



About: "The Wonderful Wizard of OZ"

[An Interpretation]

Once upon a time there was a teller of tales for children. His name is L. Frank Baum. The tale for which he became most well known is titled "The wonderful Wizard of OZ," published in 1900. Interestingly, according to others, Baum would have titled his tale differently and his publishers had some say so over the title. I only mention this because I think that Baum thought the Wizard to not be so wonderful after all.

Now, over a hundred years later, while absorbed in Theosophy ideas, I suddenly recalled the characters and symbols of Baum's wonderful tale — And yes, I had seen the movie as a child. The characters took on new life and deeper meaning, as it appeared Baum's characters and symbols were personifying¹ theosophical ideas along with an inner spiritual journey of change.

I wrote briefly about some of Baum's characters to a fellow theosophist, who passed on my ideas to an administrative person in a theosophic organization, and the latter person in turn wrote me and informed me, to my delight, that Frank Baum had been a member of their Theosophic Society. Finding out about Baum's association with theosophy was important because the tale of Dorothy's journey appeared to me as an inner journey that many persons, seeking spiritual truth have taken, or will have to

take, to undo or unveil prevalent western religious ideas and doctrine.

So, it is my pleasure to share my interpretation of some of Mr. Baum's characters and symbols. While doing so, I use the book rather than the movie made about forty years later, as it omits significant events and symbols.² The movie became a musical entertainment event that added songs so famous they are still being recorded and sung in the present. The movie did not include many situations, characters, and/or symbols that were within the book. I suspect that monetary desires and the wish for mass-appeal by movie goers were major considerations of the movie makers, as they had bought the movie rights to the book.

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¹ Treating of a thing or idea as a person. — G.B.

² Internal editing is a common danger when adapting from one media to another. Even Joseph Campbell's talks with Bill Moyers were edited with an eye for "mass-appeal" and caution to suppress any items that might offend a large part of the viewing audience or endanger monetary contribution to Public Broadcasting Corporation. — GB

A few dates may be of interest to some. *Isis Unveiled* was originally published in New York in 1877. *The Secret Doctrine* came out in the U.S. in 1888. Frank Baum was born in 1856; his “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” was copyrighted in 1899 and published in 1900. In 1910 Frank Baum and his family moved to Hollywood, California, U.S.A., where he lived till his death in 1919.

For the reader who has not yet read Baum’s tale, nor seen the movie, I obviously recommend it, especially the book. For the rare reader who has not seen the movie, nor read the book, a brief summary is that it is a story of a young girl named Dorothy and her little dog, Toto, who are swept away from their home in a storm and they find themselves in a strange and magical place: the Land of Oz. So Dorothy sets off to find her way home and she has been told that the powerful Wizard of Oz might help her get back home. Along the way she is joined in her journey by a Scarecrow, a Tin Woodman, and a Cowardly Lion. She and her friends encounter numerous obstacles including the Wizard himself. Dorothy simply desires to get home again. The scarecrow wants brains, the Tin Woodman wants a heart and the Lion desires courage. Do they each receive what they want or do they already possess it? That’s the beauty, the fun, and the struggle within the details, and, is the Wizard for real, or an imposter? Does Dorothy get home again, yes she does. Well, it’s a childrens tale, so of course she does. However, is she the same little girl who began the journey?

Would any of us be the same after such a journey?

The tale begins with Dorothy. Notice that Dorothy is a young child and an orphan, living with hard working normal people in the middle of the United States. Thus Dorothy was innocent, sort of a lost child a well. Her thoughts and beliefs were not yet crystallized. She was

therefore of a humble mind, teachable, and with tender feelings and a child’s exuberance for life.

Does it not take such qualities to take an inner spiritual journey? What quotes come to mind for you that it takes childlike¹ qualities to enter a kingdom? A partial quote from the Gnostic text “The Gospel of Thomas,” verse 22 says: “Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples, “These infants being suckled are like those who enter the Kingdom.” Talk about innocence, trust, sincerity, open mindedness, loyalty, and humility, integrity, and so on. That Teacher or Master was certainly asking a lot of his pupils, disciples or chelas.

After introducing Dorothy, a crisis enters her life, the cyclone. Does it not take some form of crisis or suffering or intense longing, regardless of how it is brought on, for many persons to seek meaning and spiritual truths as best they can and know how? One of my prior neighbors was a representative for a religious publisher. During a concersation we were having regarding the economy he said to me, “Oh, I don’t have to be concerned about economic recessions or down turns; during those times the religious book sales boom.”

During the storm, before Dorothy could jump in the cellar — the usual place to find safety and comfort in crisis — which might represent the family’s religion and belief system, she runs after her dog, ToTo, and they both are caught up in the crisis and journey.

Toto is more than just a dog, for Toto represents Dorothys intuition and friend. Throughout the tale Dorothy is protective of this little intuitive friend. During the storm Dorothy falls asleep and

¹ “The Pupil must regain *the child-state he has lost* ere the first sound can fall upon his ear. (p. 19, Fragment I, Theosophy Company edition.)

when she awakens she realizes she is in another world, not the *cellar* of what's prevalent in thoughts and beliefs. She has landed in a world of new ideas. In saving her dog Toto, (intuition), she is caught up in a strange spiritual journey and there was an immediate victim, the Wicked Witch of the East. That witch represents ignorance and superstition that keeps peoples minds in bondage.

On that witches feet was perhaps the most important symbol in the tale, the Silver Shoes. Throughout the story these shoes take on more and more importance. For the shoes are the symbol of Dorothy's ability to *choose*; to make choices. Her inner and outer life as well as our own is constantly full of choices, and when others tell us what we are to believe and think *without our choosing*, we enter a cellar of bondage of some kind. How many religions, sects and philosophies give us *options* of thought and ideas? — and without condemning us? Dorothy wanted right away to go home, that is, to live as she had. After all, being in an unknown world of ideas strange to us is scary for most. However, Dorothy encountered a new teacher, a good witch, a new guide who pointed out a path to Dorothy.

In the world of philosophy and spiritual teaching, which is the Land of Oz, there are good witches (Masters, Teachers, Guides) and selfish, power hungry, greedy bad witches. Compare this if you wish to our world of religions of various kinds, particularly selfish deceiving teachers, or guides and in H. P. Blavatsky's words, "those hiding behind a cloak of altruism." Add to that the materialistic guides who view fellow humans as simply a higher form of animal to be trained, exploited, and worked for the privileged elite or few.

So Dorothy sets off down the yellow brick road through the Land of Oz to find the Emerald City and the Wizard. Just

before leaving however she is given and puts on the silver shoes, although she is unaware of their power. Dorothy is also given a kiss to the forehead, a sign of protection.

It is difficult to say just how much and how many of the symbols, situations, and obstacles that Frank Baum used are the author's fanciful creativeness for the sake of the story, or if each had some deeper level of meaning.

Therefore, some symbols and situations may not be meaningful to elaborate on, and so I will leave many out of my interpretation. However, the symbol given Dorothy for protection is interesting as it is used further in the tale. Dorothy is given a kiss to the forehead which leaves a slight *mark* for some to see.

H.P. Blavatsky mentions protection to the Theosophic Society or *movement* even if individuals are attacked. In H. P. Blavatsky's article, "Theosophy or Jesuitism," HPB talks about theosophists as a body being protected. It appears to me as if the protection is the philosophy itself,¹ with its emphasis on universal brotherhood and compassion. Is not the aid of Masters within the philosophy, knowledge and ethics emanated by them? Is that not the greatest aid from Masters? Whether Frank Baum meant this or not, I do not know, but Dorothy was seen as protected by another witch whether Dorothy was aware of it or not.

As Dorothy goes along the yellow brick road, which represents a spiritual Path — her inner path — she meets along the way and is accompanied by three characters which are attributes of every person, the Scarecrow made of straw, the Tin Woodman made of metal, and the

¹ Robert Crosbie came to the same conclusion. Assimilating that philosophy transmitted through Blavatsky and Judge brings one under an umbrella of protection. — ED., A.T.

Lion. Now, recall if you will, the chapter titled “Summing Up,” Volume I, p. 269 of *The Secret Doctrine*. On page 274 of that section of *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB makes the point that within the human “We see that every external motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental is produced and preceded by internal feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind.”

The author goes on to say that the human changes and acts by inward impulse through these three functions, which this writer calls “attributes.” Baum makes liberal, funny, and creative use of the three attributes within each of us and personifies these by the characters accompanying Dorothy on her journey. Fortunately, Dorothy can be seen as a balanced person — that is, a power with all three functions or attributes working in harmony, along with her intuitive insight personified by her dog Toto, which we may call her Higher Mind or Higher Ego.

Returning to H. P. Blavatsky’s writings — In *Isis Unveiled, Vol. II*, p. 544, HPB states that her writing of *Isis Unveiled* was in no small part to show Jesus, The Christ-God, is a myth concocted two centuries after the real Hebrew Jesus died — and in my words — to unveil or dethrone the fabricated writings and fabricated doctrines of the western man’s Catholic and Christian sects. In fact, HPB is so emphatic about these points that on page 586 of Vol. II (*I.U.*), she states: “If both Church and priest could but pass out of sight of the world...., it would be a happy day for humanity.”

Thus HPB distinctly teaches the rejection of every anthropomorphic god of every religion, and that human beings are an evolving mixture of Spirit and Matter.

Back to Dorothy and the tale: Dorothy, who may represent any person.¹ Had to embrace and use all of her inner attributes in order to continue her journey. Her emotional attribute was represented by the Scarecrow made of straw who wanted to be balanced by acquiring brains, that is, intellect or reasoning, or the ability to think. Dorothy’s intellectual or thinking ability was represented by the Tin Woodman, who wanted to be balanced by gaining a heart, that is, to regain his *higher* emotional attribute in order to feel love.

After all, the Tin Woodman had been cut up by a wicked witch, that is, he was now an intellectual being who’s heart had been so hardened he lost his love for the Munchin girl.

The Tin Woodman was a world hardened person who had time to think, and while talking to the Scarecrow told him, “While I was in love I was the happiest man on earth; but no man can love who has not a heart,” “for brains do not make one happy, and happiness is the best thing in the world.

Now ask yourself, cannot the predominantly or chiefly emotional person of straw be blown in the wind and be susceptible to emotional influence and appeal? Cannot the chiefly or predominantly intellectual person be, or become so emotionally hardened as to appear to have lost their ability to have compassion and love?

This writer was once asked to define love and here was found to be a wonderful question. Any person might ask themselves and others. Ultimately, for me, love was found to be a value statement. Past that a person has to define that value in terms of how a person acts, thinks, and feels toward the object being valued.

¹ Similar to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Onward; Dorothy continues her journey with the joining of her little group by her third attribute, the Lion. What a grand character personifying the will-courage-fear-volition and desires of a human possessing thought and emotion, but needing to have courage. This Lion functioned with intellect or thought as he realized that when he roared it would scare away those who might harm him. On top of that, this Lion wept!

The Tin Woodman told the Lion, "Perhaps you have a heart disease. If you have, you ought to be glad, for it proves you have a heart." The Lion replied "Perhaps, if I had no heart I should not be a coward." So, despite the Lion roaring, he possessed compassion, even though he felt his life was simply "unbearable without a bit of courage." How often in our cultures are persons of both genders expected to toughen up, as their tears are viewed as a sign of weakness? And have you never wept tears of joy at a significant event for a loved one?

Dorothy could represent any of us, and especially the spiritual journey within us as she and her friends go through obstacles, learning to awaken to each of her and our attributes of heart, thought, and will. Throughout the tale, instead of Dorothy giving in to being a victim of obstacles, her attributes come to life with each, demonstrating to her that she possesses what her personified attributes are seeking.

Not wishing to write a book about a book I will instead write about only some of the events in the tale. The story is full of obstacles which Dorothy and friends had to overcome.

Among the beginning obstacles were two fierce Kalidads. These beast of prey may represent complete parental control. Some parents do believe it is their responsibility to condition the child in all ways of feeling, acting and thinking including religious belief.

The broad river they had to cross is a universal symbol of consciousness and knowledge, and in this case, Dorothy and friends had to cross one. The river appears to be a symbol of crossing a "point of no return."

The obstacle of the field of poppies with their lovely color and powerful odor put Dorothy, Toto and the Lion to sleep. This may represent the allurements of a materialistic world of riches. Within this field of allurements was a strange wildcat beast trying to eat up field mice. The wildcat appears to represent the worldly power broker, or even a power hungry religious leader. The field of mice among the poppies are the common people striving to survive. It is interesting to hear the Tin Woodman tell the mice Queen, "I have not heart, you know, so I am careful to help all those who may need a friend, even if it appears to be only a mouse." The mice end up saving the sleeping Dorothy, Toto and the Lion.

Dorothy and friends stop at some rather ordinary folks house outside of Emerald City. This event is somewhat laughable as the man of the house is full of opinions about the Emerald City and its Wizard, and the man assures Dorothy regarding the Wizard that even though those "who wait upon him do not see him face to face" that the Wizard can take care of her and her friends requests. IF this does not represent the outsiders, or even occasional church goers blind belief in the Wizard and the Wizard's powers, I don't know what does!

And then as Dorothy and friends enter the Emerald City (church or religious system), they are told to put on emerald (green) colored glasses. Could Baum have been any plainer in this symbol? Have you ever heard someone say that you or someone else may be viewing a situation or something with rose colored glasses? Thus the perception of the viewer is so obscured that the

viewer cannot see or comprehend reality. I think H.P. Blavatsky calls this the *conditioned mind*. Grownups and children lived in the Emerald City, and none of them had actually seen the face of their Wizard.

Dorothy and her friends entered the palace of the great Wizard, and each in turn were taken before the Wizard who each time appeared in a different form. During Dorothy's interview with the Wizard, who appeared as an enormous head, the Wizard took notice of a few important features of Dorothy and asked Dorothy "Where did you get the silver slippers?" (the ability to choose), and "Where did you get the mark on your forehead?"

Then The Wizard made an interesting demand of Dorothy and her friends. First they must go destroy the Wicked Witch of the West. In most religious systems there is not only a personalized God-Being or Wizard, there is also the competition between this God-Being and an anthropomorphic Evil Being or devil, and they are said to be competing for the souls, hearts and minds of the humans.

Bear in mind, that within the ideas of Theosophy, not only does the idea of the anthropomorphized God-Being have to be unveiled and thus die, but also the idea of the externalized anthropomorphic Devil-Being has to be unveiled and die as well.

At this point of Frank Baum's tale the reader is only about half way through the tale, and Dorothy with her friends set off to find the remaining Evil Witch which brings them more obstacles and strange beings

[END OF PART I]



PART-----II

Dorothy and friends are traveling to find the Evil Witch. The Witch hears of this and sends wild crows to pluck out the intruders eyes. The Scarecrow, (Dorothy's emotions) scares the crows away. In other words, Dorothy's emotions overcome an intellectual attack on her ability to perceive, to see.

The Witch sent out bees, an emotional attack, and yet the Tin Woodman had hard skin, so Dorothy's thinking or intellect overcame them. Have you ever been in situations where you've said to yourself that the emotions of this situation destroys thinking; or where the thinking or intellectualism of a situation appears to destroy feelings and compassion. The same can be asked in reverse, are there not situations that call for calm thinking, and those situations that simply need only be responded to with feeling and compassion or passion?

(Consider these simple sayings: "Sticks and stones may wound a bone, but words may tear a heart apart." "The hug and the smile make life worthwhile." "There are times when simply your presence speaks volumes.")

Then the Evil Witch sent out slave people, the Winkies with spears to destroy the travelers. At this the Lion roared and sprang forward and the Winkies ran away. This was a test of will or courage.

Finally, the Evil Witch turned to secretive magic and summoned the Winged Monkeys.¹ These Winged Monkeys appear to be the Evil Witches control of nature forces, perhaps elementals. Notice I say, "appear to be," as this is for the reader to decide, as

¹ A reader of the book would notice that the *Winged Monkeys* were used both for evil and for good. — GB

Frank Baum is not here to verify one way or the other.

These Winged Monkeys battered the Tin Woodman and threw him in the rocks, thus the intellect of Dorothy was battered. Then the Winged Monkeys, attacked the Scarecrow of straw, Dorothy's emotions, pulling the straw out, thus scattering her emotionally. The Lion was captured and fenced in, for future use of the Evil Witch. Thus Dorothy's freedom to act was fenced in.

Then an interesting thing happened: when the Winged Monkeys turned to destroy Dorothy they noticed the mark on her forehead and said, "We dare not harm this little girl for she is protected by the *Power of Good*, and that is greater than the *Power of Evil*." All they could do was to carry Dorothy with her dog Toto to the Evil Witch, and they told the Witch, "The little girl we dare not harm, nor the dog she carries in her arms."

The Evil Witch noticed the mark on Dorothy's forehead, but when the Witch noticed Dorothy's Silver Shoes, the Witch "began to tremble in fear," and was "tempted to run away from Dorothy; but she happened to look into the child's eyes and saw how simple the soul behind them was, and that the little girl did not know of the wonderful power the Silver Shoes gave her."

So the Evil Witch put Dorothy to work and then set out to harness and use the Lion. However, the Lion refused to be subdued so the Witch decided to starve the Lion into submission. The Witch set out also to steal Dorothy's Silver Slippers, and during a struggle for them, Dorothy threw a bucket of water over the Witch. The Witch never used water, and when the water went over her she began to melt away. Now what do you suppose that water might signify, if not *Truth*?

Dorothy even apologizes to the Evil Witch as the Witch was melting, as

Dorothy's intention was simply to protect her own possession — her Silver Shoes.

The Lion was freed. The prior enslaved people, the Winkies, helped repair and put back together the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow.

Back to the Emerald City the travelers go. The little dog Toto knocks over the screen, behind which the real wizard is revealed. Among the many conversations that take place, and after the Scarecrow asks for brains, the Wizard says to him, "You don't need them, you are learning something everyday. A baby has brains, but it doesn't know much. Experience is the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are on earth the more experience you are sure to get." Perhaps that statement speaks for itself to the reader of this article. Is Baum hinting at something here? Of course he is!

As Dorothy and the Wizard prepared the balloon to fly out of the Emerald City, Wizard of Oz sent word to his people that he was going to make a visit to a great brother Wizard who lived in the clouds. The news spread rapidly throughout the city and everyone came to see the wonderful sight." — Symbolic of an ASCENSION perhaps?

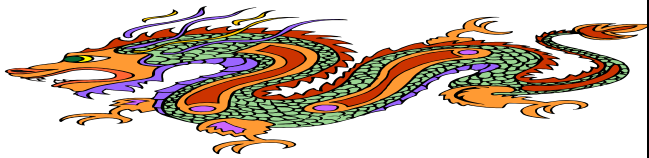
Dorothy did not make it into the balloon, she was busy running after her dog Toto, (her intuition). It was her dog Toto who got her in this journey to begin with, as she was busy gathering up Toto, protecting Toto, when the storm hit.

Dorothy still has to get home so she and her friends set off once more. This time they encounter more interesting characters, more symbols: **very old trees, ceramic people with a cow**, a ceramic princess, the ceramic clown — Mr. Joker, the China Church, and the Hammer-Heads. All of these appear to represent types of thinking, and people's sacred beliefs and their protectiveness of

their beliefs. At last, Dorothy arrives in the land of the Quadlings with the kind Witch Glinda.

Its time for Dorothy to bid farewell to her friends the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Lion, as these friends stay in Oz and provide basis for further books by Frank Baum.

Innocent little Dorothy is finally told of the power of her Silver Shoes which of course is the power of using her three attributes in choosing the direction her life will take. For she clicks the heels three times together, and she, along with Toto whom she is carrying, are back home again.



The overall moral or message of this wonderful tale may seem apparent to some and not to others. One person remarked to me, “Oh, I just thought it was a wonderful tale and no more.” For this writer the overall meaning, moral or message is to trust one’s own feelings, thoughts and will in life and to trust and follow one’s own intuition. Perhaps by doing so one may go down the yellow brick road of spiritual development and unveil the anthropomorphized God so prevalent and **conditioned-into-children** and adults in various religions and sects, including perhaps one’s own.

To take such an inward spiritual and developmental journey in the form of a children’s fairy tale, and personify inner attributes or functions common to each of us in the form of imaginary characters along with the use of symbols was to me the most wonderful use of analogy and creative genius.

However, to unveil or dethrone sacred beliefs without putting something

in their place can have devastating consequences, as it appears nature — including human nature — abhors a vacuum. Without the “something” to take the place of unveiled beliefs can lead a person into various states of despair; or else trusting only in ideas provable to the persons senses making them more easily turn deeper into materialism; or else take the attitude — as the song says — “if that’s all there is, let’s keep on dancing, so turn on the lights and let’s have a ball, if that’s all there is.”

One need only ask one’s self, if something were to come along and unveil or dethrone, or turn down my cherished perceptions and even beliefs about Theosophy; where would that leave me? So, is Theosophy about just more beliefs, or just more conditioned mind and knowledge, or *intellectualism*? One need only read what W. Q. Judge says in his article “The Earth Chain of Globes” to see that Theosophy is about *consciousness*, raising of consciousness, or unification of consciousness, both within ourselves and our race; all of which “supports and enforces the doctrine of universal brotherhood....”

Surely most of us have heard the saying, “When the pupil is ready the Teacher will appear.” One need only expand that saying somewhat such as, “When the race or subrace is ready the messenger will appear.”

H. P. Blavatsky in her appearance realized the consequences of unveiling, and in her first major public writing event went so far as to warn the sincere and pure Christian whose “lives reflect the glorious example of the Prophet of Nazareth,...” in her Preface to Volume II of *Isis Unveiled*.

Where is a person left if they only have various writings such as *Age of Reason* by Thomas Paine, of *Isis Unveiled*” by H. P. Blavatsky, or *The Bible Fraud*” by Tony Bushby, (make

your own list if you wish), without that “something” that builds, or fills the void, such as *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key to Theosophy*, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, and writings that expound on those and texts of antiquity. The Point is: When one’s farmhouse is destroyed, another must be built to take its place, and Dorothy returned to a “new farmhouse.” She was a changed person.

L. Frank Baum may have written just an entertaining tale to some person’s eyes, however, for others he may have been planting a seed that bloomed into encouragement to keep their spiritual search for truth alive, through use of their thoughts, feelings, will and courage, and intuition. My applause and gratitude to you, dear L. Frank Baum!

NOTES by the Interpreter:

1. After having written this article I looked at internet sites about L. Frank Baum and discovered a bibliographer had also confirmed that Baum had studied Theosophy. Some sites try to tie Baum into Rosicrucian ideas and philosophy. Interestingly some of Baum’s symbols are used in Rosicrucian analogies. Interestingly also, in Volume 26, #7 (May 1938), of *Theosophy Magazine*, there is reference to an allegory of a candidate’s journey in a land which contains fierce animals and plundering birds, and a mention of elemental forces by the writer.
2. In all fairness to the movie makers of the movie, “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,” editing and/or leaving out important aspects of a story is usually common and necessary when a tale, or even a philosophy is give out publicly. One might say even *The Secret Doctrine* was edited. Joseph Campbell (the great myth

interpreter) was interviewed by Bill Moyers, and what was put out for the public by the Public Broadcasting Corporation **was edited significantly**, as it was used within fund raising drives; (but that’s another story for later.)

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G.B.



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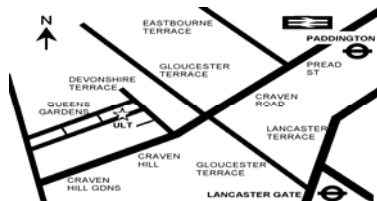
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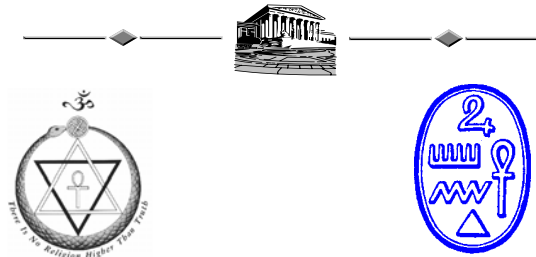
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Master's letter to Mr. Judge

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GODS, MONADS AND ATOMS

Introduction

One of the most important questions a human being may ask is: What is life? Or more personally phrased: Who am I?

Overviewing the history of world thought different answers have come up, which can be broadly divided into three ways of looking at these questions

- Religious
- Philosophical, and
- Scientific

One Life: But where does multiplicity come in? Spinoza pointed to Unity; Leibniz pointed to multiplicity; and *The Secret Doctrine* tells us: “Those unable to seize the difference between the monad — the Universal Unit — and the Monads, or the manifested Unity [...] ought never to meddle in philosophy, let alone Esoteric Sciences. (*S.D.* I, 614)

1. What is the monad?

Consciousness or the power to perceive and to experience, is the cause of all that is. Every being exists thanks to a center of consciousness. All different lifeforms are in their deepest core embodied centers of consciousness. These centers of consciousness are called in theosophy, following Pythagoras and Leibniz, monads, because they are indivisible units of the universal consciousness which is the source of all that lives. Or as Leibniz puts it:

“The monad is nothing other than a simple substance, that enters into composites. Simple means without parts. And there must be simple substances, since there are composites; for the composite is nothing but an accumulation or aggregate of simples, and these monads are the true at-

oms of nature, and, in a word, the elements of things.”

What does Leibniz mean?

He does not only say that everything that exists is a composite of non composite, therefore simple substances, but also that a composite can only be an essential living being and a unity if a simple substance unifies its composite parts. This **unifying** factor is the true unity of a being, in other words the monad of a being.

In other words: The Being of a being does not exist — or a being is not a being because of its different parts out of which it is made up (atoms, genes...etc.), but because of a simple (meaning partless) substance which is the ensouling and overshadowing consciousness of that being.

So this is very important; as *Leibniz* holds that only a **unit can unity** — only what has unity can engender unity. If there were no simple substances to do this unifying, then there would be no way to unity pluralities into composite wholes. So the idea of this quote, is **NOT** just the trivial (and materialistic) point that composites require units because composites are pluralities, but rather the more vital and more interesting idea that composites which are themselves expressing themselves as a unit and as a unity, — composites which are themselves unified require true **partless** units to serve as unifiers, or, as Plotinus expresses the idea:

Every particular thing has a One of its own to which it may be traced: the All has its One, its Prior but not yet the Absolute One: through this we reach the Absolute One, where all such reference comes to an end. Now when we reach a One — the stationary Principle — in the tree, in the animal, in soul, in the All — we have in every case the most powerful, the precious element” (*Third Ennead viii.10*)

2. Every being is a Whole/Part.

So, everything that exists is of a **composite nature**. Every plant, animal or human, but also every cell or molecule, even every **planet or solar system is a composite being**. Every being exists of smaller beings and is part of a greater being. Each entity is a **whole** and at the same time *a part* of another whole. A whole atom is *e.g.*, part of a whole molecule, and a whole molecule is part of a whole cell, and the whole cell is part of a whole organ and that organ is part of a whole organism, like our body. Each of these entities is neither a part, neither a whole, but a whole/part, and is neither one, neither many, but one/many.

Now what is now responsible for the fact that the **composite nature of any being functions as a living and organic whole?** Through what means can a **composite being maintain its wholeness, its own identity and functionality?** This cannot be the mere consequence of the workings of the composite and in their turn composite parts of that being. It has to be something which **transcends the composites of that being, and which therefore is in itself not of composite nature**. Because if that “something” were to be in itself composite, then it would and could only exist because of its composites, and such ad infinitum. Only a simple and impartible substance or unit can be responsible for the fact that a being manifests itself as a being. That simple substance the monad. (Theosophy opposes the materialistic view — whether physical or quantum physical — of modern science that we would find the ultimate essence of a being by dividing it into parts. The wholeness and the **being** of a being is not the product of the sum total of its parts, but is the **result** of a **unity** which precedes these multiple parts. **That’s why Leibniz calls the monad a true atom.**

3. The True Atom

When Leibniz names the monads the true atoms, he refers to the ancient (and theosophical) meaning of the word, namely: *impartibles* (atomoi). When the word atom is used this does not refer to a chemical atom, which is of course partible; or as remarked by HPB:

Leibniz was an absolute idealist in maintaining that material atoms are contrary to reason. For him *matter* was a simple representation of the monad, whether human or atomic. Monads, he thought (as we do) are everywhere. Thus the human soul is a monad, and every cell in the human body has its monad, as every cell in animal, vegetable, and even in the (so-called) *inorganic* bodies [...] The *atoms* of Leibniz have, in truth, nothing but the name in common with the atoms of the Greek materialists, or even the *molecules* of modern Science. He calls them *formal atoms...*” (SDI, 630-631fn; see also SD II 672fn)

What is being explained here is that all that exists, not only humans, animals, plants, but also cells, molecules, atoms or even sso-called subatomic particles out of which the bodies of these beings exist, are phenomenal expressions and perceptions of metaphysical or formal atoms, meaning **simple and impartible substances:**

“That which was for him [Leibniz] the primordial and ultimate element in every body and object was thus not the material atoms, or molecules, necessarily more or less extended, [...] but immaterial and metaphysical atoms, ‘mathematical points’; or real souls [...] Thus, reality in the manifested world is composed of a unity of units, so to say, immaterial (from our stand-point) and infinite. This Leibniz calls “Monads,” Eastern philosophy “Jivas” and Occultism gives it with the Kabalists and all the Christians, a variety of names. They are with us, as with Leibniz — the “expression of the universe,” and every physical point is but the phenomenal expression of the noumenal, metaphysical point.” (SDI, 629-30)

4. The Whole is more than the parts

“One is obliged to admit that perception and what depends upon it is inexplicable on mechanical principles [...] In imagining that there is a machine whose construction would enable it to think, to sense, and to have perception, one could conceive it enlarged while retaining the same proportions, so that one could enter it, just like into a windmill. Supposing this, one should, when visiting within it, find only parts pushing one another, and never anything by which to explain a perception. Thus it is in the simple substance [or monad], and not in the composite or in the machine, that one must look for perception.” (Leibniz, Monadology, Section 17)

5. Monad: a unity of Atma-Buddhi

The monad is **conscious and substantial at the same time. The monad is a conscious substance, which simply means that its consciousness manifests itself as the primordial substance of each being.** The monad is therefore not only the **essential consciousness of a being, but also its fundamental substance.** All beings are made as it were of the same substance, just like waves of the ocean are made of the same water. And again it is important to understand that with the word substance one does not refer to something which has material properties, like expansion, size, shape or divisibility (these are characteristics of perception). The, for us, visible matter is only a phenomenon, while substance is that which is primordial matter, that which stands on its own, and is therefore the basis of all phenomena. The monad is therefore the substantial center of consciousness of each life form (the body is a perception of the monad, is in the monad, and it has no size, shape, form....)

Now the consciousness of the monad we call Atman, the substance we call Buddhi and the Self-Consciousness we call Manas. The monad is therefore a unity of spirit-substance, of Atma-buddhi:

“Thus it may be wrong on strictly metaphysical lines to call Atma-Buddhi a MONAD, since in the materialistic view it is dual and therefore compound. But as Matter is Spirit, and vice versa: and since the Universe and the Deity which forms it are unthinkable apart from each other, so in the case of Atma-Buddhi.” (SDI, 179)

“The Sixth principle in Man (Buddhi, the Divine Soul) though a mere breath, in our conceptions, is still something material when compared with divine “Spirit” (Atma) of which it is the carrier or vehicle [...] the two constituting in Man the MONAD, and in Nature the first link between the ever unconditioned and the manifested.” (SDI, 119)

So, as a monad, each manifested being is linked with the unmanifested. When we define a monad as a center of consciousness, we could say that *atma stands for the consciousness and buddhi for the center of that center of consciousness.* For that reason buddhi is called the substantial vehicle of atma. Or in other words: Atma is pure spirit or the One Self and buddhi is the Soul of Spirit, in other words, the spiritual soul. And HPB points out that it is not due to Atman, but is because of the substantial nature of buddhi that the monad can be understood as a metaphysical atom or Master-Atom. Without this atomic character of Buddhi atman would not be able to express itself in a differentiated way. (there would not be many souls):

The term “Master Atom” is not applicable to the 7th principle, though it can be very properly used in reference to the 6th, the vehicle of spirit, or spiritual soul. [...] The 7th principle, or rather its essence, belongs to the *seventh* state of matter, i.e., a state which may be viewed in our mundane conceptions as pure spirit; while the nature of the *sixth* principle is not a *center of force* like its spirit, a centre in which the idea of all substance disappears altogether, but a fluidic or rather ethereal “atom.” The former is undifferentiated, the latter — differ-

entiated matter, though in its highest and purest state. One, the life that animates the atom, the other, the vehicle that contains it. (*Theosophical Articles and Notes, p. 87-87*)

One could also understand the bi-unity of the monad in the following way. The power to perceive (atma) can only manifest or express itself through a centre from which this power of perception can take place. Without a point from and through and in which perception can happen, perceiving and therefore also experience, would be impossible, because any kind of perception needs a basis for the (universal perceiver) from which one may perceive. The infinite consciousness of the One Self which is above time and space eternally present everywhere, can as such not have any experience, because as the SELF it is already that which it may experience (it would be like playing a Beethoven Sonata on a piano with one keynote). Now, this first basis (upadhi) from which atman can perceive is Buddhi. It is only through a substantial center or buddhi that —

(1) every monad is distinct as a spiritual unity from its source (the universal **unity**);

(2) every monad differs from every other monad;

(3) that the evolutionary experience of that monad can be stored up so to say as its experience and not that of another monad, which makes it possible that evolution has a meaning, not only for the whole, but also for every being in the whole. That's why the SD teaches that no monad disappears at the end of an evolutionary cycle.

6. Differentiation is not the same as separation

However, the evolutionary difference between monads must never be seen as separation. Why not? Because:

1) it is through the presence of atman or the **SELF** that no monad is

separated from its source — **universal unity**

- 2) that no monad is ever separated from any other monad and
- 3) each monad has in itself the potentiality of every other monad.

“The Monads are not discrete principles, limited or conditioned, but rays from that one universal absolute Principle.” (SD II, 167)

By seeing monads as rays and not as material objects we may better understand that they are on one hand different from each other, but that they are on the other hand not separate from each other, because they are rays of the same atomic light.

(third fundamental...)

7. Entelechy, Emanation and Evolution

Now, each monad has its own intrinsic nature or quality which it tries to express through evolution. Each monad has its own pilgrimage. Its own dharma or inner striving and appetite (Leibniz would say), by which anything that is latent can become potent and active. Aristotle called this evolutionary process entelechy (enteleccheia): which refers to the realization of that which is already potentially present. So the monads are called entelechies meaning units of consciousness that **express from the inside to the outside** their intrinsic natures. It is through this process of entelechy, through evolutionary unfolding that a monad emanates lower monads who are collectively the lower vehicles and vestures and principles of this **hierarchical higher monad**, and which allows this higher monad to express and manifest its capacities. So, not only is each being a monad, but also the body and the psyche of that being are composed by its own emanations.

Now: here comes the formula which enables one to understand the threefold

division of Gods, Monads and atoms or spirit, soul and body. The monads of the body of a being are called **life-atoms** or simply **lives**; the monads that form collectively the psyche of a being are called elementals and the monad of that being itself is called — in comparison with these lower monads: **a god**. The cells, molecules and atoms of a body, and the elemental constituents or building blocks of the psyche are in their essence as much evolving monads as is their **prior and originating monad**, which uses these lower monads. Of great importance for our understanding is that an emanating monad functions in relation to its emanated monads as the **dominant**, or ruling or leading monad. It is — as it were — the **Over Soul** of these lower monads. Leibniz illustrates this as follows:

“Each simple substance or individual monad...forms the center of a compound substance (such as an animal, for example), and is the principle of its uniqueness, being surrounded by a mass composed of an infinity of other monads which constitute the body belonging to this central monad.” (Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, Sec.3)

In Latin this leading monad is called the *Monas monadun*, the higher unit of the lower units.

The Monad is **universal** because it is a center of consciousness, and consciousness is universal. The Monad is **individual** because it is a center of consciousness and a center is individual **Unmanifested**, the Monad is the **ONE ABOVE ALL BEINGS**; **manifested**, It is the **One of all beings** and **differentiated**, it is **the One of each being**. The Monad is as a boundless circle of which each being is the center and of which the circumference can not be limited by any being, because **the Infinite unity** includes all beings.

Does unity ever divide itself?

Multiplicity does not mean that a whole divides itself into parts — like a pie, but that this whole or unit emanates lower *wholes*, which emanate in their turn again lower wholes. Each lower whole is part of a **greater**, like circles within circles within circles. Thus any lower **unity** is part of a greater **unity** — **or monad** — from which it emanated.

So: Differentiation through emanation does not mean that the emanating monad disappears into the **emanated monads**, because if that were true the unity within the multiplicity would cease to exist.

D.R.



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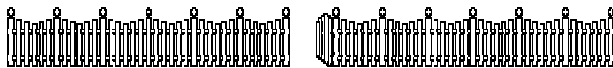
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A good companion volume for a historical overview of the life of Madame Blavatsky. Is already in print: *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky.*" (600+ pages). This volume is by far the most readable and best documented work available. — ED., A.T.¹

"She has no need of any man's praise; but even she has need of Justice."
William Q. Judge



TENZIN GYATSO ON SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY²

Our Faith in Science

SCIENCE has always fascinated me. As a child in Tibet, I was keenly curious about how things worked. When I got a toy I would play with it a bit, then take it apart to see how it was put together. As I became older, I applied the same scrutiny to a movie projector and an antique automobile.

At one point I became particularly intrigued by an old telescope, with which

¹ It is offered at a discount to subscribers: \$20 for the hardback version; \$15 for the softback; and is also available online at www.theosociety.org/pasadena/tup/-onl.htm

² By TENZIN GYATSO, the 14th Dalai Lama, is the author of "The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality." OP Ed article of Nov. 12, 2005, NY Times.

I would study the heavens. One night while looking at the moon I realized that there were shadows on its surface. I corralled my two main tutors to show them, because this was contrary to the ancient version of cosmology I had been taught, which held that the moon was a heavenly body that emitted its own light.

But through my telescope the moon was clearly just a barren rock, pocked with craters. If the author of that fourth-century treatise were writing today, I'm sure he would write the chapter on cosmology differently.

If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change. In my view, science and Buddhism share a search for the truth and for understanding reality. By learning from science about aspects of reality where its understanding may be more advanced, I believe that Buddhism enriches its own worldview.

For many years now, on my own and through the Mind and Life Institute, which I helped found, I have had the opportunity to meet with scientists to discuss their work. World-class scientists have generously coached me in subatomic physics, cosmology, psychology, biology.

It is our discussions of neuroscience, however, that have proved particularly important. From these exchanges a vigorous research initiative has emerged, a collaboration between monks and neuroscientists, to explore how meditation might alter brain function.

The goal here is not to prove Buddhism right or wrong — or even to bring people to Buddhism — but rather to take these methods out of the traditional context, study their potential benefits, and share the findings with anyone who might find them helpful.

After all, if practices from my own tradition can be brought together with scientific methods, then we may be able to take another small step toward alleviating human suffering.

Already this collaboration has borne fruit. Dr. Richard Davidson, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin, has published results from brain imaging studies of lamas meditating. He found that during meditation the regions of the brain thought to be related to happiness increase in activity. He also found that the longer a person has been a meditator, the greater the activity increase will be.

Other studies are under way. At Princeton University, Dr. Jonathan Cohen, a neuroscientist, is studying the effects of meditation on attention. At the University of California Medical School at San Francisco, Dr. Margaret Kemeny has been studying how meditation helps develop empathy in school teachers.

Whatever the results of this work, I am encouraged that it is taking place. You see, many people still consider science and religion to be in opposition. While I agree that certain religious concepts conflict with scientific facts and principles, I also feel that people from both worlds can have an intelligent discussion, one that has the power ultimately to generate a deeper understanding of challenges we face together in our interconnected world.

One of my first teachers of science was the German physicist Carl von Weizsäcker, who had been an apprentice to the quantum theorist Werner Heisenberg. Dr. Weizsäcker was kind enough to give me some formal tutorials on scientific topics. (I confess that while listening to him I would feel I could grasp the intricacies of the full argument, but when the sessions were over there was often not a great deal of his explanation left behind.)

What impressed me most deeply was how Dr. Weizsäcker worried about both the philosophical implications of quantum physics and the ethical consequences of science generally. He felt that science could benefit from exploring issues usually left to the humanities.

I believe that we must find a way to bring ethical considerations to bear upon the direction of scientific development, especially in the life sciences. By invoking fundamental ethical principles, I am not advocating a fusion of religious ethics and scientific inquiry.

Rather, I am speaking of what I call "secular ethics," which embrace the principles we share as human beings: compassion, tolerance, consideration of others, the responsible use of knowledge and power.

These principles transcend the barriers between religious believers and non-believers; they belong not to one faith, but to all faiths.

Today, our knowledge of the human brain and body at the cellular and genetic level has reached a new level of sophistication. Advances in genetic manipulation, for example, mean scientists can create new genetic entities - like hybrid animal and plant species - whose long-term consequences are unknown.

Sometimes when scientists concentrate on their own narrow fields, their keen focus obscures the larger effect their work might have. In my conversations with scientists I try to remind them of the larger goal behind what they do in their daily work.

This is more important than ever. It is all too evident that our moral thinking simply has not been able to keep pace with the speed of scientific advancement. Yet the ramifications of this progress are

such that it is no longer adequate to say that the choice of what to do with this knowledge should be left in the hands of individuals.

This is a point I intend to make when I speak at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience today in Washington. I will suggest that how science relates to wider humanity is no longer of academic interest alone. This question must assume a sense of urgency for all those who are concerned about the fate of human existence.

A deeper dialogue between neuroscience and society — indeed between all scientific fields and society — could help deepen our understanding of what it means to be human and our responsibilities for the natural world we share with other sentient beings.

Just as the world of business has been paying renewed attention to ethics, the world of science would benefit from more deeply considering the implications of its own work. Scientists should be more than merely technically adept; they should be mindful of their own motivation and the larger goal of what they do: the betterment of humanity.

TENZIN GYATSO]
[THE 14TH DALAI LAMA]



Kwan-Yin¹, The Compassionate Rebel

It is unfortunate that Buddhism's most enduring (and universal) contribution to the world has been

¹ The original title was spelled "Kuan-yin, The Compassionate Rebel. We have altered the spelling to "Kwan-Yin," as in the "Kwan-Yin Pledge": "Never will I seek nor receive private, individual salvation; never will I enter into final peace alone; but forever, and everywhere, will I live and strive for the redemption of every creature throughout the world." — ED., A. 7.

insufficiently translated as compassion. The original Sanskrit word is 'karuna,' which holds within itself traces of the fragment 'ru,' meaning to weep. While the Oxford dictionary describes compassion as pity bordering on the merciful, karuna is actually our ability to relate to another in so intense a measure that the plight of the other affects us as much as if it had been our own.

The term karuna is central to the entire Buddhist tradition. It is frequently described as a love for all beings, equal in intensity to a mother's affection for her child. However, it is quite unlike conventional love (Sanskrit: priya, kama or trishna), which is rooted in dualistic thinking and is egoistic, possessive and exclusive, in contrast to the all-encompassing nature of compassion. The root meaning of karuna is said to be the anguished cry of deep sorrow and understanding that can only come from an unblemished sense of oneness with others.

In fact, the evolution of Buddhism in Asia and its spread throughout the world is, from a spiritual point of view, none other than the unfolding of karuna in history. Nowhere is this more explicitly exemplified than in the Chinese assimilation of Buddhism. Few would deny that the defining symbol of this integration is the goddess, who with her sweet and merciful disposition, has won the hearts of not only the Chinese, but also profoundly affected even those who, belonging to a foreign tradition, have only had a fleeting interaction with her. This divine female² is none other than Kwan

² In the section, "On Kwan-shi-Yin and Kwan-Yin" (*S.D.I.*, 470-71) we find: Like Avalokiteshwara, Kwan-shi-yin has passed through several transformations, but it is an error to say of him that he is a modern invention of the Northern Buddhism, for under another appellation he has been known from the earliest times. ... Kwan-shi-Yin and **Kwan-Yin** are the two aspects (male and female) of the same principle in Kosmos, Nature and Man, of divine wisdom and intelligence. They are the "Christos-Sophia" of the mystic Gnostics — the Logos and

Yin, beloved goddess of over a billion people the world over. Her name too signifies her compassionate nature, literally meaning 'One who hears the cries of the world.'

It remains a historical fact that Kwan Yin is the Chinese version of the male god Avalokiteshvara, whom the ancient texts eulogize as the patron deity of compassion. It is fascinating however to observe that nowhere in India (where he originated) or Tibet (where he remains the most popular deity) is the latter ever deified as a female figure. In China too, his worship began as a male god, but over time, changed into a goddess and by the ninth century her popularity had prevailed over that of Avalokiteshvara's.

There are many reasons why this gender transformation took place.

As Avalokiteshvara evolved into the supreme personality of the Buddhist pantheon, with this heightened pedestal came the inevitable elitism. Karuna, however, cannot be and is not (as it has become today under the pseudonym of compassion), the exclusive preserve of a charmed circle, but rather a symphonic identification with the masses, sharing their suffering and pleasure alike. No wonder then that Avalokiteshvara shed streams of tears observing the plight of his people. Now, any emanation from a divine form is bound to hold a dynamic potential within itself and indeed Indian mythology is replete with examples where

its Sakti. In their longing for the expression of some mysteries never to be wholly comprehended by the profane, the Ancients, knowing that nothing could be preserved in human memory without some outward symbol, have chosen the (to us) often ridiculous images of ... Kwan-Shi-Yin and Kwan-Yin in their dragon garb. The subjective can hardly be expressed by the objective. Therefore, since the symbolic formula attempt to characterize that which is above scientific reasoning, and as often far beyond our intellects, it must needs go beyond that intellect in some shape or other, **or else it will fade out from human remembrance.** (*Ibid.*, 473)

fluids emerging from deities have led to enormous consequences.

Tears similarly are a spontaneous emotional response to external stimuli and represent the outward flow of Avalokiteshvara's infinite karuna.

From these pearls emanated a beautiful female as attractive as she was compassionate. The goddess Tara, thus born, has continued her upward spiral of popularity and remains one of the most loved and widely recognized deities of the Buddhist pantheon today.

Truly, even though Avalokiteshvara retains his foremost status in the gallery of Tibetan gods, in the popular imagination it is Tara, who with her supple charm, has come to symbolize the tenderness of karuna.

It is relevant here to observe that Kwan Yin is often depicted in art holding a leafy twig, derived from the 'weeping willow' tree, known so due to its trailing leafy branches that droop to the ground and along which raindrops trickle down like tears.

One of its distinctive characteristics is remaining green throughout the year, pointing perhaps to the goddess' fertility aspect, which is further echoed in images showing her with an infant.

The willow also has a deeper and direct connection with Chinese culture and it is believed that Lao Tzu, the author of Tao-te Ching, loved to meditate under its shade (6th century BC). It was under the same tree that the younger Confucius had his famous interview with Lao Tzu, telling his disciples afterwards: "I know how birds fly, fishes swim and animals run. But there is the dragon — I cannot tell how he mounts on the winds through the clouds, and rises to heaven. Today, having seen Lao Tzu, I can only compare him to the dragon."

Over centuries, Kwan Yin's visual depictions have highlighted her lithe, flowing form, much like the willow tree itself, which has the ability to bend during the most ferocious winds and then spring back into shape again. Indeed, who wants to stand rigid like the tall oak that cracks and collapses in a storm? Instead, one needs to be flexible like the willow, which survives the tempest.

Or perhaps, Kwan Yin merely uses the willow branch to sprinkle the divine nectar of life on her devotees, which is stored in the vase she holds in her other hand.

The Chinese (ever disposed to envisage friendly divinities in idealized human forms), seem to have been initially perplexed by Avalokiteshvara's complex iconography. Not for them his thousand hands or even the seven eyes of Tara. Exposed for eons to the essentially humanistic philosophy of Confucianism, such images were alien and felt to be unsuitable for portraying the 'soft' emotion of karuna, the yearning passion a mother feels for her child.

The Tibetan mind solved the craving for a down to earth, visual embodiment of karuna by envisioning the goddess Tara; the Chinese genius did the same by enclosing this virtue in the graceful and beautiful Kwan Yin, who was eminently human in appearance and approachable by all. Indeed, she gradually became the favored goddess of the peasants and fishermen of China, retaining her place in their hearts to the present day.

Additionally in China, not only had popular gods always been real people who had once lived in specific times and places, even mythical figures were turned into historical cultural heroes who were then venerated as the founding fathers of Chinese civilization. Unlike Greece, where human heroes were transformed into Olympian gods, in China the reverse

held true and if a god or goddess was not perhaps originally a human being, there was often an effort to turn her or him into one. Kwan Yin thus again had to change from a goddess into a living woman, so that she could be worshipped as a Chinese goddess. Truly, the human character of Chinese deities is one of the most distinctive features of their religion, and like ordinary mortals they too have birthdays, ancestries, careers and titles. Therefore, even though Kwan Yin is not given a date of birth in any of the Buddhist sutras, her birthday is widely celebrated on the nineteenth day of the second month of the lunar calendar.

The legend describing how Kwan Yin was once a woman gives a fascinating insight into the working of the Chinese genius and the process by which she was given a distinctively local flavor and absorbed into their pantheon:

It is said that in the past, there once lived a king under whose rule the people led a peaceful existence governed by Confucian ethics. He had three daughters; the eldest two having already married the grooms of their father's choice. The youngest offspring however, was unlike any other normal child. Firstly, when she was born, her body glowed with an almost unearthly light so much so that the palace seemed on fire. She was thus befittingly named Miao Shan (Wonderful Goodness).

Secondly, as she grew up, she wore only dirty clothes and never did display any urge to adorn herself. Further, she would subsist on only a single meal every day. In her conversations she would talk about the impermanence of material things and how human beings suffer because of their attachment to such objects.

Naturally worried about their daughter's detached inclinations, her parents proposed that (as per the Confucian ideals of filial piety) she too

marry a husband of their choice. To this she replied:

"I would never, for the sake of one lifetime of enjoyment, plunge into aeons of misery. I have pondered on this matter and deeply detest this earthly union (marriage)." Nevertheless, when her parents insisted, she agreed to comply with their wishes if only her future mate would save her from the following three misfortunes:

1). When people are young, their face is as fair as the jade-like moon, but when they grow old, the hair turns white and faces become wrinkled; whether walking, resting, sitting, or lying down, they are in every way worse off than when they were young.

2). Similarly, when our limbs are strong and vigorous one may walk as if flying through air, but when we suddenly become sick, we are confined to the bed.

3). A person may have a large group of relatives and be surrounded by his flesh and blood, but when death comes, even such close kin as father and son cannot take the person's place.

Finally she concluded: "If indeed my future husband can ensure my deliverance against these misfortunes, I will gladly marry him. Otherwise, I vow to remain a spinster all my life. People all over the world are mired in these kinds of suffering. If one desires to be free of them, the only option is to leave the secular world and enter the gate of Buddhism."

This narrative of course, is parallel to one of the most significant episodes from the life of the Buddha when he encountered the three maladies of physical existence: sickness, old age and death.

Exasperated to no end, the king summoned an old and experienced nun of his kingdom. He asked her to take the

princess under tutelage and expose her to as much hardship as possible in the nunnery, so that she realize the futility of her desired path.

The instruction was tinged with a threat of annihilation if after seven days Miao Shan was not 'reformed'.

Needless to say, all the travails she had to undergo at the monastery, including hard manual labor, were insufficient to deter her from the path of Dharma. However, Miao Shan did realize that she was being thus subjected because the inhabitants of the nunnery were under the threat of death. She addressed them, saying:

"Don't you know the stories about the ancient prince Mahasattva, who plunged off the cliff in order to feed the hungry lions, or King Sivi's cutting off his flesh to save a dove? Since you have already left the life of a householder, you should regard this material body as illusory and impermanent. Why do you fear death and love life? Don't you know that attachment to this dirty and smelly leather bag (body) is an obstacle?"

At the end of the stipulated period, the monarch, in a mad and frenzied reaction, ordered that Miao Shan be beheaded. As her executioners approached the monastery gates, Miao Shan rushed out of the building, eager to embrace her impending death. No sooner had she kneeled at the stake and the deadly sword been raised, than a blinding thunder rose. Before the assailants could regain their composure, a tiger darted out of the darkness and carried away the swooning girl into the nearby hills. The king, now beyond the bounds of reason, ordered the hermitage to be burnt down with all its inhabitants.

It was not long before his karma caught up with him and he fell sick with kaamla (jaundice). He was restless for days on end, finding no rest even in sleep. The disease spread all over his body and the best doctors throughout the land were

unable to cure him. One day, a holy mendicant came to his door and predicted:

"If some person would willingly consent to give his or her arms or eyes without the slightest anger or resentment, the elixir made of these potent ingredients will surely relieve you from your suffering."

"Where alas will I find such a compassionate being?" lamented the king. "In this very land," said the monk. "Go southwest in your dominion, on top of the mountain there is a hermit who possesses all the characteristics which are necessary for your healing."

No sooner had he heard this than the king ordered his envoys to hurry to the abode of the recluse. On being informed of his plight and its prescribed remedy, the hermit readily agreed to undergo the supreme sacrifice, requesting them to ask the suffering king to direct his mind to the three treasures of Buddhism and then very calmly proceeded to gauge out both the eyes and asked one of the men to sever the two arms. The three worlds shook under the impact of this terrible sacrifice.

When he had fully recovered, the king made haste with his wife to pay homage to the one who had so miraculously saved his life.

After bowing low before the mutilated form, as soon as they raised their heads they let out a shriek of astonished horror; the hermit's true identity lay bare before them. She was none other than their youngest daughter Miao Shan. Realizing what she had done for him, despite all that he had done to her, the king fell prostrate upon the floor and asked for forgiveness. Overcome with emotion, the parents embraced her and the father said:

"I am so evil that I have caused my own daughter terrible suffering." Miao

Shan replied, "Father, I have suffered no pain. Having given up these human eyes, I shall see with diamond eyes. Having yielded the mortal arms, I shall receive golden arms. If my calling is true all this will follow."

Much sobered by this intense experience, the king returned to his palace and ordered a statue to be made of her, which, emphasizing her sacrifice was to be without eyes and hands. Now, in Chinese, the sound for 'bereft' or 'deficient' are virtually identical with 'thousand.' At some stage in the transmission of this message, the two words were confused and the sculptor toiled away, desperately seeking some way to capture the essence of the king's wishes. He very imaginatively (or perhaps following Indian or Tibetan models) placed one eye on each palm, making the number of eyes equal to the arms, giving rise in the process to an awesome and complex image of breathtaking splendor.



Unable to relate to the thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara, the above legend provided a rational explanation to the

bewildered viewer and helped integrate the goddess into the Chinese ethos.

The story of Miao Shan represents the fusion of the Buddhist theme of the gift of the body and the Confucian concept of filial piety. In the former tradition, giving is one of the six perfections performed by a bodhisattva (would be Buddha). Amongst the different forms of gifts, that of one's own body is the best.

The only difference is that while the bodhisattvas give up their bodies in order to feed or save sentient beings regardless of any formal relationship with them, the fact that Miao Shan does so for her father is where the Confucian model comes in. In the former context, a tale is narrated of the Buddha, who in one of his previous births was a pigeon. He saw a man lose his way during a snowstorm, driven to the point of starvation. The pigeon gathered twigs and leaves, made a fire and threw himself wholeheartedly into it, to become food for the distressed soul.

It is this lofty ideal that Kwan Yin was following, a self-sacrifice par excellence, motivated by pure (selfless) and indiscriminate compassion (karuna).

On the other hand, Kwan Yin as Miao Shan gives a bold and provocative message, challenging Confucian value systems as delineated in the 'Classic of Filial Piety' (published by the emperor Xuan in AD 722). Her life glorifies austerity, celibacy and renunciation, which, as per Buddhism, are highly valued (against the householder, who is necessary in Confucianism for creating offspring to perpetuate the lineage). In times of the Ming for example, one could achieve religious sanctification by performing one's domestic obligations to the fullest degree. Eventually, Chinese of all social strata and both sexes came to know Kwan Yin as the strong-willed yet filial girl, who refused to get married and rebelled against stifling authority.

Conclusion:

The goddess Kwan Yin is a symbol, not only of the Chinese assimilation of Buddhism, but also of the many hued flavor of karuna, expressed through the softer wisdom of a woman. She is a pointer to the re-emergence of the goddess and the gender transformation of Avalokiteshvara in China represents perhaps a universal imperative, which is similarly reflected in the emanation of the goddess Tara from the compassionate tears of the same bodhisattva. Though often images are encountered, which show her sporting a moustache¹, emphasizing masculinity; this is negated by the softness of her demeanor.

Can anything be more subtly female than her graceful poise — modest and inward looking, yet potent enough to generate and compassionately nourish the whole outside world?

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¹ The Logo and Logoi, in occultism are *androgynous* — *Krishna has female attributes, venus is shown bearded, etc.* — ED., A.T.