



THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

50 GLOUCESTER PLACE, LONDON, W.1

THE PANORAMA OF LIFE

The Significance of Animal Evolution

THE Animal Welfare Group of the Theosophical Order of Service is based upon a conception of our relationship to animals which is not only humanitarian and ethical but primarily spiritual.

Life, evolution, the destiny of man, are three questions which increasingly puzzle the enquiring thoughtful mind in its search for the understanding of the purpose of life.

The Theosophical Order of Service recognises that a principle or force called Life informs or ensouls every form from the mineral to the human kingdom. This Life disappears when the form breaks up. It is withdrawn to its own psychic field. An intimacy of co-operation exists between life and form, but it is now generally conceded by many thinkers that life has an independent existence of its own. The course of this life has not yet been plotted by the scientist, but it appears to develop or unfold side by side with the evolution of form.

The Theosophical Order of Service conceives of this life as being divine in origin with all possibilities inherent in it. Each human individual, being made in the 'Image of God', possesses a Divine Spark, which enables him eventually to attain perfection of being. The Spark has gradually to unfold its potentialities through experiences in the world of form. It ensouls, subdues, and finally transcends the limitations of all form. It is a long pilgrimage for the life force, and its first experiences are gained through the lower forms of nature. As the Sufi mystic says, 'God sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the plant and the tree, begins to awaken in the animal, becomes self-conscious in man.'

The Life Principle is the force behind that which is sometimes called the soul or psychic field associated with all inorganic and organic forms. Thus the whole of the kingdoms of nature with their multiplicity of forms constitute a vast field of expression for the ensouling life, culminating, in the pre-human stage, in the highly developed sensitive organisms of the domestic animals, the companions of man. A high degree of intelligence belongs to the domestic animals, but it is instinctual consciousness, and is derived from a

pooled experience. Until self-consciousness is attained the experience of all the lower kingdoms of nature are shared by the particular species or sub-species and are contained within congruous fields of force called Group Souls.

These Group Souls become ever smaller units as the experience of the organisms attached to them becomes more and more specialized. Experience is highly concentrated and becomes individual in the domestic animal attached to man, such as the dog, the cat and the horse, until finally the stage of pooled experience is outstripped and transcended. The animal then breaks away from the Group Soul and develops a field of its own. It is at this juncture that its consciousness becomes the recipient of an added flow from the Divine Life which individualizes it and prepares it for the wider experience of self-consciousness, which the human form is fashioned to provide. This higher form now becomes the vehicle for the ultimate full deployment of the latent capacities of the Divine Life. Man's long pilgrimage towards perfection begins.

When self-consciousness is achieved, evolution takes a great step forward. As Professor Julian Huxley says, 'Biology is revealing that the destiny of man is to be the conscious agent of the world process of evolution, leading it to new heights and possibilities. The experience of the mystics of all creeds and practitioners of Yoga prove of what transcendent states of inner peace and unity of spirit the human personality is capable'.

This conception of the gradual evolution of consciousness affects profoundly our relationship to animals, especially the domestic ones. A new responsibility towards them is engendered. The intimate association of animals and humans fulfils a deeper purpose than that of pleasure and usefulness. It provides the opportunity of helping the expansion of the Life Force and prepares it for its human stage. This relationship has thus evolutionary value for both human beings and animals.

The treatment of animals becomes very important when seen from this angle. Kindness and companionship will stimulate all that is best in the animal consciousness, with rewarding results for both. Cruelty towards animals on the other hand develops fear and cunning, which will handicap the consciousness, and will complicate adversely its attitude towards its surroundings and its relationship with others when at a primitive level it finds itself a member of the great human family.

The Theosophical Order of Service is thus inspired by this panorama of life which suggests that evolution with its changing order and orderly change is a process of increasing organization involving both life and form. Moreover, it is one which we can largely understand, and with which we can co-operate. This will give purpose and dignity to human living and a sense of unity with all creation.

NOTE: Copies of this leaflet can be obtained for distribution upon application to the Hon. Secretary, 50 Gloucester Place, London, W.1.

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