**

By patience the animal spirits can be disciplined. By self-control one can unify the character. By close attention to the will, compelling gentleness, one can become like a little child. By purifying the subconscious desires one may be without fault. In ruling his country, if the wise magistrate loves his people, he can avoid compulsion.

In measuring out rewards, the wise magistrate will act like a mother bird. While sharply penetrating into every corner, he may appear to be unsuspecting. While quickening and feeding his people, he will be producing but without pride of ownership. He will benefit but without claim of reward. He will persuade, but not compel by force. This is *teh*, the profoundest virtue.

**- XI -**

**- The value of non-existence**

Although the wheel has thirty spokes its utility lies in the emptiness of the hub. The jar is made by kneading clay, but its usefulness consists in its capacity. A room is made by cutting out windows and doors through the walls, but the space the walls contain measures the room's value. In the same way matter is necessary to form, but the value of reality lies in its immateriality.

A material body is necessary to existence, but the value of a life is measured by its immaterial soul.

**XII -**

**Avoiding desire -**

An excess of light blinds the human eye; an excess of noise ruins the ear; an excess of condiments deadens the taste. The effect of too much horse racing and hunting is bad, and the lure of hidden

Treasure tempts one to do evil. Therefore, the wise man attends to the inner significance of things and does not concern himself with outward appearances. Therefore he ignores matter and seeks the spirit.

**- XIII -**

**- Loathing shame -**

Favor and disgrace are alike to be feared, just as too great care or anxiety are bad for the body. Why are favor and disgrace alike to be feared? To be favored is humiliating; to obtain it is as much to be dreaded as to lose it. To lose favor is to be in disgrace and of course is to be dreaded. Why are excessive care and great anxiety alike bad for one? The very reason I have anxiety is because I have a body. If I have not body why would I be anxious?

Therefore he who administers the empire esteems it as his own body, then he is worthy to be trusted with the empire.

**- XIV -**

**- in praise of the profound-**

It is unseen because it is colorless; it is unheard because it is soundless; when seeking to grasp it, it eludes one, because it is incorporeal. Because of these qualities it cannot be examined, and yet they form an essential unity. Superficially it appears abstruse, but in its depths it is not obscure. It has been nameless forever! It appears and then disappears. It is what is known as the form of the formless, the image of the imageless. It is called the transcendental, its face (or destiny) cannot be seen in front, or its back (or origin) behind.

But by holding fast to the Tao of the ancients, the wise man may understand the present, because he knows the origin of the past. This is the clue to the Tao.

## XV

### - That Which Reveals TEH

In olden times the one who were considered worthy to be called masters were subtle, spiritual profound wise. Their thought could not be easily understood.

Since they were hard to understand I will try to make them clear. They were cautious like men wading a river in winter. They were reluctant like men who feared their neighbors. They were reserved like guests in the presence of their host. They were elusive like ice at the point of melting. They were cautious because they were conscious of the deeper meanings of life and its possibilities. We can clarify troubled waters by slowly quieting them. We can bring the unconscious to life by slowly moving them. But he who has the secret of the Tao does not desire for more. Being content, he is able to mature without desire to be newly fashioned.

## - XVI -

### Returning to the Source

Seek to attain an open mind (the summit of emptiness). Seek composure (the essence of tranquility).

All things are in process, rising and returning. Plants come to blossom, but only to return to the root. Returning to the root is like seeking tranquility; it is moving towards its destiny. To move toward destiny is like eternity. To know eternity is enlightenment, and not to recognize eternity brings disorder and evil.

Knowing eternity makes one comprehensive; comprehension makes one broadminded; breadth of vision brings nobility; nobility is like heaven.

The heavenly is like Tao. Tao is the Eternal. The decay of the body is not to be feared.

## - XVII -

### - Simplicity of Habit -

When great men rule, subjects know little of their existence. Rulers who are less great win the affection and praise of their subjects. A common ruler is feared by his subjects, and an unworthy ruler is despised

When a ruler lacks faith, you may seek in vain for it among his subjects.

How carefully a wise ruler chooses his words. He performs deeds, and accumulates merit! Under such a ruler the people think they are ruling themselves.

## XVIII

### - the palliation of the inferior -

When the great Tao is lost sight of, we still have the *idea* of benevolence and hypocrisy. When the relatives are unfriendly, we still have the *teachings* of filial piety and paternal affection.



When the state and the clan are in confusion and disorder, we still have the *ideals of loyalty and faithfulness*.

### - xlx -

#### Return to Simplicity-

Abandon the show of saintliness and relinquish excessive prudence then people will benefit a hundredfold. Abandon ostentatious benevolence and conspicuous righteousness, then people will return to the primal virtues of filial piety and parental affection. Abandon cleverness and relinquish gains, then thieves and robbers will disappear.

Here are three fundamentals on which to depend, wherein culture is insufficient. Therefore let all men hold to that which is reliable, namely, recognize simplicity, cherish purity, reduce one's possessions. Diminish one's desires.

### XX

#### The Opposite of the Commonplace

Avoid learning if you would have no anxiety. The "yes" and the "yea" differ very little, but the contrast between good and evil is very great. That which is not feared by the people is not worth fearing. But, oh, the difference, the desolation, the vastness, between ignorance and the limitless expression of the Tao.

- Note by Dwight Goddard:

- The balance of this sonnet is devoted to showing the difference between the careless state of the common people and LaoTzu's vision of the Tao. It is one of the most pathetic expressions of human loneliness, from lack of appreciation, ever written. It is omitted here that it might serve for the closing sonnet and valedictory.)

### - XXI -

#### The heart of emptiness -

- All the innumerable forms of teh correspond to the norm of Tao, but the nature of the Tao's activity is infinitely abstract and illusive. Illusive and obscure, indeed, but at its heart are forms and types. Vague and illusive, indeed, but at its heart is all being. Unfathomable and obscure, indeed, but at its heart is all spirit, and spirit is reality. At its heart is truth.

From of old its expression is unceasing, it has been present at all beginnings. How do I know that its nature is thus? By this same Tao.

### - xxii -

#### - Increase by humility -

At that time the deficient will be made perfect; the distorted will be straightened; the empty will be filled; the worn out will be renewed; those having will obtain and those having much will be overcome.

Therefore the wise man, embracing unity as he does, will become the world's model. Not pushing himself forward he will become enlightened; not boasting of himself he will acquire merit; not approving himself he will endure. For as much as he will not quarrel, the world will not quarrel with him.

Is the old saying, "The crooked shall be made straight," a false saying? Indeed, no! They will be perfected and return rejoicing

### - xxiii -

#### Emptiness and not-doing (wu wei)

Silence is natural to man. A whirlwind never outlasts the morning, nor a violent rain the day. What is the cause? It is heaven and earth. If even heaven and earth are not constant, much less can man be. Therefore he who pursues his affairs in the

spirit of Tao will become Tao-like. He who pursues his affairs with the, will become teh-like. He who pursues his affairs with loss, identifies himself with loss.

He who identifies himself with Tao, Tao rejoices to guide. He who identifies himself with teh, teh rejoices to reward. And he who identifies himself with loss, loss rejoices to ruin.

If his faith fail, he will receive no reward of faith.

**– xxiU –**

**Troubles and merit –**

It is not natural to stand on tiptoe, or being astride one does not walk. One who displays himself is not bright, or one who asserts himself cannot shine. A self-approving man has no merit, nor does one who praises himself grow. The relations of these things (self-display, self-assertion, self-approval) to Tao is the same as offal is to food. They are excrescences from the system; they are detestable; Tao does not dwell in them.

**– xxv –**

**– describing the mysterious**

There is Being that is all-inclusive and that existed before heaven and earth. Calm, indeed, and incorporeal. It is alone and changeless!

Everywhere it functions unhindered. It therefore becomes the world's mother. I do not know its nature; if I try to characterize it, I will call it Tao.

If forced to give it a name, I will call it the Great. The Great is evasive, the evasive is the distant, the distant is ever coming near. Tao is Great. So is Heaven great, and so is Earth and so also is the representative of Heaven and Earth. Man is derived from nature, nature is derived

from Heaven, Heaven is derived from Tao. Tao is self-derived.

**XXVI**

**The virtue (teh) of dignity**

The heavy is the root of the light, the quiet is master of motion. Therefore the wise man in all the experience of the day will not depart from dignity. Though he be surrounded with sights that are magnificent, he will remain calm and unconcerned.

How does it come to pass that the Emperor, master of ten thousand chariots, has lost the mastery of the Empire? Because being flippant himself, he has lost the respect of his subjects; being passionate himself, he has lost the control of the Empire.

**XXVII**

**The function of skill**

Good walkers leave no tracks, good speakers make no errors, good counters need no abacus, good wardens have no need for bolts and locks for no one can get by them. Good binders can dispense with rope and cord, yet none can unloose their hold.

Therefore the wise man trusting in goodness always saves men, for there is no outcast to him. Trusting in goodness he saves all things for there is nothing valueless to him. This is recognizing concealed values.

Therefore the good man is the instructor of the evil man, and the evil man is the good man's wealth. He who does not esteem his instructors or value his wealth, though he be otherwise intelligent, becomes confused. Herein lies the significance of spirituality.

(To be continued...)

## **Dalai Lama Quote of the Week**

...meditation on emptiness begins with gaining a sense of the inherent existence of which phenomena are empty, for without understanding what is negated, you cannot understand its absence, emptiness.

...Through carefully watching how you conceive your self, or "I," to be inherently established, you will determine that the "I" appears to be self-instituting without depending on the collection of the mental and physical aggregates, which are its basis of designation, or without depending on any of them individually, even though the "I" appears with those aggregates. Proper identification of this appearance is the first essential toward realizing selflessness--ascertaining the object of negation.

--from *Yoga Tantra: Paths to Magical Feats* by H.H. the Dalai Lama, Dzong-ka-ba, and Jeffrey Hopkins, published by Snow Lion Publications