

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSION
OF SPIRITISM IN
CEBU CITY

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University of San Carlos

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Philosophy

by
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APPROVAL SHEET

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are many questions that intrigue the human mind. Some of these are so ancient, yet ever contemporary; so simple yet too complex for one generation of thinkers to grapple with exhaustively. This implies that the answers to these inquiries are so elusive that no matter how many philosophical giants have offered solutions, the questions keep recurring across the great expanse of time. What is man? Where did he come from? Where is he going? What is the purpose of human existence? What is man's place in the universe? As long as man is man, such queries will never become obsolete.

Different philosophical systems propose if not contradictory at least divergent explanations concerning man. However, through the maze of insights into human existence, it is possible to discern certain recurring themes, such as immortality, karma¹ and reincarnation. It is not by chance nor yet deliberate that this present study should gradually circle round about and pin down these three concepts. The research presented here is not an attempt at

¹Cf. Richard De Smet, S.J., "A Copernican Reversal: The Gitakara's Reformulation of Karma," Philosophy East and West, XXVII, (January, 1977), I., pp. 53-62.

an investigation of the nature of man and the purpose of human life. Rather it is an in-depth study of a social phenomenon which is interested in the questions concerning the what of man, the whence and what for of human existence and the unique position that man holds in the universe. Since a study of this social phenomenon's main thrust will reveal a peculiar world-view built on a belief in the immortality of the soul, the karmic law and reincarnation, these doctrines will constitute inevitably the key concepts in this project. It is, therefore, important to give in a nutshell an explanation of these terms. In another part of this report, they will be dealt with more thoroughly.

1. Immortality of the Soul

Immortality is not an unfamiliar term. It is the "attribute of deathlessness ascribed to the soul in many religions and philosophies. Forthright belief in immortality of the body is rare. Immortality of the soul is a cardinal tenet of Islam and is held generally in Judaism, although it is not an essentially Jewish idea."² The ancient Greeks, Romans and Celts all believed in a life after death. Zoroastrianism and Christianity also posit

²W.H. Harris & J.S. Levey (eds.), The New Columbia Encyclopedia (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 1317.

immortality.³

2. Reincarnation

While incarnation is a familiar term among Christians, reincarnation is not. Reincarnation, nominally, means taking on flesh again. It is the "occupation by the soul of a new body after the death of the former body."⁴ Another term often used to designate reincarnation is transmigration of souls or metempsychosis. The latter is a Greek word which means "change of soul,"⁵ that is, the "passage of the soul from one body to another, either human, animate, or inanimate."⁶ C.G. Jung, however, claims that there is some difference between metempsychosis or transmigration of souls and reincarnation. In metempsychosis, it is not certain whether or not continuity of personality is guaranteed, that is, in the cycle of births, "there may only be a continuity of karma." Reincarnation as a "concept of rebirth necessarily implies the continuity of personality."⁷

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 2297.

⁵Ibid., p. 2776.

⁶Ibid.

⁷C.G. Jung, The Archetypes And The Collective Unconscious (Princeton University Press, 1971, 2nd Edition), p. 113.