

“soil” it, that is, fail to promote its evolution, which is the reason for the lower self’s existence.

The Eternal is the ultimate and ultimately free Self in us and in all things — the atma. It is the ocean of final freedom. What does it mean to say that the way to that final freedom or Eternal Self “begins and ends outside of [the lower personal] self”? One meaning of verse 170 may be that the higher cannot come out of the lower. Although the experiences of the lower self contribute to the evolution of the higher self, the latter is not created out of the former. Our Divine nature emanates from the Eternal; it does not evolve from the lower self.

The Theosophical view of evolution diverges critically from Darwinian or Neo-Darwinian concepts in just this way. Our lower self is the product of animal evolution, though even so it is modeled on the fruit of past evolutionary eras and is not solely the result of adaptation to the current environment. But our basic human nature does not result from animal evolution in this world-period. Rather it is the consequence of a projection of the Divine Self, an emanation from the Eternal One Self, into the animal, lower personal self. As H.P.B. says in *The Secret Doctrine* (2:81): “Between man and the animal — whose Monads (or Jivas) are fundamentally identical — there is the impassable abyss of Mentality and Self-consciousness. What is human mind in its higher aspect, whence comes it, if it is not a portion of the essence — and, in some rare cases of incarnation, the *very essence* — of a higher Being: one from a higher and divine plane?”

As, in general evolution, human nature does not begin in the lower self, and does not end with it, so too in our personal development, our human identity does not begin or end within the limits of the personal self. If we wish to come to final freedom, we must do so by identifying ourselves, not with the personality, but instead with the higher Self or individuality. That Self is the way to our freedom from personal limitations.

Verse 171 may seem to be a change of subject, but in fact it is only a different way of looking at the same thing. A *tirthika*, as H.P.B. indicates in a somewhat ironic way, is anyone who belongs to a religion other than yours — in Western terms, a “heathen” or “infidel”: Gloss 29. *Tirthikas* are the Brahmanical sectarians beyond the Himalayas called “infidels” by the