

Theosophy Forward

Moving
ahead in
the 21st
century

Main theme in this issue

Our Unity

Theosophy as Religion

Some words on Daily Life

There Is a New International President:
Now What Do We Do?

Similarities and differences of
Theosophical traditions

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.

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Theosophy as Religion

From a student

[Originally printed in *Vidya*, a magazine edited by associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists in Santa Barbara, CA, in its autumn 2013 issue, and posted on the Website www.theosophysb.org/site/publications.html]

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”
(Motto of the Maharajah of Benares).

According to H. P. Blavatsky and her teachers, one of the greatest sources of human divisiveness and one of the fundamental factors working against the purely natural feelings of brotherhood and solidarity between peoples, nations, and races is what is commonly called *religion*. We see examples throughout history of how institutionalised religions can misinterpret, mistranslate, and even invert the original teachings of their founders, while at the same time demanding rigid and unthinking adherence. For those who dogmatically cling to religious doctrine with fanatical, blind belief, even minor religious differences can provoke intolerance and condemnation. To this day, we find distorted creeds actively feeding distrust, oppression, and hatred towards others of differing views, even leading to terrorism and war. In addition, religious doctrines that perpetuate a belief in the separation between humanity and nature help to justify the rampant destruction and abuse of the natural environment that has reached a critical stage. Therefore, if we wish to affirm, as H. P. Blavatsky taught, that Theosophy is not a religion, but is religion itself, we must be extremely careful to understand and examine what her statement means.

We can begin with definitions. The word *religion* is derived from Latin *re+legere*, “to gather, to be united,” or *relegare*, “to be bound fast together.” It is the opposite of divisiveness and separateness. In an article entitled “Theosophy as Religion” H. P. Blavatsky defined the essence of religion as “that which binds not only all MEN, but also all BEINGS and all things in the entire Universe into one grand whole.” If we accept that definition as our

starting point, it would seem that to whatever extent a doctrine encourages a sense of disunity, even at the level of thought, that doctrine is violating the fundamental meaning and purpose of religion.

In the same article, H.P.B. refers to Thomas Carlyle, the 18th-century Scottish writer who described the Protestant religion of his day as a kind of “working for divine wages.” That comment aptly characterises a dominant theme of much contemporary religiosity. He called Protestantism “a prudential feeling, grounded on mere calculation, a matter of expediency and utility . . . whereby some smaller quantum of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a far larger quantum of celestial enjoyment.” The widely held dogma that a new soul is created with each human birth and that the eternal destiny of that soul is determined by the actions of a single life may help to foster religious self-interest. According to H. P. Blavatsky, such dubious metaphysical assumptions undermine a sense of responsibility for our circumstances and pervert our ideas of right and wrong while justifying selfishness instead of encouraging true morality. She quotes James Miller, the 18th-century English playwright’s description of religion: “true Religion is always mild, propitious and humble; Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood, Nor bears destruction on her chariot wheels; But stoops to polish, succour and redress, And builds her grandeur on the public good.”

This, said H. P. Blavatsky, is what true Theosophy is or ought to be: “the service of humanity” and “the alleviation of human suffering in all its forms, but especially the mental and spiritual.” It is a search for the universally true and good, not so that we may advance, but so that we may properly accompany and guide others — not just our friends and those who are kind to us, but also our so-called enemies, those who hate and revile us, and especially the outcast and the forgotten. Theosophical teaching unconditionally affirms our responsibility for all humanity and all of nature. It offers sublime morality articulated in the Sermon on the Mount, which is not merely the truly Christian way, but a universal code of ethics preached also by Buddha, Confucius, Krishna, and a long line of great Sages reaching back thousands of years before the time of Christ, as well as by true teachers of humanity ever since.

Theosophy offers no new dogma or creed and purports to bring no new revelations. Rather, it attempts to uncover the timeless truths underlying

and uniting all the great religious traditions of humankind affirming that “Truth is one, its expressions are many.” The aim to give at least partial expression to inexpressible spiritual realities, appropriate to the language, time and race of those to whom truth is being delivered is the aim of all great teachers and enlightened exemplars. In time, the overgrowth of interpretation, tradition, ritual, and misuse obscures the intended original meaning. The chief aim of H. P. Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine* was to show that, “however divergent the respective doctrines and systems of old may seem on their external or objective side, the agreement between all becomes perfect, so soon as the esoteric or inner side of these beliefs and their symbology is carefully compared and examined.” This hidden root teaching is called the Wisdom-Religion, at one time a universally accepted doctrine common to the entire human race, binding all into one family.

The first principle of the Wisdom Religion and the center around which all else revolves, is absolute unity. All of manifestation, seen and unseen, spiritual and material, is the periodical emanation by a single causeless cause — a boundless, immutable, and eternal essence. Given many names in many different traditions, this ever-present, unconditioned spiritual Reality is not different from our true Self, the Self of all. Each human soul is a ray of this spiritual sun, a constituent drop in the boundless ocean of eternal light and life, and in every aspect is inseparably bound to all other beings and to the whole. It is the working of the law of karma that maintains this unity in balance and harmony over vast cycles of time in a complex universe of seeming multiplicity and diversity. Every selfish thought or self-seeking act transgresses the divine reality of our radical interdependence, which is complete at every level. Selfishness goes against the ways of nature and will produce its corresponding reaction. Each thought — like a pebble thrown into the pond of life — will, sooner or later, set in motion every single drop of water therein. While the entire human race and all the kingdoms of nature are collectively involved in a vast, interdependent cycle of involution and evolution, each of us is also directly and ultimately responsible for our own actions. Under karma, we each have our own unique path to forge. Soul evolution requires that we learn to listen and respond to the dictates of our conscience, the god within.

The journey homeward is a steep path that leads back to self-

conscious re-union with the One. According to Theosophy, the course of many lives will lead each of us to a “direct beholding” of all the eternal verities as witnessed and confirmed by mystics and seers throughout the ages. To attain this experience will require the complete transmutation of the personal, self-centered tendencies of human nature, as well as the progressive awakening of the highest noetic faculties of perception, reason, and intuition. Each will thus learn to pierce the illusions of the senses, to see through and transcend the many veils of nature and “see into the heart of things.” Plato and Pythagoras depicted this seeing and knowing as the culmination of the philosophical quest. It is a quest for knowledge of the laws and principles governing every plane and form of existence and cannot be separated from true science as conceived by the ancients and, increasingly, by wise contemporary thinkers.

A scholar of Islamic teaching, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in his *Religion and the Order of Nature* (pp. 6-7) wrote: “The environmental crisis requires not simply rhetoric or cosmetic solutions but a death and rebirth of modern man and his worldview ... There must be the rebirth of the religious knowledge of nature, the traditional cosmologies and sacred sciences still preserved in many of the non-Western areas of the world ... Without the rediscovery of this sacred science of the order of nature and the ethics of the environment, there is no doubt that what remains of order in the natural and human worlds will turn into further chaos ... that can destroy all human life on Earth. To preserve the sanctity of life requires the re-sacralisation of nature, not in the sense of bestowing sacredness upon nature, which is beyond the power of man, but of lifting aside the veils of ignorance and pride that have hidden the sacredness of nature from the view of a whole segment of humanity.”

Not in a facile manner, but by a radical return to their original and ancient meanings religion, philosophy, and science can unite to give us the knowledge and wisdom designed to serve every human need, solve many human problems, and promote the highest progress and felicity of all beings. In order for such an awakening to be in accord with the greatest possible good, it must be achieved on behalf of all. Only then will it lead to complete *gnosis*, *Brahma Vidya*, “god-knowledge” otherwise known as *Theosophia*, the “wisdom of the Divine.” This is true religion, declared H. P. Blavatsky, “the Beacon Light of truth towards which in all ages the imprisoned human soul has struggled.” Thereby, H.P.B indicates: “He who gets there must have ceased to

be a number, and have become *all numbers*. He must have forgotten the illusion of separation, and accept only the truth of collective individuality.”

The drop must re-become the ocean and live by it, in it, and for it.



Our Unity Series

In this second quarter 2014 issue of Theosophy Forward four contributions by:

Barend Voorham

Hans van Aurich

David Grossman

Ali Ritsema

... it all starts with an Ideal

by Barend Voorham – The Netherlands

It all starts with an Ideal. Idealism belongs to the *buddhic* part of our consciousness. *Buddhi* gives a vision of Truth. And the Truth is that in the core of our being we are united. It is an illusion, a *mâyâ*, to think we are separated from each other. Students in Theosophy should know that.

That doesn't mean we are all the same. Not even two leaves of a tree are exactly the same. So it is very natural that we all have another view of the Oneness of all beings. We all have developed our capacities in our own individual way.

We should use our capacities to build up an Ideal of the most perfect Theosophical Movement each of us can imagine. See it before your spiritual eye. A powerful, international, universal Movement of good willing men and women working for the benefit of all beings. They really form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. Thanks to the Theosophical teachings they are an authority for all those who crave for light. They have a strong influence on science, philosophy, religion, yes on all parts of society.

There is an open, free exchange of ideas between the Theosophical workers. A Theosophist respects the honest opinions and convictions of others and gives his own opinion as a contribution to achieve a greater Truth. So we help each other to understand Theosophy better.

Every Theosophist should build up this Ideal. If you feed it sufficiently, meditate on it, at a certain moment you *become* it. You *are* your Ideal. You are what you know you should be. Mahatma Gandhi says that man has two windows to his mind: through one he can see his own self as it is; through the other, he can see what he ought to be. We should see ourselves as compassionate co-workers of the Theosophical Movement.

Thoughts precede acts. When this Ideal is an integrated part of our consciousness it will influence all our acts, not only those which concern the Theosophical Movement, but relating to everything you do.

There is no difficulty we cannot conquer when this *buddhic* Ideal is the driving force in our lives. So we have to speak openly and sincerely with our fellow Theosophists – whether or not they belong to other organizations – about the differences in view, the differences in methods and especially in how we can give Theosophy its rightful place in the world.



Unity or multiplicity in the Theosophical Movement

by Hans van Aurich – The Netherlands

In the beginning of this century, a book entitled *Theosofie* by the Dutch author and Theosophist Ruud D.C. Jansen came my way. It is a small book pretending to be a small guide on the origin of the theosophical movement and a bird's-eye view on the theosophical topics.

It astonished me that the writer discerned, in a small country as The Netherlands, eight organisations calling themselves theosophical together with the Arcane school (Alice Bailey), the Liberal Catholic Church and the International Order of the Round Table. The Theosophical palette in the Netherlands is therefore much extended. Although fractionation possibly is a typical Dutch vice, nevertheless one observes elsewhere in the world fractionation of the Theosophical movement as well.

What is the reason, you wonder. If you compare Theosophy with life, it is easy to understand. Life has nevertheless one source or more strongly: Life is the source of our very existence. If you want to reach that source, you must become the source. In practice people approach this entirely different. One wants to selfishly embrace life, which means keeping it for yourself and therefore it becomes a matter of possession instead of a matter of being. And of course it does not work this way, you only can *be* Life.

A parallel occurs with Theosophy, meanwhile rapidly degenerating into *the* Theosophy. As *the* Theosophy is a restriction of theosophy as such, people approach it in a completely different way. Instead of living Theosophy or being Theosophy, some individuals want to selfishly embrace Theosophy in order to hold it for themselves, claiming the right to know everything of Theosophy.

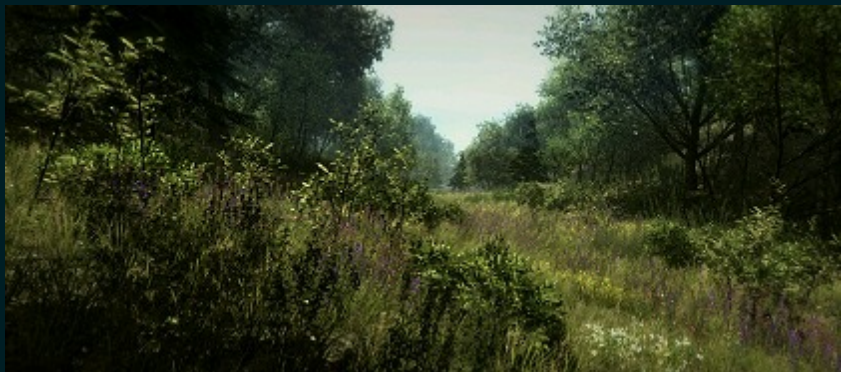
It is this attitude that drifts the student away from the real source which is Unity. Because of this he is living in a lower amplitude of vibration,

working with lower energy which blocks the contact with the one awareness, with the Unity. Thus fragmentation monopolizes the conversation and gives rise to dissociation and creation of wrong habits. There is no more verification of what one is doing and learning, which tends to lead to “believing” rather than inquiring and researching. Consequently one belief is frequently replaced by the other and therefore one habit by the other. And there, of course, we find the key, because by attentively observing and scrutinizing the situation, one is able to see through a negative situation in order to convert it into a positive situation.

Is it not so that for every Theosophist there is *nothing higher than truth*? The Theosophical seal teaches us: “no religion higher than truth.” But what is that truth? (And do not fall for it too easily, because you will restrict the term immediately!) Before knowing it, we are creating our own truth. By releasing Truth By keeping our thought absolutely free about what Truth is, we release Truth. Truth is reflected in absolute freedom of thought. Love for wisdom makes truth accessible.

Is this how we come to unity among the various Theosophical groups? There is – in my opinion – barely a chance it will happen. Maybe it is better to maintain the existing situation of many points of view, because Unity can only know itself by the multiplicity.

This is the ancient paradox.



Some Reflections On Unity

by David Grossman – USA

When unity is looked at from a metaphysical perspective, I am reminded of the following statements from *The Secret Doctrine*: “The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — a spark of the former — through the Cycle of Incarnation (or “Necessity”) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term” (1:17). “The radical unity of the ultimate essence of each constituent part of compounds in Nature — from Star to mineral Atom, from the highest Dhyani-Chohan to the smallest infusoria, in the fullest acceptation of the term, and whether applied to the spiritual, intellectual, or physical worlds” (1:120).

The implication here is that unity is a cause rather than an effect or outcome of fitting together. So the question becomes: How do we work from a basis of unity? First, we realize that we are all on the same team, attempting to be conscious coworkers with nature. Robert Crosbie, founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT), in writing on this subject pointed out that the basis for union among Theosophists is “similarity of aim purpose, and teaching.” Through this triplicity we become “magnetically united” even if our methods of work differ, as they naturally will.

One way we can work in unity is by getting to know each other. Most individuals from a particular Theosophical tradition don't really know much about the other traditions. I have found that some students in the Theosophical Society, serious thinkers, have never read any writings by William Q. Judge, which is their loss. And likewise ULT students know little about the real work of Colonel H. S. Olcott (original cofounder and first president), or have read any of Annie Besant, Gottfried de Purucker, or even *The Mahatma Letters*. So a unifying factor might be a bit of unbiased exploration of the valuable resources in the various traditions, putting aside historical prejudices, which will only be dissipated by transforming the present. There is no need to rewrite history. It seems to me that, when we spend time debating history, we are losing

valuable time in the present for the work at hand. Hopefully that doesn't go on so often anymore.

Another way to expand our perspectives and give us new insights is by inviting speakers from different traditions to speak at our halls and lodges. Students I've spoken with from various corners of the Theosophical world all acknowledge H. P. Blavatsky as the primary messenger of Theosophy in recent centuries.

In the spirit of unity and our common philosophy, as presented by H.P.B., it might be interesting and useful to pick a topic with contemporary world importance, like climate change, materialistic reductionism, world hunger, or some other such subject and have all Theosophical organizations, publications, websites, online study groups, and whoever is willing to participate, take up this topic simultaneously, as each sees fit, in the light of Theosophy. Lectures, seminars, workshops, online study groups, articles, discussions groups, art installations, or whatever form of thought and dissemination appeals to a group or individual could be used to explore the subject. Internationally infusing Theosophical thought into the world through the lens of a chosen subject has power. Later a Web page can be made available to post and share findings, conclusions, questions, or thoughts. If individuals and groups find this exercise edifying we might do another such topic in the future.



Our Unity Lies in Our Quest for Truth

by Ali Ritsema – The Netherlands

Truth is the quest of every Theosophist, says H. P. Blavatsky. It is this quest for Truth that all students of Theosophy (should) have in common and it is in this quest that lies our Unity.

As expressed in the seal of the Theosophical Society: *Satyan Nasti paro Dharma*, “Truth is beyond all teachings/religions.”

“Although there is no absolute Truth on any subject whatsoever in a world as finite and conditioned as man himself, there are relative truths and we have to make the best we can of them,” wrote H.P.B. Most important for our search is to prepare our mind because universal Truth can only be mirrored by our spiritual consciousness and cannot be found within our brain capacities. Our spiritual consciousness is the Manasic mind illumined by the light of Buddhi, our true Self.

“All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory apparent *self* to recognize our true self in a transcendental divine life,” according to the Maha Chohan.

That recognition requires our complete union with Buddhi-Manas. To reach that union, we have to paralyze the senses of the personality, purify the mind, and acquire the inner perceptions that never deceive.

According to H.P.B., some men and women exist who have thoroughly qualified for this, whose aim is to dwell under the protection of their divine Nature. And she advises: “Let them at least take courage to live the life and not to conceal it from the eyes of others! No one’s opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one’s own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, developed to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on

he ideal we have set ourselves, and look *beyond*, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet.”

And H.P.B. follows that advice by a stern remark: “Those who are capable of making this effort are the true Theosophists; all others are but members, more or less indifferent and very often useless” (*Collected Writings* 11:135).

Let us unite in this effort and encourage and support each other in our quest. Let us be driven by the yearning of our inner true Self for Truth. Let us become a point of light in this world so that we, united in spirit as seekers for Truth, will be a beacon of Theosophy in this limitless desert of earth life.



Some Words on Daily Life

by an unnamed Master of the Wisdom

[From *Lucifer* 1 (January 1888): 344-346; reprinted in H. P. Blavatsky's *Collected Writings* 7:173-175.]

It is divine philosophy alone, the spiritual and psychic blending of man with nature, which, by revealing the fundamental truths that lie hidden under the objects of sense and perception, can promote a spirit of unity and harmony in spite of the great diversities of conflicting creeds. Theosophy, therefore, expects and demands from the Fellows of the Society a great mutual toleration and charity for each other's shortcomings, ungrudging mutual help in the search for truths in every department of nature — moral and physical. And this ethical standard must be unflinchingly applied to daily life.

Theosophy should not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics, epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy *must be made practical*; and it has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless digressions, in the sense of desultory orations and fine talk. Let every Theosophist only do his duty, that which he can and ought to do, and very soon the sum of human misery, within and around the areas of every Branch of your Society, will be found visibly diminished. Forget SELF in working for others — and the task will become an easy and a light one for you

...

Do not set your pride in the appreciation and acknowledgment of that work by others. Why should any member of the Theosophical Society, striving to become a Theosophist, put any value upon his neighbours' good or bad opinion of himself and his work, so long as he himself knows it to be useful and beneficent to other people? Human praise and enthusiasm are short-lived at best; the laugh of the scoffer and the condemnation of the indifferent looker-on are sure to follow, and generally to out-weigh the admiring praise of the friendly. Do not despise the opinion of the world, nor provoke it uselessly to unjust criticism. Remain rather as indifferent to the abuse as to the praise of those who can never know you as you really are, and who ought, therefore, to

find you unmoved by either, and ever placing the approval or condemnation of your own *Inner Self* higher than that of the multitudes.

Those of you who would know yourselves in the spirit of truth, learn to live alone even amidst the great crowds which may sometimes surround you. Seek communion and intercourse only with the God within your own soul; heed only the praise or blame of that deity which can never be separated from your *true self, as it is verily that God itself*: called the HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS. Put without delay your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to remain only an intention — expecting, meanwhile, neither reward nor even acknowledgment for the good you may have done. Reward and acknowledgment are in yourself and inseparable from you, as it is your Inner Self alone which can appreciate them at their true degree and value. For each one of you contains within the precincts of his inner tabernacle the Supreme Court — prosecutor, defence, jury and judge — whose sentence is the only one without appeal; since none can know you better than you do yourself, when once you have learned to judge that Self by the never wavering light of the inner divinity — your higher Consciousness. Let, therefore, the masses, which can never know your true selves, condemn your outer selves according to their own false lights ...

The majority of the public Areopagus is generally composed of self-appointed judges, who have never made a permanent deity of any idol save their own personalities — their lower selves; for those who try in their walk in life, to follow their *inner light* will never be found judging, far less condemning, those weaker than themselves. What does it matter then, whether the former condemn or praise, whether they humble you or exalt you on a pinnacle? They will never comprehend you one way or the other. They may make an idol of you, so long as they imagine you a faithful mirror of themselves on the pedestal or altar which they have reared for you, and while you amuse or benefit them. You cannot expect to be anything for them but a temporary *fetish*, succeeding another fetish just overthrown, and followed in your turn by another idol. Let, therefore, those who have created that idol destroy it whenever they like, casting it down with as little cause as they had for setting it up. Your Western Society can no more live without its Khalif of an hour than it can worship one for any longer period; and whenever it breaks an idol and then besmears it with mud, it is not the model, but the disfigured image created

by its own foul fancy and which it has endowed with its own vices, that Society dethrones and breaks.

Theosophy can only find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life, thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity, and brotherly love. Its Society, as a body, has a task before it which, unless performed with the utmost discretion, will cause the world of the indifferent and the selfish to rise up in arms against it. Theosophy has to fight intolerance, prejudice, ignorance and selfishness, hidden under the mantle of hypocrisy. It has to throw all the light it can from the torch of Truth, with which its servants are entrusted. It must do this without fear or hesitation, dreading neither reproof nor condemnation. Theosophy, through its mouthpiece, the Society, has to tell the TRUTH to the very face of LIE; to beard the tiger in its den, without thought or fear of evil consequences, and to set at defiance calumny and threats. *As an Association*, it has not only the right, but the duty to uncloak vice and do its best to redress wrongs, whether through the voice of its chosen lecturers or the printed word of its journals and publications — making its accusations, however, as impersonal as possible. But its Fellows, or Members, have *individually* no such right. Its followers have, first of all, to set the example of a firmly outlined and as firmly applied morality, before they obtain the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of a like ethic unity and singleness of purpose in other associations or individuals. No Theosophist should blame a brother, whether within or outside of the association; neither may he throw a slur upon another's actions or denounce him, lest he himself lose the right to be considered as a Theosophist. For, as such, he has to turn away his gaze from the imperfections of his neighbour, and centre rather his attention upon his own shortcomings, in order to correct them and become wiser. Let him not show the disparity between claim and action in another, but, whether in the case of a brother, a neighbour, or simply a fellow man, let him rather ever help one weaker than himself on the arduous walk of life.

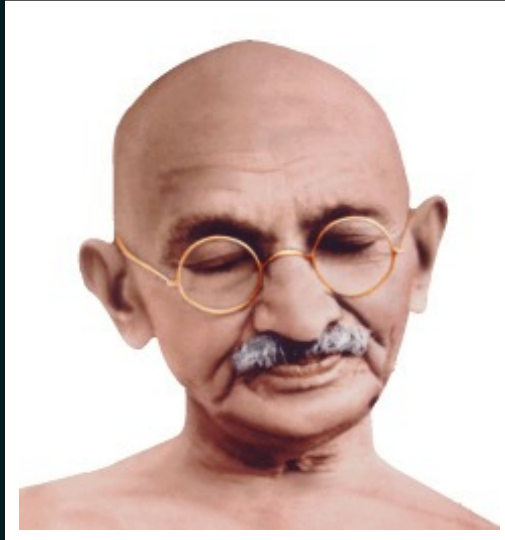
The problem of true Theosophy and its great mission are, first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in men; and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness.

Such is the common work placed before all who are willing to act on these principles. It is a laborious task, and will require strenuous and persevering exertion; but it must lead you insensibly to progress, and leave you no room for any selfish aspirations outside the limits traced ... Do not indulge personally in unbrotherly comparison between the task accomplished by yourself and the work left undone by your neighbours or brothers. In the fields of Theosophy *none is held to weed out a larger plot of ground than his strength and capacity will permit him*. Do not be too severe on the merits or demerits of one who seeks admission among your ranks, as the truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to Karma, and can be dealt with justly by that all-seeing LAW alone. Even the simple presence amidst you of a well-intentioned and sympathising individual may help you magnetically. ... You are the free volunteer workers on the fields of Truth, and as such must leave no obstruction on the paths leading to that field.

* * *

The degree of success or failure are the landmarks the masters have to follow, as they will constitute the barriers placed with your own hands between yourselves and those whom you have asked to be your teachers. The nearer your approach to the goal contemplated — the shorter the distance between the student and the Master.





“Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good.”

Mohandas Gandhi

(The preeminent leader of Indian nationalism in British-ruled India)



Silence

The Voice of the Silence

12 (Verses 161-181)

by John Algeo – USA

The preceding group of verses, 150-160, dealt with the Path as a communal experience, a band of servers who, life after life, unselfishly devote themselves to the welfare of others. The next dozen verses focus on the individual's inner self. They treat the theme of Wisdom and humbleness, and in the process play with the concept of opposites, which are not always what they seem.

A. VERSES [161-172].

[161] Be humble, if thou wouldst attain to Wisdom.

[162] Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered.

[163] Be like the ocean which receives all streams and rivers. The ocean's mighty calm remains unmoved; it feels them not.

[164] Restrain by thy Divine thy lower Self.

[165] Restrain by the Eternal the Divine.

[166] Aye, great is he, who is the slayer of desire.

[167] Still greater he, in whom the Self Divine has slain the very knowledge of desire.

[168] Guard thou the lower lest it soil the Higher.

[169] The way to final freedom is within thy Self.

[170] That way begins and ends outside of self.

[171] Unpraised by men and humble is the mother of all rivers, in Tirthika's proud sight; empty the human form though filled with Am ta's sweet waters, in the sight of fools. Withal, the birthplace of the sacred rivers is the sacred land, and he who Wisdom hath, is honored by all men.

[172] Arhans and Sages of the boundless Vision are rare as is the blossom of the Udumbara tree. Arhans are born at midnight hour, together with

the sacred plant of nine and seven stalks, the holy flower that opens and blooms in darkness, out of the pure dew and on the frozen bed of snow-capped heights, heights that are trodden by no sinful foot.

B. COMMENT. Verses 161-163 deal with the association of true Wisdom and humility, which is very old, widespread, and important. In an ancient ritual catechism, the question is asked of one called “Most Wise”: “Why Most Wise?” And the answer given is “Because most humble.” True Wisdom is knowing the limits of one’s knowledge, so the English poet William Cowper (1731-1800) wrote: “Knowledge is proud that he has learn’d so much; / Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.”

The word *wise* is related to the Latin verb *videre*, “to see,” and thus to English words like *vision*, as well as to the Sanskrit word *veda*, “sacred knowledge.” The word *humble* derives from the Latin word *humus*, meaning “earth, ground, soil.” The sacred knowledge of Wisdom comes from seeing clearly into the ground of things. Wisdom is not something airy; it is anchored in the earth.

The person who is truly wise has the calm of the deep ocean, as opposed to the turbulence of the stream or river. Streams and rivers are symbols of life in its changing nature, ever flowing on. The ocean is a symbol of eternity in its vastness and peace. Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita is caught in a battle, which is really the stream of life; he learns from Krishna to find the ocean of eternity within himself.

The image of ocean and river brings us to another subject: The question of our identity, of who or what we really are. This is, in one sense, the subject of both the Bhagavad Gita and of *The Voice of the Silence*. Verses 164-170 explore three levels of self-identification: the Eternal, the Divine, and the lower. The lower self is the self of desire and of desire-knowledge, which in Theosophy is called the personality or kama-manasic self. H.P.B. identifies it in a gloss: Gloss 28. Meaning the personal lower self.

The Divine is the higher self — Theosophically, the individuality or buddhi-manasic self. That Divine higher self cannot actually be “soiled” by the lower self. But the experience of the lower self allows the higher self to grow, and if the experience of the lower self is not of such a nature as to promote the growth and development of the higher self, metaphorically it can be said to

“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

Buddhists in the sacred land, Tibet, and vice versa.

Bigots don't recognize values other than their own. And so another religion's sacred river is regarded as just muddy water, even though it may flow from the "sacred land." So too the human form or nature may seem "empty" (of spiritual value) to the unwise, although it is filled with the waters of immortality (Amrita) or Eternity. *Amrita* is literally "non-death" (from *a-*, as also in English *atonal*, *amoral*," plus the root \sqrt{mr} , "die," found also in English *mortal*). The fool thinks human nature is empty, merely the result of random mutation and natural selection. But it is filled with the "sweet waters" of immortality, "Amrita," which is also used as a term for the elixir of immortality, like that from the philosophers' stone of the Alchemists. That is, our humble human personality contains the Divine self or immortal individuality, which only the wise perceive.

Arhans or arhats (mentioned in verse 172) are enlightened beings. H.P.B. explains "boundless vision" in a gloss: Gloss 30. Boundless vision or psychic superhuman sight. An Arhan is credited with seeing and knowing all at a distance as well as on the spot.

Remember, however, that the word *wisdom* is related to the word *vision*, so "Sages of the boundless Vision" may also be thought of as those who have acquired the Wisdom. Their vision is not so much of outward things, as into themselves. Rare, indeed, are those sages who know themselves. The *udumbara* is a sacred fig tree in Hindu mythology, an ally of the gods in their struggle against the demons.

The midnight hour, when arhans are born, is the darkest time of the night. It is traditional for holy beings to be born at the darkest hour, as Christ's birthday was located at the winter solstice, the darkest time of the year. They are born in darkness because they renew the light of Wisdom. So also H.P.B. comments on "the sacred plant of nine and seven stalks": Gloss 31 . . . Shagna plant.

It is a plant from whose fibers is woven a cloth from which is made an initiation robe symbolic of Wisdom. This plant too blooms in darkness because it represents the coming of Light. Darkness, cold, the winter, midnight — all these are humble, yin qualities. But out of them comes the Light of Wisdom, which is also warmth, summer, and noontide — yang qualities. Darkness and light, yin and yang, and all other pairs of opposites are necessary in the world.

Opposites need not be antagonists. They may be complements.

C. MEDITATION.

1. Visualize either of the following: (a) A river, winding through the countryside, in some places broad and slow-moving, in other places swift and turbulent with whitewater, but ultimately flowing into the ocean, whose calm depths are undisturbed by the river's course. (b) A solitary sacred fig tree growing in the snow at the top of a mountain and marvelously blooming at the hour of midnight, shedding its fragrance into the crisp night air.

2. Consider ways in which things that are opposites are complementary rather than oppositional, such as the diamond and the lotus flower (as in the mantra *Om mani padme hum*, "Oh the jewel in the lotus, ah!"). Also consider ways in which things are not always what they seem to be.

* * *

The next group of nine verses concerns the nature of our quest, both as a struggle between parts of ourselves and as a path that divides into two branches.

A. VERSES [173-181].

[173] No Arhan, O *lanoo*, becomes one in that birth when for the first time the soul begins to long for final liberation. Yet, O thou anxious one, no warrior volunteering fight in the fierce strife between the living and the dead, not one recruit can ever be refused the right to enter on the Path that leads toward the field of battle.

[174] For, either he shall win, or he shall fall.

[175] Yea, if he conquers, Nirvāna shall be his. Before he casts his shadow off his mortal coil, that pregnant cause of anguish and illimitable pain — in him will men a great and holy Buddha honor.

[176] And if he falls, e'en then he does not fall in vain; the enemies he slew in the last battle will not return to life in the next birth that will be his.

[177] But if thou wouldst Nirvāna reach, or cast the prize away, let not the fruit of action and inaction be thy motive, thou of dauntless heart.

[178] Know that the Bodhisattva who liberation changes for renunciation to don the miseries of Secret Life, is called "thrice honored," O

thou candidate for woe throughout the cycles.

[179] The Path is one, disciple, yet in the end, twofold. Marked are its stages by four and seven Portals. At one end — bliss immediate, and at the other — bliss deferred. Both are of merit the reward: the choice is thine.

[180] The one becomes the two, the Open and the Secret. The first one leadeth to the goal, the second, to Self-immolation.

[181] When to the Permanent is sacrificed the mutable, the prize is thine: the drop returneth whence it came. The Open Path leads to the changeless change — Nirvana, the glorious state of Absoluteness, the Bliss past human thought.

B. COMMENT.

Verse 173 tells us that treading the Path is a long and arduous journey, not an easy shortcut. Just wanting to reach the end of our quest does not bring us to it. Yet, as the Tao Te Ching says, the longest journey begins with the first step. So we must begin if we are ever to arrive. This verse also, however, promises that no one who wants to undertake the quest is ever refused.

Verses 174-176 tell us that no effort made on this journey is ever in vain. Every effort to advance on that Path will produce its effect. Verse 174 points out the obvious fact that we will either win or fall in this task. If we win, we will have our due reward; if we fall, the experience has not been a failure, for whatever we have achieved, however little or great it may be, will carry over to our next life and become the foundation for a renewed effort then. These verses are reminiscent of the ending of H.P.B.'s memorable statement "There Is a Road": "For those who win onward, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and save humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come."

These verses also use and explain the metaphor of a battle, which is a very frequent alternative to the metaphor of a journey. The battle is, of course, an interior one, a conflict between aspects of ourselves. So gloss 32 explains that the "living" and the "dead," between whom the battle is fought, are both ourselves: Gloss 32. The "living" is the immortal higher Ego, and the "dead" — the lower personal ego.

Verse 177 begins a focused discussion of the two Paths, which is the major symbolic theme of this second fragment. The Path of discipleship, which is the process of coming into knowledge of oneself and of wholeness — both within ourselves and with all life around and above us — reaches a dividing point. The one Path becomes two. One of the branches leads to liberation from limitations and pain, that is, it takes us out of this world and brings us to Nirvana. The other branch, however, returns to this world, giving those who take it the opportunity to become Servers of humanity, or Bodhisattvas of Compassion.

The phrase “cast the prize away” has a gloss (33) referring the reader to a later gloss (34) to verse 306 in Fragment 3. That later gloss is a long discussion of the doctrine of the *trikaya* or “three bodies (of the Buddha).” That doctrine will be treated in detail in the third fragment of *The Voice*. It includes the *dharmakaya*, which is the Buddha body of those who take the Path of Liberation to Nirvana, and the *nirmanakaya*, which is the Buddha body of those who take the Path of Renunciation of Nirvana in order to remain in the world and serve it.

As gloss 34 says, those who take the Path of Renunciation of a Nirmanakaya lead a “Secret Life” because they are in, but not of, the world. Consequently they work in quietness and mystery for the welfare of all beings and especially of humanity: Gloss 34. The “Secret Life” is life as a Nirmanakaya.

The two Paths are also called “open” and “secret,” as verse 180 states and gloss 35 explains: Gloss 35. The “Open” and the “Secret Path” — or the one taught to the layman, the exoteric and the generally accepted, and the other the Secret Path — the nature of which is explained at initiation.

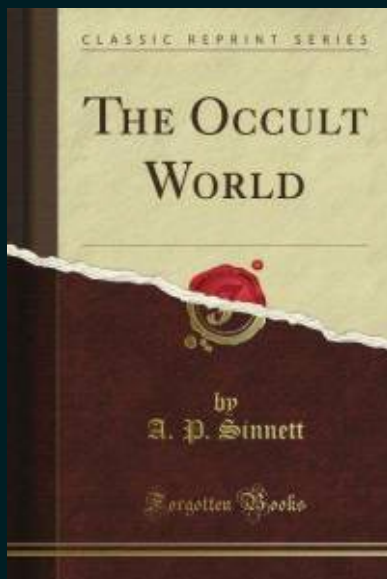
The Open Path is exoteric because all religions speak of salvation or illumination or enlightenment or liberation as the goal of life. But the other Path is esoteric or Secret because the ideal of remaining in the world as a behind-the-scenes helper of humanity is not a common theme in exoteric religions, being taught chiefly in the esoteric tradition.

The four portals referred to in verse 179 are perhaps the four states of verse 22, and the “seven portals” are dealt with in fragment three, entitled “The Seven Portals.”

C. MEDITATION.

Think about choices in life that must be made. Think of the choice between personal benefit and selfless service of others. Can we benefit ourselves while ignoring others? Can we serve others without benefiting ourselves? Imagine a road that divides, at whose fork you stand.

To be continued.



L. Frank Baum and Theosophy - Part II.

by John Algeo - USA

After the arrival in India of the two Founders of the Theosophical Society, that land became the center of Theosophical activity and has remained so ever since, at least in the sentiments of Theosophists around the world. In fact, other countries have developed more innovative methods of disseminating Theosophy than the traditional lecture-discussion format that characterizes the meetings of most Theosophical Lodges. However, the ambience of the Theosophical Society is intimately linked with India, in no small measure because of the activities of the two Founders in that land.

In 1879 Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott went on a tour in the north of India and were warmly welcomed everywhere. In Allahabad they stayed with Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Sinnett, both of whom joined the Society. Mr. Sinnett was editor of *The Pioneer*, then India's foremost English-language newspaper, and he had willingly offered to publish any interesting facts about their work. The connection of the Society with British India through Sinnett was an important one in several ways, not least because of Sinnett's interest in the Theosophical Masters, which led to his correspondence with them, resulting first in his books *The Occult World* (1881) and *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883), as well much later in a central work of Theosophy: *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. and K.H* (1923).

Finding their postal correspondence becoming too heavy, Blavatsky and Olcott founded *The Theosophist* magazine, the first issue of which appeared on 1 October 1879. In November of 1879, a meeting was held to celebrate the Society's fourth anniversary, at which three hundred guests were present. During that same year Blavatsky began to outline a book that was advertised as "*The Secret Doctrine*, a new version of *Isis Unveiled*." Work on that new volume, however, was not to proceed until considerably later, and its publication did not occur until 1888.

In 1880 Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott visited Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka) and were enthusiastically received by the Buddhists of the island, which included most of its inhabitants. They drew round themselves practically all the chief priests of Ceylon and formed the Buddhist Theosophical Society in that land.

Olcott became greatly concerned about the ability of Ceylonese Buddhists to practice their religion freely. The British governor of Ceylon, trying to promote Christianity on the island and to discourage the public celebration of “pagan” practices, had forbidden Buddhist public processions, which had long been customary on special Buddhist holy days. Olcott, relying on his American reputation, went to the Foreign Office in London to protest such discrimination on religious grounds. He was successful, so the right to hold religious processions in Ceylon was restored.

On his return to the island, Olcott also went all around the country founding Buddhist schools for Ceylonese children, whose formal education had been restricted to Christian missionary schools. As a result of such actions, Olcott became a national hero in Ceylon, where his statue is in the main square of the capital city, Colombo; his birthday became a national holiday; and his image has appeared repeatedly on postage stamps. No other non-Ceylonese has ever been so highly regarded and honored.

Although Colonel Olcott was the lecturer and organizer, the phenomena of Madame Blavatsky caused her to be the chief attraction throughout India. When in Simla in 1880, she gave striking demonstrations of her powers, they were reported and discussed throughout India and elsewhere. Those phenomena are described in A. P. Sinnett's book *The Occult World*, published in 1881. At that time, while Blavatsky remained in Bombay to edit *The Theosophist*, Col. Olcott went on another tour in Ceylon.

In 1881, Olcott published his *Buddhist Catechism* for educating Buddhist youngsters in their religion and founded a Buddhist Educational Association. That catechism has never been out of print since its first publication and is still widely used as a basic introduction to the religion. It is faintly ironic but eclectically appropriate that the best and most widely used introduction to Buddhism is in a format characteristic of Christian instruction, both Protestant and Catholic.

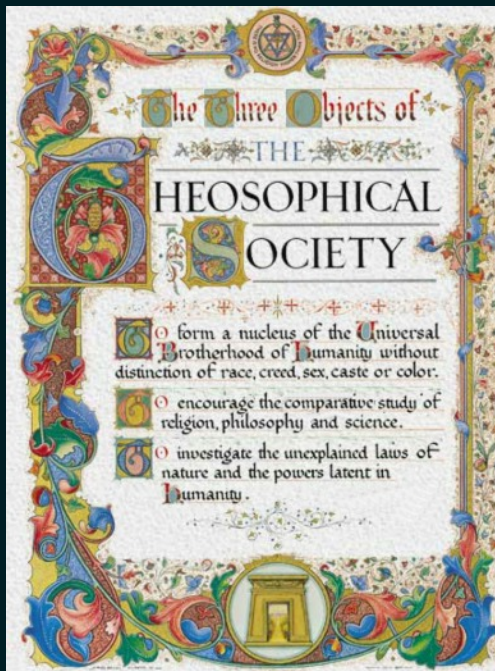
In 1882, the two Founders undertook further tours in India. Col. Olcott again visited Ceylon, where he cured a paralytic person, thereby discovering his remarkable healing powers, of which he had had earlier only slight acquaintance in the form of mesmeric passes, which he had used on a few occasions. For a few years he cured many others with extraordinary success. Finally, however, he was advised by his master to give up such healing activities, as he was being called upon too frequently to exercise them and the strain on him was too great.

Meanwhile in that same year, Madame Blavatsky went on a visit to Simla and from there journeyed into Sikkim to meet the two Masters who were the “inner founders” of the Society. The seventh Anniversary of the Society was held in Bombay with thirty-nine branches or lodges participating. Blavatsky and Olcott then left Bombay to establish a new permanent international headquarters for the Society in Adyar, Madras (now called Chennai). A history of that event entitled “Leading Them to a Vision” by S. Muthiah was published in the *Hindu* newspaper for October 22, 2007.

“A reader who rather belatedly caught up with my item on *Huddlestone Gardens* (Miscellany, May 21), recently sent me an article by C. V. K. Maithreya which narrates how the brothers Soobiah and Narasimhulu, the sons of Justice Muthuswamy of Salem, had ‘invited’ Blavatsky and Olcott to visit *Huddlestone Gardens*, which was up for sale at the time. When they got there, Mme Blavatsky had ‘an inner call to establish the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society at the place.’ With the help of Iyaloo Naidu and Justice Muthuswamy the sale was put through and the Theosophical Society put down roots on the banks of the Adyar. Soobiah, Maithreya, ... was called by Blavatsky as her ‘son’ and he was present by her side at all the subsequent purchases that were made to expand the *Huddlestone Gardens* property.

“Soobiah who was one of the founders of the Young Men’s Indian Association, was an officer in the Department of Sea Customs. Despite his official position, he involved himself with Annie Besant’s Home Rule movement. When Gandhiji visited Adyar, it was Soobiah who showed him around. Justice Muthuswamy, for his part, was associated with *The Pioneer* of Lucknow, edited by A. P. Sinnett, through a mutual friend, the Theosophist, Alan Octavian Hume.

“In April 1882, Soobiah, the spiritualist in the family, Narasimhulu, their father and other family members enrolled themselves as members of the Theosophical Society. Today, the sixth generation of the family is represented in the Society’s membership by Upasika and Aditi Maithreya. With an unbroken line of membership through six generations, Justice Muthuswamy’s family is the oldest family associated with the Society.”



Human Regeneration - Part III.

Regeneration and the Objects of the T.S.

by Radha Burnier - India

[Recognizing regeneration as the kernel of all Theosophical work, the International Theosophical Centre at Naarden, The Netherlands, jointly with the Federation of Theosophical Societies in Europe, organized two seminars in July 1990, with a number of office-bearers, workers and members of the Society from different countries as participants. The proceedings of the seminar were published as a book under the title Human Regeneration.]

Although the Theosophical Society has three Objects, it surely has only a single purpose, which is to uplift humanity from the moral and spiritual point of view. This is not identical with what most people call progress. But moral and spiritual regeneration will be the strongest force in bringing about even material progress. Everywhere we see attempts that are retarded because of selfishness, tensions, and indifference. Therefore progress must centre around a new outlook, new attitudes.

The Objects of the Society cannot be unrelated to each other, for they are all related to the question of human progress and perfection, to regeneration. If we think of them as separate, each one having its own independent purpose, they may not help to fulfil the goal of the T.S. It is probably necessary for members of the T.S. throughout the world to enquire into what these Objects signify in terms of regeneration, the upliftment of the human mind — whatever one likes to call it.

Universal brotherhood, the realization of a mind in which there is no prejudice whatsoever, no barrier against anything, is regeneration, because such a consciousness is totally different from the ordinary consciousness. It has, as mentioned, a religious quality. The realization of the indivisibility of existence is the aim of true religion. In "Is Theosophy a Religion?" H.P.B. says that religion per se is that which unites all men, and all beings into one whole; it is not something which divides. So the experience of unity is a religious experience, it is a new kind of perception, a new quality of the mind.

This is a marvel, because we are in the midst of incredible diversity, and the evolutionary process implies inequality. Nothing in manifestation is like anything else. This is an absolute fact in nature. When we think two things are alike, it is because they bear some resemblance to each other, not because they are identical. In a remarkable book, *Human Destiny* (by Pierre Lecomte du Noüy [New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947], the scientist author outlined as the aims of evolution: harmony, freedom, and individuality. He argued that as evolution progresses, there is a greater and greater revelation of uniqueness. When we think of perfection, we may make the mistake of imagining that all beings who are perfect must be alike. It is not so. They are all perfect, but each in his or her own unique way. That uniqueness exists throughout nature at every level, not a single leaf of a tree being an exact replica of another.

Inequality is inherent in evolution. In some creatures, consciousness is more awake and in some it is less awake. Consciousness is many things, such as mental activity, intelligence, and sympathy. Some creatures have those qualities in large measure; others are apparently duller. Some are clever, they have developed skills and capabilities, others have not. The consciousness of animals and plants is less developed. So we think that they have less importance than human beings and, that we have a right to suppress them.

So there are these two things in nature: inequality and diversity. Each being is at its own level on the evolutionary ladder, and everything is different from everything else. Yet, underlying everything is one being, one essence. It is a paradox: one essence, one life, one consciousness in the midst of an incredible diversity that reveals a supreme creative energy. And although there is no equality, from the outer point of view, concealed within is a supreme value which is the same in everything, because everything is a unit of the same universal being, a drop in the same ocean of consciousness. Perhaps it is a drop at the bottom of the ocean, or one that moves on the surface, but all are part of the ocean of life. This is the meaning of the sacred syllable *Om*, which symbolizes different planes, different stages of diversity, integrated into a wholeness or unity. There is an essential equality in all manifested individual existences for they are all part of one sacred life.

The realization of brotherhood is an awareness of something

marvelous, and paradoxical when looked at from the lower point of view, but nonetheless real. There is a mystic quality in the realization of brotherhood; it is not an ordinary experience. When some people say that the Theosophical Society's Object of universal brotherhood is obsolete, they do not know what they are saying. They look at it in a very ordinary sort of way, not understanding the depth and truth contained in that Object. They think there are many organizations that support international relations. The United Nations is meant to bring all the nations together. There are other humanistic movements. The idea has spread everywhere, so that Object can be shunted away.

But from the deeper point of view, universal brotherhood is far from realized, and nowhere do we see brotherhood in action. Unless we see that this Object implies a deep psychological revolution, we will not be able to carry out the work of the Society with the requisite energy. When human consciousness becomes free of its biases and barriers, when it ceases to separate itself from everything else, a new world of beauty, freedom, and goodness will materialize at the physical and subtler levels. Krishnaji stated: "Where the self is, beauty does not exist," the beauty that is goodness, peace, and bliss. So, when we reflect well, it should not be difficult to realize that universal brotherhood without distinctions of any kind is a revolution in consciousness. It is the one thing which will change humanity and bring it to a new level of existence.

Incidentally, the distinctions mentioned in the statement of the first Object of the Society are not meant to be complete. They are examples of the many distinctions that arise and exist in the mind. There are other divisions on the basis of social position, economic status, age, intellectual attainments, all sorts of things! This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but what is called "illustrative." There would be no point in adding more words. Our minds can invent any number of divisions and even if we add more words, they will be insufficient.

Let us now proceed to the second Object, the study of religion, philosophy, and science, which H.P.B. tried to relate together in *The Secret Doctrine*, which she called "a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy." All three are avenues to truth, valid roads to a single point. Truth is of primary

importance to our lives, because what we see conditions what we do. When we do something foolish, discordant, or cruel, we do it because we have failed to see correctly. If we see truth in the ultimate sense of the term — which is the same as realizing unity, and knowing the nature of love — then all our actions and relationships are bound to change qualitatively.

That fact has been emphasized in the Orient, where no difference exists between religion and philosophy. In the religio-philosophical schools, teachers point out that seeing rightly is essential because of the effect it has on actions. We may recall the well-known illustration of Vedanta: if you see a snake, you are afraid, you become aggressive, you may push others in order to get away quickly. But if you realize the snake is nothing more than a rope, your action becomes different. The emotions and thoughts that arose from seeing the snake cannot arise when it is realized to be a rope.

As mentioned previously, we live in a world of unreality that appears real. We must wake up into another level of reality. Even then, it will not be reality from a still deeper point of view, and there must be progressive awakenings. But for the moment, whatever we perceive is experienced as real: the solidity of objects, the separateness of all things. But these are like the reality experienced in a dream. Because of the unreality of our “reality,” we act as we do. When the possession of objects, of money, and so forth, is a reality, and they appear important for our safety and happiness, we act in a particular way. But if we see the unreality or the relative value of such possessions, then actions become different.

The search for truth is a search for a reality that cannot be contradicted at any time. The reality of a dream is contradicted by the reality of the waking state. The reality of an ambition to possess material objects gives place to a different reality if the person becomes more mature, less materialistic. So every reality makes way for a superior reality. We have to go on negating the lesser realities in life, by the use of *viveka*. But is there a reality which cannot be contradicted by anything else, because it is for ever? It is the eternal truth, which is the aim of religion, philosophy, and science. Although the methods and approach of religion, philosophy, and science are different, they all seek the truth.

Scientists started with the study of material nature, but they have

been pushing further and further, until some of the greatest have come to nonmaterial reality. Sir Alister Hardy has been questioning the force behind evolution, which is no longer considered by leading scientists as a mechanical, haphazard development. Hoyle says that it is statistically impossible for the micro-organism to become a human by a series of chance improvements. So what is the force behind it? He says it is intelligence. Hardy says it is love. Dirac says there is order and beauty in the very nature of the universe. So scientists are coming from the study of material manifestation to the greater reality beyond.

The material universe, which seems so real, changes; it may even be destroyed. The earth may one day become like the moon. But the power which moves it always exists, and creativity continues. Religion is the quest for this eternal existence. It is the release from finite existence for a fusion with the infinite. We are speaking of religion in the true sense of the term, not of organized religion. We cannot discuss religion here, because it is a vast subject. But at its basis is an awareness that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Therefore, the finite — which I call *my mind* and *myself* — must break out of its shell, to know truth, which on the religious path is realized as sacred. Philosophy seeks to comprehend the nature and relation of all things, briefly summarized as God, man, and universe. Philosophy, like religion and science, is an avenue to truth. They start at different points, have different approaches, but what they seek to reach is the same. So they cannot be unrelated to each other.

The important thing is to realize that truth makes one free from the folly of action based on false conceptions of reality. The truth of seeing a rope as a rope prevents a person from running away in fear or trying to kill. Nothing can be more right than the statement: "Truth shall make you free." *At the Feet of the Master* puts it differently when it says that anyone who has a glimpse of the Plan, the splendor behind the processes of life, cannot help working for it, standing for the good and resisting evil, working for evolution and not for selfishness.

The second Object of the T.S. is not concerned merely with speculative thinking or academic discussions unrelated to the problems of the world and to our problems as individuals. It is directed toward the removal of ignorance, lifting the mind out of the unrealities in which it lives. This Object

too is meant to bring about regeneration.

The third Object is investigation of the hidden laws of nature and of the powers latent in human beings. All natural laws are an expression of the divine intelligence. Those who do not understand them, who do not realize they are unchangeable and intransgressible, come up against an impenetrable wall, so to speak, and hurt themselves. Knowledge of the laws, on the other hand, is power to accelerate progress. If we do not understand how the great stream of evolution proceeds, what the great design is, we are led into foolishness and vanity. All the world is vanity because, if we think that we can work outside the law, we do not try to understand it. The law of harmony is perhaps the most important of all, for all other laws may be an expression of the great harmony of the universe.

This third Object implies study not only of nature in its outer manifestation but of the relationship of all things, one to another, for all law is a statement of relationships. Those relationships are subtle, and many people think they do not exist. But an understanding of ourselves is connected with an understanding of laws and of the forces at work behind them. There are many such forces and many forms of intelligence at work everywhere. There is a hierarchy of intelligences, we are told, working for the great Plan. What is our own place in all this? Can we claim a place which is not in the Plan, or carve a place for ourselves according to our own notions? Do we have to abandon our ideas and find out how to live according to the Plan? Discovering the answers is the same as trying to understand what our potential powers are, what spiritual faculties are latent in human consciousness, and how they can be unfolded.

We mentioned earlier that, unless we see what the human being is potentially, we cannot create an environment helpful to true progress. We are doing the opposite, creating chaotic surroundings that suppress the human potential instead of awakening it. So the study of the human beings as we really are, and of our highest possibilities, the depths or heights we can reach, is important for humanity.

It seems to me that, to make the work of the Society effective, we must see the connection between the three Objects of the T.S. and the relation of all three Objects to the unfoldment of the human consciousness and the

upliftment of humanity. The history of the Society is clear on this point: the one thing for which it is founded is to help the true progress of humanity. How can the Society have Objects not related to that purpose? Perhaps in our Lodges and groups we have not given sufficient consideration to the meaning of the Objects of the Society. We assume them to be unconnected. But if we see the relatedness, then all of us can work together for the same thing, which is the renewal of the human mind, human regeneration.

To be continued.



Theosophy and the Society in the Public Eye

Edwin Lutyens, Charles Bressey and my mother - by Marty Bax

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Edwin Lutyens, Charles Bresssey and my mother

by Marty Bax – The Netherlands

In one of my previous articles I mentioned the suffragist Lady Emily Lutyens. Emily was the daughter of Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, the Viceroy of India and the wife of one of the most prominent architects of her time, Edwin Lutyens. Edwin became famous as a country-house architect, but even more so as the architect of New Delhi, a job which he got through his father-in-law of course. Emily became a member of the Theosophical Society in 1910. As an upper-class lady she became a pillar in the financial and social support of the Society.

Theosophical connections or influence are not the focus at this time, however. The focus will be on the architect Edwin himself and his connections, because these eventually, in a wide arch and only indirectly, come back to my own family more precisely, my mother. It is too amusing a story not to tell, with an unusual twist, interesting historical dimensions, and even a connection with art! It also serves to tell how someone can strike a deep note within someone else, without ever hearing how effective the strike had been.





The President, Major A. J. Harris,
and the Executive Council of the
Timber Trade Federation of the United Kingdom
request the honour of the Company of
Sir Charles H. Bressey, C.B.
at the Annual Dinner to be held at
Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London, W.1
on Wednesday, 22nd March, 1939, at 7 for 7.30 p.m.

Decorations

R.L.T.P. to the Secretary,
62, Cannon Street, E.C.

SIR CHARLES BRESSEY, C.B.

STATION:
SHARNBROOK, L.N.E.R.
TEL.: WANSTEAD 2700.

17, LEICESTER ROAD,

WANSTEAD, 19th Feb 1939
E.11.

As there is no Leicester Rd.
in "London, West", your
letter wandered round
London, until the post-
man thought it might be
intended for me.
So I am sending you this
card, as you request, in
order to show you that
your message has been
delivered + to express the
hope that you will continue
your English studies in
which you have already
made good progress. *B.H.P.*
I know Rotterdam.

In 2008 my late mother Nely, who passed in August 2010 dug into a box full of scraps and pictures and pulled out two old invitation cards, the crease held together with Sellotape. There were letters written on the back of both cards. "Look. I have always kept these. Isn't this funny?" She asked me, while handing me the cards.

I asked her for the story behind it.

As a fifteen-year old girl my mother was naturally taught English as part of the curriculum of the Marnix Gymnasium in Rotterdam. In one of her study books she found a model letter, addressed to someone living at "17 Leicester Road, London, West 1." On impulse she sent a letter to this address, curious to know who would be living there. After quite some time, on 19 February 1939, she indeed received a postcard, coming from 17 Leicester Road, Wanstead, London E 2. It reads:

As there is no Leicester Road in "London, West 1", your letter wandered around London, until the postman thought it might be intended for me. So I am sending you this card, as you request, in order to show you that your message had been delivered + to express the hope that you will continue your English studies in which you have already made good progress.

*I know Rotterdam.
(Charles Bressey)*

Because at that time it was popular for teenagers to have pen friends abroad, my mother wrote this Mr. Charles Bressey immediately again, asking if he could help her find a female pen friend. There came no answer. To her utter surprise however, she came across a newspaper item on him a few weeks later. It was about a film on his work and his person. He appeared to be a well-known engineer! Immediately my mother sent a letter, in which she wrote: "Now I know why you don't answer: you are too busy!"

A while later she received an answer. It was written on the back of two invitation cards.

Dear Miss Luitse.

As you have been so clever in finding out all about me, I think you deserve a letter, and then I will ask one of the girls at our high school to continue the correspondence.

I have just come (18.15) from the Reception given to the French President,

TO HAVE THE HONOUR OF MEETING THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
AND MME. LEBRUN.

1889



1939

*The Chairman of the London County Council
requests the honour of the company of
Sir Charles and Lady Bressay
at a Reception at The County Hall,
on Wednesday, 22nd March, 1939,
on the occasion of the presentation of an Address of Welcome
to the President of the French Republic.*

*Reception 3.30 to 4.0 p.m.
Buffet Refreshments.
Morning Dress.*

THIS CARD DOES
NOT ADMIT.

*R.N.P. on the enclosed card
not later than 16th March, 1939,
to The Clerk of the Council,
The County Hall, S.E.1.*



and I had intended to go home to dress for dinner with the Timber Trade Federation but there is not [enough] time, so I have come to a restaurant for a meal and while it is cooking I will write you a note on the back of the invitation cards. My writing is not so clear as yours, unfortunately, owing to my habit of dictating to stenographers.

It amused me to read your cutting from a Dutch paper about the film concerning London, upon which I have been engaged, - for I had seen no mention of it in English papers (which I have little time to read). This year I am particularly busy because I am president of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution and also of the Junior Institution of Engineers. Thus I have little leisure to bestow upon my two grandsons.

In bidding you "goodbye", let me say how much I hope that you will play a useful, helpful part in life and try to make other people happy, - at the sacrifice of your own interests:

*"Und setzet ihr nicht das Leben ein,
Nie wird euch das Leben gewonnen sein."*

I expect you read German poetry.

With all good wishes

*Sincerely yours
(Bressey's signature)*

Indeed, the two cards are dated on the same day: 22 March 1939. I hope Bressey had already taken his decorations with him that morning, which were required at the dinner that evening ...

At home I searched internet for information on this man. Judging by his invitation cards, he should surface somewhere in the upper regions of society. He did - although the Wiki page on him had not been published yet; it was published 14 February 2009.

Sir Charles Herbert Bressey (3/1/1874 – 14/4/1951) was the son of an architect, received a thorough education and went to France and Germany for further schooling. During World War I he was a military road engineer in France and Belgium. In 1919 Bressey became Divisional Road Engineer for the London area, climbed up in the hierarchy until he succeeded his boss Sir Henry Maybury as the Director-General of Roads in 1928. In 1935 he was appointed by the Minister of Transport to prepare a report on London's future road transport requirements, up to the mid-1960s. He retired in 1938.



PROPOSALS OF THE BRESSEY REPORT: IDEAS BASED ON U.S.A. METHODS

Illustrated Diagrams from "The Development of London Street" by BREYER & COMPANY



One needs to know that motorized traffic was booming at the time and that speed and uncontrolled driving led to a number of accident victims in London. Because of that, in 1934 the Minister of Transport, Sir (again ...) Leslie Hore-Belisha had introduced the driving test, and a beacon – black and white striped pole, orange lighted ball on top – marking pedestrian crossings. This 'Belisha beacon' still is a typical, unique feature of the London traffic system today.

While he studied European cities and called on experts for the next few years, Bressey was assisted in his research work for the report by Edwin Lutyens. This is most likely why he was familiar with Rotterdam as he mentioned in his letter. The final report of the research, The Highway Development Survey, 1937 for Greater London, was published on 16 May 1938. In it, Bressey proposed a series of high capacity motorways radiating outwards from the city, triple-storey parking garages, large roundabouts and he made recommendations for a series of orbital roads around the city.



It all sounds very modern. Although many of the pictures published with the plans do have a distinct sci-fi twist to it, typical of the time. The images you see in films and avant-garde architectural drawings are of that era. On the other hand, sci-fi can become reality. Multi-storey parking decks are common now, although not smack in the middle of Trafalgar Square (upper left). To any foreigner the multi-storey bicycle decks in front of our Amsterdam train station look just as futuristic. But they are a reality for sure.

While researching for this blog, someone had been so kind to upload the film my mother must have read about in the newspaper in 1939. It is called *The City*, from the series *If War Should Come*. The film is a long stretch, but worth viewing: <http://www.baxpress.blogspot.com.br/2012/12/edwin-lutyens-charles-bressey-and-my.html>

My main interest at this moment – and I'm sure it would have been my mother's in the first place – is meeting the man behind the invitation cards. In person, Bressey shows himself not only as a model British well-educated gentleman, but also as a very shy and modest person, hardly looking into the camera at all. His ardent love for his work shows in the way he directs the attention away from himself immediately to the plans, and in the way he moves his fingers over the maps and touches the paper.

Bressey kept his promise. My mother did get her pen friend after all. However, it was no success. There might have been too many cultural differences. Besides, Rotterdam was bombed shortly after, on 14 May 1940. Attention was quickly needed elsewhere. After the war my newly-wed parents emigrated to Canada on the same day that Bressey died.

My mother never forgot Bressey's lines of poetry. She lived her life accordingly and once in a while recited them, moralistically, to us children. Back then, we hadn't the foggiest about the story behind it or who wrote the lines, and she never told us. Now I know they were taken from the war trilogy *Wallensteins Lager* (1797/8), written by the German philosopher Friedrich Schiller.



“Effectively, change is almost impossible without industry-wide collaboration, cooperation and consensus.”

Simon Mainwaring

(An award-winning branding consultant, advertising creative director, and social media specialist and blogger)

Miscellany and Trivia

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Anecdote about Rabbis (1)



Even though they were brought up strictly orthodox, Shlomo, 8 and Isaac, 10 were very naughty brothers. When anything went wrong in Golders Green, they were nearly always involved.

One day, a friend visited their parents and mentioned a Rabbi who was having great success with delinquent children. As they were finding it difficult to control their boys, they went to this Rabbi and asked whether he could help.

He said he could and asked to see the younger boy first – but he must be alone. So Shlomo went to see the Rabbi while Isaac was kept at home.

The Rabbi sat Shlomo down across a huge, solid mahogany desk and he sat down on the other side. For 5 minutes they just sat and stared at each other. Finally, the Rabbi pointed his finger at Shlomo and asked, “Where is God?” Shlomo said nothing. Again, in a louder tone, the Rabbi pointed at Shlomo and asked, “Where is God?” Again Shlomo said nothing. Then the Rabbi leaned across the desk, put his finger on Shlomo’s nose and shouted, “For the third time, Shlomo, where is God?”

Shlomo panicked at this, got up and ran all the way home. He went straight up to Isaac’s room and said, “We are in big trouble, Isaac.” “What do you mean, big trouble, little brother?” said Isaac.

Shlomo replied, “God is missing ... and I’m sure they think we did it.”

Anecdote about Rabbis (2)



It's Sunday evening and Rabbi Levy is in deep conversation with his friend.

"I must tell you something, Moshe," he says, "I made nine people very, very happy today."

"A mitzvah*, Rabbi, a true mitzvah," says Moshe, "but tell me – how did you manage to achieve this?"

"I performed four marriage ceremonies in my shul this afternoon," replies Rabbi Levy.

Moshe is puzzled. "I can see how you made eight people happy, Rabbi, but what about the ninth?"

"Do you really believe I did all this for free?" replies Rabbi Levy.

*Mitzvah = a moral deed performed as a religious duty

Anecdote about Rabbis (3)



At a conference on religion a priest, a minister and a rabbi were all asked the same question, "What would you like people to say about you after you die?"

The priest said, "I hope that people will say that I was able to rise above the scandals that are plaguing the Catholic Church at this time. I hope that people would say that I was able to shepherd my flock through this crisis and help them to understand the absolute love that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have for all of them as Catholics."

The minister then said, "When I die I hope that people will say that I saved many souls by bringing them to Christ. I hope that I will be remembered as a caring, thoughtful man who always spread the Word, the love of Christ and a faith everlasting in God. I hope that my preaching and converting will be carried on in my memory and to the glory of Christ."

Finally, the rabbi was asked, "Rabbi, what do you hope people will say about you after you have died?"

Without pausing, the rabbi answered, "Look. He's breathing."

Anecdote about Rabbis (4)



Rabbi Landau has always been secretly sad that he's never been able to eat pork. So one day, he flies to a remote tropical Island and books into a hotel. "No one will find me here," he said to himself. On the first evening, he goes to the best restaurant and orders the 'roast pork special'. While he's waiting, he hears someone call his name. Rabbi Landau looks up and sees one of his congregants walking towards his table. What unbelievably bad luck – the same time to visit the same restaurant on the same island!

Just at that moment, the waiter puts on his table a whole roasted pig with an apple in its mouth and says, "Your special, sir." Rabbi Landau looks up sheepishly at his congregant and says, "Would you believe it – you order an apple in this restaurant and look how they serve it!"

Anecdote about Rabbis (5)



Avraham is a 12year old known for his total lack of religious study, so when his *barmitzvah** day arrives, Rabbi Bloom is not about to let this go without comment. Avraham performs his barmitzvah as best he can with his minimal preparation and when it comes time to receive his presents, Avraham gets what most *barmitzvah* boys are given – a daily prayer book; a set of Jewish Festivals prayer books; a *kiddush cup** from the congregation’s ladies guild; an encyclopedia – “The History of the Jewish People from Bible Times to the Present”; and a bible (old testament).

Rabbi Bloom then addresses the *barmitzvah* boy, “My dear Avraham. You have received today a number of treasures of Judaism in book form that will surely enrich your life and make it holy in the eyes of God. I also have a gift for you.”

With that, Rabbi Bloom pulls out an umbrella from behind the lectern and says to Avraham, “I present you with this umbrella because I want to give you something that at least I know for certain you will open.”

*kiddush cup = Shabbat and Jewish holiday meals begin with a blessing over a cup of ritual wine. Many families have a special glass or goblet (cup) specifically for this purpose.

The Society

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Editorial

There Is a New International President: Now What Do We Do?

by Jan Nicolaas Kind

“Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose”
(Lyndon B. Johnson)

Last January, after the names of the two candidates for the position of the international presidency for the Theosophical Society, Adyar, were announced — Tim Boyd and C. V. K. Maithreya — in the capacity of editor-in-chief of the Web site Theosophy Forward, I wrote a letter an open letter to all General Secretaries and other office bearers:

“On Saturday January 11 the names of the candidates running for the position of International President of the T.S. Adyar were published. Tim Boyd and Chaganti V. K. Maithreya are on the ballot. The T.S. Adyar is in a fortunate position now to have two candidates of this caliber. This is truly a historical occasion, and the next months are going to be decisive for the T.S. Adyar and Theosophy. Both candidates will play an important role, no matter who the winner ultimately will be. Knowing them rather well, I want to make use of this opportunity to share with you that I’m confident that the candidates won’t become opponents in the negative sense of the word. It’s clear that both of them have pros but also cons, both of them have excellent qualities that can certainly benefit our beloved Society; those qualities have to be utilized to the fullest extent.

“We need to be aware, however, of the lessons to be learnt from the previous election. Read this article:

<http://www.theosophyforward.com/index.php/the-society/888-adyar-mon-amour.html>

“We can all positively contribute to what lies before us. These elections do not concern only the two contenders. We’re all in this together, so we must all pull our weight. Erroneously downgraded by some, the importance of what happens on the Internet should never be underestimated. In this day

and age websites and blogs play vital roles in daily lives, and extra caution is needed at all times; recently revolutions have started and governments have fallen due to the impact of what happens in cyberspace. Obviously transparency is a must, but one needs to be discriminative in separating the sense from the nonsense. I call on all to send both Tim and Maithreya your good thoughts, wishing them Strength, Light, and Wisdom.”

That was my letter in January and many things have happened since then. Tim Boyd was officially elected international president of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, a result announced on April 27. The Theosophical Society, Adyar indeed was fortunate to have had two men of such caliber running.

About the time the names of the candidates were announced, speculations, sickening assumptions, and offensive accusations started to surface as well. The dismay was, and still is, concentrated around what is labelled as the “Policy of Silence.” We are told, as we were in 2008, that there are conspiracies, deals made behind closed doors, the Theosophical “Cosa Nostra” has struck once more.

Looking back, it is obvious that many things could have been done differently and better, but talk about an orchestrated black-out in order to cover things up whereby General Council members *en masse* decided to keep their lips sealed, serving the dark goals of an invented Adyar-elite is just not something I would go by. The truth is that the General Council as an organ — due to the way affairs over the past decades were conducted — wasn’t able to function as an assertive and actively involved agency within the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Often it could function only as a rubber-stamp club. So if its members were silent, it was probably because they had been silent for years and had nothing to say. Now with a new international president this is going to change, and through modern means of communication this council could meet more than once per year and upgrade its role, input, and competence. Additional and more transparent safeguards need to be considered, following and controlling future election procedures. We need to remember though that thorough changes need time to materialize. Sudden and hasty changes wear out easily and very quickly. Time is needed for change, allowing for proper development.



Lily and Tim Boyd

Another complaint has been that not enough information regarding the two candidates was made available. Well, I know that some might crucify me for this, but actually I cannot recall any Theosophical Society, Adyar presidential election in which candidates were so active, in just a matter of a few weeks, in openly profiling themselves. Maithreya appeared very quickly with his own and detailed websites, while Tim Boyd, on the website of the Theosophical Society in America left sufficient info for folks to ponder on. Readers of *Theosophy Forward*, while searching in its archives, would also have been able to trace a number of articles written by both Tim and Maithreya, while their wives, Lily and Sunita, are also on record there with write ups! But in all honesty, there was even much more. There were bios, the officially distributed profiles and notices on the internet. The idea put forward that both candidates were virtually unknown is a fabrication.



Maithreya and Sunita

Both Tim and Maithreya worked for many years for the TOS; they did and are still doing remarkable work in that respect. Maithreya travelled extensively inside India, published articles in the *Indian Theosophist* but also travelled to other parts of the world and lectured at Olcott in Wheaton for example. Tim went to the World Congress in Rome in 2010 and gave a memorable talk there, traveled all over the USA, visited the Caribbean, countries in Central and South America, lectured in Singapore, India and New Zealand and authored many articles, working his entire life for Theosophy.

It would have been an utter impossibility to present in less than a few weeks a complete program as on how to find new and innovating ways of setting out on a new direction. There is no comparison with Barack Obama's rose garden at the White House, where world leaders appear before cameras to share with the world what, according to them, will happen. How often were those leaders proven to be wrong? Ask yourself this simple but relevant question: "Did we see of any plans of actions over the past 34 years?"

Whether we like it or not, there is no remote-controlled, instant solution for all that needs to be straightened out inside the Theosophical Society, Adyar.

It is a fact that one can hardly silence barking dogs. By giving dogs attention they will bark even louder.

It has to be said that over the last few months there were two “barking” website moderators who, through their respective channels, screamed the loudest that there was no transparency at all but “programmed silence.” Yet, they specifically and persistently demonstrate a complete lack of willingness to be transparent themselves. They either do not wish to reveal any personal information about who they *really* are, or silently and without explanations remove contributors from their site who are not in agreement with them. It seems to me that they, while accusing others of conspiracies are conspirers themselves. They are frustrated, angry, negative and above all lost, desperately trying to fuel any sort of conflict, thus projecting their very own bitterness and failures. If there are no conflicts, conflicts are simply being created; one must have something to write about.

Would it be possible to silence them, to shut them up, to put it bluntly?

No, I don't think so. They want to be judge, jury and executioner; not very Theosophical, is it? Due to their own incapacity to do anything else, for years now, they had no other choice but to remain biased and cynical observers, throwing mud from the sidelines, badly demanding attention. I foresee that they probably will start screaming even louder, launch another series of accusations and under the belt criticisms, or, as one of them recently did, revive a sad and painful clash a former Adyar employee had years ago with certain staff members on the Adyar compound and the previous international president. Although I think that having these relevant letters republished is outright morbid, considering the *personal* drama behind them, I'd say, let them and ignore them; those two “grapevine” moderators definitely belong to the past. They are accustomed to *hijack* other people's problems to suit their own *toxic* agendas. Steadily, with all they allegedly represent, primarily talking to themselves, they will disappear into a murky past and their ugly inharmonious hullabaloo will eventually fade away. That page will be turned.

Agreed, I am quite passionate about this subject, so bear with me when I state that nothing is perfect. Tim Boyd was chosen to be the eighth international president of the TS-Adyar by a substantial majority and that is a fact, even if one would *not* count the votes from a region where doubts were casted on the election procedures that were followed there.

C. V. K. Maithreya in an interview with Erica Georgiades in connection with the election and referring to those who voted for him stated the following:

“I think the terms ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ are both inappropriate and used by people who lack both awareness and discretion. Now it is not a question of supporters; rather it is a question of brother and sister Theosophists who need to work together for the Cause of Theosophy and its great vehicle [although not the only vehicle] The Theosophical Society. All personalities should sink into the Cause as advised and instructed by the Great Ones.”

Concluding:

Yes, all could have been done better and more transparently, as I wrote above, nothing is perfect, but for transparency one needs to open windows first, allowing the fresh air to come in and we are in the process of opening those now. Let’s see to it that in seven years’ time, when the next presidential elections take place we come close to perfection!

Tim Boyd is a “man at work,” I know him as a deep student, honest, straight forward and strong. I believe that he deserves all our support, so let no dark cloud come into the way.

For the full interview with C. V. K. Maithreya follow this link:

<http://ericageorgiades1.wordpress.com/2014/05/16/an-interview-with-chaganti-v-k-maithreya-by-erica-georgiades/>

Similarities and differences of Theosophical traditions

by Jim Colbert – USA

[This essay was first published in the spring 2014 issue of *International Theosophy Magazine*. It is reproduced here in a slightly revised form.]

Introduction:

The article you are about to read does not portend to touch the depth and scope of all Theosophical traditions. It is meant to provide a platform for comparison and understanding. It is said by some that the act of recognizing the similarities and differences between traditions can help one to gain a firmer understanding of their own tradition. It is our hope that it will bring forth comments from all traditions with challenges and agreements. We will give focus to the Theosophical Society Point Loma, the Theosophical Society Adyar, and the United Lodge of Theosophists. We are aware there is a significant tradition associated with the Theosophical Society Pasadena. Although they possess an extensive Theosophical library, they do not seem responsive towards the possibility of a greater Theosophical unity at this time. There is also the Alice Baily tradition, Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy and the Liberal Catholic Church. However, rightly or wrongly from our perspective, these traditions appear to have blended with Christianity and it is hoped a separate article should give focus to these traditions. Possibly we will be challenged on this view. Finally, there are multiple other smaller traditions plus "independent Theosophists" that are deserving of recognition. We plan to offer a forum in the future for these views.

Most all Theosophical traditions, including the three to be described here, rest on the shoulders of H. P. Blavatsky, and to some extent, *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*.

There are at least three major, easily proved, gifts H. P. Blavatsky gave to the world.

1. She brought the cultures of East and West together. She, along with earlier Theosophists, reminded the East of its spiritual heritage. Hinduism and Buddhism were hardly recognized in India at the time of her writing. Eastern ideas of karma and reincarnation were almost nonexistent in the West. Interestingly, cremation, in the United States, was first done by Theosophists.

2. Blavatsky brought in the New Age to the West. Quoting from *The New Age Encyclopedia*: "No single organization or movement has contributed so many components to the New Age Movement as the Theosophical Society. ... It has been the major force in the dissemination of occult literature in the West in the twentieth century" (1). The above is ably described in the wonderful article, "*The Secret Doctrine* as a contribution to World Thought" (2).

3. She was prescient in modern physics and in other sciences. Perhaps this is one of the reasons a man such as Albert Einstein suggested to Werner Heisenberg that he read *The Secret Doctrine* (3). Blavatsky spoke of Universes rather than a Universe. Her statements on the infinite divisibility of the atom have the resonance of modern times.

The criticism often given in writing on differences of Theosophical traditions is that the focus is on organizational structure and personalities rather than the teachings. The critique could easily have application to what is found here. We maintain that all Theosophical traditions come from and are based on the writings of H. P. Blavatsky. This is the similarity of all traditions. The organizations which arose after her death and developed their own traditions were and are highly related the leaders of those organizations. We intend to describe these developments and include some of the differences. We are giving emphasis to each as a contribution. Criticisms of each tradition exist in Theosophical literature. Maybe we can start a tradition with a positive approach.

The Theosophical Society, Point Loma Tradition

After H. P. B.'s death, William Q. Judge, one of the original founders of the Theosophical Society, carried on the work primarily in the United States. Although his contributions were extraordinary, he too passed on only five years after Blavatsky's death. Katherine Tingley became the leader of this tradition. She consolidated most of the activity in Point Loma, California which became

a center for many scientific, artistic, and literary works in the world. Point Loma is near the city of San Diego in California, USA. The primary focus of this tradition, in this era, is now in The Hague, The Netherlands with Herman C. Vermeulen presently the leader.

There have been two expressions of Theosophy, dating from the early work, in spreading Theosophy. One has been referred to as the exoteric (public presentations, literature, and meetings); the other is esoteric (secret and more sacred). In the latter there is a pledge starting with, "I pledge myself to endeavor to make Theosophy a living power in my life." Although the Point Loma tradition no longer has an esoteric section, the original writings are used to give meaning to what they consider to be living a Theosophical life.

There is focus on compassion with an emphasis on reaching out to others. If there is a choice between a public activity where there may be those new to Theosophy and those already familiar with the teachings, they will always choose the public activity as this will bring greater awareness for Theosophy. In the well-known and abridged version of the Mahâ-Chohan's view on the Society, which K. H. sent to A. P. Sinnett we read: "It's time that Theosophy should enter the arena." The Point Loma tradition strongly tries to bring this about.

One of the ways this is done is through a course they offer called, "Thinking Differently." It is a twelve lesson bi-weekly course which they are giving now in different parts of Europe. Although the components are derived directly from Theosophical teachings, one is not initially aware of this. It includes ideas from Plato and Buddhism. This author considers the course to reflect some of the main concepts of present day Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Many participating in the course eventually ask where these ideas come from and they are then provided with an introduction to the Theosophical teachings.

Finally, in the emphasis to make the teachings "accessible," modern technology is widely used. Their magazine, *Lucifer*, (title taken from H. P. B.'s publication) is now available in English as well as Dutch. The material for this summary was largely taken from an article in the first English publication of their magazine, "Theosophical Society Point Loma Blavatskyhouse: about the Point Loma tradition."

For *Lucifer* follow this link: <http://www.blavatskyhouse.org/pdf/lucifer-february-2013r.pdf>.

The United Lodge of Theosophists Tradition

ULT, as it is called, stems from the lineage of William Q. Judge. It was founded by Robert Crosbie and others in 1909 as an independent association to study the teachings. The word “association” is used here deliberately as participants of ULT are called “Associates” implying all are gathered together to study and work for Theosophy. The approach is not to stand in the way of the original teachings with officers, by-laws or organization. For public presentations the names of the speakers are not given nor are current authors’ names used in written materials.

It is a mistake to view ULT as having no organization at all. Lodges, although independent, often have a business arm connected which does have officers and by-laws. In Los Angeles this is called Theosophy Company and it is a non-profit fiduciary body. It is seen as a supplementary for paying bills, maintaining property, publishing, and taking care of all matters of this type. The study classes, public presentations and all else related to the teachings are considered as activities of United Lodge of Theosophists. It is their position that the original teachings of H. P. Blavatsky’s and William Q. Judge’s are what is important and nothing should get in the way of this.

In the many years following the passing of H. P. B., thousands of “changes and corrections” had been made to the original writings of H. P. B. and Mr. Judge. Such deletions and additions were the product of prominent “post H. P. B.” Theosophists. It was difficult for many to find the original teachings as they were not available in print. This became part of the work for ULT. Some of the associates were able to locate the original plates and photographic facsimiles of the original publications. Although these publications are now widely available, in the early part of the twentieth century, they were not. The work of the associates was important. Robert Crosbie did not publish books of his own. After his death some of the students put together many of his letters into a book entitled, *The Friendly Philosopher* which was published in 1934 (4).

The vision Crosbie had for ULT can be found there. He writes,

“Members of any organization or unattached, old and new students, could belong to it without disturbing their affiliations, for the sole condition necessary would be the acceptance of the principle of *similarity of aim, purpose, and teaching*. The binding spiritual force of this principle of brotherhood needs no such adventitious aids as Constitution or By-laws – or Officers to administer them. With it as basis for union, no possible cause for differences could arise; no room is found here for leader or authority, for dogma or superstition, and yet – as there are stores of knowledge left for all – the right spirit must bring forth from ‘Those who never fail’ all necessary assistance.” The magazine *Theosophy* is no longer being published but there are excellent magazines being published, one through the Santa Barbara ULT, called *Vidya* and *The Theosophical Movement Magazine* from the ULT in India.

For *Vidya* follow this link:

<http://www.theosophysb.org/site/publications.html>

For *The Theosophical Movement Magazine* follow this link:

http://www.ultindia.org/current_issues.html

The Theosophical Society, Adyar Tradition

The Theosophical Society, Adyar is, by far, the largest Theosophical tradition. As such, it encompasses divergent and convergent approaches to Theosophy. It includes students making Theosophy the fundamental center of their life and, others, who join it as an adjunct to their main spiritual path. When the original Theosophical Society began in 1875 it was open and still is to persons from all religions.

Recently, this author was somewhat amazed when he was attempting to make contact with other Theosophical students in Pakistan and found not only were they members of the TS but they were Muslims as well. The international headquarters is in Adyar, India. After the death of H. P. B. the person that became most prominent of this tradition was Annie Besant; truly an incredible leader. She fought for women’s rights and became a member of The International Order of Co-Freemasonry Great Britain, Le Droit Humain, eventually becoming the head of the Great Britain section which admits both men and woman. She became involved in politics in India, joining the Indian National Congress.

When World War I broke out in 1914, she helped launch the Home Rule League to campaign for democracy in India and dominion status within the Empire. This led to her election as president of the Indian National Congress in late 1917. After the war, she continued to campaign for Indian independence and for the causes of Theosophy, until her death in 1933 (5). She also started the Theosophical Order of Service which still is fully active throughout the world responding to natural disasters and promoting social justice, vegetarianism, animal rights, and environmentalism.

Annie Besant worked with Henry S. Olcott, one of the three main founders of the Theosophical Society and later with C. W. Leadbeater. Jiddu Krishnamurti, a speaker and writer on philosophical and spiritual subjects, who was brought up and groomed in a typical Theosophical environment but who distanced himself from the TS-Adyar in 1929, is still held in high esteem by many Theosophists associated with this tradition.

The Esoteric School is an important part of the activities of the TS-Adyar. For those wishing to know more about this, Pablo Sender's article *The Esoteric School of Theosophy* (6) is recommended. It is understood that the Esoteric School acts independently from the Society itself but many members participate in both. Furthermore there are autonomous sections, regional associations, presidential agencies and lodges which are directly attached to the headquarters of the TS-Adyar in India, throughout the world.

One can find excellent Theosophical libraries on various continents, but four of them are highly recommended: The Campbell Theosophical Research Library in Sydney, Australia and The Theosophical Library in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. They have collections of Theosophical publications from all the Theosophical traditions. Many of these publications are available online and in many languages. The third one, the Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library in Wheaton, Illinois USA has an excellent collection of works from all Theosophical traditions. Last, but not least, the Adyar Library and Research Centre in Chennai, India is one of the most important oriental libraries in the world. It contains over 250,000 printed volumes and around 20,000 palm-leaf manuscripts from India, Sri Lanka, China and elsewhere. *

There are multiple national and international conferences scheduled throughout the year. In the United States some are held at the American

headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois and at the Krotona Center in Ojai, California. Online courses in Theosophy are available in the form of webcasts and webinars from the Wheaton site.

Follow this link: <http://www.theosophical.org/>

Similarities and Differences

As indicated in the opening part of this article, the similarity of the traditions is they are based on the work and writings of Helena P. Blavatsky. Copies of the original writings are now available through all three traditions. All three organizations are international in scope and the meeting locations in various cities can be found on their websites:

www.blavatskyhouse.org.

www.ult.org.

www.ts-adyar.org.

Early in the history of the Theosophical movement there were indications of disagreements for those involved in making the teachings available. With some remarkable exceptions there was very little in the way of intercommunication between groups. This has changed. While some may stay focused on the past, the past is over one hundred years ago. Today, if a person from one tradition visits or gets to know persons associated with other traditions the discovery is amazing. We are all so much alike; we find others who have great knowledge and ideas to offer. Truly, we find our friends. To this observer the Point Loma tradition gives greater focus to the practical application of Theosophy in daily life. The United Lodge of Theosophists gives focus to the core teachings. The Theosophical Society, Adyar has a broader base in which to reach a wider band of other souls in other religions in their spiritual search. Think of the power if all three traditions were working together and helping each other to expand these areas of focus. Maybe then Theosophy can begin to enter the arena.

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1. Melton, J. Gordon, J. Gordon, *New Age Encyclopedia*
2. Ashish, Sri Madhava. *The Secret Doctrine as a Contribution to World Thought*, found in "Theosophical Symposium" - http://www.theosophical.org/files/resources/selfstudy/Sample_SD_Symposium.pdf
3. Algeo, John. *Theosophy and the Zeitgeist*, [*American Theosophist* 75.10 (November 1987, Fall Special Issue): 322-332.]
4. Crosbie, Robert. *The Friendly Philosopher*, The Theosophy Company, 1934
5. From *Wikipedia* - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annie_Besant
6. Sender, Pablo. *The Esoteric School of Theosophy* - <http://www.theosophical.org/publications/quest-magazine/2951>

*The Theosophical Libraries as mentioned in this article:

- The Campbell Theosophical Research Library in Sydney, Australia - <http://www.austheos.org.au/tsia-campbell-theosophical-research-library.html>
- The Theosophical Library in Amsterdam, The Netherlands - <http://www.theosofie.nl/bibliotheek/>
- Henry S. Olcott Memorial Library in Wheaton – Illinois, USA - <http://www.theosophical.org/library-home>
- Adyar Library and Research Centre in Chennai, India - <http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/adyar-library-and-research-centre>

Mini interviews

Isaac Jauli Dávila

Steven Otto

Mike Vallis

Isis Maria Borges de Resende

Marcos Luis Borges de Resende

Pamela Zane Keys

Sampsa Kuukasjärvi

Opinions and ideas expressed in the mini-interviews are exclusively of those who are being interviewed. They don't necessarily represent the ideas and opinions of the compilers of Theosophy Forward.

The responses of the interviewees are not edited for content. Some contributors give short answers to the questions while others touch upon the subject more elaborately.

Isaac Jauli Dávila



1. *What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

My name is Isaac Jauli Dávila. I was born in Mexico but I live in Spain since 1995 and I am a member of the TS since 1979.

2. *Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

I was General Secretary in Mexico; I am now a member of the Arjuna lodge of the Spanish section. I coordinate the educational issue at the Institute of Theosophical Studies H.P.B. in Spain. I collaborate with lectures, workshops and courses in Spain and Latin America.

3. *How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

I found in a bookstore *The Secret Doctrine*, I tried to understand it which was very little, but the photo of H. P. B. touched my heart. I searched for the TS and became a member.

4. *What does Theosophy mean to you?*

It makes sense to our short transit on this earth with the truths it reveals. And it is one of the most important paths for realization for humans.

5. *What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

The Secret Doctrine and *The Mahatma Letters* and other such works as *The Voice of Silence*. There is no particular preference, but all give a broad view of the great truths of our origin, the meaning and purpose of life and the collaboration that all human beings should do to help us in the evolution of this planet.

6. *What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?*

The new challenges that this time demands must be specified in a more agile and administratively modern organization, with an appropriate technological means of communication of the work of the TS in these times. To increase the educational activities within the TS campuses, in order to give opportunity to be active in the center more months of the year. To invite more contributors from around the world to "internationalize" the center(s) more. These are just some of them.

7. *Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

Based on the events that are happening in the world, it is a great opportunity for all students of Theosophy of the different streams to come together for the common good and this will also be for benefit the movement as a whole. That means working to unite this force in the world, and thereby influencing it, with our persevering experiences for the Theosophical Ideal. The contribution of the Theosophical truths is still valid, but it needs to become a lifestyle in each student, the daily practice of compassion, love and wisdom.

Steven Otto



1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?

I'm Steven Otto from Germany and I'm not a member of any TS (there are five different so called 'traditions' in Germany). At the moment I'll remain independent.

2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?

I'm active in the Theosophical movement more generally with some projects, for example my website or a book, which is to be published in the next months.

3. How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?

I heard from a colleague about Theosophy seven years ago. He has recommended it to me and the last five years I studied very closely *The Secret Doctrine*. I came in contact with the various TS's in Germany because I have compiled a study to defend the numerous allegations against H.P. Blavatsky.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

Truth. It is a very, very merciful gift, a light in the darkness. As far as my faith is concerned – everything and as far as my life concerned – very much. Theosophy changed me and my life radically in the last years.

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

It's *The Secret Doctrine*, THE root base of our movement. This book has a depth and breadth, that has not been recognized even in a rudimentary way by us. We are just at the beginning.

6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?

Our movement as a whole, has to be aware of it's very important role in the near future, in other words, the next 'cycle' – the so-called Age of Aquarius or the upcoming platonic world-month and, of course, act accordingly in the present.

7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?

A transition into a new cycle implies always a radical change. Today's materialistic society will soon experience a very cruel collapse. And I wish, that we are all properly prepared – i.e. no debt, a corresponding quantity of gold coins and maximum independence from the system – because only when prepared we can play the role, which we should play: the pioneers of a Theosophical Society not in the sense of a company or association, as today, but as a Theosophical, a reasonable and virtuous form of society - the 'brighter tomorrow', as HPB said.

Mike Vallis



1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?

Mike Vallis. Born in Cyprus. Migrated to Melbourne, Australia 30 years ago. TS member in Melbourne since late 1980's.

2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?

Yes active. Attending meetings and sometimes giving lectures.

3. How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?

First contact by reading *The Key to Theosophy* in the Greek language during my teen-years.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

A rational explanation of the meaning of life.

5. *What is your favorite Theosophical book and why?*

C. W. Leadbeater's *The Devachanic Plane* presently reading it.

6. *What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?*

Transformation.

7. *Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

Transparency, Efficacy, Relevance.



Isis Maria Borges de Resende



1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?

My name is Isis Maria Borges de Resende. I have been a member of the Theosophical Society since August 1, 1968.

2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?

Yes, I'm active in my Lodge and Section. I'm currently the president of Alvorada Lodge in Brasilia, member of the board of directors of the Theosophical Society in Brazil, and president of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation.

3. How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?

I was born in a Theosophical family and I got in touch with the Theosophical ideas when I was a child.

4. *What does Theosophy mean to you?*

Theosophy means a lot to me. I have a lot of gratitude to Helena Blavatsky and others who brought the Theosophical teachings from her time to mine. When the problems of life arise, and they always do, the Theosophical teachings are like a compass, a guide to help us to improve life, learn more and establish better relations with others, helping them somehow.

5. *What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

My favourite Theosophical book is *The Voice of the Silence*. I like it so much because it shows me that the meaning of life is to help others, selfishness is a dead-end road. Selfishness makes our life meaningless, we can be happy only helping others to do so, we are all connected and we cannot have happiness for our own delight if we are not connected to others.

6. *What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?*

In my opinion, the biggest challenge the Theosophical Society has right now is to keep alive the torch of teachings so that we may help the world to improve its condition. But to keep the torch alive it is necessary to light up, at least a little bit, the torch inside us and this is not easy. We have to be the change we want to see in the world, how are we to expect others to change if we are not able to change ourselves? We cannot give what we don't have, so the process of changing outside is not possible if we don't change inside also. So, the challenge of the Theosophical Society in a way is our own challenge, to be the change we want to see in the world.

7. *Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

Tim Boyd, the international president of the Theosophical Society — Adyar, said that he wishes to see an infusion of youthful energy, whether in the form of new members of a young age, or older members who embody a flexibility of mind and heart, the ideal would be young and old working together. I quite agree with him, we need to think about the continuity of the generations, so that the torch of the Theosophical teachings will be kept alive, burning.

Marcos Luis Borges de Resende



1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?

My name is Marcos Luis Borges de Resende and I am a member of the Theosophical Society since 1968, when I joined at the age of ten.

2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?

Yes, I am an active member. At this moment I occupy the post of General Secretary of the Brazilian Section of the Theosophical Society.

3. How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?

I was born in a family of Theosophists. My four grandparents met at the Theosophical Society. My parents knew each other since childhood at the Theosophical Society.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

For me Theosophy means wisdom applied to everyday life. I think a

distinction should be made between Theosophy, which is the wisdom of nature, and the Theosophical literature, which is the vast production of works of authors connected to the Theosophical Society, including the founders. The confusion of these concepts can lead to dogmatism.

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

I do not have a favorite. I like very much the works of Blavatsky, such as *The Key to Theosophy*, and others, and also Krishnamurti's books that, for me, are tools for pure wisdom or Theosophy.

6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS Adyar (as an organization) is facing at the moment?

This is a very delicate moment in the life of our Society. For over thirty years, we had at the head of our work a leader that had permeated our institution with deep spirituality. Radha Burnier, for me, was someone far beyond a common Theosophist, like me. She had a way of being very quirky and her departure left a big void. I think the main challenge after her passage is to maintain the Society united and faithful to its original aims and purposes. Only through not dogmatic study that leads each, to a greater or lesser degree, to the discovery of truth, our Society can continue to be a light in the darkness that is human consciousness, including in the twenty-first century.

7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?

Yes. Unity and genuine spirituality. The members of the Theosophical movement must leave their egos aside to make that happen. For the Society to continue to be a useful instrument to its true founders, those who guided and inspired Blavatsky and Olcott to establish it, it is necessary that each member do their part in order not to allow it to dogmatize, nor to become a sect or belief. This requires, at the same time, freedom of thought and dedication to the pursuit of truth, not as something to be owned, but to be discovered in every moment.

Pamela Zane Keys



1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?

My name is Pamela Zane Keys. I was born and bred in Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. However, I have also lived much of my life in smaller coastal towns such as Wanganui (where I am now) and New Plymouth; as well farming for a while in the Coromandel plus a time in the capital, Wellington. I have been a TS member since 2005 after I re-met Warwick Keys, an enthusiastic TS advocate. [We had known each other way back, when we were young students. Amazingly, we married in 2008.]

2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?

I am a member of the committee of Theosophy Wanganui, which helps form plans of action for our area. Warwick and I also lead a weekly Theosophical study group in our home.

Warwick and I are both National Speakers for TSNZ and travel together around the country to lead workshops and seminars. My presentations are usually experientially based and have included topics such as *The Inevitability of Change and How it can Transform*, *God is a Verb* and *The Worry Workshop*. Interacting with other TS members as well as the public

can be exciting and educational for us all. Having taught most of my life, I not only love to learn but also continue to be rewarded by finding ways to communicate ideas and challenge people's thinking. Whenever I get ready to speak, I think of the words of the Sufi poet, Hafiz:

*"The subject tonight is Love and for tomorrow night as well,
As a matter of fact I know no better topic for us to discuss
Until we all die."*

Being the editor of *TheoSophia* (the quarterly magazine of the TSNZ) is for me a wonder-filled experience for which I am constantly grateful. Contact with a wide variety of thinkers and writers is stimulating and inspiring while the practicalities of compiling a magazine in attractive and interesting ways present delightful challenges that keep me alert, creative and ever learning.

Story telling is a favourite hobby which flourished through my teaching years and has segued into writing. Inspired and encouraged by Vic Hao Chin Jr when he visited NZ in 2009, I began writing for teachers using real-life *Heart and Soul Stories* which seemed to encourage and inspire. Now I am working on a second book of more stories from my life which, hopefully, contain kernels of wisdom gleaned from personal, often painful, learning.

3. How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?

When I re-met Warwick in 2005, he gave me a copy of *At The Feet of The Master* to read on the train. I kept sending him texts marvelling at what I read and excitedly decided to explore Theosophy further - with his help and encouragement.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

Firstly, I found that the disparate strands of my life-long esoteric explorations through mystical spirituality, religion and study, came together and made sense through Theosophy. Theosophy has allowed my ever broadening views of *The All* to rest within the range of my continued growth and learning while spurring me on to understand and manifest more - in this life and beyond.

Secondly, helping to form a 'Nucleus of Universal Brotherhood [and Sisterhood]' is an ideal that appeals to me - along with the awesome

challenges it represents. Through our involvement in the Society, I have met and befriended some wonderful people who have supported, encouraged and led me into new discoveries. They not only provide examples of living aware and creative lives but also make up a sample of that 'Nucleus'. These Theosophists are some of the most cherished and respected people in my life.

Additionally, reading about and considering diverse religious paths such as Ancient Egyptian esoteric lore, Gnosticism, the Sufi tradition and Buddhism for example, and how seemingly diverse esoteric views (throughout history as well as across cultures) can be fundamentally united by a Theosophical viewpoint, is a great and rewarding discovery for me. I relate to the words of the great Rumi:

"I have lived on the lip of insanity, wanting to know reasons, knocking at the door.

The door opens.

I have been knocking from the inside."

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

My 'favourite book' changes with time but currently our home group is exploring Geoffrey Hodson's *Sharing the Light*. It comprises short chapters dealing with deep esoteric subjects in simple but profound ways that are clear and easy to follow. English-born Geoffrey lived and worked in NZ for some of his life. Warwick and I were fortunate to live in his former home next to Vasanta House (TSNZ HQ) in Auckland when Warwick was National President of TSNZ.

6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS Adyar is facing at the moment?

Uniting very culturally diverse groups of TS members in the work of spreading Theosophy internationally and inspiring the demonstration of Theosophical values through the lives we live, must be the greatest challenge.

7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?

I wish for forward looking approaches, grounded in the present, that will:

- appeal to new members as well as long term Theosophists
- breathe life into dated attitudes and hide bound practices and
- share in the development of an evolving world population that has often lost touch with the true essence of being.

Until then:

Out beyond right-doing and wrong-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there. (Rumi)



Sampsa Kuukasjärvi



1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?

Sampsa Kuukasjärvi from Finland. I have been an Adyar TS member since 2000.

2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?

I'm currently the President in my local Lodge and Editor-in-Chief of the Theosophical magazine of the Finnish Section. I also write, translate and lecture a little and participate in Theosophical discussions on the internet.

3. How did your first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?

I learnt the word "Theosophy" already in childhood, because my parents had a lot of Theosophical, especially Anthroposophical literature at our home. I understood that "Theosophy" means something thrilling, which is not understood by the masses.

I came in contact with the Adyar TS in the late 1990s when I had a crisis in life. Before that I visited several spiritual groups and went to different lectures. I soon experienced that Theosophical groups (meaning also Rosicrucian, Anthroposophical, etc.) were deeper than other groups, because they were not very interested in personal happiness nor so called phenomena. Coming to a Lodge meeting of the TS felt like coming home. The atmosphere there was warm-hearted and uplifting, and contrasted with many other groups. I also perceived that members in the TS were less dogmatic. So I soon joined the Society. Lodge meetings still feel like being at home!

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

Perennial wisdom, which gives me deep perspectives. More specifically it means harmlessness and free thinking.

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

There have been many, especially books by Pekka Ervast (a remarkable Finnish Theosophist) and J. Krishnamurti, which are a concrete down to earth type. Nonetheless, I don't read books anymore, because they take too much time. I only look for definitions or quotes in books and really read only articles and other short texts, usually digitally.

6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS Adyar is facing at the moment?

The international organization has serious problems with management and communication. Due to that, I believe it loses many current and potential members. There should be open communication about administrative issues from leaders to ordinary members, and effective communication about Theosophy to the outer world. The web site of the Adyar Headquarters should provide news and articles, which would be updated often. Articles should be light and contemporary and include pictures. I think old books are not the future of Theosophy.

7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?

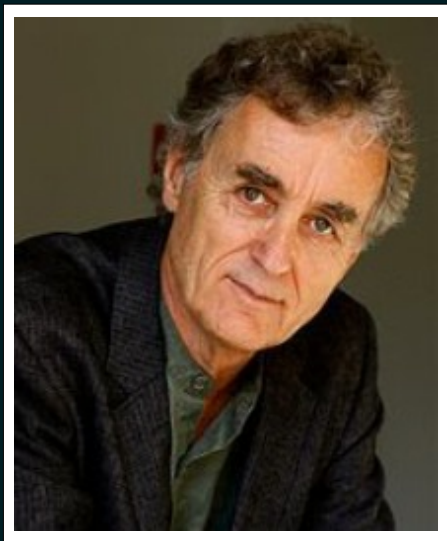
That it were not a mere museum, which repeats old quotes according to the principle "The more Sanskrit words, the better"! For too many people Theosophy seems to be a finished belief system. The movement should be

searching for truth and creating something new all the time.

To the Adyar Headquarters, I wish skilful and dedicated workers.

To the movement I wish also vitality and seeing that different Theosophical groups have between themselves more similarities than differences.





“In the end the aggressors always destroy themselves, making way for others who know how to cooperate and get along. Life is much less a competitive struggle for survival than a triumph of cooperation and creativity.

Indeed, since the creation of the first nucleated cells, evolution has proceeded through ever more intricate arrangements of cooperation and coevolution. Partnership – the tendency to associate, establish links, live inside one another, and cooperate – is one of the hallmarks of life.”

Fritjof Capra

(An Austrian-born American physicist)

Good News

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Good News from Adyar

The Olcott Memorial High School in Adyar extends its work and needs our help



The grounds

For 120 years, the Olcott Memorial High School has been providing a solid education for underprivileged boys and girls in Adyar, a suburb of Chennai in India. Now it has a special need for our help in an important extension of its higher educational work. Until recently, the children were given the standard Indian ten years of education with a common curriculum (five years in primary school and five in secondary), culminating in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate exams of the Tamil Nadu Board of Secondary Education.

In 2013 the decision was taken to turn the school into a “Higher Secondary School” by adding a class at eleventh year level. This coming June



The Staff

2014 a twelfth and final year will open. The new eleventh year class has 32 students who are offered courses in the commerce stream with subjects like economics, accounting, commerce and computer science. There will be courses in science and humanities streams next year if a minimum number of students come for admission. With these studies completed, they will be able to apply either to a university or for entry to a vocational training programme. It is hoped that some of them will join the Vocational Training Centre recently set up on TS land.

As we can imagine, the staff are very proud of this step forward in providing needy children with equal educational and employment opportunities. Started by our TS co-founder, Col. H.S. Olcott, in 1894, the school is located in the south-eastern part of Besant Gardens. It provides free education in Tamil, along with textbooks, uniforms and a nutritious breakfast. The government pays for the midday meal of the 460 children and the school adds a nutritional supplement.

The second reason our help is needed is because in spite of receiving a wage increase in June 2013, its teachers are still significantly underpaid. The Olcott Education Society (OES) – the entity that runs the school – has a “corpus fund” (also known as an endowment fund) which brings in enough income to cover one-third of its running expenses. For all the rest, it depends on donations. Since donations fluctuate from year to year, those in



Students ... beauties!

charge cannot commit to higher wages for the teachers, for fear of not being able to continue paying them. Dr. Chittaranjan Satapathy, the Secretary of the OES and International Secretary of the TS, says that the help of the TOS in building up the corpus fund would be greatly appreciated to sustain the recent increase in pay and to attract competent teachers for the higher secondary school with higher pay.

TS and TOS members around India and the world are not the only ones who support the school. Last year fans and electric lights were installed in the 14 class rooms where junior classes are held. Local branches of the State Bank of India donated the fans and the organization “Dream Runners” donated the cost of the electrification. This is excellent news, isn't it? – but rather exceptional.

Some TOS groups donate regularly to the Olcott School, of course, but in addition to efforts already being made, can some of us make an extra response to this special call?

TS and TOS members are all invited to consider donating to the Olcott School. A website provides information on the school's vision, history, curriculum, etc.: <http://www.olcott-school-chennai.org/>

For details on how to donate from outside India, write to the international secretary of the TOS, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, at tosinternational@wanadoo.fr.

Good News from ITC



From August 15–18, 2014 all roads lead to the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, The Netherlands, a wonderfully located spiritual retreat center fostering brotherhood and peace.

On this peaceful estate, International Theosophy Conferences Inc. will host a historic meeting and invites participation by Theosophists from all over the world, belonging to all organizations, but also independent Theosophists and sympathizers who are actively involved in studying or promoting Theosophy.

Theosophist from all over the world will attend: India, New Zealand, South Africa, Zambia, Brazil, Honduras, the USA, Iceland, Madeira and many other European countries.

Introduction speakers: Tim Boyd (keynote), Barend Voorham, Betty Bland, Eugene Jennings, Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Joop Smits and Jacques Mahnich.

The conference theme will be **“Theosophy, Unity and Helping the World ... Where do we go from here?”**

In her *Five Messages to the American Theosophists*, Madame Blavatsky is very clear about the direction of Theosophy and Theosophists. She states “union is strength and for every reason private differences must be sunk in United work for our great cause (i) ... But in order that we may be able to effect this working on behalf of our common cause, we have to sink all private differences.” (ii)

She tells us that if we insist upon Theosophical work being done in a particular way, or according to the wishes of a particular person, and not in anyone else's way, that this is not Theosophy, and that in pursuing this path “the growth of the Society will soon be split up into various sects, as many as there are leaders.” (iii)

She then asks “is this separateness consonant with the United Altruism of universal brotherhood? Is this the teaching of our noble masters?” And in regards to working together she states, “therefore do not for one moment relax in your efforts; press closer, shoulder to shoulder, every day; stand together as one man, come what may, fine weather or storm, and the victory of the cause to which you have placed yourselves is certain. *Striving thus in unison with your higher self*, your efforts must and will be fruitful of good to the society, to yourselves, to humanity.” (iv)

These messages were as prophetic then as they are today. The ITC 2014 Naarden conference is a unique opportunity for students of all traditions to come together sharing Theosophical ideas from the teachings of Madame Blavatsky and the Masters, and working with those ideas in workshop format together, with each and everyone present.

Each conference day will start with introduction lectures. After those, participants in workshops will be doing the most important and demanding work. Results of the workshops will be presented in plenary feedback sessions, as input for the end product of the gathering: “The ITC 2014, Naarden Declaration.” Furthermore, the core of the ITC program in Naarden will consist of three parts: Religion, Philosophy, and Science.

That work is the meaningful communication between students of all traditions in problem-solving some of the unique world challenges that this age and the future ages present. Why, because the great Master’s letter tells us that the Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity ... “That the fundamental doctrines of all religions will be proved identical in their esoteric meaning (v). ... And that the true religion and philosophy offer the solution of every problem.” (vi) What is there greater to achieve?

Concerning the problems of life having to do with lack of morality, incomplete religions and philosophies, and we might add sciences, that add nothing to the understanding, or moral and spiritual nature of man; and concerning the questions of the great dual principles in nature, good and evil, right and wrong, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism, liberty and despotism, The Master tells us, “to these problems there must be somewhere a consistent solution, and if our doctrines will show their competence to offer it,

then the world will be the first to confess that there must be the true philosophy, the true religion, the true light, which gives truth and nothing but the truth." (vii)

This will be one of the great tasks before us as Theosophical students, from different traditions working earnestly together to find the best ways to bring the truth of Theosophy, based on the Great teachings of H. P. B. and her Masters, in its aspects of science, philosophy and religion to the world, in practical form, both spiritual and material, for the benefit of all human and life-kind. This will be an important meeting and effort that any Theosophical student who is able, is welcome to join and become a vital part of it. A newsletter with further program details will be distributed soon.

Please consider coming and sharing your Theosophical wealth.

Om Mani Padme OM to All.

i *Five Messages from HP Blavatsky to the American Theosophists; In Convention Assembled: 1888-1889-1890-1891; The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, 1921; Second Message, p. 17*

ii *Ibid: pg. Second Message, p. 16*

iii *Ibid: pg. Second Message, p. 16*

iv *Ibid: Third Message, p. 24*

v *Theosophical Articles and Notes: The Great Masters Letter; p. 191*

vi *Theosophical Articles and Notes: The Great Masters Letter; p. 193*

vii *Theosophical Articles and Notes: The Great Masters Letter; p. 193*

For further information regarding this event, registration and ITC's magazine follow this link: <http://www.theosconf.org/>

For contributions in the series OUR UNITY on Theosophy Forward click here: <http://www.theosophyforward.com/theosophy/our-unity-serie>

Good News from Amsterdam

Symposium in the Westerkerk in Amsterdam Was a Great Success



The Westerkerk in the hearth of Amsterdam

On March 29, the Dutch section of Theosophical Society, Adyar, organized an important symposium. It was the fifth one in a series of symposiums initiated by the Lectorium Rosicrucianum. It took place in the famous Westerkerk, and was attended by approximately 350 visitors.



Waiting to get in

The Westerkerk, in English “Western Church”, a Dutch protestant sixteenth-century church where the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt lies buried, is a magnificent location for symposiums and other activities.



The world-famous and majestic organ

The programme consisted of eight lectures given by six members of various spiritual organizations, a professor of the Amsterdam University and an art historian. The theme of the symposium was “The Challenge of the Soul: Truth, Knowledge and Wisdom.”



Els Rijneker, General Secretary of the Dutch Section. TS-Adyar, introducing one of the speakers

The lecturers explored the subject of the symposium by envisioning the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, the Sufi Movement, the Amsterdam University, the Theosophical Society, the Rosicrucian Order AMORC, the Anthroposophical Society, and Co-Masonry of Le Droit Humain.



A packed church

The various participating spiritual organizations differed in their approaches but also discovered congruity in realizing the same objects, which are inner growth and making progress on the Path.

The art historical contribution consisted of a dissertation on Theosophical art, specifically paintings by Piet Mondrian and Theosophical architecture, such as buildings by Karel de Bazel, Mathieu Lauweriks, and Hendrik Berlage.

During the afternoon intermezzo, the visitors could attend a performance of old Indonesian sacred dances.



Sacred dances

It was an event to be remembered.

Good News from Munich



Last March, “Theosophy World News”, an independent, international, non-commercial Theosophical newsletter was launched. It provides an overview of all international content covering the subject of Theosophy that appears *on line* worldwide. Among the topics in the newsletter are: magazines, videos, events, news, articles on Theosophical and non-Theosophical websites and reviews of books.

At the time of the launch, Steven Otto the initiator of the new project and an independent Theosophist wrote: “Theosophy gives me very much; therefore I want to give something back in return.”

Theosophists supporting this project are invited to sign up for the newsletter. So if you think “Theosophy World News” is not only good news, but also a good idea, follow the link below and tell other Theosophists about it. The service is absolutely free.

Sign up here: <http://www.soehne-des-feuers.de/international-theosophy-news>

“Theosophy World News” 1st Quarter 2014: <http://www.soehne-des-feuers.de/nachrichten/theosophy-news-worldwide-1st-quarter-2014-167.html>

Good News from the EFTS



37TH EUROPEAN CONGRESS

*Bridging
Science and Spirituality*

PARIS, 30 JULY TO 3 AUGUST 2014

INVITATION

You are invited to the
European Congress 2014
Bridging Science and Spirituality
30 July to 3 August
Paris, France

Place image Good News from the EFTS 2 here NO TEXT
(Opening: 30 July morning – Closing: 3 August before lunch)
Working languages of the Congress are English and French

* * *

Organized by
The European Federation of the Theosophical Society
and the Theosophical Society in France

Short History of the Congresses in Europe

The first Congress in Europe took place in 1903 in London, England, with the guest speaker Colonel Henry S. Olcott. In the beginning of the 20th

century, Congresses were organized almost annually; this established a firm foundation for Theosophists to come together regularly, so that even during the war years Congresses still took place.

In the second half of the 20th century, Congresses were organized after every three or four years. In the 21st century, there have been four Congresses until now: in 2003 in Naarden, The Netherlands (Centenary of the EFTS); in 2004 in Porto, Portugal; in 2007 in Helsinki, Finland; and in 2010 in Rome, Italy (World Congress).

Since the beginning of the 20th century, there have been six Congresses in France. The latest Congress in Paris, which was World Congress, took place in 1971. The latest Congress in France took place in 1984 in Poitiers, which means that exactly after 30 years, in 2014 to be precise, which is also 111th anniversary of the European Federation of the Theosophical Society, the 37th European Congress will be organized again in France, this time in its capital, Paris.

The aim of the 37th European Congress is to bring members and sympathizers together from Europe and the world, and furthermore to investigate the connection between science and spirituality today.

Special guests are:

Tim Boyd, International President of the TS-Adyar

Andrej Detala, scientist and writer

Ulrich Mornoff, teacher and researcher

Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière, senior lecturer at Sorbonne University

Luc Lambs, senior scientist and researcher at Toulouse University

Other distinguished speakers are:

Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Chairperson of the European Federation of the TS and General Secretary of the TS France

Halldór Haraldsson, General Secretary of the TS Iceland

Antonio Girardi, General Secretary of the TS Italy

Graciela Ricci, psycholinguist and semiologist, TS member, Italy

Jacques Mahnich, aeronautical engineer, TS member, France

Venue

The European Congress will take place in the Adyar Theatre www.theatre-adyar.fr next to the premises of the TS in France (4 Square Rapp, 75007), in the center of Paris, 650 meters from the Eiffel Tower.



The Adyar Theatre

Programme

The programme of the Congress includes lectures and symposium talks. Also a classical music concert and light programmes by the sections are scheduled. On two days the programme ends early in the afternoon. Detailed programme of the Congress will be published in due time.

The programme of the Congress will be partly broadcasted online. (Livestream)

Registrations can be done until July 15, 2014.

Registration fees will be: **for members 20 Euros**, and for **non-members 30 Euros**. Check the website of the EFTS www.ts.efts.org and other channels.

Meals/Drinks

All who register from May 15 onwards can't order meals. The fees for the registration/drinks should reach the EFTS account not later than July 20.

During breaks **drinks** (coffee-tea) will be served in the premises of the TS France for the price of **20 Euros for the whole Congress**. In addition to this, a bottle of mineral water (0.5 l) will be offered daily.

Accommodation

Participants should take care of their accommodation by their own means. Although there are many hotels and hostels near the Adyar Theatre, **it is advisable to book the hotel/hostel as soon as possible**. The period in which the European Congress takes place is “high tourist season” and the headquarters is situated in the center of Paris. For finding a hotel/hostel near the Adyar Theatre, the Eiffel Tower can be used as a landmark, because the distance between these two places is 650 meters. To make choosing and booking easier, a few options are suggested:

Hotels

Among other possible online booking systems, www.booking.com offers a wide number of accommodation possibilities with various price levels.

Hostel/ Bed and Breakfast

For budget-friendly accommodation possibilities near the Adyar Theatre, see: www.budgetplaces.com/5564/eiffel-tower-accommodation-paris-sort-by-distance-114-9.html

Detailed information is published on the website of the European Federation of the Theosophical Society: www.ts-efts.org

If any urgent information is needed, do not hesitate to contact us via email at: congress@ts-efts.org

Come and join us in wonderful Paris!!!

Good News from the European School of Theosophy

This School wants: "... to provide opportunities in Europe for the study of Theosophy in order to ensure the continuing preservation and dissemination of the esoteric philosophy."



European School 2014
10 - 15 October
at the International Theosophical Centre
Naarden - The Netherlands

"In the Beginning was the Word"
Discovering the Logos in Kosmos and Man

Speakers: David Roef and Pablo Sender
other speakers to be announced later

In the Beginning was the Word...

This famous opening line to the Gospel of John is intuitively recognized by many readers as a bijasutra, a seminal maxim pointing to divine mind and speech as the source of existence. Although “Word” is an inadequate rendering of the original Greek term Logos, it still intimates a fundamental esoteric teaching, i.e. that behind and within the universe operates a power of “reason”, an ordering principle of mediation and relationship which forms the living heart of the cosmic pattern.

As H. P. B. explains in *The Secret Doctrine* (ii 25): “The esoteric meaning of the word Logos (speech or word, Verbum) is the rendering in objective expression, as in a photograph, of the concealed thought. The Logos is the mirror reflecting DIVINE MIND, and the Universe is the mirror of the Logos, though the latter is the essence of that Universe.” The Logos can be seen as a metaphysical bridge linking together heaven and earth, the material and spiritual orders of existence. And whenever the Logos becomes flesh, there is sacred testimony to the Great Sacrifice and Great Renunciation of all Avatars, all Divine Incarnations.

At this year’s European School we will examine, in ten lectures and seven study sessions, different aspects of the Theosophical doctrine on the Logos. Each day the focus will be on one specific topic which allows us to have a lucid and coherent exploration of the whole theme.

Topics include the Logos teaching in ancient philosophy and inner Christianity; Father-Mother-Son or the mystery of the three Logoi; Fohat, the dynamic energy of divine thought; the correspondences between cosmic and human mind; the visible and spiritual Sun; the mystical birth of the Word in man; Christos: the Logos in the Gospel of John; Krishna: the Word in the Bhagavad Gita.

Follow this link: <http://www.europeanschooloftheosophy.com/>

Theosophical Encyclopedia

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Egyptian Religion, Ancient

[Part 1, pp. 211-214]

by Jeanine Miller – the UK



[The following article is from the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, edited by Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006), pp. 211-218.]

O Egypt, Egypt, the land that was the seat of divinity shall be deprived of the presence of the gods. There shall not remain more of thy religion than tales, than words inscribed on stone and telling of thy lost piety. A day will come alas when the sacred hieroglyphs will become but idols. The world will mistake the symbols of wisdom for gods and accuse great Egypt of having adored hell monsters. - hermes trismegistus

No prophecy has ever proved so true.

Introduction

For centuries Ancient Egyptian religion remained a mystery to the Western world, hidden in its hieroglyphs, yet spelled out in the imposing grandeur of Egypt's monuments. Even with the decipherment of the

hieroglyphs little was revealed of the Egyptian famed wisdom so praised by the Greek writers; Western scholars, conditioned by extreme rationalism, or Christianity, were completely unprepared for a totally different vision expressed through symbols which had lost all meaning. Thus to take a very simple example, who could understand such phrases of ch. 42 of the *Book of the Dead* as translated by Wallis Budge in 1899: "I am he who hath no power to walk, the great knot who is within yesterday. The might of my strength is within my hand."

A more modern translation, from the French translation, at least gives a clue: "I am the motionless one, the great knot of destiny which lies in yesterday. In my hand lies the destiny of the present."

The third level of meaning of the hieroglyphs which gave their spiritual significance was completely missed. Fortunately since the second half of the 20th century more "enlightened" Egyptologists, some acquainted with the Upanishads, others with the Rosicrucian tenets, or the Kabbalah, have penetrated somewhat deeper into the labyrinthine sanctuary of the ancient Egyptian mind.

Helena P. BLAVATSKY was in this respect, as in many others, a pioneer. Her remarks and hints on Egyptian religion are scattered through *The Secret Doctrine*, some in *Isis Unveiled* and various journals, and gathered together in the *Collected Writings*.

For clarity sake, we should keep in mind the several main sources of religious documents as they spanned long periods of development of civilization and thereby of religious interpretation, unfoldment and thinking:

1. The Pyramid Texts, the earliest inscriptions superbly engraved on the walls of chambers inside the pyramid-tombs of 5 kings from the 5th to the beginning of the 6th dynasty at Sakkara, which scholars date back to the Old Kingdom (from about 2300 to 2175 BCE); these religious incantatory texts are thought to have been compiled from much older texts long before the unification of Egypt by Menes.

2. The Coffin Texts, or Books of the Justification for the Other World, which cover the sarcophagi of the Middle Kingdom (approx. 2200-2800 BCE), forming the link between the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead, some of which have recently been recognized as initiation texts for the living in

preparation for the great transition.

3. The *Book of the Dead*, misnamed for The Chapters of Coming Forth By Day, the greatest papyri collection of religious texts of which three versions exist. All treat of questions of life and death, of preparations for after death states.

4. The Shabaka Stone (preserved in the British Museum), a copy on a black basalt stone of an ancient drama played out by the gods, giving out the cosmogony and theology of Memphis wherein Ptah, the Creator God, creates by the power of thought what was conceived in his heart.

Other records such as the Book of “The Two Ways,” *The Book of Am Dwat* or “What is in the Beyond” and the so-called Wisdom Literature, bear witness to Ancient Egyptian religious philosophy.

“The esoteric teachings in Egypt and India,” writes H. P. Blavatsky. in *The Secret Doctrine* “were identical” (SD I:672), and thus a knowledge of one helps to understand the other. It is the basic ignorance of the initiatic stand of most of the sacred texts and the inveterate habit of taking every text literally that has militated against a real understanding and thereby translation of Egypt’s spiritual message.

The exoteric dogmas may often have been altered, the esoteric never

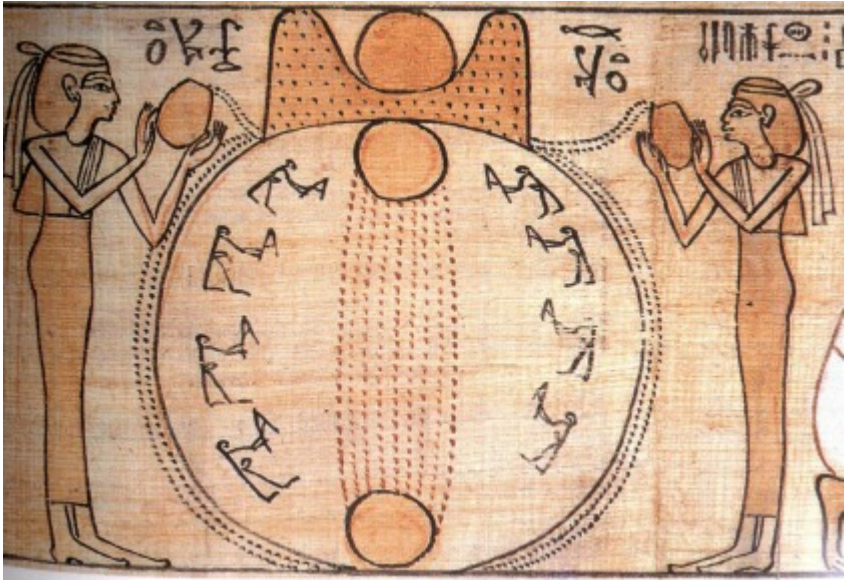
...

The Egyptian priests *have forgotten much, they altered nothing.*

Hence “... the sacred immutability of the primitive truths [was] revealed only during the mysteries of initiation.” The priests “... preserved in their rituals and dogmas the principal teachings of the secret doctrine” (SD I:312).

Cosmogony

The first steps in examining an ancient religion take us to its cosmogony. Here HPB tells us: “In the Egyptian Papyri the whole Cosmogony of the Secret Doctrine is found scattered about in isolated sentences, even in the ‘Book of Dead’... (SD I:674) Every ancient theogony ... from the Aryan and the Egyptian down to that of Hesiod — places, in the order of Cosmogonical



evolution, Night before the Day (SD II:59)” — night representing the state of repose, undifferentiation, timelessness, hence *The Secret Doctrine’s* *pralaya* as in the Hindu texts. Of such a state before creation, which the Stanzas of DZYAN describe negatively in terms of what is no longer, the Egyptians also had an inkling, for anything that exists must have a beginning and therefore an end. The creation is referred to as the “first time” implying the first event in a series. Outside “existence” is a state of “non-existence,” limitless, timeless, unchanging which enfolds the limited, but ordered existence, a state which was described as “when ... had, not yet,” similar to the Babylonian *Enuma Ellis*: “When the heights of heaven and the earth beneath had not been named, when Apsu, their Father and Tiamat, their Mother, still mingled their waters when no field or marsh was formed and no gods had been called into being. ...”

For the Egyptians also there was a time when Earth and sky had not yet come into being and “there was not announced the name of anything,” etc. (Papyrus Berlin 3055), a view in full agreement with the first Stanza of Dzyan. Differences are perceptible when it comes to detailed analysis. For example,

though the Non-Existent implies the undifferentiated oneness, it also means by comparison with the Existent, inertia, stagnation, unconsciousness. But as a living counterpart of the Existent, it can overflow, invade the Existent, for instance at the unconscious level, among human beings in sleep, in nature, in floods. Although it threatens ordered existence, it offers, during human sleep, an opportunity for revitalization, rejuvenation. The task of the gods and pharaohs is to keep the existent ordered, defined, active and organized and hold the Non-Existent at bay. All this was worked out by E. Hornung in his *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: the One and the Many*, 1971 (translated from the German into English in 1983). The Non-Existent is obviously the inexhaustible pleroma, or Waters of Space of the Vedas, the Nun of Egyptian cosmogony.

For the initiated priests as for the *esoteric doctrine*, creation was an emanation, a transformation of the infinite matrix into a limitation, a measure of it; the emergent active deity, Atum is “within his limit” and, as described in a *Pyramid Text*, he is “the serpent whose coils delimit the creation,” so Rundle Clark expresses it in his *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (p. 51). Out of the primeval ocean of space (Nun), Atum arises, his “outer coils” being the limits of the world: “I am the outflow of the Primeval Flood, he who emerged from the waters. / I am the ‘provider of attributes’ serpent with its many coils. / I am the Scribe of the Divine Book which says what has been and effects what is yet to be. (*Pyramid Text*, 1146)”

Powerful archetypal images here encapsulate the significance of manifested existence. *The Secret Doctrine’s* Root-matter appears here in the “primeval flood,” Nun, in the “Provider of attributes,” i.e., of potentialities waiting to be realized; it pulsates in the “Scribe of the Divine Book,” the *Logos* or *Word* incarnate in matter that shapes this primordial substance and inscribes all things in the Book of Destiny.

One of the esoteric tenets of *The Secret Doctrine* whereby “... Deity ... is ... ‘the EVER BECOMING, as well as the ever universally present, and the ever Existing.’ ... a perpetual, never-ceasing evolution, circling back in its incessant progress through æons of duration into its original status — ABSOLUTE UNITY (SD II:545) finds an echo in Atum of the Heliopolitan cosmogony: ‘he who completes himself,’ who emerges from the timeless Nun to become the traverser of millions of years whose motion whirls chaos into

creativity, whose manifestation heralds life, light, substance, consciousness, whose 'becomings' are symbolized by the scarab — khepri — to be fully expressed in the Solar Deity Re.

The Waters of Space were to be described in the Coffin Texts as “In the infinite, the nothingness, the nowhere and the dark.”

In the Hermopolitan theology these were to be differentiated to assume the shape of Eight Genii of the Deep, four male, four female, who formed the primeval Egg of the universe from which emerged the Solar Deity. We should never take these archetypal images literally as most people do. The egg is both symbolic and representative of the universal egg-like forms from which life issues, of the human aura, and of those states of existence, unconscious, half-conscious, conscious, etc. (See *SD* I:359 ff on the symbol of the egg and p. 556 on the Golden Egg with its positive and negative poles.) The Solar deity Re is the Word manifested as his hieroglyph implies, hence LOGOS, hence the three symbols in one: Atum-Khepri-Re; Atum, the primal mover, its becomings, its full manifestation as the Word radiating light. This succinctly expressed the Egyptian idea of the manifested threefoldness of the divine Principle of Life, subsequently represented by the trinities of Father-Mother-Son in the theological centers — Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Memphis, Thebes.

HELIOPOLITAN ENNEAD

The Heliopolitan cosmogony is of fundamental significance to any understanding of Egyptian religion. Its gods enshrine in their symbols a host of ideas, functions and secret doctrines. From Atum-Khepri-Re unfold Shu-Tefnut, from these Nut (Sky) Geb (Earth) who give birth to Osiris and Isis, Seth and Nephthys. Each of these couples has a son: Horus and Anubis.

Shu and Tefnut, or the “Divine Twins” often depicted as the “Double Lion,” represent esoterically the expanding and the contracting forces of manifestation which HPB calls “... the dual Force or power of the two *solar* eyes, or the electro-positive and the electro-negative forces” (*SD* I:673 fn.). For HPB Shu is the “solar force,” she calls him “the god of creation” (*SD* I:75, fn). However, he came into his own hegemony only during the Middle Kingdom

period, long after the unification of Egypt. Shu is very complex and so far no Egyptologist has fathomed out his nature. One sentence is quite clear: "I am he ... who transmits the word of the Self-generated demiurge to the crowds (Coffin Text 324a)" showing that the status of "transmitter of the Word" has now passed to Shu, while Re as Atum-Re remained the Presiding Deity. As agent of creation the Double-Lion becomes agent of resurrection, assimilated to the two pylons that guard the entrance to Egyptian temples where occurs the daily resurrection of Re.

But it is in his consort Tefnut, the lioness headed on whom HPB is silent, that the greatest mystery is concealed — the formidable cosmic power known to the Hindus as *shakti kundalini*. The epithet *wps* (in its feminine form *wps*) signifying flame is frequently applied to Tefnut, goddess of flame. In the temple of Philae Tefnut is depicted as a *uraeus* with the head of a lion on top of which sits the solar disc flanked by the horns of Hathor. Strange but highly significant combination of occult symbols, it has never been fathomed, for it reveals while concealing Tefnut's secret nature. Note that the uraeus is the Eye of Re which he sends among humans as avenging destructress in the legend of the near destruction of mankind. Tefnut represents the transformative, purifying but also destructive power of the great universal energy that underlies earth and human beings, that energy also embodied in Hathor, the "House of Horus," the beneficent Hathor that suckles the pharaoh but is also capable of destruction, and in Sekhmet, the lioness headed goddess of war and of medicine. If we recall that (a) it is only when the *kundalini-shakti* becomes activated in a purified body and is raised through the various centers of power or chakras, destroying all impurities, to the highest *chakra* that cosmic vision is granted, and that (b) the human eye is the most occult of our senses, then the legend of Re's Eye that sees and knows all and can destroy all, and the equation Eye-Uraeus-Flame may yield their esoteric significance. To these three symbols, plus the horns of Hathor in the temple of Philae iconography, are added the *lion* and the *solar disc* which bespeak power and cosmic rulership, the universal *shakti* power. The *rajas* quality of the lion implies activity, passion, rage; it stirs the static quality of matter towards a full expression of its potentiality. Esoterically, the solar lion is linked to the zodiacal sign of Leo, a tremendous powerful link which, so far as human beings are concerned, signifies self-assertiveness working towards self-

consciousness working towards vaster horizons of supra-consciousness. All these symbols fuse in one mighty cosmic insight, wherein the Eye of the solar Deity appears as his *Cosmic Power* and his *Cosmic Gnosis*, forewarners of his *Cosmic Will*.

Nut and Geb represent Sky and Earth, contrary to most cosmogonies where Heaven is Father and Earth Mother. As starry vault Nut enfolds the universe like the heavenly vault. For HPB Nut is the feminine aspect of Nun, the ocean of space. A painting in a tomb shows the sun at dusk as having entered her body and the 12 hours of the night inscribed as 12 suns in it; at dawn Nut gives birth once more to the sun. Like all Great Mothers, Nut is the Encompasser who takes back into herself her children, as represented in the inside lid of a sarcophagus wherein the dead were laid to repose in her embrace.

Geb is the Earth, the impregnator, also time, as his sign, the goose, means time. This hieroglyph yields the sound *gb*, but there is another word for goose, *sa* as well; hence the derivation Geb, or Seb. Most Egyptologists favor Geb, HPB uses Seb. *Sa* as goose also means “egg” as well as “son of.” The egg, *sa*, in which occurs the mystery of life and, at the cosmic level, the birth of the universe, becomes *sa*, the goose, the “living heir” and “son” within the limit of time.

In a well known iconography Nut is seen arching her elongated body like the sky vault over Earth, Geb. She is held up by Shu in a gesture of separation. A detailed examination and interpretation of this highly symbolic representation may be found in Geoffrey Hodson’s *Illuminations of the Mystery Tradition*, 1992. Here Nut represents *prakriti*, the all containing, all-productive source of all universes, while Geb is *purusha* active within *prakriti*, hence Nut’s body arched over him. Shu is *Fohat* that binds and separates and both Geb and Shu are embraced within Nut, *purusha* being the inside and *prakriti* the outside of One principle, “Absolute substance” (*op. cit.* p. 50-1).

The myth of Osiris-Isis and their son Horus, is too well known to need retelling. However, certain aspects should be clarified. Osiris is a complex god, concentrating in himself divine, natural and human characteristics. The “dismembered fertility” god who “renews himself,” the god at the top of the stairs, the god of transformations and resurrection, the impulse to evolution, all

these facets are embodied in Osiris: he who embraces life and death, birth and rebirth, is archetypal cosmic man, also reflected in Adam Kadmon of the *Kabbalah*, in Purusha of the *Rig Veda*.

Osiris, entombed in a coffin astray over the Nile, reached a tree that expanded around the coffin, was doubly entombed, until found by Isis who released the body, brought it back sufficiently to life to conceive a son, Horus. Seth, the adversary, represents matter's (illusory) fixity, its tendency to confusion and disruption; he stands for storm forces and those forces of involution, resistance, friction, constriction that imprison the human soul. The symbols give away the meaning of the story. Seth finds the body and fragments it into 14 pieces which Isis and Nephthys find and reassemble. This sacrifice of the man-god, the fragmentation of his body, recalls the Purusha's fragmentation, in the *Rig Veda*, that all might be. Osiris and Seth represent the polarities of the human being, spirit and matter; the sacrifice of divine life through embodiment in matter brings about the conquest of matter; a death and a becoming through matter and the ultimate triumph of the spirit. Osiris's death shows the way to self-fulfilment, Osiris is man's hope or resurrection, hence Osiris becomes the judge of human souls in the beyond and with him every justified soul must be identified. Through the gateway of the Still-Heart (Osiris) the soul must pass, divesting itself of veil after veil for thus only can it awaken to the higher consciousness. So the justified soul exclaims: "I have come to see him that dwelleth in his divine uraeus face to face. / Thou art in me and I am in thee and thy attributes are my attributes" (*Book of the Dead*. Ch. LXIV. 19, 20)

The ultimate end of Osiris, hence of all justified souls, is described in *the Book of the Dead*. "How long shall I live?" asks Osiris of Atum: the answer is: "You will live more than millions of years, an era of millions, but in the end I will destroy everything that I have created, the earth will become again part of the Primeval Ocean, like the Abyss of waters in their original state. Then I will be what will remain, just I and Osiris, when I will have changed myself back into the Old Serpent who knew no man and saw no god. (*Book of the Dead*, ch. 175)" — back to the primordial changelessness and oneness of the Absolute. To this Rundle Clark, in his *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, remarks perceptively: "When all differences have disappeared, he (Atum) and Osiris, the transcendent and the emergent forms of deity, will be reunited in the

universal primordial form of life, the original Serpent, the form in which divinity existed before the coming of gods or men. The final fate, then, is to return to the primordial unity. Here we see Egyptian thought reaching out to a concept very like that of the Upanishads. (p. 141)” indeed to that of the ageless gnosis, which shows how “the esoteric teachings of Egypt and India were identical” as Blavatsky stressed.

End of part one, to be continued.



Australian Aboriginal Spiritual Beliefs



[The following article is from the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, edited by Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006), pp. 70-74.]

While it is now taken as a matter of course that indigenous Australian spirituality has a place in any encyclopaedia of world religions, it must be remembered that this facet of indigenous Australian life was not given due recognition until fairly recently. W. H. Stanner's seminal article *The Dreaming* first published in 1956 can arguably be regarded as the watershed which put the spirituality of indigenous Australians on the map. Prior to that, and as a direct outcome of the colonial mind set of the British and nineteenth century evolutionary thinking, Aboriginal spirituality and cosmology were regarded as either non-existent or at best a form of magic which reflected the so-called "primitive" lifestyle of people whose existence was then considered

predominantly “nasty, brutish and short,” to quote Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* about man’s life in a state of nature, as opposed to civilization.

Today, in the context of a more enlightened post-modern age and a shift away from ethnocentric and racist thinking, spirituality is considered to be the very essence of Aboriginal life. Discussion focuses rather on whether it is more appropriate to speak of Aboriginal religion or spirituality, and to debate what religious/spiritual aspects are validly and generally applicable to the diversity of peoples and cultures that make up Aboriginal Australia. It is relevant to this discussion to remember that at the time of European contact there were some 250 distinct nations and languages (up to 600 dialects) in the continent, covering the full gamut of ecological niches and environments.

A holistic world view. The first fact that strikes the student of Aboriginal cultures is that there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the profane, between religious and secular living, between mind and matter, between humans and nature. Such contrasting dualities are inconsistent with a world view which is essentially inclusive and holistic. This is not to deny the importance of paired concepts and complimentary dualities such as male-female, moieties or paired kinship groups, associations between generations, paired totems or linked mental constructs. But in the Australian aboriginal world view, humans and all aspects of human endeavor, all animal and plant species, and all physical phenomena, from the night sky to the seasons and lightning, are regarded as equal manifestations of a timeless spiritual or cosmic order whose origins, meaning and integrity are not open to challenge (Gostin and Chong, p. 123).

This world view and its interpretation form part of a body of knowledge that is itself seen as an extension of the cosmic order and comprises the accumulated wisdom of a given group, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth since time immemorial. This does not mean that the body of knowledge is changeless or finite, but rather that change and additions become incorporated into the collective wisdom of the group (Gostin and Chong, p. 123-4). Individuals acquire this knowledge progressively and cumulatively during a lifetime punctuated by periods of formal and intense learning described as going through the Law. Knowledge is acquired both by imitation in day to day contact with peers and older persons, and by bestowal by specialist older persons. The latter often takes place in a

highly charged ritual setting which is both secret and separate, during which initiates (both male and female, mostly separately) are temporarily removed from everyday circulation. Debate and challenge are not countenanced. The individual progresses through stages of specialized learning and graduates or comes out as a person of different ritual and social status with new knowledge, new privileges and new responsibilities. This change is universally accepted by the group whose acceptance enforces the person's new role and responsibilities, derived directly from the ancient wisdom of the group and sanctioned by ritual whose origin is attributed to the prototype set down by the ancestral beings who are held to be directly responsible for the well-being of the group (Idem.).

While the authority of ancient wisdom, as interpreted and transmitted by the elders of the group, forms the cornerstone of Aboriginal spirituality, it does not mean that this world view is therefore changeless and sterile. Some cultural attributes mitigate against this. The first of this is the recognition of the need for balance: that life has both good and bad aspects and that these are inseparable. This applies not only within the sphere of human relations, but also to the relationship between humans and nature and even the wider cosmic order. This is amply demonstrated in the stories of ancestral beings who are not removed from everyday life, but who experience both the heroic and less noble foibles of human nature while carrying out their creative tasks. Balance also means accountability for one's actions and the need to pay for one's misdeeds. Rules are known and there are penalties for violating the moral order. Diversity and difference are recognized and respected, but must not run counter to the harmony and balance that is the hallmark of well ordered living. All things are interconnected and impinge on one another: there is recognition of the need for internal integrity and harmony just as there is interconnection between all things, past, present and future. Time is not linear but cyclical.

These attributes formed the basis of classical (pre-European invasion) indigenous Australian spirituality.

Due to the inherent diversity of Aboriginal cultures and the devastating impacts of colonialism — dispossession and dislocation from ancestral lands, repression of native languages, denial of cultural practices and forced assimilation — not all Aboriginal groups today can tap into a viable



body of knowledge. Very few have managed to retain the social fabric to support access to ancient bodies of knowledge. However, strategies have been put in place or are being devised to ensure cultural transmission of knowledge and ritual enforcement through tapping into the wisdom of those groups which have been less affected by the inroads of the European invasion.

The Dreaming. The holistic world view which is the trademark of indigenous Australian spirituality finds its root in the concept of The Dreaming. Various terms have been applied at different times to this fundamental concept which has a vernacular expression in every cultural group, with shades in meaning and application. Among well-known vernacular terms for The Dreaming are tjukurpa for the Pitjantjatjara/nangu whose country includes Uluru, alcheringa for the Arrernte to the immediate east of the Pitjantjatjara, muda for the Adnyamathanha of the Flinders Ranges of South Australia.

European missionaries and anthropologists dealing with this concept have variously and interchangeably used the terms Dreaming and Dreamtime, both of which are liable to misinterpretation; the first in its obvious and superficial link with the physical act of dreaming though it must be

acknowledged that dreams are a recognized way of tapping into ancient wisdom; and the latter with its erroneous temporal connotation, though it could be argued that the irrelevance and transgression of formal time in the act of dreaming captures the elusive temporal attributes of The Dreaming. Neither term is, strictly speaking, correct, and to that extent the use of either term has to be qualified. Indigenous Australians themselves use the terms interchangeably since vernacular terms can only be properly applied when referring to their specific areas of origin.

The well-known anthropologist Bill Stanner popularized the concept of The Dreaming as the cornerstone of Aboriginal spirituality: "Clearly, The Dreaming is many things in one. Among them, a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of logos or principle of order transcending everything significant for aboriginal man" (Stanner, p. 255). Stanner favored the use of capitals for the two words on the grounds that they form an indissoluble whole. Popular usage, however, tends to have capitals only for Dreaming, thus distinguishing this term from the act of dreaming. It nevertheless remains true that common usage (and ignorance) have muddied our understanding of these concepts. In the absence of a better English word, however, The Dreaming remains the most useful term. Edwards (1988) presents a comprehensive and very readable overview and interpretation of the concept of The Dreaming.

In its broadest application, The Dreaming refers to genesis or creation, but as an ongoing reality untrammelled by the constraints of time. With local variants, the interpretation of The Dreaming goes roughly as follows:

In the beginning the land was flat, featureless and enveloped in darkness, yet encompassed within it latent spiritual forms and attributes.

Progressively these forces emerged from the land in the shape of heroic beings: ancestral figures, some human, some animal, some a combination of both sharing attributes of either or both. Starting from their various places of origin, these ancestral beings undertook major journeys of varying length and eventfulness creating all the physical and animated features that constitute the modern Australian landscape: mountain ranges, rivers, claypans, outcrops, plants, bird and animal species, as well as human groups distinguished by different languages, beliefs and practices.

At the end of their creative period, the beings simply reabsorbed themselves into the landscape at places of their particular creativity thus becoming indissolubly associated with particular localities and landforms.

Aboriginal spirituality is thus strongly influenced by animistic beliefs where all of nature and the environment is imbued with spiritual forces.

There is little evidence for a single overarching creative power or ancestral being despite early missionary efforts to identify such. In the eastern part of the continent some sources suggest that the ancestral figures called Baiame (NSW) and Bunjil (Victoria) approach the notion of a dominant creator being, but it is difficult to unravel what was reality, and what was projected by the zeal of early missionaries to identify a creative force onto which they could graft the Christo-Judaic God. Some scholars argue that the almost universal prevalence of the Rainbow Serpent in Aboriginal Australian Dreamings amounts to a prototype of a single creative power. The search for such manifestations smacks of ethnocentric projections onto a spirituality which sought no subservience to any one source but rather celebrated all being as part of the great cosmic order.

There is little of the dogmatic context, structured hierarchy and separation of the sacred and the profane that pertains to conventional religion. The Dreamings are both accessible and transcendental in their everyday bearing on those who live the Dreaming. In David Hope's unique synthesis of Aboriginal spirituality, Aboriginal people are archetypal exponents of menticulture, that is a state of mental or spiritual connectedness to the land and its transcendent meanings which can only be activated by a detailed and cumulative cultural "reading" and bonding with the land, nature and all expressions of the physical environment as encapsulated in the Dreaming.

The stories of ancestral wanderings are perpetuated in vibrant oral histories or Dreaming stories, songs, dances and ceremonial cycles also referred to as Dreamings, which are handed down from generation to generation giving each group their distinctive historical, cultural and spiritual framework. While each Dreaming story is firmly anchored in its local area, many stories extend beyond the boundaries of any one language group, and like the *Seven Sisters Dreaming* or the *Rainbow Serpent Dreaming* may extend across several language groups or even traverse the continent.



These Dreaming tracks, also referred to as songlines, strings or paths may also be the routes for extensive exchange, trade and marriage links between groups. Secular activities thus become inextricably interwoven with spiritual connections, and links through ancient Dreamings validate contemporary alliances.

Ceremonial life. The ancestral heroes not only laid down the physical features and boundaries which identify and separate groups from one another, they also instituted various rules of behavior and belief systems validated and exemplified by their own ancestral feats and journeys. It is these codes which are handed down during initiation ceremonies performed at specific sites identified with the movements of the ancestral beings. These major ceremonies are commonly referred to as going through the Law and often entail a strict separation of the genders, each undergoing their own “men’s or women’s business.” The ceremonial sites have variously been called secret, sacred, secret/sacred or ceremoniously charged, depending on the degree of exclusivity which applies to them and their associated ritual ceremonies. Since Dreaming stories may pertain or belong to women as much as they do to men, some sites and/or ceremonies are exclusive to men, others to women, and yet

others involve the co-operation of both genders.

Most highly charged sites are out of bounds to non-initiated people and severe penalties may apply to violators of this rule, though there are many different rules across the continent. Tunbridge provides an excellent summary of the functions of Dreaming stories (Tunbridge, p. xxxvii).

A common feature of all ceremonies, however, is that they entail the re-enactment of important aspects of ancestral Dreamings, and in doing so, re-activate (for the duration of the ceremonies) the spiritual forces that have remained charged but quiescent, as it were, in those particular sites. Human re-enactment through ritual is crucial to connecting with the ancestral beings, but it is not a symbolic act. The effect of properly performed ritual is rather to re-activate, sustain or release the connection and power of the ancestral beings for the general well-being of the living. Indigenous persons of high degree invoking their ancestral heroes in their sacred ceremonies on sacred ground are believed actually to temporarily become those ancestral beings and to fuse with the primeval creative forces. The present merges and becomes one with the past.

As Stanner puts it, there is neither past, nor present, nor future: there is only “everywhen” (Stanner, p. 225). It is in this sense that Aboriginal spirituality is distinguished by its inseparable link between the land, The Dreaming, ancestral beings and the present custodians of the land. The highly charged re-enacting ceremonies performed by initiated persons at special places associated with ancestral beings endorse, perpetuate and ensure the continuity of the bond between the Dreaming heroes and their descendants. The connection between the physical and spiritual attributes of the land and its living custodians thus transcends time: The Dreaming is “everywhen.”

Many of the ceremonies performed are specific in their re-enactment and desired outcomes. While their secret nature prevents any detailed rendering, some categorization is possible. So-called “increase” ceremonies are performed mostly by men with a focus on ensuring the sustained fertility and productivity of the environment and individual animal and plant species by invoking and ensuring timely seasonal cycles of rain and plenty. The ceremonies are focused on ensuring a proper balance between humans, the land and cosmic forces believed to be controlled and managed by the

ancestral beings. Women also have their sphere of influence though this was somewhat late in recognition as most early observers and recorders of custom and beliefs were middle-class British males who transposed their Eurocentric male dominant views on indigenous Australian cultures.

Aboriginal women play a crucial ceremonial role in sustaining the health and well-being of the community and family groups, as well as in other specific fields relating to what is commonly called “women’s business.” Diane Bell’s *Daughters of the Dreaming* (1983) remains one of the most detailed and authoritative accounts of women’s ritual role in indigenous Australia.

Another important focus of ceremonial activity are funerary rites associated with the proper disposal of the dead and ensuring that the transition to the spirit world takes place as smoothly and respectfully as possible so as to ensure a balanced relation between the world of the living and those who have gone before. Since most Aboriginal groups believe in reincarnation in some form (there being no fundamental distinction between human and animal species) it is most important that funeral ceremonies be carried out properly and with due respect. Most burials involve two ceremonies, the first focusing on the immediate disposal of the human remains by whatever customary practices apply locally (e.g., in ground burial, exposure and/or smoking of the body on a wooden platform — obviously no longer practiced nowadays); and the second involving a well publicized and grandiose disposal of the remains (bones, skeleton) associated with guest dancers, carving of funerary posts and/or hollow log coffins and the like. The epitome of this secondary funerary rite is the “opening [read unveiling] of tombstones” by Torres Strait Islanders which reflects a fascinating blend of Christian ritual and traditional islander custom. In other parts of Australia, the secondary ritual may involve the “smoking” of the house and/or burial of possessions of the deceased to ensure that all traces associated with the dead have been effectively erased, thus making the environs safe for the living.

Both men and women are also importantly involved in the transmission of cultural and esoteric knowledge to the next generation and this takes place in mostly segregated initiation ceremonies which may involve several cycles spread over many years of cumulative learning. Indeed, induction into the most secret bodies of knowledge is reserved for those who have proven through their life’s example that they are worthy custodians to

receive such knowledge in trust. It is one of the saddest indictments of European influence that in some groups older custodians of oral knowledge may, and indeed do, choose to withhold such knowledge from the younger generations for fear that it may not be treated with the proper respect and value. The inroads of alcoholism and associated violence are deemed to be primary obstacles to the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next in modern times.

The totemic landscape as icon. For the first Australians land is clearly more than real estate. It is the living repository of ancestral beings and in a very real way it is their mother: that from which they were born and to which they will return in the endless cycle of birth, death and reincarnation. In a very real sense the land rights slogans “the land is our mother” and “we belong to the land” mean just that. It is for this reason that people seek to return to the land of their birth, particularly when death approaches. Just as the spirit child is believed to enter the mother at a specific site at the time of the first quickening of the foetus, so it is important to return to the same country (the preferred term) in order to return the spirit to its ancestral place at the time of death. One is literally treading on hallowed ground at all times, though some sites are recognized as being more ritually charged than others. The differentiating factor lies in the location of specific Dreaming paths and sites. For indigenous Australians the physical attributes of the environment do not have to be ritually invoked or somehow acted upon by human intervention to bring about their transformation or imbue them with spiritual connotations. Landscape features are icons of heroic beings or some manifestation of ancestral activity — tears, excreta, weapons or whatever.

The concept of totemism has been used to explain the relationship between people, spirit beings, and country (Berndt and Berndt, pp. 231-8; Strehlow). This refers not only to the particular anthropomorphic attributes of a given locality or species, but links the totem very directly and specifically with the individual who bears, or the kin or clan group which bears, its name and wholly identify with that locality or species. The bond that exists between people, land and species thus becomes even more personalized and intense. The person who belongs to the Kangaroo Dreaming is the kangaroo and the kangaroo is the person, group or collectivity. There is no disjunction. Rules of behavior and proper handling of the totemic species apply, one of the most

common attributes being a prohibition on killing and eating the species, though exception and variations on the theme apply in different groups and in specific circumstances. Just as people are one with their totem and individuals are in the first instance identified by their country of origin, so country may be accorded totemic names and be referred to in kinship terms. The relationship between humans, Dreamings, totems and country is integrated and highly complex. It is against this background that one can better appreciate the devastating effect of dispossession and enforced removal from the land on the survival of oral histories and Dreaming stories, and hence on the moral fabric of indigenous Australian societies.

It follows that one cannot explore indigenous Australian spirituality or make sense of any one aspect of Aboriginal cultures, be it kinship, gender relations or systems of authority and the Law, without reference to the wider interactional, notably spiritual, context(s) within which such activity is taking place. The Dreaming represents that timeless, indefinable essence which underlies, informs, encompasses and gives meaning to all aspects of indigenous Australian life. It also follows that no one who has not gone through the rigors and the learning of the Law can really apprehend the fullness of this concept, and even then, one would only be conversant with the ancient wisdom of one particular group. These limitations must be taken very seriously and realistically by anyone purporting to discuss Aboriginal spirituality. Even so, non-Aboriginal Australians have become much more sensitized to and aware of this concept and associated ideas over the past two decades as attention has focused on land rights, native title and reconciliation.

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American Religions, Native

[Part 1, pp. 25-29]



[The following article is from the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, edited by Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006), pp. 25-32.]

Those who romanticize the religious traditions of the natives of North America (often called American Indian or Amerind) identify them as ecological, involving a profound reverence for nature. Although true, it is overly simplistic. Certainly, the theme of appreciation — even reverence — for nature was an important aspect of the religious ideas of the natives of North America, but other than that there are considerable variations in their beliefs. And the religions of the natives of Central and South America — especially of the highly developed Olmec, Mixtec, Toltec, Mayan, Aztec, and Inca civilizations — differ significantly from them. Most of the religions of the Americas existed only in oral traditions, since very few of the tribes had a written language. There may have been as many as 600 different languages in North America, 300 more in Central America, and 1400 in South America, of which more than two-thirds have become extinct since the arrival of the Europeans. Even those which had a literature, such as the Mixtecs, Mayas, and Aztecs, lost much of it when it was destroyed by Spanish conquerors.

It is common to classify Native American customs, mode of life, social structure, and religious beliefs according to 15 geographic areas which differ significantly in climate, vegetation, terrain, and availability of food. The usual order of listing of them is: arctic, subarctic, northeast (or eastern woodlands), southeast, plains (or prairies), plateau, northwest coast, great basin, California, southwest, middle America (or Mesoamerica), Caribbean, Andes, tropical forest, and South American marginal. Differences in religion tend to be associated with these different general areas. For purposes of this encyclopedia, there will be a four-fold division: North America, Central America, South America, and Maya. Only the Māyā and Inca receive any extensive discussion in early theosophical writings. Recently, there have been theosophical publications concerning the natives of North America, but even those do not explore the religious ideas theosophically. This article shall cover the Central American and North American Indian Religions.

It is hypothesized by some anthropologists that humans migrated to the Americas as long as 35,000 years ago by way of the Bering Straits during the glacial period because the ice mass covering North America had caused the ocean levels to recede significantly, affording a solid land bridge where there are now a chain of islands (the Aleutians). The theosophical view, as articulated by Blavatsky, suggests that the migration came westward much earlier from Europe and northern Africa (*IU* I:552), since she claims similarities between ideas among “the Mexican Indians” (presumably Olmecs, Mixtecs, Toltecs, Mayans, and Aztecs) and the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians in the use of the tau (*IU* II:254; cf. I:555, 572), the name of their priests (*IU* I:556; *SD* II:213), some religious ideas (*IU* I:551, 553-4, 557-60), and certain taboos relating to fire, which either came from or spread to other areas, such as the Sioux in the plains of North America (*IU* I:248). And there is the obvious similarity between the pyramids of Egypt and those in Mexico and Central America. But she also states that there was a direct contact between the American continent and the Euro-African continent during the Atlantean period (*IU* I:558; *SD* II:407 fn) and that the ideographs used by the “Red Indians,” i.e., the hieroglyphics used by Olmecs, Mixtecs, Toltecs, and Mayans, are related to Senzar, the sacred language of the Atlanteans (*SD* II:439). She claims that “man has lived in America at least 50,000 years ago” (*CW* II:335). That would mean the ancestors of those people migrated to what are now the Americas

millennia ago mainly by land. Probably both theories are correct, the native tribes of North America coming eastward from Asia as descendants of the “Nagas, the Serpents of Wisdom” (*SD II:182*), and the more highly developed Olmec, Mixtec, Toltec, Mayan, and Inca civilizations coming westward from what was then Atlantis. This would account for the difference in their ideas as well as the great difference in the levels of their civilization. There is archeological and linguistic evidence that the Aztecs migrated into Mexico from North America. They, then, would represent an intermixing of the two streams, since they obviously got much of their culture from the older Mayan civilization.

The name “Indian” for the natives of the Americas is derived from Christopher Columbus’ belief that he had discovered a western sea route to the “Indies” (which, to Europeans at that time, included India, China, Japan, and the Malay archipelago) when he landed, in 1492, first on Watling Island in the Bahamas and subsequently on Cuba and Hispaniola, then in his second expedition also on the Lesser Antilles, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica in 1493, then also on Trinidad on his third expedition in 1498, and finally also on the coast of Central America on his fourth expedition in 1502. Obviously, the natives themselves did not, until recently, adopt that name. In fact, in North America, some of the tribal names translate as “human being” (e.g., Anishnabe, Inuit, Dene, or Numuna, the first being the name the Ojibwa and Chippewa had for themselves; the last being the name the Comanches had for themselves). “Lenape” (sometimes called the Delaware) means “genuine people” and “Lenni Lenape,” another name they called themselves, means “really genuine people.” In Central and South America, many of the civilizations were named after an area in which remains of their culture were discovered. Specific articles, therefore, will follow the current practice of naming.

It is commonplace in theosophical literature to find an essential unity underlying all the various religions of the world. Blavatsky says of the caves of Ellora in western India and the temples found in the Deccan of India as well as temples at Chichén Itzá in the Mexican Yucatán or at Copán in Guatemala, “They present such features of resemblance that it seems impossible to escape the conviction that they were built by peoples moved by the same religious ideas, and that had reached an equal level of highest civilization in arts and sciences” (*IU I:561*). And she adds that even if they were *not* racially or culturally connected, they were “at least of the same religion — the one

taught in the oldest Mysteries" (*ibid.*, 567) because, she says, "There never was, nor can there be more than one universal religion; for there can be but one truth concerning God. Like an immense chain whose upper end, the alpha, remains invisibly emanating from a Deity — in *statu abscondito* with every primitive theology — it encircles our globe in every direction; it leaves not even the darkest corner unvisited, before the other end, the omega, turns back on its way to be again received where it first emanated. On this divine chain was strung the exoteric symbology of every people. Their variety of form is powerless to affect their substance, and under their diverse ideal types of the universe of matter, symbolizing its vivifying principles, the uncorrupted immaterial image of the spirit of being guiding them is the same" (*IU* 1:560).

The specific articles referred to above attempt to point out parallels with theosophy wherever possible since one does find hints of esoteric ideas — mystery teachings — in the myths of many of the ancient cultures of the Americas. Yet, it is also obvious that some of the tribes and civilizations had religious views, as well as practices such as human sacrifice and cannibalism, significantly different from theosophy and unrelated to any mystery teachings or esoteric ideas.

NATIVE CENTRAL AMERICAN RELIGIONS

The earliest natives of Mexico and Central America of which we have any knowledge were the Olmecs ("Rubber People"), whose name seems to have been given to them because that area is where people later learned to tap the trees for making rubber. They are sometimes called the La Venta culture after the site in Mexico where remains of their civilization were first discovered. Evidence suggests that their territory extended from central Mexico to El Salvador, with its cultural center primarily in the coastal areas of southern Veracruz and Tabasco. Their empire and culture lasted at least from 1200 BCE to 300 CE. Although they possessed hieroglyphic writing, an accurate calendar, and exquisite sculpture and gem carving, little is known about their religious beliefs. They carved huge stone heads, presumably anthropomorphic representations of their gods, weighing up to 36,000 pounds (16,300 kg.) which they transported more than 50 miles (80 km.) to their present locations. Carvings show the sun, carrying a child in the form of a



jaguar (perhaps representing the planet Venus), emerging from the mouth of a giant animal which represents the earth. They constructed pyramids for ceremonial purposes and also as burial sites of important persons, since skeletal remains and funerary objects have been found in rooms under the pyramids. Since these practices are also found in Mayan culture, it has been assumed that the Mayans adopted at least some of the Olmec beliefs. There is also evidence that Mayan culture was influenced, probably at a later time, by invasions from areas around present-day Mexico City, i.e., from the Toltecs and early Aztecs. The Mayans, in turn, also influenced the Aztecs.

Following the Olmecs was the Izapan culture located along the western side of what is now Guatemala. Since Izapan writing and stone monuments are similar to those of the Mayas, it is assumed that they were the immediate antecedents of Mayan culture, which emerged around the fourth century in the Chiapas province of Mexico and adjoining area of Guatemala, whose name is the modern form of the Nahuatl word “Cuautemallan” or “place of many trees.”

Another Mexican culture, the Mixtec (pronounced “Mish-tek”), lived in Oaxaca, Puebla, and part of Guerrero in southwest Mexico. Their origin is obscure. They were probably influenced by Olmecs and flourished prior to arrival in their area of the Toltecs. They had extended periods of warfare with their rivals, the Zapotecs, as well as with the Aztecs, before they were subjugated by the Spanish. Little is known of their religious beliefs and neither

the Mixtecs nor Zapotecs are mentioned in theosophical literature. The religious pantheon of the Zapotecs was headed by the rain god Cosijo who is represented iconographically by a combination of an earth-jaguar and a sky-serpent, symbols common to many of the Mesoamerican cultures. Possibly they have an esoteric significance, the jaguar, a stealthy predator, representing the impermanence of the physical world and the serpent, often associated with the occult force known in Sanskrit as kundalinī (literally “serpentine”), representing the permanence of the spiritual.

The Nahuatl-speaking Toltecs, whose name means “master builders,” flourished in central Mexico and the Yucatan between the 10th and 13th centuries. Their early history is obscure, but they seem to have had links with the Mixtecs and Zapotecs. Their religion centered around Quetzalcoatl (lit. “serpent with feathers of the quetzal bird”), who was a god of civilization identified with the planet Venus and wind. He is depicted in iconography with what appear to be rattles on his tail, so must have been considered a feathered rattlesnake. He represented forces of goodness and light and was pitted against Tezcatlipoca (“Smoking Mirror”), a deity associated with the night sky, moon, and stars, and who represented the forces of darkness, evil, and destruction. One myth has Tezcatlipoca driving Quetzalcoatl out of the Toltec capital city of Tula (in central Mexico), whereupon the latter wandered for many years until he reached his homeland on the east coast of the country. According to one version of the myth he was consumed by fire there, rising in the sky to become the planet Venus; according to another version he sailed off to a mythical land with a promise to return. Blavatsky notes that it was common among ancient cultures to represent “wisdom and immortality” as a serpent (*IU* I:553), which would indicate that there is an esoteric interpretation of the Quetzalcoatl myth. Since the snake was, as noted above, mythologically associated with the sky (symbolizing a heavenly or spiritual state of consciousness), it was depicted as bird-like, i.e., feathered. What his association with a rattlesnake might indicate, however, is not at all clear.

Toltec ceremonies included a sacred ball game (tlatchli), which the Mayans and Aztecs also played, sun worship, and human sacrifice. It is believed by anthropologists that the name Quetzalcoatl was originally the name of a Toltec ruler, but Blavatsky suggests that the influence is the reverse, rulers and priests often taking the name of their deity (*IU* I:550). C. A. Burland

(*Montezuma: Lord of the Aztecs*, 1973, pp. 23-4) supports the latter claim, the first Toltec ruler taking the name of the god, followed later by eight others who did the same. The Toltecs went into decline in the 13th century as a result of invasions by the Chichimecs who, in turn, were then conquered by the Aztecs. There is only passing mention in early theosophical literature (cf. *IU* I:552) of the Toltecs and their ancient urban center, Tula, which includes impressive pyramidal structures, one of which is dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. The Chichimecs are not mentioned at all.

The Mayan civilization does have several references in theosophical literature and deserves a separate entry along with its principle text *Popul Vuh* or “Council Book,” so it will not be detailed here. See MAYAN RELIGION.

The term *Aztec* was applied to the last of the great empires of Mexico by a Spanish historian, Francisco Xavier Clavijero, in the 18th century. The Aztecs called themselves *Mexica* (pronounced “Me-shee-ka”) who around 1100-1160 CE migrated into the area of central Mexico from a place they called Aztlán, which gives us the word “Aztec.” It is from their name for themselves that the word Mexico (pronounced “Mey-hi-co”) is derived. Convention, however, now dictates that we refer to them as Aztecs. Our knowledge of them is based on a few codices written in hieroglyphics, post-conquest copies of lost manuscripts (many of which were burned as “works of the devil” by priests who accompanied the Spanish conquistadores), and a verbal tradition. Unfortunately, there are inconsistencies between these sources so reconstructing their religious beliefs must be considered somewhat tentative. And the post-conquest writings were done by people familiar with the Old Testament, so they often attempted, quite improbably, to connect the Aztecs with one of the lost tribes of Israel (cf. J. Eric S. Thompson, *The Rise and Fall of Mayan Civilization*, 2nd ed. 1966, p. 33, who attributes the claim to an eccentric Englishman, Lord Kingsborough [*Antiquities of Mexico*, 1831]; cf. also Nigel Davies, *The Aztecs: a History*, 1974, p. 9, who quotes a Spanish historian).

The chief deity of the Aztecs was the war god Huitzilopochtli (“Blue [or Southern] Hummingbird”), who is said to have guided them, by communicating in dreams with their priests, during their migration from Aztlán into central Mexico. Huitzilopochtli, who is also a sun god reborn every morning from the womb of his mother the earth goddess Coatlicue (“Serpent-

Skirted," also known as Tonantzin, "Our Mother"), is depicted in iconography as hideous. The Aztecs propitiated him with human sacrifices, usually enemies captured in war. There is a temple dedicated to him at the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlán (lit. "Beside Cactus Rock") which the *Columbia Encyclopedia* extols as "a great architectural achievement of pre-Columbian America." Later Aztecs associated Huitzilopochtli with the Toltec god Quetzalcoatl. Huitzilopochtli is indirectly associated with rain, since the Aztecs noted that the hummingbird (*huitzilin*) makes its appearance there in the rainy season. But they also had a rain god, Tlaloc, to whom human sacrifices (especially of young children) were performed; his sister (or wife), Coyaxauhque ("Jade-Skirted"), was the goddess of water. Xiuhtecuhtli (the Fire God who was "Lord of Life") was thought to bring the soul into existence. There were many other gods as well, one of which was another sun god, Tonatiuh (lit. "The Sun"), whose face appears in the center of the famous Aztec Stone; surrounding him are four panels representing the four previous "creations" of the world, which were destroyed by jaguars (symbolic of earth and represented by Tezcatlipoca, god of night), wind (represented by Ehécatl, sometimes associated with Quetzalcoatl), fire (represented by Chalchiuhtlicue), and water (represented by Tlaloc, god of rain), in other words one each of the four classical elements. In fact, the Aztecs, like the Mayans, identified gods and goddesses which presided over all aspects of their lives. As in Hinduism, they often appear as couples, "based on the ever-present Mexican principle of duality," as Davies puts it (*op. cit.*, p. 143). The highest of these, the original creator pair residing in a remote heaven called Omeyocan ("Two-Place"), were Omecihuatl ("Two-Lord") and Omecihuatl ("Two-Lady"). Little more than lip-service was given them. A male god whose name suggests a duality was Ometochtli ("Two Rabbit"), god of the sacred intoxicating drink *pulque*, made from the agave fruit; he is also associated with the moon, since Aztecs, like Hindus, perceived the shadows on the full moon to form the shape of a rabbit. Somewhat related to the idea of a life-death duality are Tlazolteotl ("Goddess of Extrusion [or Emission]") who was associated with birth, sexual pleasure, and evacuation, to whom people would make confession at the end of their lives, and Mictlantecuhtli ("Lord of the Place of Death") who ruled the underworld and is depicted as a skeleton.

The Aztec priests believed in both magic and prophesy. Their "sacred book of fate," as Burland terms it (*op. cit.*, p. 50), was the *Teoamoxtli* which

priests alone could read and which they consulted on all important occasions. Priestly education for boys was at a special school called *calmecac*, and involved rigorous training not only in liturgics and study of the sacred mythology, but also masochistic ordeals that would prepare them to endure hardships, since the religious students had to accompany soldiers into battle to carry spears, war clubs, and other equipment. On certain ritual occasions, priests would purify the altar with their own blood by piercing their bodies and tongues with bone awls and agave spines. Postulants had to go out at night to catch scorpions and poisonous spiders, roast them, and then grind the results into a black powder which priests spread over their bodies; it contained a substance which deadened pain and produced a state of euphoria during ritual performances. Aztec priests, unlike Mayan priests, were celibate.

Aztec mythology claimed that the world has undergone five "creations," the first four being destroyed by jaguars (symbolic of earth), a hurricane (wind), volcanic eruptions (fire), and a flood (water), the four elements represented in the Aztec Stone. If one identifies these as analogous to the theosophical idea of the Root Races, the Aztec notion that we are in the fifth of those "creations" is essentially the same as one finds in *The Secret Doctrine*. It also suggests that the Aztecs, unlike the Mayans, thought of themselves as post-Atlantean. Flood myths, of course, are common to many cultures around the world and may be interpreted either allegorically as signifying being overwhelmed by psychic experiences during the Fourth Root Race, with the result that the intellect now prevails in the Fifth Root Race, or else as literally referring to an actual flood which occurred when the island of Poseidonis, the last remnant of the continent of Atlantis, sank about 12,000 years ago (*SD II:765*). The Aztecs believed the fifth "creation" will end with earthquakes. In order to forestall that catastrophe, they believed, human victims had to be sacrificed at certain important festivals and their hearts cut out and offered to the appropriate god.

The Aztecs cremated their dead (cf. Davies, p. 58, 151), as do the Hindus, unlike the Mayans who buried their dead (cf. Thompson, p. 68 ff). But since the Aztecs propitiated a god of the underworld, they (like the Mayans) obviously believed in a kind of life after death, which Blavatsky says is in the form of a "living spirit" (*yuli*) which issues from the body through the mouth or head at the moment of bodily death (*CW II:171-2*). Blavatsky cites a claim that

they, like other pre-Spanish Mexicans, “believed in numerous spirit-abodes, into one of which the shades of innocent children were placed until final disposal; into another, situated in the sun, ascended the valiant souls of heroes, while the hideous spectres of incorrigible sinners were sentenced to wander and despair in subterranean caves, held in the bonds of the earth-atmosphere, unwilling and unable to liberate themselves. They passed their time in communicating with mortals, and frightening those who could see them” (*IU* 1:313).

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of Central American religious practices for modern man to understand is that of human sacrifice, especially of young children. It is easy for us to see it as barbaric. And from a theosophical point of view it is — or is, at the very least, misguided. But one must put it in the context of the fact that Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Chinese immolated servants and slaves in the tombs of royalty, devout Catholics burned at the stake people they considered heretics, and contemporary devout Muslims “martyr” themselves in acts of terrorism against “infidels.” And, as Davies points out, “It is probably not incorrect to maintain that [sacrificial victims] were offered at times to Huitzilopochtli as the sun, but, in the main, the victims tended themselves to *become* the god to whom they would be sacrificed. ... In a sense, therefore, they died *as* the god, not *for* the god. ... The personification of the god by the victim helps explain the apparent lack of resistance to being sacrificed” (Davies, p. 171). In fact, the victim was often first honored as a “son of the sun” and then dressed in clothing associated with the deity, sometimes even made to perform actions identified with the deity, before being ceremonially killed. It was believed, then, that this action not only propitiated the deity, but also helped maintain the natural order (keep the sun rising, bring rain, forestall the eventual earthquake that is to destroy our present “creation,” etc.). It also guaranteed the victim a place in a delightful paradise, as depicted in Aztec frescoes. It must, however, also be noted that human sacrifices became more barbaric and numerous following the four-year famine of 1450-1454; wars with neighboring city-states were often waged merely for the purpose of capturing men to be sacrificed, sometimes 500 or even 1000 at a time (cf. Davies, pp. 96-8, 163, 167, 169, 218), and even willing sacrificial victims were drugged beforehand with *pulque* (cf. Davies, p. 101).

Despite their practice of human sacrifice, Blavatsky points out the fact that, “the Aztecs appeared in more than one way to have resembled the ancient Egyptians in civilization and refinement. Among both peoples magic or the arcane natural philosophy was cultivated to the highest degree” (*IU* 1:560). As for “natural philosophy,” they, like other cultures which preceded them in Mexico and Central America, had a considerable knowledge of astronomy and a more accurate calendar (both solar, based on 365 days, and ceremonial, based on 260 days divided into 20 weeks of 13 days each) than their Spanish conquerors (cf. *IU* 1:11). As for “magic,” the only indication of that in scholarly sources is the claim that the priests received frequent instructions in their dreams from Huitzilopochtli. Aztec priests enjoyed considerable social status, practically on a par with the nobility; the ruler himself was, in fact, of the priestly class. In addition to conducting rites, priests were educators and also warriors. One of their functions was to march at the head of the regular troops, carrying images of their gods on their backs, and blow shell horns to signal the attack (Davies, p. 187).

The Aztecs (along with other Mesoamericans), as can be seen in their iconography, conceived of their gods in anthropomorphic (as well as zoomorphic) ways, thus when the Spanish conquistadores arrived on the shores of Mexico in 1519 they were greeted as gods. Some even considered Cortés to be Quetzalcoatl returned from the sea (cf. Davies, pp. 237, 239-40) and reported such to the Aztec ruler Mohtecuzomatzin or Moctezuma (usually anglicized “Montezuma”). Although ambivalent that this white-faced man at the head of his small white-faced army was really Quetzalcoatl, when Cortés finally entered the capital city Tenochtitlán, Moctezuma, dressed in regal splendor, greeted him as if he were the god returning to his “own land” (Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Bernal Díaz Chronicles*, p. 138; cited in Davies, p. 255). Whether he really believed that, however, is doubtful (cf. Davies, pp. 258-261). In any event, Moctezuma could hardly have foreseen that the Aztecs and their neighbors were soon to be conquered by the Spanish, the images of their gods destroyed, and their people converted, often forcibly, to Catholicism (Davies, pp. 300-1). Nevertheless, priests called “daykeepers” (*ajq'ij*) still maintain some of the old religious traditions, though without human sacrifice.

End of part one, to be continued.

Medley

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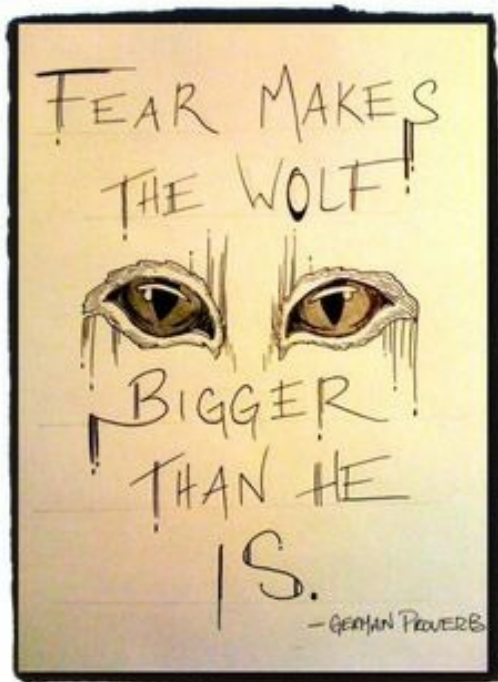
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Focus

by Leo Babauta – USA

A simplicity manifesto in the Age of Distraction

Part seven



Let go of the need to stay updated

Many of us are slaves to the news, to the need to keep updated with what's happening in the world, in our business niche, with our friends.

We are information junkies in some way: we watch TV news all the time, or entertainment news, or keep up with lots of blogs, or our RSS feed reader, or Twitter, or Digg or Delicious, or email, or one of the many news aggregator sites.

The need to keep up consumes much of our day, and creates a kind of anxiety our minds barely register.

What is this need based on? Why can't we get free of it? Actually, we can get free. I've done it in my life, to a large extent. Let's examine the two questions.

What is this need based on?

In short: **fear**



If we really think about it, we're not gaining much by keeping up with all this information. How is it adding to our lives? How is it helping us to create, to live happy lives, to do what's most important to us, to spend time with our loved ones? If anything, it takes away from these things.

Let me repeat that point: this obsession with keeping up with information takes away from the things that are most important to us.

But we try to keep up because we're afraid:

- we might miss something important, and seem ignorant
- we might miss out on an opportunity
- we might not see something bad that we need to respond to
- something bad might happen to us if we aren't informed

These fears seem reasonable, until we test them. Then we can see that they're not really grounded in anything other than societal norms, and a "need" created by media corporations and similar companies.

How to break free

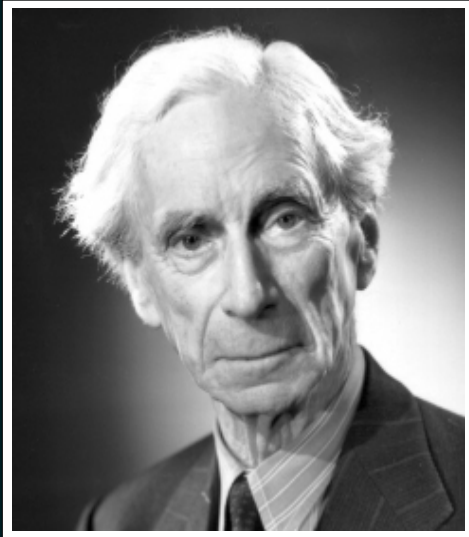
Two ways: 1) examine each fear individually, and 2) test them.

When we shine a light on our fears, they lose power. When we test them to see their validity, they will usually fail, and we can overcome them. Let's shine a brief light:

1. **We might seem ignorant.** Really? How often do people quiz you on current events, or laugh at you for not knowing? Maybe some times, but even if it does happen, so what? Let others be fueled by this need, and let yourself focus on things you care about, not what others think is important.

2. **We might miss out on an opportunity.** Possibly. There are always going to be opportunities we miss. But more likely are the opportunities we're missing because we're letting our days be consumed by trying to stay up to date. When we do this, we lose time we could be using to pursue exciting, real opportunities.

To be continued.



“Ethics is in origin the art of recommendation to others
the sacrifices required for cooperation with oneself.”

Bertrand Russell

(British philosopher, logician, mathematician, historian
and social critic)

Integrating Meditation With Science

Mindfulness meditation produces personal experiences that are not readily interpretable by scientists who want to study its psychiatric benefits in the brain. At a conference near Boston April 5, 2014, Brown University researchers will describe how they've been able to integrate mindfulness experience with hard neuroscience data to advance more rigorous study.

Mindfulness is always personal and often spiritual, but the meditation experience does not have to be subjective. Advances in methodology are allowing researchers to integrate mindfulness experiences with brain imaging and neural signal data to form testable hypotheses about the science – and the reported mental health benefits – of the practice.

A team of Brown University researchers, led by junior Juan Santoyo, will present their research approach on Saturday, April 5, 2014, at the 12th Annual International Scientific Conference of the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Their methodology employs a structured coding of the reports meditators provide about their mental experiences. That can be rigorously correlated with quantitative neurophysiological measurements.

"In the neuroscience of mindfulness and meditation, one of the problems that we've had is not understanding the practices from the inside out," said co-presenter Catherine Kerr, assistant professor (research) of family medicine and director of translational neuroscience in Brown's Contemplative Studies Initiative. "What we've really needed are better mechanisms for generating testable hypotheses – clinically relevant and experience-relevant hypotheses."

Carefully coded data on experience – "grounded theory methodology" – supports the formulation and testing of hypotheses and a scientific investigation of mindfulness. Now researchers are gaining the tools to trace experiences described by meditators to specific activity in the brain.

“We're going to [discuss] how this is applicable as a general tool for the development of targeted mental health treatments,” Santoyo said. “We can explore how certain experiences line up with certain patterns of brain activity. We know certain patterns of brain activity are associated with certain psychiatric disorders.”

Structuring the spiritual

At the conference, the team will frame these broad implications with what might seem like a small distinction: whether meditators focus on their sensations of breathing in their nose or in their belly. The two meditation techniques hail from different East Asian traditions. Carefully coded experience data gathered by Santoyo, Kerr, and Harold Roth, professor of religious studies at Brown, show that the two techniques produced significantly different mental states in student meditators.

“We found that when students focused on the breath in the belly their descriptions of experience focused on attention to specific somatic areas and body sensations,” the researchers wrote in their conference abstract. “When students described practice experiences related to a focus on the nose during meditation, they tended to describe a quality of mind, specifically how their attention ‘felt’ when they sensed it.”

The ability to distill a rigorous distinction between the experiences came not only from randomly assigning meditating students to two groups – one focused on the nose and one focused on the belly – but also by employing two independent coders to perform standardized analyses of the journal entries the students made immediately after meditating.

This kind of structured coding of self-reported personal experience is called “grounded theory methodology.” Santoyo's application of it to meditation allows for the formation of hypotheses.

For example, Kerr said, “Based on the predominantly somatic descriptions of mindfulness experience offered by the belly-focused group, we would expect there to be more ongoing, resting-state functional connectivity in this group across different parts of a large brain region called the insula that encodes visceral, somatic sensations and also provides a readout of the emotional aspects of so-called ‘gut feelings’.”

Unifying experience and the brain

The next step is to correlate the coded experiences data with data from the brain itself. A team of researchers led by Kathleen Garrison at Yale University, including Santoyo and Kerr, did just that in a paper in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* in August 2013. The team worked with deeply experienced meditators to correlate the mental states they described during mindfulness with simultaneous activity in the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC). They measured that with real-time functional magnetic resonance imaging.

They found that when meditators of several different traditions reported feelings of “effortless doing” and “undistracted awareness” during their meditation, their PCC showed little activity, but when they reported that they felt distracted and had to work at mindfulness, their PCC was significantly more active. Given the chance to observe real-time feedback on their PCC activity, some meditators were even able to control the levels of activity there.

“You can observe both of these phenomena together and discover how they are co-determining one another,” Santoyo said. “Within 10 one - minute sessions they were able to develop certain strategies to evoke a certain experience and use it to drive the signal.”

Toward therapies

A theme of the conference, and a key motivator in Santoyo and Kerr's research, is connecting such research to tangible medical benefits. Meditators have long espoused such benefits, but support from neuroscience and psychiatry has been considerably more recent.

In a February 2013 paper in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, Kerr and colleagues proposed that much like the meditators could control activity in the PCC, mindfulness practitioners may gain enhanced control over sensory cortical alpha rhythms. Those brain waves help regulate how the brain processes and filters sensations, including pain, and memories such as depressive cognitions.

Santoyo, whose family emigrated from Colombia when he was a child, became inspired to investigate the potential of mindfulness to aid mental health beginning in high school. Growing up in Cambridge and Somerville,

Mass., he observed the psychiatric difficulties of the area's homeless population. He also encountered them while working in food service at Cambridge hospital.

"In low-income communities you always see a lot of untreated mental health disorders," said Santoyo, who meditates regularly and helps to lead a mindfulness group at Brown. He is pursuing a degree in neuroscience and contemplative science. "The perspective of contemplative theory is that we learn about the mind by observing experience, not just to tickle our fancy but to learn how to heal the mind."

It's a long path, perhaps, but Santoyo and his collaborators are walking it with progress.

Check this link:

http://www.sciencedaily.com/news/mind_brain/spirituality/





“When a person feels appreciated for their infinite and absolute value, you can then communicate about any issue and you will have their cooperation and respect.”

Kimberly Giles

(A sought-after executive coach, author, and speaker)

Notable Books

Sent to Soar by Stephen Poos-Benson
Happy Me, Happy You by Serge Kahili King

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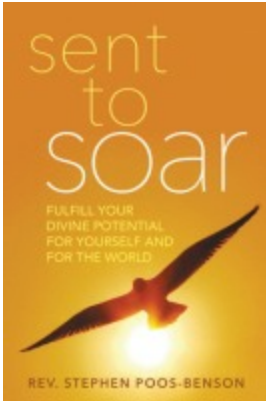
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"I still love books. Nothing a computer can do can compare to a book. You can't really put a book on the Internet. Three companies have offered to put books by me on the Net, and I said, 'If you can make something that has a nice jacket, nice paper with that nice smell, then we'll talk.' All the computer can give you is a manuscript. People don't want to read manuscripts. They want to read books. Books smell good. They look good. You can press it to your bosom. You can carry it in your pocket."

Ray Bradbury

Notable books:



Poos-Benson, Stephen.

Sent to Soar: Fulfill Your Divine Potential for Yourself and for the World.

Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, 2014.

Pages xiv + 261

This is a spiritual self-improvement book. Each of its ten chapters is followed by a list of “Questions to Help You Discover and Explore Your Divine Purpose.” The chapters skim over a wide variety of approaches to self-discovery beginning with traditional religions and going on to a potpourri of others. The approach seems to try for humor, with the self-referred to as “the Goo that is you” and free will called “the Holy Hairball.” A problem with the book’s diversity of approaches is that a reader may find in it a confused tangle of ways rather than a clear path. Its bibliography lists forty-odd volumes, none of which are Theosophical.

HAPPY ME, HAPPY YOU

THE HUNA WAY
TO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

SERGE KAHILI KING

King, Serge Kahili.

Happy Me, Happy You: The Huna Way to Healthy Relationships.

Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, 2014.

Pp, viii + 280. \$16.95.

This book is a mixed bag. It is one of several King has published on the “Huna Way,” which he calls “a Polynesian philosophy of life” (p. 279). Wikipedia reports that “*Huna* is a Hawaiian word adopted by Max Freedom Long (1890–1971) in 1936 to describe his theory of metaphysics which he linked to ancient Hawaiian *kahuna* (experts). It is part of the New Age movement.”

The subject of happiness in life has been approached in two dimetrically opposite ways: optimistic and pessimistic. The optimistic view is expressed, for example, in *South Pacific*, a musical by Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Joshua Logan, in which the nurse Nellie Forbush sings the following song:

*When the sky is a bright canary yellow
I forget ev'ry cloud I've ever seen,
So they called me a cockeyed optimist
Immature and incurably green.*

*I have heard people rant and rave and bellow
That we're done and we might as well be dead,
But I'm only a cockeyed optimist
And I can't get it into my head.*

*I hear the human race
Is fallin' on its face
And hasn't very far to go,*

*But ev'ry whippoorwill
Is sellin' me a bill,
And tellin' me it just ain't so.*

*I could say life is just a bowl of Jello
And appear more intelligent and smart,
But I'm stuck like a dope
With a thing called hope,
And I can't get it out of my heart!
Not this heart...*

The pessimistic view, on the other hand, was famously expressed by the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who asserted that life in a state of nature is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Between those two extreme views, a third seeks a practical via media, as in Anne Nichols's comedy *Abie's Irish Rose*, in which a nice Jewish boy (Abie) falls in love with and marries a Catholic girl (Rose), and boy's Jewish mother tells the couple that if it makes them happy to be happy, then they should be happy.

Whether King's new book will make a reader happy is unpredictable and depends on whether the reader is a cockeyed optimist or a Hobbesian pessimist or an in-between Jewish mother.

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