

Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy

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THE title of the lecture that I am to deliver to you tonight shows you, I think, the limitations which I practically impose upon both the subjects mentioned in it, so defining the limits of what I have to say. I am to speak to you on "Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy". Now, it is certain that you may argue for the vegetarian theory and practice from very many points of view. You may take it from the standpoint of physical health; you may take it along the physiological and chemical lines; you might make a very strong argument in its favour from the connection between it and the use, or rather the disuse, of strong liquor, because the use of alcohol and the use of meat are very closely connected with each other, and are very apt to vary together in the same individual; or you might take it from other standpoints, familiar, probably, to many of you, in the arguments that you read in vegetarian journals and hear from vegetarian speakers. So again with Theosophy. If I were going to deal [Page 2] with it by itself, I should be giving an impression of its meaning and doctrines, tracing for you, perhaps, the course of its history, advancing arguments as to the reasonableness of its general teaching, as to the value of its philosophy to man. But I am going to take the two subjects in relation to each other, and that relation means that I am going to try to bring to some of you, who very likely are already vegetarians, arguments along a line of thought that may be less familiar to you than those with which vegetarianism is generally supported. And I am going also to try to show to those of you who are not vegetarians that, from the Theosophical standpoint, there are arguments to be adduced, other than those which deal with the nourishment of the body, with chemical or physiological questions, or even with its bearing on the drink traffic — a line of thought entirely different from these, and valuable perhaps especially because of its difference; just as you might bring up fresh reinforcements to an army that is already struggling against considerable odds.

The vegetarianism that I am going to argue about tonight is that which will be familiar to all of you as the abstinence from all those kinds of food which imply the slaying of the animal, or cruelty inflicted upon the animal. I am not going to take up any special line of argument, such as those which may divide one vegetarian party from the other. I am not going to argue [Page 3]

about cereals, nor about fruits, nor about the variety of diets which form so much of the discussion at the present time. I am going to take the broad line of abstinence from all kinds of animal food, and I am going to try to show the reasons for such abstinence which may be drawn from the teachings of Theosophy, which may be endorsed by that view of the world and of men which is known under this name.

I ought to say before putting the argument that, while I believe the argument I put to be perfectly sound from the standpoint of Theosophy, I have no right to pledge the Theosophical Society as a whole to the acceptance of that argument, for, as many of you know, we do not require from persons who enter the Theosophical Society their acceptance of the doctrines which are known under the general name of Theosophy. We only ask them to accept the doctrine of universal brotherhood, and to search after truth in the cooperative spirit, as it were, rather than in the competitive. That is, we require from our members that they shall not attack aggressively the religions or other views of their neighbours, but that they shall show the same respect to others as they expect others will show to them in the expression of their

opinions. With that one obligation we are content. We do not try to force Theosophical views on those who enter. Those of us who believe them to be true have faith in the force of truth itself, and therefore we leave [Page 4] our members perfectly free to accept or to reject them. That being so, you will understand that in speaking I am not committing the Society. The views that I speak are drawn from the Philosophy which may or may not be held by any individual member of our union.

Now, the first line of argument to which I am going to ask your attention regarding vegetarianism in the light of Theosophy, is this: Theosophy regards man as part of a great line of evolution; it regards man's place in the world as a link in a mighty chain, a chain which has its first link in manifestation in the divine life itself, which comes down, link after link, through great hierarchies or classes of evolving spiritual intelligences, which, coming downwards in this fashion from its divine origin through spiritual entities, then involves itself in the manifestation that we know as our own world; that this world, which is but the expression of the divine thought, is penetrated through and through with this divine life; that everything that we call law is the expression of this divine nature; that all study of manifestation of law is the study of this divine mind in nature; so that the world is to be looked on, not as essentially matter and force, as from the standpoint of materialistic science, but essentially as life and consciousness involving itself for purposes of manifestation in that which we recognise as matter and as force. [Page 5]

Then, starting with this idea and tracing what we may call this involution of life to its lowest point, we come to the mineral kingdom; from that to the life working upwards again, as it were, in an ascending cycle instead of a descending — matter becoming more and more ductile under the force of this now evolving life, becoming more and more plastic — until from the mineral is evolved the vegetable. Then, as, working in the vegetable kingdom, matter becomes yet more plastic and therefore better able to express the life and consciousness which are working within it, you come to the evolution of the animal kingdom, with its more highly differentiated energies, with its growing complexity of organisation, with its increased power for feeling pleasure and pain, and, above all, with the increase of individualisation, these creatures becoming more and more of the type of individuals, becoming more and more separated, as it were, in their consciousness, beginning to show the germs of higher consciousness; this primary life, that lives in all, being able to express itself more completely in this more highly organised nervous system, and being, as it were, trained in that by more responses to the contacts from the external universe. Then, still climbing upwards, it finds a far, far higher manifestation in the human form, and that human form is animated by the Soul and by the Spirit — the Soul which through the body manifests itself as mind, and the Spirit which [Page 6] by the evolution of the Soul gradually comes into manifestation in this external universe.

Thus man, by virtue of this Soul that becomes self-conscious, by virtue of this higher evolution — the highest which exists in material form in our world — is, as it were, the highest expression of this evolving life; he ought, therefore, also to be the most perfect expression of this continually growing manifestation of law. Because of the will which develops itself in man, which has the power of choice, which is able to say "I will", or "I will not", which separates itself from the lower forms of living creatures by this very power of self-conscious determination, which, just because it is near the expression of the divine, shows those marks of thought, of spontaneous action, which are characteristics of the supreme life evolving itself in matter — just because of all that, man has a double possibility, a greater responsibility, a higher or a more degraded destiny. He has this power of choice. That law which in lower forms of life is impressed on the form and which the form obeys, as it were, by way of compulsion; the law which in the mineral world leaves no choice to the mineral atoms; which, in the vegetable world again, is a compulsory law, developing it along certain definite lines, without, as far as we are able to judge, much power of

resistance; which in the animal speaks as instinct, which the animal obeys, and obeys continually; [Page 7] that law, as we follow the general order, when it comes to deal with man, finds a change.

Man is the disorderly element in nature; man it is who, although he has higher possibilities, sets up discord in this realm of law; man it is who, just by virtue of his developed will, has the power of setting himself against law and holding his own, as it were, for a while against it. In the long run the law will crush him. Always when he sets himself against it, the law justifies itself by the pain which it inflicts; he cannot really break it, but he can cause disorder, he can cause disharmony, he can, by this will of his, refuse to follow out the highest and the best, and deliberately choose the lower and the worse road. And just because of that power the power of choice — he has higher possibilities than lie before the mineral, the vegetable, or the animal world. For it is a higher type of harmony to put oneself consciously into union with the law than it is to be simply an apparatus moved by it without the volition that consciously chooses the higher; and therefore man is in this position: he may fall lower than the brute, but he can also rise infinitely higher. Therefore, the responsibility comes upon him to be the trainer of the lower nature, the educator of the lower nature, the gradual moulder, as it were, of the world into higher forms of being and nobler types of life. And man, wherever he goes, should be the friend of all, the helper of all, the lover of all, expressing his [Page 8] nature that is love in his daily life, and bringing to every lower creature not only the control that may be used to educate, but the love also that may be used to lift that lower creature in the scale of being.

Apply then that principle of man's place in the world, vicegerent in a very real sense, ruler and monarch of the world, but with the power of being either a bad monarch or a good, and responsible to the whole of the universe for the use that he makes of the power. Take then man in relation to the lower animals from this standpoint. Clearly, if we are to look at him in this position, slaying them for his own gratification is at once placed out of court. He is not to go amongst the happy creatures of the woods, and bring there the misery of fear, of terror, of horror, by carrying destruction wherever he goes; he is not to arm himself with hook and with gun, and with other weapons which he is able to make, remember, only by virtue of the mind which is developed within him. Prostituting those higher powers of mind to make himself the more deadly enemy of the other sentient creatures that share the world with him, he uses the mind, that should be there to help and to train the lower, to carry fresh forms of misery and destructive energy in every direction. When you see a man go amongst the lower animals, they fly from his face, for experience has taught them what it means to meet a man. If he goes into some secluded part of the [Page 9] earth where human foot has rarely trodden, there he will find the animals fearless and friendly, and he can go about amongst crowds of them and they shrink not from his touch. Take the accounts you will read of travellers who have gone into some district where man has not hitherto penetrated, and you will read how he can walk among crowds of birds and other creatures as friend with friends. And it is only when he begins to take advantage of their confidence to strike them down, only then, by experience of what the presence of man means to them, do they learn the lesson of distrust, of fear, of flying from his presence. So that in every civilised country, wherever there is a man, in field or in wood, all living things fly at the sound of his footstep; and he is not the friend of every creature but the one who brings terror and alarm, and they fly from his presence.

And yet there have been some men from whom there has rayed out so strongly the spirit of love, that the living things of field and forest crowded around them wherever they went; men like St. Francis of Assisi, of whom it is told that, as he walked the woods, the birds would fly to him and perch on his body, so strongly did they feel the sense of love that was around him as a halo wherever he trod. So in India you

will find man after man in whom this same spirit of love and compassion is seen, and in the woods and the jungle, on the mountain and in the desert, [Page 10] these two men may go wherever they will, and even the wild beasts will not touch them I could tell you stories of Yogis there, harmless in every act of thought and life, who will go through jungles where tigers are crouching, and the tiger will sometimes come and lie at their feet and lick their feet, harmless as a kitten might be, in face of the spirit of love. And thus it might be with all things that live: thus it would be, if we were friend instead of foe. And though, in truth, it would now take many a century to undo the evil of a bloodstained past, still the undoing is possible, the friendliness might be made, and each man, each woman, who in life is friendly to the lower creatures, is adding his quota to the love in the world, which ultimately will subdue all things to itself.

Pass from that duty of man as monarch of the world to the next point which in Theosophical teaching forbids the slaughter of living things. Some of you may know that part of our teaching is that the physical world is interpenetrated and surrounded by a subtler world of matter that we speak of as "astral"; that in that, subtle matter — which may be called ether if the name be more familiar to you — forces especially have their home; that in that world you have the reflection and the imaging of what occurs on the material plane; that thoughts also take image there, just as actions are there reflected, and this astral world lies between the material world and the world of [Page 11] thought. The thought-world, full of the thoughts of men, sends down these potent energies into the astral world; there they take image, which reacts upon the physical. It is this which is so often felt by the "sensitive". When he comes into a special hall, a house, a city, he is able to tell you, by a subtle feeling that he may be unable to explain, something of the general characteristics of the atmosphere of that house, or hall, or city — whether to him it is pure or foul; whether to him it is friendly or hostile; whether it exerts upon him a healthful or a hindering influence. One of the ways in which you may recognise the working of this astral world is by connecting it in your thought, as science is beginning to connect the ether, with all magnetic currents, and with all electric action. Take, for instance, the action that a speaker has upon a crowd. That is dependent upon the presence of this ethereal matter in which magnetic forces work, so that a sentence which is spoken charged with the magnetism of the speaker has a wholly different effect upon those on whose ears it falls than if they read the same sentence in cold blood, as it is called, in a newspaper or a book. Why? Because the force of the speaker, taking form in this subtle matter which is the medium between him and the hearers, sets it throbbing to his vibrations; his magnetism charges it, throws it into waves, and these waves strike upon the similar matter in the bodies of the hearers, and the wave [Page 12] sweeps right across the hall, and this vibration of a single thought for the moment makes all who are there feel its power alike, though they may not do so afterwards. Over and over again, in talking to people — talking, I mean, from the platform — when the magnetic force is strong, you will carry away the people you are talking to, although they may not agree with the arguments you are putting to them, and you will see somebody clapping madly in his applause who you know is antagonistic to the thought that you are then expressing. Meet him on the following day, and you will find him very angry with himself because he let himself be carried away for the moment. What has done it? It is this magnetic sympathy, this throwing of ether into waves, which strike on him as they strike on others, and both his body and brain respond to the vibrations, and so for a time he is mastered by this magnetic power of the speaker.

Now, taking that — which is only an illustration, to show you what I mean by this astral matter and the way in which it is thrown into vibration by magnetic currents — think of astral matter for a moment from the standpoint of Theosophy as interpenetrating and surrounding our world; then carry your thoughts to a slaughter-house. Try to estimate, if you can, by imagination — if you have not been unfortunate enough to see it in reality — something of the passions and emotions which there are aroused, not for the moment in the man who is [Page 13] slaying — I will deal with him presently — but in the animals that are

being slain! Notice the terror that strikes on them as they come within scent of the blood! See the misery, and the fright, and the horror with which they struggle to get away even from the turning down which they are being driven! Follow them, if you have the courage to do it, right into the slaughter-house, and see them as they are being slain, and then let your imagination go a step further, or, if you have the subtle power of sensing astral vibrations, look, and remember what you see: images of terror, of fear, of horror, as the life is suddenly wrenched out of the body, and the animal soul with its terror, with its horror, goes out into the astral world to remain there for a considerable period before it breaks up and perishes. And remember that wherever this slaughtering of animals goes on, you are there making a focus for all these passions of horror and of terror, and that those react on the material world, that those react on the minds of men, and that anyone who is sensitive, coming into the neighbourhood of such a place, sees and feels these terrible vibrations, suffer under them, and knows whence they are.

Now, suppose that you went to Chicago — I take that illustration because it is one where I myself particularly noticed this effect. Chicago, as you know, is pre-eminently a slaughtering city; it is the city where they have, I suppose, the most elaborate arrangements for the killing of animals [Page 14] which human ingenuity has yet devised, where it is done by machinery very largely, and where myriads upon myriads of creatures are slaughtered week by week. No one who is the least sensitive, far less anyone who by training has had some of these inner senses awakened, can pass not only into Chicago, but within miles of Chicago, without being conscious of a profound sense of depression that comes down upon him, a sense of shrinking, as it were, from pollution, a sense of horror which at first is not clearly recognised nor is its source at once seen. Now, here I am speaking only of what I know. And, as it happened, when I went to Chicago, I was reading, as I am in the habit of doing in the train, and I did not even know that I was coming within a considerable distance of the town — for the place is so enormous that it stretches much farther than a stranger would imagine, and it takes far longer to reach the centre than one has any notion of — and I was conscious suddenly, as I sat there in the train, of this sense of oppression that came upon me; I did not recognise it at first, my thoughts were anywhere but in the city; but it made itself so strongly felt that I began to look and to try to sense what it was that was causing this result; and I found very soon what the reason of it was, and then I remembered that I was coming into the great slaughter-house of the United States. It was as though one came within a physical pall of blackness and of misery — this psychic or astral result [Page 15] being, as it were, the covering that overspread that mighty town. And I say to you that for those who know anything of the invisible world, this constant slaughtering of animals takes on a very serious aspect, apart from all other questions which may be brought to elucidate it; for this continual throwing down of these magnetic influences of fear, of horror, and of anger, and passion, and revenge, works on the people amongst whom they play, and tends to coarsen, tends to degrade, tends to pollute. It is not only the body that is soiled by the flesh of animals, it is the subtler forces of the man that also come within this area of pollution, and much, very much of the coarser side of city life, of the coarser side of the life of those who are concerned in the slaughtering, comes directly from this reflection from the astral world, and the whole of this terrible protest comes from the escaped lives of the slaughtered beasts.

I said that there was this, apart from the men who slaughter. But can we rightly leave them out of consideration when we are dealing with the question of flesh-eating? It is clear that neither you nor I can eat flesh unless we either slay it for ourselves or get somebody else to do it for us; therefore, we are directly responsible for any amount of deterioration in the moral character of the men on whom we throw this work of slaughtering because we are too delicate and refined to perform it for ourselves. Now take the case of the [Page 16] slaughterer. I suppose no one will contend that it is a form of business which he himself would very gladly take up, if he be either an educated or refined man or woman — for I do not

know why women should be left out of this, as they figure largely amongst meat-eaters. I presume that very few men and very few women would be willing to go and catch hold either of sheep or of oxen and themselves slaughter the creatures in order that they may eat. They admit that it has on the person who does it a certain coarsening influence. So much is that recognised by law that, certainly in the United States — I don't know if the law is the same here — no butcher is permitted to sit on a jury in a murder trial; he is not permitted to take part in such a trial, simply because his continual contact with slaughter is held to somewhat blunt his susceptibilities in that connection, so that all through the States no man of the trade of a butcher is permitted to take part as jurymen in a trial for murder. That law is not confined to the States, but, as I say, I do not know if it is the law in England. This is very clear and definite: that if you go to a city like Chicago, and if you take the class of slaughtermen there, you will find that the number of crimes of violence in that class is greater than among any other class of the community; that the use of the knife is far more common, and this has been observed — I am speaking now of facts that I gathered at Chicago — it has been [Page 17] observed that this use of the knife is marked by one peculiar feature, namely, that the blow struck in anger by these trained slaughtermen is almost invariably fatal, because instinctively they give it the peculiar twist of the hand to which they are continually habituated in their daily killing of the lower animals. Now that, in Chicago, is recognised as a fact, but it does not seem to imply in the minds of the people any moral responsibility for their share in the evolution of this very uncomfortable type of human being. And so with the whole question of slaughtering in this city and anywhere else.

Has it ever struck you as a rule in ethics that you have no right to put upon another human being for your own advantage a duty that you are not prepared to discharge yourself? It is all very well for some fine and delicate and refined lady to be proud of her delicacy and refinement, to shrink from any notion, say, of going to tea with a butcher, to certainly strongly object to the notion of his coming into her drawing-room, to shrink altogether from the idea of consorting with such persons — "So coarse, you know, and so unpleasant". Quite so, but why? In order that she may eat meat, in order that she may gratify her appetite; and she puts on another the coarsening and the brutalising which she escapes from herself in her refinement, while she takes for the gratification of her own appetite the fruits of [Page 18] the brutalisation of her fellow men. Now, I venture to submit that if people want to eat meat, they should kill the animals for themselves, that they have no right to degrade other people by work of that sort. Nor should they say that if they did not do it the slaughter would still go on. That is no sort of way of evading a moral responsibility. Every person who eats meat takes a share in that degradation of his fellow men; on him and on her personally lies the share, and personally lies the responsibility. And if this world be a world of law, if it be true that law obtains not only in the physical, but also in the mental and the moral and the spiritual world; then every person who has a share in the crime has a share also in the penalty that follows on the heels of the crime, and so in his own nature is brutalised by the brutality that he makes necessary by his share in the results that come therefrom.

There is another point for which people are responsible in addition to their responsibility to the slaughtering class. They are responsible for all the pain that grows out of meat-eating, and which is necessitated by the use of sentient animals as food; not only the horrors of the slaughterhouse, but also the preliminary horrors of the railway traffic, of the steamboat and ship traffic; all the starvation and the thirst, and the prolonged misery of fear which these unhappy creatures have to pass through for the gratification of the appetite [Page 19] of man. If you want to know something of it, go down and see the creatures brought off some of the ships, and you will see the fear, you will see the pain, which is marked on the faces of these our lower fellow-creatures. I say you have no right to inflict it, that you have no right to be party to it, that all that pain acts as a record against humanity and slackens and retards the whole

of human growth; for you cannot separate yourself in that way from the world, you cannot isolate yourself and go on in evolution yourself while you are trampling others down. Those that you trample on retard your own progress. The misery that you cause is, as it were, mire that clings round your feet when you would ascend; for we have to rise together or to fall together, and all the misery we inflict on sentient beings slackens our human evolution, and makes the progress of humanity slower towards the ideal that it is seeking to realise.

Looking at the thing from this broad standpoint, we get away from all the smaller arguments on which discussion arises, away from all questions as to whether meat nourishes or not, whether it helps the human body or not; and we take our ground fundamentally on this solid position: that nothing that retards the growth and the progress of the world, nothing that adds to its suffering, nothing that increases its misery, nothing that prevents its evolution towards higher forms of life, can possibly [Page 20] be justified, even if it could be shown that the physical vigour of man's body were increased by passing along that road. So that we get a sound standpoint from which to argue. Then you may go on, if you will, to argue that as a matter of fact the physical vigour does not need these articles of food; but I would rather take my solid stand on a higher ground: that is, on the evolution of the higher nature everywhere, and the harmony which it is man's duty to increase, and finally to render perfect in the world.

You may notice on all these points I have been arguing outside, as it were, the individual meat-eater; I am not, therefore, urging abstinence for the sake of personal improvement, for the sake of personal development, for the sake of personal growth. I have been putting it on the higher basis of duty, of compassion, of altruism, on those essential qualities which mark the higher evolution of the world. But we have a right also to turn to the individual and see the bearing on himself, on his body, on his mind, on his spiritual growth, which this question of meat-eating or abstinence from meat may have. And it has a very real bearing. It is perfectly true, as regards the body, when you look upon it as an instrument of the mind, when you look on it as that which is to develop into an instrument of the Spirit; it is perfectly true that it is a matter of very great importance what particular kind of nourishment you contribute to [Page 21] the body that you have in charge. And here Theosophy comes in and says: This body that the Soul is inhabiting is an exceedingly fleeting thing; it is made up of minute particles, each one of which is a life, and these lives are continually changing, continually passing from one body to another, so that you get a great stream as it were of particles going from body to body and affecting, as they fall on them, all these bodies, affecting them either for good or for evil. Science, remember, is also coming to recognise that as truth. Science, studying disease, has found that disease is constantly propagated by these minute organisms that it speaks of as microbes; it has not yet recognised that the whole body is made of minute living creatures that come and go with every hour of our life, that build our body today, the body of someone else tomorrow, passing away and coming continually, a constant interchange going on between these bodies of men, women, animals, children, and so on.

Now suppose for a moment you look on the body from that standpoint, first, again, will come your responsibility to your fellows. These tiny lives that are building your body take on themselves the stamp that you put upon them while they are yours; you feed them and nourish them, and that affects their characteristics; you give to them either pure or foul food ; you either poison them or you render them healthy; and as you feed [Page 22] them they pass away from you, and carry from you to the bodies of others these characteristics that they have gained while living in your charge; so that what a man eats, what a man drinks, is not a matter for himself alone, hut for the whole community of which that man is part; and any man who in his eating or in his drinking is not careful to be pure, restrained and temperate,

becomes a focus of physical evil in the place where he is, and tends to poison his brother men and to make their vitality less pure than it ought to be. Here both in flesh and in drink the great responsibility comes in. It is clear that the nature of the food very largely affects the physical organism, and gives, as it were, a physical apparatus for the throwing out of one quality or another. Now the qualities reside in the Soul, but they are manifested through the brain and the body; therefore, the materials of which the brain and the body are made up is a matter of very considerable importance, for just as the light that shines through a coloured window comes through it coloured and no longer white, so do the qualities of the Soul working through the brain and the body take up something of the qualities of brain and body, and manifest their condition by the characteristics of that brain and that body alike.

Now, suppose that you look for a moment at some of the lower animals in connection [Page 23] with their food; you find that according to their food, so are the characteristics that they show. Nay, if you even take a dog, you find that you can make that dog either gentle or fierce according to the nature of the food with which you supply him. Now, while it is perfectly true that the animal is much more under the control of the physical body than the man; while it is quite true that the animal is more plastic to these outer influences than the man with the stronger self-determining will; still it is also true that, inasmuch as the man has a body and can only work through that body in the material world, he makes his task either harder or easier as regards the qualities of the Soul, according to the nature of the physical apparatus which that Soul is forced to use in its manifestations in the outer world. And if in feeding the body he feeds these tiny lives, which make it up, with food which brings into action, with them, the passions of the lower animals and their lower nature; then, he is making a grosser and a more animal body, more apt to respond to animal impulses, and less apt to respond to the higher impulses of the mind. For when he uses in the building of his own body these tiny lives from the bodies of the lower animals, he is there giving to his Soul as an instrument a vehicle which vibrates most easily under animal impulses. Is it not hard enough to grow pure in thought ? Is it not hard enough to control the passions of the body ? [Page 24]

Is it not hard enough to be temperate in food, in drink, and in all the appetites that belong to the physical frame ? Has not the Soul already a difficult task enough, that we should make its task harder by polluting the instrument through which it has to work, and by giving it material that will not answer to its subtler impulses, but that answers readily to all the lower passions of the animal nature to which the Soul is bound ? And then, when you remember that you pass it on, that as you eat meat, and so strengthen these animal and lower passions, you are printing on the molecules of your own body the power of thus responding, you ought surely to train and purify your body, and not continually help it, as it were, to remain so responsive to these vibrations belonging to the animal kingdom. And as you do so you send them abroad as your ambassadors to your fellow men, making their task harder, as well as your own, by training these tiny lives for evil and not for good ; and so the task of every man who is struggling upwards is also rendered harder by this increase of the molecules that vibrate to the lower passions. And while that is true in the most terrible degree of the taking of alcohol — which acts as an active poison, going forth from every one who takes it — it is also true of this animalising of the human body, instead of the ensouling and spiritualising of it; we are keeping the plane of humanity lower by this constant degradation of the animal self. [Page 25]

When you come then to think of the evolution of the Soul in yourself, what is your object in life? Why are you here ? For what are you living ? There is only one thing which justifies the life of man, only one thing that answers to all that is noblest in him and gives him a sense of satisfaction and of duty done; and that is when he makes his life a constant offering for the helping of the world, and when every part of his life is so regulated that the world may be the better for his presence in it and not the worse. In Soul, in thought,

in body, a man is responsible for the use he makes of his life. We cannot tear ourselves apart from our brothers; we ought not to wish to do it, even if we could, for this world is climbing upwards slowly towards a divine ideal, and every Soul that recognises the fact should lend its own hand to the raising of the world. You and I are either helping the world upward or pulling the world downward; with every day of our life we are either giving it a force for the upward climbing or we are clogs on that upward growth; and every true Soul desires to be a help and not a hindrance, to be a blessing and not a curse, to be amongst the raisers of the world and not amongst those who degrade it. Every true Soul wishes it, whether or not it is strong enough always to carry the wish into act. And shall we not at least put before us as ideal that sublime conception of helping, and blame ourselves whenever we fall below it. whether in [Page 26] the feeding of the body or in the training of the mind?

For it seems to me, looking at man in the light of Theosophy, that all that makes life well worth having is this co-operation with the divine life in nature, which is gradually moulding the world into a nobler image, and making it grow ever nearer and nearer to a perfect ideal. If we could make men and women see it, if only we could make them respond to the thought of such power on their own side, if only they would recognise this divine strength that is in them to help in the making of a world, to share in the evolution of a universe, if they could understand that this world in theirs, placed as it were in their hands and in their charge, that the growth of the world depends upon them, that the evolution of the world is laid upon them, that if they will not help, the divine life itself cannot find instruments whereby to work on this material plane — if they would realise that, then, with very many falls, their faces would be set upward; with very many mistakes and blunders and weaknesses, still they would be turned in the right direction, and they would be gazing at the ideal that they long to realise. And so in mind and in body, in their work in the inner world of force as in the outer world of action, the one ruling idea would be: Will this act and thought of mine make the world better or worse, will it raise it or lower it, will it help my fellow men or hinder [Page 27] them ? Shall the power of the Soul be used to raise or to lower ? If that thought were the central force of life, even though forgetting it or failing, the Soul would again take up the effort and refuse to yield because it had so often failed. If we could all do that and think that, and win others to do it too, then sorrow would pass away from earth, the cries and the anguish and the misery of sentient existence would lessen; then from man, become one with divine law, would love radiate through the world and bring it into nobler harmony. And each who turns his face in that direction, each who purifies his own thought, his own body, his own life, is a fellow-worker with the inner life of the world, and the development of his own Spirit shall come as guerdon for the work he does for the helping of the world.