

*Platonic Philosophy is the
most elaborate compendium
of Indian Philosophy.*



Abstract and train of thoughts¹

Platonic Philosophy is Indian Philosophy.

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¹ Title page illustration: Gandabherunda commissioned by a General of the Western Chalukya Empire.

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First published in *Lucifer*, Vol. X, Nos 59 and 60, July and August, 1892, pp. 361-73 and 449-59. Re-published in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (OLD PHILOSOPHERS AND MODERN CRITICS) VI pp. 202-10.

At the time this lengthy essay was published by the Editors, in the tenth volume of *Lucifer*, an Editorial note was appended to it, stating that:

. . . the following article was written by H.P. Blavatsky at the beginning of 1891. She incorporated in it, as students will see, much matter from *Isis Unveiled*, but the large additions and corrections give it an independent value.

This Editorial comment is not consistent with actual facts. The essay, upon careful analysis, proves to be almost entirely a compilation of passages from *Isis Unveiled*, with the addition of merely a few brief sentences here and there which connect them together. No “large additions and corrections” have been found in this text.

A few brief passages are identical with Madame Blavatsky’s essay on the “Elementals,”¹ already analysed in the preceding pages, and this fact, as well as the nature and character of all this material, gives considerable validity to the supposition that this compilation from *Isis* was put together by Blavatsky at the time when she was re-writing that early work of hers, possibly approximately at the same time when she compiled her essay on the “Elementals.”

For reasons stated above, we publish in the following pages only such passages which appear to be new material, not lifted from any other work, as far as is known. We list also in their proper sequence the passages which Blavatsky inserted from *Isis Unveiled* in collating this essay.

¹ [Consult “Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

God is neither Truth nor Intelligence but the Father of both.

[The collation opens with the following brief statement:]

In one of the oldest philosophies and religious systems of prehistoric times, we read that at the end of a Mahā-Pralaya (general dissolution) the Great Soul, Paramātma, the Self-Existent, that which can be “apprehended only by the suprasensual,” becomes “*manifest of itself*.”¹

[This is followed by an exposition of Brāhmanical ideas on the subject taken from *Isis Unveiled*, I:xvi-xvii, with some slight variations. Then, this statement is made:]

[203] Let us see how the Brāhmanical ideas tally with pre-Christian Pagan Philosophies and with Christianity itself. It is with the Platonic Philosophy, the most elaborate compend[ium] of the abstruse systems of ancient India, that we had better begin.

[Here follows the material from *Isis Unveiled*, I:xi-xii wherein a quotation is given from B.F. Cocker’s *Christianity and Greek Philosophy*, p. 377, mentioning the concept of <θεος> *theos*. On this, Madame Blavatsky adds:]

It is not difficult for a Theosophist to recognize in this “God”:

- 1 The UNIVERSAL MIND in its cosmic aspect; and
- 2 The Higher Ego in man in its microcosmic.

For, as Plato says, He is not the truth nor the intelligence, “but the Father of it”; *i.e.*, the “Father” of the Lower Manas,² our personal “brain-mind,” which depends for its manifestations on the organs of sense. Though this eternal essence of things may not be perceptible by our physical senses, it may be apprehended by the mind of those who are not wilfully obtuse.³

[Here follow passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:55-56, and I:13-14, with minor changes, after which the statement is made to the effect that:]

Almost a century separated Plato from Pythagoras, so that they could not have been acquainted with each other. But both were Initiates, and therefore it is not surprising to find that both teach the same doctrine concerning the Universal Soul.

[At this point are gathered passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:131; I:xiii; II:431; I:xiii-xiv; I:xii; I:xii-xiii *fn.*; I:xiv-xv; I:xvi; I:236; I:409; I:236-37. This is followed by the important statement that:]

The wholesale accusation that the ancient Philosophers merely generalized, and that they practically systematized nothing, does not prove their “ignorance,” and further it is untrue. Every Science having been revealed in the [204] beginning of time by a *divine* Instructor, became thereby sacred, and capable of being imparted only during the Mysteries of Initiation. No initiated Philosopher, therefore — such as Plato — had the right to reveal it. Once postulate this fact, and the alleged “ignorance” of the ancient Sages, and of some initiated classic authors, is explained. At any rate, even a correct generalization is more useful than any system of exact Science, which only becomes rounded and completed by virtue of a number of “working hypotheses” and conjectures.

¹ See *Mānava Dharma Shastra* (Laws of Manu), Chapter i, 5-8, *et seq.*

² [Consult “Higher Self and Higher Ego,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ This “God” is the Universal Mind, Alaya, the source from which the “God” in each one of us has emanated.

The eagle-headed men and the animals with human heads point to the descent of animals from man, and not the other way around.

[From here on, to the conclusion of the first instalment of this collation, there follow passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:237-38 & *fn.*; I:239; I:287-88, with only this statement which appears to be new, and refers to the theory of the evolution of man from the animals:]

. . . this theory antedated Anaximenes by many thousands of years, as it was an accepted doctrine among the Chaldeans, who taught it *exoterically*, as on their cylinders and tablets, and *esoterically* in the temples of Ea and Nebo — the God, and prophet or revealer of the Secret Doctrine.¹ But in both cases the statements are *blinds*. That which Anaximenes — the pupil of Anaximander, who was himself the friend and disciple of Thales of Miletus, the chief of the “Seven Sages,” and therefore an Initiate as were these two Masters — meant by “animals” was something different from the animals of the modern Darwinian theory. Indeed the eagle-headed men, and the animals of various kinds with human heads, may point two ways: to the descent of man from animals, and to the descent of animals from man, as in the Esoteric Doctrine. At all events, even the most important of the present day theories is thus shown to be not entirely original with Darwin.

Metempsychosis and transmigration imply reincarnation of the spiritual soul from one human body to another.

[The second instalment of this collation opens with a passage from *Isis Unveiled*, I:289, on metempsychosis as taught by the ancients. It is stated that:] [205]

None of them addressed himself to the profane, but only to their own followers and disciples, who knew too much of the symbological element used even during public instruction to fail to understand the meaning of their respective Masters. Thus they were aware that the words metempsychosis and transmigration meant simply reincarnation from one human body to another, when this teaching concerned a *human being*;² and that every allusion of this or another sage, like Pythagoras, to having been in a previous birth a beast, or of transmigrating after death into an animal, was allegorical and related to the spiritual states of the human soul.

Plato referred to Reincarnation and Karma in mythical terms.

[Here follow passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:289; I:276-77, with this additional statement:]

. . . the ray of our Higher Ego, the lower Manas, has its higher light, the reason or rational powers of the Nous, to help it in the struggle with Kāmic desires.

[As well as the following passage:]

These are the teachings of the Secret Doctrine, of the Occult Philosophy. The possibility of man losing, through depravity, his Higher Ego was taught in antiquity, and is still taught in the centres of Eastern Occultism.³ And the above shows quite plainly that Plato believed in Reincarnation and in Karma just as we do, though his utterances in respect to the subject were in a mythical form.

¹ The Wisdom of Nebo, of the God my instructor, all-delightful,” says verse 7 on the first tablet, which gives the description of the generation of the Gods and creation. [Consult “Blavatsky on Nebo of Birs-Nimrud,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Consult “Transmigration, Reincarnation, Gilgulim,” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ [Consult “Woe for the living Dead,” in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]

[A passage from *Isis Unveiled*, I:12, with minor alterations, and treating on the idea of “two souls” entertained by many ancient philosophers, is followed by the following paragraph:]

Now, if the latter means anything at all, it means that the above teaching about the “two souls” is exactly that of the Esoteric, and of many exoteric, Theosophists. The two souls are the dual Manas: the lower, personal “Astral Soul,” and the Higher Ego. The former — a Ray of the latter falling into Matter, that is to say, animating man and making of him a thinking, rational being on this plane — having assimilated its most spiritual elements in the divine essence of the reincarnating Ego, perishes in its [206] personal, material form at each gradual change, as Kāma Rūpa, at the threshold of every new sphere, or Devachan, followed by a new reincarnation. It perishes, because it fades out in time, all but its intangible, evanescent photograph on the astral waves, burnt out by the fierce light which ever changes but never dies; while the incorruptible and the immortal “Spiritual Soul,” that which we call Buddhi-Manas and the individual SELF, becomes more purified with every new incarnation. Laden with all IT could save from the personal Soul, it carries it into Devachan to reward it with ages of peace and bliss. This is no *new* teaching, no “fresh development,” as some of our opponents have tried to prove; and even in *Isis Unveiled*, the earliest, hence the most cautious of all the modern works on Theosophy, the fact is distinctly stated.¹

Divine Causality cannot be a personal, therefore a finite and conditioned godhead, any more with Plato than with the Vedantins, as he treats his subject teleologically.

[Long passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:431-32, introduce the following new material:]

Between Pantheism and Fetishism, we have been repeatedly told, there is but an insignificant step. Plato was a Monotheist, it is asserted. In one sense he was that, most assuredly; but his Monotheism never led him to the worship of one *personal* God, but to that of a Universal Principle and to the fundamental idea that the absolutely immutable or unchangeable Existence alone, really *is*, all the finite existences and change being only appearance, *i.e.*, Māyā.² His *Being* was noumenal, not phenomenal. If Heraclitus postulates a World-Consciousness, or Universal Mind; and Parmenides an unchangeable *Being*, in the identity of the universal and individual thought; and the Pythagoreans, along with Philolaus, discover true Knowledge (which is *Wisdom* or Deity) in our consciousness of the unchangeable relations between number and measure — an idea disfigured later by the Sophists — it is Plato who expresses this idea the most intelligibly. While the vague definition of some philosophers about the *Ever-Becoming* is but too apt to lead one inclined to argumentation into hopeless [207] Materialism, the divine *Being* of some others suggests as unphilosophical an anthropomorphism. Instead of separating the two, Plato shows us the logical necessity of accepting both, viewed from an Esoteric aspect. That which he calls the “Unchangeable Existence” or “Being” is named *Be-ness* in Esoteric Philosophy. It is SAT, which becomes at stated periods the cause of the *Becoming*, which latter cannot, therefore, be regarded as *existing*, but only as something ever tending — in its cyclic progress toward the One Absolute Existence — to exist, in the “Good,” and at one with Absoluteness. The “Divine Causality” cannot be a personal, therefore

¹ Vol. I, p. 432, and elsewhere.

² *Sophistēs*, p. 249

finite and conditioned, Godhead, any more with Plato than with the Vedāntins, as he treats his subject teleologically, and in his search for final causes often goes *beyond* the Universal Mind, even when viewed as a noumenon. Modern commentators have attempted on different occasions to prove fallacious the Neo-Platonic claim of a secret meaning underlying Plato's teachings. They deny the presence of "any definite trace of a secret doctrine" in his *Dialogues*:

Not even the passages brought forward out of the insidious¹ Platonic letters² containing any evidence.³

As, however, no one would deny that Plato had been initiated into the MYSTERIES, there is an end to the other denials. There are hundreds of expressions and hints in the *Dialogues* which no modern translator or commentator — save one, Thomas Taylor — has ever correctly understood. The presence, moreover, of the Pythagorean number-doctrine and the sacred numerals in Plato's lectures settles the question conclusively.

Xenocrates was less reticent than Plato and Speusippus in his exposition of the soul. With him, Science was the object of noumenal thought — not the searches and researches in the phenomenal world.

[At this point are placed passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:xvii-xviii & I:xix, with slight alterations and minor additions. Speaking of Xenocrates and the three qualities as outlined in the *Laws of Manu*, Madame Blavatsky adds the following material:]

These three qualities are Intelligence, Conscience and Will; answering to the Thought, Perception, and Envisagement [208] (Intuition) of Xenocrates, who seems to have been less reticent than Plato and Speusippus in his exposition of soul. After his master's death Xenocrates travelled with Aristotle, and then became ambassador to Philip of Macedonia. But twenty-five years later he is found taking charge of the Old Academy, and becoming its President as successor to Speusippus, who had occupied the post for over a quarter of a century, and devoting his life to the most abstruse philosophical subjects. He is thought more dogmatic than Plato, and therefore must have been more dangerous to the schools which opposed him. His three degrees of knowledge, or three divisions of Philosophy, the separation and connection of the three modes of cognition and comprehension, are more definitely worked out than by Speusippus. With him, Science is referred to

. . . that essence which is the object of pure thought, and is not included in the phenomenal world

— which is in direct opposition to the Aristotelian-Baconian ideas; sensuous perception is referred to that which passes into the world of phenomena; and conception, to that essence

. . . which is at once the object of sensuous perception and, mathematically, of pure reason — the essence of heaven and the stars.

¹ [interpolated]

² VII, p. 341e, and II, p. 341c

³ See [Karl Friedrich] Hermann, I, pp. 544, 744, note 755. [unverified, owing to insufficient data. See HERMANN, in Bio-Bibliographical Index. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

All his admiration notwithstanding, Aristotle never did justice to the Philosophy of his friend and co-disciple. This is evident from his works. Whenever he is referring to the three modes of apprehension as explained by Xenocrates, he abstains from any mention of the method by which the latter proves that scientific perception partakes of truth. The reason for this becomes apparent when we find the following in a biography of Xenocrates:

It is probable that what was peculiar to the Aristotelian logic did not remain unnoticed by him (Xenocrates); for it can hardly be doubted that the division of the existent into the absolutely existent and the relatively existent, attributed to Xenocrates, was opposed to the Aristotelian table of categories.

This shows that Aristotle was no better than certain of our modern Scientists, who suppress facts and truth in order that these may not clash with their own private hobbies and “working hypotheses.” [209]

Xenocrates referred to the World-Soul as the androgyne principle Father-Mother, the male element of which he designated as the last Zeus (Third Logos). To this World-Soul is entrusted dominion over all that which is subject to change and motion.

[Here follow passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:xix-xx, portions of which were also used in the collation entitled “Elementals.” Then comes the following paragraph:]

It is difficult to fail to see in the above teachings a direct echo of the far older Indian doctrines, now embodied in the so-called “Theosophical” teachings, concerning the dual Manas. The World-Soul, that which is called by the Esoteric Yogacharyās “Father-Mother,”¹ Xenocrates referred to as a male-female Principle, the male element of which, the Father, he designated as the last Zeus, the last divine activity, just as the students of the Secret Doctrine designate it the third and last Logos, Brahmā or Mahat. To this World-Soul is entrusted dominion over all that which is subject to change and motion. The divine essence, he said, infused its own Fire, or Soul, into the Sun and Moon and all the Planets, in a pure form, in the shape of Olympic Gods. As a sublunary power the World-Soul dwells in the Elements, producing Daimoniacal (spiritual) powers and beings, who are a connecting link between Gods and men, being related to them “as the isosceles triangle is to the equilateral and the scalene.”²

[After some brief excerpts from *Isis Unveiled*, I:xx, quoting Zeller, the following paragraph is brought in:]

This must be so, since we find men like Cicero and Panætius, and before them, Aristotle and Theophrastus, his disciple, expressed the highest regard for Xenocrates. His writings — treatises on Science, on Metaphysics, Cosmology, and Philosophy — must have been legion. He wrote on Physics and the Gods; on the Existent, the One and the Indefinite; on Affections and Memory; on Happiness [210] and Virtue; four books on Royalty, and numberless treatises on the State; on the Power of Laws; on Geometry, Arithmetic, and finally on Astrology. Dozens of renowned classical writers mention and quote from him.

[The collation closes with long passages from *Isis Unveiled*, I:xx-xxii.]

¹ See *The Secret Doctrine*, Stanzas, Vol. I.

² Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, lib. I, xiii (or 32-35), Strabo [*Geographica*, Bk. V, ch. 1], or Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, XIII (416d).

Suggested reading for students.



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