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YES, BUT WHY?

Over three hundred years ago, René Descartes formulated this simple proposition: “Cogito ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am). To which a modern French philosopher might respond with this riposte: “Oui, mais pourquoi?” (Yes, but why?). Nobody in their right mind doubts their existence; but the question as to whether there is a “why” behind the ongoing drama of life continues to engage those with minds given to philosophical reflection.

Theosophical literature affirms that there is indeed a purpose underlying human existence. Our immortal Self repeatedly incarnates in human form for the purpose of realizing its latent divine potential. This process is described as taking place over vast stretches of time and involving cyclical periods of growth known as Root Races, of which there are said to be seven. All this is described in great detail in *The Divine Plan*, Barborcka’s illuminating commentary on *The Secret Doctrine*. But in the same way that it is easier, from a distance, to see the contour of a forest than of a single tree, the theosophical student may grasp the purpose behind humanity’s epic journey more easily than that of his or her own.

It is said that before a soul commences a new incarnation, it sees in a flash a preview of the upcoming life—its purpose, the challenges, the opportunities. That memory resides somewhere in our higher consciousness; in our more intuitive moments, we may catch a rare glimpse of it. But there are more obvious clues that can point us in the right direction. For those with a strong inclination or aptitude for a particular line of work, the advice of the late Joseph Campbell was to “follow your bliss.” And our parents may provide a clue. Mozart’s father was a professional musician; had he been a banker or businessman, would the musical genius of Amadeus have flourished in the way that it did? Our circumstances in life also may be trying to tell us something; what we consider to be an obstacle or hardship may be, in fact, an opportunity to develop a certain quality of character in which we are lacking. Other clues may be provided by apparent chance occurrences, which are sometimes meaningful synchronicities, intended to guide us in a certain direction.

Whatever our lot in life may be, we would do well to recall an ancient Roman proverb: “Faber est quisque fortunæ suæ” (Each person is the architect of his own fortune).

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