

## A Rough Outline of Theosophy by Annie Besant

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[Page 1] IN dealing with a great theme within narrow limits one has always to make a choice of evils: one must either substantiate each point, buttress it up with arguments, and thus fail to give any roughly complete idea of the whole; or one must make an outline of the whole, leaving out the proofs which bring conviction of the truth of the teaching. As the main object of this paper is to place before the average man or woman an idea of Theosophy as a whole, I elect to take the inconvenience of the latter alternative, and use the expository instead of the controversial method. Those who are sufficiently interested in the subject to desire further knowledge can easily pass on into the investigation of evidences, evidences that are within the reach of all who have patience, power of thought and courage.

We, who are Theosophists, allege that there exists a great body of doctrine philosophical, scientific and ethical, which forms the basis of, and includes all that is accurate in, the philosophies, sciences, and religions of the ancient and modern worlds. This body [Page 2] of doctrine is a philosophy and a science more than a religion in the ordinary sense of the word, for it does not impose dogmas as necessary to be believed under any kind of supernatural penalties, as do the various Churches of the world. It is indeed a religion, if religion be the binding of life by a sublime ideal; but it puts forward its teachings as capable of demonstration, not on authority which it is blasphemy to challenge or deny.

That some great body of doctrine did exist in antiquity, and was transmitted from generation to generation, is patent to any investigator. It was this which was taught in the Mysteries, of which Dr. Warburton wrote: "The wisest and best men in the Pagan world are unanimous in this, that the Mysteries were instituted pure, and proposed the noblest ends by the worthiest means". To speak of the Initiates is to speak of the greatest men of old; in their ranks we find Plato and Pythagoras, Euclid and Democritus, Thales and Solon, Apollonius and Iamblichus. In the Mysteries unveiled, they learned their wisdom, and gave out to the world such fragments of it as their oath allowed. But those fragments have fed the world for centuries, and even yet the learned of the modern West sit at the feet of these elder sons of wisdom. Among the teachers of the early Christian Church some of these men were found; they held Christianity in its esoteric meaning, and used exoteric dogmas merely as veils to cover the hidden truth. [Page 3] "Unto you it is given", said Jesus, "to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (*Mark*, iv, 2). Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen both recognised the esoteric nature of the underlying truths of Christianity, as before them did Paul. In West as in East, exoteric religions were but the popular representations of the Secret Wisdom. But with the triumph of ecclesiasticism, the Secret Wisdom drew back further and further into the shade, until its very existence slowly faded from the minds of men. Now and then one of its disciples appeared in Christendom, and gave to the world some *discovery* which started thought on some new and fruitful line; thus Paracelsus, with his *discovery* of hydrogen, his magnetic treatment for the core of disease, and his many hints at secrets of nature not even yet worked out. Trace through the Middle Ages, too often by the lurid light of flames blazing round a human body, the path along which the pioneers of Science toiled, and it will be found that the *magicians* and *wizards* were the finger-posts that marked the way. Passing strange it is to note how the minds of men have changed in their aspect to the guardians of the Hidden Wisdom. Of old,

in their passionate gratitude, men regarded them as wellnigh divine, thinking no honours too great to pay to those who had won the right of entrance into the temple of the Unveiled Truth. In the Middle Ages, when [Page 4] men, having turned from the light, saw devils everywhere in the darkness, the adepts of the Right-Hand Path were dreaded as those of the Left, and where-ever new knowledge appeared and obscure regions of nature were made visible, cries of terror and wrath rent the air, and men paid their benefactors with torture and with death, In our own time, secure in the completeness of our knowledge, certain that our philosophy embraces all things possible in heaven and earth, we neither honour the teachers as Gods nor denounce them as devils: with a shrug of contempt and a sniff of derision we turn from them, as they come to us with outstretched hands full of priceless gifts, and we mutter, "Frauds, charlatans!" entrenched as we are in our modern conceit that only our century is wise.

Theosophy claims to be this Secret Wisdom, this great body of doctrine, and it alleges that this precious deposit, enriched with the results of the investigations of generations of Seers and Sages, verified by countless experiments, is today, as of old, in the hands of a mighty Brotherhood, variously spoken of as Adepts, Arhats, Masters. Mahatmas, Brothers, who are living men, evolved further than average humanity, who work ever for the service of their race with a perfect and selfless devotion, holding their high powers in trust for the common good, content to be without recognition, having passed beyond all desires of the personal self.[Page 5]

The claim is a lofty one, but it can be substantiated by evidence. I leave it as a mere statement of the position taken up. Coming to the Western world today, Theosophy speaks far more openly than it has ever done before, owing to the simple fact that, with the evolution of the race, man has become more and more fitted to be the recipient of such knowledge, so that what would once be taught to only a small minority may now find a wider field. Some of the doctrine is now thrown broadcast, so that all who *can* receive it *may*; but the keys which unlock the Mysteries are still committed but to few hands, hands too well tried to tremble under their weight, or to let them slip from either weakness or treachery. As of old, so now, the Secret Wisdom is guarded, not by the arbitrary consent or refusal of the Teachers to impart instruction, but by the capacity of the student to understand and to assimilate.

Theosophy postulates the existence of an eternal Principle, known only through its effects. No words can describe It, for words imply discrimination, and This is ALL. We murmur, Absolute, Infinite, Unconditioned — but the words mean naught. SAT, the Wise speak of: BE-NESS, not even Being, nor Existence. Only as the Manifested becomes, can language be used with meaning; but the appearance of the Manifested implies the Unmanifested, for the Manifested is transitory and mutable, and there must be Something that eternally endures. This Eternal [Page 6] must be postulated, else whence the existences around us ? It must contain within Itself That which is the essence of the germ of all possibilities, all potencies: Space is the only conception that can even faintly mirror It without preposterous distortion, but silence least offends in these high regions where the wings of thought beat faintly, and lips can only falter, not pronounce.

The universe is, in Theosophy, the manifestation of an aspect of SAT. Rhythmically succeed each other periods of activity and periods of repose, periods of manifestation and periods of absorption, the expiration and inspiration of the Great Breath, in the figurative and most expressive phraseology of the East. The outbreathing is the manifested world; the inbreathing terminates the period of activity. The Root-Substance differentiates into *spirit-matter*, whereof the universe, visible and invisible, is built up, evolving into seven stages, or planes, of manifestation, each denser than its predecessor; the substance

is the same in all, but the degrees of its density differ. So the chemist may have in his receiver water held invisible: he may condense it into a faint mist-cloud, condense it further into vapour, further yet into liquid, further yet into solid; throughout he has the same chemical compound, though he changes its condition. Now it is well to remember that the chemist is dealing with facts in Nature and that his results may therefore throw light on natural methods, working in larger fields; we may at [Page 7] least learn from such an illustration to clarify our conceptions of the past course of evolution. Thus, from the Theosophical standpoint, *spirit* and *matter* are essentially one, and the universe one living whole from center to circumference, not a molecule in it that is not instinct with life. Hence the difficulty that scientists have always found in defining *life*. Every definition they have made has broken down as excluding some phenomena that they were compelled to recognize as those of life. Sentiency, in our meaning of the word there may not be, say in the mineral; but is it therefore *dead*? Its particles cohere, they vibrate, they attract and they repel: what are these but manifestations of that living energy which rolls the worlds in their courses, flashes from continent to continent, thrills from root to summit of the plant, pulses in the animal, reasons in the man? One Life and therefore One Law, everywhere, not a Chaos of warring atoms but a Kosmos of ordered growth. Death itself is but a change in life-manifestation, life which has outworn one garment, and, rending it in pieces, clothes itself anew. When the thoughtless say, "He is dead", the wise know that the countless *lives* of which the human body is built up have become charged with more energy than the bodily structure can stand, that the strain has become too great, that disruption must ensue. But *death* is only transformation not destruction, and every molecule has pure life essence [Page 8] at its core with the material garment it has woven round itself of its own substance for action on the objective plane.

Each of the seven Kosmic planes of manifestation is marked off by its own characteristics; in the first pure *spirit*, the primary emanation of the ONE, subtlest, rarest, of all manifestations, incognisable even by the highest of Adepts save as present in its vehicle, the Spiritual Soul: without form, without intelligence, as we use the word — these matters are too high, "I cannot attain unto them". Next comes the plane of Mind, of loftiest spiritual intelligence, where first entity as entity can be postulated; individualism begins, the Ego first appears. Rare and subtle is matter on that plane, yet form is there possible, for the individual implies the presence of limitation, the separation of the "I" from the "not I". Fourth, still densifying, comes the plane of animal passions and desires, actual forms *on their own plane*. Then, fifthly, that of the vivid animating life-principle, as absorbed in forms. Sixthly, the astral plane, in which matter is but slightly rarer than with ourselves. Seventhly, the plane familiar to all of us, that of the objective universe.

Let us delay for a moment over this question of *planes*, for on the understanding of it hinges our grasp of the philosophical aspect of Theosophy. A plane may be defined as a state marked off by clear characteristics; it must not be thought of as a place, [Page 9] as though the universe were made up of shells one within the other like the coats of an onion. The conception is metaphysical, not physical, the consciousness acting on each plane in fashion appropriate to each. Thus a man may pass from the plane of the objective in which his consciousness is generally acting, on to the other planes: he may pass into the astral in sleep, under mesmerism, under the influence of various drugs; his consciousness may be removed from the physical plane, his body passive, his brain inert; an electric light leaves his eyes unaffected, a gong beaten at his ear cannot rouse the organ of hearing; the organs through which his consciousness normally acts in the physical universe are all useless, for the consciousness that uses them is transferred to another plane. But he can see, hear, understand, on the astral plane, see sights invisible to physical eyes, hear sounds inaudible to physical ears. Not real? What is *real*? Some people confine the real to the tangible, and only believe in the existence of a thing that can knock them down with a lesion to prove the striking. But an emotion can slay as swiftly as an arrow; a thought can cure with

as much certainty as a drug. All the mightiest forces are those which are invisible on this plane, visible though they be to senses subtler than our own. Take the case of a soldier who, in the mad passion of slaughter, the lust for blood, is wounded in the onward charge, and knows not the wounding till his passions cool and the [Page 10] fight is over; his consciousness during the fight is transferred to the fourth plane, that of the emotions and passions, and it is not till it returns from that to the plane of the physical body that pain is felt. So again will a great philosopher, his consciousness rising to the plane of intelligence, becomes wholly abstracted — as we well say — from the physical plane; brooding over some deep problem, he forgets all physical wants, all bodily appetites, and becomes concentrated entirely on the thought-plane, the fifth, in Theosophic parlance.

Now the consciousness of man can thus pass from plane to plane because he is himself the universe in miniature, and is built up himself of these seven *principles*, as they are sometimes called, or better, is himself a differentiation of consciousness on seven planes. It may be well, at this stage, to give to these states of consciousness the names by which they are known in Theosophical literature, for although some people shrink from names that are unfamiliar, there are, after all, only seven of them, and the use of them enables one to avoid the continual repetition of clumsy and inexact descriptive sentences. To Macrocosm and Microcosm alike the names apply, although they are most often found in relation to man. The Spirit in man is named *Âtmã*, cognizable only in its vehicle *Buddhi*, the Spiritual Soul; these are the reflections in man of the highest planes in the universe. The Spiritual Intelligence is *Manas*, the Ego in man, the [Page 11] immortal entity, the link between *Âtmã-Buddhi* and the temporary personality. Below these come in order *Kama*, the emotional and passionate nature; *Prâna*, the animating life-principle of the personality; *Liñga Sharîra*, the *astral body* the double of the physical, but formed of the somewhat more ethereal *astral* matter; lastly, *Stûla Sharîra*, the physical body. These seven states are grouped under two heads: *Âtma-Buddhi-Manas* make up the trinity in man, imperishable, immortal, the *pilgrim* that passes through countless lives; the *Individual*, the True Man. *Kâma*, *Prâna*, *Liñga Sharîra*, and *Sthûla Sharîra* form the quaternary, the transitory part of the human being, the *person*, which perishes gradually, onwards from the death of the physical body. This disintegrates, the molecules of physical, astral, *kâmic* matter finding all new forms into which they are built, and the more quickly they are all resolved into their elements the better for all concerned. The consciousness of the normal man resides chiefly on the physical, astral and kamic planes, with the lower portion of the *Mânasic*. In flashes of genius, in loftiest aspirations, he is touched for a moment by the light from the higher *Mânasic* regions, but this comes — only comes — to the few, and to these but in rare moments of sublime abstraction. Happy they who even thus catch a glimpse of the Divine *Augoeides*, the immortal Ego within them. To none born of women, save the Masters, is it at the present time given by the [Page 12] law of evolution to rise to the *Âtmic-Buddhic* planes in man; thither the race will climb millenniums hence, but at present it boots not to speak thereof.

Each of these planes has its own organisms, its own phenomena, the laws of its own manifestation; and each can be investigated as exactly, as scientifically, as experimentally, as the objective plane with which we are most familiar. All that is necessary is that we should use our appropriate organs of sensation, and appropriate methods of investigation. On the objective plane we are already able to obey this rule; we do not use our eyes to listen to sounds, and then deny that sounds exist because our eyes cannot hear them nor do we take in hand the microscope to examine a distant nebula, and then say that the nebula is not there because the field of the microscope is dark. A very slight knowledge of our own objective universe will place us in the right mental attitude towards the unknown. Why do we see, hear, taste, feel? Merely because our physical body is capable of receiving certain impressions from without by way of the avenues of senses. But there are myriads of phenomena, as *real* as those we familiarly cognize,

which are to us non-existent, for the very simple reason that our organs of sensation are not adapted to receive them. Take the air-vibrations which, translated into terms of consciousness, we call sound. If an instrument that emits successive notes be sounded in a room with a dozen people, as the notes become [Page 13] shriller and shriller one person after another drops out of the circle of auditors and is wrapped in silence while still a note is sounding, audible to others there; at last a pipe speaks that no one hears, and though all the air be throbbing with its vibrations, silence complete reigns in the room. The vibration-waves have become so short and rapid that the mechanism of the human ear cannot vibrate in unison with them; the objective phenomenon is there, but the subjective does not respond to it, so that for man it does not exist. Similar illustrations might be drawn in connection with every sense, and it is surely not too much to claim that if, on the plane to which our bodies are correlated, phenomena constantly escape our dull perceptions, men shall not found on their ignorance of other planes the absolute denial of their existence. Only informed opinion is of any weight in discussion, and in Occult Science, as in every other, the mere chatter and vituperation of uninformed criticism do not count. The Occultist can be no more moved thereby than Professor Huxley by the assertions of a fourth-standard schoolboy. Those who have time, ability, and courage, can develop in themselves the senses and the capacities which enable the consciousness to come into touch with the higher planes, senses and capacities already evolved and fully at work in some, and to be in the course of ages the common inheritance of every child of man. I know that the exercise [Page 14] of these powers often arouses in the minds of people convinced of their reality an eager desire to possess them, but only those who will pay the price can attain possession. And the first installment of that price is the absolute renunciation of all that men prize and long for here on earth; complete self-abnegation; perfect devotion to the service of others; destruction of all personal desires; detachment from all earthly things. Such is the *first* step on the Right-Hand Path, and until that step is taken it is idle to talk of further progress along that thorny road. Occultism wears no crown save that of thorns, and its scepter of command is the seven-knotted wand, in which each knot marks the payment of a price from which the normal man or woman would turn shuddering away. It is because of this that it is not worth while to deal with this aspect of Theosophy at any length. What does concern us is the general plan of evolution, the *pilgrimage* of the Ego, of the individual, encased in the outer shell of the personality.

The evolution of man consists in the acquirement by the Ego of experience, and the gradual moulding of the physical nature into a form which can readily respond to every prompting of the Spirit within. This evolution is carried on by the repeated incarnation of the Ego, overshadowed by the Spirit, in successive personalities, through which it lives and acts on the objective plane. The task before it when it starts on the wheel of life on this earth; during the [Page 15] present cycle, is to acquire and assimilate all experience, and so to energize and sublimate the objective form of man that it may become a fit instrument and dwelling for the Spirit; the complete assimilation of the Ego with the Spirit, of Manas with Âtma-Buddhi, being the final goal of the long and painful pilgrimage. It is obvious that such work cannot be accomplished in one lifetime, or in a few. For such a gigantic task countless lives must be required, each life but one step in the long climbing upward. Each life should garner some fresh experience, should add some new capacity or strengthen some budding force; thus is built up through numberless generations the Perfect Man. Hence the doctrine of Reincarnation is the very core and essence of Theosophy, and according to the hold this belief has on life, so will be the grasp of the learner on all Theosophic truth.

There is no doctrine in the range of philosophy which throws so much light on the tangled web of human life as does this doctrine of Reincarnation. Take, for instance, the immense difference in capacity and in character found within the limits of the human race. In all plants and in all animals the characteristic

qualities of species may vary, but within comparatively narrow limits; so also with man, so far as his outer form, his instincts and his animal passions are concerned. They vary of course, as those of the brute vary, but their broad outline remains the same. But when we come to study the difference of mental [Page 16] capacity and moral character, we are struck with the vast distances that separate man from man. Between the savage, counting five upon his fingers, and the Newton who calculates the movements of a planet and predicts its course, how wide and deep a gulf as to intellect! Between a barbarian dancing gleefully round the bleeding body of his foe, as he mangles and torments the living tissues, and the Howard who gives his life to save and aid the lowest fallen of his people, how vast the difference as to character! And this leaves out of account those living men, who are as far ahead of Newton and of Howard as these are above the least evolved of our race. Whence the great divergences, unparalleled among the rest of the organisms on our globe? Why is man alone so diverse! Theosophy points in answer to the reincarnation of the Ego, and sees in the differing stages of experience reached by that Ego the explanation of the differing intellectual and moral capacities of the personality. *Baby Egos* — as I have heard H. P. Blavatsky call them with reference to their lack of human experience — inform the little-evolved humanity, while those who dwell in the more highly developed races are those who have already garnered much rich harvest of past experience and have thereby become capable of more rapid growth.

The Ego that has completed a span of earth-life, and has shaken off the worn-out personality [Page 17] that it informed, passes into a subjective state of rest, ere reassuming “the burden of the flesh”. Thus it remains for a period varying in length according to the stage of evolution it has reached. When that period is exhausted, it is drawn back to earth-life, to such environment as is suitable for the growing of the seed it has sown in its past. As surely as hydrogen and oxygen rush into union under certain conditions of temperature and of pressure, is the Ego drawn by irresistible affinity to the circumstances that yield opening for its further evolution. Suitable environment, suitable parents to provide a suitable physical body, such are some of the conditions that guide the place and time of reincarnation. The desire for sentient life, the desire for objective expression, that desire which set the universe a-building, impels the Ego to seek renewed manifestation; it is drawn to the surroundings which its own past has made necessary for its further progress. Nor is this all. I have spoken of the fact that each plane has its own organisms, its own laws; the Mānasic plane is the plane on which thoughts take forms, objective to all who are able to perceive on that plane. All the experiences of a life, gathered up after death, and the essence, as it were, extracted, have their appropriate thought-forms on the Mānasic plane; as the time for the reincarnation of the Ego approaches, these, with previous unexhausted similar thought-forms, pass to the astral [Page 18] plane, clothe themselves in astral matter, and mould the astral body into the form suitable for the working out of their own natural results. Into this astral body the physical is built, molecule by molecule, the astral mould thus, in its turn, moulding the physical. Through the physical body, including its brain, the reincarnated Ego has to work for the term of that incarnation, and thus it dwells in a tabernacle of its own construction, the inevitable resultant of its own past earth lives.

To how many of the problems that vex thinkers today by the apparent hopelessness of their solution, is an explanation suggested if, for the moment, Reincarnation be accepted even as a possible hypothesis. Within the limits of a family, hereditary physical likeness, often joined by startling mental and moral divergences; twins, alike as far as regards heredity and pre-natal environment, yet showing in some cases strong resemblance, in others no less dissimilarity. Cases of precocity, where the infant brain manifests the rarest capacities precedent to all instruction. Cases of rapid gain of knowledge, where the knowledge seems to be remembered rather than acquired, recognized rather than learned. Cases of intuition, startling in their swiftness and lucidity, insight clear and rapid into complicated problems without guide or teacher to show the way. All these and many other similar puzzles receive light from the idea of

the persistent individual that informs each [Page 19] personality, and it is a well-known principle in seeking for some general law underlying a mass of apparently unrelated phenomena that the hypothesis which explains most, brings most into accord with an intelligible sequence, is the one most likely to repay further investigation.

To those, again, who shrink from the idea that the Universe is one vast embodiment of injustice, the doctrine of Reincarnation comes as a mental relief from a well nigh unbearable strain. When we see the eager mind imprisoned in an inefficient body; when we note the differences of mental and moral capacity that make all achievement easy to one, impossible to others; when we come across what seem to be undeserved suffering, disadvantageous circumstances; when we feel longings after heights unattainable for lack of strength; then the knowledge that we create our own character, that we have made our own strength or our own weakness, that we are not the sport of an arbitrary God or of a soulless Destiny, but are verily and indeed the creators of ourselves and of our lot in life — this knowledge comes to us as a support and an inspiration, giving energy to improve and courage to endure.

This immutable law of cause and effect is spoken of as Karma (action) in Theosophy. Each action — using the word to include all forms of activity, mental, moral, physical — is a cause and must work out its full effect. Effect as regards the past, it is [Page 20] cause as regards the future, and under this sway of karmic law moves the whole life of man as of all worlds. Every debt incurred must be duly paid in this or in some other life, and as the wheel of life turns round, it brings with it the fruit of every seed that we have sown. Reincarnation under karmic law, such is the message of Theosophy to a Christendom which relies on a vicarious atonement and a swift escape to Paradise when the grave closes on the dead. Reincarnation under karmic law, until the fruit of every experience has been gathered, every blunder rectified, every fault eradicated, until compassion has been made perfect, strength unbreakable, tenderness complete, self-abnegation the law of life, renunciation for others the natural and joyous impulse of the whole nature.

But how, it may be asked, can you urge to effort, or press responsibility, if you regard every action as one link in an infrangible chain of cause and effect? The answer lies in the sevenfold nature of man, in the action of the higher on the lower. The freewill of man on this plane is lodged in the Mānasic entity, which acts on his lower nature. Absolute freewill is there none, save in the Unconditioned. When manifestation begins, the Universal Will becomes bound and limited by the laws of Its own manifestation, by the fashion of the expression It has chosen as Its temporary vehicle. Conditioned, it is limited by the [Page 21] conditions It has imposed on Itself, manifesting under the garb of the universe in which it wills to body Itself forth. On each plane Its expression is limited by the capacities of Its embodiments. Now the Manasic entity in its own sphere is the reflection, the image, of the Universal Will in Kosmos. So far as the personality is concerned, the promptings, the impulses, from the Mānasic plane are spontaneous, have every mark of freedom, and if we start from the lowest plane of objective nature, we shall see how relative freedom is possible. If a man be loaded with chains, his muscles will be limited in their power of movement. They are constrained in their expression by the dead weight of iron pressing upon them; yet the muscular force is there, though denied outward expression, and the iron cannot prevent the straining of the fibers against the force used in their subdual. Again, some strong emotion, some powerful impulse from the kāma-mānasic plane, may hold rigid the muscles under lesion that would make every fibre contract and pull the limb away from the knife. The muscles are compelled from the plane above them, the personal will being free to hold them rigid or leave them to their natural reaction against injury. From the standpoint of the muscles the personal will is free, and it cannot be controlled save as to its material

expression on the material plane. When the Mānasic entity sends an impulse downwards to the lower nature with which it is linked, conflict arises between the [Page 22] animal desire and the human will. Its interferences appear to the personality as spontaneous, free, uncaused by any actions on the lower plane; and so they are, for the causes that work on it are of the higher not the lower planes. The animal passions and desires may limit its effective expression on their own plane, but they cannot either prompt or prevent its impulses: man's true freedom is found when his lower nature puts itself into line with the higher, and gives free course to the will of the higher Ego. And so with that Ego itself: able to act freely on the planes below it, it finds its own best freedom as channel of the Universal Will from which it springs, the conscious willing harmony with the All of which it is part. An effect cannot be altered when the cause has appeared; but that effect is itself to be a cause, and here the will can act. Suppose a great sorrow falls on some shrinking human heart; the effect is there, it cannot be avoided, but its future result as cause may be one of two things; Kâma may rebel, the whole personal nature may rise in passionate revolt, and so, warring against the Higher Will, the new cause generated will be of disharmony, bearing in its womb new evil to be born in days to come. But Kâma may range itself obediently with karmic action; it may patiently accept the pain, joyfully unite itself to the Higher Will, and so make the effect as cause to be pregnant with future good. [Page 23]

Remains but space for one last word on that which is Theosophy in action — the Universal Brotherhood of Man. This teaching is the inevitable outcome of the doctrines of the One Universal Spirit common to all humanity, Reincarnation and Karma. Every distinction of race and sex, of class and creed, fades away before the essential unity of the indwelling Spirit, before the countless incarnations under all forms of outward garmenture, making the experience of prince and beggar part of the training of all in turn. Here is to be found the motive spring of action — love for all mankind. In each child of man the true Theosophist recognises a brother to be loved and served, and in the Theosophical Society, Theosophists, under the direction of the Masters, have formed a nucleus for such Brotherhood of Humanity and have made its recognition the only obligation binding on all who enter. Amid class hatreds and warring sects it raises this sublime banner of human love, a continual reminder that essentially all humanity is one, and that the goal to which we travel is the same for all. Without this recognition of Brotherhood all science is useless and all religion is hypocrisy. Deeper than all diversity, mightier than all animosity, is that Holy Spirit of Love. The Self of each is the Higher Self of all, and that bond is one which nothing in all worlds can avail to break. That which raises one raises all; that which degrades one degrades all. The sin and crime of our races are our [Page 24] sin and crime, and only as we save our brethren can we save ourselves. One in our inception, one in our goal, we must needs be one in our progress; the “curse of separateness” that is on us, it is ours to remove, and Theosophy, alike as religion and philosophy, will be a failure save as it is the embodiment of the life of Love.