

REINCARNATION

by

Dr. GUSTAVE GELEY

THE FOLLOWING PAGES contain opinions on the hypothesis of Reincarnation from some of the most eminent of modern thinkers in all parts of the world. The doctrine of Reincarnation, so ably defended by the brilliant Dr. Gustave Geley, is, to quote the words of the *Introduction* to this illuminative essay, "linked to a tradition the golden thread of which can be traced for more than sixteen centuries. . . . The ancient world throbbed with this divine hope of multiple re-births, and it is a significant fact that not only has Christ not pronounced one single word against the doctrine, but on the contrary has voiced reflections which can only loyally be interpreted as being in its favour."

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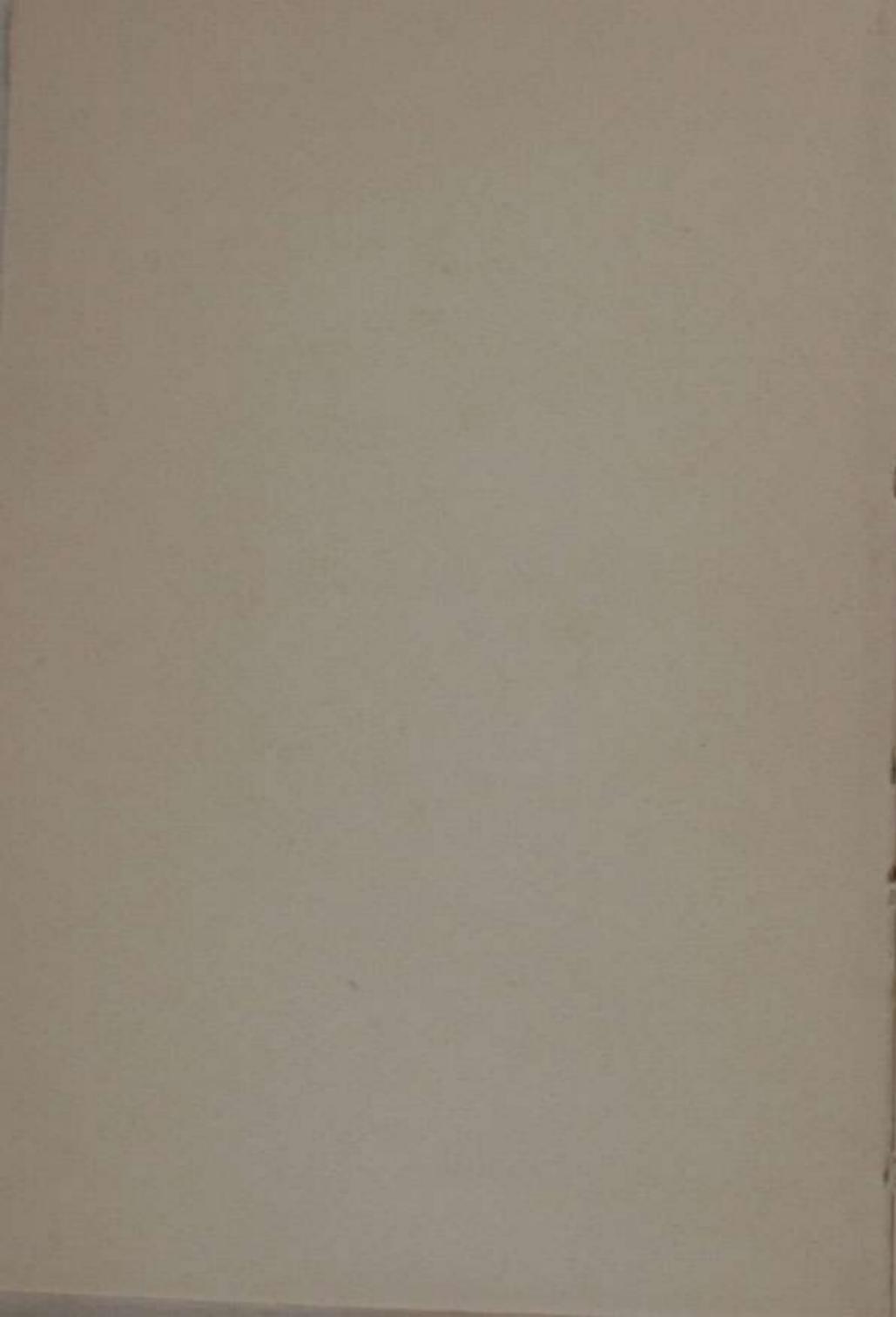
Introduction by

GABRIEL GOBRON

Translated from the French by ETHEL ARCHER

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REINCARNATION

By the same Author

FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS TO THE CONSCIOUS
ECTOPLASM AND CLAIRVOYANCE
CLAIRVOYANCE AND MATERIALIZATION
Etc., Etc.

REINCARNATION

by

DOCTOR GUSTAVE GELEY

Late Director of the Institut Metapsychique International

With an introduction by
GABRIEL GOBRON

Translated from the French by
ETHEL ARCHER

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IN order to present adequately Dr. Geley's thought to English readers, and to indicate as far as possible the school of philosophy to which he belongs, it has been found necessary to keep as closely to the original as differences of idiom permit. In a philosophical work the thought is of paramount importance, and hence must be the first consideration.

ETHEL ARCHER.

INTRODUCTION

THE WITNESS OF HISTORY TO THE TRUTH OF REINCARNATION

THE following pages contain the opinions on reincarnation of Dr. Gustave Geley (formerly director of the International Metapsychical Institute of Paris, founded by M. Jean Meyer), of M. J. Emile Marcaut, one of the most distinguished members of the French Theosophical Society, and of other eminent persons throughout the world.

Dr. Innocenzo Calderone, director and founder of the review *Filosofia della Scienza* (Palermo), author of *Libero Arbitrio Determinismo Rincarnazione* (Palermo, 1912), published (Milan, 1913) the results of a vast international questionnaire on reincarnation (the text in Italian). But the world cataclysm of 1914-1918 prevented the public from realizing to the full the significance of this remarkable document—a veritable probing to the depths of the spirit of the age—which

proved how much modern thought had in common with the thought of antiquity upon the subject of rebirths.

To make some slight amends for this ill-deserved neglect, we have collected in an appendix some other replies received by Dr. Calderone, besides that of Dr. Gustave Geley.

Dr. Gustave Geley, who perished tragically in an aviation accident, is too well known in France and elsewhere to need further introduction. Dr. Calderone does not hesitate to place the author of that veritable Bible of Reincarnation: *De l'Inconscient au Conscient*, on an equality with Myers, who, according to the apt classification of Professor Flournoy of Geneva, may be termed "the Copernicus of Experimental Spiritualism." *De l'Inconscient au Conscient* has been translated into several languages and continues to meet with much success. It is an important work, having nothing in common with those ephemeral productions which, as La Bruyère wittily remarks, are as soon forgotten as last year's calendar.

Time thrusts to oblivion works that are feeble, but immortalizes those that are worthy and true. The central idea of Dr. Geley's

work, belief in evolution through past births, is an idea as old as the world, and even to-day it is a burning question. Dr. Calderone's questionnaire has established the fact that several very influential members of the Italian and Polish clergy have openly adhered to the doctrine of successive lives. We may cite amongst others Mgr. Puecher Passavali, of the order of the Capuchins, apostolic preacher to the Holy See and Vicar of St. Peter's, Rome: the celebrated prelate Towianski; Mgrs. Falcowski and Baycowski, etc. And of celebrated Italian Catholics who have died believing in reincarnation, there is, for instance, Tancredo Canonico, Senator and President of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

And so these notabilities of the Catholic world of to-day discovered afresh the consoling and logical belief, that, in their time, had captivated such Fathers of the Church as Iamblichus, Origen, St. Jerome, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Pamphilius, and St. Girolamo.

Belief in the transmigration of souls is linked to a tradition the golden thread of which can be traced for more than sixteen centuries, throughout the vicissitudes of

history and the spiritual crises of the unenlightened ages. Reincarnation (sometimes presented to the common people under the guise of Metempsychosis) is found at the beginning of Brahminism and is the keystone of Buddhism. It is the soul of all ancient civilizations: the Hindoo *Samsara* becomes, or is, the Japanese *Kakoro*, the Orphic and Pythagorean mysteries, *the journey to the Celestial Fields* of the Egyptian religion; the *Aleen T. Gilgulah* of the Hebrews; *the Cyclè d'Abred* of the Celts, the pagan Metempsychosis, the old German belief in re-births (according to the works of Guido von Lizts), the Manichean *religion of Light* with its aerial vessels, etc.

The ancient world throbbed with this divine hope of multiple re-births, and it is a significant fact that not only has Christ not pronounced one single word against this doctrine, but on the contrary has voiced reflexions which can only loyally be interpreted as being in its favour. It is this that the aforesaid Catholic prelates have understood, indeed, we find Abbe Alta presenting St. Paul to us as one who believed in successive lives.

Primitive civilizations—as has been completely established by those of such opposite schools of thought as the Socialist Durckheim and Mgr. le Roy, Archbishop of Carie and Superieur-General of the Fathers of the Holy Ghost—believe in transmigration of the soul, together with 350 million Asiatics, and the many Theosophists, Occultists, and Spiritualists scattered to-day over the entire face of the globe. If we wished to mention the names only of all those who have turned away from the doctrine of eternal punishment as from a blasphemy, to the keen logic and calm justice of the doctrine of reincarnation, we should need whole books.

In this company of the best spirits of all times, and of all places, we are glad to number those pioneers of Spiritualism, Allan Kardec, Léon Denis, Gabriel Delanne, and Dr. Gustave Geley, to say nothing of all those yet living, who are endeavouring to draw the world once more to that grand and eternal truth, of light and of hope, of splendour and of love.

GABRIEL GOBRON,
Licencié-ès-lettres.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE subject is treated at length in: *Reincarnation*, by Papus (Dr. G. Encausse) (Rider and Co. Price 3s. 6d.). *The Great Initiates*, by Edouard Schuré (Rider and Co. Price 10s. 6d.).

Much valuable information as to the position of reincarnation in the great religions of the world, together with copious bibliographies, will be found in the articles "Transmigration" and "Soul" in *Hastings Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, and in the article "Transmigration" (of Souls) in *The Jewish Encyclopædia*.

Those acquainted with French may consult with profit *Le Problème de l'Être et de la Destinée*, by Léon Denis (Jean Meyer. Price 9 francs). *La Réincarnation*, by Gabriel Delanne (Jean Meyer. Price 9 francs). *De l'Inconscient au Conscient*, by Dr. Gustave Geley.

REPLY OF DR. GUSTAVE GELEY

ANNECY,

July 1912.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The questionnaire that your happy thought has evoked upon the subject of reincarnation, will be of immense interest in view of the indifference, ignorance, or preconceived hostility that it so often encounters; if the matter can be properly dealt with. To this end it is necessary that the persons, savants, thinkers, and philosophers, whose opinion you have asked, should take the trouble to furnish a reply, that shall be in one way studied and reflected, and in another way short and to the point.

These are, alas, somewhat difficult conditions. Those of your future collaborators who do not know, or who falsely interpret, the doctrine of successive lives, will not perhaps put forward all the efforts necessary for documenting seriously or for replying

impartially. As to the partisans of this doctrine, without too much weakening the numerous arguments which plead in favour of their ideas in all the various departments of human knowledge, it will be extremely difficult for them to condense their statements in the necessarily confined limits of the enquiry.

Personally, I must admit, I feel particularly embarrassed.

I have already expressed my opinion in numerous publications, of which several are standard works. I do not wish at the present time to shun your flattering appeal, but I must at once excuse myself on the grounds that it will be impossible for me not to repeat myself, and for the fact that I shall have but little to add to the arguments already known.

In examining the various questions which you propose to us, I shall force myself not to forget any of them, but I shall not bind myself to studying them in the order given. I shall ask you to allow me to develop my thought freely and in my own way.

You know, my dear friend, that I am a reincarnationist. I am so for three reasons. Because the doctrine of successive lives seems

to me *from the moral point of view fully satisfying, from the philosophic absolutely rational, from the scientific seemingly true, and better still, probably true.*

It is then, from this triple point of view, moral, philosophic, and scientific, that I am going to analyse and comment upon it.

The moral aspect of reincarnation is too well known to necessitate a detailed exposition here. It has its base in the celebrated phrase, *immanent justice*. This immanent justice is the result of a normal and regular play of terrestrial life.

The soul never being other than that which it makes itself in the course of its evolution, throughout its successive existences, it follows that its intelligence, character, faculties, and its good and bad instincts are its own work. It must infallibly carry with it then its own consequences.

Each of its acts, works, efforts, pains, joys, sufferings, errors, and faults has a fatal repercussion, an inevitable reaction in one or other of its existences.

There is no need then for divine judgment or supernatural sanctions. As has been very happily said, we are rewarded or punished

not for what we have done but simply by what we have done.

The natural order of reincarnation is not, be it understood, uniquely personal, it is also collective, extending itself to a family, a people, a race, etc. For a narrow solidarity necessarily relies on groups of souls brought together for one or several existences. Immanent justice commences to manifest itself more often in the course of an earthly existence taken by itself; but then it is very rarely the case that it can have been truly smooth. Seen in so restrained a manner it appears unreliable and generally disproportioned.

In a sufficiently long series of incarnations, on the contrary, it becomes perfect, mathematically perfect. The happy or unhappy chances are in effect counterbalanced, and there only remains as a definite result the proceeds of our conduct.

The moral aspect of reincarnation reposes as one sees upon a foundation that is pre-eminently clear and simple.

One immediately sees its practical consequences. It imposes, before all, work and effort; not isolated effort, the struggle for self, but communal effort: for all which

favours or retards altruistic and general evolution favours or retards that of some member of the community. Base and inferior sentiments such as hate, the spirit of vengeance, egoism, and jealousy are incompatible with the notions of communal evolution and immanent justice.

The enlightened disciple of reincarnation will avoid quite naturally every act detrimental to altruism and will aid it as far as lies in his power. Confiding in natural law, he will pardon without penalty the misdeeds of which he has been a victim. He will only regard imbeciles, wicked and criminal persons as beings of a lower grade—when they are not insane. He will resign himself to those natural and passing inequalities which are the result of the law of individual effort in evolution, but he will do his best to bring about the suppression of disproportionate inequalities, artificial divisions, and unhappy prejudices.

Finally, he will extend his kindness and pity even to animals, and he will avoid as far as possible causing them suffering or death.

Several objections have been made to the

moral aspect of reincarnation. These objections, apart from the philosophic and scientific ones which we shall examine later on, are as follows: *It has been said that forgetfulness of past lives abolishes the supposed laws.*

How can this be possible? The forgetfulness of a fact does not destroy the consequences of this fact. Moreover, forgetfulness is neither complete nor definite, but relative and momentary. Forgetfulness seemingly disappears in the case of those beings sufficiently evolved, during the phases of disincarnation. These last have then the consciousness more or less full of the past, the idea of a road already traversed, a prevision of the future consequences of their actions—good or bad. They are thus able to prepare, as far as their stage of advancement permits, their next incarnation in more favourable conditions.

Again, this forgetfulness is not arbitrary. It is actually indispensable to the soul as is death itself, to force it to constant effort, to multiple experiences, to a continuous development in and through the most varied conditions. It is necessary also for preventing

the soul from being tormented by the memory of the past; for instance, by regrets for a happy existence, or by remorse for a tortured or criminal existence.

It is conceivable, on the contrary, that in a higher stage of evolution, forgetfulness, henceforth useless and troublesome, will no longer exist. From this time onwards the past, hitherto entirely stored up in the greater consciousness, will become little by little accessible in all its fullness. The conscious and subconscious will be no longer isolated and distinct. Everything which is contained in the last (memory of the past or transcendent faculties) will be directly accessible to the soul normally and regularly.

Another objection made to the theory of reincarnation is based upon the unhappiness of beings too little evolved for this unhappiness to be considered as a law. "What crime," it may be asked, "could a horse have been able to commit in some past life, that is overwhelmed with blows by a drunken brute, or a dog tortured by a vivisector?" In this reasoning there is a fundamental error. Evil is not necessarily the law of the past. It is, on the contrary, in the actual stage of that

evolution, very much more frequently the consequence of the generally inferior level of that stage.

To see systematically in the sufferings of any soul whatsoever the consequence of acts done in the past, will be then for the reincarnationist a very faulty piece of logic. What one is permitted to affirm, on the contrary, is that the true law, that of immanent justice, is always rigorously proportioned to the degree of free will, that is to say, to the intellectual and moral level of the Soul.

This law does not weigh heavily save on such souls as are sufficiently advanced. It weighs so much the more so, the further they are advanced, because in all probability their deliberate conduct will be, in proportion to their enlightenment, a greater and greater influence upon their progress and their condition of life.

I pass now to the examination of the *philosophy of reincarnation*.

This philosophy, more abstract and less familiar than the moral, is more frequently misunderstood. It is nevertheless no less satisfying.

One might sum up in a phrase by saying:

that it *overthrows all the difficulties opposed to idealism by materialism, all the objections made in the name of logic to the notion of survival.* The first great objection made in all times to the hopes of traditional idealism reposes upon the undeniable fact of evil. There is a story that the Japanese replied to the first Christian missionaries who were trying to convert them: "How can we believe all that you tell us of the attributes of Divinity. It is one of two things, either God has not wished to punish evil or else He has not been able to. If He has not wished to do so, He is not sovereignly good. If He has not been able to He is not all-powerful!"

This naïve reasoning is in reality irrefutable despite all the subtlety of the theologians.

The problem of evil has always been a source of inextricable embarrassment for the exponents of the Theistic and providential doctrines. In vain have they tried to find the solution, from the orthodox and infantine conception of original sin, to the audacious and heretical conception of the creator of evil of the Manicheans.

They have miserably failed.

For the philosophy of reincarnation, on

the contrary, the problem is one of extreme simplicity. It no longer places at the base of evolution sovereign justice and sovereign kindness, incompatible with the fact of universal evil; it no longer relies upon an almighty intelligence which it cannot discover in the infinite slowness, the gropings of manifest accumulated errors, in order to arrive at a result both mediocre and imperfect. It no longer makes of supreme intelligence, justice, and goodness a divine synthesis, extrinsic and creative. It only regards this divine synthesis as a progressive conquest, as the splendid crowning of a slow and painful evolution.

Thus the divine idea, in force in all the physical and psychic manifestations of the universal life, will tend to realize itself in the course of evolution; at first latently, then in broader outlines, then more and more actively and in evidence.

Evil has not then its origin in the will, powerlessness or improvidence of a responsible Creator. *Evil is simply the measure of inferiority of worlds and of souls, or the law of the past.*

In both cases it is bound to diminish in

proportion to evolutionary progress, and proportionately to this progress. In both cases it is useful; it is the principal factor of our advancement. Evil is the goad which punishes us if we remain stationary in our present stage, and which by its painful reactions conducts us or puts us back upon the right road.

But, mark this well, evil so understood has only a relative character, transitory and always reparable.

If these conceptions are true, real evil no longer exists, in the absolute sense of the word; injustice has vanished from the universe, and everywhere, realized or in sight of realization, is a higher ideal of goodness, justice, solidarity, and of love: an ideal hastening on for all individuals the certainty of future happiness in the endless development of the eternal consciousness. The other philosophic objections made to dogmatic spiritualism have no further value in face of the doctrine of reincarnation than the problem of evil. They collapse of themselves.

I. The objection based upon the extraordinary and absurd idea of an immortal

soul, but having had nevertheless a commencement, coming out of nothingness, and destined after a brief existence to rewards and punishments without end.

For reincarnation, the soul is not immortal, it is eternal, and destined to an endless evolution.

For reincarnation, there are no punishments without end: there are only fatal and transitory laws, assured by the inexorable laws of evolution.

For reincarnation, in short, supreme happiness will not be the privilege of the rare "élite," it will be the possession of all. It will not be the result of a supernatural grace, nor of empty ritualistic practices. The inevitable consequence of the diminishing progress of evil coinciding with the indefinite enlargement of the field of conscience, evil will be able to be conquered little by little in a struggle that will be less and less painful.

II. The objection based upon the no less extraordinary and absurd idea of an immaterial soul. For reincarnation, intelligence, energy and matter are not conceivable

separately, they are only modes of the universal substance on the path of evolution.

III. The objection based upon the gross and traditional conception, so well exploited by materialism, of the central position of the earth, and the central position of mankind.

From this point of view reincarnation is in accord with astronomy, which shows us our earth as a mediocre star, without special importance, and tends to admit a great number of inhabited worlds. It is in accord equally, with anatomy and comparative physiology, which proves that nothing essentially distinguishes man from the lower animals, and that the idea of a soul reserved to man alone is scientifically untenable.

“Immortality,” evidently, could not have commenced at a particular phase of evolution, that of the appearance of the human race. The process of incarnation and disincarnation is not a privilege reserved for mankind alone, *it is the consequence of a natural and general law, embracing all which thinks, which lives and which is.*

For this reason the opposition made to the doctrine of reincarnation by certain

representatives of the philosophy of monism is both absurd and untenable.

Without wishing to go into the question of high metaphysics, still evidently immature, I shall not trouble to point out the easy and possible agreement of reincarnation with naturalistic monism, which it happily completes.

The soul, that is to say, that which is "*essential*" in the being, must be an individualised monad of the one principle. A divine particle on the path of conquering its divinity—that is to say, the perfect consciousness of itself and of all—it will raise itself in order to pass over the inferior kingdoms, so as to acquire, little by little, its greatest development in the human states, and the superhuman states of which we are still ignorant.

The manifested universe will thus only be composed of eternal monads, and of ephemeral groupings of eternal monads. The processes of incarnation and the reverse will correspond to the building up or the rupture of the ephemeral groupings.

It is in and through these successive groupings that evolution will build itself up con-

jointly and separately, evolution having as a result the passage of potential and realized energies; the acquisition and development of the conscience, which epitomises and condenses all the potentialities.

One sees, then, that the doctrine of reincarnation abolishes all the difficulties opposed to idealism, whether it be in the name of morality or of philosophy.

I now come to the *scientific point of view*. It is obviously the most important.

However beautiful and satisfying reincarnationist ideas may be, they will not suffice without bringing to the modern mind the support of scientific proofs.

What in reality makes the idea of reincarnation principally attractive is that it is not considered, and is not able to be considered to-day as the product of revelation or an a priori teaching: but is simply the result of a scientific probability, a probability which, sooner or later, I am sure, will become a magnificent certainty.

As I have already done when treating of moral and philosophic presumptions, I will at first condense in a phrase the scientific proofs.

Reincarnation is probably true because :

1st. *It is in agreement with all our actual scientific knowledge without being in contradiction with any of it.*

2nd. *It gives the key to a crowd of psychological enigmas.*

3rd. *It relies upon a positive demonstration.*

Let us study these three affirmations in succession.

1st. *The philosophy of reincarnation agrees with all our actual scientific knowledge.*

I shall not insist upon this point. I have already shown how this philosophy agrees with astronomy, natural history, geology, palæontology, anatomy, comparative physiology, etc. One will search vainly in our heaped-up knowledge for a serious argument to oppose it.

But what is most striking in this declaration is the agreement of reincarnation with evolution. This agreement is so perfect that most of the inherent difficulties to the doctrine of many lives will soon seemingly be resolved by a knowledge of the theory of reincarnation.

Naturalists already find themselves forced

to admit that there are unknown factors in evolution more powerful than natural selection and the influence of environment.

These essential factors will be revealed to us by the study of the soul's evolution side by side with organic evolution, by the knowledge of the true nature of the Soul—of its principal constituents still hidden.

2nd. *The philosophy of reincarnation furnishes the key to a crowd of psychological enigmas.*

The principal enigmas are:

The innateness of the chief faculties and capacities.

Talent and genius.

The considerable psychic inequalities that manifest themselves between those who are neighbours through accident of birth and of life, especially between compatriots and parents: between brothers, even between twins born and brought up under identical conditions.

The enormous paradoxical differences between physical and psychic heredity, etc.

What explanation has classic psycho-physiology proffered to these riddles? Derisory

explanations, reducing themselves to *demi-hypotheses, not having begun, even, to submit themselves to demonstration*. It has spoken of variations of the cerebral tissue, which it declares imperceptible and inappreciable, of unperceived causes, of various influences, pathological or otherwise, during life in the womb, of conditions ignored by generation or heredity, of complicated genealogical formations, etc. In short, nothing precise, nothing positive. It is the bankruptcy of classic biology. With the theory of reincarnation, on the other hand, obscurity at once vanishes.

The above enigmas have their explanation in the plurality of lives.

Ideas and innate faculties are the acquisitions of the past, acquisitions that are sooner or later accessible to the Soul, provided that organic conditions are more or less favourable.

Psychic heredity exists perhaps, but it is only the very attenuated consequence of physical heredity. Actually, character and the faculties which the soul brings over from birth, are above all the product of his own evolution. One can understand from thence how occasionally, faculties and innate ideas are able to manifest at a very early hour,

even before the complete development of the cerebral organs. One at once understands *infant prodigies*. I know quite well that it has been objected to this that infant prodigies, as often as not, have only been premature, and have rarely attained as adults what they promised as children. That is perfectly true, but it proves nothing. "Infant prodigies" are not necessarily infants of genius, but the idea of acquisitions from the past plainly manifesting themselves, I repeat, before the complete development of the brain, gives the simplest explanation apart from the exclusive explanation of their precocity. Moreover, if precocity is not always the mark of genius it is none the less at times the indication of it. Mozart and Pascal, only to cite the best-known examples, were infant prodigies before becoming men of genius.

"There was a man," wrote Chateaubriand, in his *Genie du Christianisme*, "who at two years of age, with strokes and circles, created mathematics; who at six had produced the most learned treatise on conic sections that had been seen since antiquity; who at nineteen reduced to machinery what before had existed mentally; who at twenty-three

demonstrated the phenomena of the force of gravity, and destroyed one of the greatest errors of ancient physics; who at an age when other men are painfully commencing to be born, having completely gone over the circle of human knowledge perceived its emptiness and turned his thoughts towards religion; who from that moment until his death, which occurred in his thirty-ninth year, though always suffering and infirm, yet fixed the language that Racine and Bossuet spoke, and presented the model for the most perfect humour, as also for the strongest reasoning. Finally, who, in the short intervals of his sickness, solved by abstraction one of the most important problems of geometry, and committed to writing thoughts which belonged as much to God as to man. This terrifying genius was named Pascal."

Official psychologists can parade as much as they like their little physiological hypotheses, calling upon "unperceived causes" and "obscure influences," they will never manage to explain the "frightful genius" of Pascal, nor genius in general. They may appeal as much as they like to morbid causes, they will gain nothing but opprobrium

for having introduced or tolerated in contemporary science the most vain, foolish, and monstrous of hypotheses. They can search well hereditary conditions, which as often as not are disproportioned, undiscoverable, and really non-existent; they will only deceive themselves. In the name of common sense, in the face of evidence, we shall reply to them: "The existence and importance of your pretended 'obscure influences' are so little demonstrated that you are unable even to define them exactly.

"The hypothesis of morbidity only drives you into a blind alley, to the untenable contradiction of declaring that physical power means health, but that mental power means sickness!

"As to heredity, its rôle is also dispensed with and secondary in psychology, however important and predominant it may be in physiology. Genius and the high intellectual faculties do not come down through our ancestors any more than they are transmitted to our descendants.

"These are facts, and facts of everyday knowledge. It is useless for you to hurl yourselves against them.

“In stepping aside from the already accepted hypothesis of reincarnation, you can only put in its place a formidable question mark !”

It remains for me to discuss the third argument of the scientific order, that of *positive demonstration*. These demonstrations are borrowed, as are the foregoing presumptions, from psychology, but from psychology such as results from the most recent discoveries and researches, from *integral psychology*, embracing at the same time normal, abnormal, and supranormal psychology.

Integral psychology proves two things :

- (a) *The theoretical possibility of reincarnations.*
- (b) *Their probability.*

A. *The theoretical possibility of reincarnations agrees with the evidence of modern works upon the subconscious and cryptomnesia.*

The important part that the subconscious plays in the higher workings of the mind has been known for a long while. One has even known of the existence of cryptomnesia. One knew that numerous memories, apparently forgotten, were nevertheless not lost

and were able suddenly to reappear beneath the influence of emotion, danger, illness, and so on. But recent psychic discoveries have proved that the importance of the subconscious and cryptomnesia were infinitely greater than we had believed. Researches upon the mechanism of genius, and study of the case of multiple personality in the same person have shown the frightful complexity of the unconscious.

Then there is the study of hypnotism, somnambulism, and above all the study of mediumistic phenomena which has established its predominant position in abnormal and supranormal psychology.

It has actually been proved that an essential part of the thinking self—a portion which appears more and more vast and complicated—escapes to a great extent (in the normal life) from the sphere of the conscience and the will, and remains hidden and latent.

From thence the chief objection formerly made to reincarnation falls of itself—the *objection of forgetfulness*. Nothing is easier to understand than that cryptomnesia extends itself beyond our present existence. Nothing is more logical or rational than to suppose

that the subconscious, so mysterious and profound, contains in itself the memory and acquisitions of past lives.

B. *Their probability.*

From this it will be easy to establish that reincarnation is not only possible, but that it is probable. I say probable, I do not say certain. Up to the present no experiment has been made sufficiently direct enough to prove the reality of past lives.

The experiences of De Rochas on regression of the memory are only sufficient to encourage further research. They are in no sense conclusive. It seems impossible to eliminate mental suggestion on the part of the operator when face to face with the subject, or of auto-suggestion on the part of the latter. The experiments of De Rochas do not so much offer a precise proof as a unanimous testimony on the part of the subjects to the truth of reincarnation. All, irrespective of birth, education, intellectual grade, and religious principles, declared spontaneously that they had passed through other lives. Upon this idea they build very often romances of varying worth, but usually

unverifiable. But the fact of the unanimity and spontaneity of their assertions relative to the plurality of their existences is by no means negligible. It proves at least the reality of a profound instinct, of an intuition resting without doubt upon a serious base.

Apart from these experiences of the regression of the memory, some observations have been recently published that tend to prove reincarnation. Readers of philosophical journals know them well, and some are indeed impressive, but there are too few to carry conviction. An even greater caution ought to be observed in regard to those facts which concern the "déjà vu," the personal impressions, and vague reminiscences of past lives that so many sensitives profess to retain.

These reminiscences have their importance, certainly, for those who experience them, but their "objective" and demonstrative value is obviously nil.

In default of a direct demonstration, which will be the work of the future, reincarnation sustains its character of probability by indirect proofs that are firmly established. One can outline them as follows:

The study of psychology as a whole, and

especially of "metapsychism," reveals the presence in the self of psychic and dynamic principles of a higher order which pertain both to the subconscious and the exterior lives. *These principles appear as wholly independent of organic functioning.*

They constitute a complex synthesis of which the constituent elements only issue from a small part of the acquisitions of the conscious personality and of conscious existence. These constituent elements have their origin in a double evolution. An earthly evolution in the successive existences corresponding to organic evolution, developing the normal faculties; an extra-terrestrial evolution for the phases of disincarnation, developing the supranormal faculties, such as thought-reading, clairvoyance, etc. These last generally remain latent in the phases of incarnation. It is the theory known as the *subliminal consciousness or the subconscious self.*

I shall not dream of recalling here, even briefly, the logical basis of this theory, nor of restating its proofs. I shall content myself by referring the reader to the original works; reminding him that this conception is logical,

that it springs naturally from the facts without being in contradiction with any of them, and that it presents a very strong and impressive series of proofs in its favour, which are sufficient to explain all the obscure phenomena of integral psychology. Finally, that it has not been refuted.

Professor Morselli, however, hostile to this theory has dared to declare :

“ This hypothesis (that of the subconscious self) is constructed with great dialectic skill ; it is certainly the most serious endeavour I know that has been attempted in this direction.” Hence, from this time onwards, one is authorised to ask why this eminent psychologist has not tried point by point to refute this so “ serious ” attempt at explanation. It is no refutation if one contents oneself by affirming, a priori, the organic origin of subliminal and supraliminal forces. Facts, logical reasoning, and rational induction protest against this gratuitous affirmation.

In short, official science, by the organ of its representatives, still comports itself in regard to the obscure phenomena of abnormal psychology as it comports itself to the obscure phenomena of normal psychology. It hugs

to itself half-theories, vague half-suppositions, incorrect and unproven.

Morselli speaks to us of "forces still unknown, of powers of the human organism still undetermined, of faculties still undefinable, and incomprehensible, etc."¹

These nebulous theories, besides others purely verbal, cannot be opposed (at least by a refutation previously in vogue) to the full precise documented and complete theory of the subliminal consciousness or the subliminal self.

We may, then, logically be permitted to conclude: There exists an hypothesis which is in accord with all the ideas of modern science, and which on the sole condition of being accepted in full, *explains all the obscure phenomena of normal, abnormal, supranormal, and even of pathological psychology. This same hypothesis overthrows, besides, difficulties of the moral and even of the metaphysical order, which, since the beginning of the human race, have paraded themselves before the conscience and intelligence.*

It is then surely worthy of consideration, and it is probably true, conforming in its

¹ *Annals of Psychic Science*, May, 1907.

outlines, at least, to the criterion of Russell Wallace. "There is no more convincing proof of the truth of a general theory than the possibility of making it agree with new facts, and of interpreting by its means phenomena hitherto considered as inexplicable anomalies."

That official psychologists do not admit with enthusiasm the theory of reincarnation—revolutionary despite its luminous simplicity—that they hold themselves in reserve, that is perfectly natural, understandable and right. But that in spite of careful works made upon the subject, in spite of bundles of solid proofs established by these works, they disdain and systematically refuse to discuss it even as an hypothetical study; this is simply unwarrantable. Besides, this attitude will soon become an impossibility for them. In the words of a well-known saying, "*Truth is on the march and nothing has power to stop her.*"

One more question remains for me to discuss. You ask your collaborators, my dear friend, what is their opinion on the social importance of the doctrine of reincarnation, how it agrees with the spirit of religion, and its probable rôle in the future evolution of

mankind. Before replying, it seems to me that a short glance over history is indispensable. A knowledge of its rôle in the past is necessary in order to properly understand what is reserved for it in the future.

The main lines of this teaching are as follows: The idea of reincarnation, according to documents which we possess, is general at the commencement of human evolution. It is the doctrine common to humanity in its infancy. But soon the idea becomes darkened, loses itself, and is only held by a small minority. It is only much later that it reappears, called without doubt to predominate once more in a highly evolved humanity. Once again the theory of "extremes" is proved.

The cycle of evolution is very easy to understand.

The acceptance of the reincarnationist idea, more or less precise, or more or less deformed by various superstitions, by humanity in its infancy (and still more in our own day by the savage peoples) is the consequence of an instinct answering to reality, of recollections not yet troubled by theological or philosophical conceptions.

" I dimly sense that I have always known
That I have lived in countless lives before,"
wrote the poet Jean Lahore.

What the highly evolved poet felt through
intuition primitive man feels by instinct.
His candid psychology allows him to feel
without trouble that he has always seen and
that he has lived in forms without number.

*But the idea of reincarnations is at one and
the same time, simple in its morality and very
complicated in its philosophy for mentally
evolving humans.*

In fact, its true philosophy has been for
a long while inaccessible to the masses, and
the perspective, badly envisaged, of an end-
less evolution of limitless efforts, is not satis-
fying to the plain or average man.

Its morality, on the other hand, only offers
him a precarious support, for the simple
notion of immanent justice is not sufficient
for bridling his disorderly and powerful
passions.

Mysticism, supernatural theories, have
then a stronger attraction. The conception
of a mysterious other world, with laws of
perfect happiness or endless sufferings, has
more influence, so much so that it is con-

sidered an unquestionable and indisputable truth.

For both these reasons, moral and philosophical, the founders of religion, the teachers of humanity, and the prophets, have quickly turned themselves away, through conscious reflexion or subconscious intuition, from the idea of reincarnation. When they have not forbidden it, they have at least avoided teaching it to the crowd, and they have substituted in its place, the crude but more striking conception of creation *out of nothing*, of gods or a god all-powerful, of a last judgment, of heaven and hell.

One need not fear to say that these teachers in their time were not wrong. The idea of reincarnation, I repeat, exists; but *to be properly understood, in order to acquire the whole of its practical value*, a greater development of conscience and intelligence is necessary.

It is not, mark this well, simply a spiritual view, it is a fact of experience. A very simple example will serve to explain my thought.

An evolved reincarnationist will never notice the artificial divisions of humanity,

and will only see in them manifestations of a rudimentary civilization that must one day disappear. For him, evil will be above all, as I have said, the result of a generally inferior stage of evolution, of worlds, and of men. He will strive above all then, wherever possible, to suppress and diminish the evil.

The primitive reincarnationist, on the contrary, will willingly draw from his teaching a different conclusion. He will decide that if a man, or group of men, suffer, maybe, from defective social or political conditions, if it is proof of anything at all, it is the inevitable result of faults committed in one or other of their past lives.

He will not seek to ameliorate, then, this unhappy situation, considered by him as a deserved punishment, both useful and inevitable. One understands, moreover, how it is that Hindoo reincarnationists harshly maintain the shameful rule of castes, perpetuating the same in ignorance and misery.

The example of India is typical in other respects as showing the relative inferiority of the reincarnationist idea with men of an inferior breed or level. There are living there three hundred million souls of the same

race, submitted to the same surrounding conditions but of different religions. Now, according to unanimous reports of English governors, there is no doubt (not to mention the predominant religion) that the mass of Hindoo Mahometans are in no way superior to the Hindoo Brahmins. The morality of these last is simply a misunderstood caricature of true reincarnationism, and their philosophy is veiled and darkened by the most superstitious practices it is possible to imagine.

The example is typical and conclusive.

Revealed religions, have then, from all evidence, played an indispensable rôle in evolution; their naïve and simple ideas were necessary in the long pre-scientific phase of this evolution.

Moreover, one should not be astonished at the progressive dimness of the reincarnationist idea during the first great stages of human civilization. Admitted still, at least as a secret doctrine, by the chief religions of pagan antiquity, it seems to have been definitely wiped out with the coming of Christianity and Islamism.

It remained, nevertheless, the privilege of a small number, but a privilege absolutely

hidden. The isolated thinkers who wished to teach it in the West were either misunderstood or else martyred, like Giordano Bruno.

The doctrine from that time onwards was only transmitted through initiation, more or less distorted and adulterated, drowned beneath superfluous teachings or hidden beneath mysterious symbols. It was the predominant doctrine of secret societies.

But, evolution following its course, the first generalizations of scientific philosophy and the progress of the human will, have come in our days to disturb these dogmas, and to show their emptiness. Materialism seemed about to triumph. Then the idea of reincarnation appeared in full daylight and was immediately adopted by the élite.

In the course of the nineteenth century, before there was any attempt, even of positive proof, many thinkers were reincarnationists. Many, for personal reasons, avoided stating the fact in public, but others were more courageous. Amongst the philosophers, Fourier, Pierre Leroux, Esquinos, Godin, Pezzani, Charles Bonet, Jean Reynaud, Schopenhauer: amongst the writers, Henri Martin, Michelet, Georges Sand,

Lamartine, Théophile Gautier, Balzac, Gérard de Nerval, Victor Hugo, Sardou. Others besides whose memory escapes me at the moment, believed firmly in reincarnation, and did not disguise the fact.

Since the beginning of metaphysical researches, the number of partisans of the doctrine increases regularly and continuously. (I avoid citing names which are known to everybody.) We are, in effect, at the dawn of a third phase of evolution—the phase of scientific philosophy.

The theory of reincarnation, with its well-understood train of metaphysical consequences, both moral and social, will repose in the future upon a base that is firm and henceforth unshakeable.

But, and this truth should be proclaimed from the house-tops, under pain of a recoil of which the consequences for humanity will be absolutely destructive, it must flee without reserve from the tyranny of pretended teachings, based upon pretended revelations and pretended initiations.

It will triumph the more so over materialism and dogmatism, inasmuch as it will only make use of the positive method, *this last-*

named being the only one capable of realizing the indispensable, rich, and harmonious union between intuition on the one hand and experiment and reason on the other. One cannot too much insist, in fact, upon the necessity of not separating in the search for truth these essential factors of all progress, both in the moral and material realm.

Observation, experiment, and rational deduction are generally of little value when not guided by or associated with intuitive ideas. For the most part, great discoveries have been in the minds of men of genius before being realized. Great hypotheses have always preceded demonstrations and verifications.

This is true. But on the other hand, intuition alone is quite powerless. When it professes to do without the help of reason or experience it is fatally condemned to remain of no account, without weight or influence, or to sink beneath a mass of contradictions. The abuses of the intuition are most serious, less easily reparable than the abuses of reason. One owes to them the variety, and in consequence inanity of a priori systems of philosophy, and the variety and inanity of occult doctrines.

The intuitive method alone leads purely and simply to mysticism, or rather, in spite of glittering paradoxes, one cannot distinguish it from mysticism.

Moreover, one is forced to say, certain reincarnationist schools of thought are still lamentably impregnated with this mysticism, imbued with the old traditions of *grimoires* of magic or the atavistic spirit of the theological method.

They have still their secret doctrine, their dogmas, priests, magi, and initiates. They have even in the other world their "Lords of Karma," their demi-gods, and their angels who are more or less *laic*!

One of these schools, by the mouth of its great prophetess, comes solemnly to announce to the world the advent of a new Messiah!

This time the limits of decorum have been passed, and our right and duty is to cry "Halt." At the risk of saddening believers of these neo-religions (otherwise eminently respectable), and ignoring friendships and personal sympathies, we dare to say to them, "we wish neither to equivocate nor compromise. There is no agreement possible between your methods and ours. The

extravagances of which you have been the dupes, could only, if the absurd propaganda of your masters had had any success, have set back the future of the reincarnationist philosophy, which we value quite as much as you yourselves.

"The era of revelations and of prophecies is closed for ever. There is no room in the modern mind for an out-of-date mysticism which henceforth becomes merely injurious."

"The definite work of moral and mental emancipation can only depend upon researches upon the true nature of the Soul, and upon its destiny, which are strictly and exclusively scientific."

"The philosophy of the future will be simple, clear, and splendid, the *philosophy of science.*"

DR. GUSTAVE GELEY.

APPENDIX

FURTHER OPINIONS EXPRESSED UPON DR. CALDERONE'S QUESTIONNAIRE ON REINCARNATION

"A law of the soul's evolution, which through the unlimited phases of its becoming, finishes by attaining a perfect and personal will."

DR. INNOCENZO CALDERONE,
Director de "Filosofia Scienza."

"If Mgr. Passavali has gone further than certain theologians, what of that? Is astronomy to blame when in order to further its researches it makes use of a powerful telescope instead of a pair of spectacles?"

ATTILIO BEGEY.

"Reincarnation is truly a Christian doctrine reserved for this present age; one of those gospel ideas which God has hidden beneath a veil of mystery and is revealing little by little to an enlightened mankind, to those souls who stand in need of it."

SENATOR TANCREDO CANONICO,
President of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

“ To me the theory of reincarnation seems well worth accepting.”

DR. J. MAXWELL,
Procureur-General of the Court of Bordeaux.

“ Without doubt reincarnation will have the most far-reaching moral consequences, according to whether more or less of good has predominated in previous lives.”

C. D. ZURETTI,
Professor at the University of Geneva.

“ Reincarnation will mean the re-establishment of a heaven and a hell, no longer transcendent but immanent. It will be the triumph of justice and virtue through means of our actions.”

A. FERRIÈRE,
Professor at the University of Geneva.

“ In his writings on successive lives Guiseppe Mazzini has set forth in a most simple and convincing fashion the moral and social value of the doctrine of reincarnation.”

FRANCESCO PORRO,
Professor at the University of Genoa.

“ Amongst all the sages of the East and West who have held this doctrine must be numbered Dante Alighieri, who believed himself to be a reincarnation of the Emperor Trajan.”

PAOLO VISANI SCOZZI,
Doctor of Florence.

" Perhaps the most outstanding fact in favour of reincarnation is the existence of mathematical prodigies amongst whom are children from 3-10 years of age."

GUISEPPE DI GIORGI,
Engineer, Palermo.

" Infant prodigies have within them the germ of a faculty that was over-developed in their previous life, and which in the present life rapidly asserts itself."

CHARLES LANCELIN,
Author of " Occultism and Science."

" The best and oldest of all beliefs."

SCHOPENHAUER,
*The philosopher and author of
" Recollections of Occult Sciences."*

" The doctrine of reincarnation and of successive lives is the only one which casts a vivid light on the problem of human destiny. Without it life presents nothing but contradictions, uncertainties, and shadows. Reincarnation alone explains the infinite variety of characters, points of view, and environments."

LÉON DENIS,
The Apostle of Spiritualism.

“ There was never a belief more beautiful, more just, more pure, more moral, richer, more consoling, and, up to a certain point, seemingly more true.”

MAURICE MAETERLINCK,
Author of "Death."

“ The Reverend Mr. Forbes relates the story of a clergyman, who when visiting a Roman fortress, stated that he could fully remember having been in command there in Roman times.”

VICENZO TUMMOLO,
Professor at the University.

“ In the Gnostic Gospel, *Pistis Sophia*, one comes across many allusions to the idea of rebirths. Synesius, Bishop of Ptolomais (350-431) believed in it.”

R. G. MACBEAN,
British Consul in Sicily.

“ Amongst the Fathers of the Church Origen has given clearest teaching upon the pre-existence of the soul.”

E. IZARD,
Palace of the Prince, Monaco.

“ How clear the words of Plato appear. ‘ To learn is but to remember ’.”

DECIO CALVERI,
Rome.

"More or less obvious traces can be found in Franklin, Victor Hugo, Goethe, Fichte, Schelling, Lessing, and Hunie, who declares that reincarnation is 'the only doctrine of immortality' worthy to be taken into consideration by a philosopher."

M. ANTONIO TARANTO,
Judge of the Court of Palermo.

"As a matter of fact there have always been cultured ecclesiastics who have believed, and who to-day believe, in the theory of reincarnation."

ENRICO CARRERAS,
Rome.

"It is one of the most 'profound and original doctrines that religious thought has ever conceived' (Fouillée), and one that 'only cowardly thinkers could reject as absurd' (Huxley)."

LUIGI NOLA PITTI,
Editor of the Review
"Filosofia della Scienza."

"Not only is there nothing anti-scientific in this theory, but it agrees with the great doctrine of *monism* even to the point of its being possible to confound the two."

C. DE VESME,
Author of "The History of
Experimental Spiritualism."

"Reincarnation is a theory that is neither self-contradictory nor paradoxical. It agrees

with much of ascertained fact, rests upon observation and experiment, and has every claim to scientific recognition."

GABRIEL DELANNE,

*Engineer of the Central School, Author of
"Documents for the study of Reincarnation."*

"Reincarnation says to all men, 'Life is the time to sow. Sow now all that you wish to reap later. For justice is a veritable fact, and everything that you do has value for the future.'"

PIERRE CORNILLIER,

Author of "La Survivance Humaine."

"The doctrine of Reincarnation agrees perfectly and sublimely with the demands of expiation or of reparation, and with the justice and love of the Divine Author of our Souls."

A CATHOLIC PRIEST

(known to Dr. Calderone), D.D.

