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THE HISTORY OF GREAT LIGHT

BOOK I. ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS IN TAO

BY HUAI-NAN-TSZE

Introduction

The author of *The History of Great Light*, Huai-Nan-Tsze (sometimes called Lui An, Liu Ngan, or Lew Gan), was a grandson of the Emperor Kao Ti (or Kao Tsu), the founder of the Han Dynasty, who ascended the throne in 206 B.C. and died in 195 B.C.

The father of Huai-Nan-Tsze was Prince Li and his mother a lady of the court of the Prince of Chao.

The date of his birth is not known, but he is said to have died in 122 B.C.

Huai-Nan-Tsze, although of royal lineage, preferred to devote his life to scholarship and spiritual philosophy rather than to the occupations of a courtier, and gradually he gathered about him a group of the most profound exponents of Taoism and men of kindred interests.

He was a man of exceptional ability, with a widely extended mental horizon and a deeply religious reverence for all that is Divine.

The Eight Sages, who are said to have been his companions, teachers and collaborators, were especially venerated for their holiness and wisdom. In some accounts they are identified with the Eight Taoist Immortals.

In early Chinese records it is difficult to distinguish between fact and legend, history and myth, as is evident from the legendary character of the accounts of the Eight Immortals which are subsequently given.

This legendary element enters into many fabulous tales associated with the life of Huai-Nan-Tsze himself, for many miraculous adventures are told concerning him.

He is said to have learned from the Eight Sages the secret of the Elixir of Life.

A dramatic and humorous fable relates that after he had drunk of the Elixir, he and the Sages mounted upon a cloud and sailed up to heaven. Huai-Nan-Tsze, however, dropped the vessel containing the Elixir into his courtyard, where his dogs and the farmyard animals licked the dregs and at once sailed up to heaven after him.

Such tales as these are in accordance with the mentality of a people steeped in mystical lore and although they are phantastic when regarded in a literal sense, yet, if their symbolic significance is understood, behind the fabulous setting are to be found luminous truths.

This work of Huai-Nan-Tsze is little known, being overshadowed by the writings of Lao-Tsze and Chuang Tsze, but a perusal of it will convince the student of mystical philosophy that it is worthy of careful study. Its profundity of thought is illuminated by bright flashes of delightful humour, and withal it breathes a peace and a perpetual joy which characterize the writings of all true exponents of *Wu-Wei*.

In *The History of Great Light* Huai-Nan-Tsze presents his teachings in the paradoxical method adopted by Lao-Tsze in *The Simple Way*, using as illustrations the common things of everyday life, suggesting, by means of contrast and analogy, the inner realities of Tao, of Yang and Yin, *Wu-Wei*, and the sublime virtues of the soul when it is united to Tao. Thus the moral of the teachings is within the comprehension of the most simple, while the mode of life which they advocate may be practised by all. Their very simplicity, however, veils an inner depth of meaning which can only be fully revealed when union with Tao has been attained.

The Eight Immortals are very interesting figures in the legendary lore of Taoism. They are the subjects of stories, poems and paintings, and each of them is credited with possessing marvellous qualities and mystic powers. A symbol also is assigned to each of them, the significance of which will gradually become evident through reflection.

The number eight is especially venerated by the Taoists, probably because of the basic nature of the Eight Kwa of the Yang and Yin Diagrams,* upon which many of their metaphysical speculations are founded.

The Eight Taoist Immortals are described as follows:—

1. Chung-li K'uan, the first and greatest, is said to have discovered the Elixir of Life. His symbol is the peach, an emblem of longevity. He is also depicted as carrying a fan with which he could revive the dead.

2. Chung Kwoh-Lao. A recluse with mystic powers. He is said to have had a mule that could carry him a thousand miles in a day, which he could fold up like a piece of paper and put in his wallet. When again required he had simply to sprinkle it with water and it resumed its normal proportions. His symbols are a musical instrument made of bamboo, called the Yu Ku, and the feather of the Phoenix, the bird of immortality.

3. Lu Tung-pin. A Taoist scholar and recluse, who received the secret of immortality from Chung-li K'uan. During his probation he is described as having to undergo ten temptations, upon the overcoming of which he was given a sword possessing supernatural powers. With this he rid the country of dragons and other monsters that infested it. His symbols are the sword and the Taoist fly-brush.

4. Ts'ao Kuo-chiu. A military commander who turned hermit. Once when meditating, the wall of his cave was rent asunder, disclosing a casket of jade containing a scroll upon which were written the secrets of immortality and of the transmutation of metals. As he followed the instructions given therein the cave became filled with luminous clouds out of which came a stork, upon whose back he was transported to the Happy Land of Immortality.† He is the patron saint of the drama, and his symbols are a pair of castanets and a feather fan.

5. Li T'ieh-Kuai. A beggar with a crutch. He is said to have been a disciple of Lao-Tsze, who summoned him to Heaven, instructing him to leave his body in the care of a pupil. During his absence the pupil was summoned to the bedside of his dying mother and the body in his charge, being considered dead, was

* See *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. XV, No. 60, pp. 325-6.

† In some accounts the *Isles of the Immortals*, situated in the Eastern Sea, are said to be the dwelling-place of these exalted beings.

consigned to the flames. Li T'ieh-Kuai, on returning, found only a heap of ashes, so he entered the body of a beggar who had just died and in this he continued his life. His symbols are a pilgrim's gourd, containing magical medicines with which he healed many of the sick, and a crab. He is sometimes represented as accompanied by a deer. He is the patron saint of apothecaries.

6. Han Hsang-tsze. Scholar, poet and student of transcendental lore.

He is said to have been able to make flowers grow before the eyes of the beholders.* He was a pupil of Lu Tung-pin, and was instructed by him to climb a peach tree, whereupon he fell from its branches and became immortal.

He is the patron saint of musicians, and his symbol is the flute, which he is usually represented as playing.

7. Lan Ts'ai-ho. A woman, who was a strolling singer, whose songs told about the unreality of this fleeting life and the delusiveness of earthly pleasures. She was dressed in a blue robe and wore only one shoe. At the end of her earthly life she disappeared into a cloud.

Her symbol is a basket of flowers, and she is the patron saint of florists.

8. Ho Hsien-Ku. Called the Immortal Maiden. In a vision she was instructed that if she ate mother-of-pearl she would gradually become immortal. She lived in the mountains and became more and more ethereal, floating from peak to peak. At last, dispensing with earthly food, she attained her quest. Her symbol is the lotus, the flower of open-heartedness.†

The idea of immortality permeates the whole of the Taoist teachings and finds expression in various passages of *The History of Great Light*. Its conscious attainment is one of the fruits of the truly alchemical life with which the more profound teachings of Taoism are concerned. It is realized only through the soul's perfective union with Tao, which union, as all true mystics teach, may be accomplished in this present life, and is not necessarily reserved for the after-death state or for some future life.

Taoism, while appearing to depreciate the things of this world, does so only in contrast to the world of reality, in comparison with which they are only as shadow to substance; as the reflected

* These may symbolize the spiritual flowers of the soul.

† This is only one of the many symbolical meanings of the lotus.

beauty of nature to the transcendent beauty of the spiritual world; as the temporal existence of body to the immortal life of the soul.

The aim of Taoist teachings is to free man from attachments to all that is transient, thus enabling him both to use and to enjoy all things to the fullest possible extent by assigning them to their proper place in his life.

Numerous methods are given in Taoist writings for the realization of immortality, foremost among which is a system of mental and mystical discipline.

The unfoldment of the higher faculties of the mind whereby it is related to the realities of the spiritual realms, and the control of the lower nature so that it functions normally, will ever be man's chief means for the elevation of the little self to the great Self, whereby he participates consciously in Eternal Life.

A body kept fit and healthy by proper exercise and diet can, however, help in the accomplishment of the soul's purpose; consequently most mystical systems contain instructions regarding the care of the physical part of man, in order that it may be given its correct place in a complete rule of life, and neither hinder him by its ill-health, nor prematurely decay and perish.

The search for the true Elixir of Immortality through the discipline of the whole nature, and through identification with Tao, often degenerated in the later decadent ages into a superstitious hunt for longevity, or the preservation of physical existence by numerous magical arts of an inordinate and a godless character.

A clear distinction should, however, be made between immortality and longevity, since the former belongs to the soul, while the latter pertains merely to the external nature.

The physical body, being generated in time, is subject to the constant changes which are inseparable from all corporeal existences; consequently, although it is said mystically to "put on immortality", it can neither be immortal nor can it become immortal, whatsoever processes are employed in endeavouring to make it so.

The essence of soul, however, belongs to the spiritual realm, which is eternal: soul, therefore, is essentially immortal.

But until his spiritual nature is unfolded, man identifies himself with his body and the material world, and these obscure his real Self and prevent him from realizing his true nature: thus he is not conscious of his essential immortality.

The Chinese character for Immortal is particularly significant. It is composed of a combination of Man and Mountain. Immortals therefore, are considered to be Mountain Men, or those who live on the heights or secluded places, such as mountain peaks. The Sacred Mountain of the Taoist Paradise is thus mystically implied.

The History of Great Light is the only writing of Huai-Nan-Tsze which is now known. The work comprises twenty-one books, the first and most important of which is entitled *Yuen Tao Huin* (*Original Instructions in Tao*). It is a translation of this book that will be printed in *The Shrine of Wisdom*.

Two English translations of this work have been published: the first, in *Taoist Texts*, by Frederick Henry Balfour, was printed in 1884, and the second, in *Tao, the Great Illuminant*, by Evan Morgan, in 1933.

In this present version an endeavour has been made to preserve, as far as is consistent with its meaning, the characteristically quaint idiom of the original Taoist text.

The translation largely follows that of Balfour, but in a number of instances passages have been revised from the Chinese text. Use has also been made of the valuable work of Mr. Evan Morgan, and the editors wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to his translation in interpreting several parts of this difficult treatise.

Mr. Wylie in his *Notes on Chinese Literature* (1922 edition, p. 157) mentions Huai-Nan-Tsze (Lew Gan) as a distinguished Taoist writer, and gives the interesting information that there existed formerly a second part of *The History of Great Light* but that it is now lost. He also says that the oldest and most valuable commentary on Huai-Nan-Tsze is that of Kaou Yew. It is from the Kaou Yew edition of the work that the revisions in this version have been made.

It has been recorded that, but for the care of Lui Hiang, one of the most celebrated philosophers of the Han Dynasty, who lived about 80 B.C., the whole of *The History of Great Light* would have been lost. The manuscript was about to be destroyed, but he, recognizing its great merit, preserved it and caused it to be copied.

The original Chinese text is continuous without any divisions, but both Balfour and Evan Morgan have divided it into paragraphs, and the latter has given titles to the various sections.

This method has been adopted in the present version, since it is an aid in the elucidation of the work.

The explanatory notes which accompany the text are taken chiefly from Chinese sources.

I. TAO AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

Tao is that which covers Heaven and supports Earth; it is the cause of the extension of the four quarters and it formulated the eight points; its height cannot be measured, nor its depths fathomed. Tao enfolds the Universe in its embrace, and conferred visibility upon that which at first was formless. Flowing like a fountain, yet impalpable, its energies bubbled forth in the void and filled space. By ceaselessly flowing, it transformed murky chaos into crystal clearness.

Thus Tao reaches upward to Heaven and touches the Earth beneath; sideways it fills all within the Four Seas. It cannot be exhausted; it knows neither exuberance nor decay; if it be opened out, it will cover the North, the South, the East, the West, the Zenith and the Nadir, as with a veil; if it be gathered together, it will not even fill a man's hand. Though it can be contracted, it can yet be expanded; though it be obscure, it can become clear; though it be weak, it can become strong; though it be soft, it can become hard. Tao fills all within the four points of the compass; it contains the Yang and Yin; it holds together the Universe and the Ages, and supplies the luminaries with light.

It is so tenuous and subtle that it pervades everything even as water pervades earth in mire. It is by Tao that mountains are high, and abysses deep; that beasts walk and birds fly; that the sun and moon are bright, and the stars revolve in their courses; that the *chi-lin** roams abroad, and the phoenix hovers in the air. In remote antiquity the two Emperors Fo-Hi† and Shen Nung obtained the power inherent in Tao, and were established in the Centre; they walked with the Gods and in all the Universe there was peace.

* For information concerning the *chi-lin* (which is the Dragon-Horse or Unicorn) and the Phoenix or Feng, see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. XV, No. 60, pp. 321, 324 and 325.

† See *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. XV, No. 60, p. 321.

2. THE PERMEATION OF TAO

It is through Tao that the sky appears to revolve and the earth to have stability, that processes of change go on unceasingly, and that water flows without stopping; for Tao is the beginning and end of all creation. The rising of wind, the gathering of clouds, are as they should be; the rolling of thunder, and the fall of rain, alike must be, and that without end.

The operations of Tao are as mysterious as spirit, the disappearance of a lightning-flash, the soaring of a dragon, or the alighting of a phoenix. They resemble the whirling of a potter's wheel which perpetually goes round and round. In the natural succession and change, organisms are finished and polished, and afterwards dissolve again into their pristine elements.

Those who practise *Wu-Wei** are in harmony with Tao; those who speak with discretion have a comprehension of virtue, those who are tranquil and content, devoid of conceit, they are in possession of harmony, although they live in the midst of a myriad diversities. All things are in accordance with their various natures.

The energy of Tao operates in the minutest thing and yet pervades the mighty Universe. The Virtue moulds Heaven and Earth and harmonizes the Yang and Yin; it divides the Four Seasons from each other, and brings the Five Elements† into accord. The benign and gentle breath of Tao cherishes all things, both inanimate and animate; it enriches vegetation with moisture, and permeates stones and metals; it causes the growth of birds and beasts, giving to the one rich and glossy fur, to the other abundant plumage, and horns to the antlered stag. Through its powers the embryos of beasts mature and the eggs of birds hatch.

Because of Tao fathers do not mourn the untimely death of their children, nor does the elder brother that of his younger brother; the young are not left orphans, nor is the wife a widow. The ill-omened rainbow will never appear, nor destructive comets cross the sky, because of the harmoniousness of Tao.

* Wu-Wei is mystical action in inaction. See *Shrine of Wisdom* edition of "The Simple Way of Lao-Tsze," p. 41.

† The Five Elements are, according to the Chinese: Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth. See *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. XI, No. 41, p. 121.

3. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF TAO

Tao in its sublimest aspect does not regard itself as the author of Creation, nor as the power which completes, transforms and fashions all things.

Things which walk, breathe, fly or crawl, await the operation of Tao before they come into being, without recognizing the Virtue to which they owe existence; and they await the operation of the same principle before they die, without feeling any resentment. When men derive benefit from Tao, they render it no praise; so when they misuse it and bring disaster upon themselves, they may not reproach it. When they accumulate and store up riches, this may not be considered an increase of their true wealth; nor when they distribute or scatter it, is it to be accounted any impoverishment.

All-pervading, yet Tao may not be sought; subtle and impalpable, yet it cannot be overlooked. If it be piled up, it will not be high, if it be overthrown, it will not be low; add to it and it will not increase; deduct from it and it will not be diminished; plane it, and it will not become thin; cut it, and it will not be injured; dig into it, and it will not be found deep; fill it and it will not become shallow. Shadowy and indistinct, it has no form. Indistinct and shadowy, its resources have no limit. Hidden and obscure, it reinforces all things out of formlessness. Penetrating and permeating everywhere, it never acts in vain. It stoops and rises with the hard and soft; it mounts and falls with the Yang and Yin.

4. ANCIENT MEN OF TAO

In ancient days Feng I and T'ai Ping* rode in the chariot of the Yang and Yin with the rainbow for their steeds, riding on the clouds, roaming through the subtle mists of space, flying to the loftiest and most distant regions of the Heavens. When they trod upon the hoar-frost or the snow, they left no footprints; when the rays of the sun fell upon them, they threw no shadow. They

* These were deified Heroes of former times. They were associated with the Huang Ho, or Yellow River, and were also said to ride on a pair of dragons.

climbed aloft on spiral gusts of wind; they passed over hills and streams, treading the air and soaring higher than the K'un Lun Mountains,* bursting open the Gate of Heaven and entering the Palace of Deity.

(*To be continued*)

JEWELS

The wealth of the soul consists in abundance of learning, concentration, renunciation for a noble purpose, faith, activities for worship or sacrifice, forbearance, purity of conscience, compassion, veracity and self-control. Strive to secure these; let not your mind get unsteady. Righteousness and prosperity are based upon these. They constitute the truly good. Through righteousness sages have realized their purpose; the universe is rooted in righteousness; the Gods shine in Heaven through righteousness, and prosperity is found in righteousness. Righteousness, O King, is the highest virtue; wealth takes its rank only in the middle, while desire for pleasure is the last: this is the verdict of intelligent thinkers. Therefore a man of trained mind should consider the practice of righteousness as the most important duty of life. His behaviour towards all, too, should be tempered by righteousness.

—*Mahabharata*

All disputation, all wrangling, is futile. Conviction will come to the earnest seeker after truth through his own efforts. Begin with belief, not with doubt; think calmly, reverently, dispassionately, and reality will then dawn upon you and illumine what was in darkness, make distinct and clear what was vague and dim.

—*Jaina Scripture*

* The K'un Lun Mountains are one of the two chief Taoist paradises, or Happy Lands, of which there are seventy-two in all. They are symbolically said to be situated in the extreme West of China and to be the source of the Yellow River. The ruler of this heavenly country is Hsi Wang-mu (The Royal Mother of the West) and it is she who confers the Peach of Immortality which grows on the shore of the Lake of Gems situated at the base of the mountains.

THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

PROCLUS*

PROPOSITION LI

Every thing self-subsistent, is essentially exempt from the natures which are measured by time

For if that which is self-subsistent is unbegotten, it will not according to existence be measured by time. For generation is conversant with the nature which is measured by time. Hence nothing self-subsistent has its being in time.

PROPOSITION LII

Every thing eternal is a whole which subsists at once. And if it has its essence alone eternal, it will possess the whole at once present, nor will it have this thing pertaining to itself now subsisting, but that afterwards which as yet is not: but as much as is possible it now possesses the whole without diminution, and without extension. Or whether it has its energy as well as its essence at once present it possesses this also collectively, abiding in the same measure of perfection and, as it were, fixed immovably and without transition according to one and the same boundary

For if the eternal, as the name denotes, is unceasing being, but to be sometimes, and to subsist in becoming to be, are different from unceasing being, it is not proper that it should have one thing prior and another posterior. For if it had it would be generation, and not being. But where there is neither prior nor posterior, nor was and will be, but alone *to be*, and this a whole, there every thing subsists at once that which it is. The same thing also takes places with respect to the energy of that which is eternal.

COROLLARY

From this it is evident that eternity is the cause to wholes of their existence as wholes, since every thing which is eternal

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 70.

either according to essence, or according to energy, has the whole of its essence or energy present with itself.

PROPOSITION LIII

CONCERNING ETERNITY AND ETERNAL NATURES

Eternity subsists prior to all eternal natures, and time exists prior to every thing which subsists according to time

For if everywhere natures which are participated are prior to their participants, and imparticipables are prior to participated natures, it is evident that the eternal is one thing, the eternity which is in the eternal another, and eternity itself, another. And the first of these indeed subsists as a participant, the second as a thing participated, and the third as an imparticipable. That also which is in time is one thing, for it is a participant; the time which is in this is another thing, for it is participated; and the time prior to this is another thing, for it is imparticipable. Everywhere also, that which is imparticipable is in all things the same; but that which is participated is in those things only by which it is participated. For there are many eternal, and many temporal natures, in all of which eternity subsists according to participation. The time also which is in temporal natures subsists in a distributed manner; but the time which they participate is indivisible. And there is one time prior to both these. Eternity itself likewise is an eternity of eternities, and time itself is a time of times; and they give subsistence, the one to participated eternity, but the other to participated time.

PROPOSITION LIV

Every eternity is the measure of eternal natures, and every time is the measure of things in time, and these are the only two measures of life and motion in beings

For every thing which measures, either measures according to a part, or it measures the whole at once when it is adapted to that which is measured. That which measures, therefore, according to the whole is eternity; but that which measures according

to parts is time. Hence, there are only two measures, the one of things eternal, but the other of things in time.

PROPOSITION LV

Every thing which subsists according to time, either subsists through the whole of time, or has its hypostasis once in a part of time

For if all progressions are through similitude, and things more similar to first natures subsist in union with them prior to such as are dissimilar, but it is impossible for things which are generated in a part of time to be conjoined with eternal natures (for as being generated, they differ from first natures which are self-subsistent, and as existing only once, they are separated from things which always exist, but the media between these are such things as are partly similar and partly dissimilar to them)—this being the case, the medium between things which are once generated, and those that exist always, is either that which is always becoming to be, or that which is once, or that which is not truly being. It is however impossible it should be that which once only truly is. And that which is once not truly being is the same with that which is becoming to be. Hence, the medium is not that which is once only. It remains, therefore, that the medium between both is that which is always becoming to be, being conjoined indeed with the inferior of the two through becoming to be, but through subsisting always, imitating an eternal nature.

COROLLARY

From these things it is evident that perpetuity is twofold, the one indeed being eternal, but the other subsisting according to time: the one also being a stable, but the other a flowing perpetuity: the one indeed having its being collected, and the whole subsisting at once; but the other diffused, and expanded according to temporal extension: and the one being a whole of itself, but the other consisting of parts, each of which is separate, according to prior and posterior.

PROPOSITION LVI

Every thing which is produced by secondary natures, is produced in a greater degree by prior and more causal natures, by whom such as are secondary were also produced

For if that which is secondary has the whole of its essence from that which is prior to it, its power of producing is also derived from thence; for powers in producing causes are essentially productive, and give completion to the essence of them. But if it is allotted the power of producing from a superior cause, it will possess from that its existence as the cause of those things of which it is the cause, and its power of giving subsistence to other things will be measured from thence. If, however, this be the case, the things proceeding from it are effects through that which is prior to it: for the one perfects a cause, and the other the thing caused. But if this be the case, the thing caused is from thence rendered such as it is.

Moreover, that it is also in a greater degree perfected from thence is evident. For if that which is first gives to that which is second the cause of producing, it will primarily possess this cause; and on this account that which is secondary generates, receiving from thence a secondary generative power. If, however, the one becomes productive through participation, but the other in a way superior to participation and primarily, that will be in a greater degree a cause, which imparts generative power to another thing proximate to its own nature.

PROPOSITION LVII

Every cause both energizes prior to the thing caused, and gives subsistence to a greater number of effects posterior to it

For so far as it is a cause, it is more perfect and more powerful than that which is posterior to it and, in consequence of this, is the cause of a greater number of effects. For it is the province of a greater power to produce more, of an equal power to produce equal, and of a less power to produce a less number of effects. And the power which is able to effect greater things among similars, is also capable of effecting such as are less; but that which is able to effect such as are less, is not necessarily

capable of producing such as are greater. If, therefore, the cause is more powerful than its effects, it is productive of more numerous effects.

Moreover, such effects as the thing caused is able to produce, the cause is in a greater degree able to produce. For every thing which is produced by secondary natures, is in a greater degree produced by such as are prior and more causal. The cause, therefore, gives subsistence, together with the thing caused, to such effects as the thing caused is naturally adapted to produce. But if likewise it produces prior to it, it is indeed evident that it energizes prior to the thing caused, according to the energy which is productive of the latter. Every cause, therefore, energizes prior to the thing caused, and together with it, and posterior to it, gives subsistence to other things.

COROLLARY

Hence, it is evident that of such things as soul is the cause, intellect also is the cause; but that soul is not the cause of all such things as intellect is the cause. But intellect energizes prior to soul; and such things as soul imparts to secondary natures, intellect also imparts in a greater degree. Likewise, when soul no longer energizes, intellect imparts by illumination the gifts of itself to those things to which soul does not impart herself: for that which is inanimate, so far as it participates of form, participates of intellect, and the productions of intellect. Moreover, of such things as intellect is the cause, *the Good* also is the cause; but not *vice versa*. For the privations of forms subsist from *the Good*, since all things are from thence; but intellect, being form, does not give subsistence to privation.

PROPOSITION LVIII

Every thing which is produced by many, is more composite than that which is produced by fewer causes

For if every cause imparts something to that which proceeds from it, more numerous causes will impart a greater number of gifts, but less numerous causes a less number. Hence, of participants some will consist of a greater number of things, but others

of a less number, of which each participates, some indeed through a progression from a greater number of causes, but others from a less. These, however, which proceed from a greater number of causes are more composite, but those from a less number of the same causes are more simple. Every thing, therefore, which is produced by a greater number of causes is more composite, but that which is produced by a less number is more simple. For the more composite participates of those things of which the more simple participates, but the contrary to this is not true.

PROPOSITION LIX

Every thing which is essentially simple, is either better or worse than composite natures

For if such beings as are the extremes of things are produced by fewer and more simple causes, but such as are in the middle, from a greater number of causes, the latter indeed will be composites, but of the former, some are more simple according to that which is better, but others according to that which is worse. That the extremes, however, are produced by fewer causes is evident, because such natures as are higher begin to produce prior to such as are subordinate, and extend beyond them to things to which subordinate natures do not proceed, through a diminution of power. For on this account also, the last of things (that is, matter) is most simple, as also is the first of things, because it proceeds from the first alone. With respect to simplicity, however, one kind subsists according to that which is better than all composition, but another according to that which is worse; and there is the same reasoning with respect to all things.

(To be continued)

SEED THOUGHT

I like life indeed, but there is that which I like more than life and therefore I will not seek to hold it in any improper way.

—*Mencius*

THE LAWS OF MANU

WITH A COMMENTARY BY THE EDITORS OF THE
SHRINE OF WISDOM

1. *The Creation**

32. "Dividing His own Body, the Lord became half male and half female, and from that female He produced Viraj."

33. "But, O best of twice-born men, know that I am the Creator of all this world, whom that male Viraj produced, having practised austerities."

34. "Then I, desiring to produce created beings, performed very difficult austerities and called into existence ten great sages, lords of created beings."

35. "Marici, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Pracetas, Vasishtha, Bhrigu, and Narada."

36. "They produced seven other Manus possessing great brilliancy, gods, and the mansions of gods, and great sages of measureless power."

37. "Yakshas, Rakhasas and Pisakas, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, Asuras, Nagas and Sarpas, Suparnas and the several classes of the Manes."

The above verses portray the manifestation of successive orders of incorporeal beings in a descending scale of dignity, produced by Brahma in His active objective aspects. Each of these orders has its own definite place and purpose in the cosmic scheme. Those which are produced first participate in the creative energy of Brahma to the fullest degree, but the work of the lesser orders is in connection with various natural and corporeal existences and processes, at the lower end of creation.

Brahma, Himself, creates the Cosmos as one perfect whole; the production of its parts and of the particular existences which it contains is the work of secondary powers and natural intelligences.

* For previous Sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 69 and 70.

The two halves of the Body of Brahma represent the subjective aspects of all complementary cosmic principles, and correspond to His active and passive attributes. Since the Cosmos, in its totality, originates from Him, He must essentially contain all things in Himself prior to their objective expression.

“Viraj” is perhaps best regarded as Brahma in His manifested aspect as immanent in the Cosmos.

“Manu”, as here given is “Svayambhuva”, the first of the Manus, who, when identified with Brahma, is sometimes called “the secondary creator of the world”.

The Principles mentioned in verse 32 have analogies with Cronos, Rhea, and Zeus, in Greek mythology.

The “Ten great sages”, sons of Manu, are not sages in the ordinary sense, but represent manifested aspects of the Divine Mind of the Creator and are called “Mind-born sons of Brahma” and “Progenitors of Mankind.”

The “seven Manus” are said to participate in the work of creation and to preside over the world during different periods of its history as the leaders of mankind.

“Austerities” here signifies creative activities, and not “tapas”—self-discipline or self-renunciation, as is usually understood by the term.

“Mansions of the gods” are the heavens of the manifested world, which are generally given as seven in number. They are the heavens of natural happiness and are described in Indian scriptures in very beautiful imagery.

The various classes of beings enumerated in verse 37 cover a wide range, but most of them belong to the world of nature where they fulfil specific functions. They have correspondences with the giants, dwarfs, demons, fairies, and nymphs of other mythologies. Some of them are stated to war against the gods; some to be injurious to man and to tempt him to do evil, and others to be his benefactors and teachers. Thus the “Asuras” have a parallel in the Titans of the Greek myths, who fought against Zeus and the Olympians. In the respective myths both the Asuras and the Titans are described as originally belonging to the spiritual world, and as descending, or as being thrown down, into the lower part of the objective world. This can be interpreted as mystically portraying their

objective creative activities, for they are said to be Creative Principles and the support of the realms of ultimate precipitation.

Those beings represented as injurious to man are only apparently so because they are concerned with the effects of his inordinate activities which cause his natural relations with other things to become abnormal. They are not essentially evil since everything created by Brahma or produced through His agency is good in its own nature and performs a necessary purpose in the cosmic scheme. These beings are connected with the Narakas or hells described in the Indian System, which are places or states of punishment and purgation.

In the Indian epic, *Ramayana*, there is a significant passage which states that when Brahma created the waters He also created the Rakshasas to guard them. Water is symbolical of the natural world and its forces, which, when misused for selfish ends, inevitably bring injurious reactionary effects. Therefore the guardian intelligences, through whom purgative processes take place and retributive justice is executed, are naturally regarded by man as evil, until, becoming enlightened, he recognizes that the pains and sufferings which he thought to be evil, are the means whereby he is made conscious of his need of ordination.

The "Yakshas", or "good people", guard the treasures of Kuvera, the God of the wealth of the earth, who corresponds to Plutus of the Greek myths.

"The Gandharvas", or Celestial Musicians, are harmonizing powers who are said in the Vishnu Purana to have been born from Brahma "imbibing melody". Other titles given to them are: "Witnessers of the deeds of men" and "Those skilled in medicine". They are also referred to as engaging in combats with men and as instructing in religious matters those who can overcome them. In this is symbolized the truth that man is destined to become a lord over nature by exerting his higher powers and that when he does this he is given the assistance necessary to enable him to enter his true kingdom.

The "Manes" are the sons of the great sages or Rishis described in Chapter II, verse 192, as "Pitris or progenitors, free from wrath, intent in purity, exempt from sensual passions, and endued with exalted qualities."

38. "Lightnings, thunderbolts, and clouds, Indra's bent and unbent coloured bows (rainbows), meteors, comets, and luminaries of various kinds."

39. "Horse-faced kinnaras, monkeys, fishes, and all kinds of birds, cattle, deer, men, and animals with two rows of teeth."

It is evident that "men" here refers to man's material nature, by which he is included in the animal kingdom. But the "four human castes" of verse 31, described as proceeding from the Body of Brahma, are the four types into which all mankind may be divided.

40. "Small and large worms and grubs, beetles, and winged insects, and numerous kinds of immovable things."

41. "Thus was this whole creation, both the immovable and the movable, according to the results of its actions, produced by those great beings at My command, by means of austerities."

"According to the results of its actions" indicates that the material forms of all things are the necessary expression or results of the activities of those natures to which they belong.

The brief but suggestive account of creation is completed in this last verse. Although so short, it comprehends within its range, in an epitomized form, a general outline of the complete cosmic scheme.

It should be remembered, however, that *The Laws of Manu* is not concerned primarily with the subjects of Cosmology or Theology, but rather with the presentation of a system of religious ethics. Without a theological and cosmological background, however, the system would appear arbitrary: whereas it is based on the fundamental reality of Divine and Cosmic Laws.

42. "Whatever kind of action is ordained to each of these creatures here below, that I will truly declare to you, as well as the order of their origin."

43. "Cattle, deer, and wild beasts with two rows of teeth, and the race of men, are born from the womb."

44. "From eggs are produced birds, snakes, crocodiles, fish and tortoises: likewise all other similar kinds of animals, terrestrial or aquatic."

45. "From warm moisture spring gnats and flies, bugs and whatever else of this kind is produced in heat."

46. "All plants propagated by seeds and slips, grow from shoots; annual plants abound with flowers and fruit, but perish after the ripening of their fruit."

47. "Those trees which have no flowers, but produce fruit, are called vanaspati (lords of the forest); but whether they bear fruit without flowers, or fruit only, the large woody plants of both sorts are called trees."

48. "The plants with one stem and those with many stems, of various kinds, the different kind of grasses, the climbing plants and the creepers, all spring from seed or slips."

49. "These animals and plants which are enveloped by manifold darkness, according to their inherent nature, possess an internal sensitivity."

50. "The multiform conditions in this terrible and constantly changing circle of births and deaths to which created things are subject, are said to have their beginning from Brahma and to end with those immovable creatures already mentioned."

Since the objective world exists in time and space, all the particular generated existences within it are consequently subject to alternating cycles of birth and death: whatever comes into being in time must also go out of being in time.

The external perception of this continual process of births and deaths must necessarily appear terrible to the unenlightened man who regards this world and its life as the only realities.

The inevitability of death is declared in Chapter XII, verse 80:—

"Old age, against which there is no remedy, the pangs of disease, afflictions of many kinds, and finally unescapable death."

But it is followed by others which point out the ways of deliverance, as verse 85, stating:—

"Amid all these holy acts, the knowledge of the soul is said to be the most excellent: that is the first of all sciences, for through it immortality is gained."

(To be continued)

SALLUST ON THE GODS

Chapters VIII–XII

(Thomas Taylor's Translation)*CONCERNING INTELLECT AND SOUL; AND THAT
SOUL IS IMMORTAL

There is a certain power subordinate to essence but prior to soul; from essence indeed deriving its being, but perfecting soul, in the same manner as the sun perfects corporeal sight. And of souls some are rational and immortal, but others irrational and mortal; and the first of these are produced from the first, but the second from the second orders of the Gods.

In the first place, let us investigate the definition of soul. Soul then is that by which animated natures differ from such as are inanimate; but they differ through motion, sense, phantasy, and intelligence. The irrational soul therefore is sensitive and phantastic life; but the rational soul is that which rules over sense and phantasy, and uses reason in its energies. The irrational soul indeed is subservient to the corporeal passions, for it desires without reason and is inflamed with anger: but the rational soul through the assistance of reason despises the body and, contending with the irrational soul, when it conquers, produces virtue, but when it is conquered, vice.

It is necessary that the rational soul should be immortal, because it knows the Gods; for nothing mortal knows that which is immortal. Besides this, it despises human concerns, as foreign to its nature, and has a disposition contrary to bodies, as being itself incorporeal. Also, when the body with which a soul is connected is beautiful and young, then the soul is oppressed and its vigour diminished; but when this grows old, the soul revives, and increases in strength and vigour. And every worthy soul uses intellect; but intellect is not generated by body, for how can things destitute of intellect generate intellect? But, employing the body as an instrument, it does not

* With a few minor modifications.

subsist in body, even as no artificer of machines subsists in his machines; and yet many of these, without any one touching them, are moved from place to place. But we ought not to wonder if the rational soul is often led astray by the body; for arts themselves when their instruments are damaged are incapable of operation.

CONCERNING PROVIDENCE, FATE, AND FORTUNE

From hence also we may perceive the Providence of the Gods; for how could order be inserted in the world if there be no one who distributes it in order? From whence too could all things be produced for the sake of some purpose; as, for instance, the irrational soul that there might be sense; the rational that the earth might be adorned?

From natural effects likewise we may perceive the operations of Providence: for it constructed the eyes of a transparent nature for the purpose of seeing; but the nostrils above the mouth, that we might distinguish disagreeable smells: and of the teeth, the middle are fashioned sharp, for the purpose of cutting, but those situated in the more interior part of the mouth are broad, for the purpose of grinding the food into pieces. And thus we may perceive in all things that nothing is constructed without reason and design. But since so much Providence is displayed in the last of things, it is impossible that it should not subsist in such as are first: besides, divinations, and the healings of bodies, take place from the beneficent Providence of the Gods.

It is necessary to believe that a similar concern about the world is exerted by the Gods, without either expecting reward, or enduring labour in the exertion; but that as bodies endued with power, produce essentially, or by their very essence, that which they produce; as the sun illuminates and heats by that which he is alone; so the Providence of the Gods, by a much greater reason, without labour and difficulty to itself, confers good on the subjects of its Providential care. Thus by this means the objections of the Epicureans against Providence are dissolved: for, say they, that which is Divine is neither the cause of molestation to itself nor to others. And such is the incorporeal Providence of the Gods about bodies and souls. But the beneficent exertion of the Gods, resulting from and subsisting in bodies, is different from

the former and is called Fate, because its series is more apparent in bodies; and for dealing with Fate the mathematical art was invented.

That human affairs, therefore, and particularly a corporeal nature, are not only directed by the Gods, but from Divine bodies also, is highly consonant with reason and truth; and hence reason dictates that health and sickness, prosperous and adverse fortune, proceed from these according to every one's peculiar deserts. But to refer injustice and crimes committed through wantonness to Fate, is considering us indeed as good, and the Gods evil and base. Unless some one should endeavour to remove this consequence by replying that every thing which the world contains, and whatever has a natural subsistence, is good, but that the nature which is badly nourished, or which is uneducated, changes the good proceeding from Fate into something worse; just as the sun, though it is good itself, becomes noxious to the weak-eyed and the feverish. For on what account do the Massagetæ devour their parents, the Hebrews practise circumcision, and the Persians preserve rules of rank? How can astrologers call Saturn and Mars noxious, and yet again celebrate these planets as beneficent, by asserting that philosophy, kingdoms, and military command, are their gifts? If they assign triangles and squares as the cause, it is absurd that human virtue should everywhere remain the same, but that the Gods should be subject to mutation from diversity of places. But that nobility or ignobility of parents may be predicted from the stars, shows that they do not produce all things, but only signify some, by their different situations and aspects; for how can things which subsist prior to generation be produced from generation?

As therefore Providence and Fate subsist above nations and cities, as likewise above every individual of human kind, so also Fortune, about which it is now requisite to speak. Fortune, therefore, must be considered as a power of the Gods, disposing things differing from each other, and happening contrary to expectation, to beneficent purposes; and on this account it is proper that cities should celebrate this Goddess in common; since every city is composed from different particulars. But this Goddess holds her dominion in sublunary concerns, since every thing fortuitous is excluded from the regions above the moon.

But if the evil enjoy prosperous fortune, and the worthy are oppressed with want, there is nothing wonderful in such a dispensation; for the former consider riches as all things, but they are despised by the latter. And besides this, prosperous events do not diminish the depravity of the evil; but virtue is alone sufficient to the good.

CONCERNING VIRTUE AND VICE

But in discoursing on the soul it is requisite to speak of virtue and vice; for while the irrational soul proceeding into bodies immediately produces anger and desire, the rational soul presiding over these, causes the whole soul to receive a tripartite division, into reason, anger, and desire. But the virtue of reason is prudence; of anger, fortitude; of desire, temperance; and of the whole soul, justice.

It is requisite that reason should judge what is fit and becoming; that anger, listening to the persuasions of reason, should despise things apparently horrible; and that desire should pursue that which is attended with reason, and not that which is apparently pleasant. When the parts of the soul are in this condition, a just life is the result: for justice respecting possessions is but a small part of virtue. Hence in well-educated men you will perceive all these virtues in amicable conjunction; but in the uncultivated, one is bold and unjust; another temperate and foolish; and another prudent and intemperate: none of which can be called virtues, because they are destitute of reason, imperfect and belong to certain irrational animals. But vice is to be considered from contraries; for vice of reason is folly; of anger, fear; of desire, intemperance; and of the whole soul, injustice. But virtues are produced from an upright polity, and from a well-ordered education and instruction; but vices from an opposite process.

CONCERNING A GOOD AND A DEPRAVED POLITY

But forms of polities are produced according to the triple division of the soul; for the rulers are assimilated to reason, the soldiers to anger, the common people to desire. Hence, when all things are administered according to reason, and he who is

the best of all men possesses dominion, then a Kingdom is produced: when, from reason and anger in conjunction, more than one hold the reins of government, an Aristocracy is produced: but when government is carried on through desire, and honours subsist with a view to possessions, such a polity is called a Timocracy. That polity which takes place in opposition to a Kingdom is called a tyranny; for the former administers everything, but the latter nothing, according to reason. But an Oligarchy, or the dominion of the few, is contrary to an Aristocracy, because in the former not the best, but a few only, and these the worst, govern the city. And lastly, a Democracy is opposed to a Timocracy, because in the former, not such as abound in riches, but the multitude alone, is the ruler in all things.

FROM WHENCE EVILS ORIGINATE; AND THAT
THERE IS NOT A PRINCIPLE OF EVIL

But how came evil into the world, since the Gods are good, and the producing causes of all things? In the first place, we ought to assert that, since the Gods are good and the authors of all things, there is not any principle of evil, but that evil is produced by the absence of good; just as darkness is itself nothing, but is produced by the privation of light.

If evil has any subsistence, it must necessarily subsist either in the Gods or in intellects, in souls or in bodies; but it cannot subsist in the Gods, since every God is good. And if any one should say that intellect is evil, he must at the same time assert that intellect is deprived of intellect: but if soul, he must affirm that soul is inferior to body; for every body, considered according to itself, is without evil. But if they assert that evil subsists from soul and body conjoined, it will certainly be absurd, that things which separately considered are not evil, should become evil from their conjunction with each other.

If any one should say that daemons are evil, we reply, that if they possess their power from the Gods they will not be evil; but if from something else, then the Gods will not be the authors of all things. If the Gods do not produce all things, either they are willing but not able, or they are able but not willing; but neither of these can be ascribed with any propriety to a God.

And from hence it is manifest that there is nothing in the world naturally evil; but about the energies of men, and of these not all, nor yet always, evil appears. Indeed, if men were guilty through evil itself, nature herself would be evil; but if he who commits adultery considers the adultery as evil, but the pleasure connected with it as good; if he who is guilty of homicide considers the slaughter as evil, but the riches resulting from the deed as good; and if he who brings destruction on his enemies considers the destruction as evil, but taking revenge on an enemy good; and souls are by this means guilty; hence evils will be produced through goodness, just as while light is absent, darkness is produced, which at the same time has no subsistence in the nature of the things. The soul therefore becomes guilty because it desires good, but it wanders about good because it is not the First Essence. But that it may not wander, and that when it does so, proper remedies may be applied so that it may be restored, many things have been produced by the Gods; for arts and sciences, virtues and prayers, sacrifices and initiations, laws and politics, judgments and punishments, were invented for the purpose of preventing souls from falling into guilt; and even when they depart from the present body, expiatory Gods and daemons purify them from their guilt.

JEWELS FROM SANSKRIT WRITERS

O God of Gods, Thou art to me
 A father, mother, kinsmen, friends;
 I knowledge, riches, find in Thee;
 All good Thy being comprehends.

VIKRAMA-CHARITA.

By ships the perilous sea is crossed;
 So men on virtue's stable bark
 Pass o'er this mundane ocean dark,
 And reach the blessed heavenly coast.

If holy actions bore no fruits;
 If self-command, beneficence,
 Received no fitting recompense;
 Then men would lead the life of brutes.

Who then would knowledge toil to gain?
 Or after noble aims aspire?
 O'er all the earth delusion dire
 And darkness deep and black would reign.

But 'tis not so; for saints of old
 Well knew that every righteous deed
 From God obtains its ample meed:
 They, therefore, strove pure lives to lead,
 As ancient books have told.

The Gods—for such Their sovereign will—
 Have veiled from our too curious ken
 The laws by which the deeds of men
 Are recompensed with good and ill.

No common mortal comprehends
 The wondrous power, mysterious skill,
 With which these Lords of all fulfil
 Their high designs, their hidden ends.

These secret things those saints descry
 Alone, whose sinless life austere
 For them has earned an insight clear,
 To which all mysteries open lie.

So let thy doubts like vapours flee,
 Abandon impious unbelief;
 And let not discontent and grief
 Disturb thy soul's serenity.

But study God aright to know;
 That highest Lord of all reverè,
 Whose grace on those who love Him here
 Will endless future bliss bestow.

MAHABHARATA.