

ILLUMINATION

*Editor's Note: The original scan (which is itself a xerox) shows the type of formatting PB used when typing up an article for publication. In the days before computers, it was customary to block out the margins used in a given publication and type within those margins. That said, to date we have not been able to locate what publication this might have been prepared for. Our best guess is that this was written before *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga* (i.e. prior to 1939); this guess is based upon PB's later more impersonal references to a spiritual first principle as "The World Mind" rather than as "God." There are other characteristics of this document which are more mystical than fully philosophical – more subjective than impersonal – which suggest this was written in the 1930s.*

For more information about the people and texts PB quotes or references here, please see the file titled "Wiki Standard Info for Comments." For more information about the editorial standards, spelling changes, and formatting that we have implemented please see the file titled "Introductory Readers' Guide." We have introduced minimal changes to the text; our changes deal with inconsistencies of spelling, educated guesses at illegible words, and the rare modification of grammar for clarity's sake. Whenever there is any question as to whether what is typed is what PB wrote, please consult the associated scan of the original pages, currently to be found in a PDF of the same name. – Timothy Smith (TJS), 2023

No reading of a spiritual book, no hearing of a lecture by another person can of itself bring illumination to anyone. The latter happens so deeply inside his consciousness that nothing coming from outside can penetrate there. Books, sermons and counsel are however good in their own lesser place to improve character and thus prepare the way for illumination. Studies and moral efforts such as are usually associated with the Quest are also on the outside surface and unable to enter into the depth needed for illumination. Prayer and meditation on the contrary are direct paths which are capable of reaching the plane of illumination. When they fail, as they often do, this is because they are not intense enough or not deep enough or not sincere enough to leave the ego behind.

Since so few are ready to deny the ego, and fewer still able to do so, it generally works out that only when all their props and supports are knocked away from under them by events outside their control will any of them abandon their dependence on their

(continued from the previous page) ego and their belief that man can completely control his own life. Then, in utter helplessness, they will cry out and then only illumination becomes possible. But the catastrophe which can bring this about may have to be a formidable one, formidable enough to make its sufferers feel their utter powerlessness and insignificance. Some people are stricken with fear for their future while others may even be filled with suicidal thoughts through the feeling that there is no way out of the problem.

Even if they have the conventional religious faith, that will not be enough to help them because the anthropomorphic conception of God does not correspond with the actuality. Its falsity deceives them, its self-centredness keeps them within the ego and limits their outlook. It is indeed a concession intended to pander to their egoism, while at the same time bringing that same egoism under some kind of control. Hence, they are really still depending on themselves for help even when they believe [that]³ they are depending on God. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the orthodox conception of the Deity as given out to the masses is without

(continued from the previous page) basis or value. For it is false only because it is childish, and childish only because it has been made comprehensible to the simplest understanding. And is not such a conception of God better than none at all?

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² "2" in the original. PB himself inserted "Illumination 2" at the top of the page by hand.

³ "That" was typed above the line and inserted with a caret.

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⁵ "(3)" in the original. PB himself inserted "Illumination 3" at the top of the page by hand.

When the results of popular education began to show in their lives,⁶ atheism or agnosticism spread among millions of the European working classes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They rejected all religious consolation as being nothing more than a vacuous dream, appealing only to immature minds. Yet, the orthodox conception of the Deity which these masses rejected is not so illogical as it seems. It is a symbol, holding more content beneath the surface for those able to penetrate it. It is indeed symbolic. The developed intelligence realised that it is not to be taken literally and understands its higher meaning. The spiritually illumined person also disregards its outer form and sees the truth it is striving to tell, the reality it is seeking to suggest. With his entry into the state of illumination not only does this conception of his own racial or national faith

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(continued from the previous page) become highly significant, but all religions from the most primitive to the most cultured become significant. This was why the part of me which was appearing on the world stage, found it difficult to bear hearing anyone criticising any religion, whether it was Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, etc. This was because I saw that God, whom I loved most of all, actually dwelt behind all religions and therefore to attack them was to attack my Beloved. I saw that every kind of religion helped some kind of person or mentality so that all the different kinds of religion even though they seemed to contradict each other or were impure in motive and sometimes unworthy in conduct, were originally inspired by Divine Purpose to meet the different needs of different stages of evolution of the human race.

Only a man in a higher state of consciousness can really depend upon God; because without such illumination he depends upon his ego to the end. No matter how much he prays for help he first tries to work out his problems by his own management. In the illumined state, he completely depends upon God for everything. He no longer has any ambition or desires. The

⁶ PB himself inserted a comma by hand.

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⁸ PB himself inserted "Illumination 4" at the top of the page by hand.

(continued from the previous page) desiring ego is dissolved. Only a grave inner crisis involving the crushing of the ego can bring on this God-conscious state. Very often this is not possible of achievement by ourselves so it has to be done by an outside force or by outside circumstances. It is seldom that a man's own voluntary power can shatter its ego shell. However, he can assist the process somewhat through a self-discipline, purification and trying to raise himself to a higher existence. But in the end he has to acknowledge the ego's limitations and turn to the Short Path or else circumstances or disasters must crush him. He is so much in the ego that he cannot see outside it and therefore cannot unaided, destroy it. Ultimately, if he remains on the Long Path, unpleasant and humiliating experiences must finish this process. It is the dark night of the Soul, the shock of being driven out of his personal complacency. He cannot help himself and feels that no one in the world can help him either. In that darkness he is utterly and completely lost, and there is no place to turn for light and relief, no way out at all. He is forced to give up and cry out in desperation to the great Nothingness which surrounds him. He loses the faith that God is merciful for he seems so deserted

(continued from the previous page) and alone.

When this experience happened to me, I felt dead and empty inside. I was suddenly faced with an entirely new problem which caused me intense mental anguish for about a day and a half. There seemed to be no way out [from]¹³ it. Desolation and emptiness covered my heart. Confusion and torment filled it. There seemed to be no

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¹⁰ PB himself inserted "Illumination 5" at the top of the page by hand.

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¹² PB himself inserted "Illumination 6" at the top of the page by hand.

¹³ PB himself changed "of" to "from" by hand.

one to whom I could turn to for help or advice, and I could find no solution within myself and had no power to do anything within myself. It was impossible not to refrain from crying and giving away to tears as I sank deeper into this black state. I became oblivious of my physical surroundings, as I was so intensely wrapped up in my desolating thoughts. I felt utterly lost within myself. All of the people around me seemed like empty shells. I felt no affinity with them.

Suddenly, I realised that this was a crushing of the self by an unknown power beyond myself. It was then that I began fervently to pray, feeling forlorn humbled terrified and lost. I did not pray for any particular one thing but prayed only for help in a general sense. I lost the feeling of the passage of time. I felt severed from

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(continued from the previous page) earthly reality and became dizzy at the thought that I had reached the end of my endurance. Then I swooned. The moments just before I fainted were filled with indescribable horror. But I soon awoke. A tiny flame of hope appeared in my heart. And then it grew and grew. My first thought was that God was answering my prayers. I began gradually to feel close to the people around me once more; closer than ever before. Some hours later reassurance gradually returned to me and I felt mature and newly born. Enlightenment seemed to come.

Next, a feeling of oneness with God followed. I seemed to know and understand much that I had never understood before. My ego was going and my happiness increased every moment. I felt that this new found faith would guide me through every possible situation.

Previously, I had been somewhat of a dreamer and impractical. A big change in my nature took place and I became better balanced and much more practical. Previously I had disliked certain duties, but now I welcomed them and was able to perform them efficiently and correctly. I felt that I was able to put that wisdom into action. In all conversations, decisions and actions

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¹⁵ PB himself inserted "Illumination 7" at the top of the page by hand.

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(continued from the previous page) I did not need to think out beforehand what I had to say or do but immediately and spontaneously uttered or did whatever came into my mind. It was always the right approach, the perfect approach to the matter in hand, however trivial it was. This gave a feeling of absolute certainty as the result of these utterances or accomplishment of these actions.

All day long I felt that I was in communion with God so that I was either praying or talking to [Him,]¹⁸ and he was constantly with me as my beloved companion:¹⁹ whose presence I felt strongly. At times I would become so immersed in this feeling that I thought I was God! I felt that the real me was invulnerable. No one could hurt it whatever they did to the outer person.

The Divine Presence seemed to be very near. In fact, I knew that it was in my real essence. Whenever any difficulties or problems arose, I found that all I had to do to solve them was to say "Not my will but thy will be done." [With enough patience,]²⁰ they would invariably work out [in]²¹ the best way. During the illumination whenever I saw something wrong in any situation and thought that it ought to be put right, this magical result was instantly

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(continued from the previous page) brought about. It happened in widely different cases: such as the lack of certain needed things;²⁴ they came into my possession; and in

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¹⁷ PB himself inserted "Illumination 8" at the top of the page by hand.

¹⁸ PB himself capitalized "Him" by hand.

¹⁹ PB himself inserted a colon by hand.

²⁰ PB himself deleted duplicate "They" and inserted "With enough patience" by hand.

²¹ PB himself inserted "in" by hand.

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²³ PB himself inserted "Illumination 9" at the top of the page.

discord between two persons, I was able to put love into their hearts and harmony was restored.

The outer personality who was the actor on the stage would express a wish for something but would place it at the same time under the higher will and say that it wanted that thing only if it was the Divine Will. Nevertheless, it seemed to get what it had wished for. Yet, it was not attached to the thing and was ready to relinquish it if it were not permitted by the Divine Will. Although there was desire in the sense of legitimate need, it was not attached desire. It was always subordinated to the Higher Will, for my overmastering desire was to keep in harmony and communion with God. Under this rule all the lesser desires had to take a secondary place. The same applied to my worldly requirements. They were always met. For instance, when an important journey became necessary, and I had not the money to pay for it yet, almost at the last minute the money came to me as a gift though I

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(continued from the previous page) had never asked anyone for it. I felt intuitively that every need would be provided for. And it was. I inwardly felt and outwardly realised the truth of the sentence in the Psalm: "The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want."

The ordinary person is too attached to his desires to be able to get what he²⁷ wants from God. But he can, by the force of his ego, his ambition, his will power or his concentration of thought or desire be in a position to get some part of these desires satisfied. The illumined person is detached from desires and, since he is free from ambition, by stating even once only what he outwardly needs, – since inwardly he is fully satisfied having given up the world – God brings it to him. But this is correct only when he is actually experiencing illumination for only then does he and can he truly depend on God. His thought, wish, prayer or word attain the power to become realised, magically fulfilled because he has stepped aside and allowed the infinite

²⁴ We have changed a colon to a semicolon per context and grammar.

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²⁶ PB himself inserted "Illumination 10" at the top of the page by hand.

²⁷ The original typist inserted "(really - ?)" by hand

power to act within him. Prayer is sincere and its answer becomes possible when it becomes deeply felt and as concentrated

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(continued from the previous page) as meditation when it asks God to take us away from the ego or to do something to set us free from the false self.

The word "I" was pronounced in me; I saw it was the only reality, all else was illusion. "I" was in every person there but they did not know it and clung to its counterfeit - body intellect and desire - which blocked their way to Spirit. "I AM" is the foundation of truth and reality of the whole universe. I saw my body as a mere shell and all other people's bodies as shells. I felt like a bird, free of all desires, really detached from everything. I was not the body and felt so free of it that I knew I could not die; In the real "I" I would always be able to live for it was God.

Previously I had been in intermittent ill-health, but during the illumination I enjoyed perfect health and abounding vitality. I did not lose the awareness of the "I" or the "I AM." Its presence pervaded every hour of the day and persisted even during sleep so that I was both asleep and not asleep. I found that four hours sleep was quite sufficient. In fact, I

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(continued from the previous page) never really slept at all, but remained partly awake, the real "I" being conscious of the fact that my body was sleeping.

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²⁹ PB himself inserted "Illumination 11" at the top of the page by hand.

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³¹ PB himself inserted "Illumination 12" at the top of the page by hand.

Although I had descended deep into my being and experienced Timelessness, I was still able to live in my surface being and experience time. The two experiences went on side by side. Deep down within my heart I lived in a sort of everlasting NOW. I was perfectly content with it and did not look to any future for a greater happiness. Whether I was looking at a beautiful scene in Nature or hearing beautiful music or merely doing some prosaic task, my happiness remained unchanged. I lived completely, vividly, and intensely in the present moment. There was no past and no future; they were both contained within it. This was not like the ordinary man's Now which is based on the passage of time. This had a timeless quality about it. It was an unmoving stillness and things, events, people, came into and flowed out of it. I realised that the passage of time was an illusion, that everything which was happening to the ego was not making any difference to the real self, which remained the same. Looking back

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(continued from the previous page) upon the past years I still seemed to be in the same eternal Now which I had been in when I first experienced it. It is as if nothing has happened since then.

What happened to my sense of time, happened also to my sense of place. For the first time in years I lost the intense longing to return to India, which had until then, seemed my only spiritual home.

In the Light there was no struggle or fear. Here Nature was working willingly with her God. In my heart rose the mighty strains of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. "Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth for Ever and Ever."³⁴ The Power of God surged through my being with such force I realised that within myself, at the centre of my being, God was always there, strong, great, loving, blissful. And when I looked around at my fellows I saw that there too, deep within every one of them, He dwelt, serene and quietly. Only they were not aware, not awake to this Reality. Still

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³³ PB himself inserted "Illumination 13" at the top of the page by hand.

³⁴ PB himself has conflated the verses, in the original it is: "For the lord God omnipotent reigneth/Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" repeated many times, then Verse 2: "And He shall reign for ever and ever" (repeated). – TJS '23

there He reigned, “forever and ever.” I wanted to say to them, “Have no fears, my brothers, for we are in God, we are God, and with him there is only peace, and power, and love. Be

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(continued from the previous page) brave for it is your heritage one day to know Him, to be Free in your awareness of His presence, to be joyous and peaceful in His enfolding arms. You will be compensated for all your suffering. I can feel your pain and sorrow but listen to me, I tell you that within your very self is only joy and bliss. One day you shall all know this truth, that is the inescapable Law!”

My relationships with people also underwent a great inner change. I felt independent of them, and no longer in compelling need of their affection or even presence. I felt detached even whilst still loving my known and unknown friends. What I gave was free from possessiveness and liberated from futile longings. It was [purer, and]³⁷ not the chained kind of love that it is with so many people. Therefore, there was also no dependence upon anyone for happiness. Happiness has to come from the harmony within and however welcome the love for or from the other person is, its loss will not then reduce one’s own happiness. Love is the expression of this harmony. The infinite being loves us infinitely. To the extent that we can attune ourselves to it we too shall express love in our own relationships. Yet this love is not commonly seen and therefore what is commonly

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³⁶ “(14)” in the original. PB himself inserted “Illumination 14” at the top of the page by hand.

³⁷ PB himself inserted a comma and “and” by hand into a blank space left in the original by the typist.

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³⁹ PB himself inserted “Illumination 15” at the top of the page by hand.

(continued from the previous page) called “love” is only a distant and distorted echo of it.

I felt that my love for them did not diminish but on the contrary it greatly increased. There seems to be a fear in some people that they will have to give up their personal affections if they take to the spiritual path. The Truth is that they will give out more real love if it comes through their higher self than if they do not. I was Love; there was no need to go out of my way to love anyone. Similarly, in illumination I found I was the basic condition of all the other virtues. There was no need to aspire to any specific one of them. So instead of seeking them one by one it is enough to seek illumination.

All my experiences now began to fit into a pattern. All fear left me. The world was transfigured with light. A few hours later whilst in bed in a state between sleeping and waking, I became conscious of a vast cosmic experience where the whole universe seemed engaged in constant movement with a dynamic power as the agent behind it. I felt that the entire universe was a unified whole in which everything related to everything else,

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(continued from the previous page) and that I, myself, was at one with it. I could see now that everything that had happened to me in former years was part of a tremendous plan and had to happen that way. There was purpose and meaning in it all. Even the words that I and others had uttered were part of this plan. Even their thoughts and feelings and acts were within it too. There is a perfect harmony and pattern underneath all the jigsaw puzzle of the world’s surface. When the pieces of this puzzle are put into their correct position this harmonious pattern stands revealed. The world and everyone in it was controlled by a vast universal Mind. Every act and word is within this Mind or Plan. Within this great pattern is the individual’s free will but ultimately, even the free will is controlled by this great Mind. Both the persons who believe in free will completely and that there is nothing higher than man’s will, as well as the others who

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⁴¹ “(16” in the original. PB himself inserted “Illumination 16” at the top of the page by hand.

believe the extreme opposite, that there is nothing but God's will, and that they must remain passive in their existence incapable of doing anything to change their lives, both these are partly wrong and partly right. Neither is the theory that the two forces exist side by side correct. The right view is, that

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(continued from the previous page) one is inside the other, like two concentric circles, a smaller lying inside a larger one. It is not as if the Higher Power and our own personal will are jointly responsible for all that happens to everyone every day of their lives. The Higher Power's will is ultimately alone responsible.

Whatever any person decides to do, his personal freedom of choice will always be within the cosmic plan: So vast is this Plan that it has room for every possible choice. In this sense free will does exist. Yet, "Determinism" also exists, but the former is within the latter like a smaller circle within a larger one. Both Indian fatalist and Western individualist are expressions of God's Plan; since the Universal Mind is using them as well as other types for its outworking. Whether people are good or bad, religious or atheistic, thoughtful or ignorant, they are all just as they should be in the cosmic plan. Everyone is growing up spiritually and growing through {their}⁴⁴ experiences, whether the latter are high or low. Inner growth is the Law.

There are two levels from which to regard the

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⁴³ PB himself inserted "Illumination 17" at the top of the page by hand.

⁴⁴ We have changed "is" to "their". —TJS '23

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⁴⁶ PB himself inserted "Illumination 18" at the top of the page by hand.

(continued from the previous page) concept of free [will from]⁴⁷ the level of the enlightened, every little circumstance is preordained;⁴⁸ every little or large thing – such as a scrap of paper or a revolving planet – is in a place allotted to it. Even “evil” is ultimately a part of the World Mind Plan. Everything moves and acts according to the Creator’s pattern.

I felt no urge to teach others, or to [preach and]⁴⁹ arouse them,⁵⁰ or to tell them what I saw by enlightenment. [I played]⁵¹ the part of a [Witness, and silently carried on with my ordinary life.]⁵² In my enlightenment there was no desire to teach others or to awaken them. This was because I felt everything was right as it was, everything was fulfilling God’s will, each person was at his proper place in evolution and could not be at any other one. Every person is in the place which properly belongs to him at this particular time, whether he likes or dislikes that place. By “place” is meant not only the physical environment but also the human relationships

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(continued from the previous page) which pertain to that environment and the mental conditions which are active within him. By “time” is meant that every event seems to be pre-timed and could not happen before its proper hour as set by the will of God. Every creature, person, incident and event falls into the pattern at exactly its right place. He is at his natural level, and needs no interference from outsiders. I saw it takes enormous periods of time for people to attain the ego-free state and they must grow into it little by little. What was the sense then of trying to lift anyone to the highest plane of teaching; the feat is impossible to him and he ends in confusion, insanity or

⁴⁷ PB himself changed “will. From” to “will from” by hand.

⁴⁸ PB himself inserted a semicolon by hand.

⁴⁹ PB himself inserted “preach and” by hand.

⁵⁰ PB himself inserted a comma by hand.

⁵¹ PB himself changed “It was a mistake of the Maharishee to teach others to play” to “I played” by hand.

⁵² PB himself changed “Witness. This was correct only on his own higher level. For those who had not attained it, it was a false attitude. There are some jnanis who do not have to teach or preach, they silently carry on with their ordinary lives.” to “Witness, and silently carried on with my ordinary life.” by hand.

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frustration. It is dangerous to give such teaching to those unready for it, as it stops them making the step-by-step upward effort they need must make. This is why those who are enlightened remain silent – unless they have a special mission to “speak” to help others. There are certain individuals like Buddha and Jesus who had such missions. These messengers know that people cannot yet free themselves from ego, yet their love or pity was so great that they gave whatever little peace and comfort could be absorbed.

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(Continued from the previous page) The Cosmic Vision revealed the true meaning of freedom and fate, and showed how illusory is the feeling of free choice which we possess. The Bhagavad Gita’s description of Arjuna’s Cosmic Vision is a perfect {description}⁵⁵ of the actual situation. The world is therein pictured as being whirled around on a wheel, with God as the driving force. Every human being is on that wheel, revolving through the series of innumerable embodiments. Whatever it chooses to do, it will still be whirled around with all the others. Its personal freedom will still be fitted into, and limited by, that supreme fact. I understood perfectly that the Bhagavad Gita’s statement that God is the real doer of everything and we only actors in God’s drama, that those destined to be slain on the battlefield are already dead, and those destined to slay them already marked down as instruments to effect this purpose. I understood too, Muhammad’s constant injunction to resign oneself to God’s will. In recognising that we are parts of the pattern of circumstances and in accepting it, we let go of the ego, thus fulfilling and finishing the divine Idea in us. But if the Oriental fatalists sit down to wait for something to happen, they will be forced, eventually, to get up

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⁵⁵ We have changed "descripting" to "description" for grammar’s sake. –TJS '23.

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(continued from the previous page) and do something about it. But even their misconceptions {are}⁵⁷ part of the scheme. However, for someone to appear among them and show up their error and arouse them – even this too is a further part of the Plan.

The world pattern is preordained in the sense that it is written out like a stage play. The author of the play is God. Each of us has an allotted part. Each has to play that part. He has no free will to reject it or to play another part. This is because he is the result of all that went before, cannot help being what he is and what he has to do on the stage, follows logically from what he is. Each person seemed to be enacting his allotted role, and saying and doing what he was ordained. Even I seemed to be one of the actors outwardly, although I was inwardly aware of what was happening and therefore, also played the part of a spectator. I looked upon the ego as something really separate from myself, or as a kind of puppet which I was manipulating. All other people looked like puppets to me too, although I could see that they were not aware that their higher selves were manipulating them. Whereas, I, was aware, and could understand the process and the purposes of what

(continued from the previous page) it was trying to do in my outer self.

Everything has to happen the way it does. Every incident is preordained by the past as well as by the Plan. Even the freedom of will to choose is only apparent, for the actual choice is itself preordained. Even our weaknesses and faults are used to bring about the preordained happenings. There is nothing wrong, nothing evil, everything contributes to ultimate good. Even seeming wrongs will be turned to right in some vast chain reaction which affects many other people whom we never know.

I was much impressed by this Causal Chain, the way our acts and words start ramifications in long lines affecting many persons we never know or hear of, and across

⁵⁷ We have changed “is” to “are” for grammar’s sake.

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the world. Out of evil comes good, and out of good comes evil, if the chain of effects could be traced far enough. Good intentions may lead to evil results. Human existence seems to be involved in a gigantic web. Each part contributes to the whole web and its ultimate ramifications stretch across the whole web. Not only do we affect those whose [lives]⁵⁹ come in contact with our own, but also those whose lives seem too remote and unlinked

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(continued from the previous page) with ours. There are unseen ties and filaments connecting man with Nature, man with destiny and man with man. There was a strong feeling of being an intended part of the design of this immense, even endless world system which is so incredibly complicated. All I had to do was to fulfil my existence as that little part and ignore or discard any personal feelings about it. By a single large comprehensive insight, all is now explained. I see human life especially my own life, under this new light. Those who have been driven by scientific discovery to concede large parts of the pattern yet believe that it somehow arranges itself, and that no Higher Power or Mind has anything to do with it, must therefore believe that the appearance of this particular pattern is solely a matter of chance. Why then does it show qualities of instinct, reason, purpose, and other qualities associated with mind?

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⁵⁹ The original typist deleted "seem too remote and unlinked" from after "lives" by typing over the words with x's.

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⁶¹ "(2" in the original.

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