

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WILL

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“You may be master of the Cabala and Chemistry;
but you must also be master over flesh and blood.”

– Bulwer Lytton

In our last letter on "Practical Instructions" we have attempted to show that thoughts and ideas, passions, and desires, are not what are commonly understood as evanescent or temporary states of the molecules of the brain; but thing, which by associating themselves with the semi-intelligent forces of nature, may becoming living realities and powerful instruments for good and evil. Thoughts create desire, desire sets the will in motion, the motion of the will produces force and force gives shape to matter or substance.

There are three possibilities by which we may deal with these forces. We may either allow them to control us and become subservient to them, or we may associate ourselves with them and thereby make them our co-laborers, or we may become their masters and command them by the power of our will.

A person that allows himself to be guided entirely by his lower impulses and animal desires, is either a criminal or maniac, and it is very difficult to draw the line between the two. We read occasionally of cases where the most horrible crimes have been committed without any apparent provocation, and which can only be explained by the fact that the perpetrators either did not have the power or did not make the necessary efforts to resist such impulses.

The oftener man gives way to such impulses or influences, the less becomes his power of resistance. His condition finally becomes one of passive evil and, after death, his personality disintegrates and perishes in the eighth sphere.

The second possibility is to associate oneself with the evil powers of nature, to enter into communication with or appropriate the elementals, to make them his co-operators in evil, or, in medieval language, “to make a compact with the evil ones.” Under this head come the practices of *Black Magic*, which although they may require a certain concentration of Will, do not require any high or enlightened development of the same. Instead of expanding the mind, such practices produce a contraction of the same. They consist in establishing an extraordinary amount of selfishness and isolation. The will is made forcible by certain exercises, such as the careless endurance of physical pain, or by concentrating all mental energies upon some material object. By such practices the “Black Magician” may obtain the assistance of the elementals, and through them produce some occult phenomena. His condition becomes one of *active* evil, and the consequence is not only the final destruction of his personality, but also that of his individuality.

The third possibility, and the only method to be recommended, is to develop our will power, so as to make the forces of nature our slaves and to control them. To gain the mastery over these forces is the most important step for the student of occultism, and the great secret, without a knowledge of which no

further advance can be made, and the only method by which that power can be obtained, is by continual practice; that is, by a continual exercise of the will in the right direction. This does not mean only a continual desire to suppress selfish desires, but a continuous effort to accomplish and accumulate such work as is useful for the real progress of mankind. Like everything else in its right place, the animal nature also has its uses, and the lower principles are necessary factors at a certain state of evolution. They are the soil into which the *tree of life* extends its roots, and from which the higher principles draw substance and strength. A man can be born without material desires and impulses, if the "Ego" or monad has already conquered them; but for *average* man to be born without material desires, would be in the present state of evolution neither desirable nor useful. A man, for instance, without any combativeness would have no courage or self-reliance and would be a moral as well as a physical coward, without destructiveness he would have little energy to subdue evil, without acquisitiveness he would acquire no knowledge, and an entire absence of amativeness would probably make him narrow-minded, self-centered and selfish. Neither is it at all desirable that the so-called "fall of man" (the descent of matter into spirit) should never have taken place; for in that case man would have remained in the state of blissful ignorance of an elementary spirit, while now he obtains knowledge and thereby becomes like God.

If the Will is a universal force, it necessarily follows that there can be only *one* supreme Will in the universe, although it here manifest itself in different forms, and the more we unite our individual Will with the supreme Will and co-operate with the same, the more our Will becomes powerful; while if we attempt to bring the action of our individual Will in opposition to the supreme Will, the consequences are necessarily disastrous to ourselves and lead to isolation and death. The Will to become powerful must become free from material desires. If we desire an object, we do not necessarily attract that object, but the object surely attracts us and we may become its slaves. Eliphas Levi says: "The Will accomplishes everything which it does not desire," and illustrations of the truth of this paradox are seen in every-day life. We see people spending their whole lives in vain and useless efforts to obtain riches, and either dying in poverty, or even if they accomplish their object, craving for more, and leading a life more miserable and wretched than the homeless beggar in the street; we see the office-seeker desiring power, bowing before ruffians, and the result is frequently an ignominious failure; we see the fop who wishes to be admired by women usually ridiculed and rejected by intelligent women and we often see those who seek happiness in external pleasures becoming disgusted with life and ending it by their own hands. The safest way to become rich is by not craving for riches; because if we are contented with what we have, even if it be nothing, we shall be richer than the miser who possesses much and wants still more. If we desire power, we must rise morally and intellectually above others and be willing to sacrifice our own desires for their benefit, and power will come to us unasked. If we desire love, let us distribute all the love we have to all mankind, and the love of all whose love it is desirable to possess will descend upon us like the rain descends upon earth. If we desire happiness, we must be willing to give up our selfishness and we shall find happiness within ourselves.

A consideration of the above makes it evident that the development of the will and the attainment of occult powers is simply a natural result of evolution. Many incarnations may be necessary for average man to arrive at the state of perfection attained by the Adept, but the process may be hastened by a continuous effort of the will. Man in his youth longs for the material pleasures of earth, for the gratification of his physical body. As he advances in age, he throws away his playthings and reaches out for something more substantial. He enters perhaps into intellectual pursuits, and not, unfrequently, after a lifelong study, comes to the conclusion that he has been wasting his time by running after a shadow.

Perhaps love steps in and he may think himself the most fortunate of mortals, only to find out sooner or later that ideals can only be found in the ideal world. He then becomes convinced of the emptiness of the shadows he has been pursuing, and these winged butterfly, emerging from the chrysalis, he stretches out his feelers into the realm of the infinite spirit, and is astonished to find a radiant sun where he only expected to find darkness and death. Some arrive at this light sooner, others arrive later, and many are lured away by some illusive light, which they mistake for the sun, and scorch their wings and perish.

Life is a continuous battle between good and evil, between the results of a previous Karma and the efforts of the Will to overcome them, between man's higher nature and his lower impulses and man's future depends on which will come out victorious. But this battle does not last forever if determined efforts are made by the will. A set of animal impulses, once thoroughly subdued, are not liable to assert themselves again, and the more man exorcises his will the more will he gain in strength.

There are two gigantic obstacles in the way of true progress the misconception of what we believe to be *God* and the misconception of what we believe to be *Man*. As long as man believes in a personal God who distributes favors to some and punishes others, - a God that can be reasoned with, persuaded or pacified - he will keep himself within the narrow circle of his ignorance and his mind cannot sufficiently expand. To be selfish and at the same time to continually think of some place of personal enjoyment or heaven, does not assist in man's progression. If such a man desists from doing a wicked act or denies himself material pleasure, he does so from any innate love of good, but either because he expects a reward for his "sacrifice", or because his fear of God makes him a coward. We must do good because we want to do good, and not from fear of punishment or from hope for any personal consideration. The gods help those that help themselves, and the wise expect nothing but *justice*. The wise man knows that he is only a part of the universal whole; that by doing good to others he also benefits himself, and that by injuring others he becomes his own executioner. To love all is to him a necessity, and the love of self appears to him illusive and foolish.

The knowledge of God and the knowledge of Man are ultimately identical, and he who knows himself, knows God. If we understand the nature of the divine powers within us, it will not be difficult to unite our Will with the supreme Will of the cosmos; we shall then we no longer subject to external influences, but we shall control them; instead of being the slaves of Nature, we shall become her masters, and instead of being ruled by demons, we shall become rulers and gods.

This is, however, a doctrine which is liable to be misunderstood, and a misunderstanding of which may lead to consequences of a most serious nature. To unite our will with the universal will, does not simply mean a sentimental acquiescence with the decrees of an inexorable fate and a patient indifference to whatever may happen; much less does it mean a submission of our will to the will of an ignorant or wicked person; but it means a strong and active desire to accomplish whatever may be in our power for the good of humanity. An old doctrine which often turns up in the Middle Ages and was especially prevailing among the convents of France and Spain, says: "The devout having offered up and annihilated their own selves exist no longer but in God. *Thenceforth they can do no wrong*. The better part of them is so divine, that it no longer knows what the other is doing." This has been misunderstood by the numerous monks and nuns of these times, who thought that after they had worked themselves to a certain degree into the favor of God by confession, castigation and penances, they might thenceforth do as they pleased and commit the most outrageous acts of profligacy and injustice without being made responsible for their acts, and as the clergy were considered to be the especial favorites of Divinity and

God's deputies, the people would often submit entirely their own wills to the desires of clerical scoundrels, who did not hesitate in wars their authority by torture and fire.

They became indeed irresponsible beings, because by associating themselves with their animal natures they became brutalized, and the "better part of them" did no longer know what the other doing, because having separated themselves from their higher principles and having merged themselves into the lower ones, they had no "better parts" any more. They became "devils" instead of becoming "gods."

To sacrifice one's self means to subdue the *lower* desires strengthen the higher ones; to unite one's will with divine will is to want nothing else but the good, to live up to one's highest conceptions of justice and truth, and to have one's actions always guided by a universal love for humanity. It means not only *desire* the good, but to *dare* to do it. To accomplish this, it is necessary that our highest conceptions of such abstract ideas should be correct. It is sometimes said that it does not make any difference what a man believes, so long as he acts rightly; but a person cannot be certain to act rightly, unless he knows what is right, and we therefore often see the most horrible acts of injustice committed in the name of justice. The belief of the majority is always the correct belief, and the voice of conscience and humanity is often drowned in the clamor of a superstition based upon erroneous theological doctrine. An erroneous belief is undoubtedly detrimental to progress, and a belief to be useful must be based on knowledge. The true development of will depends therefore the attainment of knowledge because knowledge establishes faith and without faith the will cannot have much power.