

*William Quan Judge*  
*Humanity, the Great Orphan*



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*What is the real meaning of that phrase so often seen in Theosophical papers, “the great orphan, Humanity”?*

This phrase has a deep significance for me. An orphan may also be one who had no parents, as the state of orphanage is that of being without father or mother. If we imagine a child appearing on the earth without a parent, we would have to call it an orphan. Humanity is the “great orphan” because it is without parents in the sense that it has produced itself and hence from itself has to procure the guidance it needs. And as it wanders in the dark valley of the shadow of death, it is more in need of help and counsel than the mere body of a child which is the ordinary orphan. The soul is parentless, existing of itself from all eternity, and considered as soul, mankind is hence an orphan. Plunged into matter, surrounded on every side by the vast number of intricate illusions and temptations that belong to earthly life, it stands every day and hour in need of protection as well as guidance.

If the idea of a loving parent be applied to the notion that a definite God has produced mankind, then we find that this supposed parent has at the same time invented the most diversified and ingenious series of bedevilmments and torments to beguile, hurt, harass, and finally destroy the child. For if a certain one God is the maker or parent of man, then He also is the one who made nature. Nature is cruel, cold, and implacable. It stops for no man, it never relents, it destroys without mercy. When inhabitants of earth multiply, Nature manages to destroy millions of people in a night or two, as has now and then happened in China; the very elect of the earth are swept off the earth in a moment; slowly and painfully the infant races creep up the ladder of time, leaving as they go vast heaps of slain at the foot. The whole of life presents, indeed, to man more frowns than smiles. It is this fact that has made so many who

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<sup>1</sup> [This magazine was distributed free of charge to members-at-large of the Theosophical Society in America, who were invited to “send questions, answers to questions, opinions and notes upon Theosophical subjects.” Usually they were handled by the editor, Alexander Fullerton, with the assistance of Mr. Judge. Though some of the editor’s answers (signed Ans.) may have been by Judge, we include only those contributed under his own name, initials, or pen-names. — *Dara Eklund*.]

are told of a loving father and at the same time of an illogical scheme of salvation revolt altogether from the idea of any meaning to life but despair.

I cannot see how the phrase “great orphan” carries with it the notion of being without guide or helper. The orphan is everywhere; but among the units composing it are some who have risen through trial to the state where they can help the lower ones. Orphans themselves, they live to benefit mankind of which they are a part. They are the head of the body of which the lower members are the less developed units or atoms. Enthusiasm for the “orphan” is that which will lead to devotion and sacrifice; and that enthusiasm must be developed not only in the Theosophist, but in all the men of earth. Having it they will help all on their own plane, and each stratum of men rising in development will help all below until all belonging to the globe have risen to the perfect height. Then they can proceed to other spots in cosmos where are also wandering vast masses of souls, also units in the “orphan,” who require and can then receive the same help that we had extended to us. If this is not the destiny of man during the time when all things are manifesting, then the remark of Spencer to the effect that altruism is useless because when universal there is no one to benefit, must be accepted. However, the phrase in the question is one of those rhetorical ones that must not be read in its strict letter and ordinary meaning.

