

THE FALL OF IDEALS

By H. P. Blavatsky

In a world of illusion in which the law of evolution operates, nothing could be more natural than that the ideals of MAN—as a unit of the total, or mankind—should be forever shifting. A part of the Nature around him, that Protean, ever changing Nature, every article of which is incessantly transformed, while the harmonious body remains as a whole ever the same, like these particles man is continually changing, physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually. At one time he is at the topmost point of the circle of development; at another at the lowest. And, as he thus alternately rises and sinks, and his moral nature responsively expands or contracts, so will his moral code at one time embody the noblest altruistic and aspirational ideals, while at the other, the ruling conscience will be but the reflection of selfishness, brutality and faithlessness. But this, however, is so only on the external, illusionary plane. In their internal, or rather, *essential* constitution, both Nature and man are at one, as their essence is identical. All grows and develops and strives toward perfection on the former planes of externality or, as well said by a philosopher, is—“ever becoming;” but on the ultimate plane of the spiritual essence all IS, and remains therefore Immutable. It is toward this eternal *Esse* that everything, as every being, is gravitating, gradually, almost imperceptibly, but as surely as the Universe of stars and worlds moves towards a mysterious point known to, yet still unnamed by, astronomy and called by the Occultists the *central Spiritual Sun*.

Hitherto, it was remarked in almost every historical age that a wide interval, almost a chasm, lay between practical and ideal perfection. Yet, as from time to time certain great characters appeared on earth who taught mankind to look beyond the veil of illusion, man learnt that the gulf was not an impassable one; that it is the province of mankind through its higher and more spiritual races to fill the great gap more and more with every coming cycle; for every man, as a unit, has it in his power to add his mite toward filling it. Yes; there are still men, who, notwithstanding the present chaotic condition of the moral world, and the sorry *débris* of the best human ideals, still persist in believing and teaching that the now *ideal* human perfection is no dream, but a law of divine nature; and that, had Mankind to wait even millions of years, still it must some day reach it and rebecome *a race of gods*.

Meanwhile, the periodical rise and fall of human character on the external planes takes place now, as it did before, and the ordinary average perception of

man is too weak to see that both processes occur each time on a higher plane than the preceding. But as such changes are not always the work of centuries, for often extreme changes are wrought by swift acting forces—*e.g.*, by wars, speculations, epidemics, the devastation of famines or religious fanaticism—therefore do the blind masses imagine that man ever was, is and will be the same. To the eyes of us, moles, mankind is like our globe—seemingly stationary. And yet, both move in space and time with an equal velocity, around themselves and—*onward*.

Moreover, at whatever end of this evolution, from the birth of his consciousness, in fact, man was, and still is, the vehicle of a dual spirit in him—good and evil. Like the twin sisters of Victor Hugo's grand, posthumous poem "Satan"—the progeny issued respectively from Light and Darkness—the angel "Liberty" and the angel "Isis-Lilith" have chosen man as their dwelling on earth, and these are at eternal strife in him.

The Churches tell the world that "Man is born in sin," and John (First Epistle, III, 8) adds that "he that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Those who still believe in the rib and apple fable and in the rebellious Angel, Satan, believe as a matter of course, in a, personal Devil—as a contrast in a dualistic religion—to a personal God. We, Theosophists of the eastern school, believe in neither. Yet we go, perhaps, further still than the Biblical dead letter. For we say that while as *extra-cosmic* Entities there is neither god nor devil, that both exist nevertheless. And we add that both dwell on earth in man, being in truth *the very man himself*, who is as a physical being, the devil, the true vehicle of *evil*, and as a spiritual entity—god, or *good*. Hence to say to mankind: "Thou hast the devil," is to utter as metaphysical a truth as when saying to all its men: "Know ye not that God dwelleth in you?" Both statements are true. But we are at the turning point of the great social cycle, and it is the former fact which has the upper hand at present. Yet as—to paraphrase a Pauline text—"there be devils many . . . yet there is but one Satan," so while we have a great variety of devils constituting collectively mankind, of such grandiose Satanic characters as are painted by Milton, Byron and recently by Victor Hugo, there are few, if any. Hence, owing to such mediocrity, are the human ideals falling, to remain unreplaced; a prose-life as spiritually dead as the London November fog, and as alive with brutal materialism and vices, the seven capital sins forming but a portion of these, as that fog is with deadly microbes. Now we rarely find aspirations toward the eternal ideal in the human heart, but instead of it every thought tending toward the one central idea of our century, the great "I," *self* being for each the one mighty center around which the whole universe is made to revolve and turn.

When the Emperor Julian—called the *Apostate* because, believing in the grand ideals of his forefathers, the Initiates, he would not accept the human anthropomorphic form thereof—saw for the last time his beloved gods appear to him, he wept. Alas! they were no longer the bright spiritual beings he had worshipped, but only the decrepit, pale and worn out shades of the gods he had so loved. Perchance they were the prophetic vision of the departing ideals of his age, as also of our own cycle. These “gods” are now regarded by the Church as *demons* and called so; while he who has preserved a poetical, lingering love for them, is forthwith branded as an antichrist and a modern Satan.

Well, Satan is an elastic term, and no one has yet ever given even an approximately logical definition of the symbolical meaning of the name. The first to anthropomorphize it was John Milton; he is his true putative intellectual father, as it is widely conceded that the *theological* Satan of the Fall is the “Mind-born Son” of the blind poet. Bereft of his theological and dogmatic attributes Satan is simply an *adversary*; not necessarily an “arch-fiend” or a “persecutor of men,” but possibly also a foe of evil. He may thus become a Savior of the oppressed, a champion of the weak and poor, crushed by the minor devils (men), the demons of avarice, selfishness and hypocrisy. Michelet calls him the “Great Disinherited” and takes him to his heart. The giant Satan of poetical concept is, in reality, but the compound of all the dissatisfied and noble intellectuality of the age. But Victor Hugo was the first to intuitively grasp the occult truth. Satan, in his poem of that name, is a truly grandiose Entity, with enough of the human in him to bring him within the grasp of average intellects. To realize the Satans of Milton and of Byron is like trying to grasp a handful of the morning mist; there is nothing *human* in them. Milton’s Satan wars with angels, who are a sort of flying puppet, without spontaneity, pulled into the stage of being and of action by the invisible string of theological predestination; Hugo’s Lucifer fights a fearful battle with his own terrible passions and again becomes an Archangel of Light, after the most awful agonies ever conceived by mortal mind and recorded by human pen.

All other Satanic ideals pale before his splendor. The Mephisto of Goethe is a true devil of theology; the Ahriman of Byron’s “Manfred”—a too supernatural character, and even Manfred has little akin to the human element, great as was the genius of their Creator. All these images pale before Hugo’s SATAN, who loves as strongly as he hates. Manfred and Cain are the incarnate *Protests* of downtrodden, wronged and persecuted individuality against the “World” and “Society”—those giant fiends and savage monsters of collective injustice. Manfred is the type of an indomitable will, proud, yielding to no influence, earthly or divine, valuing his full absolute freedom of action above any personal feeling or social consideration,

higher than nature and all in it. But, with Manfred as with Cain, the Self, the "I," is ever foremost; and there is not a spark of the all-redeeming love in them, no more than of fear. Manfred will not submit even to the universal Spirit of Evil; alone, face to face with the dark opponent of Ahura Mazda—Universal Light—Ahriman and his countless hosts of darkness, he still holds his own. These types arouse in one intense wonder, awe-struck amazement by their all-defiant daring, but arouse no human feeling: they are *too supernatural ideals*. Byron never thought of vivifying his Arch-angel with that undying spark of love which forms—nay, *must* form—the essence of the "First-Born" out of the homogeneous essence of eternal Harmony and Light, and is the element of forgiving reconciliation, even in its (according to our philosophy) last terrestrial offspring—Humanity. Discord is the concomitant of differentiation, and Satan, being an evolution, must in that sense be an adversary, a contrast, being a type of chaotic matter. The loving essence cannot be extinguished but only perverted. Without this saving redemptive power, embodied in Satan, he simply appears the nonsensical failure of omnipotent and omniscient imbecility which the opponents of theological Christianity sneeringly and very justly make him: with it he becomes a thinkable Entity, the *Asuras* of the Puranic myths, the first *breaths* of Brahma, who, after fighting the gods and defeating them, are finally themselves defeated and then hurled on to the earth, where they incarnate in Humanity. Thus Satanic Humanity becomes comprehensible. After moving around his cycle of obstacles he may, with accumulated experiences, after all the throes of Humanity, emerge again into the light as eastern philosophy teaches.

If Hugo had lived to complete his poem, possibly with strengthened insight, he would have blended his Satanic concept with that of the Aryan races, which makes all minor powers, good or evil, born at the beginning and dying at the close of each "Divine Age." As human nature is ever the same, and sociological, spiritual and intellectual evolution is a question of step by step, it is quite possible that instead of catching one-half of the Satanic ideal as Hugo did, the next great poet may get it wholly; thus voicing for his generation the eternal idea of Cosmic equilibrium so nobly emphasized in Aryan mythology. The first half of that ideal approaches sufficiently to the human ideal to make the moral tortures of Hugo's Satan entirely comprehensible to the eastern Theosophist. What is the chief torment of this great Cosmic Anarchist? It is the moral agony caused by such a duality of nature—the tearing asunder of the Spirit of Evil and Opposition from the undying element of primeval love in the Archangel. That spark of divine love for Light and Harmony, that no HATE can wholly smother, causes him a torture far more unbearable than his Fall and exile for protest and rebellion. This bright, heavenly spark, shining from Satan in the black darkness of his kingdom of moral night, makes him visible to the intuitive reader. It made Victor Hugo see him sobbing in superhuman

despair, each mighty sob shaking the earth from pole to pole; sobs first of baffled rage that he cannot extirpate love for divine Goodness (God) from his nature; then changing into a wail of despair at being cut off from the divine love he so much yearns for. All this is intensely human. This abyss of despair is Satan's salvation. In his *Fall*, a feather drops from his white and once immaculate wing, is lighted up by a ray of divine radiance and forthwith transformed into a bright Being, the Angel of LIBERTY. Thus, she is Satan's daughter, the child jointly of God and the fallen Archangel, the progeny of Good and evil, of Light and darkness, and God acknowledges, this common and "sublime paternity" that unites them. It is Satan's daughter who saves him. At the acme of despair at feeling himself hated by LIGHT, Satan hears the divine words: "No; I hate thee not." Saith the Voice: "An angel is between us, and her deeds go to thy credit. Man, bound by thee, by her is now delivered."

O Satan, tu peux dire à present: je vivrai!
Viens; l'Ange Liberté, c'est ta fille et la mienne;
Cette paternité sublime nous unit! . . .

The whole conception is an efflorescence of metaphysical ideality. This white lotus of thought springs now, as in former ages, from the rottenness of the world of matter, generating *Protest* and LIBERTY. It is springing in our very midst and under our very eyes, from the mire of modern civilization, the fecund bed of contrasting virtues. In this foul soil sprouted the germs which ultimately developed into all-denying protestators, Atheists, Nihilists, and Anarchists, men of the Terror. Bad, violent, criminal some of them may be, yet no one of them could stand as the copy of Satan; but taking this heart-broken, hopeless, embittered portion of humanity in their collectivity, they are just Satan himself; for he is the ideal synthesis of all discordant forces and each separate human vice or passion is but an atom of his totality. In the very depths of the heart of this HUMAN Satanic totality burns the divine spark, all negations notwithstanding. It is called LOVE for HUMANITY, an ardent aspiration for a universal reign of Justice—hence a latent desire for light, harmony and goodness. Where do we find such a divine spark among the proud and the wealthy? In respectable society and the correct, orthodox, so-called religious portion of the public, one finds but a predominating feeling of selfishness and a desire for wealth at the expense of the weak and the destitute, hence, as a parallel, indifference to injustice and evil. Before Satan, the incarnate PROTEST, repents and reunites with his fellow men in the common Brotherhood, all cause for protest must have disappeared from earth. And that can come to pass only when Greed, Bias and Prejudice shall have disappeared before the elements of Altruism and Justice to all. Freedom, or Liberty, is but a vain word now all over the civilized

globe; Freedom is but a cunning synonym for oppression of the people in the name of the people, and it exists for castes, never for units. To bring about the reign of Freedom as contemplated by Hugo's Satan, the "Angel of Liberty" has to be born simultaneously and by common love and consent of the "higher" wealthy caste, and the "lower" classes—the poor; in other words, to become the progeny of "God" and "Satan," thereby reconciling the two.

But this is a Utopia—for the present. It cannot take place before the castes of the modern *Levites* and their theology—the Dead-Sea fruit of Spirituality—shall have disappeared; and the priests of the Future have declared before the whole world in the words of *their* "God":

Et j'efface la nuit sinistre, et rien n'en reste,
Satan est mort, renais O LUCIFER CELESTE!