Some Social Aspects of the Secret Doctrine of Elena Blavatsky

Anna Delcheva Kaltseva

South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Faculty of Philosophy, BULGARIA
Department of Philosophical and Political Science, Blagoevgrad

Received 15 November 2019 • Revised 21 December 2019 • Accepted 23 December 2019

Abstract

The paper attempts to show the social character of major philosophical aspects in Elena Blavatsky’s the Secret Doctrine. These are the staging of Unity in the Universe, of the continuous movement of the Cosmos and of human being, of the evolution under the rules of cause and consequence, of cyclicity and hylozoism. Proper understanding and knowledge of these foundations of the Universe could change the mass consciousness and serve as a basis for the creation of a society guided by the principles of love, charity and mutual assistance. And these are essentially alternatives to the current risk society in which human civilization resides.

Keywords: Blavatsky, social, Unity, Universe, evolution, alternatives, risk, human.

1. Introduction

This presentation is an attempt to represent the social significance of one of the guiding philosophical principles of Theosophy, understood in its broad sense as knowledge of Nature, the world, man, and God. It has existed since ancient times. It has developed in India and Ancient Egypt, in the Hermetic tradition, the Pythagorean School. It has formulated for the first time by the Neo-Platonists in the late 2nd century AD, found a new dimension in Gnosticism, in the mysticism of Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg in the 16th-18th centuries. Then – in the Theosophical writings and society, founded by Helena Blavatsky in 19th century. In the 20th century, the tradition continued by Helena and Nikolai Roerich, the Bulgarian White Brotherhood and the work of Nikolay Raynov, and the following Theosophical ideas in the late 20th and early 21st century.

This paper is an attempt to show the essence and social significance of the law of Reincarnation, of Karma – cause and effect, underlying philosophical aspects in Theosophy. Scientific research in this area is scarce worldwide1, although in the last two decades, there has been a marked increase in interest in Theosophy and, accordingly, in the publication of scientific

---


© Authors. Terms and conditions of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) apply.
Correspondence: Anna Delcheva Kaltseva (PhD), South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophical and Political Science, Blagoevgrad, BULGARIA. E-mail: akaltseva67@gmail.com.
articles on theosophical issues. Reincarnation and Karma are challenging metaphysical realms to explore. Their study requires both a wealth of empirical material in the form of testimonies to an innumerable number of people about their memories and experiences in previous lives and new methods. These methods are related to the development of extrasensory perceptions, a possibility that is extremely rare in the history of Mankind. At the same time, these spiritual and psychological qualities are becoming more and more common as the essence of children born, called indigo, crystalline, rainbow children. The scientific study, as far as it exists, of reincarnation and Karma is within the testimony of people with similar experiences. And the collection of sufficient empirical material for their memories and narratives to enable qualitative analysis and sound logical conclusions about the social importance of the laws of reincarnation and Karma in the life and development of human civilization.

The need for knowledge for the essence and effect of these fundamental philosophical principles of Theosophy justifies by the contemporary situation in the world society. The author of this paper presents the thesis that knowledge of the existence and operation of the reincarnation and Karma will lead to:

1. Changes in the consciousness and attitude towards oneself and the world of the individual in the direction of strengthening and increasing the responsibility to one's own life and the social environment and society as a whole;

2. These personal changes will become the basis for the socio-cultural shift in society for its real formation and existence through the principles of mutual understanding, cooperation, mutual assistance, charity, compassion, and brotherhood.

Such a thesis may seem utopian and unrealistic. The reasons for its exposure arise:

1. From the essence of the laws of reincarnation and Karma. In short, they state that man lives thousands upon millions of lives. And death means only the end of the physical body, but not the immortal particle, commonly called the Spirit in man.

2. Experience in every new birth is determined by the actions and choices made by a person in a previous life – this is the Law of Karma, the law of cause and effect. When a person is aware and convinced that the daily well-being that he or she makes with his actions, words, deeds depends on personal well-being, then that person becomes a radically new person in modern society. A person who lives by the laws of essential honesty, honesty, nobility. And as difficult as it may be for such a person, he knows that the attacks, ridicule, deprivation he has to endure are merely the result of his actions in a previous reincarnation. And his current behavior, attitude towards the world prepares him for his well-being and happiness in the next life. Such a change, based on the knowledge of reincarnation and Karma, is not a change that is reported loudly and universally. It is an internal change of the individual and the hope that increasing the number of people with such awareness, understanding, and attitude to life will gradually or faster change the whole society – in the city, the state, the continent, the world.

2. Modern civilization requires knowledge of Karma and Reincarnation

The modernity and development of human civilization need a change, and the general situation conditions this need on Earth. Since the beginning of the new millennium, humanity has been moving towards an ever-expanding conflict and opposition at all levels – political, social, socio-cultural, religious, interstate, and international. The result is chaos, confrontation, violence, and wars that kill millions of people in different parts of the world. Other millions are becoming
refugees and disrupting order, peace, and tranquility in countries considered to be the model of modern society.

Attempts to find out why all this is happening only partially provide a logical explanation for the disharmony that has conquered modern civilization. One of the answers is related to the thirst for power and money, which underlies the desire for more influence and world domination. On the other hand, on a personal level, the decades-old model of material well-being increasingly diverges from the understanding of peace, harmony, and happiness that are the natural pursuit of man. Third, the distance from Nature turns to man and society into a tree without roots, which perceives the surrounding world solely as a source of food and raw materials. The planet’s resources are destroyed, and millions of people starve while others throw-away tons of food. Irresponsibility and selfishness lead to an overpopulation of the Earth. It is possible that soon, according to UN experts, our planet won’t be able to feed its population.

“Environmental problems are one of the most significant problems of our time”, notes Antoaneta Nikolova, and continues: “For several decades, ways have been sought to solve them. They are increasingly aware that they are inseparably linked to economic and social challenges and have common roots”. Antoaneta Nikolova points out that it is imperative to “rethink the worldview model we belong to and look for alternatives”.

Concepts like “brotherhood”, “mutual aid” and even “cooperation” today seem demoted and archaic, despite being present in constitutions and laws. They give way to fear and terror, horror, violence, stock prices, and sexual passions. And this shows that humanity did not learn the lessons of the two world wars in the 20th century. The Earth civilization is rapidly moving toward its self-destruction, which is the destruction of weapons, the destruction of Nature and natural resources, the destruction of personality, and its transformation into an easily manipulated unit of the space of chaos. Consumer society, raised in a cult of Western civilization, creates alienation among people, confusion, futility, both individually and universally. Neglecting moral values and recognizing money as the highest value takes away the joy of Being, brings to the surface deep passions, and personifies the real human being. A sense of doom and hopelessness is creating, both individually and universally. There are no guidelines and goals that make sense of being outside material possessions.

As early as the late 19th century, the best representatives of European philosophy noted the onset of a global crisis, rooted himself: the falsehood of his historical Being and the limited forms of his self-knowledge. As Gergana Popova writes, the roots of the crisis and the decline of Europe, the degradation of the European man “can be traced more deeply – in Nietzsche’s critique of European culture, in the complaints of romantics about the lost connection with Nature, in the reflections of Rousseau for the corruption of European morals. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ‘crisis’ became a significant leitmotif in the fields of art, science, and philosophy”.

The outlined lack of meaning and guidance in the individual and the universal human world necessitates the question of where we are going, where we would go if we continued as to what is the purpose of human existence. The items are not new and may be as old as intelligent civilization. It necessitates the expansion of the search for reasoned and satisfactory answers in an alternative direction of knowledge, which, without being a religion, seeks answers to questions in the spiritual plane, and reveals a different view of human development.

---


3. New directions in scientific thought

To this are added the purely methodological searches for scientific thought. “One of the most widespread opinions in contemporary scientific socio-political knowledge is that it is undergoing a radical transformation (“revolution”). It requires the creation of a new paradigm of knowledge and change of natural and social reality, a model that corresponds to and expresses the essence of the modern world, and which would allow the survival and further progressive development of humanity. Awareness of this need began in the first half of the twentieth century, with the new paradigm defines in different ways – “humanistic”, “antropospheric”, “biotechnospheric”, etc., incl. and “noospheric”5, professor Boris Manov writes in search of an answer to the question “Science or utopia is Vladimir Vernadsky’s doctrine of the noosphere”.

4. Helena Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society

In this series of conclusions and questions, one of the possible alternatives of our risk society is Theosophy, with its ideas about community and its development. Helena Blavatsky created the first in the most recent history of humanity the Theosophical Society in 1875 in America and, for the fulfillment of its purposes, wrote thousands of pages leading among them The Secret Doctrine, The Isis of Revelation, and The Key to Theosophy.

The goals6 of the Theosophical Society are directed in three main directions: (1) Formation of the nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Mankind without distinction of race, color, or creed; (2) Contributing to the study of Aryan and other sacred manuscripts of world religions and various scientific fields to restore the importance of ancient Asian literary sources belonging to the philosophical teachings of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism; and (3) Exploration of the hidden secrets of nature in all possible aspects, as well as the mental and spiritual capabilities of man, inherent only to him.

These goals are enormous in scope and cover both the social aspects of the life of civilization and its cultural and evolutionary development. The question naturally arises: “Why exactly at this time – the second half of the 19th century, did the Theosophical Movement appear”. At first glance, its appearance and activity are surprising. The Theosophical “boom” in the ’70s of the 19th century appeared out of nowhere. But the history of philosophy and of human civilization in its entirety – without being divided into Eastern and Western ones – provides convincing evidence that this “boom” does not come from an empty ground. It has roots, sound foundations and prominent representatives at all times and epochs – beginning with Ancient Egypt, India and China, Ancient Greece and Rome, even during the dark Middle Ages of Europe, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the decades immediately preceding the creation of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. In all times in the West and East, there were scholars, sages, spiritual leaders who shared and dedicated their lives to the ideas that are summarized in the goals of the Theosophical Society created by Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott. In their essence, these ideas are philosophical, ethical, and filled with a robust social charge. Added to this is Blavatsky’s acknowledgment that the “birth” of Theosophical Society in the 19th century was also the result of the total materialization of science7.

5. Universal Oneness

In Theosophy, as well as in the philosophy of the East, the leading idea is Universal unity. It is Oneness of everything visible and invisible in the world around us and in us, on planet Earth, in the cosmos, and the Universes. This Oneness is all-pervading, ubiquitous, and all-encompassing. It has no beginning and no end. It refers to the smallest particle, the smallest quark, proton, neutron, atom, and molecule to the same extent as minerals, rocks, plants, animals, humans, and the organization of their life called society. It is an inseparable unity of darkness and light, of Spirit and matter, of male and female origin. Lao Zu summarizes in Tao Du Jing: “All things bring with them, Yin and Yang”. We are all and all connected – an idea deeply social in Nature because it outlines the natural unity on which life on Earth is based. And all of us, as individuals, as families, nations, states, are subject to the Law of Reincarnation, Cause, and Effect – Karma. The knowledge of this Law, its necessary action, impartiality, and inclusiveness is fundamentally essential. It is crucial to each individual and then to the family, group, nation, and all human civilization.

The law of cause and effect or the law of Karma is not unfamiliar with the upbringing in the dogmas of the Christian church. In the Old Testament, Karma is expressed as “Eye for eye, tooth for a tooth”. In the New Testament, Jesus repeats, “What you sow, you will reap”. The true profound meaning of these affirmations is made manifest upon familiarity with the law of Karma, always connected with the law of Reincarnation. In Theosophy, as in Hinduism and Buddhism, Reincarnation is a fundamental philosophical category and principle, an ontological definition of life choices and behavior. With the death of the physical body of the individual, the other three lower bodies are gradually destroyed – the astral, the etheric, and the lower Manas, the lower mental body of the deceased person. After each death of a person, the spiritual achievements of consciousness, of the higher mental body, the spiritual achievements of the Ego, remain from his physical life. In the various schools of the East, this is the fifth or third principle of man. It depends on whether the physical body counts him as first or vice versa – by the Atma as the first body of a man. Another fundamental philosophical and vital principle in Theosophy is that the human being is not only a physical body. The second, invisible to the eye body, is astral. The third is etheric, and the fourth is animal Manas or Mind. The fifth is the highest human Mind. The sixth is the Spiritual Soul or Buddha, and the seventh is Atma, which is not always, connection with Universal Oneness, with the World Mind, with the Absolute, which, according to Theosophy, is everywhere – the all-pervading, all-encompassing and eternal, unity of Spirit and Matter. That is precisely the God of Theosophy, Blavatsky says. Helena Blavatsky notes that she calls this Oneness Divine not because it is anthropomorphic, but to make it more accessible to Western consciousness.

Absolute consciousness is eternal according to our understanding. Helena Blavatsky avoids using “eternal”, explaining this with the theosophical knowledge of space and time as always existing, nonlinear, and cyclical manifestations of our consciousness. In their infinity, concepts such as “eternity” lose their meaning. The World Mind, the Oneness of Darkness and Light, of masculine and feminine origin for the Theosophists are the true Divine Wisdom, not the anthropomorphized dogmatic authority called God.

The absolute consciousness is also called the Absolute Reality, the Absolute. Although the continual movement is its essence, the Absolute is the only reality that is immutable and,

---

10 The Bible, ed. St. Synod of the Bulgarian Church, 1991, Leviticus 24: 20, p. 139.
therefore, non-illusory. As such the Absolute Reality, Divine Wisdom, is Non-Being – invariable and eternal in our perception and different from the other in the Being in which we live and which is continuously changing. Therefore it is an illusion, Maya\textsuperscript{13}. This idea is also fundamental to Theosophy, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

From the Absolute Reality, from the Divine Wisdom, from the World Mind comes every manifestation of life and returns to it after physical death. Birth and death are a constant manifestation of the never-ending movement in this Absolute Being. Rest periods alternate with periods of activity, and this applies to the entire Universe, space, planets, plants, animals, and humans. In Eastern philosophy, these periods are called the Days and Nights of Brahma, Manvantara and Pralaya – equal in length, which is enormous and is described by more of a 10-digit number\textsuperscript{14}. During the Night of Brahma, all forms of life in the Universe are dissolved in Non-Being, in Absolute Reality. At dawn, when the Brahma Day begins, or at the start of the new Manvantara, the new manifestation begins, the formation of forms. Every form, from the smallest particle to the planets and universes, begins to evolve from where evolution ended before the last Pralaya. Thus, each new Brahma Day, each new Manvantara, is a life of a higher evolutionary level, with growth always physical, mental, and spiritual\textsuperscript{15}. In every Manvantara, the development of every world – mineral, plant, animal-human – goes through innumerable births and deaths, unnumerous reincarnations. The purpose of this cycle is to gain experience in the material world; to improve himself physically, mentally, and spiritually, following the Divine wisdom. It means following moral rules and ethical norms known and valid as the core of every religion on Earth – knowledge for good and evil, humanity, charity, mutual aid, and philanthropy. The evolution of every human Being continues through so many millions of reincarnations until its essence reaches the perfection of Non-Being, of Divine Wisdom. In this very long process, personal development starts from the smallest particle, cell, and molecule, passes through the lowest organisms, through the mineral and stone, plants and animals, to become human and continue to develop in human form one or more Manvantara, or in one or several Brahma Days.

The evolution of man is not an individual process but is part, only an aspect of the universal growth of the kingdoms existing on Earth – mineral, plant, animal, human. The ontological motivation of this universality is the guiding principle of Theosophy noted above. Blavatsky emphasizes “the philosophical, metaphysical, and naturalistic foundations of this statement”\textsuperscript{16}. “All men have the same spiritual and physical origin, which is the basis of Theosophical Teaching. Insofar as humanity is the same entity and that entity is one – infinite, uncreated, and eternal, whether we call it God or Nature – nothing can affect one nation or one person without affecting another country or another man”\textsuperscript{17}. In addition, Blavatsky emphasizes: “If every person does not understand and perceive as an axiom that causing harm to one person causes harm not only to him and to himself, but also to humanity as a whole, no fraternal feelings preached by different great reformers, and most fully Buddha and Jesus, are not possible on Earth”\textsuperscript{18}.

After physical death, there remains the permanent part of the deceased person – the Atma, the Buddha, and the Supreme Manas or the spiritual achievements of the individual. After a certain period of time – different for each person, the immortal part of the individual, united with the Absolute, is born again in a new body. It is taken according to the Laws of the Continuing

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., v. 1, p. 89-90.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., v. 1, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{16} Blavatsky, H., The Key to Theosophy, \url{http://www.theosophist.ru}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 31.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., c. 35.
Movement in the Absolute Divine Being, which is the essence of the Law of Spiritual Evolution. Reincarnation is invariable, and in its many sequences, the individual learns his lessons unconsciously, and with the progress of his evolution, he becomes more conscious.

6. Anti-Reincarnation

At the same time, modern scientific thought is hard to accept and generally rejects the idea of reincarnation. Reincarnation is considered pseudoscientific and not worthy of analysis and consistent study, although this question is fundamental to the philosophy of the East. Plato also believes in the immortality of the soul. Often, criticism shows a misunderstanding of the essence of Reincarnation or a priori acceptance of the negative and harmful position of the Christian church on this issue. That forms a predominantly negative attitude of the scientific community towards Reincarnation.

In the article “A Philosophical/Critical Analysis of the Idea of Reincarnation” Umezurike Grace points out: “Modern materialism contends that mental states are reducible to physical brain states. Thus if materialism is true, reincarnation is ruled out automatically. Epiphenomenalism, which contends that the Mind is a separate yet dependent by-product of the brain, has the same implication for reincarnation. A dualism that contends that the Mind is a separate, independent entity from the brain is a necessary presupposition for the possibility of reincarnation.” Grace concludes that “the idea of reincarnation and the idea of an immortal soul are unnecessary” in general.

Robert Morey is even more adamant in insisting that reincarnation damages morality and does not explain the world. “There are serious doubts about the intellectual integrity of the reincarnation theory. It does not tell the world we live in. It is devastating to morality. The arguments in favor of reincarnation have been examined and found unconvincing. The lifestyle of societies based on the theory of reincarnation, as well as their perspectives on life, leads to political, economic and social stagnation, Moray points out and concludes that “degeneration theory cannot be accepted as a philosophy or a way of life”.

7. Helena Blavatsky for Reincarnation and Karma

Helena Blavatsky presents in detail the ideas of reincarnation and Karma in The Key to Theosophy. She defines reincarnation as a sequence of births. She notes that “it is only through this sequence of births that the eternal development and cultivation of the innumerable millions of Ego is accomplished.”

To the question “What determines the number of human reincarnations”, Helena Blavatsky answers: “From karma”. In The Key to Theosophy she calls Karma the “Universal Law for Guaranteeing Justice”. “For the materialist, who calls the Law of periodicity governing several bodies, and all other laws of Nature, blind forces and mechanical requirements, Karma, no doubt, will be random Law and nothing more. No definition or restriction could describe what is impersonal and not being, but a universal working law”. Also, it is noted that according to

---

23 Ibid.
Theosophy, Karma is inherent in the life of man and society. “Karma is the primary law of the Universe, the root cause, origin and source of all other laws existing in Nature. Karma is a specific law that brings the consequence closer to the cause of the physical, mental, and spiritual plan of Being”, Blavatsky replies\(^24\). She admits that she does not know the reasons for the existence of this Law and that Karma is unknowable in itself. But the results of the operation of this impersonal universal law are fully understood.

The creator of the Theosophical Society emphasizes that the impersonality and universality of the Law of Karma is proven by the mystical experience of generations of hellseehers in a very long period. Blavatsky realizes that such a method runs counter to materialistic science, but places emphasis on the importance of the Laws of Reincarnation and Karma for the development of human civilization. “By its results, Karma invariably corrects human injustice and all the shortcomings of Nature. With equal impartiality, Karma punishes, and rewards. She is not interested in “rank and title”, nor can she be reconciled with prayers or otherwise. This is also a common idea for Hindus and Buddhists of Karma, emphasizes Blavatsky\(^25\).

In the endless series of births and deaths, one experiences the consequences of all the evil, negative and harmful, that he has done in his previous life. If he killed, he would be killed. If he lied, he would be lied to. Even if he did not help when asked, and the suppliants needed his help – even this inaction becomes his Karma, which he will experience on his back in the next reincarnation. When a person’s life is governed by the rules of high responsibility, ethics, compassion, kindness and compassion, he can count on a good life in his next birth. A man can continue in following lives to gain experience in various fields without having to pays for old mistakes. When he cleanses all his dependencies on bad deeds in a long process of evolution, the person reaches a merger with the Absolute, reaches the state of Nirvana. In which, according to Theosophy, he also has a choice – to remain in it or to continue to develop even more advanced rules at an even higher evolutionary level, helping and bearing responsibility for less-developed beings and societies.

In The Key to Theosophy, Helena Blavatsky explains in terms of Reincarnation and Karma why there are poor and rich. “Every major social evil, the class difference in society, gender in daily life, the unequal distribution of capital and labor – it all depends on what we briefly but accurately call Karma”\(^26\). Blavatsky is adamant that Karma is an impartial and impersonal principle that does not error in its action and which is impossible to be deceived. She states that there is individual, divisive, national Karma, and these varieties are closely intertwined, which is one of the proofs of the unity of everything existing on the planet. “Every individual environment and individual living conditions in which a person is found are nothing but relying on Karma, individually crafted in a previous life. We must not overlook the fact that every atom obeys the general law governing the whole body to which the atom belongs. Here, too, we come across the broader meaning of the Karmic law. The sum of individual karmas forms the Karma of the nation to which the respective individuality belongs. The total amount of national Karmas builds the Karma of the world. Disasters are not unique to the individual or the nation, they are more or less universal, and it is in this vast flow of personal interdependencies that the Law of Karma reveals its logical and harmonious flow”\(^27\).

Blavatsky admits that she cannot answer the question of the reasons for the Karma act, but notes: “We know how it works and we can identify and describe its actions with great precision”. “It is considered by the Theosophists the axiom that the interdependence of Mankind

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 134.


\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 135.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 134.
is the cause of what is called Distributive Karma. And it is this law that offers the solution to the great question of collective suffering and liberation from it. No man can rise above his weaknesses without elevating all, an integral part of which he is. In the same way, no one can sin and suffer as a consequence of the sin of one. There is no such thing as a Division\textsuperscript{28}, Blavatsky says.

8. Conclusion

This exposition places a more general emphasis on Reincarnation and Karma as ontological features of the theosophical view of world development. It is possible to study them – with the above mentioned extrasensory perceptions, which are possessed by an extremely small number of people, and with some existing scientific methods. These can be sociology methods – surveys, focus groups, interviews. The analysis of the obtained results should go in the direction of the socio-philosophical summary of the impact of reincarnation and Karma on society. As well as on the psychological aspects related to the personality and its development. As well as to change the character of modern civilization – making planet Earth a place without wars, without inequalities and miseries. It is a long-term vision. Maybe it is like utopian. But it is a future that depends on each person, on their development as an integral part of Unity. In this sense, the vision that Petkova offers is useful: “But to what extent in his being one has thought that if he tries to work on his senses, his perceptions of the visible – empirical world, as well as of his mental – inner world, will become more complete, dense and nuanced. This will also be the way to try to get the most out of your brain. We say to ourselves that we do not seem to have enough senses, and in fact, we humans purposefully do not use those we have fully. The center that will process our thoughts is our brain, and it will do what we provide to it as information. The periphery through and through, which will invade all imagery from and to the world, will be effected through our senses, with their sensitivity and delicacy”\textsuperscript{29}.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

References


A. D. Kaltseva – Some Social Aspects of the Secret Doctrine of Elena Blavatsky


