

Karma-Nemesis, Adrasteia-Themis



Quick overview of the main ideas¹

Karma-Nemesis is no more than the spiritual effect of causes produced and forces awakened into activity by our own actions. It is a law of occult dynamics that

. . . a given amount of energy expended on the spiritual or astral plane is productive of far greater results than the same amount expended on the physical objective plane of existence.

This Law — whether Conscious or Unconscious — predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in Eternity, truly, for it is Eternity itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is Action itself.

Intimately, or rather indissolubly, connected with Karma, is the law of rebirth, or of the reincarnation of the same spiritual individuality in a long, almost interminable, series of personalities.

With the early Greeks, Nemesis was no goddess, but a morel feeling rather, the barrier to evil and immorality. He who transgresses it commits a sacrilege in the eyes of the gods, and is pursued by Nemesis. But, with time, that “feeling” was deified, and its personification became an ever-fatal and punishing goddess. Therefore, if we would connect Karma with Nemesis, it has to be done in the triple character of the latter, viz., as Nemesis, Adrasteia, and Themis. For, while the latter is the goddess of Universal Order and Harmony, who, like Nemesis, is commissioned to repress every excess, and keep man within the limits of Nature and righteousness under severe penalty, Adrasteia — “the inevitable” — represents Nemesis as the immutable effect of causes created by man himself. Nemesis, as the daughter of Dikē, is the equitable goddess reserving her wrath for those alone who are maddened with pride, egoism, and impiety. In short, while Nemesis is a mythological, exoteric goddess, or Power, personified and anthropomorphised in its various aspects, Karma is a highly philosophical truth, a most divine noble expression of the primitive intuition of man concerning Deity.

T. T.

¹ Compiled from *The Secret Doctrine*, by the Series Editor.

Life would become unbearable, if one had to believe in a god created by man's unclean fancy, when the will of man masquerades as the Will of God.

Part 1

From *The Secret Doctrine*, I pp. 642-44.

The Grand Cycle includes the progress of mankind from the appearance of primordial man of ethereal form. It runs through the inner cycles of his (man's) progressive evolution from the ethereal down to the semi-ethereal and purely physical: down to the redemption of man from his *coat of skin* and matter, after which it continues running its course downward and then upward again, to meet at the culmination of a Round, when the Manvantaric Serpent "swallows its tail" and seven minor cycles are passed. These are the great Racial Cycles which affect equally all the nations and tribes included in that special Race; but there are minor and national as well as tribal cycles within those, which run independently of each other. They are called in the Eastern esotericism the *Karmic* cycles. In the West, since Pagan Wisdom has been repudiated as having grown from and been developed by the dark powers supposed to be at constant war and in opposition to the little tribal Jehovah — the full and awful significance of the Greek NEMESIS (or Karma) has been entirely forgotten. Otherwise Christians would have better realized the profound truth that Nemesis is without attributes; that while the dreaded goddess is absolute and immutable as a Principle, it is we ourselves — nations and individuals — who propel her to action and give the impulse to its direction. KARMA-NEMESIS is the creator of nations and mortals, but once created, it is they who make of her either a fury or a rewarding Angel. Yea —

Wise are they who worship Nemesis.¹

— as the *chorus* tells Prometheus. And as unwise they, who believe that the goddess may be propitiated by whatever sacrifices and prayers, or have her wheel diverted from the path it has once taken. "The triform Fates and ever-mindful Furies" are her attributes only on earth, and begotten by ourselves. There is no return from the paths she cycles over; yet those paths are of our own making, for it is we, collectively or individually, who prepare them. Karma-Nemesis is the synonym of PROVIDENCE, minus *design*, goodness, and every other *finite* attribute and qualification, so unphilosophically attributed to the latter. An Occultist or a philosopher will not speak of the goodness or cruelty of Providence; but, identifying it with Karma-Nemesis, he will teach that nevertheless it guards the good and watches over them in this, as in future lives; and that it punishes the evildoer — aye, even to his seventh rebirth. So long, in short, as the effect of his having thrown into perturbation even the smallest atom in the Infinite World of Harmony, has not been finally readjusted. For the only decree of Karma — an eternal and immutable decree — is absolute Harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we

¹ [Æschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 957] Who *dread* Karma-Nemesis would be better.

work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or break them.

Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways — which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate; while another sees in them the action of blind Fatalism; and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them — would surely disappear, if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence." We cut these numerous windings in our destinies daily with our own hands, while we imagine that we are pursuing a track on the royal high road of respectability and duty, and then complain of those ways being so intricate and so dark. We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making, and the riddles of life that *we will not* solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life. If one breaks the laws of Harmony, or, as a theosophical writer expresses it, "the laws of life," one must be prepared to fall into the chaos one has oneself produced. For, according to the same writer, "the only conclusion one can come to is that these laws of life are their own avengers; and consequently that every avenging Angel is only a typified representation of their reaction."

Therefore, if anyone is helpless before these immutable laws, it is not ourselves, the artificers of our destinies, but rather those angels, the guardians of harmony. Karma-Nemesis is no more than the (spiritual) dynamical effect of causes produced and forces awakened into activity by our own actions. It is a law of occult dynamics that "a given amount of energy expended on the spiritual or astral plane is productive of far greater results than the same amount expended on the physical objective plane of existence."

Part 2

From The Secret Doctrine, II pp. 304-6.

Of all the terrible blasphemies and accusations virtually thrown on their God by the Monotheists, none is greater or more unpardonable than that (almost always) false humility which makes the presumably "pious" Christian assert, in connection with every evil and undeserved blow, that "such is *the will* of God."

Dolts and hypocrites! Blasphemers and impious Pharisees, who speak in the same breath of the endless merciful love and care of their God and creator for helpless man, and of that God *scourging the good, the very best of his creatures, bleeding*

them to death like an insatiable Moloch! Shall we be answered to this, in Congreve's words:

But who shall dare to tax Eternal Justice?¹

Logic and simple common sense, we answer: if we are made to believe in the "original Sin,"² in *one* life, on this Earth only, for every Soul, and in an anthropomorphic Deity, who seems to have created some men only for the pleasure of condemning them to eternal hell-fire (and this whether they are good or bad, says the Predestinarian),³ why should not every man endowed with reasoning powers condemn in his turn such a villainous Deity? Life would become unbearable, if one had to believe in the God created by man's unclean fancy. Luckily he exists only in human dogmas, and in the unhealthy imagination of some poets, who believe they have solved the problem by addressing him as —

Thou great Mysterious Power, who hast *involved*
The pride of human wisdom, *to confound*
The *daring scrutiny* and prove *the faith*
Of thy *presuming* creatures! . . . ⁴

Truly a robust "faith" is required to believe that it is "presumption" to question the justice of one, who creates helpless little man but to "perplex" him, and to test a "faith" with which that "Power," moreover, may have forgotten, if not neglected, to endow him, as happens sometimes.

Compare this blind faith with the philosophical belief, based on every reasonable evidence and life-experience, in Karma-Nemesis, or the Law of Retribution. This Law — whether Conscious or Unconscious — predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in Eternity, truly, for it is ETERNITY itself; and as such, since no act can be co-equal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is ACTION itself. It is not the Wave which drowns a man, but the *personal* action of the wretch, who goes deliberately and places himself under the *impersonal* action of the laws that govern the Ocean's motion. Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects; which adjustment is not an act, but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigour. If it happen to dislocate the arm that tried to bend it out of its natural position, shall we say that it is the

¹ [William Congreve (1670–1729, English playwright and poet. Quotation from "The Mourning Bride," act III.]

² [Look up "The Original Sin is a Jewish invention," in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ The doctrine and theology of Calvinists. "The purpose of God *from eternity* respecting all events" (which becomes *fatalism* and kills free will, or any attempt of exerting it for good) . . . "It is the pre-assignment or allotment of men to everlasting happiness or misery (*Catechism*). A noble and encouraging Doctrine this!

⁴ [Quoting Hannah More's, *Sacred dramas, chiefly intended for young persons: the subjects taken from the Bible. To which are added: Reflections of King Hezekiah, and Sensibility, a poem.* From "Moses in the Bulrushes: A Sacred Drama." Part I, p. 18. Italics by H.P. Blavatsky. That part of the "Sacred Drama" reads as follows:

Oh thou mysterious pow'r! who hast involv'd
Thy wise decrees in darkness, to perplex
The pride of human wisdom, to confound
The daring scrutiny, and prove the faith
Of thy presuming creatures I clear this doubt;
Teach me to trace this maze of Providence;
Why save the fathers, if the sons must perish?]

bough which broke our arm, or that our own folly has brought us to grief? Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty, like the God invented by the Monotheists. It has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man; nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinise its mysteries. On the contrary, he who unveils through study and meditation its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men. KARMA is an Absolute and Eternal law in the World of manifestation; and as there can only be one Absolute, as One eternal ever present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as Atheists or materialists — still less as fatalists:¹ for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect in its effects in the phenomenal world.

Intimately, or rather indissolubly, connected with Karma, then, is the law of rebirth, or of the reincarnation of the same spiritual individuality in a long, almost interminable, series of personalities. The latter are like the various costumes and characters played by the same actor, with each of which that actor identifies himself and is identified by the public, for the space of a few hours. The *inner*, or real man, who personates those characters, knows the whole time that he is Hamlet for the brief space of a few acts, which represent, however, on the plane of human illusion the whole life of Hamlet. And he knows that he was, the night before, King Lear, the transformation in his turn of the Othello of a still earlier preceding night; but the outer, visible character is supposed to be ignorant of the fact. In actual life that ignorance is, unfortunately, but too real. Nevertheless, the *permanent* individuality is fully aware of the fact, though, through the atrophy of the “spiritual” eye in the physical body, that knowledge is unable to impress itself on the consciousness of the false personality.



¹ Some theosophists, in order to make Karma more comprehensible to the Western mind, as being better acquainted with the Greek than with Aryan philosophy, have made an attempt to translate it by *Nemesis*. Had the latter been known to the profane in antiquity, as it was understood by the Initiate, this translation of the term would be unobjectionable. As it is, it has been too much anthropomorphised by Greek fancy to permit our using it without an elaborate explanation. With the early Greeks, “from Homer to Herodotus, she was no goddess, but a *moral feeling* rather,” says Decharme; the barrier to evil and immorality. He who transgresses it, commits a sacrilege in the eyes of the gods, and is pursued by Nemesis. But, with time, that “feeling” was deified, and its personification became an ever-fatal and punishing goddess. Therefore, if we would connect Karma with Nemesis, it has to be done in the triple character of the latter, viz., as Nemesis, Adrasteia and Themis. For, while the latter is the goddess of Universal Order and Harmony, who, like Nemesis, is commissioned to repress every excess, and keep man within the limits of Nature and righteousness under severe penalty, *Adrasteia* — “the inevitable” — represents Nemesis as the immutable effect of causes created by man himself. Nemesis, as the daughter of *Dikē*, is the equitable goddess reserving her wrath for those alone who are maddened with pride, egoism, and impiety. (See Mesomèdes, *Hymns to Nemesis*, verse 2; in Brunck’s *Analecta* II, 292. Cf. Decharme, *Mythologie de la Grèce Antique*, p. 304) In short, while Nemesis is a mythological, exoteric goddess, or *Power*, personified and anthropomorphised in its various aspects, *Karma* is a highly philosophical truth, a most divine noble expression of the primitive intuition of man concerning Deity. It is a doctrine which explains the origin of Evil, and ennobles our conceptions of what divine immutable Justice ought to be, instead of degrading the unknown and unknowable Deity by making it the whimsical, cruel tyrant, which we call Providence.

Suggested reading for students.



More commonly confusing words.

- ADULTERY, LUST, MALICE
- ADYTUM AND ASYLUM
- AETHER AND ETHER
- AGNOSTICISM, ATHEISM, MONISM
- AION, ETERNITY, DURATION
- APPREHENSION AND COMPREHENSION
- ASTRAL LIGHT IS A TERM VERY LITTLE UNDERSTOOD
- AURA AND MAGNETISM
- BUDDHA AND PRINCE SIDDHARTHA BUDDHA
- BUDHISM IS INNER WISDOM
- CELIBACY, CONTINENCE, MONASTICISM
- CHEMIST AND ALCHEMIST
- CHILIASTS, MILLENNIUMISTS, MILLENARIANS
- DARKNESS IS INNER LIGHT
- DEVOTION, WORSHIP, LOYALTY
- EMANATION AND RADIATION
- EMBLEM AND SYMBOL
- GRAIKOS, HELLENE, HELLAS
- HIGHER SELF AND HIGHER EGO
- IMAGINATION AND IMITATION
- JIVA AND JIVATMAN
- JNANA AND YAJNA
- KAMIC VERSUS MANASIC ACTION
- KARMA AND KRIYA
- KOSMOS AND COSMOS
- KRONOS AND CHRONOS

CONFUSING WORDS SERIES
SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- LAUGHTER, SMILES, TEARS
- LIGHT AND HEAT
- LUST, JEALOUSY, PHYSICAL LOVE
- MAGNETISM, MESMERISM, HYPNOTISM
- MATERIALISM, SPIRITUALISM, MONISM
- MUZIRIS, MNIZURIN, MNOUZIRIS
- NIRVANA AND PARINIRVANA
- PANTACLE AND PENTACLE
- RAJA AND RISHI
- REMEMBRANCE, RECOLLECTION, REMINISCENCE
- SKANDHA, SHLOKA, STANZA, SUTRA
- SPIRIT, SPIRITS, SPIRITUALISM
- SPIRITUALISM IS A PHILOSOPHY OF YESTERDAY
- SVABHAVA AND SVAYAMBHU
- TELETE, MYESIS, EPOPTeia
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL OCCULTISM
- THEOSOPHIST AND THEOSOPHER
- TRANSMIGRATION, REINCARNATION, GILGULIM
- TRIRATNA AND TRISHARANA
- TRUE AND FALSE PERSONALITY
- UNITY AND DUALITY
- VACH IS NOT MERE SPEECH
- VEDANTA, BUDDHISM, THEOSOPHY
- VRIL AND BOVRIL
- WILL AND DESIRE
- YOGIS AND MAHATMAS

