

Independent Theosophical Magazine - Electronic Edition - XII / 2011

Theosophy

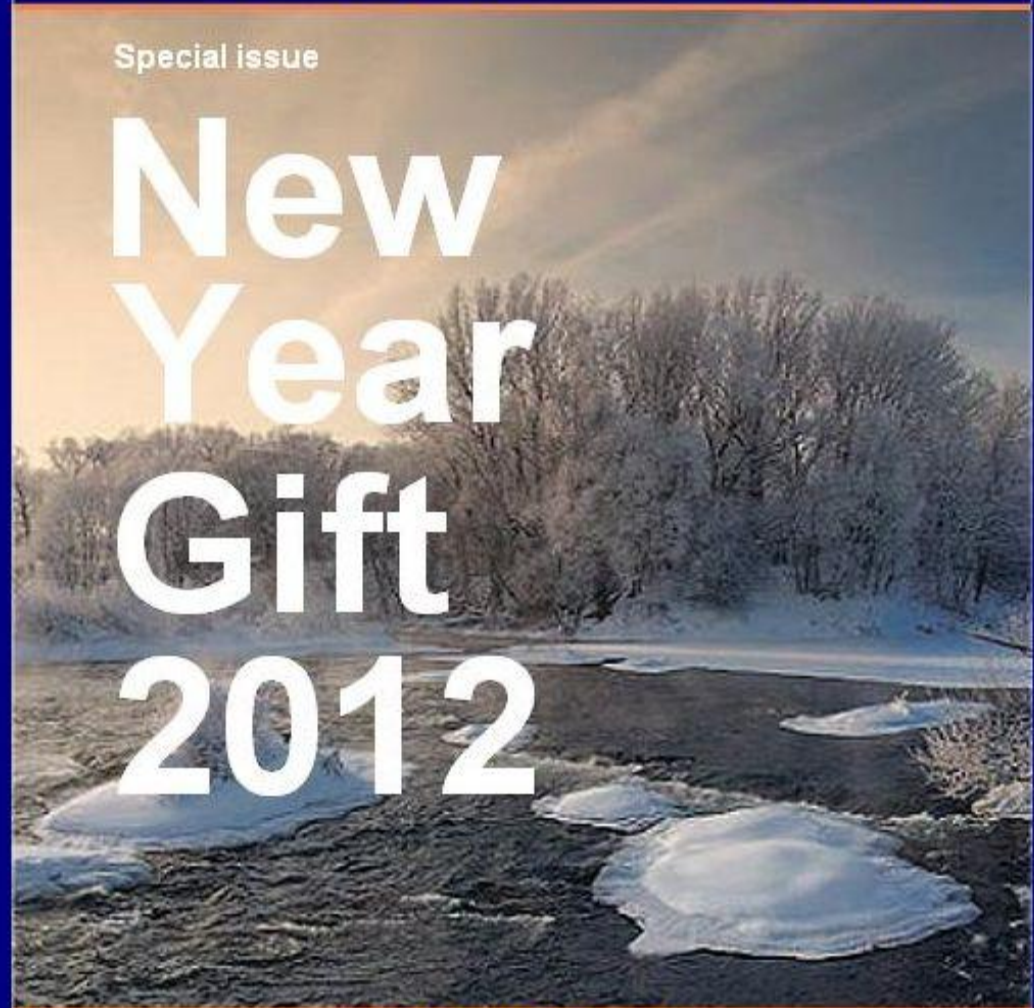
Moving
into the


Forward

21st
century

Special issue

New Year Gift 2012



 Theosophy Forward



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CLOSE MENU



Editorial

Thank you for collecting your special New Year Gift.

This year, 2011, has been *dazzling* for *Theosophy Forward*.

Theosophy Forward has increased the number of its readers significantly and its output considerably. This year, we produced several e-books on various subjects. These publications were enthusiastically received and highly rated for their quality and overall presentation.

Reactions have come from all corners of the globe. In addition to all the countries where the various Theosophical organizations have national sections and branches, *Theosophy Forward* also has readers in countries like China, Japan (with one Lodge attached directly to Adyar), Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, South Korea, Syria, and Turkey.

The magazine's team is small but ever active, and all who participate in it to make it happen deserve gratitude. I would like to thank all the contributors to this year's publications; there were a great many. But I must mention the names of those who were a source of special inspiration during the past twelve months: Kathleen F. Hall, Dara Eklund and Nicholas Weeks, Sally and James Colbert, and Doreen Domb. Special thanks are due to Ananya Rajan, John

Algeo, Anton Rozman, and last, but not least, our technical staff of Gilson Moraes and S. T. Adelante.

In this special issue you'll find a number of selected articles that appeared on *Theosophy Forward* in 2011, greetings from Theosophists from various Theosophical organizations, and an excellent musical gift.

I am convinced that, if we really set our minds to it, unity is within our vision and the reach of our hands; so let's work together in 2012, practicing brotherhood and *the art of listening* at all times. The Theosophical movement is in transition, and since each of us is a center for Theosophical work, we all can contribute to it, both collectively and individually. The Theosophical movement is one, Theosophists, whether aligned with one of the organizations or not, are diverse. Our colorful diversity is where our challenge lies. Instead of being an impediment, our diversity should bring us reverentially together and make us conscious of our common responsibility and the crucial task of spreading the Ancient Wisdom.

The world is waiting.

Jan Nicolaas Kind
Theosophy Forward



Theosophy Forward

This independent electronic magazine offers a portal to Theosophy for all those who believe that its teachings are timeless. It shuns passing fads, negativity, and the petty squabbles of sectarianism that mar even some efforts to propagate the eternal Truth. *Theosophy Forward* offers a positive and constructive outlook on current affairs.

Theosophy Forward encourages all Theosophists, of whatever organizations, as well as those who are unaligned but carry Theosophy in their hearts, to come together. Theosophists of any allegiance can meet and respectfully exchange views, because each of us is a centre for Theosophical work. It needs to be underscored that strong ties are maintained with all the existing Theosophical Societies, but the magazine's commitment lies with Theosophy only and not with individuals or groups representing these various vehicles.

Theosophy Forward - New Year Gift 2012

Special Edition of Theosophy Forward

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CLOSE MENU



Four Ways of Living Theosophy

by John Algeo



Winter (1909)
Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935)

This series has called forth a large number of excellent responses. Most of them, in one way or another, have said quite truly that Theosophy will be a living force only to the extent that we live according to Theosophical teachings. Little, if anything, can be added to that truth - except, perhaps, for one detail. And that detail is to specify how, in particular, we can live Theosophy.

Certain particulars are obvious, to be sure, from the Society's three objects. If we are to form a nucleus of universal brotherhood, we must act in a brotherly way toward others: the brotherliness of Castor and Pollux (in which one lays down his life for the other), not that of Cain and Abel (in which one takes the life of the other). If we are to encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science, we must not be anti-intellectual and it helps to know a bit about those subjects. If we are to investigate unexplained laws and latent powers, we must know what those laws are about, what the powers control, and how to investigate them sensibly and safely.

However, beyond whatever actions the three objects imply, still rather large generalizations, the question remains: Exactly how do we do it? That question has not been left in

the dark by the brightest lights of the Theosophical Society. Indeed, it has been addressed several times and quite specifically. From the very beginning of the Society, it was intended to provide an entrance to practical work, as Colonel Olcott reports in *Old Diary Leaves*. When, for a variety of reasons, such practical work did not materialize generally (although Olcott certainly lived Theosophy his whole life), Madam Blavatsky created the Esoteric Section (now the Esoteric School) for precisely that purpose. It still exists, and membership in it is intended to provide a structured way of living Theosophy - although the extent to which it succeeds in achieving that aim depends crucially on those in the School.

Later, Annie Besant, recognizing that more was needed, particularly to suit individual bents, urged all members of the Society to involve themselves with one or more of three sister organizations, each of which addressed a different aspect of the need for a structured way of living Theosophy. Membership in any of them was never compulsory, but they were and remain available as options for putting Theosophical ideas into practice as ideals for living.

One of Annie's supplementary organizations was the Liberal Catholic Church. It obviously works best for those from a Christian background. That and its adherence to Catholic opposition to women in the priesthood create problems for some. But analogs for other religious backgrounds could be developed, as a Hindu temple ceremony has been, or as an unstructured way of regarding the ancient teachings of

Zoroastrianism was pointed to by Colonel Olcott and is still adhered to by a number of Parsis.

Another of Annie's options was Co-Freemasonry. It suits those with a ritual bent but who are not necessarily Christian and who value the equality of the sexes in all activities. Before Besant, Co-Freemasonry was largely secular in orientation and centered in France. Besant spiritualized it by envisioning it as a modern form of the ancient Mysteries and universalized it by spreading it around the globe through her Theosophical connections. Today it still exists in a number of forms, of which those most closely aligned with Besant's own ideals and ideas are the Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry and the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry for Men and Women in Great Britain. Freemasonry uses an eighteenth-century set of symbolical actions, objects, and language to express ritually the ideals implicit in Theosophy. It is consequently not for everyone.

Annie Besant's most original option, one she created de novo was the Theosophical Order of Service. This sister organization has only one purpose: to put Theosophical ideas into practice for the service of others. When people try to resolve problems in their own lives, often the best advice one can give them is to forget about themselves and concentrate on helping others. As *The Voice of the Silence* makes clear, it is by serving others that we save ourselves. The TOS is the most neutral of Annie's three options. You don't have to be Christian or ritualistic to act within it. You need only to do what Theosophy asks of all of us: to serve

our fellow beings in practical ways.

The Esoteric School, the Liberal Catholic Church, Co-Freemasonry, and the Theosophical Order of Service are all excellent ways of living Theosophy and thereby making Theosophy a living force in the world. Together, they provide four means of doing just that, each suitable for a somewhat different personal orientation, but all compatible with one another.



Winter landscape (1909)
Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944)

Religions and the Theosophical Society

by Vic Hao Chin

When the Theosophical Society was founded, it was expected to play a major role in the minimization of the evils brought about by institutionalized religion. A significant proportion of H. P. Blavatsky's writings addressed this matter, and the Mahatma Letters were quite scathing in pointing out the harmful side of religion. Today, however, it seems that the Theosophical Society is not playing a major role in world thought in continuing such a work. If the rise of fundamentalism is any indication, then the harmful side of religion has not abated but may have increased.

In Letter 88 of the *Mahatma Letters* (chronological edition), the Mahatma Koot Hoomi wrote:

I will point out the greatest, the chief cause of nearly two thirds of the evils that pursue humanity ever since that cause became a power. It is religion under whatever form and in whatsoever nation. It is the sacerdotal caste, the priesthood and the churches; it is in those illusions that man looks upon as sacred, that he has to search out the source of that multitude of evils which is the great curse of humanity and that almost overwhelms mankind. Ignorance created Gods and cunning took advantage of the opportunity. Look at India and look at Christendom and Islam, at Judaism and

Fetichism. It is priestly imposture that rendered these Gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it. It is belief in God and Gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them. Is not man ever ready to commit any kind of evil if told that his God or Gods demand the crime - voluntary victim of an illusionary God, the abject slave of his crafty ministers? The Irish, Italian and Slavonian peasant will starve himself and see his family starving and naked to feed and clothe his padre and pope. For two thousand years India groaned under the weight of caste, Brahmins alone feeding on the fat of the land, and to-day the followers of Christ and those of Mahomet are cutting each other's throats in the names of and for the greater glory of their respective myths. Remember the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, morality, and universal charity, the altars of their false gods.

Even if one disagrees with the numbers quoted "two thirds of the evils that pursue humanity", one cannot help but agree with the general diagnosis. Some of mankind's longest wars and conflicts have been waged on religious grounds, such as the Crusades, Thirty Years War, Arab-Israeli wars, Protestant-Catholic conflict in Ireland, etc. We are today witnessing the worst form of indiscriminate terrorism in history - religious terrorism.

In speaking about beliefs in anthropomorphic god or gods, the Mahatma Koot Hoomi stressed:

Our chief aim is to deliver humanity of this nightmare, to teach man virtue for its own sake, and to walk in life relying on himself instead of leaning on a theological crutch, that for countless ages was the direct cause of nearly all human misery. (*Ibid*)

What have we been doing about this, and what should we collectively do about this in the future? What should be the role of the Theosophical Society in freeing humanity from such a specter?

It is to be noted that the Theosophical Society seems to have undergone two historical phases on this mission. The first one was when HPB and the Mahatma Letters called a spade a spade and wrote very frankly about the evil side of religious beliefs and institutions. The second phase gradually seeped in after the death of HPB and Henry Steel Olcott, when the Theosophical Society began to be over-conciliatory about religion and started to speak about religious beliefs in a manner quite incongruent with the early writings.

An example is the belief in anthropomorphic God or gods. The writings of the Mahatmas and HPB were virtually uncompromising about their non-existence. Yet in the decades following the turn of the century, theosophical literature began to speak again of God in a manner that

surely would make the Mahatmas raise their eyebrows, such as equating Isvara or the Solar Logos with God. "Isvar is the effect of Avidya and Maya, ignorance based upon the great delusion," states the Mahatma KH. Even *At the Feet of the Master* refers to God in an almost personal manner, such as "the wise man knows that only God is great, that all good work is done by God alone"; "If he is on God's side he is one of us ..."

The close association between the TS and the Liberal Catholic Church had all the more clouded the difference between the original teachings and the later theosophical view, not only on the subject of God, but on Jesus, vicarious atonement, etc. The TS in some respect has become an esoteric apologist for Christianity.

It is then essential for theosophists to review again the work of the TS in relation to religions and religious beliefs. In the effort to espouse religious unity, it is easy to go overboard by trying to forcibly adapt to the questionable doctrines of current religions just to appease them, a Procrustean solution that sacrifices truth.

This work must be done in stages. For example, we must promote a wider discussion about the superstition of anthropomorphism in current religious belief systems, in the hope that the common adherents will be freed from such an internally contradictory concept of the Deity. Another is to free people from the concept of an eternal hell due to the wrath of God, and popularize the view that we make our own

future destiny from our actions and thoughts. Another is that we must take part in the movement to free people from mindlessly accepting that the words of scriptures are the words of God and that every word is literally true.

When these things are popularly but intelligently discussed, new paradigms will emerge in world thought that will bring public opinion farther away from superstition and closer to the reality. Let us be part of that effort to bring about the paradigm shift about religions. Then indeed we will to some degree contribute to the vision of the Mahachohan that the Theosophical Society will be "the corner-stone, the foundation of the future religion of humanity."



Winter Landscape (1906)
Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935)



Winter I (1907)
Mikalojus Ciurlionis (1875-1911)

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Needed: A Leap Forward!

by Boris de Zirkoff

Universal Life, in all its multi-myriad forms and aspects, is in constant flux. Unalterable in its underlying essence, it is in perpetual outward change. As soon as any one of its temporary manifestations becomes rigid, decay sets in, which is but another aspect of life, breaking up the outworn form, in order to build a new and more adequate one.

Wherever there is flexibility, optimism, dynamic interest, vision, the search for the unknown, the urge to grow and to become, and the enthusiasm that scales new heights and attempts the seemingly impossible - there is youth and hope and the broad highway to all future yet unborn.

Wherever there is rigidity, pessimism, indifference, fear of the unknown, frustration and mental fatigue, doubt, anxiety and lack of vision, attachment to established routines and well-worn grooves of thought, crystallization of methods, and cherished traditions obscuring the distant horizons of the future - there is old age, decay, senility, and the loss of the vital fires that are essential to all becoming and all growth.

It is so with the Theosophical movement, as well. Its essential life must constantly rebuild its temporary forms, brush aside useless traditions, revitalize its manifold

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channels, keep flexible its vehicles and molds, seek out new ways of manifestation, untried methods of growth, and unplumbed depths of experience, and reach out constantly towards greater and broader horizons where are marshaled in letters of fire the noblest hopes and dreams of the human race. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, at least in part, the Theosophical movement in its present form will have to yield to other currents, other movements of consciousness, emanating from the same ageless source of all life on this planet, the fountain of its perennial youth, whence issue the life-giving streams of the spirit nourishing the spiritual organism of humanity.

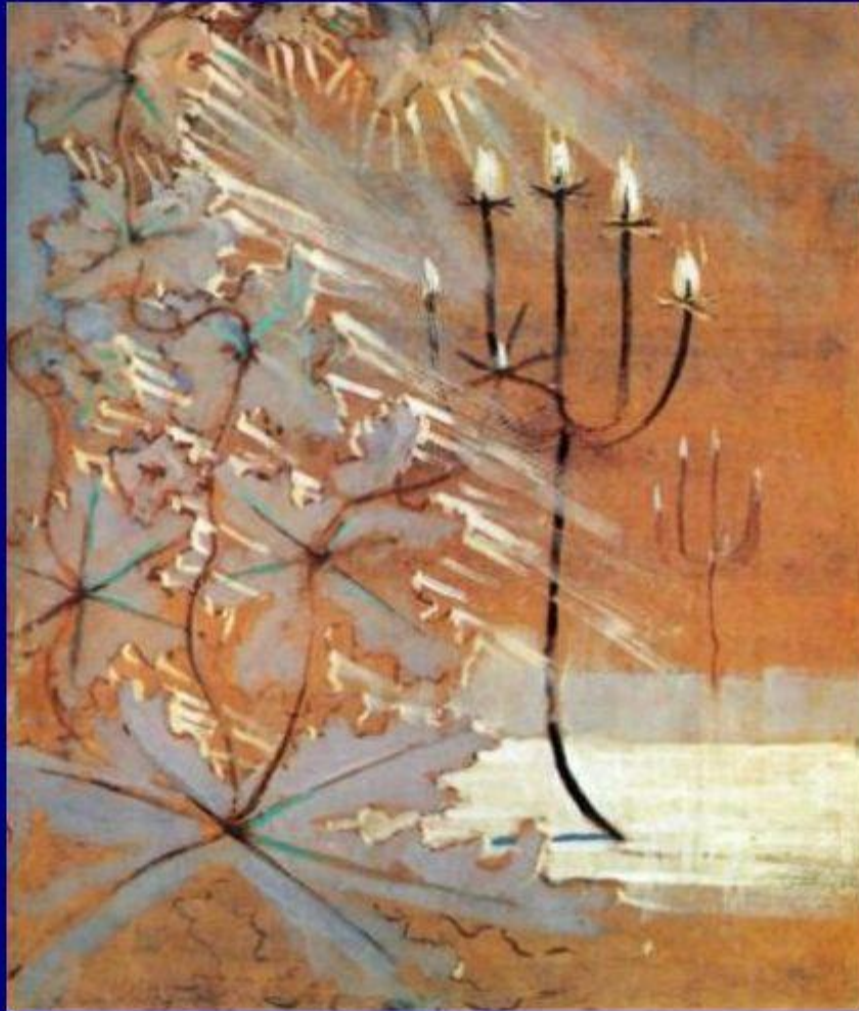
In the work we are engaged in, the world over, we need the help of those who are young - young in body as well as in heart and mind. Without them, the movement becomes moribund, set, sectarian, and crystallized. With them, it keeps its resiliency, its flexibility, and its required momentum of thought and emotion. Let us never forget that when the present-day Theosophical Society was launched by the original Founders, H. P. Blavatsky was 44, Col. Henry Steel Olcott was 43, and William Quan judge was a mere 24 years of age!

The outward structural form of the organized Theosophical movement is in need of rejuvenation. While it is enduring in the spiritual validity of its message, its declared objectives and its methods of work have no vital contact with the spirit of the present age. A fearless leap forward, both in thought and in action, is demanded of us, but the enlightened leadership for that change is sorely lacking.

In the midst of a somber scene and the shadows of outworn traditions, we seek new and greater lights on the distant horizons of our undying hopes.



Couple Riding, (1906)
Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944)



Winter V (1907)
Mikalojus Ciurlionis (1875-1911)

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Thoughts on Music and Vedanta

by Halldór Haraldsson

During my career as a pianist, both as a teacher and a performer, I have often noticed how much music has in common with Vedanta philosophy. Those who have pursued one branch of art or another for some time soon notice how many things are similar to other branches - only the outer form of expression is different. Whether or not we find such correspondences, there is no doubt that finding them can deepen our understanding of our particular art and open our eyes to various important things that would otherwise have been hidden from us.

The Vedanta philosophy is defined as Monism or rather Non-Dualism (Advaita): "Truth is one - sages call it by various names". The whole of reality is one unified wholeness, multiplicity is our illusory perception of it, "Maya". The rope is taken to be a snake. This reminds one undeniably of musicians at different levels, from the perceptions of the beginner to those of the mature master in music. The beginner is involved in countless things, both theoretically and practically. The beginner takes the rope for a snake. Besides all the large and small factors that form a whole movement of a sonata or a symphony, a close relationship also exists between the themes of all the movements in the case of a mature master composer, as if

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they had their origin in one single idea. It is e.g. a widely held opinion that Mozart had some access to deeper layers of consciousness. He seemed to have been able to "see" a whole movement of a sonata or a symphony as if in an instant. Without the work taking its normal time, like "looking at a sculpture in sound". This sense of unity is also to be found in the renderings of great performing artists.

Another similarity between music and Vedanta can be found in the various "schools of technique" and teachings. The various "schools" of piano playing, for instance, in the 19th century and at the beginning of the last one, were identified with some famous pianist, a method, the name of a city or a country, the French or the Russian School etc. Then in the second and third decades of the 20th century a scientific approach was beginning to emerge, i.e. the idea that some truth is to be found in all the various schools and that they all lead to the goal just as the various paths of Yoga, Karma, Jnana, Bhakti or Raja lead to the same goal. But whether in Yoga or in the art of piano playing, narrow-mindedness has now been superseded by this kind of broadmindedness and common sense, in which the best of the various methods are selected and used.

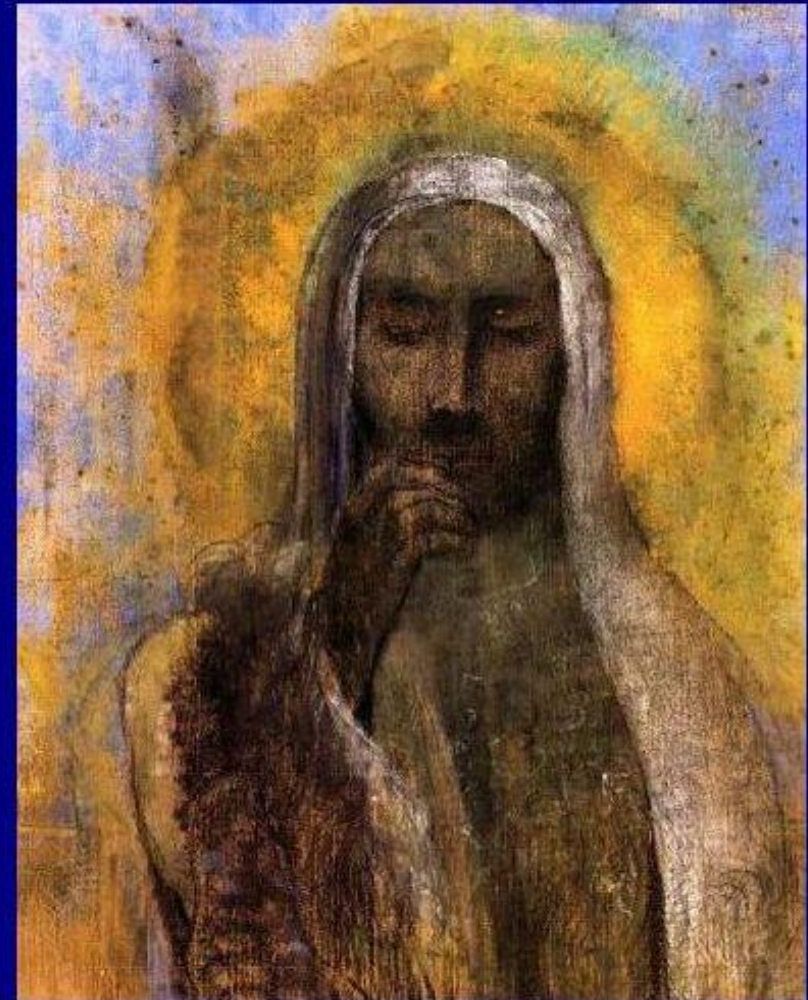
We can also see practical correspondences in the eight steps of Patanjali's Raja Yoga and the steps in the training of the pianist. *Yama* and *Niyama* could be the pianist's truthfulness to his art; *Asana* the practical posture at the instrument; *Pranayama* a natural way of breathing and directing the life-force; *Pratyahara*, turning the mind and

senses inwards; *Dharana*, concentration on the piece at hand; *Dhyana*, keeping the concentration steady on the piece; and *Samadhi*, becoming one with the music. On rare occasions the pianist may become so united with the piece of music he is interpreting that he loses all sense of time and place and even reaches a higher state of consciousness.

In Yoga the aspirant has to go through various practices in concentration and meditation, practising the repetition of various mantras (japa) or visualizing the Chakras, to being aware of the breath, sensations, sounds etc. All this reminds one of the practices adopted by pianists. In the beginning the pianist learns small pieces by heart, then gradually longer and more difficult ones, until he can attempt larger forms like sonatas and other large-scale works. During this process he has to overcome technical difficulties, rhythmic problems, articulation, to form the notes into phrases, gain control over dynamics, mould melodic lines in an artistic way, control the tempo, accelerate or slow down or keep it steady, build up the work as a whole, its structure, respect its style, what period it belongs to and finally to give it life, so that when it is performed for an audience it will be convincing and the "artistic image" the pianist has conceived will "get through" to the listener. All this is mentioned here to show how many things have to be taken into account in order to bring all these parts into a convincing unity of interpretation.

When small parts are practised over and over again it is not very far from the phrases or images repeated in meditation. It undeniably reminds us of Ramanuja's definition of

you are now on. Two things seem to take the longest time to realise: to know how to really LISTEN and to RELAX. So many just want to go fast and try to pass by the vital points, and so they in fact take longer, because they are always trying to avoid the real issue. Do we not sometimes seek some mysterious methods in order to get quick results? There is also another viewpoint for the impatient aspirants: Somebody once said that "it is not the goal that is vital to one's existence, but the quality of the journey! Why should we not relax and enjoy the view and listen with alert attention and have courage to face the journey and everything that happens on it? Bon voyage!



Christ in Silence (1895-1899)
Odilon Redon (1840-1916)

Having an Eye for what is happening around Us

by Fay van Ierlant

In *The Secret Doctrine* we read that, as humans of this manifested Universe we belong to the Fifth Sub-Race of the Fifth Root-Race. The number five, points to the fifth principle in the sevenfold constitution of the human being, which is the mind. As a race, our possibilities to become more aware of our world lie in the nature of our mind.

The human mind, as HP Blavatsky explains in her *Key to Theosophy*, has a dual principle in its functions. One function, called the lower mind, "is the centre of the animal man, where lies the line of demarcation which separates the mortal man from the immortal entity." The other function is "the higher human mind, whose radiation links the monad, the spiritual principle in man, for the lifetime, to the mortal man."

HPB states that "The future state and the Karmic destiny of man depend on whether Manas [the mind] gravitates more downwards to Kama rupa, the seat of the lower mind and of the animal passions, or upwards to *Buddhi*, the Spiritual Ego."

From Robert Bowen's brochure "Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy," we find more about the mind and how

it uses the physical brain. Bowen, as many remember was a student of HP Blavatsky's circle in London. He quotes HPB as saying:

"The brain is the instrument of waking consciousness and every conscious mental picture formed, means change and destruction of the atoms of the brain. Ordinary intellectual activity moves on well beaten paths in the brain, and does not compel sudden adjustments and destructions in the substance. But this new kind of mental effort calls for something very different - the carving out of 'new brain paths', the ranking in different order of the little brain lives. If forced injudiciously it may do serious physical harm to the brain. ... This mode of thinking (she says) is what the Indians call Jnana Yoga."

Jnana means spiritual insight. Jnana yoga is the mental process in which the mind learns to transcend narrowed reflections and mental pictures until it can dwell in the "World of No Form but of which all forms are narrowed reflections." Why do we have to go through the process of Jnana yoga to be able to become aware of the reality that lies beyond the narrowed reflections and beyond our own mind made pictures of our world?

The answer may be found in the second part of *The Secret Doctrine, Anthropogenesis*. Stanza X, sloka 42 mentions that during the Fourth Root-Race, "They built temples for the human body. Male and female they worshipped. Then the Third Eye acted no longer." In the chapter "The Races with



the 'Third Eye,'" it is explained that the third eye acted no longer because humanity had sunk too deep into the mire of matter. That happened when the Fourth Race arrived at its middle age and the falling into matter began to dim their spiritual vision. The third eye, the organ of spiritual vision, petrified and disappeared inside the head and became the pineal gland. Since then insight into Reality can only be acquired through training and initiation. It is said that, "During the activity of the inner man (during trances and spiritual visions) the gland swells and expands". What was once a natural human capacity now needs be developed through effort. We can read more about the third eye in the *Collected Writings* Vol. XII where the difference between Hatha and Raja Yoga is explained. HPB writes how the nadis (the channels along which the currents of prana, or vitality, flow) when struck in a proper way, awaken the sentries on both sides, the spiritual manas and the physical kama, and subdues the lower through the higher.

"We [Raja Yogis] begin with the mastery of that organ which is situated at the base of the brain, in the pharynx, and called by the Western anatomists the Pituitary Body. In the series of the objective cranial organs, [] it stands to the Third Eye (Pineal Gland) as Manas stands to Buddhi. ... The one is the Energizer of Will, the other that of *Clairvoyant Perception*" (p.616-617).

Exploring further we find Mahatma KH in his first letter to A.O. Hume writing about the evolution of the mind:

"You ask us to teach you true Science, the occult aspect of the known side of nature, and this you think can be easily done as asked. You do not seem to realize the tremendous difficulties in the way of imparting even the rudiments of our Science to those who have been trained in the familiar methods of yours. You do not see that the more you have of the one the less capable you are of intuitively comprehending the other, for a man can only think in his worn grooves, and unless he has the courage to fill up these and make new ones for himself, he must perforce travel on the old lines. ..."

The idea that I wish to convey is, that the result of the highest intellection in the scientifically occupied brain is the evolution of a sublimated form of spiritual energy, which, in the cosmic action, is productive of illimitable results, while the automatically acting brain holds or stores in itself only a certain quantum of brute force that is unfruitful of benefit for the individual or humanity. The human brain is an exhaustless generator of the most refined quality of cosmic force out of the low, brute energy of nature. ..."

The Mahatma mentions a mind being capable of comprehending intuitively. Intuition is knowledge by identity, all dualities are dissolved. It gives the vision of the whole, a unified vision of reality in which the individual and the universal are perceived as one.

The limitations of universal consciousness, when it is centralized and expressed through an individual's center of



consciousness, deprives the individual of the awareness of their divine nature. It is the delusion caused by this privation which makes a person run after all kinds of worldly objects and pursuits in a futile search for happiness. Under this delusion, as mentioned above in Stanza 10, sloka 42 of the *Secret Doctrine* (Anthropogenesis), that because of the loss of the original third eye, humans regard the divine power flowing through them as their own personal power that they are entitled to use in any way they like. It is this attitude that is really responsible for the almost universal misuse of power in this, our world, and the cause of most of its problems. This trend is becoming more and more pronounced and those who benefit from it, take it for granted and consider it a legitimate exercise of freedom and their right as a human being.

The blind pursuit of power is the indication that one is grossly involved in the illusions of the world and therefore inevitable. However, humans, that can use their minds to refine "the low, brute energy of nature" of the human brain to "an exhaustless generator" of cosmic consciousness will intuitively comprehend the truth that reality is an undivided whole of which they are an integrated part. Such a mind will be able to discern between separated delusions and the real sense of fundamental unity; the fundamental unity of universal brotherhood. This might be the challenge of the Fifth Sub-Race of the Fifth Root-Race going through matter in the Fourth Round.



Colour Planes Winter Recollection (1913-23)
Frantisek Kupka (1871 -1957)

The Internet, an Instrument of the Forces of Light and of Darkness

by Mary Harkness

The advent of the internet towards the end of the last century, from the 1980s onwards, has strongly impacted on our lives and, with ever advancing technology, is swiftly changing the face of human relationships, human behavior and modes of contact. We must be ever mindful that with every increasing opportunity comes increasing responsibility.

On the plus side, use of the internet broadens our knowledge by opening a new window on the world; it helps us to communicate swiftly with each other and from many respects exercises a positive influence on our minds. Having friends and links through the web enhances self-esteem, allows freedom of expression, and also facilitates regular contact between colleagues, friends, home, work and office. Time spent on the internet at home or elsewhere can help reduce the feeling of isolation or loneliness. Research on any chosen topic is made available through the press of a button accessing Google, whereas in former times extensive reading of books or visits to the library was deemed essential. There are various web facilities available to us, to name a few: e-mail, blogging, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Wikipedia, Wikileaks, Google Research, Google Earth, Skype, current news & information etc. In a sense, the internet has become a "super power."

All peoples, all countries, irrespective of race, creed, sex, age, geographical distance, and time zones, are able to inter-communicate, share greetings and intelligence. Online interaction also creates and strengthens groups of people sharing common interests or goals. Most Theosophical sections, regional associations and countries linked to the headquarters in Adyar, have their own special Theosophical website allowing members, enquirers, or the general public access to a plethora of Theosophical material, history, and notification of events via the links on their websites. There is the potential for easier and rapid research on a range of topics for school pupils and university students thus facilitating their quest, enhancing learning, and widening their depth of knowledge. It provides an important and swift facility for remaining in regular touch with family and friends and therefore to some extent has replaced the art of letter writing. The web has also proved to be more cost effective for business as postal mail can be expensive.

With this rapidly advancing phenomenon, much of it weighing on the positive side, it behooves us to be aware of the web's negative side and its darker influence: Friendships created over the internet can prevent close ties as there is no physical contact, no eye to eye with opportunity to sense or read facial expressions. All contact is through the medium of a machine. Family life can greatly suffer through the amount of time some members spend in isolation on the computer. The lack of quality time spent together can prove detrimental to young children and teenagers and to family bonding. Cyber bullying is a real concern and is known to



have adversely affected vulnerable and susceptible women and children causing untold misery. We frequently hear of and read reports of those who have been duped of their savings by cunning spammers and hackers using deceitful means. Then there are numerous people who pour their hearts out on blogging sites, on Twitter and Facebook - posting too much personal information about themselves and are surprised whenever their homes are burgled during their well-advertised holiday away. Information given out can never be retracted. On the more sinister side, there are suicide sites encouraging extremely vulnerable people to commit the final act, there are evil sites set up to groom and harm young children, self-harming sites, and casual date and partner sites for one night stands. The internet can be used to facilitate gangs intent on violence which can morph into mass lawlessness. Many of the blogging sites set up are ego-based, frequently used by attention seeking individuals. There are social networking sites like MySpace and YouTube which allow users to create their own pages to post blogs, photos, and videos but this service has been abused by some posting videos depicting crimes against animals.

In many ways, as mentioned earlier, the facility of e-mail has greatly helped communication at all levels but there is another disturbing side - the unpleasant or nasty e-mail. These can cause much distress, and again one must look carefully and question the motive and state of mind of the sender of such e-mails, prime examples of great unkindness. Reputations of famous sports people and celebrities have been ruined by news blogs and the

numerous negative comments which follow such postings. Some have elicited hundreds of comments, a few in defense of, but the majority condemning the individual concerned. Such an accumulation of ill will only serves to make matters worse and to strengthen the so-called vice or evil in the person concerned. Another misuse of the internet is that of anonymous postings letting off steam and the anonymous letter, deriding some unfortunate person with the express expectation on the part of the sender, that others will denounce or react based on the vitriol sent, despite the fact that the writer lacked the courage to sign their name. Generally in police stations, courts of law, and other establishments, such letters are not given any credence.

Such abuses of the internet deliberately cause harm or hurt to the individual, can hinder a person's own spiritual development, and distract from higher, nobler thinking. Some may be unaware of the effects of their postings or in some cases rants, hitting others like bricks, they don't stop to think. Many replies are rattled off with no proper thought behind them. Karma makes no allowances. "Each man is personally responsible to the Law of Compensation for every word of his voluntary production" KH (ML, 258).

Those of us who are earnest in serving the Theosophical Society, the blessed movement so dear to the Masters' hearts, must try to consciously use the internet as a vehicle for the Light, as a tremendous medium for Their Work. HPB maintained that "co-workers must work like the fingers of one hand." Care must be taken at all times not to be



judgmental, to remember to send a blessing and goodwill with every single reply or e-mail, even when deleting nuisance postings or spam mail. We must be aware that the intent or motive behind the words we send will have a greater impact or influence on the receiver. Presently, the internet is an instrument of, not only the forces of Light but also those of Darkness. As beings with free will, both are necessary for us to grow, to learn to discriminate, in time to be that which we essentially are. This is the age with emphasis on the development of higher mind and for the members of the TS movement to make the best use of the internet as a vehicle, and to function at optimum level with full awareness, the advice from the Master KH is most apt, "be steadfast, wary and united" (ML, 318).

And finally inspiring words from Lord Gautama Buddha:
"The thought manifests as the word
The word manifests as the deed
The deed develops into habit
And habit hardens into character
So watch the thought and its ways with care
And let it spring from love born out of concern for all beings."



Figure With Rays of Light (1927)
Lawren Harris (1885-1970)

The Gift of the Magi

by O. Henry - William Sydney Porter (1862-1910)

[Yule is not an exclusively Christian festival. In fact, the word "yule" originally designated a Germanic pagan midwinter festival. And such winter solstice celebrations of light re-emerging from darkness have been observed all over the northern hemisphere. In that sense, Yule is universal. Also, we think of the magi as three wise men who came bearing gifts for the infant Jesus. But they would have been Zoroastrian priests from Persia; and their gifts were highly symbolic: gold for kingship, frankincense for divinity, and myrrh for healing. The giving of gifts at Yule tide is traditional, but also archetypal and thus Theosophical. In *The Voice of the Silence*, the key to the first of the seven portals of the last fragment is "dana," which means "giving" or "gift." Giving oneself to others is the first step on the road to enlightened bodhisattva-hood. In that sense, the following O. Henry short story is profoundly Theosophical.]

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the

moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating. While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad. In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young." The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and



sterling - something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art. Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length. Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window someday to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet. On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant

sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street. Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie." "Will you buy my hair?" asked Della. "I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it." Down rippled the brown cascade. "Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand. "Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present. She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation - as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value - the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made



by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends - a mammoth task. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically. "If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do - oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty- seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops. Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty." The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two - and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves. Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him. "Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again - you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice - what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor. "Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?" Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy. "You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you - sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year - what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.



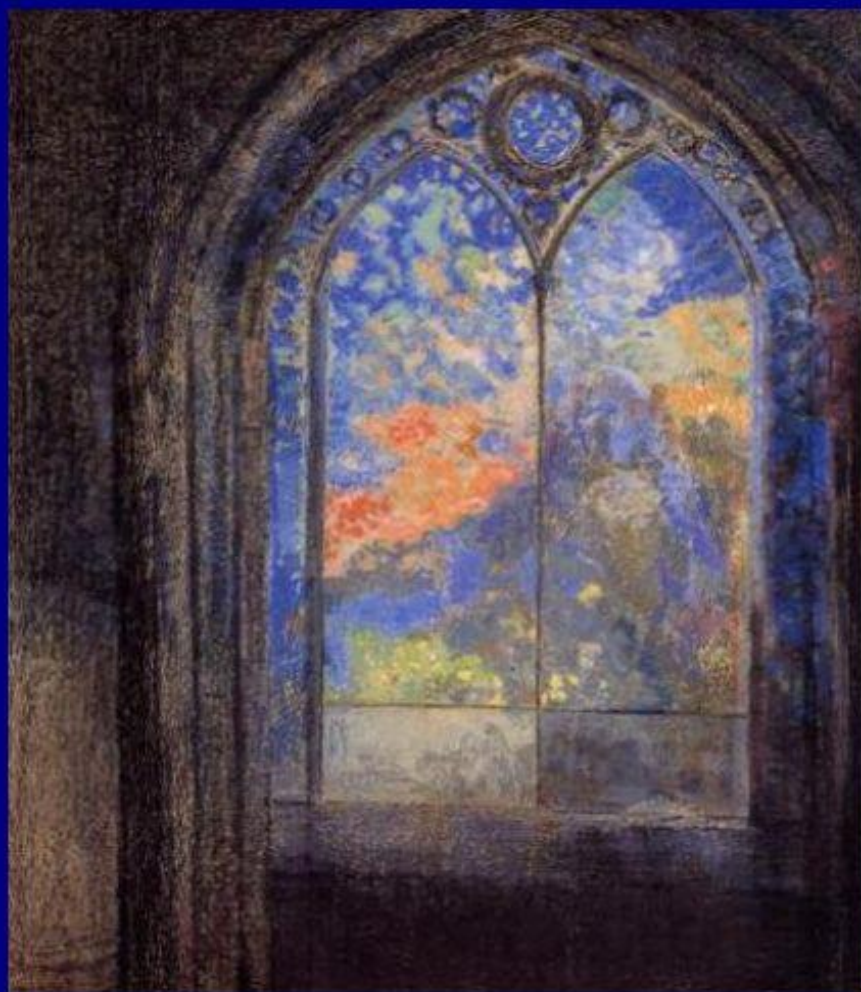
Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table. "Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first." White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat. For there lay The Combs - the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims - just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone. But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!" Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit. "Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on

it." Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled. "Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men - wonderfully wise men - who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that, of all who give gifts, these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.





The Mysterious Garden (1905)
Odilon Redon (1840–1916)

Greetings

by Theosophists

The start of a New Day... The start of a New Year.....

For students of Theosophy the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* do not need any introduction.

The Three Propositions are the core of the ideas H.P. Blavatsky and her Masters gave to us in 1875. These three ideas give us three views on Life, the Cosmos and on Man, which means on our Self.

Our higher spiritual faculties enable us to experience, visualize and identify us with these three basic ideas and incorporate them in our daily activities. And thus we discover an ever growing and more grandiose Truth.

Make it a habit when you wake up in the morning to focus your first thoughts on the characteristics of the First Proposition.

Identify yourself with the Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle and you will develop your Universal Thinking skills. Because you address yourself to Atman, your highest Principle, your Universal Self, which binds you together with everything else.

If you keep these thoughts in your heart for the rest of the day, they will stay with you and slowly the seeds will grow.

And you will grow stronger and stronger as a worker for Universal Brotherhood, Peace and Compassion.

Katherine Tingley taught us with the invocation on page nine of her wonderful book: *The Wisdom of the Heart*

"Every day has its brightness, its bloom, its color. Every day is the happiest I ever lived. There is no thought of yesterday or tomorrow, only the joy of living today, the happiness of the passing moment, the unity of all life and the noble plan of life universal. I see on one side forces of darkness, on the other those of Light; but I do not dwell on the dark side. I turn my eyes to greet the rising sun".

Elly Teeuwen and Maria Endang Sutjiati - Peeters

Elly and Maria are workers for and members of The Theosophical Society, Point Loma-Blavatsky House - The Hague, The Netherlands.



All students of Theosophy share a Wisdom that allows to appreciate very deeply aspects of the Universal Manifestation, especially in regard to the Laws that govern it, among which we have the Cyclic Law.

The annual cycle, since it is one of the shortest, sometimes is not considered really important beyond its material consideration. However, every cycle, from the spiritual point of view, may be seen as an opportunity so that life may express itself more effectively during that period of Manifestation.

Every human being who is able to realize the specific note or quality which each year has for a quickening of the evolutionary stage we are in, may become a conscious agent to help humanity as a whole to make the best use of the cycle.

May those who aspire to serve Theosophy be able to effectively realize that aspiration during 2012.

Todos los estudiantes de Teosofía compartimos una Sabiduría que nos permite apreciar muy profundamente aspectos de la Manifestación Universal sobre todo en relación a las Leyes que la rigen entre las cuales tenemos la Ley Cíclica.

El ciclo anual, por ser de los más pequeños, a veces no se le considera verdaderamente importante más allá de su consideración material. Sin embargo, todo ciclo desde el

punto de vista espiritual puede verse como una oportunidad para que la vida pueda expresarse más efectivamente en ese periodo de Manifestación.

Todo ser humano que logre desentrañar la nota o cualidad específica que ese año tiene para un aceleramiento de la etapa evolutiva que atravesamos, puede ser un agente consciente para ayudar a todo el género humano a aprovechar el ciclo de la mejor manera posible.

Que los aspirantes al servicio teosófico podamos contribuir efectivamente a eso durante el 2012.

Gaspar Torres

Gaspar is General Secretary of the Cuban Section-Adyar.



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All of us, and I really mean *all of us*, should realize that we're one and that division only exists in our bothered heads. This division, one of our most painful errors, has driven us apart and that has to change.

Let's not blind ourselves by thinking in terms of changes for the sake of the changes. The transition will irrevocable take place; time will take care of it. Let's put emphasis on co-operation in the New Year, and move towards an open interchange of experience and practical knowledge between Theosophists belonging to all traditions.

With determined efforts, knowing that all of us started off as enquirers and that we will remain students for the rest of this life-time, Light will be spread over this wonderful, fascinating, miraculous and stimulating blue planet of ours, thus keeping this blessed Movement in motion.

Wish you all you yourselves in 2012.

Jan Nicolaas Kind

Jan who lives in Brazil, is a member of the Theosophical Society - Adyar, member of the Theosophical Society - Pasadena, and associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists.



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The experience of being human is a divine gift that allows us the opportunity to fully come to realize who we are - our essence. This essence is something that we can come to recognize through developing our awareness of selves, others, and the world we live in on this earth.

I feel great gratitude for being given this opportunity - as it allows me to experience the incredible beauty of love in the world; to recognize when it is absent, and to work toward helping all of humanity to have love in their lives - in whatever capacity I am able.

We live in a dynamic and exciting time that seems to be slowly evolving towards the brotherhood of all humanity. To be part of this evolvement is an incredible opportunity - to work towards a world where love - our pure essence - unites us all.

Kathleen Hall

Kathleen is a resident of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, and is a member of the Canadian Theosophical Society.



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Shared resolutions

Every year we make resolutions. Mostly for ourselves: to quit smoking, read more or see a longtime friend. However, Theosophy shows us interconnectedness. Theosophy reminds us that our thoughts, actions and habits have a role in a bigger context than our own life. We are influencing the whole now, at this moment, with our thoughts and actions. We carry responsibility in everything.

This gives our resolutions a wider dimension. We see that our resolutions are also the resolutions of others. So we can direct ourselves to the larger whole and think what it means for us. For example, if we want a world in which the welfare will be shared equally. Do we always share equally? Can we forget ourselves when sharing?

If we can bring this into practice, we have made the world more honest. Our resolutions are not separate from the whole. Isn't that a great motivation?

Erwin Bomas

Erwin is a member of The Theosophical Society, Pont Loma-Blavatsky House - The Hague, The Netherlands.



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The dawning of a New Year fills our hearts with hope: hope for better days, hope for a better world free of injustices, cruelty and suffering. No matter what happens we always hope things will improve. In Hellenic mythology Elpis (hope) was the only spirit who did not wish to escape from Pandora's Box and remained in the vessel to bring comfort to mankind. Man's heart is like a Pandora box; hope is always there. However, the contemporary challenges we face today, require more than hope, require action, cooperation and keen will to work for a better world. May this New Year, be a year in which we may cooperate in union and harmony for the ideals of Universal Brotherhood to become a practical reality in the world we live, and not simply a utopia.

Erica Georgiades

Erica lives in Athens, Greece, and is President-founder of Hypatia Lodge and member of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) in Greece.



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At the Solstice we celebrate the sun and its cycle of renewal. Let us greet the New Year with awe and gratitude! I am grateful for marvelous internet expressions such as *Theosophy Forward* and *Theosophy Watch*. This contributes to harmony among Theosophists of different backgrounds, as seen at our annual International Theosophy Conferences. So, we have great hope for the future of struggling humanity.

As Madame Blavatsky predicted, the 20th century would be like heaven compared to the preceding centuries. So far, we have avoided world wars and depressions. Education and trade have enlarged the middle class. Thanks to the internet and television, we are a global culture that transcends borders and religions. The opportunities for Theosophical service and teaching abound. Let us continue to share the light of Theosophy in the New Year!

Garrett Riegg, Secretary International Theosophy Conferences.

Garrett lives in Oakland, California-USA, and is an associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists.



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LIFE PRACTICE PRAYER WISH

One breath at a time
our working progress
individual and collective holding vigil
holding the center up - from mind's hijack
peacefully abiding the terrain of body
its mindfulness not ever fooled,
whilst occupant mind is oft reigning fool's errand

Steady a relinquishing grasp
upon the stalking of hope ...
rather than merely shadowing Intention,
solidify its grounding thought
grant it Motion
Heart will carry out what present conditions beckon

Exert one's *self* endlessly
towards a greater good serving
all kingdoms of nature serving
right alongside one's journeying spirit
support ability to exude Kindness
practice *best* knowledge that launches readily
from the dwelling of self-empathy

The backdrop to surrounding topography
both relative and boundless,
SO matters
in the instant shift takes root
from within and without,
forever practice *indifference*
to the differences between and among
allow the sound of *such* words
to **care for deeply** the ongoing *thread soul (sutrātma)*,
this working progress
one breath at a time

Doreen Domb

Doreen lives in Grass Valley, California-USA, and has been active in various Theosophical groups. Now she considers herself an independent Theosophist, but continues to have close ties with other Theosophists and activities - both with those who are affiliates and those who are independent.



We wish that all Theosophists, from all traditions, would verbalize together, that Brotherhood starts with us. And, we all know that this is very difficult but it is what we must do to realize our First Object.

Sally and James Colbert, President and treasurer
International Theosophy Conferences

Sally and James live in Julian, California-USA, and are associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists.



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We, students of Theosophy, are supposed to be reasonable people. As such we "know" that all we can aspire from the New Year are just minor changes, which possibly we will be able to bring about in our lives, in our relationships with others, in the world at large - being aware of the fact that all big and important changes do take time.

But looking at Nature we can see that it doesn't act "reasonably", and that it throws itself into each New Year with an enormous passion to create, bringing new life into every existing form.

We know that there is Reason behind this effort, but we can observe that it works passionately as if it won't have any other opportunity to express itself.

Therefore, in the New Year, I wish us all to rediscover this sacred passion, so that it can impregnate our thoughtfulness, enabling us to make a difference.

Anton Rozman

Anton, who lives in Koper, Slovenia, is a member at-large of the Canadian Theosophical Association and member of the International Centre of Theosophical Studies and Research in Cervignano, Italy.



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2012 looms large as an end and beginning of cycles. It has never been more important to study the riches of the past as context for what is unfolding today and in the future. My wish for this year is to increase appreciation of our history as vital and substantial, intimate and expansive, flowing and intertwining. Even the most mundane events hold layers of meaning in the patterns of time. We must preserve the details of the past and present, so that future historians can continue weaving our experiences into a unity.

Janet Kerschner, Archivist TSA

Janet lives with her family in Wheaton, Illinois-USA.



From darkness into Light ... restoring hope.



Samuel Barber

Adagio for Strings

The second movement of the String Quartet, Op. 11, 1936

Click on the link below to listen!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MG_44cVjG_Q&feature=related



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