

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF
A NOVITIATE:
POEMS AND ESSAYS**

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The Philosophy of a Novitiate: Poems and Essays by Annie M. L. De Boer

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ANNIE M. L. DE BOER

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THE PHILOSOPHY
OF A
NOVITIATE

Poems and Essays of
ANNIE M. L. DeBOER
Editor of ||
"Glad Tidings of the Dawn"

A Quarterly Magazine Devoted
to Theosophical Ideals and
Their Realization

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Inscribed to
Saint Narada

*"The Words of Wisdom are chance pearls,
thrown among the rocks by the sullen waters of
oblivion, which diligence loves to gather and
hang around the neck of memory."*

To you
Annie M. L. DeBoer

LIFE'S IMMORTALITY

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to
be never;

Never was time it was not; end and beginning are
dreams;

Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth
the spirit forever;

Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the
house of it seems.

—Bhagavad-Gita.

For centuries the question, what am I, whither
am I going, and what shall I be? have thrilled
human hearts and dominated human thought.

Clement, an illustrious Roman and one of the
founders of the Christian Church, in speaking of
himself has told the story of the world's seeking:

"From my earliest youth, doubts, of whose origin
I was uncertain, perplexed me. Shall I exist after
death no longer, and will no one bestow a thought
upon me while ceaseless time is burying all human
things in forgetfulness? Will it be the same with
me as if I had never been born? When was the
world created, and what existed before the world
was? If it existed from eternity, then it will be
everlasting. If it had a beginning it will also have
an end. And what will there be after the end of
the world, unless the stillness of death? Or per-
haps there will be something which it is now im-
possible to think of.

"Having been troubled with such thoughts from
my youth, I frequented the schools of the philoso-
phers in order to discover something certain; but I
saw there little else than the advancement and
destruction of theories—controversies and counter-
controversies—first, the proposition was demon-
strated, and believed, that the soul is immortal;
then again, that it is mortal. When the first pre-
vailed, I rejoiced; but when the other, I was
dispirited.

"Thus was I driven about by opposing proposi-
tions, and was at last compelled to admit that
these things did not appear in their true light, but
only as they were presented by the opposing views
of different persons. I was then seized with a
greater perplexity of mind, and groaned from the
very depth of my soul."

He then determined to travel to the land of
mysteries and search out in Egypt a magician who
would conjure up for him a spirit, thinking thus to
secure satisfactory evidence of the immortality of
the soul, but a friendly philosopher withheld him
from thus seeking the truth by the practice of "the
unlawful art", fearing that he might never again
enjoy peace of mind.

Socrates, the philosopher, and greatest sage the
world has ever known, avowed his despair of

TO YOU ALSO

ever discovering a solution by the aid of reason's light alone, while he whispered a hope that some messenger might come to earth who might bring some light on the immortality of the soul. Long years after, there appeared one greater than Socrates, who proclaimed himself a Messenger of Life and Immortality, but the same scorn that destroyed the philosopher rejected the Christ, and the great majority of mankind are waiting, like Clement of old, to hear the voice of some loved who has passed to the "Unknown Land." Although the so-called dead are not dead at all, they are nevertheless separated from the living by the barriers that the material or physical world maintains. They may be ever near us, but we are not conscious of their presence, and our voices must call in vain for their manifestation upon physical planes of consciousness. Only in the realms of occult science may the living enter into communication with the astral world, but the pathway of adeptship is beset with danger for any but the divine teachers and Saviors of the World, whose help we may as freely implore for the so-called dead as for the living, and just as we find our power of friendly help not altogether limited to our own order of being, so higher and holier beings possess in fuller fruition those privileges of communion which are so helpful to us here. When our spirits are attuned to the spirit of righteousness, our prayers and aspirations exert an influence far beyond our conscious range and bring us into communication with the invisible helpers of the world.

Leaving the realms of the astral worlds to those more fitted than ourselves to look beyond the veil and grapple with the mysterious, may we not in the light of twentieth century knowledge form an intelligent hypothesis for an unquestioning belief in the immortality of the soul?

Materialistic science maintains that the universe is the result of natural forces, and that man himself is purely the result of evolution, but science has failed to detect a transition from the lifeless to the living. Wherever there is life it has been evolved from pre-existing life, and no forces of nature have been found adequate to produce out of inorganic matter the chemical compounds which make up living cell, and to group them into organs and bodies endowed with the functions of life, but the gulf between the living and the dead has been bridged, and this proves the existence of a power greater than nature.

There are multitudes of beings lower in the scale of existence than man. Life exists in every variety of animal, in the earth, the air and the sea, and in every species of plants, and in all stages of development, life is the result of a countless number of preceding efforts. Human life, the very

flower of evolution on the planet earth, reaches back into the remotest eternity of time.

If evolution has by an eternity of effort brought man to his present stage, which while the highest type of evolution on this earth, is not yet such a vehicle as the soul would desire, is it not reasonable to conclude that the process of evolution will be continued until that has been completed which has been begun?

If our human life is a result it is a promise also, and as the soul has made use of all the past, so must the soul make use of all the future, for while man is the highest of all the dwellers on the planet earth, the earth is only one of the planets warmed by the sun and the sun only one of a myriad of similar suns, which are so distant that they group as stars, and may we not believe that in some of the innumerable worlds there are beings far higher in the scale of evolution than ourselves? As our little planetary system is but the innermost reaches of the illimitable universe, and as sun after sun and constellation after constellation reach on and on in a complexity of systems so vast that only the mind of God has power to grasp the complexity of it all, so only God may know the capacities and possibilities of an immortal soul.

* * *

The soul of man contains both the past and the future. We are part of the first cause which originated all things and which leads through every experience and transformation to the end that was ordained for the beginning. Each speck of protoplasm originating in the womb of Infinity held within itself all the potentialities of the immortal soul. Step by step and round by round in the endless cycles of evolution, the soul is unfolding its possibilities and powers. Eternity has time enough for the full development of every latent talent; and through his every growing spiritual power, man is drawing ever nearer to the divine fulfillment of his immortal destiny.

If materialistic science cannot explain the origination of life, no more can such science explain the law of gravitation, the law of motion as against the natural forces of nature that tend to rest and inaction. No one knows why a stone falls to the ground, nor why it falls sixteen feet in the first second; no one knows why frost crystals are symmetrical nor why the rose is red and the violet blue, and science cannot explain human intelligence and the existence of the immortal soul with its capacity for joy and sorrow, its deep wells of affection, and hope of immortality; therefore, materialistic science does not accept the immortality of the soul.

It is consistent to believe that this body of ours when consigned to the elements shall live again in

leaf and flower, in plant and tree, but that our human intelligence and love—all that has made life beautiful and worth while—shall at the death of the body pass into oblivion and cease to exist forever?

Between the infinite past, when, as science maintains, there was no life, and the infinite future when there will be no life, the moment of the present emerges, a moment only, though measured by millions of years. In this moment of time, man as a child of the dust has painfully developed so far as to become conscious of the difference between right and wrong. He knows that good is that which promotes development and is in harmony with health, beauty and happiness, and he learns to recognize evil as that which retards and frustrates development, and is akin to disease, ugliness and misery; therefore, he is said to possess a soul and a hope of immortality, but to what purpose—to what end?

It is said by a modern scientist that our earth has been destroyed many times by the power of radium. Radium emanations have been found in springs, in the air, in rocks, etc., and this has given rise to his theory regarding the evolution of the worlds. He says scientists have deduced that if the earth contained only two parts radium per million million, this minute quantity would raise the temperature of the earth's core 1800 degrees in 100,000,000 years, there being no escape for the imprisoned heat. He argues that as the ages roll by, the interior of the earth must become hotter and hotter, until finally, after millions of millions of years, the crust may give way to the heat within, and the bursting earth go up in flames, becoming a burning gas ball, just as our sun appears today. This he calls the incandescent age. After another ten million years the incandescent earth will have expended all its heat into space by radiation and gradually will cool. A new crust then begins to form. This is seen at present on Jupiter and Saturn. Thus he argues that worlds do not die, but slowly pass from one stage to another, in an endless cycle.

If this theory is true, where then has been the soul of man, and what record has been kept in the archives of eternity of his intellectual, moral and spiritual progress? In the wreck and dissolution of worlds are souls annihilated, and has God no record of the universe—no link to bind the past with the present and the future?

If the soul may not live again in another life, in another world, why is it made greater than this world? Why should the soul desire immortality if that desire may not be satisfied? We like to think of ourselves as living after millions of years, and sometimes in moments of exaltation we dimly

remember that we have always existed, in fact we believe that we are immortal. Why then should we be tantalized by a dream that is only a dream? We may promise ourselves a limited existence after this life, but we will not be satisfied—the soul can accept nothing short of eternity. This eagerness with which we look beyond the present to the future is a promise of immortality. The soul is never satisfied, and if we are not heirs of immortality, then we are too divine.

In all the ancient mysteries is beautifully symbolized a belief in the immortality of the soul. In autumnal decay, in wintry darkness and buried seed, in opening bud, and summer light and ripening fruit is symbolized the fate of man. In the Mystical Hymns of Orpheus is a hymn to Adonis in which he is likened to the sun, sinking to Tartarus, the black abyss under the earth—the realm of the dead—then rising again to Heaven, the bright expanse above the earth which was the realm of the living. When he rises, all things rejoice in his smile; when he sinks nightly, sky and earth wrap themselves in mourning.

Thus the human destiny was symbolically interwoven with nature. Aphrodite, bewailing the death of Adonis, is nature mourning for departed man. Every autumn Persephone, symbol of the buried grain, was carried down to the dark realm of shadows, from whence she returned each spring, becoming the "Queen of the Dead." Thus the changes of nature typified the changes in the human lot, and the earliest imagination of man was concerned with the immortality of the soul.

Socrates tried to explain the desire for immortality in the hypothesis of the soul's pre-existence to that of the body in the bosom of the Absolute, the Infinite, the Eternal. The ideas which Socrates held to be universal, and of primary importance, were those of Equality, Justice, Goodness, Beauty, etc., and he held that the world could not have been made beautiful if there had not existed a primary conception of beauty. We must acknowledge that mind has always existed, or something must have arisen out of nothing. That we do not all remember a previous existence is no proof against our having had a previous existence. Sometimes even in this life our recollection of certain events is blotted out and sometimes the memory suddenly returns of events that have not crossed our minds for years. May we not conclude that the time will come when we will be enabled to recall the events of many lifetimes, when the aggregated experience will lead to a fuller comprehension of God's Great Eternal Plan; and when we more fully comprehend will we not be more sympathetic and compassionate toward those intelligences who are yet not as highly evolved as ours?