



The Spiral Path...

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Nature's heart is compassion absolute,
because that compassion is absolute harmony.

G. de Purucker



FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS

Change. Constant, unstoppable and with unexpected twists. Such is life. Wild and wiggly. Woolly and as smooth as untouched skin. Wherever we go we find something to challenge us, something to move us forward into the mystical unseen realms where our true home is. Where our life is anchored. From whence we come and to which we shall go, having moved up higher on the rungs of Nature's ladder. Greater in our knowledge and wider in our worldview. Poised ready for our next life challenge.

As we travel this road, let us recall the three fundamental propositions that HPB put forth. These are first, the existence of a boundless, eternal Principle of life; second, the universality of the law of periodicity, or Karma; third, the spiritual identity of all souls with the Over-soul. "Her main teachings can be reduced to the following propositions: That Morals have a basis in Law and in fact; That Moral Law is Natural Law; That Evolution makes for Righteousness; and, That the Spiritual Identity of all Being renders Universal Brotherhood the only possible path for truth-seekers." (*The Path*, June 1892.)

When the world seems so uncertain...look to the light.

A PRAYER

Max Ehrmann

Let me do my work each day, and if the darkened hours of despair overcome me, may I not forget the strength that comforted me in the desolation of other times. May I still remember the bright hours that found me walking over the silent hills of my childhood, or dreaming on the margin of the quiet river, when a light glowed within me, and I promised my early God to have courage amid the tempest of the changing years.

Spare me from bitterness and from the sharp passions of unguarded moments. May I not forget that poverty and riches are of the spirit. Though the world know me not, may my thoughts and actions be such as shall keep me friendly with myself.

Lift mine eyes from the earth and let me not forget the uses of the stars. Forbid that I should judge others, lest I condemn myself. Let me not follow the clamor of the world, but walk calmly in my path. Give me a few friends who will love me for what I am, and keep ever burning before my vagrant steps the kindly light of hope. And, though age and infirmity overtake me, and I come not within sight of the castle of my dreams, teach me still to be thankful for life, and for time's olden memories that are good and sweet; and may the evening's twilight find me gentle still.

KARMA

J. Campbell Ver Planck

The Law of Karma, or Action, is one of the chief teachings of oriental philosophy. It is stated to be a universal Law, having its root or basis in the outbreathing (action) and inbreathing (re-action) of the Brahm, the Great Breath or Unseen Mover, from whose motion in matter (substance) all things are evolved.

There is one thing which we may predicate of Action; that is, Reaction. This fact indicates the method of Karma. Karmic Law manifests on or in various planes of life, and differs with that plane wherein it acts. Newton expressed one mode of Karma upon the physical plane when he formulated his first law of Motion; viz. "Action and Reaction are equal and opposite in direction." Physiologists and psychologists tell us that this rule holds good in Emotion, and in nervous action and reaction also. The Western bible expresses Karma for the moral plane when it says: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. What ye have sown, that shall ye reap." This ethical causation, this moral reaction, this conservation and intercorrelation of mental, moral, and psychic energy, is also Karma.

We can imagine that when a man does a selfish deed or thinks a selfish thought, it goes forth into the swift and subtle aetheric world as a specific vibration, colored, so to say, with his mental and moral coloring, bearing his stamp, as it were, in that vibratory ratio which is his own. We can fancy it issuing, a tireless energy, into that aether which powerfully responds to the tremor of a thought, and thus affecting, modern Science tells us, the far stars with its dynamic palpitation. On the confines of a system this energy must return, and it does thus react, naturally along the line of least resistance, to the sphere or base from which it emerged and which powerfully attracts it, bringing with it all that it has gathered to itself in the course of that long journey, and taking effect in manifold ways upon the doer, the creator, to whom it has returned. Nor is this return always made in the same brief human life. Hence we have Reincarnation as the companion or extension of Karma. The soul is drawn back to earth life again and again by the return or re-awakening of its dormant energies, self-engendered and responsive to material planes of being. The one Substance, Akasa, Mulaprakriti, *Aether* — call it as you will — that from which all things are evolved, is, by virtue of its atomic constitution and magnetic laws, the great Agent of Karma. Through it, all things and beings, in it immersed and by it saturated, become the minor instruments of the Law.

Karma is, in fact, Action and Reaction, as we have said. All that is, has been, or will be done occurs by virtue of this Law of Cause and Effect; all Action is the result of previous Action. Its justice is perfect, its equilibrium unshaken. It provides that all things shall return to their source. Amid myriad tangential causes its delicate adjustments and readjustments are unerring, because every action has its due balance and effect.

Imagine the reverse of the case above stated, and conceive an unselfish man, acting only from a sense of duty, and in accord with the progressive tendency of evolutionary Law. As by its light he sees that mankind are one and inseparable, his acts will have no personal coloring. They create no specific self-

condensed and contrary currents or discords in the aetheric medium, but pass out into the harmonious ocean of life about us, in waves as universal as its own. Bearing no personal impress, they have no cause to return to his sphere, which then pulsates with the surrounding harmony and broadens into the eternal.

Some persons say that Karma is “cruel”, because it “punishes those who do evil without knowing of this Karmic Law”. But Karma does not punish. That is incorrect and slovenly speech. How can Action punish? Action reacts; that is all. A selfish action cannot react as a good one, any more than an apple seed can bring forth a fig tree. We must expect to receive back our action in kind. When the unconscious child puts its hand into the fire, we do not say fire is cruel because it burns the child. We recognise here the action of a Law of the physical plane. We respect it as such. But Karma is equally a Law of many planes, and cannot be bribed or bought off any more than fire can be so dissuaded. The burnt adult suffers more than the child, for his imagination enters into the matter. So he who knowingly does a selfish deed, defying Karma, suffers, in its reaction, upon moral and mental planes; whereas he who has done evil in ignorance of Karma, probably has only the lower forms of reaction to bear.

All action is Karma and causes new Karma. Deeds of men and of nations; social conditions; mental limitations, joy, sorrow, life, death, health, disease, rapture and pain; all are the effects of previous action, whether of individual men, of nations, or of races. We bear our part in national Karma, and suffer, as units of that nation, for deeds not committed by our individual selves. But Karma — our past actions — brought us into that place and nation, and to such consequences, while also in Devachan there is compensation for the individual for such trials as he has not merited in his single individual capacity.

We hear talk of “interfering with Karma”, but this is absurd, impossible. If to one is awarded penance or suffering, to another it may be given to relieve that suffering. It may be your Karma to be menaced by dire consequences, and mine to avert those consequences. Suffering, too, is one means of the soul’s expansion and advance, so that it may be “good” Karma, while a place amid earthly ease and immunity from sorrow is often contractive and disastrous to the soul. More disastrous still is that repression of sympathy and help when chilled by the reasoning faculties, which forbid us to “suffer with all that lives”. We cannot swerve Karmic Law. It may be retarded, but returns with compound interest.

The Law is divine. We do not make it. We only set in motion causes which this pre-existent Law of Action and Reaction returns to us as effects. We engender these causes, and, in regard to them, we exercise free will, at least until the innumerable causes, reacting, stultify that will.

In action alone is the registration of all deeds and thoughts; their impress upon the One Substance constitutes the true book of Judgment. Thus Karma is the only rightful Judge. It alone can fitly punish and reward, for in it alone is full discernment. As true Love consists in perfect Justice, *impartial to all alike*, so is this Law one of universal Love. It alone impels the soul, through experience of the misery of Self, to expansion into the Selfless and the Universal.

Yet there is one escape from Karma. That is, by Becoming it. Duty done for its own sake, regardless of results (for Duty alone is ours; the consequences are in the Great Brahm), acting or refraining from action because it is right to do so, we do thus, by our inward devotion, become one with that Law obeyed by us. No longer its unconscious instruments, we are its conscious agents, parts of itself, hearers and doers of its first great injunction.

“Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.”

Voice of the Silence

The Path, April 1891

The misery of any nation or race is the direct result of the thoughts and acts of the Egos who make up the race or nation. In the dim past they did wickedly and now suffer. They violated the laws of harmony. The immutable rule is that harmony must be restored if violated. So these Egos suffer in making compensation and establishing the equilibrium of the occult cosmos. The whole mass of Egos must go on incarnating and reincarnating in the nation or race until they have all worked out to the end the causes set up. Though the nation may for a time disappear as a physical thing, the Egos that made it do not leave the world, but come out as the makers of some new nation in which they must go on with the task and take either punishment or reward as accords with their karma. — William Q. Judge

THOUGHTS ON CENTERS

Jasper Niemand

A center is a nucleus of energy, self-sustained from within, and capable of radiating its force to all other parts. The creation of a center, however created ("created" as such, or evolved to the point of being such), has the radiation as its primary object. This radiation is the result, roughly speaking, of the balance of forces. Thus whether we speak of the nuclei formed by Evolutionary Law, or of those centers established by the Lodge, of that center which every soul may cause itself to be, (or even of the various Societies maintained by mankind at large) this intention is the same. A center distributes energy to all those out-lying parts which are in relation with it, receiving by reaction a certain amount of force, but always, by virtue of its own essential nature, generating vital energies from within itself. This being the distinguishing attribute of real centers, it of necessity follows that the lack of such attribute on the part of any center shows disintegration, shows that the center, as such, is ceasing to be.

A center can only give forth what it contains, that is to say, a center may remain such while changing its quality. Suppose, for example, a strong and useful center full of harmonious impulses, radiating help of a mental and spiritual kind to all quarters. Imagine then that discord arises in (or between) its component parts. The center generates discord. It then becomes as powerful for "evil" as it has hitherto been for "good," and it will remain a factor for such spiritual and mental discord until its energy shall have run down. By "evil" is here meant action opposed to the currents of Law, in the evolutionary harmony; the term "good" stands for the reverse. This is merely a rough statement, a bare outline of a fact in nature. A discordant vibration has run through all the sphere and its action has been reversed. The importance of considering this fact lies in this — that every student desirous of becoming a center of usefulness, may become the exact reverse without realizing it. He thinks to drop out of sight, out of action, but he cannot; to exist is to act.

Not Masters themselves can all at once withdraw force from such a center once it is created. The storage of energy must be gradually expended. The moon is an example of this fact. The earth is said to have received the storage of energy of the moon, now a shell, so to say, of astral influences injurious to the earth.

The moon center has given its life forces to our planet; its action is reversed and its present output of energy is of a lower order. The storage of energy must be gradually expended; it cannot be annihilated or forcibly expelled; it must follow the processes of Nature and run down. If, created for useful purposes, it turns to discordant ends, it can only be left to run itself out gradually, along with other abortions of Nature, as Nature unaided has her failures. These lie within the scope of Karmic Law.

If we suppose the case of a center established by Adepts, with the assistance and consent of certain men for the subject of helping the race, we may at once see that, if the men who compose it once begin to generate discord there, the Adepts have in time no choice but to withdraw their aid. They cannot abolish that which has become a living fact in nature, an entity. Then the men who have failed to abide by their original intention have not alone the fact of that broken pledge to contend with; they must thereafter bear the responsibility of having created a center active for evil, for that it will become and will continue to be until all its natural force for discord has been expended. A clue to this may be found in a letter of Mahatma K.H. in *The Occult World*, where He says that the brain of man generates a higher order of energy from the gross cosmic. When the minds of many men have thus generated force, what will be the result if they use that force for discord instead of harmony? It must follow that, in our Society, in our groups, in all our centers, harmony must prevail, or we have established a nucleus of discord actively opposed to Law. And the same within ourselves. We never, for a single second, remain inactive for either the black side or the white. Our various acts do not so much count in themselves, as the order in mental force engendered; this force can be, and doubtless is used by the Masters, and hence the need of fidelity to Their Ideals. For the Ideals which we make and impress upon the brain of the universe, live. The man who has formed such a living picture and then abandons his intention, fights against that to which he himself has given life and form, and at the first quiver of a mental energy opposed to it, this living ideal reacts and injures him. Then all is discord and opposition, in the center or in the Man.

Karma

Grace F. Knoche

Much thought is being given these days to our brotherhood with the whole of nature, that we are linked with sun, moon, and stars as closely as we are with the kingdoms coming after us. Here is oneness of essence of every god-spark throughout space because of identity of source in the Unfathomable; and yet, since each bears the fruitage of aeons of evolving, every god-spark is impressed with its unique seal of divinity. A oneness, but with differences — and herein lies the secret of life's unending mystery. This suggests that a vast treasury of individual karmic experience is capsuled within the core of each of us. In brief, we are one with all others in our inmost self, yet every human being has his essential quality or character, his distinctive grain, as it were, running true to form throughout his nature.

By the law of magnetic attraction, whatever comes to us we ourselves must at some time have set in motion, knowingly or not. Every instant of our lives we are impressing on our entire being the quality of our thinking and feeling, lofty or base. No one reaps a harvest that is not of his or her own making — in benefits and strength of character for good seed sown; in deprivations and weakness of will for tares. Not only is karma the stern yet always beneficent recorder of every movement of consciousness for humans, but likewise for all entities from atomic to macrocosmic. To regard karma as an avenging demon or a rewarding angel is to judge by externals. Just as we leave our characteristic mark on every particle of our composite constitution, just so every other entity is doing likewise.

All of us undergo trials that are hard to justify from the narrow limits of a single life; we are subject to laws and influences that seemingly have little relation to our personal lives: national, racial, global, even solar and cosmic in scope. When kindly and thoughtful persons suffer a cruel fate it is incomprehensible that they could have committed terrible wrong in the past. And what about the inexpressible suffering of the many millions through famine, war, or natural catastrophe?

If, indeed, the one inviolable law in the universe is karma, whose face is compassion and whose reverse is justice, then in the final reckoning it is impossible for an individual to undergo any experience that ultimately does not derive from some portion of his constitution, which extends from the divine to the physical. As the workings of karma are mysterious, they are not easily discerned. What happens to one may not be the result of evil deeds in the past, but may well be impelled by the higher self for its own benefic purposes.

The fact that a few tragically misguided people can plunge a whole nation of fine men and women into conditions that normally no one of them would tolerate, must have its seeding long ago. Ever since we were lighted with the fire of mind and became aware of ourselves as thinking beings, we have had the power to choose between right and wrong. For millions of years we have been responsible for our thoughts and emotions and the deeds that spring from them. Because of the power of choice, and because we are as yet imperfectly developed, we are bound to make wrong choices, especially when the pull of the material seems stronger than the pull of the spiritual.

Human nature evolves slowly and today, as in the past, we have a choice between selfish and unselfish instincts; between acting for our own benefit, or for the benefit of our family and community. With every decision we are setting in motion causes for good or ill, which eventually will have their effects upon us and our surroundings. To be able to trace the interwebbings of karma among nations would require a knowledge far beyond present human capability — a comprehension of the vast panorama of past sowing by nations and individuals long ages ago. As we each have our individual karma, and are born in a certain country at a certain time, we also to some degree participate in its national karma.

If we conceive that justice and harmony are inherent in the universal order and that nature ever works to restore disturbed equilibrium, we must conclude that everyone, barring none, is reaping the quality of experience that belongs to him. When we are beset with trials beyond our control, perhaps our higher self is rejoicing at the opportunity offered us to learn valued lessons, nurture compassion and, possibly, in these particular circumstances to be of quiet help to those around us in greater need than we. Have we not all discovered, usually after many years, that the harshest passages of our life yielded lasting gifts? "Blessings in disguise" is the common phrase, suggesting an intuitive recognition that pain and sorrow hold hidden beauties, not least in our deepened love and understanding for those in travail.

How do we know what the soul must undergo to be truly free? How do we know that the terrible suffering, which may in a sense be worse for the bystander than for the one going through it, is not the

very karma that the soul has been yearning for? But to shrug off another's pain is diabolic and leads to hardness of heart. Such an attitude is to miss the whole purpose of life. We must relieve suffering as far as we can; in every possible way we must share our sympathy and understanding — not by lifting the burden from another's shoulders, but by helping him to meet and carry his life's challenges with greater confidence in himself and in the larger perspective.

There is so much awry in human relationships all over the world that it may take many ages to set things right; no doubt we've tallied up quite a karmic score against us that must be balanced. But we should not overlook the other side of the ledger, the nobler entries made in this life and in lives gone by. Could it not be that the intensity of global and individual suffering and confusion of values is due as much to a karmic awakening, a stimulus from our higher selves, as it is to karmic debts still unpaid?

Surely we were meant to live our lives as a wholeness and not be continually fractured by anguish or despair. Sorrow comes to us all, but like rain to Mother Earth it should nourish and bring new growth. So let us give ample room for joy in our lives, the inner joy that warms the heart and balances the karmic scales. One day, in this life or in another, we may be able to look at all we have been through with the eyes of the seer we intrinsically are — as an eagle high above our earth karma — and glimpse with panoramic vision our entire experience, past and present, in terms of motivation as well as in deeds. We shall know that all hindrances, all suffering, physical and mental, and also death, are part of the natural pattern of growth, etching into the soul the larger perception, the truer love, the deeper caring for all.

Excerpts from *To Light a Thousand Lamps*, ch. 7

From the Editor

We tread this path of our individual lives — alone. Though we are an integral and vibrant part of the whole of humanity, we are a single unit. No one is born with us nor do they die with us. As individuals, we have choices to make every moment of our lives. Choices that either enhance the world-life or tear it down. Would that we will always make the choice to benefit those around us and all of humanity.

Fraternally,
Scott J. Osterhage

Desire wisdom; love all men; do your duty; forget yourself; let each thought and act of your life have for its aim the finding of divine wisdom; strive to apply that wisdom for the good of other men. If you search in every direction, Light must come to you. Let the place in which you now are be the lonely room you speak of, and seek to find in everything the meaning. Strive to know what they are, and by what governed or caused. This is the first step. Live your life with this ever before you. Purify your thoughts as well as your body. Reason all you can, feel all with your heart you may, and when intellect and heart fail you, seek for something higher. This is the A.B.C.; it is enough for the present.

William Q. Judge

Let the Silence within, Speak...

This quarterly circular is issued by the American Section National Secretary. Material, subjects, or ideas for potential publication in this circular are welcome from the membership. Let me know if you do not wish to receive this circular.

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