

separate ones), to smaller and smaller soul-groups, consisting of only a few embodied expressions, until the human state is reached. In becoming human, we are “individualized.” That is, the evolving entity or monad expresses itself in only one personal form at a time.

We human beings are thus the most separate, divided, isolated beings of the cosmos. The angst of isolation is the “curse” of the human “Fall” out of an integrated Eden, where we lived in harmonious but unconscious integration with other beings, into the fragmented world of self-awareness. But that is not the end of evolution. Indeed, far from being the zenith of spiritual evolution, the human state is in one sense its nadir.

From the self-aware state of isolated separateness, we evolve toward a conscious reintegration with other beings in which we each retain our separate identity but become conscious of our fundamental unity in the Ground of Being. The result is a reestablishment, not of the old group soul, but of a conscious analog of it: a self-aware collective consciousness in which each individual retains a distinct identity but also shares with all other fellow individuals a common awareness of their unity and mutual participation in the One Life.

The first step toward this conscious reintegration is the formation of karmic bands, in which evolving human souls are linked to one another by shared karma and eventually by a shared consciousness. Final liberation from the limitations of existence depends on our overcoming (or “renouncing”) the illusion of an isolated, separate self (verse 151), and that overcoming begins with the karma we share with others.

Those who try to maintain the isolated state in which human life begins at the time of their individualization from the group soul are doomed to failure, for that is an evolutionary dead end. Only when we live a life of altruistic helping, by acting for others as they act for us, do we fulfill the purpose of our lives. Our appointed work in life is to make contact with our fellows, to become part of an evolving band of distinct but interlinked souls (verses 152-153).

The first Object of the Theosophical Society is highly relevant here. The first Object is often regarded as a pious generalization, an impractical statement of an impossible ideal. It is nothing of the sort; it is very specific,