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## *Is Foeticide a Crime?*

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**T**HE articles in your paper headed “Is Suicide a Crime?” have suggested to my mind to ask another question “Is Foeticide a Crime?” Not that I personally have any serious doubts about the unlawfulness of such an act; but the custom prevails to such an extent in the United States that there are comparatively only few persons who can see any wrong in it. Medicines for this purpose are openly advertised and sold; in “respectable families” the ceremony is regularly performed every year, and the family physician who should presume to refuse to undertake the job, would be peremptorily dismissed, to be replaced by a more accommodating one.

I have conversed with physicians, who have no more conscientious scruples to produce an abortion, than to administer a physic; on the other hand there are certain tracts from orthodox channels published against this practice; but they are mostly so overdrawn in describing [107] the “fearful consequences,” as to lose their power over the ordinary reader by virtue of their absurdity.

It must be confessed that there are certain circumstances under which it might appear that it would be the best thing as well for the child that is to be born as for the community at large, that its coming should be prevented. For instance, in a case where the mother earnestly desires the destruction of the child, her desire will probably influence the formation of the character of the child and render him in his days of maturity a murderer, a jail-bird, or a being for whom it would have been better “if he never had been born.”

But if foeticide is justifiable, would it then not be still better to kill the child after it is born, as then there would be no danger to the mother; and if it is justifiable to kill children before or after they are born then the next question arises: “At what age and under what circumstances is murder justifiable?”

As the above is a question of vast importance for thousands of people, I should be thankful to see it treated from the theosophical standpoint.

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*Editor's Note.* — Theosophy in general answers: “At no age as under no circumstance whatever is a murder justifiable!” and occult Theosophy adds: — “yet it is neither from the standpoint of law, nor from any argument drawn from one or another orthodox *ism* that the warning voice is sent forth against the immoral and dangerous practice, but rather because in occult philosophy both physiology and psychology show its disastrous consequence.” In the present case, the argument does not deal with the causes but with the effects produced. Our philosophy goes so far as to say that, if the Penal Code of most countries punishes attempts at suicide, it ought, if at all consistent with itself, to doubly punish foeticide as an attempt to *double suicide*. For, indeed, when even successful and the mother does not die just then, *it still shortens her life on earth to prolong it with dreary percentage in Kamaloka*, the intermediate sphere between the earth and the region of rest, a place which is no “St. Patrick’s purgatory,” but a fact, and a necessary halting place in the evolution of the degree of life. The crime committed lies precisely in the willful and [108] sinful destruction of life, and interference with the operations of nature, hence — with KARMA — that of the mother and the would-be future human being. The sin is not regarded by the occultists as one of a *religious* character, — for, indeed, there is no more of spirit and soul, for the matter of that, in a foetus or even in a child before it arrives at self-consciousness, than there is in any other small animal, — for we deny the absence of soul in either mineral, plant or beast, and believe but in the difference of degree. But foeticide is a crime against nature. Of course the sceptic of whatever class will sneer at our notions and call them absurd superstitions and “unscientific twaddle.” But we do not write for sceptics. We have been asked to give the views of Theosophy (or rather of occult philosophy) upon the subject, and we answer the query as far as we know.

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