

Confusing Words Series

Jnana and Yajna

Yajna or compassion / sacrifice is one of three aspects of LAW, and the object of *Compassion: the Spirit of Truth* (2009), the first of our Major Works.

Jnana is higher knowledge, divine or inner wisdom. It is the precursor of the English word knowledge. In a key article entitled “What Shall We Do for Our Fellow-Men?” H.P. Blavatsky defines *ajñāna* or lack of inner wisdom as follows:

But it is a worse mistake, however, to translate *Ajñāni* by “fool,” all the Beals, Oldenbergs, Webers, and Hardys, to the contrary. *Jnana* (or, *Jñāna*, rather) is Wisdom certainly, but even more, for it is the spiritual knowledge of things divine, unknown to all but those who attain it — and which saves the *Jīvanmuktas* who have mastered both Karmayoga and Jñānayoga. Hence, if all those who have not *jñāna* (or *jnana*) at their fingers’ end, are to be considered “fools” this would mean that the whole world save a few Yogis is composed of fools, which would be *out-carlyleing* Carlyle in his opinion of his countrymen.¹ *Ajñāna*, in truth, means simply “ignorance of the *true* Wisdom,” or literally, “Wisdomless” and not at all “fool.” To explain that the word “fool” is “never understood intellectually” is to say nothing, or worse, an Irish bull, as, according to every etymological definition and dictionary, a *fool* is “*deficient in intellect*” and “*destitute of reason.*”²

¹ Cf. “. . . A Parliament speaking through reporters to Buncombe and the twenty-seven millions, mostly fools.” Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) on his fellow countrymen, in: *Latter Day Pamphlet*, No. 6. (1850). Here is what Samuel Butler (1835–1902) wrote about Carlyle: “It was very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs Carlyle marry one another and so make only two people miserable instead of four.” Attribution: British writer.

² *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR OUR FELLOW-MEN?) XI p. 474