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A selection of texts sorted by topics, concepts or relevant issues

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Mind in Itself: One Consciousness

There is a single Consciousness without beginning or end, ever the same in itself, beyond and behind which there is nothing else.

The one infinite life-power which reveals itself in the cosmos and manifests itself through time and space, cannot be named. It is something that is. For a name would falsely separate it from other things when the truth is that it is those things, all things. Nor would we know what to call it, since we know nothing about its real nature.

This is the Principle which forever remains what it was and will be. It is in the universe and yet the universe is in it too. It never evolves, for it is outside time. It has no shape, for it is outside space. It is beyond man's consciousness, for it is beyond both his thoughts and sense-experience, yet all consciousness springs mysteriously out of it...

Inexplicable and incomprehensible though the fact must be to the human intellect, the One infinite Mind never loses its own character even though it is seemingly incarnated into the myriad forms of an evolving universe, never loses itself in them.

Outwardly all differ but in the deepest root of consciousness all are the same.

There is only this one Mind. All else is a seeming show on its surface. To forget the ego and think of this infinite and unending reality is the highest kind of meditation.

The time has indeed come for us to rise to meditate upon the supreme Mind. It is the source of all appearances, the explanation of all existences. It is the only reality, the only thing which is, was, and shall be unalterably the same. Mind itself is ineffable and indestructible. We never see it as it is in itself but only the things which are its passing phases.

The concept of God as the World-Mind or Universal Mind

Please note: PB uses several names for the same entity: World-Mind, Universal Mind, Universal Consciousness, Single Power, Intelligent Energy, God, etc. (For more information, the Glossary section lists the most frequent synonyms used by PB).

There are moments when a man may sit alone with nature, when no sound intrudes and all is quiet, pleasant, harmonious. If he will enter into this stillness with nature and enter it deeply enough, he will find that it is associated with what most religions call God.

The intellect is not competent to establish the existence of God, which only a higher faculty can know and consequently make any valid assertions about. But neither is it competent to disprove the existence of God since it can disprove only those finite matters which it can deal with: God, being infinite, is outside its reach in every way.

The man whose idea of himself is strictly limited to his little ego, and who is excessively attached to it, will naturally tend to form an idea of God as being a kind of gigantic person.

When I feel the divine presence in my heart, I acknowledge God as Personal; but when, going deeper in silent contemplation, I vanish in the infinite immeasurable Void, I must afterwards call Him Impersonal.

The first question is also the final one; it is quite short, quite simple, and yet it is also the most important question which anyone could ever ask, whether of himself or of others. This question is: "What is consciousness?" Whoever traces the answer through all its levels will find himself in the end in the very presence of the Universal Consciousness otherwise called God.

This higher self is what the successful mystics of all religions have really achieved union with, despite the widely different names from "God" downwards, which they have given it.

If by God you mean something higher than mere material existence, then we do not deny God. It is the false notions of God that we deny, the grotesque caricatures that appear in churches and temples and sermons and books. We look on this higher Reality as something not far off from the essence of our own selves. We have discovered that the common everyday life does not exhaust the alphabet of existence, that there is something sublime beyond it and yet akin to us. We do honour and revere such a God, if you wish to call It such, because we believe It to be the true God.

This is the mistake all too often made by those who ask the age-old questions: they see that every creature's life has a beginning, so they assume God must have had one too. But the Life-Force which appears anew in every babe comes from God; it has always existed, taking on countless outward forms. God, its source, has always been and never began...

All scientific evidence indicates that there is a single power which presides over the entire universe, and all religious mystic experience and philosophic insight confirms it. Not only is this so, but this power also maintains the universe; its intelligence is unique, matchless, incredible. This power is what I call the World-Mind.

The World-Mind is the conscious Power sustaining all life, the intelligent Energy sustaining all atoms, the divine being behind and within the Universe.

The study of comparative religion shows that Hinduism's "Divine Mother" is simply the Creative Energy of the Universe. The name and form are merely symbolic, but have been taught to the simple masses of a pre-scientific age, being better within their grasp.

The Creative Energy is one and the same no matter how high or how low may be the level upon which it manifests and how refined or how gross the form through which it expresses itself.

Hidden behind the so-called material universe is the Power which emanated it, which is present in all atoms. Hidden behind the Power is the eternal Mind. If we could raise ourselves to the ultimate point of view, we would see all forms in one spirit, one essence in all atoms, and hence no difference between one world and another, one thing and another, one man and another.

Mind, which forever is, can undergo no change in itself and no multiplication of itself. If it could, it would not be what it is—the Ultimate, the Absolute, the Unconditioned, and the Unique. Nor, being perfect, complete, could it have desire, purpose, aim, or motive for itself. Therefore it could not have projected the universe on account of any benefit sought or gain needed. There is no answer to the question why the universe was sent forth.

The World-Mind reproduces something of itself in each individual entity we call the Soul, or Overself. The soul in man, the Overself, is linked with, or rooted in, the soul in the universe, the World-Mind.

Despite the ever-confronting evidence that change is ceaseless throughout the universe and through all human experience, we persistently get the feeling of solidity in the universe and permanency in experience. Is this only an illusion and the world merely a phantasm? The answer is that there IS something unending behind both.

Behind all the innumerable creatures in this universe and behind all the innumerable phenomena of the universe itself, there is a single, infinite, eternal, supreme Intelligence.

There is no moment when the unseen divine activity is not present in the Universe. Everything is being carried on by the divine Power and divine Wisdom. God is not taking care of us or, indeed, of everyone else. God is in every atom of the Universe and consequently in full operation of the Universe.

God is both outside and inside us, is everywhere around and deep within. It is there but waits to be recovered by the individual consciousness.

The atheist says, "God is nowhere!." The mystic says, "God is now here!." The philosopher says, "God is!."

The World-Idea: the Universe as a process of manifestation

Whatever we call it, most people feel—whether vaguely or strongly—that there must be a God and that there must be something which God has in view in letting the universe come into existence. This purpose I call the World-Idea, because to me God is the World's Mind. This is a thrilling conception. It was an ancient revelation which came to the first cultures, the first civilizations, of any importance, as it has come to all others which have appeared, and it is still coming today to our own. With this knowledge, deeply absorbed and properly applied, man comes into harmonious alignment with his Source.

The World-Mind is hidden deep within our individual minds. The World-Idea begets all our knowledge. Whoever seeks aright finds the sacred stillness inside and the sacred activity in the universe.

The World-Idea holds within itself the laws which rule the world, the supreme intention which dominates it, and the invisible pattern which forms it.

The universe comes forth from the World-Mind, from its own being and its own substance. Therefore the universe is divine, therefore God is present in every atom and likewise in every one of us. Whoever denies the existence of God denies the very essence of his own self.

The universe was never created for the first time for it has always and incessantly appeared and disappeared, activated and rested, come forth, evolved, and retreated into latency.

There is no moment when the universe has not existed, either latently or actively, and consequently there will be no moment when it will not continue to exist, either latently or actively. This is so because the world does not arise by a sudden act of creation but by a gradual process of manifestation. Since there is no particular moment in the universe's long history when it could be said to have been first created, it has never had a beginning and consequently will never have an end...

Take the beginning and the end of the Greek alphabet and suppose that the first letter, Alpha, is the first faint stirrings of the universe. And take the last letter, Omega, to be the last vanishing trace of that universe. Imagine that Alpha is the reincarnation of the previous Omega, and you will have a key to what is really happening...

The universe has never had a beginning, and cannot have an end, but its forms and states may change and therefore must have a beginning and end.

The number of objects and creatures, stars and suns is by a natural necessity infinite. Infinite being can only express itself infinitely. The worlds cannot be counted; the space which contains them cannot be measured.

We live in a universe which is only one amid an infinity of other universes whose patterns, as we find with individual living things, show infinite differences of detail while sharing certain basic general forms.

Each universe, however vast, is finite. But the possible number of universes is not. The Infinite Being, by some strange necessity (from the human standpoint, contemplating a fathomless mystery), forever sponsors fresh universes as old ones decay and disappear. In this way It seems (again from the human standpoint), by giving expression to an infinite number of universes, to be expressing Its own infinite nature.

The God Who is to be found within ourselves must also exist equally outside ourselves in the phenomenal universe, else how would He be Infinite?

What is the universe but a gigantic symbol of God? Its infinite variety hints at the infinite endlessness of the Absolute itself.

There is an orderly structure in the universe and an orderly pattern in the lives of its creatures. If everything else is governed by laws, why not the growth of man's spirituality?

It is nonsense to say that any man is alone in his trouble. He is in the great World-Idea, part of it, belonging to it, sustained by it.

Just as we find strife, violence, and evil on the surface of human existence but divinity, harmony, and peace at its core, so we find cruelty, suffering, and malevolence on the surface of the world's existence but intelligent beneficent purpose at its core. It is ultimately an expression of God's wisdom, power, and love.

There is a universal order, a way which Nature (God) has of arranging things. This is why what we see around us as the world expresses all-pervading meaning, intelligence, and purpose. But we catch only a mere hint of these veiled qualities—the mystery which recedes from them is immeasurably greater.

The totality of the immeasurably rich nature of the universe never reaches the human senses. This is not their fault. They cannot help but receive nothing more than a limited selection from it. There are numerous vibrations beyond their range and also beneath it. And yet we have the temerity to assert that the world of our experience, the only one we know, is the real world and that all others are illusory!

There is Infinite Intelligence always at work on this planet... Everything around us and every event that happens to us is an expression of God's will.

Some events in the future are inevitable, either because they follow from the actions of men who fail to amend character or improve capacity or deepen knowledge, or because they follow from the basic pattern of the World-Idea and the laws it sets to govern physical life.

The universe comes, exists, goes, comes again, and repeats this cycle. Man does the same until he breaks the illusion of common experience and penetrates into the reality behind it all and behind himself.

The more one learns about the World-Idea, the more one wonders at it. To go farther and co-operate with it is to find peace.

We live in an orderly universe, not an accidental one. Its movements are measured, its events are plotted, and its creatures develop towards a well-defined objective. All this could not be possible unless the universe were ruled by immutable laws.

There is a mathematical order in the cosmos, a divine intelligence behind life, an Idea for human, animal, plant, and mineral existences.

There is not one cell in the whole organism of man which does not reflect in miniature the pattern, the proportions, and the functions of the immense cosmos itself.

Against this immense cosmic background, we may see the paltriness of human pride, the ridiculousness of human conceit.

There are existences for beings on levels and in times and spaces different from ours. The level we know and the humans we see only partially manifest the World-Idea.

If he will stop looking at his own life from the shut-in standpoint of his little ego and instead look at it from the wide-angle standpoint of its place in the reincarnationary cycle of development, it will become filled with new meanings, rich with

higher significances. To bring his personal idea into alignment with the World-Idea will then become both his duty and his happiness.

Think of yourself as the individual and you are sure to die; think of yourself as the universal and you enter deathlessness, for the universal is always and eternally there. We know no beginning and no ending to the cosmic process. Its being IS: we can say no more. Be that rather than this—that which is as infinite and homeless as space, that which is timeless and unbroken. Take the whole of life as your own being. Do not divorce, do not separate yourself from it. It is the hardest of tasks for it demands that we see our own relative insignificance amid this infinite and vast process. The change that is needed is entirely a mental one. Change your outlook and with it "heaven will be added unto you."

Reality: All is One and the same

That which always remains the same, never changes, that is reality.

This is the reality that is hidden in me and you, in the whole universe itself. It acts everywhere and exists eternally.

So long as man's awareness is trapped in space and time, so long will he be unable to know the reality that transcends them.

What we need to grasp is that although our apprehension of the Real is gradual, the Real is nonetheless with us at every moment in all its radiant totality. Modern science has filled our heads with the false notion that reality is in a state of evolution, whereas it is only our mental concept of reality which is in a state of evolution.

He discovers that the world of matter is ultimately space and that all material forms are merely ideas in his mind. He discovers, too, that his inmost self is one with this space, because it is formless. He perceives the unity of all life and he has found Truth, the whole Truth...

He will know R E A L I T Y, and know it too as his own ultimate being, indestructible and ever-existent. Amid the most prosaic surroundings, deep in the core of his own heart there will be perfect calm for himself and goodwill for all others.

The Higher Purpose of human life

If it be asked whether there is any purpose in life, the answer must be "Yes!—to perfect ourselves and know ourselves; to find the happiness which comes as a fruit of such fulfilment."

Man's main business is to become aware of his true purpose in life; all other business is secondary to this concern. It is Man's true business in this world to discover his real self and to ascertain his relationship to the surrounding world...

The most important questions which a man can ask himself—What he is and What he is here for—must be answered before his life finds its proper course...

We are here in this world for a higher purpose than the obvious physical one of self-preservation, for even that is contributory to it. We are here to evolve into the consciousness of Overself. Every physical experience is only a means toward such spiritual development.

If he looks to final ends he will know the right means. If he finds out what is the larger purpose behind the smaller ones, it will be immensely easier to know what to do in any given situation when he has to choose between opposite courses.

When he sees life whole and therefore sees it right, he will understand why Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you," and why, if he is to insist upon any single renovation in human life, it must be its own self-spiritualization. If he is to put emphasis anywhere, it must be upon the rediscovery of the divine purpose of his earthly life.

Men of rank, fortune, influence, or power may become complacent, satisfied with what they are or have or where they are. But this is a condition which cannot last. Why? Because the higher purpose of life, embodied in the World-Idea, is also present and will make appropriate change or exert appropriate pressure at the destined time.

There is a deep joy in this growing perception of life's larger meaning, a profound comfort in the ever increasing knowledge of its beneficent purpose.

The Quest: the secret path

The inner meaning of life does not readily reveal itself; it must be searched for. Such a search is the Quest.

We are here on earth in pursuit of a sacred mission. We have to find what theologians call the soul, what philosophers call the Overself...

The Overself is in the heart of every man but few care to seek it out until pressure of its grace from within, or fatigue with the world-life without, drives them to do so.

If he is tempted by these sudden glimpses to enquire whether there is a method or technique whereby they may be repeated at will, he will find that there is and that it is called meditation. If he wishes to go farther and enquire whether his whole life could continuously enjoy them all the time, the answer is that it could and that to bring it about he needs to follow a way of life called The Quest.

The Quest we teach is no less than a quest for knowledge in completeness and a search for awareness of this Universal Self, a vast undertaking to which all men are committed whether they are aware of it or not.

Each man should be himself, not represent and copy another man. But he should be his best self, not his worst, his lower, his lesser. This calls for growth, aspiration, effort, on his part. That is to say, it calls for a quest.

Man begins his search for the highest Truth with his ego and rises to its higher and higher levels, but in the end he must leave the ego if the Truth is to be found. The manner of finding truth is such that he must leave the ego's limitations and look to its origin, its universal source.

The secret path is an attempt to establish a perfect and conscious relation between the human mind and that divinity which is its source.

From this deep source, he nourishes the continuous tranquillity of the atmosphere he carries about with him; from it he gains the solid assurance that the quest is worthwhile and its goal very real.

Truth existed before the churches began to spire their way upwards into the sky, and it will continue to exist after the last academy of philosophy has been battered down. Nothing can still the primal need of it in man. Priesthoods can be exterminated until not one vestige is left in the land; mystic hermitages can be broken until they are but dust; philosophical books can be burnt out of existence by culture-hating tyrants, yet this subterranean sense in man which demands the understanding of its own existence will one day rise again with an urgent claim and create a new expression of itself.

In short, let him know himself. He may then have a key to better knowledge of other things, especially of the meaning of his own life.

Earthly life is fleeting, transient, never permanently satisfying, and therefore only the outer face of his life; deep within must be a persistent quest of truth and reality which alone confer everlasting peace.

Stick to this quest with the iron determination not to stop until you have realized the truth. Don't worry about the remoteness of the goal; leave all the results to fate and do the best you can. With proper guidance, the goal can be brought infinitely nearer than it seems. Those who know truth want to share it—what else do they care for? Make up your mind and progress from can't to can!

The Quest is a veritable re-education of the self, leading in its turn to a noble transcendence of the self.

The being which he finds at the end of this inner search is an anonymous one. He may ask for a name but he will not get one. He must be satisfied with the obscure response: "I Am That I Am!"

The Overself is present with man, and life is nothing more, in the end, than a searching for this presence. He engages in this activity quite unconsciously in the belief that he is looking for happiness.

If we do not know the "why" of universal existence, we do know the "why" of human existence. It provides the field of experience for discovering the divine soul. The integral quest which ends in this discovery is, consequently, the greatest and most important of human undertakings.

If a scheme for progress, such as the Quest, remains intellectual alone and does not come down to the heart, and move it, the aspirant will continue to remain outside the precinct of the Overself.

The time will come when, under the pressure of the mysterious inner self, this quest will become the most important enterprise of his life.

All that has happened before his entry upon the quest has really been converging towards it.

Once he has committed himself to this quest, he will find that events so arrange themselves as to indicate his sincerity, examine his motives, display his weaknesses, and find out his virtues. His devotion to the philosophic ideal will be tested, his loyalty to the goal will be tried.

All through this quest, but especially at certain critical periods, events will so happen and situations will so arrange themselves that the aspirant's weaknesses of character will be brought out into the open. The experience may be painful and its results may be saddening, but only by thus learning to know and discriminate against his bad qualities can he set out to submit them to the formative discipline of philosophy.

Those who recur often to thoughts of their past get trapped by it and kept prisoner of the ego. Remorse for sins committed and self-pity for being the victim of other people's sinning—both are soon overdone and create more obstacles to be overcome on the quest.

All quests involve some travelling, the periodical shift from one point to another. The spiritual quest involves constant intellectual travelling, but only a single important shift—that from the ego's standpoint to the Overself's.

He will advance most on the Quest who tries most to separate himself from his ego. It will be a long, slow struggle and a hard one, for the false belief that the ego is his true self grips him with hypnotic intensity. All the strength of all his being must be brought to this struggle to remove error and to establish truth, for it is an error not merely of the intellect alone but also of the emotions and of the will.

This quest is an irreversible journey. Once you have really started on it there is no turning back. You may believe that you have given it up in despair or turned away from it for a worldlier existence, but you are only fooling yourself. For one day either a deep repressed hunger will suddenly reassert itself or else a cataclysmic turn of events will drive you back to seek this last and enduring refuge of man.

Man's story is a serial one. It proceeds through body after body, birth after birth. But the fact is that once he really absorbs the spirit of this quest he will be unable to desert it for more than an interval, even should he wish to. He will be inexorably driven back to it by mysterious forces within his own psyche...

The Quest will come to an end when he turns away from teachers and teachings and begins to receive instruction from within himself. Previously all that he got was someone else's idea; now he is acquiring firsthand knowledge.

Such is the strange paradox of the quest that on the one hand he must foster determined self-reliance but on the other yield to a feeling of utter dependence on the higher powers.

This enterprise of the quest is the most serious in which a man can engage. We must treat it as such. But let this not cause anyone to lose the sense of humour.

The Higher Self, Overself or Divine Soul: our true identity

You have a body but the real you is not physical. You have an intellect but the real you is not intellectual. You have emotions but the real you is not emotional. What then are you? You are the infinite consciousness of the Overself.

All the experiences which life brings us are meaningful. Let us use our intelligence and learn these meanings. For life is trying to develop that intelligence in us until she can make us aware of the highest meaning of all—the Soul.

Many believe, some suspect, but few know that there is a divine soul in man.

That which connects the individual man to the Universal Spirit, I call the Overself. This connection can never be broken. Its existence is the chief guarantee that there is hope of salvation for all, not merely for those who think their group alone will be granted it.

There is some life-power from which we derive our capacities and our intelligence. It is hidden and intangible. No one has seen it but everyone who thinks deeply enough can sense that it is there, always present and always supporting us. It is the Overself.

Just as there is a sun hidden behind the sun, the divinity which animates it, so in the human being there is a Mind within the mind—and that is his Overself.

There is some point in each individual being where the human and the divine must join, where man's little consciousness bends low before, or blends subtly with, the Universal Mind which is his ultimate source. It is impossible to describe that intersection in any terms which shall adequately fit it, but it can be named. In philosophy it is the Overself.

The Overself is the representative of God in man. The soul constitutes both the connection between man and God and the ultimate attainment of man.

We cannot know God in the fullness of his consciousness but we can know the link which we have with God. Call it the soul, if you must, or the Overself if you prefer, but to catch a glimpse of this link is to be reborn.

There is something deeper than our ordinary thoughts and feelings, something that is our inmost essential self. It is the soul. It is here, if we can reach to it, that we may meet in fellowship with the Divine. Through it the World-Mind reveals something of its own mysterious nature.

Everything that exists in time must also exist in change. The Overself does not exist in time and is not subject to change. It is real, it is present and active in our very midst, its power and its guidance can be felt and recognized.

When time stops, he feels that he has found his higher Self, that the ordinary everyday self is a shallow one. The other never changes, whereas the lower one changes during the years and with moods during the day.

One day he will see the whole of the picture, not just the lower part of it, and he will understand that it is his own Overself which has brought him to—and led him safely through—the disheartening experiences of his present incarnation.

Is this benign state a past from which we have lapsed or a future to which we are coming? The true answer is that it is neither. This state has always been existent within us, is so now, and always will be. It is forever with us simply because it is what we really are.

This Overself is everywhere one and the same for all men. The experience of rising into awareness of it does not differ in actuality from one man to another, but the purity with which he absorbs it, interprets it, understands it, does.

Every verbal explanation really fails to explain the Overself unless and until we know it for ourself within ourself and as ourself.

The concept of the Overself is foundational. It provides meaning for life

Both the inward and outward lives of every man are controlled by a concealed entity—the Overself. Could he but see aright, he would see that everything witnesses to its presence and activity.

It is a consciousness where the "here" is universal and the "now" is everlasting.

The Overself is not a goal to be attained but a realization of what already is. It is the inalienable possession of all conscious beings and not of a mere few. No effort is needed to get hold of the Overself, but every effort is needed to get rid of the many impediments to its recognition. We cannot take hold of it; it takes hold of us. Therefore the last stage of this quest is an effortless one. We are led, as children by the hand, into the resplendent presence. Our weary strivings come to an abrupt end. Our lips are made shut and wordless.

During such unforgettable moments the Soul will speak plainly, if silently, to him. It may tell him about his true relationship to the universe and to his fellow creatures. It will certainly tell him about Itself. It may separate him from his body and let him gaze down upon it as from a height, long enough to permit him to comprehend that the flesh is quite the poorest and least significant part of him. And perhaps best of all it will certainly fill him with the assurance that after his return to the world of lonely struggle and quick forgetfulness, It will still remain beside and behind him.

The physical body

Is it true that most men suffer from mistaken identity? Normal experience leads a man to identify with his body but he fails to go farther and deeper to ask himself: "Who is present in the body?"

The physical body, although seemingly inseparable from it, is something lived in and used, as a house is lived in and a tool is used.

The first great error to be thrown away is a common one—acceptance of the physical body as the real self when it is only an expression and channel, instrument and vehicle of the self.

This lesson, that a man is not his body, will be learnt in modern times through his reasoning intelligence as it was learnt in former times through his believing feelings.

The body in which he dwells is not himself. The intellect with which he thinks is not himself. The consciousness by which he utters "I" IS himself.

The animal part of us is doomed to oblivion, the spiritual part is ageless and deathless. The physical body belongs to the animal part. All attempts to perpetuate it must fail and arise from confusing the two levels of being, the transient and the eternal.

He must refuse to follow the common error and identify himself with this one physical body of the present incarnation. Rather, he must identify himself with his mental being and feel this as something immortal, something reappearing on earth time after time and coming closer and closer, with each appearance, to the goal...

The earth is the scene where man is placed to achieve his spiritual development. The body is the only direct contact he has with it: How foolish is it to mistreat the body through ignorance, abuse it through carelessness, or neglect it through laziness?

The body is not to be despised with the ascetic nor neglected with the mystic. It is to be understood and rightly used. It is to be cared for as one of the instruments whose total contribution will enable us to fulfil the spiritual purpose of life on earth.

The body is our physical home. Through its five senses we may suffer pain and misery or enjoy satisfaction and pleasure. Therefore it should be well treated and well cared for, kept healthy as far as we can. This is not only a personal need but also a spiritual duty for its condition may obstruct or assist the inner work.

Nowhere in the physical brain can any anatomist find that which creates thought, although he may find conditions in it which prevent thought or distort it or weaken it. This is because the principle of consciousness exists before the physical body's brain exists, while it lives, and after its death.

The ego: a set of thoughts...

When examined, the ego is found to be a complex of body and thought, physical senses and mental tendencies...

The ego may stay in its proper place attending to the needs and sustenance of his body and intellect, but always as a subordinate to the higher self and obeisant to the higher will.

The ego will 'always' strive to preserve itself, using when it must the most secret ways, full of cunning and pretense, camouflage and deceit. It takes into itself genuinely spiritual procedures and perverts or misuses them for its own advantage.

It is natural for the ego to assert itself and it will continue to do so even if he retires from the world. Only when the ego loses the power to rule the affairs of a man does the Overself step in and rule them for him, but this position is not reached merely by saying or wishing that it should be reached. It represents the culmination of a lifelong struggle.

Consider what happens when we become intensely interested in a story unfolding itself on a cinema screen. What happens during the deepest points of such concentration? For the time being we actually forget ourselves, and we drop the whole burden of personal memories, relations, desires, anxieties, and pettinesses which constitute the ego. Temporarily the I is transcended. The attainment of the Overself is nothing more than the ability to detach, not destroy, the ego at will.

It is simply a matter of finding the Overself and letting it rule the ego thenceforth. Thus the ego is not killed but put back in its lower place. But first he has to become conscious of the Overself, he has to feel it as a living presence, and he has to do this throughout the day and night, awake or asleep. That is the goal.

The aspirant who is really earnest about the quest should develop the attitude that his personal misfortunes, troubles, and disappointments must be traced back to his own weaknesses, defects, faults, deficiencies, and indisciplines. Let him not blame them on other persons or on fate. In this way he will make the quickest progress whereas by self-defending or self-justifying or self-pitying apportionment of blame to causes outside himself, he will delay or prevent it. For the one means clinging to the ego, the other means giving it up.

Some things inside his own being are blocking his way to the Overself. An effort—determined, continuous, and daring—is needed to clear them. They are emotional and passionate in appearance, egoistic in essence.

Behind a self-deceiving facade of pretexts, excuses, alibis, and rationalizations, the ego is forever seeking to gratify its unworthy feelings or to defend them. The ego lies to itself, lies to the man who identifies himself with it, and lies to other men. The ego offers bitter resistance all along the way, disputes every yard of his advance, and is not overcome without incessant struggle against its treacheries and deceptions.

Although the ego claims to be engaged in a war against itself, we may be certain that it has no intention of allowing a real victory to be achieved but only a pseudo-victory...

When the ego sees a danger to its own continued existence in any proposed move or decision, it creates fears, invents false hopes, and exaggerates difficulties in order to prevent it.

When the mind is clogged by memories, hoarded from the ego's past experience, it cannot free itself from the ego, and "come home."

When it is declared that the ego is a fictitious entity, what is meant is that it does not exist as a real entity. Nevertheless, it does exist as a thought.

The ego is like a repression which must be dug out of the subconscious mind, seen and understood for what it is, and then let go until it vanishes, losing all its secret power thereby.

The ego must acknowledge its own transiency, confess its own instability, and thus become truly humble.

The ego is cunning, subtle, insidious. Even when the aspirant has long left a grosser kind of life behind him, it inserts itself into his prayers and meditations alike, and enters most of his inner work.

The ego is the centre of conflicts which lead to sorrow. There is no way of liberating ourselves from the latter without prior liberation from the former.

The ego is perfectly capable of making all sorts of compromises or truces with itself—moral ones with its conscience, logical ones with its intellect, spiritual ones with its aspirations—and perfectly capable of all sorts of dodges, quibbles, evasions, and disguises, whether dealing with matters on the highest or lowest level of reference.

The ego is a structure which has been built up in former lives from tendencies, habits, and experiences in a particular pattern. But in the end the whole thing is nothing but a thought, albeit a strong and continuing thought.

The ego gets in its own way and shuts out the truth. It is so immersed in itself that it sees nothing else than its own views, its own opinions. And this is true even when it apparently undergoes a mental change or emotional conversion, for in the end it is the ego itself, which sanctions the newly accepted idea or belief.

The ego will always seek, and find, ways to excuse itself. It will do anything else it can rather than honestly confess its own vileness or weakness or erroneousness. It will cling stubbornly to them rather than admit the need for a thorough change.

The ego is always in hiding and often in disguise. It is a cunning creature, never showing its own face, so that even the man who wants to destroy its rule is easily tricked into attacking everything else but the ego! Therefore, the first (as well as the final) essential piece of knowledge needed to track it down to its secret lair is how to recognize and identify it.

The ego, which is so quick to complain about other people's bad treatment of it and so slow to confess its own bad conduct, is his first and worst enemy.

The highest goal of the Quest is not illumination gained by destruction of the ego but rather by perfection of the ego. It is the function of egoism, which is to be destroyed, not that which functions. The ego's rulership is to go, not the ego itself.

The ego is not asked to destroy itself but to discipline itself. The personal in a man must live, but only as a slave to the impersonal. These two identities make up his self.

It is both true and untrue that we cannot take up the ego with us into the life of mystical illumination. The ego is after all only a reflection, extremely limited and often distorted, of the Higher Self... But still it is a reflection. If we could bring it into correct alignment with, and submission to, the Higher Self, it would then be no hindrance to the illumined life. The ego cannot, indeed, be destroyed so long as we need its services while in the flesh; but it can be subjugated and turned into a servant instead of permitting it to remain a master. When this is understood, the philosophical ideal of a fully developed, mastered, and richly rounded ego acting as a channel for the inspiration and guidance of the Higher Self will be better appreciated. A poverty-stricken ego will naturally form a more limited channel for the expression of the Higher Self than would a more evolved one. The real enemy to be overcome is not the entity ego, but the function of egoism.

The ego is a part of the divine order of existence. It must emerge, grow, enslave, and finally be enslaved.

The persona, the mask which he presents to the world, is only one part of his ego. The conscious nature, composed of thoughts and feelings, is the second part. The hidden store of tendencies, impulses, memories, and ideas—formerly expressed and then reburied, or brought over, from earlier lives, and all latent—is the third part.

This is the ego that we falsely think of as being our real self. This is the ego to which memory ties us. This is the illusive part of our dual personality; this is the known part of our being, a mere shadow thrown by the unknown part which is infinitely greater. This moves from one earthly body to another, from one dream to another through the phantasmagoria of existence without awakening to Reality.

The ego's consciousness is a vastly reduced, immeasurably weakened echo of the Overself-Consciousness. It is always changing and dissipates in the end whereas the Other is ever the same and undying. But the ego is drawn out of the Other and must return to it, so the link is there. What is more, the possibility of returning voluntarily and deliberately is also there.

That which claims to be the "I" turns out to be only a part of it, the lesser part, and not the real "I" at all. It is a complex of thoughts.

My dear Ego: "It is obvious that in this world I cannot live without you. Your presence is overwhelming, fills every instinct, thought, feeling, and action. But it is also obvious that I cannot live with you. The time has come to adjust our relationship. So I have one request to make of you. Please get out of my way!"

If the ego cannot keep him any longer through his animal instincts, it will masquerade as his higher self, flatter him for his lofty aspirations, insert itself into his intuitions, and seek to deceive him as he bends in prayer or sits in meditation.

Every state other than this perfect stillness is a manifestation of the ego, even if it be an inner mystical "experience." To be in the Overself one must be out of the ego, and consequently out of the ego's experience, thoughts, fancies, or images. All these may have their fit place and use at other times but not when the consciousness is to be raised completely to the Overself.

Every discussion which is made from an egoistic standpoint is corrupted from the start and cannot yield an absolutely sure conclusion. The ego puts its own interest first and twists every argument, word, even fact to suit that interest.

If the ego were as prone to condemn itself as it is to justify itself, or to justify others as it is to condemn them, how quick and easy would the Quest be.

The Cycle of Birth, Death and Rebirth (*Samsara*)

The dying autumn leaves induce sad thoughts such as: we are only passengers travelling through this world...

What man undergoes in his physical life seems so real, so lasting, and so intimate—yet it is only a brief episode in the immensely larger span of his cosmic cycle.

Life is a preparation for death, just as death is a preparation for re-entry into life.

The life that is in us goes at death into the life that is in the universe. It is as secure there as it was in us. It is not lost. Thereafter it reappears in another form, another body.

The wheel of life does not stop for long—soon it will turn again and pass from the point of death to the point of life.

Are all the varied joys and sufferings undergone only to come to a complete end in death? Is all the vast intelligence of this universe which gave birth to our own minute fragment to be forever separated from us? No! We shall live again, die again, and return again unless and until we have fulfilled the divine purpose which brought us here.

Every man is offered a chance to live again, not once but as many times as will bring him to his diviner being and establish him in that. Human existence is a kind of bewitchment; we experience what we are made to experience. All is simply the expression of the World-Idea—that is, of God's will—but we share in the making, participate in the divine ideation.

We repeat these appearances on earth in a constant process and a long cycle of time. But contrast it with the beginninglessness and endlessness of life itself. What is this but a fraction of a fraction of a moment?

At the present stage of human existence, there is no other way to durable spiritual development than through physical embodiments. The total sum of its varied experiences offer us the chance at first to learn and thus to progress, and later to overcome ourselves and thus to attain spiritual awareness.

And the Gita tells us that no efforts are in vain; all bring their fruit sometime, somewhere—if not in this birth then in another, if not in this world then in the next.

How old is the series of experiences through which we moved unknowingly towards our present evolutionary position!
How lofty is the level toward which we have yet to climb!

He has brought over from earlier births a number of subconscious memories, tendencies and complexes, unfulfilled desires and unexpressed aspirations. These have to be dealt with, either by increasing eradication or by diminishing satisfaction, so that they no longer interrupt the calm tenor of the mind.

Our troubles are but transitory, whereas our spiritual hopes survive the incarnations and bridge the gaps between births.

At any given moment, a man thinks and acts according to, and as a result of, his whole mental and physical experience of life and his whole character and nature. These cannot be limited to the single short life on earth he now knows, for that will not explain many of his tendencies and traits. They must include all his previous lives.

That a truth which is so clear to their own minds could be so obscure to other minds, is easily explicable by the grading processes of reincarnation. Each man's present state and views are the outcome of his past experiences in past lives.

You must remember that everyone without exception stands in life just where the evolutionary flow has brought him and that his outward life is the result of all those previous experiences in many, many incarnations.

We ought to be glad that we do not live forever. It is a frightening thought. If there were no death we would go on and on and on, captives in the body, having tried all experiences which promised much but in the end yielded nothing. No, it is good that in the end we are released from the physical tomb, as Plato called it, and will be able to enjoy a period of dignified rest until we plunge back again into the next re-embodiment.

When the decreed time comes the body is discarded but the mind remains. It passes through varied experiences and finally sleeps them off. After a while it awakes deeply refreshed. Then the old propensities slowly revive and it returns to this world, putting on a new body in new surroundings.

This dream-like progress after death is not valueless. It acts as a reminder during each pre-birth of the true purpose of life.

Dying into annihilation is one thing but dying into another form of consciousness is quite different. It is the latter which happens at the passing away of the life-force from the body.

Death is the entrance to a new kind of being, a renewed form of life, another period in which old experience is assimilated and the next phase (reincarnation) prepared for.

The very nature of reincarnation prevents anyone from completely proving it. But there is no other theory that is so reasonable to help us understand our evolution, history, capacity, genius, character, and inequality; no other so useful to help us solve the great problem of why we are here on earth at all. This doctrine, that the ego repeatedly visits our plane in fresh physical forms, is demanded by reason, supplied by intuition, and verified by revelation.

The death of the body does not mean the death of the mind...

Only in those last few days or hours or minutes do most men find out the truth that as one kind of life leaves both them and their flesh, another opens up to them.

How trifling all his earthly successes must seem to a dying man! It is both the irony and tragedy of life that we use up its strictly limited quota of years in pursuits which we come later to see as worthless and in desires which we find bring pain with their fulfilment. The dying man, who sees the cinema-film of his past flash in review before his mental eyes, discovers this irony and feels this tragedy.

For those who have made sufficient progress with the Quest, death is not a frightening experience. Once the exit from the body has been made, the rest is pleasant and peaceful.

The thought of the body, of being identified with it, guarantees that a dying person will come back here again.

The spiritual instinct may appear to be totally dormant in a man but it is never killed. In another birth, and after other experiences, it will return.

Even those who are well-intentioned and spiritually minded make many mistakes in life simply because they cannot see the unfortunate results to which their wrong decisions and actions must necessarily lead. Only experience can lead to their correction and only reincarnation can give enough experience.

All the reincarnations which are necessary to the unfoldment of his character and capacities must be lived through.

We travel from one body to another, with suitable and necessary rest-periods in between them. From each we gather experiences; in each we learn and unlearn, sin and suffer, act aright and benefit. In the end, amid advance and relapse, there is the fullness and satisfaction of ripened manhood, cleaned, leaving behind more animality.

In the end, after many a life on earth, he will find that much of what he looks for in others will have to be found in himself. But it will not be found in the surface self. It lies deeply submerged, in a region where the purest forms exist.

The higher self affects the ego but is not affected by it. Its existence goes on quite independently of the serialized earth appearances of the ego, and persists when the other ceases.

A Christianity once existed which has long been condemned and forgotten but which is as much nearer the true teaching of Jesus as it is nearer him in time. We refer to the school of the Gnostics. Their defeat and disappearance does not lessen their truth. The Gnostic Christians of the third century accepted the pre-existence and earthly rebirths of man. With this doctrine there came naturally the law of recompense (Law of Karma), which warns men to heed more carefully what they think and do, for the results will return equally and justly in time.

Karma: we reap what we sow

Nature, which is God Active, governs man by her own laws, which bring him the results of his own doing.

There is no other judge of your deeds than the law of recompense, whose agent is your own Overself.

Each of us lives at a certain time in history and occupies a certain place (or certain places) during that period. Why now and here? Look to the law of consequences for an answer, the law which connects one earthly lifetime with earlier ones.

The inequalities and injustices, which trouble many, are all balanced sooner or later by the law of recompense (karma). Each person receives in return precisely what he or she gives out; thus there *is* justice in the world, despite appearances to the contrary...

Our wrong-doing produces sorrows, not only for others but principally for ourselves. Our good action produces a rebound of good fortune. We may not escape from the operation of this subtle law of moral responsibility.

Nobody succeeds in extinguishing karma merely because he intellectually denies its existence, as the votaries of some cults do. If, however, they first faced up to their karma, dealt with it and used it for self-cultivation and self-development, and then only recognized its illusoriness from the ultimate standpoint, their attitude would be a correct one. Indeed, their attempt to deny karma prematurely shows a disposition to rebel against the divine wisdom, a short-sighted and selfish seeking of momentary convenience at the cost of permanent neglect of the duty to grow spiritually.

The karma made in past births is like a shot from a gun; we cannot recall it and must endure the consequences. But once we have surrendered ourself to the Spiritual Preceptor, he guides our hands and prevents us from shooting out further bad karma.

Where a wrong is done us by someone generally we may be sure that the experience represents the expiation of a wrong which we have done to someone in a past incarnation. It is useless to cry out against the injustice of the injury when the cause lies deep within our own history. It is best to put aside the natural feeling of resentment and, understanding as well as we may what it is we are expiating, take its lessons to heart.

All men come back to bodily life again if they leave a residue of karma. All karma that is not brought to an end by bringing the mind's bondage to the ego-thought to an end, makes reincarnation inescapable.

As the full meaning of reincarnation and of karma sinks deeper and deeper into his mind, a generous tolerance will rise higher and higher in his feelings. He will begin to see that every wrong-doer is what he is because of his past experience and present mentality and has to act in the way he does and cannot act in any other way. The life of such a man develops inevitably and naturally out of his character, out of his mode of thought, and out of his experience on this earth in the present and in former lives.

Everyone has to feel and think and act and speak. But everyone does not perceive the consequences, near or remote, swift or slow, of these operations. Whoever chooses a wrong aim or an unworthy desire must endure the consequences of his choice. In every evil act, its painful recoil lies hidden. The process is a cumulative one. Each act begets a further one in the same downward direction. Each departure from righteousness makes return more difficult.

In the end the heartlessly cruel punish themselves, though whether here in this life, in purgatory after death, or in some future re-embodiment is another matter.

The law of recompense may possibly be better named the law of reflection. This is because every act is reflected back to its doer, every thought is reflected back to its source, as if by a vast cosmic mirror. Perhaps the idea of recompense carries too strong a moral implication and hence too limited a meaning to be the correct equivalent for the word "karma."

It is absurd to treat the idea of karma as if it were some outlandish Oriental fancy. It is simply the law which makes each man responsible for his own actions and which puts him into the position of having to accept the results which flow from them. We may call it the law of self-responsibility. The fact that it is allied with the theory of reincarnation does not invalidate it, for we may see it at work in our own present incarnation quite often.

If it be true that the course of life is predetermined, this does not necessarily mean that it is arbitrarily predetermined. No--the good and bad qualities of your character, the development or lack of development of your capacities, and the decisions made in passing or by reason are the real determinants of your life. There is an inescapable equation between conduct and consequence, between thought and environment, between character and destiny. And this is karma, the law of creative equivalence.

The law of recompense has no jurisdiction over the eternal and undivided Overself, the real being, only over the body and mind, the transitory ego.

When we thoroughly imbibe this great truth, when we humbly acknowledge that all human life is under the sway of the law of consequences, we begin to make a necessity of virtue.

The eternal laws of karma will not cease operating merely for the asking ... He must set going a series of new causes which shall produce new and pleasanter consequences that may act as an antidote to the older ones.

The rigid fatalism which ignores the fact that what we do now is contributing towards the making of the future and which resigns itself to endure the effects of what it has made in the past—that rigid kind of fatalism which is mesmerized by those effects and makes no effort at all—has no place whatever in philosophy or in the philosophical understanding of the law of karma.

When men come to understand that the law of compensation is not less real than the law of gravitation, they will profit immensely.

Karma expresses itself through events which may seem to be accidents. But they are so only on the surface.

We get just the kind of karma whose silent instruction is needed at the time.

While fulfilling its own purpose, karma cannot help fulfilling another and higher one; it brings us what is essential to our development.

The place where you are, the people who surround you, the problems you encounter, and the happenings that take place just now—all have their special meaning for you. They come about under the law of recompense as well as under the particular needs of your spiritual growth. Study them well but impersonally, egolessly, and adjust your reactions accordingly. This will be hard and perhaps even unpalatable, yet it is the certain way to solving all your problems...

Beware of giving birth to thoughts of hate, envy, malice, or wrath and sending them to another person. For they will reach him, yes, but will then return like a boomerang to their source.

He may deceive himself or others, but he cannot deceive the power of karma. Before it, he must stand responsible for his acts and receive their due effects. There is no other way he can go.

The result of wrong-doing will reach a man in the end and teach him the value of its opposite. If he stubbornly needs many lessons and many classes in life's school before he is willing to accept this value, the fact is regrettable and his suffering is inevitable.

When at length he will be called to account by karma, he will be judged not by the certificates of character which others bestow upon him, whether good or bad, but by the motives felt in his heart, the attitudes held in his mind, and the deeds done by his hands.

One shouldn't brood over fancied wrongs which he believes have been done to him nor dwell on another's faults. The law of recompense will deal with the situation. Emotional bitterness is harmful to both persons. On this path, the student must learn to overcome such feelings; they act as obstacles which hinder his advancement.

Why blame a person for what he does if his higher faculties have not yet awakened and possessed him? He is only doing what he can. Moreover it is prudent never to condemn others. For others will then be by karmic law condemn you.

Who has not made mistakes in the past? Wisdom lies in not making the same mistake twice. Situations which bring to the surface what might otherwise have lain hidden in his character and which put his quality to the test give him a chance to adjust himself accordingly. Every important event which leads to them has an inner as well as an outer significance, for it traces back to a karmic origin which is specially selected by the Overself because he is on this Quest to promote his self-knowledge and self-purification.

Each man gets his special set of experiences, which no one else gets. Each life is individual and gets from the law of recompense those which it really needs, not those which someone else needs. The way in which he reacts to the varied pleasant and unpleasant situations which develop in everyday life will be a better index to the understanding he has gained than any mystical visions painted by the imagination.

Although karma is clinched by what a man does in fact, it is built up also by what he long thinks and strongly feels.

Karma is the precise result of what a man thinks and does. His reaction to events and situations is the precise result of what he is, his stage in evolution...

That which delays the expression of a man's dynamic thought in modifications of his environment or alterations of his character is the weight of his own past karma. But it only delays; if he keeps up the pressure of concentration and purpose, his efforts must eventually show their fruit.

Each person who enters our life for a time, or becomes involved with it at some point, is an unwitting channel bringing good or evil, wisdom or foolishness, fortune or calamity to us. This happens because it was preordained to happen—under the law of recompense. But the extent to which he affects our outer affairs is partly determined by the extent to which we let him do so, by the acceptance or rejection of suggestions made by his conduct, speech, or presence. It is we who are finally responsible.

The karma is a part of himself and he cannot get away from it. But just as he may bring some changes about in himself, so there may be a corresponding echo in the karma.

Even deliberate inaction does not escape the making of a karmic consequence. It contains a hidden decision not to act and is therefore a form of action!

Sins of omission are just as important karmically as sins of commission. What we ought to have done but did not do counts also as a karma-maker.

If men knew that the law of compensation was no less operative than the law of their country, they would unquestionably become more careful.

If you demand freedom you must accept the responsibility which accompanies it. This is not only a human and social law but also a divine and karmic law.

Those who will not learn from correct reflection about their experiences will have to learn from kicks delivered by the fresh karma they make.

All through history we see men inflicting suffering upon other men. This shows their ignorance of the higher laws, for by their own sin they punish themselves.

The law of consequences is immutable and not whimsical but its effects may at times be modified or even neutralized by introducing new causes in the form of opposing thoughts and deeds. This of course involves in turn a sharp change in the direction of life-course. Such a change we call repentance.

All things contribute to the making of man—the history of his past and the climate of his land, the people among whom he is born, and his own particular tendencies. The most important is his karma.

Sometimes we are pushed to perform deeds which turn out to be our finest ones, or our most fortunate ones, although at the time we did not know this. Who is the pusher? In those cases it is either karma or grace.

The course of each individual quest, its ecstasies and sufferings, is not easily predictable. The factors of karma and Grace are always present and their operation in different life situations may always be different and cannot be foreseen.

If in the end—and sometimes well before—karma catches up with a man, it is not all painful; the term need not fill him with foreboding. For the good he has thought and done brings a good come-back too.

A creative and original mind can undertake work for his own profit or benefit. If he undertakes it in addition for the benefit of others, he gains karmic merit. One refers, of course, to worthwhile work.

There is a gratifying secret entwined with this injunction to serve mankind. Whoever gives himself in such service will inevitably receive a boomerang-like return one day when others will display a readiness to serve him. For karma is a divine law which brings back to him whatever he has given forth.

There is no such act as a one-sided self-giving. Karma brings us back our due. He who spends his life in the dedicated service of philosophic enlightenment may reject the merely material rewards that this service could bring him, but he cannot reject the beneficent thoughts, the loving remembrances, the sincere veneration which those who have benefited sometimes send him. Such invisible rewards help him to atone more peacefully and less painfully for the strategic errors he has made, the tactical shortcomings he has manifested. Life is an arduous struggle for most people, but much more so for such a one who is always a hated target for the unseen powers of darkness. Do not hesitate to send him your silent humble blessing, therefore, and remember that Nature will not waste it. The enemies you are now struggling against within yourself he has already conquered, but the enemies he is now struggling against are beyond your present experience. He has won the right to sit by a hearth of peace. If he has made the greatest renunciation and does not do so, it is for your sake and for the sake of those others like you.

The philosophical teaching

Since truth can be looked at from different standpoints, since it has different aspects, it is desirable that there should exist a variety of doctrines and views. Where the attempt is made to congeal it into a fixed creed, for all time, a sect is created and sectarian prejudices are introduced.

The noblest calling in life and the most useful vocation is philosophical teaching.

This teaching will only be of interest to those who have long felt an aspiration towards higher-than-ordinary experience. It can be understood only by those who try to live it: all others merely think they understand it. Only those who have incorporated it in their lives for a number of years can know how intensely practical philosophy is.

The fellowship of philosophy requires no ritual, no immersion, no dogmatic confession, no creedal test. It is free and non-sectarian. It shuts no one in, no one out.

We may begin by asking what this philosophy offers us. It offers those who pursue it to the end a deep understanding of the world and a satisfying explanation of the significance of human experience. It offers them the power to penetrate appearances and to discover the genuinely real from the mere appearance of reality; it offers satisfaction of that desire which everyone, everywhere, holds somewhere in his heart—the desire to be free.

Those who would assign philosophy the role of a leisurely pastime for a few people who have nothing better to do, are greatly mistaken. Philosophy, correctly understood, involves living as well as being. Its value is not merely intellectual, not merely to stimulate thought, but also to guide action. Its ideas and ideals are not left suspended in mid-air, as it were, unable to come down to earth in practical and practicable forms. It can be put to the test in daily living. It can be applied to all personal and social problems without exception. It shows us how to achieve a balanced existence in an unbalanced society.

The philosophic movement is a loose and free one. Its strength cannot be measured by numbers or institutions, for externality and rigidity are out of harmony with its teaching and character. Yet, unorganized and unadvertised though it be, it is not less vital and not less significant than more visible movements.

Unless men possess the right intuitional calibre, they cannot grasp this teaching, for it stands at an altitude beyond the reach of the gross and the materialistic.

No age is unsuited to the study and practice of philosophy. No one is too young to begin it, nor too late.

Those who do not like philosophy and cannot understand it are simply not ready for it. We cannot compel them to take it up. But we can keep it available for them, whenever the time comes that they do feel a need for it.

Such an exalted teaching is never to be forced on others; they must first feel the desire for truth, and that strongly enough to begin to seek for it. Each man therefore obtains the truths to which he is entitled. It is all a matter of ripeness.

Philosophy does not have to defend itself, nor even to explain itself. It is only for those who have grown and grown until they are ready for it. They will appreciate its worth and perceive its truth without argument.

The interest in philosophy develops out of different motives. The need of finding inner peace is one man's motive; the wish to understand life is another's.

Whereas metaphysics seeks to lift us up to the superphysical idea by thinking, whereas meditation seeks to lift us up by intuition, whereas ethics seeks to raise us to it by practical goodness, art seeks to do the same by feeling and appreciating beauty. Philosophy in its wonderful breadth and balance embraces and synthesizes all four and finally adds their coping stone, insight.

The immediate task today is for philosophy to deliver its message. The secondary task is to assist those who accept this message to come to a proper and adequate understanding of it. The first is for the multitude and hence public. The second is for the individual and hence private.

By refusing to join philosophy to any built-up structure, social or cultural organization, or particular group of people, this approach keeps its own freedom and bestows that same freedom on those who study it.

Many people talk mysticism or play with psychism so long as either promises them wonderful powers which most other people haven't got or wonderful experiences which most other people do not have. But when they come to philosophy and find that it demands from them a renovation of their entire character, they are seized with fear and retreat.

Philosophy is not for such people, for it does not conform to their wishes. It tells them what they do not like to hear. It disturbs their egoistic vanity and troubles their superficial serenity when it throws a glaring spotlight on their lower nature, their baser motives, and their ugly weaknesses.

They come to philosophy when they have exhausted other sources, paths, and directions, only when their search is prolonged enough and intelligent enough to show, with time, that the Truth is not findable elsewhere.

The groups

Since the real essence of philosophy has only an inner content, which must be felt intuitively and grasped intellectually, but no outer form, it cannot become material for a cult, an organized group. It must lead each person on his own individual way, letting him grow naturally from within.

In the absence of a master let him follow a lone path, welcoming whatever he can learn from competent authorities but attaching himself to none.

I have always recommended to those who feel strong enough to be able to do so, to refrain from joining any organization, to keep their freedom, while at the same time studying the doctrines of whatever organizations interest them, whatever religions engage some of their attention. This freedom enables them to look anywhere, to study everything, to question courageously, to keep breadth of view, depth of thought.

It is a common but fallacious belief that by joining a group we get at the truth more quickly, or progress to spiritual reality more easily.

The refusal to join any ecclesiastical church or religious society does not leave a man spiritually homeless. If he faithfully exercises himself in meditation and seeks to practise the presence of God, what better “home” could he have?

There is no liturgy and no ritual, no hierarchy and no institution in philosophic worship, nor are they needed.

The philosopher's larger and nobler vision refuses to establish a separate group consciousness for himself and for those who think as he does. Hence he refuses to establish a new cult, a new association, or a new label. To him the oneness of mankind is a fact and not a fable...

Meditation and Yoga: calming the thoughts

All these yoga exercises and physical practices are praiseworthy. They are recommended to aspirants—but only as accessories. They are not, and never can be, substitutes for that moment-to-moment struggle with the ego in daily living which is fundamental and inescapable...

All physical techniques have an indirect helpfulness but their value should not be overrated, as the advocates and teachers of these techniques almost always do. They misplace their emphasis on the body and on the tricks it is able to perform.

Only one detail of the human organism deserves their greater emphasis and that is intuition.

To find the time required for meditation may call for a little planning of our time and a lot of revision of our values. But this in itself is a worthwhile self-discipline. For we rush hither and thither but have yet to ask ourselves where we are rushing to. What better use could we make of the treasure of leisure than soul-finding?

Meditation is not achieved if the concentrated mind is directed toward a subject of personal and worldly nature. Reflecting on the subject will give a deeper knowledge of it and a fuller perception of its meaning, but it will not give anything more.

However concentrated the mind may become, it will not escape from the ego, nor does it seek to do so. Meditation is achieved if the concentrated mind is used to reflect on the Overself or the way to it.

What I call natural meditation, that which comes of itself by itself or which comes from the admiration of nature or of music, is not less valuable than any meditation of the yogi, and perhaps it is even better since there is no artificial effort to bring it about. The man feels his inner being gradually lapsing into this beautiful mood which seems to coalesce a feeling of hush, peace, knowledge, and benignity.

This art of meditation is in the end a matter of reaching ever-greater depth within oneself, until one penetrates beneath the ego and enters pure being.

It would be a grave mistake to believe that the following of ascetic regimes and the stilling of wandering thoughts causes the higher consciousness to supervene. What they really do is to permit it to supervene. Desires and distraction are hindrances to its attainment and they merely remove the hindrances. This makes possible the recognition of what we really are beneath them. If however we do nothing more than this, which is called yoga, we get only an inferior attainment, often only a temporary one. For unless we also engage in the rooting out of the ego, which is called philosophy, we do not get the final and superior transcendental state.

The benefits of meditation apply both to mundane life and to spiritual seeking. Think what it means to be able to give our mental apparatus a complete rest, to be able to stop all thoughts at will, and to experience the profound relief of relaxing the entire being—body, nerves, breath, emotions, and thoughts...

The advanced form of meditation merges into contemplation. Here there is no special need to adopt any one posture or to sit in any one way. It is then a practice done in a more inwardly absorbed condition; the physical body and surroundings are less present or quite ignored.

To put an end to this constant working of the mind, this manufacture of thoughts without apparent stop, is the purpose of yoga. But by the practice of philosophy, by the utter calm, thoughts end themselves.

Reminiscence—recollection by the mind of its own identity—is itself equal to a meditation.

Higher Knowledge is Wisdom

There are two kinds of knowledge: the ordinary kind which supplies information about a particular thing object or person and the higher kind which leads to wisdom. A man may correctly understand the handling of an electrical appliance and yet be a fool in the handling of his own life.

The modern world has rightly sought and attained knowledge. Now it must quickly seek and attain wisdom, the next higher octave of knowledge, or it risks losing its gains and destroying itself.

We need to know the truth, the wisdom-knowledge, but it is not enough. We need to have the living mystic experience, the vital feeling of what I am, but it is not enough. For we need to synthesize the two in a full actual intuitive realization, conferred by the Overself. This is Grace. This is to emerge finally—born again!

The time has come to develop the knowledge and extend the understanding of a teaching which few know and fewer still understand. Occupied principally, as it is, with matters of eternal rather than ephemeral life, it finds today a larger opportunity for service than it could have found at any earlier period in consequence of the evolutionary forces which have been working on man's history, ideas, attitudes, communications, and productions. It is the most important knowledge which any human being could study.

The work begins by removing whatever obstructs the mind from viewing the truth, those qualities and conditions which made it impossible to see Reality as it is.

If God did not exist then we humans would not exist. A divine ray, atom, soul, call it what you wish, is present in each of us. Some are aware of this, others must one day come to this knowledge.

The initiation into wisdom—if it is to be lasting—is not suddenly given by any master; it is slowly grown by the experiences and reflection of life. Thought is gradually converted into habit, and habit is gradually merged into high character...

One should seek for knowledge of the Higher Laws governing life, for true purity of character, and for humility if he wishes to reach the Highest Truth.

The notion that it is first necessary to become a monk or to live like a saint before one can hope to acquire this knowledge is erroneous. One must find the inner self, and this of itself will purify us, subdue passions, and tame selfishness. When the magic touch of the Overself falls upon us, our long-held foolishness withers away, and our tightly clutched vices die off and disappear.

The beginner needs knowledge, needs to attend lectures, study books, discuss ideas, and even debate the criticism of them. But the man who has done all that needs to move on, to get into the testing ground where teachings and values must prove themselves—that is, into life itself.

It is here, in the ordinary and uneventful tasks of the day, that he may find just as much opportunity to practise nonattachment, to suppress egoism, and to express wisdom.

The mere number of years of existence is not enough basis on which to judge a man's wisdom. The body's age is quite separate from the soul's.

Our elders are worthy of respect, but their counsel is worthy of heeding only if they are old in soul as well as body, only if they have extracted through many lifetimes all the wisdom possible from each one. Experience without reflection misses most of its value, reflection without depth misses much of its value, depth without impartiality may miss the chief point. For all our experience, our life in the body and world, is a device to bring out our soul.

Up to a certain level, this gleaning of knowledge from diverse and various sources enriches man but beyond that level it confuses and thus weakens him.

There is another way of knowing beside the ordinary way, through the channels of eyes or thoughts, a way which can be found only by quietening the mind and stilling the emotions.

It is not easy for a man to believe that a greater wisdom may be received by his mind if he keeps it still than if he stirs it into activity.

Every time he patiently crushes a wrong or foolish thought, he adds to his inner strength. Every time he bravely faces up to a misfortune with calm impersonal appraisal of its lesson, he adds to his inner wisdom.

Socrates got his wisdom from within himself. He had no master.

What is the best charity, the truest philanthropy? It is so to enlighten a man that thereafter he will find within himself all the resources he needs to manage his life so as to bring him the greatest happiness.

It is for him to do whatever practical wisdom calls for in each situation but, having done that, to relinquish the results to the higher power for better or for worse.

Let evil appearances be what they are, the revelation of insight contradicts them and shows the divine presence throughout the whole universe and behind all happenings.

This is knowledge of the highest order, that everything around us and within us, every bit of Nature and creature, the experience of life with a physical body and of death without it—all are but forms of consciousness.

Both Shankara and Ramana Maharshi blame identification with the body as ignorance, which the first says results in no hope of liberation and the second says is the root cause of all trouble. What they say is unquestionably so. But what else can happen in the beginning except this identification? It is the first kind of identity anyone knows. His error is that he stays at this point and makes no attempt to inquire further. If he did—in a prolonged, sustained, and continued effort—he would eventually find the truth: knowledge would replace ignorance.

Who has not made mistakes in the past? Wisdom lies in not making the same mistake twice. Situations which bring to the surface what might otherwise have lain hidden in his character and which put his quality to the test give him a chance to adjust himself accordingly. Every important event which leads to them has an inner as well as an outer significance, for it traces back to a karmic origin which is specially selected by the Overself because he is on this Quest to promote his self-knowledge and self-purification...

True healing is primarily the healing of spiritual ignorance, never the gaining of prosperity, and only occasionally the getting of good health. It is to win an unbreakable peace and a perfect knowledge which neither death nor man can steal or impair.

When the knowledge of the soul is not merely intellectual, however convincing, not only a matter of belief, however firm, but an unchangeable awareness of its ever-present existence, it is true knowledge, authentic revelation, and blissful salvation.

Modern science

If knowledge fails to reconcile science with religion and philosophy, then civilization will become the victim of a politically directed materialistic scientific knowledge, and end by destroying itself.

Philosophy respects science, but not the abuses of science. When they occur, they create materialism in metaphysical thought, pollution in industrial application, and unbalance in religious criticism.

The work done by science and rationalism has been a necessary one, but it was destructive of religious codes and consequently of moralities based on those codes. Mankind must now perform a piece of constructive work in the sphere of ethics or it may experience a social collapse of colossal magnitude. It is here that the hidden teaching can step in and offer a valuable contribution.

The mystery of the universe is in the end the mystery of mind. The reasonable question to which scientists should address themselves, and will in the end have to, is "What is Mind?" To call it brain, flesh, is a misleading answer.

In their haste to assert that mind is only a function of brain flesh they use the very mind whose existence, unnoticed and overlooked, makes their assertion possible.

Man as scientist has put under observation countless objects on earth, in sea and sky. He has thoroughly examined them. But man as man has put himself under a shallower observation. He has limited his scrutiny first to the body, second to what thinking can find. Yet a deeper level exists, where a deeper hidden self can be found.

(a) "The vulgar belief that Science has "explained everything" is a hopeless misunderstanding. As we shall afterwards find, it would be nearer the truth to say that Science has explained nothing. (b) Science does not even try to refer facts of experience to any ultimate reality. That is not its business. (c) In a limited sense Science explains things, namely, by reducing them to simpler terms, by discovering the conditions of their occurrence, and by disclosing their history. What do we mean when we say that Physics has accounted for the tides or that Physiology has made some function of the body much more intelligible than it used to be? What is meant is that we have gained a general conception of the nature of the facts in question, and that we are able to relate them to some general formula. In this sense only does Science explain things, and it does not really get beyond a description."—Thomson, Introduction to Science.

Every thoughtful scientist now knows that just as matter has turned out to be a manifestation of force, so force will eventually turn out to be a manifestation of something higher; he perceives that matter is really an appearance behind

which stands the reality force; so an ultimate reality must be reckoned as standing behind force. In other words, there is but ONE Reality and various forms under which it appears.

The hope of educated men who understand and appreciate the services of science but who deplore its dangers and recognize its limitations, lies in the investigation and development of consciousness.

Consciousness is the ultimate, as science is beginning vaguely to see. With a concentrated, sharpened mind he can pierce into his deepest self and then endeavour to understand it; he can also pierce into the external world of matter and understand that too. Unthwarted by the illusions of the ordinary man, who takes what his eyes see for granted, he can probe beneath appearances. And when he can at last see the Truth, his spiritual ignorance falls away of its own accord and can never come back to him again...

In the study of modern science, in all laboratory analysis or examination of natural phenomena, great stress is laid upon the necessity for strict impersonality and freedom from every trace of wishful thinking, personal emotion, and prejudice. This is of equal necessity to the student of philosophy.

The day will come when science, waking more fully than it is now from its materialistic sleep, will confess humbly that the soul of man does really exist...

... And the time will come, and cannot be avoided, when both the new and the accumulated facts will force scientists to regard Mind as the real thing they have to deal with, and matter as a group of states of mind. But by that time they will be something more than mere scientists alone; they will be somewhat on the way to becoming philosophical scientists.

Mentalism

To put the once-abstruse truths of mentalism into works readable, understandable, and nontechnical—just as had been done with yoga—was a further effort I made with enthusiasm but now, so many years later, its importance seems even greater than it did then.

Mentalism is the study of Mind and its product, thoughts. To separate the two, to disentangle them, is to become aware of Awareness itself. This achievement comes not by any process of intellectual activity but by the very opposite—suspending such activity. And it comes not as another idea but as extremely vivid, powerfully compelling insight.

Mentalism does not reduce our experience of the world to a shadow. It lets us keep the reality we feel but points to an ultimate reality from which that feeling derives.

We are not asked to doubt the actuality of the ground beneath our feet or the music in our ears, but to understand that they have reached our consciousness because we have thought them.

Mentalism is not to the taste of most people. It does violence to their common sense. It is too little known, hence has few followers. There are two kinds of truth: one is the truth of appearances, and the other is hidden deep down. The first is easy to understand; the other requires much work on one's own mind to get it sharp enough to recognize what is so elusive.

A distinguished musician once said to me that the effective power and reality of music lay not in the sensory impressions it causes, but rather in the mental ones, not in the sounds that enter the ear but in the thoughts provoked by those sounds.

He added that its essential features of time and number are mathematical ones—that is, mental ones.

Why is it that during our most exalted and purest emotional happiness, such as that which comes from listening to fine music or looking at a landscape of wild grandeur or giving ourselves up to, mystical rapture, time seems to be blotted out and we remember its existence only when we are recalled to our ordinary prosaic state? Consider that this strange feeling never arises during our more worldly or more painful episodes. The explanation lies in mentalism. All human experience, including the physical, takes place in the mind. Each episode must be thought into consciousness before it can ever exist for us. If the episode is a happy one, we love to dwell on it, to linger in it, and to become absorbed by it. Such intense concentration greatly slows down the tempo of our thoughts and brings us nearer the utter thought-free stillness wherein our spiritual self forever dwells outside time and space.

It is not merely a personal speculation but a commonplace fact of science, an item of the accepted physiology of the senses, a known result of anatomical research, that the consciousness of what we see and feel is what we really experience, not the things themselves. In the end all our facts are mental ones, all our surroundings are known only as our own thoughts.

In all these studies the principal concept should be returned to again and again: the entire universe, everything—objects and creatures—is in Mind. I hold all the objects of my experience in my consciousness but I myself am held, along with them, in an incredibly greater consciousness, the World-Mind's.

When we come at last to perceive that all this vast universe is a thought-form and when we can feel our own source to be the single and supreme principle in and through which it arises, then our knowledge has become final and perfect.

The act of creative meditation which brings the universe into being is performed by the World-Mind. We, insofar as we experience the world, are participating in this act unconsciously. It is a thought-world and we are thought-beings.

The only world we know, the only one we can ever know, is the one within our mind. The first proof of this is that when it leaves the mind in deep sleep, it has no existence for us at all; the second proof is that when it re-enters the mind on awakening, the sense-perceptions which tell us of its existence re-enter it also.

The object seen, the eye which sees it, and the act of seeing are all part of a mentally created scene; all are idea.

Inwardly and daily he returns to this idea that all is Idea, that the familiar world—its places and people, its city life seething with activity, its vaunted civilization and polished culture—has no other existence than in his consciousness and takes its reality from that. So to become conscious of Consciousness detached from its productions—thoughts—is his task, draws his strength and devotion.

"Before Abraham was I am!" These words are an expression of the higher mentalism. Note carefully that Jesus did not say "I was." This means that he, as the non-personal unindividuated Mind, existed before the birth of Abraham. "I am" points to the eternal One where no individual entity ever was, is, or shall be.

To renounce the world is merely to exchange one kind of residence and one form of activity for another. We live in the consciousness, experience all happenings in it, and cannot renounce it whatever form or appearance it takes. There is in fact a hierarchy of worlds to be passed through.

If a man understands that life is like a dream and is mental at bottom, and if as a result he practises a certain kind of detachment, there will descend upon his character a calmness and a serenity for which he will not even have to work, given sufficient time.

To say that the world does not exist helps neither the cause of truth nor the seeker after truth. To admit that it does exist but to qualify the admission by adding "but not materially, only mentally" is to describe experience accurately. The dream exists in the dreaming mind as a series of thoughts, even though its world is not physical.

Mentalism leads neither to solipsism (one's own existence is the only existence) nor to Hindu Advaita's denial of the World's existence. The first is a misreading and consequent misunderstanding of it caused by a failing to see that the individual ego is itself a projection of Mind. The second fails to see that as an experience in the field of awareness of that ego, as a given and fundamental idea in that consciousness, it is a coexistent and not to be denied without impairing sanity.

There is only one mind and all such names as cosmic mind, over-mind, and so forth are merely imperfect and partial concepts of that ultimate single mind which philosophy puts forth in order to help students advance to a higher stage.

These concepts are not false, however. They represent aspects of the same ultimate mind as seen from different standpoints. As these standpoints are not the highest they do not yield the final truth. It will be well therefore for him to accustom himself to the highest standpoint and to remember always that there is but one mind, one reality, one principle, one substance, one being only. All things are forms or shapes which it appears to take temporarily. The key to the understanding of these admittedly difficult points is to think of the universe seen during dream and then to remember that that universe itself, its seas and continents, its peoples and animals, its happenings in time, its distances in space, do not exist apart from the mind of the dreaming person; that even if millions of people exist within that universe they are nothing else than ideas passing through the mind of the dreamer; and that their ultimate stuff or reality is mind although to the dreamer they appear real, as do also water, fire, gas, and even the ninety-odd chemical elements. Now he must try to regard the waking universe in the same way, with this difference: that because the ego is one of the dreamed-of figures in the waking dreams it must be eliminated if one is to break through the dream and ascertain that it is a dream in the universal mind.

Mentalism, the teaching that this is a mental universe, is too hard to believe for the ordinary man yet too hard to disbelieve for the illumined man. This is because to the first it is only a theory, but to the second it is a personal experience. The ordinary man's consciousness is kept captive by his senses, each of which reports a world of matter

outside him. The illumined man's consciousness is free to be itself, to report its own reality and to reveal the senses and their world to be mere ideation.

There are strange uncommon moments when we seem to be lifted out of ourselves, when the whole of the past and present existences seems but a picture in a fitful dream and when the entire stuff of the universe seems nothing other than momentary thought. At such moments we may understand by an act of intuition rather than of reflection that the world is a product of Mind, not of Matter.

This is knowledge of the highest order, that everything around us and within us, every bit of Nature and creature, the experience of life with a physical body and of death without it—all are but forms of consciousness.

Fate and Free Will

The World-Idea's end is foreordained from the beginning. This leaves no ultimate personal choice. But there's a measure of free will in a single direction—how soon or how late that divine end is accomplished. The time element has not been ordered, the direction has.

Fate hands him the opportunities and the difficulties: what he does with them is his choice, for which he is responsible.

He may be predestined to live in certain surroundings but the way in which he allows them to affect him is not predestined.

That our mortal destiny is made up of welcome and unwelcome circumstances or happenings is a certainty. There is no human being whose pattern fails to be so chequered—only the black and white squares are unequal in number, and the proportion differs from one person to another. It hurts to confess this duality of pain with joy, this temporality which threatens every happiness; but this truth is unassailable, as Buddha knew and taught.

A child is born into a family not by mere chance but as the resultant of forces set agoing in the previous births both by the newly born and by its parents.

He who has had the good fortune to have a loving companion in marriage should not rail at Destiny when this helpmate is taken away. The same karma which brought the two together has also severed the relationship. But this is only temporary. There is really no loss, as mind speaks to mind in silent moments. Love and companionship of high quality will act as an attractive force to bring them together again somewhere, sometime. Many feel this in the inner understanding.

He should dismiss fears and anxieties concerning the present state or future destiny of anyone he loves. Let him do what he reasonably can to protect the other, then place him or her trustingly in the care and keeping of the higher power.

Where is man's free will? He is free to choose whether he will conform to the pattern of the World-Idea, whether he will obey or not obey the higher laws.

A man's attitude toward the question of free will changes after he has surrendered to the Overself. It has to change. For henceforth he is to be loyal not to the ego's desires but to the Overself's injunctions. If the two coincide, it is well and pleasant for him. If not, and he obeys his higher self as he must, then it can no longer be said that he has full freedom of will. But neither can it be said that he has not. For the Overself *is in him*, not outside, not something alien and apart; it is indeed himself at his best and highest level. Because the Overself is under no other law than that of its own being, which it always obeys, both freedom and fate are harmoniously united in it. Hence, the truly wise man will reconcile and unite the tenet of karma and the tenet of free will. He knows that only a limited vision will range them against each other.

Although it is quite true that much of the vaunted free will of man is quite illusory, it is equally true that most of the events in his life, which consequently seem so predetermined, grow inescapably out of the kind of moral character and mental capacity which he possesses. They are neither merely accidental nor wholly arbitrary. Choice and reaction, attitude and decision depend ultimately on his psychological make-up and influence the course of events in a certain way. "Character is fate"—this is the simplest statement of the greatest truth. Where is freedom for man when heredity and the history and state of his family and race prearrange so many physical factors for him?

When considered from the long-range karmic point of view, each of us creates his own world and atmosphere. Therefore, we have no one but ourselves to thank or blame for our comfort or wretchedness. It should be remembered, too, that present correct or incorrect use of free will is right now deciding the conditions and circumstances of lives to come.

When the ego is displaced and the Overself is using him, there will be no need and no freedom to choose between two alternatives in regard to actions. Only a single course will present itself, directly and unwaveringly, as the right one.

We are seldom fair to fate. When events do not happen in the way we would like them to, we refuse to accept the idea that it is our own fault, so we blame our harsh fate. But when they do happen favourably, we personally take the credit for bringing them about!

When a man hesitates too long over taking a course which intuition tells him he should take, and in which his higher life is concerned, it may be that destiny will intervene and make him suddenly realize that this is the way, and that all doubts should be thrown out.

If you begin the day with love in your heart, peace in your nerves, and truth in your mind, you not only benefit by their presence but also bring them to others—to your family or friends, and to all those whom destiny draws across your path that day.

Universal Love and Compassion

If suffering brings moods of dejection, it is only fulfilling its intention. This is part of its place in the scheme of things, leading to the awareness that underneath the sweet pleasures of life there is always pain. But thought would present only a half-truth if it stopped there. The other half is much harder to find: it is that underneath the surface sufferings which no one escapes, far deeper down than its counterpart, is a vast harmony, an immense love, an incredible peace, and a universal support.

Compassion is the highest moral value, the noblest human feeling, the purest creature-love. It is the final social expression of man's divine soul. For he is able to feel with and for another man only because both are in reality related in harmony by the presence of that soul in each one.

So long as there are others acutely conscious of their spiritual need, so long must he go out among them. He does not do this by an external command but only by an internal one—the command of compassion. He no longer feels for himself alone but also for others. Indeed he cannot help doing so, for the same reason that Jesus could not help proclaiming the gospel to the Israelites, even though he foreknew the end would be impalement upon the Cross.

He could not tell others how to struggle out of the depths if he had not himself done so, how to realize the soul if he himself had not realized it. But this is only his first qualification. His second is that he has cultivated the special virtue of compassion for others throughout the whole course of his mystical life. Consequently he becomes its fullest embodiment when that life flowers into bloom. That is why he is a teaching sage rather than a cold self-centered mystic.

Real love is not something to be withdrawn abruptly when the person who is its object annoys or offends you.

There is no reason to feel that love for a marriage partner is at variance with efforts toward self-evolution. In its best sense, mutual love is an aid for both to progress and develop as individuals.

To the degree you keep ego out of your reaction to an enemy, to that degree you will be protected from him. His antagonism must be met not only with calmness, indifference, but also with a positive forgiveness and active love...

When one's love for another is of the highest type and leads to an expansion of understanding, compassion, and tolerance of others, he has glimpsed the greater purpose of personal love: how the surrender of his heart may lead to its opening to, and becoming united with, Universal Love.

The practice of extending love towards all living creatures brings on ecstatic states of cosmic joy.

It is a state of exquisite tenderness, of love welling up from an inner centre and radiating outward in all directions. If other human beings or animal creatures come within his contact at the time, they become recipients of this love without exception. For then no enemies are recognized, none are disliked, and it is not possible to regard anyone as repulsive.

Truth and Love will conquer in the end—however far off that be—for they are deeply buried in the hearts of men and will be slowly uncovered by the instruction which life itself gives. We must acquire something of God's patience.

To serve humanity

Having no official connection with any group, sect, organization, or church leaves me free to help anyone, anywhere.

Whoever finds his Overself and draws from it the will and desire to serve others, will radiate joy, confidence, and peace to them.

He comes to the service of mankind by an indirect route. For his primary service is to the Overself. But after he makes this inward act of entire dedication to it, the Overself then bids him go forth and work for the welfare of all beings.

Swami Vivekananda's works can be recommended as being authentic fruits of realization that come close to the doctrine here discussed, albeit his path was not the same. The Quest follows a double line of development: mind-stilling plus mind-stimulating, each in its proper place. And the ultimate goal is to discover that there is but one reality, of which all are but a part, that the separateness of the personal ego is but superficial, and that Truth is evidenced by the consciousness of unity. The first fruit of such discovery is necessarily the dedication of life to the service of all creatures, to incessant service for universal welfare.

When the ego discovers that it is a part of the whole, it will naturally cease to live only for its own good and begin to live for the general good also.

All are ultimately one big family. This is what reflection on experience teaches. When one reflects on Truth, he shall eventually learn that, as the Overself, all are one entity—like the arms and legs of a single body. The upshot of this is that he has to consider the welfare of others equally with his own.

The continued study of this philosophy will inevitably lead the student to accept its practical consequences and thus make the universal welfare of mankind his dominant ethical motive.

When he has found the truth, he has nothing to decide. He will realize that the ALL, this whole teeming universe, IS himself, that all creatures and all men are one. Therefore their interests and their welfare become his automatically. Therefore he will come back to earth again and again to help all beings attain truth and happiness. The notion of choosing selfish bliss or unselfish service does not occur to those who have realized truth.

The best form of social service is the one which leads others to the higher understanding of truth.

Despite all the talk disparaging the ego, it is not wrong but praiseworthy to develop the best personality one can and then use it. Its character can be purified, its passions controlled, its weaknesses overcome, its ignorance dispelled. New virtues can be introduced and new power developed. One can then make better use of such a personality—for one's own advantage and for service of others—and one should.

To understand the mysterious language of the Silence, and to bring this understanding back into the world of forms through work that shall express the creative vitality of the Spirit, is one way in which you may serve mankind.

If anyone or anything, a man or a book, can contribute to free us from the resentments towards others or the bitternesses towards life which poison feelings, thoughts, and health, he has rendered us a great service or the book has proved its worth.

The best charity in the end is to show a man the higher life that is possible for him.

The same possessions which enslave one man may set another free. For where the first uses them to strengthen desires, nourish passions, increase selfishness, and exploit humanity, the second may use them to build character, improve intelligence, foster meditation, and serve humanity...

There is a gratifying secret entwined with this injunction to serve mankind. Whoever gives himself in such service will inevitably receive a boomerang-like return one day when others will display a readiness to serve him. For karma is a divine law which brings back to him whatever he has given forth...

Moreover, whatsoever we give or do to others is ultimately reflected back to us in some form by the power of karma, and if he frequently nurses the ideal of serving mankind he will attract to himself the spiritual help of those who themselves have this same aim.

To serve humanity is in the end to serve yourself. This follows from the working of karma. To forgive those who, in ignorance, sin against you is, for the same reason, to forgive yourself.

If it be asked, How can anyone who is attuned to such impersonality be also benevolent? the answer is that because he is also attuned to the real Giver of all things, he need not struggle against anyone nor possess anything. Hence he can afford to be generous as the selfish cannot. And because the Overself's very nature is harmony and love, he seeks the welfare of others alongside of his own.

The mark of true goodness is, first, that it never by thought, word, or deed injures any other living creature; second, that it has brought the lower nature under the bidding of the higher; and third, that it considers its own welfare not in isolation but always against the background of the common welfare.

Never again will it be possible for him wilfully to injure another; but on the contrary the welfare of the All will become his concern. In Jesus' words he is "born again." He will find his highest happiness, after seeking reality and truth, in seeking the welfare of all other beings alongside of his own. The practical consequence of this is that he will be inevitably led to incessant effort for their service and enlightenment.

Fo Sho hing tsan: "I do not seek for any reward, not even being reborn in a paradise. I seek the welfare of man. I seek to enlighten those who harbour wrong thoughts."

When he first attains to this clear vision, he sees not only that which brings him great joy but also that which brings him great sorrow. He sees men bewildered by life, pained by life, blinded by life. He sees them wandering into wrong paths because there is no one to lead them into right ones. He sees them praying for light but surrounded by darkness. In that hour he makes a decision which will fundamentally affect the whole of his life. Henceforth he will intercede for these others, devote himself to their spiritual service.

He is not working for this generation, nor for this country, nor for any millenium, but for an infinite duration of time. Therefore he is, he must be, infinitely patient.

He is well aware of their characteristics; but however undesirable, faulty, or evil they may be, he makes no attempt to judge them. Indeed, he accepts them just as they are. This is inevitable since, being aware of his and their common origin in God, he practises goodwill towards everyone unremittingly.

His last task is to re-enter the busy world and dwell in it as focus for unworldly forces, to heal the suffering and guide the blinded.

Helping others to attain what he has attained, guiding seekers to reach safely the glorious summit where he now stands, is not decided for him by personal temperament or choice but by the overpowering sense of a primary and paramount duty.

No worldly advantage can tempt the sage into desertion of his sacred task of serving humanity, nor can any egoism lead him into betrayal of those who trust him.

The only kind of service he may render is unpaid service. This condition he cheerfully accepts. For whatever he does to help others, he does out of love of the deed itself.

He will engage in the service of humanity because compassion will arise in his heart, because of the good it will do.

Realization, Enlightenment, Liberation: the state of Non-Duality

How can a mental state be the final realization? It is temporary. Mystic experience is such a state. It is something one enters and leaves. Beyond and higher is realization of unchanging truth.

The journey of life is both an adventure and a pilgrimage. We pass from body to body to collect experience. The fruit of experience is Enlightenment: the knowledge of Overself, established awareness of its presence; and knowledge of the Unseen Power behind the universe, established connection with it. The aspirant must take heart that one day his goal will be reached, even if there were no law of evolution to confirm it—as there is.

Everything that intrudes upon the mental stillness in this highly critical stage must be rejected, no matter how virtuous or how spiritual a face it puts on. Only by the lapse of all thought, by the loss of all thinking capacity can he maintain this rigid stillness as it should be maintained. It is here alone that the last great battle will be fought and that the first great fulfilment will be achieved. That battle will be the one which will give the final deathblow to the ego; that fulfilment will be the union with his Overself after the ego's death...

What it asserts is that the real truth already exists in the pithy core of man's mind, that it can be seen by anyone who will undo the illusions which cover it so thickly, the passions which obscure it so agitatedly, and, above all, the egoism which fears it so greatly. This does not imply the development of new things: it implies the removal of old ones. It is concerned with the discovery of what we really are, not what we shall one day become.

The actual finding of Truth, which is the same as Nirvana, Self-Knowledge, Liberation, is really a work of brief duration—perhaps a matter of minutes—whereas the preparation and equipment of oneself to find it must take many incarnations...

Whatever is called for to bring on enlightenment exists within himself already, but it is latent and undeveloped. By study, exercise, and practice the aspirant can be his own teacher. Sooner or later he will have to take this work into his own hands. The notion that someone else can or will do it all for him is delusory.

Although the movement towards enlightenment goes forward by stages, the actual moment of enlightenment comes abruptly with a sudden transcendence of the darkness in which men ordinarily live.

In the moment that there dawns on his understanding the fact of Mind's beginninglessness and deathlessness, he gains the second illumination, the first being that of the ego's illusoriness and transiency.

This last stage, contemplation, is neither deep reflective thinking nor self-hypnotic trance. It is intense awareness, without the intrusion of the little ego or the large world. In this state the thought-making activity comes to an end, the intellect itself is absorbed in the still centre of being, and a luminous peace enfolds the man.

His life silently becomes a witness to the fact of the Overself's continuous presence.

The knowledge that no two human beings are alike refers to their bodies and minds. But this leaves out the part of their nature which is spiritual, which is found and experienced in deep meditation. In that, the deepest part of their conscious being, the personal self-vanishes; only consciousness-in-itself, thought-free, world-free, remains. This is the source of the "I" feeling, and it is exactly alike in the experience of all other human beings. This is the part which never dies, "where God and man may mingle."

When he experiences the deepest possible state, all mental acts are suspended, all mental activities ended. This includes the act of identifying oneself with the ego. There is then nothing more to prevent the coming of enlightenment.

The effects of enlightenment include: an imperturbable detachment from outer possessions, rank, honours, and persons; an overwhelming certainty about truth; a carefree, heavenly peace above all disturbances and vicissitudes; an acceptance of the general rightness of the universal situation, with each entity and each event playing its role; and impeccable sincerity which says what it means, means what it says.

The stage of contemplation has its own definite signs. Prominent among them are its thought-free emptiness, its utter tranquillity, its absence of personal selfishness.

From this seeming Nothingness deep within he draws a peace of mind, an emotional freedom, a sense of God's living presence that the world's harshness cannot dislodge.

In the nihilistic experience of void, the mystic finds memory sense and thought utterly closed, he knows no separate thing and no particular person; he is blank to all lower phenomena but it is a conscious living rich blissful sublime blankness; it is simply consciousness freed from both the pleasant and the unpleasant burdens of earthly existence.

He who perpetually feels the presence of the divine soul within himself, thereby obtains an effortless control of himself.

Though overshadowed continuously by this divine being that is really his own other self, he remains nevertheless quite human. Just as the Illumined State does not prevent him from receiving physical impressions from the world around him, so it does not prevent him from receiving psychic impressions from the people around him. But he does not cling to any of these impressions, nor does he let his emotions get entwined with them.

Even if the ego still lives in him, it lives thoroughly purified and utterly checked. His principle trends of thought and conduct proceed from a level beyond it.

The real heaven is a state of delightful rest which the finite human mind cannot correctly imagine and usually misconceives as a state of perpetual idleness for the ego.

All human thought and experience move through the contrasts between two things or through the difference between them. Otherwise, it would not be possible for us to think or to have experience. In all human consciousness there is two-ness: thought and the object of thought, self and the thing it is aware of. But in the deepest trancelike meditation, this duality vanishes and only pure consciousness, the nondual Reality, exists.

There, in the deepest state of contemplation, the awareness of a second thing—whether this be the world of objects outside or the world of thoughts inside—vanishes. *But unconsciousness does not follow.* What is left over is a continuous static impersonal and unchanging consciousness. This is the inmost being of man.

In this strange experience he seems to be doing nothing at all, to be mentally quite inactive, all his forces having reached a full stop. Yet the Overself is intensely active.

The final grade of inner experience, the deepest phase of contemplation, is one where the experiencer himself disappears, the meditator vanishes, the knower no longer has an object—not even the Overself—to know for duality collapses.

Because this grade is beyond the supreme "Light" experience where the Overself reveals its presence visually as a dazzling mass, shaft, ball or ray of unearthly radiance which is seen whether the bodily eyes are open or closed, it has been called the divine darkness.

The Buddhists call lasting enlightenment by the name of *Nirvana*.

One of the foremost features of enlightenment is the clarity it gives to the mind, the lucidity of understanding and luminosity which surrounds all problems.

In these glimpses he only looks at the Infinite Beauty, but in the final realization he becomes unified with it.

At long last, when the union of self with Overself is total and complete, some part of his consciousness will remain unmoving in infinity, unending in eternity. There, in that sacred glory, he will be preoccupied with his divine identity, held to it by irresistible magnetism, gladly, lovingly.

OM means "I am part of (or one with) the World-Soul."

The Sage: the realized, enlightened, liberated human being.

There are two kinds of consciousness, one is in ever-passing moments, the other ever-present. The one is in time, the other out of it. The ordinary person knows only the one; the enlightened sage knows both.

The illuminate is conscious of both the ultimate unity and immediate multiplicity of the world. This is a paradox. But his permanent resting place while he is dealing with others is at the junction-point of duality and unity so that he is ready at any moment to absorb his attention in either phase.

He does not have to enter into formal meditation to find his soul. It is an ever-present reality for him, not merely an intellectual conception or emotional belief.

There is in him now a translucency of mind which gives all things, all persons, all events, a deeper diviner significance. Life henceforth has a wonderful and beautiful meaning.

The highest attainment in philosophy, that of the sage, comes from a union of the sharpest, subtlest thinking and of the capacity to enter the thought-free state—a combination of real knowledge and felt peace—balanced, united, yielding truth. This is what makes the sage, whose understanding and peace are his own, who does not depend upon any outside person. Yet it is not the little ego's emotion nor its intellectuality which has brought him to this truth. It is the highest human mind, the finest human feeling. The total man cannot lose what he has attained. It is the higher power working inside the human being.

These finer qualities will no longer appear only in momentary impulses. They will possess his whole character.

Henceforth he functions as the human instrument of a trans-human power.

Henceforth he is to work knowingly and lovingly with the power behind his life.

One result then comes, that what he does by instinct and what he does by choice are henceforth one and the same.

Life is a struggle for all; only the wise struggle ego-lessly, but they struggle all the same. They have to because the adverse element in Nature is forever at war, tearing down where they build, stimulating strife where they give peace, and enslaving minds where they lead to freedom.

The sage can condemn nobody, can regard none as outside his range of compassion, and can find a place in his heart for the worst sinner. He knows that duality is but a dream and discovers himself anew in all sentient creatures. He knows that the world's woe arises out of its false and fictitious sense of separateness.

Each person who brings more truth and goodness, more consciousness and balance into his own small circle, brings it into the whole world at the same time. A single individual may be helpless in the face of global events, but the echoes of the echoes of his inspired words and deeds, presence and thoughts, may be heard far from him in place and time.

Just as Jesus was in reality greater than the rabbis whose unquestioned authority dominated the people of Israel, so any man today who reflects in all its purity the Overself's light, unshadowed by his personal opinions, is in reality greater than the impressively robed dignitaries of Church and State.

The man who is no longer disturbed by the presence or working or characteristic of his own ego will not be disturbed by that of others. No negative feeling will enter his attitude toward them.

The realized man does not look back constantly for memories of the past and does not consider them worth recapitulating, for they belong to the ego ... The only exception would be where he has to draw upon them to instruct others to help them profit by his experiences.

The sage seeks to descend and meet a man at his own level, and then try to lift him just a little higher...

The sage does not ask for service from others, but only to be allowed to serve them. He does not seek to attach them to himself, but only to God.

He will certainly be unpretentious and may even be unimpressive, but that will be only to the external eye. To those who can see with the mind, the heart, and the intuition, he will be a rare messenger of divinity.

In that universal Mind wherein he now dwells, he can find no man to be called his enemy, no man to be hated or despised. He is friendly to all men, not as a deliberately cultivated attitude but as a natural compulsion he may not resist.

His behaviour is spontaneous, but not through mere impulse nor through unused intellect. It is the spontaneity, the forthrightness of an inspired man who knows where he is going and what he is doing, who is directly guided in his relations with other men by a higher will than his own ego's.

Grace flows from such a man, a Sage, as light flows from the sun...

The actions of a man who has attained this degree are inspired directly by his Overself, and consequently are not dictated by personal wishes, purposes, passions, or desires. They are not initiated by his ego's will but by a will higher than his own...

Outwardly he appears to act as intensely or as vigorously as other men. But inwardly he will really be at rest in the Overself, which will lead him like a child into performing necessary actions. His mind is still, even though his body is busy. And because of this leading, his actions will be right and even inspired ones, his personal Will, will be expressive of a higher one.

Men who have daily experience of a divine presence will not waste their time arguing whether or not a divine power exists.

It is not enough for the illuminee when the veil falls and the inner meaning of universal life is read. His efforts do not come to such an abrupt end. For he does not consider his own salvation complete while others remain unsaved. Consequently, he dedicates himself to the task of trying to save them. But in order to do this he has to reincarnate on earth innumerable times. For men can attain the goal here alone and nowhere else.

It is such a man (the Sage) who most serves his fellows yet who least receives the recognition of his service. This is because humanity fails to understand where its true interests lie, what its true goal is, and why it is here at all.

Just by being himself, without preaching, without trying, the sage may awaken in others whose lives touch his, a longing for the higher life.

Just by being himself he makes the philosophic virtues real to others.

He will not seek to draw public attention to himself unless it is in his destiny to do so because he has some public work to perform. He will prefer to keep his holiness hidden from his fellows, and so it will be left for some among them to discover whether he is holy or not. This secrecy provides a wall of outward defense against the negative and evil forces which find plenty of vehicles among his fellow human beings.

It may be said that the world's supreme need is exactly what the illumined man has found, therefore his duty is to give it to the world. This is true, but it is equally true that the world is not ready for it any more than he himself was ready for it before he underwent a long course of purification, discipline, and training. Accepting these realities of the situation, he feels no urge to spread his ideas, no impulse to organize a following. However that does not mean that he does nothing at all; it only means that he will help in the ways he deems to be most effective even if they are the least publicized and the least apparent. He is not deaf to the call of duty but he gives it a wider interpretation than those who are ignorant of the state and powers which he enjoys.

All speculation upon the motives and the methods of the illuminee will avail little. The light by which he works is denied to ordinary men. We should trust where we cannot see and wait patiently for the day of revelation, when we will find all made clear and all riddles solved to our satisfaction.

The sage is a man who lives in constant truth-remembrance. He has realized the existence of the Overself, he knows that he partakes of Its life, immortal and infinite. He has made the pilgrimage to essential being and returned again to walk amongst men, to speak their language, and to bear witness, by his life amongst them, to Truth..

The wise man lets the Overself's presence flow through his life, never blocks it by his ego nor turns it aside by his passions.

The illuminee exerts his influence upon others spontaneously and effortlessly rather than deliberately and purposely. He need make no effort but the benign power and light will radiate naturally from him just the same and reach those who come within his immediate orbit. It is sufficient for them to know with faith and devotion that he is and they receive help and healing. The Overself works directly through him and works unhindered upon all who surrender themselves to it.

He is an ambassador from the infinite, an envoy to all men from the higher plane of their own being.

He is open-eyed enough to see men as they are, but also generous enough to see them as they must one day become.

It is impossible for the materialist to perceive that we live and move and have our being in a universal Mind. But the sage, knowing this, knows also that this universal life will take care of his individual life to the degree that he opens himself out to it, to the extent that he takes a large and generous view of his relation to all other individual lives.

If he has to meet someone who is regarded as a sage, he may quickly feel the stillness surrounding the man. If they sit down together and he feels disinclined to break the silence, it would be better not to do it but to take it as a signal to flout convention and let the initiative be taken by the sage himself.

The sage gladly opens to all qualified and eager seekers the mysteries and treasures of his own inner experience, that they may profit by his past struggles and present success.

Prophets and teachers, sages and saints have come among us in all times to speak of that inner life and inner reality which they have found. But only those who cared to listen have profited by these revelations, communications, and counsels, and still fewer have profited by being willing to follow the path of discipleship.

The last thing he wants to do is to leave a sect behind him. Like the Buddha, he wants men to depend on the Truth rather than on a person.

Where the Overself lives fully in a man, he will not need to consider whether an act is righteous or not. Righteous acts will flow spontaneously from him and no other kind will be possible...