

*What shall we do
for our fellow-men?*



World-improvement or world-deliverance?

Musings of a sophist ignorant of Cosmogony and Theogony.

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He who does not say with the Master:
“Mercy alone opens the gate to save the whole race of mankind,”
is unworthy of that Master.

You yourself must make an effort. The Tathāgatas are only preachers. — If a man find no prudent companion, let him walk alone like a king who has left his conquered country behind. It is better to live alone; there is no companionship with the *fools*. Let a man walk alone; let him commit no sin, with few wishes — like a rhinoceros in the forest.

— *Dhammapada*: 61, 276, 329, 330

Sutta-Nipata: I, 3, § 12-13

To the Editor of *Lucifer*.¹

A very important paragraph which you wrote in No. 3 of your *Revue Théosophique*, published in Paris, May 21st, 1889,² has caused very serious doubts in the minds of some of your readers in Germany — doubts, probably caused by our misunderstanding you or by your shortness of expression. Will you permit me to state our view of the case, and will you have the kindness to give us on this basis your opinion of it publicly, perhaps in *Lucifer*?

You were speaking of Indian “yogis” and European “saints” and said:

« . . . La Sagesse³ Orientale nous apprend que le *Yogi* Indou qui s’isole dans une forêt impénétrable, ainsi que *l’hermite* chrétien qui se retire, comme aux temps jadis, dans le désert, ne sont tous deux que des égoïstes accomplis. L’un, agit dans l’unique but de trouver dans l’essence une et nirvanique refuge contre la réincarnation; l’autre, dans le but de sauver son âme — tous les deux ne pensent qu’à eux-mêmes. Leur motif est tout *personnel*; car, en admettant

¹ [Letter from Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden, President of the Germania Theosophical Society. Commentaries by H.P. Blavatsky, in her capacity as Editor, are shown in the footnotes.]

² pp. 6 and 7

³ The editor of *Lucifer* and the *Revue Théosophique*, pleads guilty to an omission. She ought to have qualified, «la Sagesse Orientale» by adding the adjective «ésotérique.»

qu'ils atteignent le but, ne sont-ils pas comme le soldat poltron, qui déserte l'armée au moment de l'action, pour se préserver des balles? En s'isolant ainsi, ni le Yogi, ni le 'saint,' n'aident personne autre qu'eux-mêmes; ils se montrent, par contre, *profondément indifférents* au sort de l'humanité qu'ils fuient et désertent . . . »⁴

You do not plainly say what you expect a true sage to do; but further on you refer to our Lord, the Buddha, and to what *He* did. We readily accept His example as well as His teachings for our ideal rule; but from those stanzas I have quoted above, it appears, that what he expected his disciples to do, does not quite agree with what you seem to expect from them.⁵

He taught that all the world, or the three worlds, in fact, every existence, is pain, or leading to pain and grief. World and existence is pain and evil *per se*. It is a mistake (avidyā) to believe that desire can be satisfied. All worldly desires lead in the end to dissatisfaction, and the desire (the thirst) to live is the cause of all evil. Only those who are striving to deliver (to save or to redeem) themselves from all existence (from their thirst for existence), leading the "happy life" of a perfect Bhikshu, only those are sages, only those attain nirvana and, when they die, Parinirvāna, which is absolute and changeless being.⁶

No doubt some sort of development or so-called improvement, evolution and involution, is going on in the world; but just for this reason the Buddha taught (like Krishna before him), that the world is, "unreality, māyā, avidyā." Every actual form of existence has become, has grown to be what it is; it will continue *changing* and will

⁴ [" . . . Oriental Wisdom teaches us that the Hindu Yogi who isolates himself in an impenetrable forest, like the Christian *hermit* who, as was common in former times, retires to the desert, are both of them but accomplished egoists. The one acts with the sole idea of finding in the One essence of Nirvāna refuge against reincarnation; the other acts with the unique idea of saving his soul — both of them think only of themselves. Their motive is altogether *personal*; for, even supposing they attain their end, are they not like cowardly soldiers, who desert the *regiment* when it goes into action, in order to protect themselves from the bullets? In isolating themselves as they do, neither the Yogi nor the "saint" helps anyone but himself; on the contrary, both show themselves *profoundly indifferent* to the fate of *mankind* whom they *fly* from and *desert*. . . ."]

⁵ The Western disciples and followers of the Lord Buddha's ethics lay very little stress on the dead letter (and often fanciful) translations of Buddhist *Sutras* by European Orientalists. From such scholars as Messrs. Max Müller and Weber, down to the last amateur Orientalist who dabbles in Buddhism disfigured by translation and proudly boasts of his knowledge, no Sanskrit or Pali scholar has so far understood correctly that which is taught; witness Monier-Williams' fallacious assumption that Buddha never taught anything *esoteric*! Therefore neither the *Dhammapada* nor the *Sutta-Nipata* are an exception, nor a proof to us in their now mutilated and misunderstood texts. Nāgārjuna laid it down, as a rule, that "every Buddha has both a revealed and a mystic doctrine." The "exoteric is for the multitudes and new disciples," to whom our correspondent evidently belongs. This plain truth was understood even by such a prejudiced scholar as the Rev. J. Edkins, who passed almost all his life in China studying Buddhism, and who says in his *Chinese Buddhism*:

"The esoteric is for the Bodhisattvas and advanced pupils, such as Kashiapa. It is not communicated in the form of definite language, and *could not*, therefore, *be transmitted by Ananda as definite doctrine among the Sutras*. Yet *it is virtually contained in the Sutras*. For example, the *Fa-hua-Ching*, or *Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law*, which is regarded as containing the cream of the revealed doctrine, is to be viewed as a sort of original document *of the esoteric teaching, while it is in form exoteric*." [Ch. iii, p. 43. Italics are ours.]

Moreover we perceive that our learned correspondent has entirely misunderstood the fundamental idea in what we wrote in our May editorial, «Le Phare de l'Inconnu» in the *Revue Théosophique*. We protest against such an interpretation and will prove that it errs in the course of this article.

⁶ An exoteric and frequent mistake. Nirvāna may be reached during man's life, and after his death in the Manvantara or life-kalpa he belongs to. *Parinirvāna* ("beyond" Nirvāna) is reached only when the Manvantara has closed and during the "night" of the universe or *Pralaya*. Such is the esoteric teaching.

have an end, like it had a beginning as a form. *Absolute being* without “form” and “name,” this alone is true reality, and is worth striving at for a real sage.⁷

Now what did our Lord, the Buddha, do and how did He live? He did not in any way try to *improve* the *world*; he did not strive to realise socialistic problems, to solve the labour question or to better the *worldly* affairs of the poor, nor the rich either; he did not meddle with science, he did not teach cosmology and such like;⁸ quite on the contrary; he lived in the most *unworldly* manner, he begged for his food and taught his disciples to do the same; he left, and taught his disciples to leave, all worldly life and affairs, to give up their families and to remain homeless, like he did and like he lived himself.⁹

Against this cannot be brought forward, that these are only the teachings of the Hinayāna system and that perhaps the Mahayana of the Northern Buddhists is the only right one; for this latter lays even more stress than the former on the *self-improvement* and continued *retirement* from the world of the bhikshu, *until* he has reached the perfection of a Buddha. True, the Mahayana system says, that not *every* Arahat has already attained highest perfection; it distinguishes Śrāvakas, Pratyeka-Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, of whom the latter only are considered the true spiritual sons of the Buddha, who are to be Buddhas themselves in their final future life and who have already realised the highest state of ecstasy, the Bodhi state, which is next to Nirvana.

Until a bhikshu or arhat has sufficiently progressed in perfection and wisdom, “playing at” Buddha and fixing himself up as an example or as a teacher to the world, is likely not only to throw him entirely off his path, but also to cause annoyance to those who *are* truly qualified for such work and who *are* fit to serve as ideal examples for others. None of us is a Buddha, and I do not know which of us might be a Bodhisattva; not everyone *can* be one, and not everyone was by the Buddha himself expected to *become* one, as is clearly and repeatedly expressed in the *Saddharma*

⁷ Just so; and this is the theosophical teaching.

⁸ *Mālunkya Sutta* in Spence Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 375. *Samyutta Nikāya* at the end of the work (Vol. iii of “Phayre MS.”; also *Cullavagga*, IX, 1, 4).

⁹ Quite right again. But to live “like he lived himself” one has to remain *as an ascetic* among the multitudes, or the *world*, for 45 years. This argument therefore, goes directly against our correspondent’s main idea. That against which we protested in the criticized article was not the *ascetic life*, *i.e.*, the life of one entirely divorced, morally and mentally, from the world, the ever-changing *māyā*, with its false deceptive pleasures, but the life of a *hermit*, useless to all and as useless to himself, in the long run; at any rate *entirely selfish*. We believe we rightly understand our learned critic in saying that the point of his letter lies in the appeal to the teaching and practice of the Lord Gautama Buddha in support of withdrawal and isolation from the world, as contrasted with an opposite course of conduct. And here is where his mistake lies and he opens himself to a severer and more just criticism than that he would inflict on us.

The Lord Gautama was never a *hermit*, save during the first six years of his ascetic life, the time it took him to enter fully “on the Path.” In the “Supplementary account of the three religions” (*San-Kiea-Yi-su*) it is stated that in the *seventh* year of his exercises of abstinence and solitary meditation, Buddha thought, “I had better eat, lest the heretics should say that Nirvana is attained in famishing the body.” Then he ate, sat for his transformation for six more days and on the seventh day of the second month obtained his first *Samadhi*. Then, having “attained the perfect view of the highest truth,” he arose and went to Benares where he delivered his first discourses. From that time forward for nearly half a century, he *remained in the world*, teaching the world salvation. His first disciples were nearly all Upāsakas (lay brothers), the neophytes being permitted to continue in their positions in social life and not even required to join the monastic community. And those who did, were generally sent by the Master to travel and proselytize, instructing in the doctrine of the four miseries all those with whom they met.

Pundarika, the principal Mahāyāna work.¹⁰ Nevertheless, admitting for argument's sake, that we were somehow fit to serve as specimen sages for "the world" and to improve "humanity" — now what *can* and what *ought* we to do then?

We certainly can have nothing to do with humanity in the sense of the "world," nothing with *worldly affairs* and *their* improvement. What else should we do, than to be «*profondément indifférents*» to them, to «*fuir et déserter*» them? Is not this "army" which we are deserting, just that "humanity" which the *Dhammapada* rightly terms "the fools"; and is it not just that "worldly life" which our Lord taught us to quit? What else should we strive at then but to take "refuge against re-incarnation," refuge with the Buddha, his dharma and his sangha!¹¹

¹⁰ Our correspondent is too well read in Buddhist *Sutras* not to be aware of the existence of the esoteric system taught *precisely* in the *Yogāchāra* or the contemplative Mahayana schools. And in that system the hermit or yogi life, except for a few years of preliminary teaching, is *strongly objected to* and called SELFISHNESS. Witness Buddha in those superb pages of *Light of Asia* (Book the Fifth) when arguing with and reprimanding the self-torturing Yogis, whom, "sadly eyeing," the Lord asks:

. . . Wherefore add ye ills to life
Which is so evil?

When told in answer that they stake brief agonies to gain the larger joys of Nirvana, what does He say? This:

Yet if they last
A myriad years . . . they fade at length,
Those joys . . . Speak! Do your Gods endure
For ever, brothers?
"Nay," the Yogis said,
"Only great Brahm endures; the Gods but live."

Now if our correspondent understood as he should, these lines rendered in blank verse, yet word for word as in the *Sutras*, he would have a better idea of the esoteric teaching than he now has; and, having understood it, he would not oppose what we said; for not only was self-torture, selfish solitude, and life in the jungle simply for one's own salvation condemned in the *Mahayana* (in the real esoteric system, not the mutilated translations he reads) but even *renunciation of Nirvana for the sake of mankind* is preached therein. One of its fundamental laws is, that ordinary morality is insufficient to deliver one from rebirth; one has to practice the six Pāramitās or cardinal virtues for it:

1. Charity.
2. Chastity.
3. Patience.
4. Industry.
5. Meditation.
6. Ingenuousness (or openness of heart, sincerity).

And how can a *hermit* practice charity or industry if he runs away from man? Bodhisattvas, who, having fulfilled all the conditions of Buddhahood, have the right to forthwith enter Nirvana, prefer instead, out of unlimited pity for the suffering ignorant world, to renounce this state of bliss and become *Nirmānakāyas*. They don the *Sambhogakāya* (the invisible body) in order to serve mankind, *i.e.*, to *live a sentient life after death* and suffer immensely at the sight of human miseries (most of which, being Karmic, they are not at liberty to relieve) for the sake of having a chance of inspiring a few with the desire of learning the truth and thus saving themselves. (By the by, all that Schlagintweit and others have written about the *Nirmānakāya* body is erroneous.) Such is the true meaning of the Mahayana teaching. "I believe that not all the Buddhas enter Nirvana," says, among other things, the disciple of the Mahayana school in his address to "the Buddhas (or Bodhisattvas) of confession" — referring to this secret teaching.

[See "The Voice of the Silence - tr. Blavatsky" in our Higher Ethics and Devotion Series. — ED. PHIL.]

¹¹ The quotation with which our correspondent heads his letter *does not* bear the interpretation he puts upon it. No one acquainted with the spirit of the metaphors used in Buddhist philosophy would read it as Dr. Hübbschleiden does. The man advised to walk "like a king who has left his conquered country behind," implies that he who has conquered his passions and for whom worldly *māyā* exists no longer, need not lose his time in trying to convert those who will not believe in him, but had better leave them alone to their Karma; but it certainly does not mean that they are fools intellectually. Nor does it imply that the disciples should leave the world; "Our Lord" taught us as much as "the Lord Jesus" did, the "Lord Krishna" and other "Lords" all "Sons of God" — to quit the "worldly" life, not *men*, least of all suffering, ignorant Humanity. But surely neither, the Lord Gautama Buddha less than any one of the above enumerated, would have taught us the monstrous and selfish doctrine of remaining «*profondément indifférents*» to the woes and miseries of mankind, or to *desert* those who cry daily and hourly for help to us, more favoured than they. This is an outrageously selfish and cruel system of life, by whomsoever adopted! It is neither Buddhistic, nor Christian, nor theosophical, but the nightmare of a doctrine of the worst schools of Pessimism, such as would be probably discountenanced by Schopenhauer and von Hartmann themselves!

But we further think, that the Buddha — as in every other respect — was quite right also on this point, even if one considers it as a scientist, as an historian or as a psychologist, not as a bhikshu. What real and essential improvement of the “world” can be made? Perhaps in carrying out socialistic problems a state might be arrived at, where every human individual would be sufficiently cared for, so that he *could* addict more *spare* time to his spiritual self-improvement if he *wished* to do so; but if he does *not wish* to improve *himself*, the best social organization will not make or help him do so. On the contrary, my own experience, at least, is just the reverse. The spiritually or rather mystically highest developed living human individual I know is a poor common weaver and moreover consumptive, who was until lately in such a position employed in a cotton-mill, that he was as such treated as a dog, like most labourers are, by their joint-stock employers. Still this man is in his inner life quite independent of his worldly misery; his heavenly or rather divine peace and satisfaction is at any time his refuge, and no one can rob him of that. He fears no death, no hunger, no pain, no want, no injustice, no cruelty.¹²

You will concede, I suppose, that Karma is not originated by external causes, but only by each individual for himself. Anyone who has made himself fit for and worthy of a good opportunity, will surely find it; and if you put another unworthy one into the very best of circumstances, he will not avail himself of them properly; they will rather serve *him* to draw him down into the mire which is his delight.

But perhaps you reply: it is, nevertheless, our duty to create as many good opportunities as we can, for humanity in general, that all those who are worthy of them, might find them all the sooner. Quite right! We fully agree and we are certainly doing our best in this respect. But will this improve the *spiritual* welfare of “humanity”? Never, not by an atom, we think. Humanity, as a *whole*, will always remain comparatively the same “fools,” which they have always been. Suppose we had succeeded in establishing an ideal organization of mankind, do you think these “fools” would be any the wiser by it, or any the more satisfied and happy?¹³ Certainly not, they would always invent new wants, new pretensions, new claims; the “world” will forever go on striving for “worldly perfection” only. Our present social organization is greatly improved on the system of the Middle-Ages; still, is our present time any the happier, any the more satisfied than our ancestors have been at the time of the Nibelungs or of King Arthur? I think, if there has been any change in satisfaction, it was for the worse; our present time is more greedy and less content than any former age. Whoever expects his *self*-improvement by means of any *world*-improvement or any exter-

Our critic sees in the “army” of Humanity — those “fools” that the *Dhammapada* alludes to. We are sorry to find him calling himself *names*, as we suppose he still belongs to Humanity, whether he likes it or not. And if he tells us in the exuberance of his modesty that he is quite prepared to fall under the flattering category, then we answer that no true Buddhist ought, agreeably to the Dhammapadic injunctions, to accept “companionship” with him. This does not promise him a very brilliant future with “the Buddha, his dharma and his sangha.” To call the whole of Humanity “fools” is a risky thing, anyhow; to treat as such that portion of mankind which groans and suffers under the burden of its national and individual Karma, and refuse it, under this pretext, help and sympathy — is positively revolting. He who does not say with the Master: “Mercy alone opens the gate to save the whole race of mankind” is unworthy of that Master.

¹² And yet this man lives *in*, and with the world, which fact does not prevent his *inner* “Buddhaship”; *nor* shall he ever be called a “deserter” and a coward, epithets which he would richly deserve had he abandoned his wife and family, instead of working *for them*, not for his own “dear” self.

¹³ This is no business of ours, but that of their respective Karma. On this principle we should have to deny to every starving wretch a piece of bread, because, forsooth, he will be just as hungry tomorrow?

nal means and causes, has yet to be sorely undeceived; and happy for him if this experience will come to him before the *end* of his present life!

A very clever modern philosopher has invented the theory that the best plan to get rid of this misery of the “world,” would be our giving ourselves up to it the best we could, in order to hasten this evil process to its early end. — Vain hope! Avidyā is as endless as it is beginningless. A universe has a beginning and has an end, but others will begin and end after it, just like one day follows the other; and as there has been an endless series of worlds before, thus will there be an endless series afterwards. Causality can never have had a beginning nor can it have an end. And every “world,” that will ever be, will always be “world,” that is pain and “evil.”¹⁴

Therefore, like Karma, also *deliverance*, redemption or salvation (from the world) can never be any otherwise than “*personal*,” or let us rather say “*individual*.” The world, of course, can never be delivered from itself, from the “world,” from pain and evil. And *no one* can be delivered therefrom by anyone else. — You certainly do not teach vicarious atonement! Or, *can* anyone save his neighbour? Can one apple make ripe another apple hanging next to it?¹⁵

Now what else can we do but live the “happy life” of bhikshus without wants, without pretensions, without desires? And if our good example calls or draws to us others who seek for the same happiness, then we try to teach them the best we can. But this is another rather doubtful question to us! Not only are we not properly fit to teach, but if we were, we require proper persons to be taught, persons who are not only willing, but who are also fit to listen to us.¹⁶

In spite of all these difficulties and quite conscious of our own incompetency, we nevertheless venture now to publish books and journals in which we try to explain Indian religio-philosophy to the best of our understanding. Thus everyone who has eyes may read it, and who has ears may hear it — if his good Karma is ripening! What else do you expect *us agnams* to do?¹⁷ Are we not rather to be blamed already,

¹⁴ And therefore, *sauve qui peut*, is our correspondent’s motto? Had the
All Honoured, Wisest, Best, most Pitiful,
The Teacher of Nirvana, and the Law,

taught the heartless principle *après moi le déluge*, I do not think that the learned editor of the *Sphinx* would have had much of a chance of being converted to Buddhism as he is now. Very true that his Buddhism seems to be no better than the exoteric dry and half-broken rind, of European fabrication, of that grand fruit of altruistic mercy, and pity for all that lives — real Eastern Buddhism and especially its esoteric doctrines.

¹⁵ No; but the apple can either screen its neighbour from the sun, and, depriving it of its share of light and heat, prevent its ripening, or sharing with it the dangers from worms and the urchin’s hand, thus diminish that danger by one-half. As to Karma this is again a misconception. There is such a thing as a *national*, besides a personal or *individual* Karma in this world. But our correspondent seems to have either never heard of it, or misunderstood once more, in his own way.

¹⁶ *Fais que dois, advienne que pourra*. [Do what you have to do, no matter what.] When did the Lord Buddha make a preliminary selection in his audiences? Did he not, agreeably to allegory and history, preach and convert demons and gods, bad and good men? Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden seems more Catholic than the Pope, more prim than an old-fashioned English housewife, and certainly more squeamish than Lord Buddha ever was. “Teach vicarious atonement?” certainly we do not. But it is safer (and more modest at any rate) to make too much of one’s neighbours and fellowmen than to look at every one as on so much dirt under one’s feet. If I am a fool, it is no reason why I should see a fool in everyone else. We leave to our critic the difficult task of discerning who is, and who is *not* fit to listen to us, and, in the absence of positive proof, prefer postulating that every man has a responsive chord in his nature that will vibrate and respond to words of kindness and of truth.

¹⁷ We expect you not to regard everyone else as an “*agnam*” — *if* by this word an *ignoramus* is meant. To help to deliver the world from the curse of *Avidyā* (ignorance) we have only to learn from those who know more than

that we undertake such work, for which we — *not* being Buddhas, nor even Bodhisattvas — are as badly qualified as a recruit is fit to serve as general field-marshal. And if you cannot find fault with us, can you say that those “yogis” or “saints” whom you seem to blame in your above passage, were in a better position and could have done more? If, however, they were, *what* ought they to have done?

We are fully aware that a true Buddhist and a sage, or — if you like — theosophist, must always be every inch an *altruist*. And when we are acting altruistically, it is perhaps no bad sign in regard to what we someday might *become*; but everything at its proper time: where competency does not keep pace with altruism in development and in display, it might do more harm than good. Thus we feel even not quite sure whether our conscience ought not to blame us for our well-intended, but pert work; and the only excuse we can find for our thus giving way to the promptings of our heart is, that those persons who really might be properly qualified, do *not* come forward, do not help us, do *not do* this evidently necessary work!¹⁸

Yours respectfully,

HÜBBE-SCHLEIDEN

Neuhausen, Munich, June 1st, 1889

we do, and teach those who know less. This is just the object we have in view in spreading theosophical literature and trying to explain “Indian *religio-philosophy*.”

¹⁸ An apocalyptic utterance this. I think, however, that I dimly understand. Those who are “properly qualified, do *not* come forward, do *not* help us, do *not do* this evidently necessary work.” Don’t THEY? How *does* our pessimistic correspondent *know*? I “guess” and “surmise” that they do, and very much so. For had the T.S. and its members been left to their own fate and Karma, there would not be much of it left today, under the relentless persecutions, slander, scandals, purposely set on foot, and the malicious hatred of our enemies — *open and secret*. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

What shall we do for our fellow-men?

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Without the study of cosmogony and Theogony which teach the hidden value of every force in Nature and their direct correspondence to, and relation with, the forces in man (or the principles), no occult psycho-physics or knowledge of man as he truly is, is possible.

You have obliged my friends and myself by answering or annotating my letter to you in your number of July 15th. Will you allow us to continue this discussion? Several letters which I have received in consequence of this correspondence not only from Germany, but also from England,²⁰ make it appear likely that your readers on the other side of the Channel also take an interest in this all-important question. As the purport of my former communication has been misunderstood, I have now made this question the title of my present letter, in order to emphasize the point. My friends and I did not ask: Shall we do *anything* for our fellow-men or *nothing*? but: *What shall we do for them?*

You agree with us — as your note *d* to my last letter (p. 431) unmistakably shows — that the ultimate Goal which the mystic or the occultist have to strive for, is not perfection IN existence (the “world”) but *absolute being*: that is, we have to strive for deliverance FROM all existence in any of the three worlds or planes of existence. The difference of opinions, however, is this: Shall we now, nevertheless, assist all our fellow-men indiscriminately in their *worldly* affairs; shall we occupy ourselves with their national and individual Karma, in order to help them to improve the “world” and to live happily *in* it; shall we strive *with* them to realize socialistic problems, to further science, arts and industries, to teach them cosmology, the evolution of man and of the universe, *etc., etc.*, — or on the other hand, shall we only do the best we can to show our fellow-men the road of wisdom that will lead them *out* of the world and as straight as possible towards their acknowledged goal of absolute existence (*Pari-Nirvāna, Moksha, Ātma*)? Shall we consequently only work for those who are willing to get rid of all individual existence and yearning to be delivered from all selfishness, from all strivings, who are longing only for eternal peace?

¹⁹ [Letter from Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden, President of the Germania Theosophical Society. Commentaries by H.P. Blavatsky, in her capacity as Editor of *Lucifer*.]

²⁰ Perchance also, from Madras? — [Editor, *Lucifer*.]

Answer 1

As the undersigned accepts for her views and walk in life no authority dead or living, no system of philosophy or religion but one — *namely, the esoteric teachings of ethics and philosophy of those she calls “MASTERS”* — answers have, therefore, to be given strictly in accordance with these teachings.

My first reply then is: Nothing of that which is conducive to help man, collectively or individually, to live — not “happily” — but less *unhappily* in this world, ought to be indifferent to the Theosophist-Occultist. It is no concern of his whether his help benefits a man in his *worldly* or *spiritual* progress; his first duty is to be ever ready to help if he can, without stopping to philosophize. It is because our clerical and lay Pharisees too often offer a Christian dogmatic tract, instead of the simple bread of life to the wretches they meet — whether these are starving physically or morally — that pessimism, materialism and despair win with every day more ground in our age. Weal and woe, or happiness and misery, are relative terms. Each of us finds them according to his or her predilections; one in worldly, the other in intellectual pursuits, and no one system will ever satisfy all. Hence, while one finds his pleasure and rest in family joys, another in “Socialism” and the third in a “longing only for eternal peace,” there may be those who are starving for truth, in every department of the science of nature, and who consequently are yearning to learn the esoteric views about “cosmology the evolution of man and of the universe.” — *H.P. Blavatsky*

According to our opinion the latter course is the right one for a mystic; the former one we take to be a statement of our views. Your notes to my former letter are quite consistent with this view, for in your note *c* you say: “Para-nirvana is reached only when the Manvantara has closed and during the ‘night’ of the universe or Pralaya.” If the final aim of parinirvāna *cannot* be attained individually, but only solidarity by the whole of the present humanity, it stands to reason, that in order to arrive at our consummation we have not only to do the best we can for the suppression of our own self, but we have to work first for the world-process to hurry all the worldly interests of Hottentots and the European vivisectors having sufficiently advanced to see their final goal of salvation are ready to join us in striving towards that deliverance [meaning not clear].

Answer 2

According to our opinion as there is no essential difference between a “mystic” and a “Theosophist-Esotericist” or Eastern Occultist, the above-cited course is *not* “the right one for a mystic.” One, who while “yearning to be delivered from all selfishness” directs at the same time all his energies only to that portion of humanity which is of his own way of thinking, shows himself not only very *selfish* but guilty of prejudice and partiality. When saying that *Para*, or *Parinirvāna* rather, is reached only at the Manvantaric close, I never meant to imply the “planetary” but the whole *Cosmic* Manvantara, *i.e.*, at the end of “an age” of Brahmā, not one “Day.” For this is the only time when during the *universal* Pralaya mankind (*i.e.*, not only the terrestrial *mankind* but that of every “man” or “*manu*-bearing” globe, star, sun or planet) will reach “solidarily” Parinirvāna, and even then it will not be the whole mankind, but only those portions of the mankinds which will have made themselves ready for it. Our correspondent’s remark about the “Hottentots” and “European vivisectors” seems to

indicate to my surprise that my learned Brother has in his mind only our little un-progressed *Terrene* mankind? — *H.P. Blavatsky*

You have the great advantage over us, that you speak with absolute certainty on all these points, in saying: “this is the esoteric doctrine,” and “such is the teaching of my masters.” We do not think that we have any such certain warrant for *our* belief; on the contrary, we want to learn, and are ready to receive wisdom, wherever it may offer itself to us. We know of no authority or divine revelation; for, as far as we accept Vedāntic or Buddhistic doctrines, we only do so because we have been convinced by the reasons given; or, where the reasons prove to be beyond our comprehension, but where our intuition tells us: this, nevertheless, is likely to be true, we try our best to make our understanding follow our intuition.

Answer 3

I speak “with absolute certainty” only so far as my own *personal* belief is concerned. Those who have not the *same warrant* for their belief as I have, would be very credulous and foolish to accept it on blind faith. Nor does the writer believe any more than her correspondent and his friends in any “authority” let alone “divine revelation”! Luckier in this than they are, I need not even rely in this as they do on my *intuition*, as there is no *infallible* intuition. But what I do believe in is:

- The unbroken oral teachings revealed by living *divine* men during the infancy of mankind to the elect among men;
- That it has reached us *un-altered*; and
- That the MASTERS are thoroughly versed in the science based on such uninterrupted teaching. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

In reference, therefore, to your note *e*, it was not, nor is it, our intention “to inflict any criticism on you”; on the contrary we should never waste time with opposing anything we think wrong; we leave that to its own fate; but we try rather to get at positive information or arguments, wherever we think they may offer themselves. Moreover, we have never denied, nor shall we ever forget, that we owe you great and many thanks for your having originated the present movement and for having made popular many striking ideas hitherto foreign to European civilization. We should now feel further obliged to you, if you (or your masters) will give us some reasons, which could make it appear likely to us, why *parinirvāna* could *not* be attained by any *jīva* at any time **(a)** . . .

Answer 4

(a) There is some confusion here. I never said that no *jīva* could attain *Parinirvāna*, nor meant to infer that “the final goal can only be reached solidarily” by our present humanity. This is to attribute to me an ignorance to which I am not prepared to plead guilty, and in his turn my correspondent has misunderstood me. But as every system in India teaches several kinds of *pralayas* as also of *Nirvānic* or “*Moksha*” states, Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden has evidently confused the *Prākṛitika* with the *Naimittika* *Pralaya*, of the *Viśishtādvaita* Vedāntins. I even suspect that my esteemed correspondent has imbibed more of the teachings of this particular sect of the three

Vedāntic schools than he had bargained for; that his “Brahman Guru” in short, of whom there are various legends coming to us from Germany, has coloured his pupil far more with the philosophy of Sri Ramanujacharya, than with that of Śrī Śamkarāchārya. But this is a trifle connected with circumstances beyond his control and of a Karmic character. His aversion to “Cosmology” and other sciences including Theogony, and as contrasted with “Ethics” pure and simple, dates also from the period he was taken in hand by the said learned guru. The latter expressed it personally to us, after his sudden *salto mortali* from esotericism — too difficult to comprehend and therefore to teach — to *ethics* which anyone who knows a Southern language or two of India, can impart by simply translating his texts from philosophical works with which the country abounds. The result of this is, that my esteemed friend and correspondent talks Viśishtādvaitism as unconsciously as M. Jourdain talked “prose,” while believing he argues from the Mahayana and Vedāntic standpoint — pure and simple. If otherwise, I place myself under correction. But how can a Vedāntin speak of *Jīvas* as though these were *separate* entities and independent of JIVĀTMA, the one universal soul! This is a purely Viśishtādvaita doctrine which asserts that Jivātma is different in each individual from that in another individual? He asks “why parinirvāna could *not* be attained by any *jīva* at any time.” We answer that if by “*jīva*” he means the “Higher Self” or the *divine ego* of man, only — then we say it may reach Nirvana, not Parinirvāna, but even this, only when one becomes *Jīvanmukta*, which does *not* mean “at any time.” But if he understands by “*Jīva*” simply the *one life* which, the Viśishtādvaitas say, is contained in every particle of matter, separating it from the *śarīra* or body that contains it, then, we do not understand at all what he means. For, we do not agree that Parabrahm only *pervades* every *Jīva*, as well as each particle of matter, but say that Parabrahm is inseparable from every *Jīva*, as from every particle of matter since it is the *absolute*, and that IT is in truth that Jivātma itself *crystallized* — for want of a better word. Before I answer his questions, therefore I must know whether he means by Parinirvāna, the same as I do, and of which of the *Pralayas* he is talking. Is it of the *Prākṛitika* Mahā Pralaya, which takes place every 311,040,000,000,000 years; or of the *Naimittika* Pralaya occurring after each *Brahma Kalpa* equal to 1,000 Mahā Yugas, or which?²¹ Convincing reasons can be given then only when two disputants understand each other. I speak from the esoteric standpoint almost identical with the Advaita interpretation: Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden argues from that of — let him say *what* system, for, lacking omniscience, I cannot tell. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

. . . final goal can only be reached solidarily by the whole of the humanity living at present. In order to further this discussion, I will state here some of the reasons which appear to speak against this view, and I will try to further elucidate some of the consequences of acting in accordance with each of these two views:

1. The unselfishness of the Altruist has a very different character according to which of the two views he takes. To begin with *our* view, the true Mystic who believes that he can attain deliverance from the world and from his individuality independent of the Karma of any other entities, or of the whole humanity, is an Altruist, because and so far as he is a monist, that is to say, on account of

²¹ [See “Kali-Yuga and the Kalki-Avatar,” Appendix A, in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]

the *tat twam asi*.²² Not the form or the individuality, but the *being* of all entities is the same and is his own; in proportion as he feels his own *avidyā*, *ajñāna* or unwisdom, so does he feel that of other entities, and has compassion with them on that account **(b)**. To take now the other view: Is not the altruism of an . . .

(b) To feel “compassion” without an adequate practical result ensuing from it is not to show oneself an “Altruist” but the reverse. Real self-development on the esoteric lines is *action*. “Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes *an action in a deadly sin*.”²³ — H.P. Blavatsky

. . . occultist who sees himself tied to the Karma of all his fellow-men, and who, on that account, labours for and with them, rather an egotistical one? For is not at the bottom of his “unselfishness” the knowledge that he cannot work out his own salvation at any lesser price? The escape from selfishness for such a man is self-sacrifice for the “world”; for the mystic, however, it is self-sacrifice to the eternal, to absolute being. Altruism is certainly considered one of the first requirements of any German Theosopher; we cannot or will not speak for others — but we are rather inclined to think that altruism had never been demanded in this country in the former sense (of self-sacrifice *for* the “world”), but only in the latter sense of self-sacrifice to the eternal **(c)**.

(c) An Occultist does not feel “himself tied to the Karma of all his fellow-men,” no more than one man feels his legs motionless because of the paralysis of another man’s legs. But this does not prevent the fact that the legs of both are evolved from, and contain the same ultimate essence of the ONE LIFE. Therefore, there can be no *egotistical* feeling in his labours for the less favoured brother. Esoterically, there is no other *way, means or method* of sacrificing oneself “to the eternal” than by working and sacrificing oneself for the collective spirit of Life, embodied in, and (for us) represented in its highest divine aspect by Humanity alone. Witness the *Nirmānakāya* — the sublime doctrine which no Orientalist understands to this day but which Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden can find in the IInd and IIIrd Treatises in *The Voice of the Silence*.²⁴ Naught else shows forth the eternal; and in no other way than this can any mystic or occultist *truly* reach the eternal, whatever the Orientalists and the vocabularies of Buddhist terms may say, for the real meaning of the *Trikāya*, the triple power of Buddha’s embodiment, and of Nirvāna in its triple negative and positive definitions has ever escaped them.

If our correspondent believes that by calling himself “theosopher” in preference to “theosophist” he escapes thereby any idea of *sophistry* connected with his views, then he is mistaken. I say it in all sincerity, the opinions he expresses in his letters are in my humble judgment the very fruit of sophistry. If I have misunderstood him, I stand under correction. — H.P. Blavatsky

2. It is a misunderstanding if you think in your note *e*, that we are advocating entire “withdrawal or isolation from the world.” We do so as little as yourself,

²² [*That art thou.*]

²³ Vide “The Two Paths” in *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 31

²⁴ [See “The Voice of the Silence - tr. Blavatsky” in our Higher Ethics and Devotion Series. — ED. PHIL.]

but only recommend an “ascetic life,” as far as it is necessary to prepare anyone for those tasks imposed upon him by following the road of *final* deliverance from the world. But the consequence of your view seems to lead to joining the world in a *worldly* life, and until good enough reasons are given for it, we do not approve of this conduct. That we should have to join our fellow-men in all their *worldly* interests and pursuits, in order to assist them and hasten them on to the solidary and common goal, is contrary to our intuition **(a)** . . .

Answer 5

(a) It is difficult to find out how the view expressed in my last answer can lead to such an inference, or where I have advised my brother Theosophists to join men “in all their *worldly* interests and pursuits”! Useless to quote here again that which is said in note *a*, for everyone can turn to the passage and see that I have said nothing of the kind. For one precept I can give a dozen. “Not nakedness, not matted hair, not dirt, not fasting or lying on the earth . . . not sitting motionless, can purify one who is full of doubt,” says *Dhammapada*.²⁵ “Neither abstinence from fish or flesh, nor going naked, nor the shaving of the head, nor matted hair, *etc., etc.*, will cleanse a man not free from delusions,” says *Āmagandha Sutta*.²⁶ This is what I meant. Between salvation through dirt and stench, like St. Labro and some Fakirs, and worldly life with an eye to every interest, there is a long way. Strict asceticism in the midst of the world, is more meritorious than avoiding those who do not think as we do, and thus losing an opportunity of showing them the truth. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

. . . deliverance *from* the world by furthering and favouring the world-process seems rather a round-about method. Our inclination leads us to retire from all *worldly* life, and to work apart — from a monastery or otherwise — together with and for all *those* fellow-men who are striving for the same goal of deliverance, and who are willing to rid themselves of all karma, their own as well as that of others. We would assist also *all* those who have to remain in worldly life, but who are already looking forward to the same goal of release, and who join us in doing their best to attain this end. We make no secret of our aims or our striving; we lay our views and our reasons before *anyone* who will hear them, and we are ready to receive amongst us *anyone* who will *honestly* join us **(b)**.

(b) So do we. And if not all of us live up to our highest ideal of wisdom, it is only because we are *men*, not gods, after all. But there is one thing, however, we never do (those in the esoteric circle, at any rate): *we set ourselves as examples to no men*, for we remember well that precept in *Āmagandha Sutta* that says: “Self-praise, disparaging others, conceit, evil communications (denunciations), these constitute (moral) uncleanness”; and again, as in the *Dhammapada*,²⁷ “The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive; the faults of others one lays open as much as possible, but one’s own fault one hides, as a cheat hides the bad die from the gambler.” — *H.P. Blavatsky*

²⁵ verse 141

²⁶ 7, 11

²⁷ verse 252

. . . however, we are doing our best to live up to our highest ideal of wisdom; and perhaps the good example may prove to be more useful to our fellow-men than any organized propaganda of teaching.

By the by, in your note you couple together *Schopenhauer* and *Eduard von Hartmann*. In this question, however, both are of opposite opinions. Schopenhauer, like most German mystics and theosophers, represents the views of Vedanta and (exoteric) Buddhism, that final salvation can, and can only, be individually attained independent of time and the karma of others. Hartmann, however, verges much more towards your opinion, for he does not believe in *individual* consummation and deliverance from the world; he thinks all mysticism and particularly that which is now known as Indian philosophy, an error, and demands of everyone as an altruistic duty to give himself up to the world-process, and to do his best in order to hasten its end (He is the “clever modern philosopher” whom I have mentioned on page 435) **(c)**.

(c) As I have never read von Hartmann, and know very little of Schopenhauer, nor do they interest me, I have permitted myself only to bring them forward as examples of the worst kind of pessimism; and you corroborate what I said, by what you state of Hartmann. If, however, as you say, Hartmann thinks “Indian philosophy an error,” then he cannot be said to *verge* toward *my* opinion, as I hold quite a contrary view. India might return the compliment with interest. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

3. There is, and can be, no doubt that Vedanta and (exoteric) Buddhism do not hold your view, but ours. Moreover, one could scarcely dispute that Lord Buddha — whatever esoteric doctrine he may have taught — founded monasteries, or that he favoured and assisted in doing so. Whether he expected all his disciples to become Bodhisattvas may be doubtful, but he certainly pointed out the “happy life” of a Bhikshu as the road to salvation; he expressly abstained from teaching cosmology or any worldly science; he never meddled with the worldly affairs of men, but every assistance he rendered them was entirely restricted to showing them the road to deliverance from existence. And just the same with Vedanta. It prohibits any attachment to worldly views and interests, or enquiries after cosmology or evolution *a fortiori*²⁸ socialism and any other world-improvement. All this Vedanta calls *Ajñāna* (Buddhism: *Avidyā*), while *Jñāna* or wisdom — the only aim of a sage (*Jñāni*) — is but the striving for the realization of the eternal (true reality, *Ātma*) **(a)**.

Answer 6

(a) It depends on what you call Vedanta — whether the Dvaita, or the Viśishtādvaita. That we differ from all these, is no news, and I have spoken of it repeatedly. Yet in the esotericism of the *Upanishads*, when correctly understood, and our esotericism, there will not be found much difference. Nor have I ever disputed any of the facts about Buddha as now brought forward; although these are facts from only his *exoteric* biography. Nor has he invented or drawn from his inner consciousness the philosophy he taught, but only the method of his rendering it. Buddhism being simply esoteric *Bodhism* taught before him secretly in the *arcana* of the

²⁸ [with stronger reason]

Brāhmanical temples, contains, of course, more than one doctrine of which the Lord Buddha never spoke in public. But this shows in no way that he did not teach them to his Arhats. Again, between “attachment to worldly views or interests” and the study of Cosmology, which is *not* “a worldly science” however, there is an abyss. One pertains to religious and philosophical asceticism, the other is necessary for the study of *Occultism* — which is not Buddhistic, but universal. Without the study of cosmogony and Theogony which teach the hidden value of every force in Nature and their direct correspondence to, and relation with, the forces in man (or the principles), no occult psycho-physics or *knowledge of man* as he truly is, is possible. No one is forced to study esoteric philosophy unless he likes it, nor has anyone ever confused Occultism with Buddhism or Vedāntism. — H.P. Blavatsky

Ajñāni (misprinted in the July number page 436: *agnam*) signified just the same as what is rendered by “fool” in the English translations of the *Dhammapada* and the *Suttas*. It is never understood “intellectually” and certainly does not mean an *ignoramus*, on the contrary, the scientists are rather more likely to be *ajñānis* than any “uneducated” mystic. *Ajñāni* expresses always a relative notion. *Jñāni* is anyone who is striving for the self-realization of the eternal; a *perfect jñāni* is only the *jīvanmukta*, but anyone who is on the road of development to this end may be (relatively) called *jñāni*, while anyone who is less advanced is comparatively an *ajñāni*. As, however, every *jñāni* sees the ultimate goal *above* himself, he will call himself *ajñāni*, until he has attained *jīvanmukta*; moreover, no true mystic will ever call any fellow-man a “fool” in the intellectual sense of the word, for he lays very little stress on intellectuality. To him anyone is a “fool” only in so far as he cares for (worldly) existence and strives for anything else than wisdom, deliverance, parinirvāna. And this turn of mind is entirely a question of the “will” of the individuality. The “will” of the *ajñāni* is carrying him from spirit into matter (descending arc of the cycle), while the “will” of the *jñāni* disentangles him from matter and makes him soar up towards “spirit” and out of all existence. This question of overcoming the “dead point” in the circle is by no means one of intellectuality; it is quite likely that a sister of mercy or a common labourer may have turned the corner while the Bacons, Göthes, Humboldts, *etc.*, may yet linger on the descending side of existence tied down to it by their individual wants and desires **(b)**.

(b) *Agnam*, instead of *ajñāni* was of course a printer’s mistake. With such every Journal and Magazine abounds, in Germany, I suppose, as much as in England, and from which *Lucifer* is no more free than the *Sphinx*. It is the printer’s and the proof-reader’s Karma. 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 *outcarlyleing* Carlyle in his opinion of his countrymen. *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.” Therefore, while thanking the kind doctor for the trouble he has taken to explain so minutely the vexed Sanskrit term, I can do so only in the name of *Lucifer’s* readers, not for myself, as I knew all he says, minus his risky new definition of “fool” and *plus* something else, probably as early as on the day when he made his first appearance into this world of *Māyā*. No doubt, neither Bacon, Humboldt, nor even the great Haeckel himself, the “light of Germany,” could ever be regarded as “*jñānis*”; but no more could any European I know of, however much he may have rid himself of all “individual wants and desires.” — *H.P. Blavatsky*

4. As we agree, that all existence, in fact, the whole world and the whole of its evolutionary process, its joys and evils, its gods and its devils, are *Māyā* (illusion) or erroneous conceptions of the true reality: how can it appear to us worthwhile to assist and to promote this process of misconception? **(a)**

Answer 7

(a) Precisely, because the term *māyā*, just like that of “*ajñāna*” in your own words — expresses only a *relative* notion. The world . . . “its joys and evils, its gods and devils,” and men to boot, are undeniably, when compared with that awful reality, *everlasting eternity*, no better than the productions and tricks of *māyā*, illusion. But there the line of demarcation is drawn. So long as we are incapable of forming even an approximately correct conception of this *inconceivable* eternity, for us, who are just as much an *illusion* as anything else outside of that eternity, the sorrows and misery of that greatest of all illusions — human life in the universal *mahāmāyā* — for us, I say, such sorrows and miseries are a vivid and a very sad reality. A shadow from your body, dancing on the white wall, is a reality so long as it is there, for yourself and all who can see it; because a reality is just as relative as an illusion. And if one “illusion” does not help another “illusion” of the same kind to study and recognise the true nature of Self, then, I fear, very few of us will ever get out from the clutches of *māyā*. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

5. Like all world-existence, time and causality also are only *Māyā* or — as Kant and Schopenhauer have proved beyond contradiction — are only *our* conditioned notions, *forms* of *our* intellection. Why then should any moment of time, or one of our own unreal forms of thought, be more favourable to the attainment of parinirvāna than any other? To this parinirvāna, Ātma, or true reality, any manvantara is just as unreal as any pralaya. And this is the same with regard to *causality*, as with respect to *time*, from whichever point of view you look at it. If from that of absolute reality, all causality and karma are unreal, and to realize this *unreality* is the secret of deliverance from it. But even if you look at it from the *ajñāna*-view, that is to say, taking existence for a reality, there can never (in “time”) be an end — nor can there have been a beginning — of causality. It makes, therefore, no difference whether any world is in pralaya or not; also Vedanta rightly says that during any pralaya the *kārana śarīra* (causal body, *ajñāna*) of Īśvara and of all jīvas, in fact, of all existence, is continuing **(b)**. And how could this be otherwise? After the destruction . . .

(b) This is again a *Viśishtādvaita* interpretation, which we do not accept in the esoteric school. We cannot say, as they do, that while the gross bodies alone perish, the *sūkshma* particles, which they consider uncreated and indestructible and the only real things, alone remain. Nor do we believe any Vedāntin of the Śamkarāchārya school would agree in uttering such a heresy. For this amounts to saying that *Manomaya Kośa*, which corresponds to what we call *Manas*, mind, with its volitional feelings and even *Kāmarūpa*, the vehicle of the *lower* manas, also survives during pralaya. See page 185 in *Five Years of Theosophy* and ponder over the three classifications of the human principles.²⁹ Thence it follows that the *Karana Śarīra* (which means simply the *human Monad* collectively or the reincarnating ego), the “causal body,” cannot continue; especially if, as you say, it is *ajñāna*, ignorance or the *wisdomless* principle, and even agreeably with your definition “a fool.” The idea alone of this “fool” surviving during any pralaya, is enough to make the hair of any Vedanta philosopher and even of a full blown Jīvanmukta, turn grey, and thrust him right back into an “*ajñāni*” again. Surely as you formulate it, this must be a *lapsus calami*?³⁰ And why should the *Karana Śarīra* of Īśvara let alone that of “all Jīvas” (!) be necessary during *pralaya* for the evolution of another universe? Īśvara, whether as a personal god, or an *intelligent* independent principle, *per se*, every Buddhist whether esoteric or exoteric and orthodox, will reject; while some Vedāntins would define him as Parabrahm *plus* MĀYĀ only, *i.e.*, a conception valid enough during the reign of *māyā*, but not otherwise. That which remains during pralaya is the eternal potentiality of every condition of *Prajñā* (consciousness) contained in that plane or *field* of consciousness, which the Advaita calls *Chidākāśa* and *Chinmatra* (abstract consciousness), which, being absolute, is therefore perfect *unconsciousness* — as a *true* Vedāntin would say. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

. . . of any universe in pralaya, must not another appear? Before our present universe must there not have been an infinite number of other universes? How could this be, if the cause of existence did not last through any pralaya as well as through any kalpa? And if so, why should any pralaya be a more favourable moment for the attainment of parinirvāna than any manvantara?

6. But if then one moment of time and one phase of causality were more favourable for this than any other: why should it just be *any* pralaya after a manvantara, not the end of the *mahā-kalpa* or at least that of a *kalpa*. In any kalpa (of 4,320 million of earthly years) there are 14 manvantaras and pralayas and in each mahā-kalpa (of 311,040 milliards of earthly years) there are (36,000 x 14) 504,000 manvantaras and pralayas. Why is this opportunity of parinirvāna offered just so often and not oftener, or not once only at the end of each universe. In other words, why can parinirvāna only be obtained by spurts and in batches; why, if it cannot be attained by any individuality at its *own* time, why must one wait only for the whole of one’s present fellow-humanity; why not also for all the animals, plants, amoebas and protoplasms, perhaps also for the minerals of our planet — and why not also for the entities on all the other stars of the universe? **(a)**

²⁹ [Also cf. “Constitution of Man – Overview” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³⁰ [slip of the pen]

Answer 8

(a) As Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden objects in the form of questions to statements and arguments that have never been formulated by me, I have nothing to say to this. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

7. But, it appears, the difficulty lies somewhat deeper still. That which has to be overcome, in order to attain parinirvāna, is the erroneous conception of separateness, the selfishness of individuality, the “thirst for existence” (*trishnā, tanhā*). It stands to reason, that this sense of individuality can only be overcome individually: How can this process be dependent on other individualities or anything else at all? Selfishness in the *abstract* which is the cause of all existence, in fact, *Ajñāna* and *Māyā*, can never be altogether removed and extinguished. *Ajñāna* is as endless as it is beginningless, and the number of jīvas (atoms?) is absolutely infinite; if the jīvas of a whole universe were to be extinguished in parinirvāna, jīvaship and ajñāna would not be lessened by one atom. In fact, both are mere unreality and misconception. Now, why should just one batch of humanity have to unite, in order to get rid each of his own misconception of reality? **(b)**

(b) Here again the only “unreality and misconception” I can perceive are his own. I am glad to find my correspondent so learned, and having made such wonderful progress since I saw him last some three years ago, when still in the fullness of his *ajñāna*; but I really cannot see what all his arguments refer to? — *H.P. Blavatsky*

Summing up, I will now give three instances of the difference in which I think, a Mystic or (exoteric) Buddhist, Bhikshu or Arhat, on the one side, and an occultist or theosophist on the other, would act, if both are fully consistent with their views and principles. Both will certainly use any opportunity which offers itself to do good to their fellow-men; but the good which they will try to do, will be of a different kind.

Supposing they met a poor, starving wretch, with whom they share their only morsel of bread: the mystic will try to make the man understand that the body is only to be kept up, because that entity which lives in it has a certain spiritual destination, and that this destination is nothing less than getting rid of all existence, and, at the same time, of all wants and desires; that having to beg for one’s food is no real hardship, but might give a happier life than that of rich people with all their imaginary worries and pretensions, that, in fact, the life of a destitute who *is* nothing and who *has* nothing in the world, is the “happy life” — as Buddha and Jesus have shown — when it is coupled with the right aspiration to the eternal, the only true and unchangeable reality, the divine peace. If the mystic finds that the man’s heart is incapable of responding to any keynote of such true religiousness, he will leave him alone, hoping that, at some future time, he too will find out that all his worldly wants and desires are insatiable and unsatisfying, and that after all true and final happiness can only be found in striving for the eternal. — Not so the occultist. He will know that he himself *cannot* finally realise the eternal, until every other human individuality has likewise gone through all the worldly aspirations and has been weaned

from them. He will, therefore, try to assist this poor wretch first in his worldly affairs; he will perhaps teach him some trade or handicraft by which he can earn his daily bread, or he will plan with him some socialistic scheme for bettering the worldly position of the poor.

Answer 9

Here the “Mystic” acts precisely as a Theosophist or Occultist of the Eastern school would. It is extremely interesting to learn where Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden has studied “Occultists” of the type he is describing? If it is in Germany, then pitying the Occultist who *knows* “that he himself *cannot* finally realize the eternal” until every human soul has been weaned from “worldly aspiration” I would invite him to come to London where other Occultists who reside therein would teach him better. But then why not qualify the “Occultist” in such case and thus show his nationality? Our correspondent mentions with evident scorn “Socialism” in this letter, as often as he does “Cosmology.” We have but two English Socialists, so far, in the T.S.,³¹ of which two, every Theosophist ought to be proud and accept them as his exemplar in practical Buddha- and Christ-like charity and virtues. Such socialists — two active altruists full of unselfish love and charity and ready to work for all that suffers and needs help — are decidedly worth ten thousand Mystics and other *Theosophers*, whether German or English, who talk instead of acting and sermonize instead of teaching. But let us take note of our correspondent’s second instance. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

Secondly, supposing further the mystic and the occultist meet two women, the one of the “Martha” sort, the other of the “Mary” character. The mystic will first remind both that everyone has, in the first instance, to do his or her duty conscientiously, be it a compulsory or a self-imposed duty. Whatever one has once undertaken and wherever he or she has contracted any obligation towards a fellow-being, this has to be fulfilled “up to the uttermost farthing.” But, on the other hand, the mystic will, just for this very reason, warn them against creating for themselves new attachments to the world and worldly affairs more than they find absolutely unavoidable. He will again try to direct the whole of their attention to their final goal and kindle in them every spark of high and genuine aspiration to the eternal. — Not so the occultist. He may also say all that the mystic has said and which fully satisfies “Mary”; as “Martha,” however, is not content with this and thinks the subject rather tedious and wearisome, he will have compassion with her worldliness and teach her some esoteric cosmology or speak to her of the possibilities of developing psychic powers and so on.

Answer 10

Is the cat out of the bag at last? I am asked to “oblige” our correspondent by answering questions, and instead of clear statements, I find no better than transparent hints against the working methods of the T.S.! Those who go against “esoteric cosmology” and the development of psychic powers are not forced to study either. But I have heard these objections four years ago, and they too, were started by a certain “Guru” we are both acquainted with, when that learned “Mystic” had had enough of

³¹ [Theosophical Society]

Chelaship and suddenly developed the ambition of becoming a Teacher. They are stale. — *H.P. Blavatsky*

Thirdly, supposing our mystic and our occultist meet a sick man who applies to them for help. Both will certainly try to cure him the best they can. At the same time, both will use this opportunity to turn their patient's mind to the eternal if they can; they will try to make him see that everything in the world is only the *just* effect of some cause, and that, as he is consciously suffering from his present illness, he himself *must* somewhere have consciously given the corresponding and adequate cause for this illness, either in his present or in any former life; that the only way of getting finally rid of all ills and evils is, not to create any more causes, but rather to abstain from all doing, to rid oneself of every avoidable want and desire, and in this way to lift oneself above all causality (karma). This, however, can only be achieved by putting good objects of aspiration into the place of the bad, the better object into that of the good, and the best into that of the better; directing, however, one's whole attention to our highest goal of consummation and living in the eternal as much as we can, this is the *only* mode of thought that will *finally* deliver us from the imperfections of existence.

If the patient cannot see the force of this train of argument or does not like it, the mystic will leave him to his own further development, and to some future opportunity which might bring the same man near him again, but in a more favourable state of mind.

Not so the occultist. He will consider it his duty to stick to this man to whose Karma, as to that of everyone else, he is irremediably and unavoidably bound; he will not abandon him until he has helped him on to such an advanced state of true spiritual development that he begins to see his final goal and to aspire to it "with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might." In the meantime, however, the occultist will try to prepare him for that by helping him to arrange his worldly life in a manner as favourable to such an aspiration as possible. He will make him see that vegetarian or rather fruit diet is the only food fully in accordance with human nature; he will teach him the fundamental rules of esoteric hygienics; he will show him how to make the right use of vitality (mesmerism), and as he does not feel any aspiration for the nameless and formless eternal, he will meanwhile make him aspire for esoteric knowledge and for occult powers.

Now, will you do us the great favour to show us reasons *why* the mystic is wrong and the occultist right, or why parinirvāna should not be attained by any individuality and at any time, when its own karma has been burnt by *jñāna* in *samādhi*, and independent of the karma of any other individual or that of humanity.

Yours sincerely,

HÜBBE-SCHLEIDEN

Neuhaugen bei München, September 1889

Answer 11

As no Occultist of my acquaintance would act in this supposed fashion no answer is possible. We theosophists, and especially your humble servant, are too occupied with our work to lose time at answering supposititious cases and fictions. When our prolific correspondent tells us *whom* he means under the name of the “Occultist” and *when* or *where* the latter has acted in that way, I will be at his service. Perhaps he means some Theosophist or rather member of the T.S. under this term? For I, at any rate, never met yet an “Occultist” of that description. As to the closing question I believe it was sufficiently answered in the earlier explanations of this reply.

Yours, as sincerely,

H.P. BLAVATSKY

