

Theosophy Forward

Moving
ahead in
the 21st
century

Main theme in this issue

Our Unity

On Theosophical Unity

The Yoga of Compassion

Why Not Study What H. P. B. Taught?

Character is Destiny

Friendship

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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Practical Occultism

by H. P. Blavatsky

[This article was published in *Lucifer* 2.8 (April, 1888): 150-154, and reprinted in *Collected Writings* 9:155-162.]

Important to students

As some of the letters in the CORRESPONDENCE of this month show, there are many people who are looking for practical instruction in Occultism. It becomes necessary therefore, to state once for all: —

(a) The essential difference between theoretical and practical Occultism; or what is generally known as Theosophy on the one hand, and Occult science on the other, and: —

(b) The nature of the difficulties involved in the study of the latter.

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the meta-physical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer — is a Theosophist.

But it is quite another matter to put oneself upon the path which leads to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil; a path which also leads a man to that power through which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.

Moreover, there is one important fact with which the student should be made acquainted. Namely, the enormous, almost limitless, responsibility assumed by the teacher for the sake of the pupil. From the Gurus of the East who teach openly or secretly, down to the few Kabalists in Western lands who undertake to teach the rudiments of the Sacred Science to their disciples — those western Hierophants being often themselves ignorant of the danger they incur — one and all of these “Teachers” are subject to the same inviolable law.

From the moment they begin *really* to teach, from the instant they confer *any* power — whether psychic, mental or physical — on their pupils, they take upon themselves *all* the sins of that pupil, in connection with the Occult Sciences, whether of omission or commission, until the moment when initiation makes the pupil a Master and responsible in his turn. There is a weird and mystic religious law, greatly revered and acted upon in the Greek, half-forgotten in the Roman Catholic, and absolutely extinct in the Protestant Church. It dates from the earliest days of Christianity and has its basis in the law just stated, of which it was a symbol and an expression. This is the dogma of the absolute sacredness of the relation between the god-parents who stand sponsors for a child. [So holy is the connection thus formed deemed in the Greek Church, that a marriage between god-parents of the same child is regarded as the worst kind of incest, is considered illegal and is dissolved by law; and this absolute prohibition extends even to the children of one of the sponsors as regards those of the other.] These tacitly take upon themselves all the sins of the newly baptised child — (anointed, as at the initiation, a mystery truly!) — until the day when the child becomes a responsible unit, knowing good and evil. Thus it is clear why the “Teachers” are so reticent, and why “Chelas” are required to serve a seven-years probation to prove their fitness, and develop the qualities necessary to the security of both Master and pupil.

Occultism is not magic. It is *comparatively* easy to learn the trick of spells and the methods of using the subtler, but still material, forces of physical nature; the powers of the animal soul in man are soon awakened; the forces which his love, his hate, his passion, can call into operation, are readily developed. But this is Black Magic — *Sorcery*. For it is the motive, *and the motive alone*, which makes any exercise of power become black, malignant, or white, beneficent Magic. It is impossible to employ *spiritual* forces if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness remaining in the operator. For, unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can equally be used by the selfish and revengeful, as by the unselfish and the all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart — and this is DIVINE MAGIC.

What are then the conditions required to become a student of the “Divina Sapiencia”? For let it be known that no such instruction can possibly be

given unless these certain conditions are complied with, and rigorously carried out during the years of study. This is a *sine qua non*. No man can swim unless he enters deep water. No bird can fly unless its wings are grown, and it has space before it and courage to trust itself to the air. A man who will wield a two-edged sword, must be a thorough master of the blunt weapon, if he would not injure himself — or what is worse — others, at the first attempt.

To give an approximate idea of the conditions under which alone the study of Divine Wisdom can be pursued with safety, that is, without danger that Divine will give place to Black Magic, a page is given from the “private rules,” with which every instructor in the East is furnished. The few passages which follow are chosen from a great number and explained in brackets.

* * *

1. The place selected for receiving instruction must be a spot calculated not to distract the mind, and filled with “influence-evolving” (magnetic) objects. The five sacred colors gathered in a circle must be there among other things. The place must be free from any malignant influences hanging about in the air.

[The place must be set apart, and used for no other purpose. The five “sacred colors” are the prismatic hues arranged in a certain way, as these colors are very magnetic. By “malignant influences” are meant any disturbances through strifes, quarrels, bad feelings, etc., as these are said to impress themselves immediately on the astral light, *i.e.*, in the atmosphere of the place, and to hang “about in the air.”

This first condition seems easy enough to accomplish, yet — on further consideration, it is one of the most difficult ones to obtain.]

2. Before the disciple shall be permitted to study “face to face,” he has to acquire preliminary understanding in a select company of other lay *upasakas* (disciples), the number of whom must be odd.

[“Face to face,” means in this instance a study independent or apart from others, when the disciple gets his instruction *face to face* either with himself (his higher, Divine Self) or — his guru. It is then only that each receives *his due* of information, according to the use he has made of his knowledge. This can happen only toward the end of the cycle of instruction.]

3. Before thou (the teacher) shalt impart to thy *Lanoo* (disciple) the good (holy) words of LAMRIN, or shall permit him “to make ready” for *Dubjed*, thou shalt take care that his mind is thoroughly purified and at peace with all, especially *with his other Selves*. Otherwise the words of Wisdom and of the good Law, shall scatter and be picked up by the winds.

[*Lamrin* is a work of practical instructions, by Tson-kha-pa, in two portions, one for ecclesiastical and exoteric purposes, the other for esoteric use. [Vide Bio-Bibliographical Index, s.v. *Lamrin*, for further data. — *Compiler*.] “To make ready” for *Dubjed*, is to prepare the vessels used for seership such as mirrors and crystals. The “other selves,” refers to the fellow students. Unless the greatest harmony reigns among the learners, *no* success is possible. It is the teacher who makes the selections according to the magnetic and electric natures of the students, bringing together and adjusting most carefully the positive and the negative elements.]

4. The *upasaka* while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand. Thou shalt impress upon their minds that whatever hurts one should hurt the others, and if the rejoicing of one finds no echo in the breasts of the others, then the required conditions are absent, and it is useless to proceed.

[This can hardly happen if the preliminary choice made was consistent with the magnetic requirements. It is known that chelas otherwise promising and fit for the reception of truth, had to wait for years on account of their temper and the impossibility they felt to put themselves *in tune* with their companions. For —]

5. The co-disciples must be tuned by the guru as the strings of a lute (*vina*) each different from the others, yet each emitting sounds in harmony with all. Collectively they must form a keyboard answering in all its parts to thy lightest touch (the touch of the Master). Thus their minds shall open for the harmonies of Wisdom, to vibrate as knowledge through each and all, resulting in effects pleasing to the presiding gods (tutelary or patron-angels) and useful to the *Lanoo*. So shall Wisdom be impressed for ever on their hearts and the harmony of the law shall never be broken.

6. Those who desire to acquire the knowledge leading to the *Siddhis*

(occult powers) have to renounce all the vanities of life and of the world (here follows enumeration of the Siddhis).

7. None can feel the difference between himself and his fellow-students, such as “I am the wisest,” “I am more holy and pleasing to the teacher, or in my community, than my brother,” etc. — and remain an upasaka. His thoughts must be predominantly fixed upon his heart, chasing therefrom every hostile thought to any living being. It (the heart) must be full of the feeling of its non-separateness from the rest of beings as from all in Nature; otherwise no success can follow.

8. A *Lanoo* (disciple) has to dread external living influence alone (magnetic emanations from living creatures). For this reason while at one with all, in his *inner nature*, he must take care to separate his outer (external) body from every foreign influence: none must drink out of, or eat in his cup but himself. He must avoid bodily contact (*i.e.*, being touched or touch) with human, as with animal being.

[No pet animals are permitted and it is forbidden even to touch certain trees and plants. A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in order to individualize it for occult purposes.]

9. The mind must remain blunt to all but the universal truths in nature, lest the “Doctrine of the Heart” should become only the “Doctrine of the Eye” (*i.e.*, empty exoteric ritualism).

10. No animal food of whatever kind, nothing that has life in it, should be taken by the disciple. No wine, no spirits, or opium should be used; for these are like the *Lhamayin* (evil spirits), who fasten upon the unwary, they devour the understanding.

[Wine and Spirits are supposed to contain and preserve the bad magnetism of all the men who helped in their fabrication; the meat of each animal, to preserve the psychic characteristics of its kind.]

11. Meditation, abstinence in all, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as good will to all and entire oblivion of Self, are the most efficacious means of obtaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom.

12. It is only by virtue of a strict observance of the foregoing rules that

a Lanoo can hope to acquire in good time the Siddhis of the Arhats, the growth which makes him become gradually One with the UNIVERSAL ALL.

* * *

These 12 extracts are taken from among some 73 rules, to enumerate which would be useless as they would be meaningless in Europe. But even these few are enough to show the immensity of the difficulties which beset the path of the would-be “Upasaka,” who has been born and bred in Western lands. [Be it remembered that *all* “Chelas,” even lay disciples, are called Upasaka until after their first initiation, when they become lanoo-Upasaka. To that day, even those who belong to Lamaseries and are *set apart*, are considered as “laymen.”]

All western, and especially English, education is instinct with the principle of emulation and strife; each boy is urged to learn more quickly, to outstrip his companions, and to surpass them in every possible way. What is miscalled “friendly rivalry” is assiduously cultivated and the same spirit is fostered and strengthened in every detail of life.

With such ideas “educated into” him from his childhood, how can a Westerner bring himself to feel towards his co-students “as the fingers on one hand”? Those co-students, too, are not of his *own selection*, or chosen by himself from personal sympathy and appreciation. They are chosen by his teacher on far other grounds, and he who would be a student must *first* be strong enough to kill out in his heart all feelings of dislike and antipathy to others. How many Westerners are ready even to attempt this in earnest?

And then the details of daily life, the command not to touch even the hand of one's nearest and dearest. How contrary to Western notions of affection and good feeling! How cold and hard it seems. Egotistical too, people would say, to abstain from giving pleasure to others for the sake of one's own development. Well, let those who think so defer till another lifetime the attempt to enter the path in real earnest. But let them not glory in their own fancied unselfishness. For, in reality, it is only the seeming appearances which they allow to deceive them, the conventional notions, based on emotionalism and gush, or so-called courtesy, things of the unreal life, not the dictates of Truth.

But even putting aside these difficulties, which may be considered “external,” though their importance is none the less great, how are students in

the West to “attune themselves” to harmony as here required of them? So strong has personality grown in Europe and America that there is no school of artists even whose members do not hate and are not jealous of each other. “Professional” hatred and envy have become proverbial; men seek each to benefit himself at all costs, and even the so-called courtesies of life are but a hollow mask covering these demons of hatred and jealousy.

In the East the spirit of “non-separateness” is inculcated as steadily from childhood up, as in the West the spirit of rivalry. Personal ambition, personal feelings and desires, are not encouraged to grow so rampant there. When the soil is naturally good, it is cultivated in the right way, and the child grows into a man in whom the habit of subordination of one’s lower to one’s higher Self is strong and powerful. In the West men think that their own likes and dislikes of other men and things are guiding principles for them to act upon, even when they do not make of them the law of their lives and seek to impose them upon others.

Let those who complain that they have learned little in the Theosophical Society lay to heart the words written in an article in *The Path* for last February: — “The key in each degree is the *aspirant himself*.” [*The Path* 2.11 (February, 1888): 330, where William Quan Judge, writing under the pseudonym of William Brehon, analyses the Second Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*. Speaking of the original school of initiation upon this earth, he says: “It is secret, because, founded in nature and having only real Hierophants at the head, its privacy cannot be invaded without the real key. And that key, in each degree, is the *aspirant himself*. Until that aspirant has become in fact the sign and the key, he cannot enter the degree above him. As a whole then, and in each degree, it is self-protective.” — *Compiler*.] It is not “the fear of God” which is “the beginning of Wisdom,” but the knowledge of SELF which is WISDOM ITSELF.

How grand and true appears, thus, to the student of Occultism who has commenced to realize some of the foregoing truths, the answer given by the Delphic Oracle to all who came seeking after Occult Wisdom — words repeated and enforced again and again by the wise Socrates — MAN KNOW THYSELF. ...

Our Unity Series

In this third quarter 2013 issue of Theosophy Forward, four contributions by:

Betty Bland

Dara Eklund

Jacques Mahnich

Vicente Hao Chin Jr.

Unity among Theosophists

Betty Bland – USA

One of my favorite but decadent recipes comes from my mother's family; it is the traditional Southern pound cake. The recipe probably began when recipes were not as sophisticated as today, so its ingredients were simple: a pound of eggs and a pound each of butter, sugar, and flour. Refining adjustments have been made over the years, but the proportions are still similar. Now this is an instance in which the whole is definitely better than its parts. Each ingredient is dependent on its proper blending with the others and if any ingredient is missing, the operation is a disaster.



Southern Pound Cake

As Theosophists who are committed to a chief aim of brotherhood, we are similar to that pound cake. Through our unfortunate splits and disagreements we have evolved into different but essential ingredients for the whole Theosophical cake. If any one of our groups which is committed to the Theosophical worldview as espoused by Madame Blavatsky shuns the rest, it denigrates the outcome of our final product — the upliftment of humanity, humanity being freed from religious superstition and scientific materialism so that we might grow in harmony and peace.

Considering our world situation today, we can see more clearly than ever why the Masters were so adamant that our task is extremely urgent. Madame Blavatsky made this clear in her writings. I quote from her *Collected Works*:

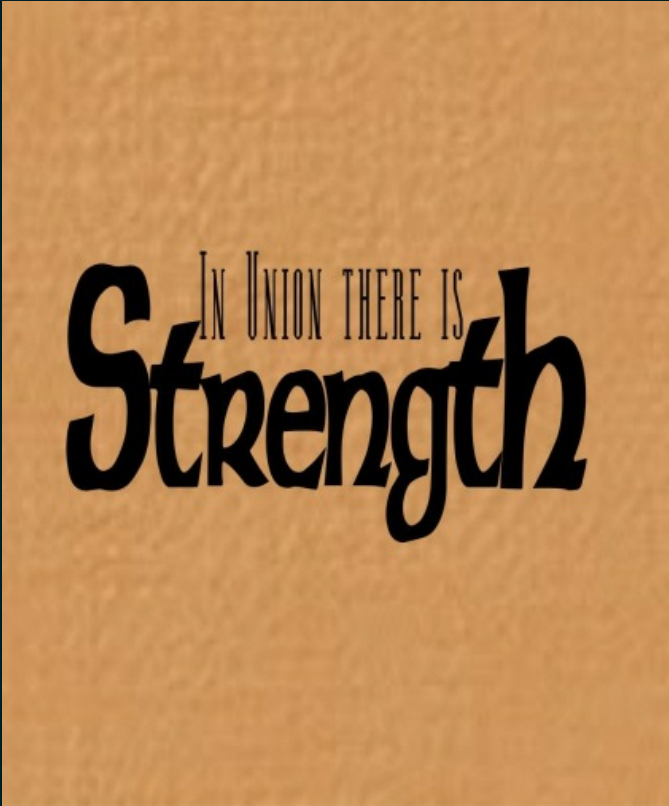
But in order that we may be able to effect this working on behalf of our common cause, we have to sink all private differences. Many are the energetic members of the Theosophical Society who wish to work and work hard. But the price of their assistance is that all the work must be done in their way and not in any one else's way. And if this is not carried out they sink back into apathy or leave the Society entirely, loudly declaring that they are the only true Theosophists. ... But to work properly in our Great Cause it is necessary to forget all personal differences of opinion as to how the work is to be carried on. Let each of us work in his own way and not endeavour to force our ideas of work upon your neighbours. ... Theosophy is essentially unsectarian, and work for it forms the entrance to the Inner life. ... Thus, then, "UNION IS STRENGTH"; and for every reason private differences must be sunk in united work for our Great Cause. (Vol.XI; pp. 165-166)

The use of the term union, or unity, implies more than one thing or being united in a common work. Although the Theosophical Society began as one, we have become multiple. Over the past more than 130 years, we Theosophists have divided and split over a number of issues, generally personal in nature. In a number of ways, that is most unfortunate, but if our differences can be seen as complimentary and enriching, then perhaps we find ourselves at an auspicious juncture. If we can work together with mutual respect and cooperation, we just might be able to achieve our original goals in time to save this fragile world. Instead of having our "goose cooked" we might

make a great deal of progress toward our objective. In other words, we might “make the cake.”

I end with another citation from the *Collected Works of HPB*:

“Theosophy teaches self-culture and not control,” we are told. Theosophy teaches mutual-culture before self-culture to begin with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of mutual development and progress in Theosophical thought may be best achieved. (Vol.VII; p.160)



IN UNION THERE IS
Strength

We are nearing the Goal

Dara Eklund – USA

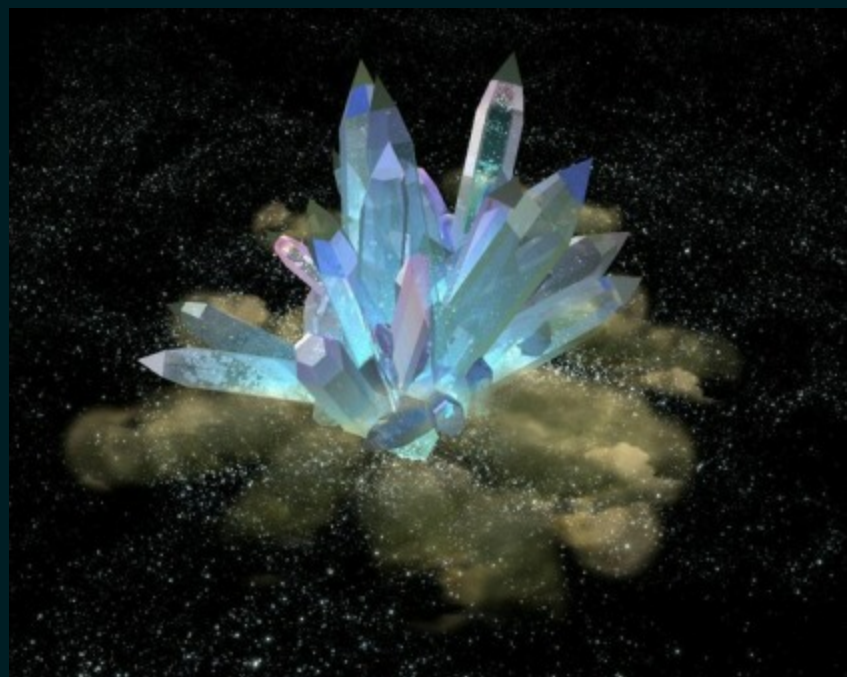
It is only natural that Theosophists would be soul-searching at a time when it seems that so many divisive elements are still at work in society. Upholding the ideal that "Brotherhood is a Fact in Nature," it seems mankind as a whole has not yet acknowledged this Fact. While mouthing allegiance to "Unity in Diversity," the diverse elements have not yet been brought into a balanced perspective, much less unity. We observe with the ancient Taoist precept that "The Great Way is very simple, but the people love the by-paths". Also from the Chinese philosophy we have been shown, that to have harmony in the world one must first have harmony in the individual, the family and the nation. So harmony begins with us, in our hearts and daily lives, by mastering the negative tendencies which have cut us off from our True Being.

As Alice Cary wrote her poem "Nobility":

"True worth is in Being, not seeming - in doing, each day that goes by, some little good - not in dreaming of great things to do by and by... There's nothing so kingly as kindness, and nothing so royal as truth." We influence the whole of humanity by such simple beginnings.

My thinking on the unity of various Theosophical traditions is, that we already have in place a group of cooperating societies and lodges, in the International Theosophical Conferences organization. Aside from this group there are many efforts at cross fertilization within the Theosophical Movement. Here in California several lodges reach out to other traditions for their speakers. They welcome non-theosophical persons who are in harmony with our ideal of Universal Brotherhood. In our individual lives and professions our striving and practical application of Theosophia promotes the unity of One Life. in all beings.





Moving Forward

Jacques Mahnich – France

Since its creation, the history of the modern Theosophical movement looks like a never-ending record of schisms, human conflicts and divergences in ideas and actions. To realistically propose ideas and initiatives for reconciliation with plans to move forward as a united (re-united) stream of thoughts and actions, we must assess thoroughly the root-causes for these departures from the initial Theosophical Society's goals and from its founder's intents. A common denominator, often existing in most spiritual movements, seems to be this everlasting egoistic behavior of people who are so convinced that they know how to find the Truth better than anyone else, including the founders of the movement, and therefore reject any other voice.

Through individual and collective initiative, the twenty-first century seems to have triggered a theosophical "renewal" where students are moving away from the crystallization of existing organizations in order to go back to the original goals of the Divine Wisdom. It seems history is repeating itself when we compare this with religious movements like, for example, Christians who have returned to the original Gospels message. And it brings hope of a new energy and a unity in diversity.

Lessons learned are key factors for future achievements. Such success starts with integrity and the ability to forget one's own personal desires and wants. To "know" is not enough. We must live by it and become a living example of these values. Then, a working-together attitude is required. Most organized movements have a pyramid-like leadership where one person is responsible for the decisions of the many and the organization as a whole. This can often lead to one-sided or an autocratic leadership. Also, while age brings wisdom and experience, we must be realistic that age also weakens the body and sometimes the mental capabilities. As we age we may not see things as clearly as we once did. Intergenerational leadership teams where young and mature work together can provide a good balance between the solidity of

tradition and the inspiration of innovation. Spirituality is a living process that must be continuously adapted to each culture and period of time in order to survive.

Civilizations and human societies have developed and deteriorated through organizations. Organized bodies are the way for humans to create and support systems of thought and ways of living. History teaches us that most of the spiritual movements started with a very limited number of people who revived or rediscovered the Divine Wisdom. Later on, followers organized communities, roles, regulations, and, inevitably, egoistic human behavior took over leadership, leading to suffering and a loss of vision of the original goal that inspired the organization.

An organized body is useful to frame and transmit the teachings and their practice. But it must be emphasized that it is the responsibility of all members to study and behave according to the teachings for the movement to grow. We cannot feed the world with the Divine Wisdom if we are not the living example. As the Dalai Lama says, “There will be no future worth living, unless everyone, now, takes personal responsibility for their own inner life and universal responsibility for the pain and the misery in the world.”

Another important facet is the concrete and service-oriented actions. The twenty-first century, together with its frenzy for self-centered and egoistic “always-more-for-me” attitude, is also an opportunity for our movement: spiritual values are losing ground in many parts of the world, but the thirst for it remains. The acceleration of the rhythm of life, the opening of borders, and the arrival of seamless communications can provide great potentials for a unified world, but it can be our downfall as well if there is no balance.

We should use these opportunities to communicate at large, to open up the doors for the people to see and hear what the Divine Wisdom may provide as values and concrete remedies to the current human world suffering. Social networks, web sites, international gatherings, service-oriented projects are the tools to weave the web of universal manifestation of the One Reality.

On Theosophical Unity

by Vicente Hao Chin Jr. – The Philippines

The issue of Theosophical unity is a complex one. We must first be clear as to what kind of unity we are talking about.

If it is about organizational unity – that is, merging all Theosophical organizations into one – then this looks improbable, at least in the foreseeable future. The ground is not yet well set.

If it is about cooperative unity among the different Theosophical organizations to further the mission of the Theosophical movement, then it is definitely possible as well as desirable.

Below are some thoughts on such an effort:

1. First, we need to state the obvious: the underlying principles of such cooperation should be the objectives of the Theosophical movement as



laid down by the founders, including the Mahatmas in their letters. The essentials of these objectives would not be too difficult to define, even if there may be some grey areas. The three objectives of the TS, the spiritual life, character building, Theosophical philanthropy, and popularization of theosophy (this is an example of a grey area) are examples of bases for such unified vision and work.

2. Because of the existence of grey areas, such cooperative unity must accentuate the positive or the unitive facets when it comes to efforts to popularize Theosophy, rather than rub on the areas of disagreement. The International Theosophical Conferences are examples of such efforts where we strengthen the areas of unity rather than wrangle about the differences.

3. But the basic areas of disagreement cannot be avoided, and we cannot be blind to them as if they don't exist because they will keep on popping up in the effort to popularize Theosophy. How can we handle this?

a. The Theosophical world is firmly founded on genuine freedom of thought, inquiry and belief. But at the same time, it is best that we come nearer to a consensus on what is this thing called Theosophy that we want to popularize. (I am speaking here on theosophy for the general public.)

b. To achieve this it will be helpful to have a *friendly* inter-theosophical forum among knowledgeable theosophists who will study and discuss perceived incongruities in basic or popular theosophy and see in what way we can develop an integrated body of teachings. I need to emphasize the word "friendly" or brotherly because any unfriendly or aggressive attitude will just derail such efforts to bring about a general consensus as to what is the theosophy that we wish to popularize. This need not be an official inter-organizational forum. A group of well-known and respected theosophists from various societies would be enough to lead other theosophists to a reasonable consensus. This can be initiated by, for example, Theosophy Forward or the International Theosophical Conference. The effort may fail, but it is worth pursuing.

c. Such a group will inevitably arrive at certain principles that will guide such a joint inquiry and research that will serve as the basis for arriving at a broad consensus. For example, they will most probably acknowledge that scientific findings that are reasonably conclusive should be given due

consideration in case it conflicts with any Theosophical teachings, such as that there are no canals or forests on the physical surface of Mars.

d. For certain controversial areas, more joint research and exploration would be necessary. For example, *is the astral body the kama rupa or the linga sarira?* There is room for actual quasi-scientific research on this issue because of the vast information now available on out-of-body experiences, near-death experience, etc.

e. There will probably remain certain areas that are difficult to tackle, such as the definition of the monad (*is it the atma-buddhi or the anupadaka monad?*) primarily because they rely on the assertions of individuals rather than based on experience. Part of the problem is the use of the same terms for different things (monad, astral body, logos, etc.). It would have been helpful if a different term had been used when a later writer introduced a new idea or concept. Although this is water under the bridge, it is still possible to review the confusing nomenclature and create qualifying adjectives to distinguish one term from another (especially if theosophists cannot agree on the actual teachings), and present a less confusing body of teachings to the public.

4. An area of bitter dissension is about historical personalities, primarily C. W. Leadbeater and W. Q. Judge:

a. As much as possible, we must look forward and not backward. Many issues about the past probably can no longer be resolved at this time when the protagonists and witnesses are long dead. The effort of some ULT members to reopen the Judge case as if a new trial ought to be undertaken is most probably doomed to fail, and the one that will perhaps be harmed most by such an attempt to reopen will be the memory of Judge himself. At present, the whole theosophical world has maintained respect for Judge and to re-ventilate the whole controversy will just harm him more than it will help. Even a staunch pro-Judge writer such as Ernest Pelletier has concluded that the charges “could not be proved or disproved” (*The Judge Case*, p. xiv).

b. We must focus on the validity of the Theosophical teachings of these historical people rather than the moral issues about them. It is not that we are to become blind to such moral issues – for the latter have importance – but a hundred years of seemingly unending disputations should be enough to convince us that we are unable to arrive at a consensus on these issues.

Much talent, time and resources have been wasted on the fruitless recycling of such issues that just divide us more. The farther we are from the eras of these historical personalities, the less are we in a position to judge personal moral matters. So let us move forward. Theosophy is immensely larger than any personality, including those of Blavatsky and the Mahatmas. We must not be bogged down by the issues about the personalities who tried to be vehicles of the reintroduction of the ageless wisdom. The imperfections of its advocates are secondary. Our primary agenda is about the Wisdom and its potential for human and social transformation. Let these be the foundations of Theosophical unity.

Unity in Theosophical work and mission is possible and desirable. Together, we will become far more effective in the effort to popularize theosophy and make it a practical living philosophy for everyone.



Between Brotherhood and Occultism

by James LeFour – USA

Modern Theosophy would not exist without Occultism. Not only were many of its most influential members in the early formative years occultists, most notably being the co-founder Helena Petrovna Blavatsky herself, but the very foundation of most of its teachings comes from occult knowledge.

The intention of the early members was that the Theosophical Society would not always rest upon any charismatic authority of occult ideas by blind faith, but that those original ideas would spur the public into using their own sense of logic, and even the scientific research available, to create their own opinions regarding the greater questions in life. The occult platform which the early Theosophical Society used to counteract dogmatism and popular spiritualism was taught as a starting point for the freedom of thought. Even if new members were to completely disagree with all occult ideas put forth, giving the public those true teachings would compel them to reflect and either agree or disagree. The hope remained that with the information the Society encouraged everyone to study, they could come to the willing conclusion that we are all brothers and sisters. The central influence early Theosophists wanted to impregnate all Western minds with was the idea of Brotherhood. We all belong to each other and should treat each other as such. If one were to disagree with that simple idea of connectedness and equality, regardless of one's non-dogmatic methods, most T.S. members would conclude that person as misguided.

The Understood Greatness of True Occultism

The inherent problem with learning occult teachings as a backbone, or even just a starting point, toward open-minded inquiry is that, as the odds might indicate, the inquirer is not an occultist. To be more forthcoming, that



hallowed achievement is likely not going to happen in this lifetime or the next or the average person. In the colorful phrasing of the “Old Lady”, Helena Blavatsky, “Some imagine that a master in the art, to show the way, is all that is needed to become a Zanoni ... Will these candidates to Wisdom and Power feel very indignant if told the plain truth? It is not only useful, but it has now become *necessary* to disabuse most of them and before it is too late. This truth may be said in a few words: There are not in the West half-a dozen among the fervent hundreds who call themselves ‘Occultists,’ who have even an approximately correct idea of the nature of the Science they seek to master.” (From “Occultism vs Occult Arts”)

Thus the question: Why should the average person learn of it at all? Wouldn't all Theosophical students be better off having never heard of Occultism in the first place?

H. P. B. conveys that the occult sciences provide much for the simple student of ethics and causality, even though they may not become a practitioner of the higher occult arts. It is the same as when a Westerner learns about the laws of karma or comes to a basic comprehension of thought power. After coming to any deep understanding about how the universe works, it brings about changes in every action and premeditation for the responsible adult. And hopefully, understanding such higher truths changes one's behavior and approach to life towards a much more altruistic direction.

Occultism is not about siddhis, and it is also not just about spiritual perfection. Occultism is about causality. It is about learning that pushing one domino leads to the last domino also falling over. That is necessary knowledge for anyone in a human skin. When the population of the world is capable of learning that they are much more powerful than they think they are, choicelessness is no longer an option, and the correct choice is altruistic Brotherhood. That is Theosophy.

In an article by H. P. B., entitled *Practical Occultism*, she directly addresses "the essential difference between theoretical and practical Occultism; or what is generally known as Theosophy on the one hand, and Occult science on the other ..." The majority of the article is a listing of Occult laws and practices, and the purpose of writing such an article to Western audiences has a great amount of subtext to any who are paying attention. Not only do those (again, about six or so) occultists that are in practice not need for her to spell out the rules to them, but least of all would they learn it from an English periodical. She lists these rules for the theoretical Occultist, synonymous as she mentioned, with a Theosophist. She states them in plain language so that those with the acumen and accountability can follow the golden rule a little further, or at the very least follow a more Hippocratic one so that we do not unintentionally harm others.

To distinguish Theosophy from Occultism more clearly, she explains, "Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour

than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer – is a Theosophist.”

To elucidate the definition of Occultism she explains, “It should never be forgotten that Occultism is concerned with the *inner man* who must be strengthened and freed from the dominion of the physical body and its surroundings, which must become his servants. Hence the *first* and chief necessity of Chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. These are all-important; while outward observance of fixed rules of life is a matter of secondary moment.”

And as a warning, she describes the consequences of prematurely approaching the study of Occultism. If one is not entirely pure, or has not conquered the lower self with the higher it will only exacerbate ones base desires and intentions. What should come from a place of spiritual altruism degrades into astral attachments. Black magic and sorcery, even unintentionally executed selfish willpower, often becomes the result. And so the student sees a much broader necessity for Theosophy in human evolution. All spiritual beings over the course of their evolution, lifetime to lifetime, will learn the universal tenets of Theosophy one way or another. Organizing the tenets into a system and a doctrine is a way to get everyone to grow up spiritually more quickly and benevolently.

To Imagine a Theosophical Society without Occult Teachings

Even though the Theosophical Society is not even 140 years old at the time of this writing, it could be said that the keeping of history and historical records is a fervent pastime for some of its members at all stages of its development. And what good fortune this is so, not only because twists and changes occur so frequently in the Theosophical Society’s progress, but because much of what is advised by its leaders requires a great deal of context to actually apply.

The Theosophical Society, for example, exists independent of the divine philosophy known as Theosophy or any of its doctrines and teachings. In fact, the only requirement besides the membership fee is the belief in the objects, in existence since the inception of its Original Programme. Without proper historical context, this has led some members to think that since a belief in any specific teaching is not necessary for Theosophical Society membership, the organization may as well be viewed as entirely separate from the doctrines of Theosophy and their practice.

However, if the Society were truly viewed as separate from Doctrine, what would be left? There would be little forward momentum keeping the heart of the Theosophical Society beating at all. Imagine an international organization with many quaint yet well stocked libraries of rare volumes, but no one ever applied the knowledge beyond writing ontological articles or giving lectures for the sake of discourse. They would host occasional interfaith ceremonies and prayer services featuring a variety of local religious leaders. It would be very much like a town activities center only for anything loosely spiritual, and the members would have little in common as far as motivation beyond the fact that they all have a similar affection for the atmosphere.

It sounds nice in a way, except that the Universalist Unitarian church does something similar, and the Theosophical Society has a purpose which is very different. For the Theosophical Society, something like this would represent a slow death. Or perhaps not death, if there are still three good working Theosophists in the world, but it certainly would come to lack productivity. The common goal necessary, with which every lodge can work independently of each other and yet still know they are all working for the same thing, is the means toward achieving Brotherhood. The means to get to that goal could have been any number of things, but for the TS it has become the education of Theosophy. There are many organizations that work toward Brotherhood, like the Peace Corps for example, or the Girlscouts, or as mentioned the Unitarian Universalist Church. The Theosophical Society teaches Theosophy, and those who choose to may apply those teachings to their lives, but it is not a requirement to be a member.

The Theosophical Society must always encourage the study of Theosophy, and must only *encourage* the study of the Theosophy. Dogmatism is nothing more than a presumption of authority, and Theosophists can be just

as guilty of it as the rest of the world if they are not careful. However if a member of the Society can come and go through its hallways without ever hearing about the laws of Occultism, being encouraged to peruse *Isis Unveiled*, or encountering some ideas from *The Secret Doctrine* or *The Mahatma Letters*, then the Society has failed that member. If its members believe it is only a house for the study and comparison of other faiths, then they have missed the point of this approach. That being stated, almost all spiritual practices and studies have a place within the Society. Even astrology, movie watching, or a cooking class could be considered Theosophical practices if they are done with the right spirit in the hearts of the practitioners.

From a certain perspective, the entire “experiment” that is known as the Theosophical Society could be paraphrased with the axiom “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.” In this case, the horse is humanity and the water is an understanding of Brotherhood. Perhaps a better motto would be “You can lead a TS member to Theosophy, but cannot make him awaken.” No one can force humanity into a recognition of its many faces. Not even Jesus, Mohammed, Moses, Krishna, or the Buddha. A belief in Jesus only yields one with a wonderment of Jesus, and even though the disciple cannot understand what his messiah is explaining, he will bow down and mimic the words. Even the right answer, without allowing a person to work out the conclusion for themselves, is not the right answer. And so we have the Theosophical Society – a house where people can study in the name of Brotherhood, until they realize that all religions are pursuing the same thing, which is an experiential Oneness.

Theosophy proposes that human beings can understand what Brotherhood means, and they are capable of realizing its implications, if those who are teaching it have a little patience. The Theosophical Society shows its members the water and waits for that aha moment where they realize that Cosmogony and Anthropogenesis are fascinating studies on their own, but they are only functional in the capacity that they are glowing neon arrows pointing to the revelation that we are all One!

A Theosophical Society without Fear

“But if the two Founders were not told what they had to do, they were distinctly instructed about what they should never do, what they had to avoid,

and what the Society should never become. Church organizations, Christian and Spiritual sects were shown as the future contrasts to our Society.”

This quote from *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society* very well embodies many devoted members' greatest fear. That being the fear of having its principles and teachings used to create an actual church or cult, and misusing the doctrines entrusted to its members by twisting them into some form of misguided dogma. The idea of calling it an actual fear may seem like a very strong word, but a spade is a spade, and a fear is a fear.

When the Liberal Catholic Church was being formed and promoted by members of the TS Adyar, it had many critics insisting that they had created the very anathema to what the founders intended. The voice of the critics was that of fear talking. It is viable to assess whether or not it was a good idea, or even whether it was entirely necessary, but to accuse it of being antithetical to the purpose of the Theosophical movement? Flapdoodle.

“The Theosophical Society was chosen as the corner stone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity.” This well-known phrase was not stated idly, nor scribed by any common person. There is no reason not to believe the Liberal Catholic Church to be the first of many future religions, each conducive to Theosophy in its own way. As long as there is no dogma, and each member is free to interpret the esoteric meaning of liturgy, symbol, or allegory in any way – that faith does fulfill the intention of the Theosophical movement.

In the article *Is Theosophy a Religion?*, H. P. B. explains that Theosophy cannot be a religion because Theosophy is religion. “It transmutes the apparently base metal of every ritualistic and dogmatic creed (Christianity included) into the gold of fact and truth, and thus truly produces a universal panacea for the ills of mankind ... Because Theosophy can be practiced by Christian or Heathen, Jew or Gentile, by Agnostic or Materialist, or even an Atheist, provided that none of these is a bigoted fanatic, who refuses to recognize as his brother any man or woman outside his own special creed or belief.”

The problem with her logic, in regards to practitioners of other faiths being able to practice Theosophy, is that most of those religions are dogmatic. To put it another way, if someone is at first a dogmatic Christian (as many

Westerners are) before they come to study Theosophy, then after they find the inner meaning of their own faith they will reject the dogmatic aspects of their original religion. They then become what could be called a Christian Theosophist, and would no longer be in harmony with whatever branch of dogmatic Christianity they originally claimed to be. From a Western religious definition, this makes Theosophy a competing religion.

In H. P. B.'s time the pendulum of public understanding was in a different place. There was no Western popularization of the Bahai faith or a Unitarian Universalist Church, and the nuances of Buddhism were still being introduced (mostly by Theosophists); in fact, the definition of religion at that time was more accurately synonymous with the word dogma. However, now there are many non-dogmatic faiths in public view. The West is moving forward, and in no small way in thanks to the efforts of the Theosophical Society.

One modern public definition of religion is as follows: "A set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs."

The only part of that definition not applying to Theosophy is in regards to devotional observances, and that seems to be flexible in this context. Of course, this is just one definition. And this article is not suggesting that "non-dogmatic religion" is a perfect term fit to define Theosophy, but neither is the word "philosophy" because no philosophy has built within its teachings doctrines on Cosmogony or Anthropogenesis. It is more accurate to say there is no word yet in the English language that could acceptably define what Theosophy is to the public understanding. But the Theosophical Society should not be so wary of being defined as a religion when it is done so; there is no reason to fear it, because by some more modern definitions it is accurate.

Theosophy has been accused of being a "pseudo-religion" by its attackers, and ironically that seems to now be a closer term describing it than the one it gives itself. Blavatsky said, "Now Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only *all* MEN, but also *all* BEINGS and all

things in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our Theosophical definition of religion; but the same definition changes again with every creed and country, and no two Christians even regard it alike.” And so the definition of “religion” will continue to change as the human race progresses. Do not let the Theosophical Society be the one obstinately against this change, for it is a manifesting result of the seeds so diligently sown by the Society’s own efforts. It is a success!

Defining Relevance

One thing the Theosophical Society should have great concern for is to never become irrelevant. In order to accomplish this it is important, in the information age, to clearly define what it is here for, and what it provides that is different from the many altruistic organizations that have become our allies since its foundation in 1875. While some of the founders’ goals have been achieved, like that of an appreciation for the wisdom of India and a dispelling of the Spiritualist misteachings, the world still needs the Theosophical Society just as much as ever.

The surest bridge between Brotherhood and Occultism is still made by Theosophy. And the Theosophical Society, among being many things, is still an excellent vehicle through which to spread those divine teachings to a much more open-minded public than in the past. Should they call it a religion is of no consequence, as long as they walk away knowing that there are many methods toward Brotherhood, and that Theosophy is very much an encouraged practice to attain that goal.

Sources:

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MahaChohan’s Letter

East – West discovering *Dharma*

From a Student

Dharma is a Sanskrit word meaning righteousness, moral law, merit, and virtue.

Dharma is a sacred law. *Dharma* is also the natural property of all things. The *Dharma* of *fire* is to burn, that of a *dog* is to bark when it “smells” a stranger. In the case of man, *Dharma* is a pursuit of one’s regular duty in one’s stage of life. As the man advances in life, the sense of duty progresses in a continuous process. As one takes up new responsibility, one discovers new duty towards the family, profession, and religious, social, national. At every stage, one makes choices with the best understanding within the limitation of one’s knowledge in the given situation.

As one advances in the understanding of *Karma*, one becomes more conscious and responsible to apply the right thought and action in accomplishing one’s *Dharma*. In others words, there is a continuity from philosophical thought to the application of the correct action in the right way, in a given context, i.e. *Dharma*.

In the Theosophical perspective, *Dharma* has a wider meaning in the sense of a East – West, two complementary and joint approach towards discovering the understanding of eternal verities which form the basis of H.P. Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*:

“*The Secret Doctrine* was a universally diffused religion of ancient and prehistoric world.” (SD I, xxxiv)

“Rawlinson shows an undeniable Vedic influence in the earl mythology of Babylon.” (SD I, xxxi).

Goerges Dumezil, a French modern scholar compares the *Mahabharata* and Scandinavian *Loki*’s story that illustrate a similar pattern of a war between spiritual and opposite forces of the same family. HPB says in the Glossary for *Loki*:

“Loki by blood is the brother of Odin ... Odin-Loki is two in one.”

In *The Key to Theosophy* HPB introduces the Neo-Platonists, and their philosophy as an expression of the Wisdom-Religion. The Greek philosophers with Pythagoras, Ammonius, Apollonius of Tyana, and down to the last Hypatia show a continuity of this same wisdom-religion. They maintained a connection with the Hindu Brahmins.

The *Theosophical Movement's second Object* declares a pioneer statement:

“Study of the Eastern literature (Aryan and others), religions and sciences”.

In 1879, *The Theosophist* began a publication of articles and formed a *library* as a platform of exchange of Eastern and Western cultures.

W.Q. Judge contributed two important books *The Bhagavad-Gita* and *The Aphorisms of Patanjali* and a series of articles in *The Path* to help a deeper understanding of an Eastern approach to universal *ideas* in view of the modern Western thought.

In the 4th of the *Five Messages*, brings forward the influence of Hindu on English [and Western] thought through writing in *Lucifer* ...

“So that each may supply the qualities lacking in the others, and develop more fraternal feelings among Nations”.

From the soul point of view, the inner man acts through bodies from different places. There some astonishing examples of Western born, all ready to adapt Eastern thought easily even very young, e.g. Sir Edwin Arnold, Gandhi and Tagore are symmetrical examples. This exchange has increased considerably in the 20th and 21st centuries with an English speaking community of scientists in India and another community of Western thinkers adopting Indian philosophical ideas.

Letters That Have Helped Me (Book 2, Letter 2): “we have to educate the West so that it may appreciate the possibilities of the East, and thus on the waiting structure in the East may build a new order of things for the benefit of the whole”.

The Indian Institute of World Culture in Bangalore and the Institute of World Culture in Santa Barbara offer another channel to enrich understanding.

Others beyond Theosophists illustrate this exchange of thoughts. Vivekananda the Vedanta philosophy's messenger to the West (World Parliament of Religions in 1893) addressed the audience as "Brothers and Sisters" and there was a feeling of a resonance in the hearts of all.

Gandhi's message of applying Brotherhood (Hindu – Muslim unity) and non-violence in the Independence of India attracted world's attention and was a partial success. To him, it was a failure because he wanted an independent one India. But the outcome was two nations of India and Pakistan, which again split to add another nation, Bangladesh. The Dalai Lama's message of Peace and Compassion has been a great success in the world. There is a terrible suffering and loss of lives among Tibetans however the outcome is that Buddhist ideas are well appreciated in the West.

Even now there is religious violence in several parts of the world. However there is an immense serious effort towards *peace* movements to bring closer ties all over. Examples of altruism are in international rescue movements like Doctors without Borders are ready to rush aid to any nation in case of emergency.

There is a continuity of what may be called Indo-European civilizations as similar patterns of thought (freedom of thought, democracy). At the same time there are differences of approach, rather complementary ways that deepen the understanding and enrich the experience during a fruitful cooperation in a project. *The Sanskrit Heritage* site (<http://sanskrit.inria.fr>) shows how far scholars can concentrate their efforts from different areas and nations (philosophy, linguistics, mathematics, computer science, etc) for the revival of Sanskrit that was announced by H.P.B.

There is a *modern international thought* being created along the lines of international work together with all nations, as a result of globalization.

Deepak Chopra, an Indian born specialized in modern medicine talks about Hindu philosophical ideas appealing to the West. International Schools are teaching children spirituality, ethics, and tolerance, without reference to any religious systems.

Institutions of excellence are teaching *stress management with meditation*. Some examples involve Full Awareness (Thich Nhat Hanh) and Mindfulness (Mark Williams). This is used in various nations including in a psychiatry clinical context (Christophe André). There is a genuine influence of Yoga practice with expanding the consciousness to be “fraternal” to those one loves, then to those with whom one has difficulties, finally to all. It also uses concentration on the breath to bring calm the mind. Theosophy has a special warning to this approach. The breath control is only mildly mentioned in the end of Book 2 in the Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms*. No concentration on breath is recommended because of its inherent dangers that may stimulate centers of forces that may cause trouble.

A true Brotherhood requires a metaphysical comprehension of the *Dharma*. The way is *spirituality, ethics, and idealism*. Then only the exchange can be on the level of *truth* only.

There is no Religion higher than Truth.

Sayat nasti paro Dharmah.

A compromise results in a partial application only. This is better than total failure but the aim is a total success. The encouragement given by *The Voice of the Silence*, each apparent failure is a partial success as well as:

“The enemies he slew in the last battle will not return to life in the next birth that will be his.” And “Gain *siddhis* for thy future birth.”

Reason can demonstrate the truth by method of philosophy, in an intellectual sense, while *intuition* gives the direct cognition for the ultimate *realization of Truth*. Reason and Intuition have to be trained in a progressive and continuous process. The *hearing* and *seeing* are used in the Indian philosophy. Fine hearing enables a *Yogi* to hear mystic sounds (*The Voice of the Silence*). A higher seeing capacity leads to *Seer-ship*, a spiritual clairvoyance (*Rishis* are examples through a *Raja Yoga* training).

In the *Study of the Light on the Path* (B.P. Wadia) there is a section on *Listening and Speaking*.

The *Listening* with three stages:

- 1) Listen to the teaching of Theosophy as recorded in the Message.
- 2) Learn to listen to the Inner Ego by training the ears.

- 3) Learn to listen to Great Gurus, the Elder Brothers, the modern Representatives of the Ancient Fathers, who sustain the institution of Chelaship in the Yuga.

The Speaking with three stages:

- 1) Learn to speak the Teachings of Theosophy as recorded in the Message.
- 2) Learn to speak to other souls in the Language of the Soul.
- 3) Learn to speak as a Channel of Great Gurus, the Elder Brothers, the modern Representatives of the Ancient Fathers, who sustain the institution of Chelaship in the Yuga.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* may be viewed as an appeal to a sense of duty with a fine analysis. Action is a necessity. The duty of a warrior is to fight a lawful battle. Therefore he must resolve to fight. The important attitude is to fight, treating success and failure alike, i.e. without the expectation of the result. The analysis proceeds to one's own nature. Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature (*Prakriti*). There are influences from various factors like sense attraction and repulsion. It is better to do one's duty rather than do the duty of another. The variety of duty is a factor determined by one's own nature, *Svabhava* and one's particular position, *Svadharma*. Special attention to one's duty with devotion attains to perfection.

The Voice of the Silence questions:

"Thou hast to be prepared to answer Dharma, the stern law ...
Hast thou complied with all the rules?"

Living the Life (B.P. Wadia) indicates the way:

"The Teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy and the Great Teachers who are the custodians of those Teachings aid in preparing the earnest aspirant resolved to serve the Cause and determined to live the Life ...

Dharma reveals the right way to overcome *Karma*. *Karma* is the acceptance of one's state in a given context: endure, suffer, and pay your debt. *Dharma* says this is the right way to learn to pay your debt and ascend to heavenly heights."

Man is free to choose and act by *self-induced and self-devised efforts* but *Dharma* warns that if he chooses wrongly, the inner man is held responsible for the errors of the personalities and for the choice of the right duty to perform to discharge it. The universe is governed by moral principles. Man is a creator by thought and word and the rules of the Inner Life demand that he be non-violent in thought and speech, i.e. the application of universal Brotherhood. In other words, gain the *Great Wisdom* for the *Great Sacrifice* necessary for the *Great Service*.

The teaching of the Occult Science is given by the term *Manodhatu* in the *Glossary*:

“Each human being has his *Manodhatu* or plane of thought proportionate with the degree of his intellect and his mental faculties, beyond which he can go only by studying and developing his higher spiritual faculties in one of the higher spheres of thought.”



H. P. B. and the Altruistic Heart

by Ananya Rajan

[This talk was given during 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference held in August 2013 in New York. The theme title of the conference was “How to Awaken Compassion? - H. P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine”]

The theme of this conference is “How to Awaken Compassion: H.P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine.” Keeping the theme of the conference in mind, I think it’s important for us to realize that we are the “Eternal Secret Doctrine.” Within us resides everything we need to know. Our bodies are a living library of ancient cultures and traditions despite not remembering on a conscious level. We come from the Eternal and we will eventually return to the Eternal. All we need to do is look harder. As H. P. B. showed us from her writings, we cannot evolve without understanding who we are. I do not mean from the scientific, psychological or philosophical point of view. These are views from an outside intellectual perspective. To understand the Self is work that must only be done by the individual alone. It is up to the individual to press on, looking harder into their sense of who they are. This can be intimidating for many. We want to believe we know ourselves, but often times we don’t.

Through her life, H. P. B. lived the example of her teachings. She showed us who she was, never gave up when ridiculed, wasn’t afraid as a woman to show her emotions – which even in today’s modern world and almost 140 years later is still a source of conversation. A man can lose his temper and be considered justified while a woman is considered emotional. Of course in H. P. B.’s time, women didn’t raise their voices. Yet, she courageously stood against the majority, despite being ridiculed. All she wanted to do was to share with us what she was taught and she did that through her life and her life’s work. She lived theosophy and in turn showed us that theosophy needs to be lived. When we live it, it becomes a part of our life and practical. In *The Key to Theosophy* under the heading of “What is Practical

Theosophy,” H. P. B. states that members best help the movement by Theosophy being an example in their lives.

So what does living the example of Theosophy in one’s life mean? To me, practical Theosophy means love. Not love in the romantic sense of the word, but love without boundaries, without conditions, and without sentimentality. It is love that embodies compassion for all beings, great and small. It is love that allows the heart to be open. It is love that allows freedom for every individual to be who they are, but love that uses discernment as its guard.

Living Theosophy is living altruistically. It is heart work at the core. Our intelligence can only take us so far. Eventually we need to turn off our minds and open our hearts. Given the time period of H. P. B.’s life, I have come to believe that she was careful to use the word love minimally because of the misinterpretation that can surround it. Instead she used language that at times seems “heady” to say the least. In *The Secret Doctrine*, her volume on *Cosmogogenesis* is actually a beautiful love story. Coded in allegory, it paints the picture of the Absolute selflessly giving in order to know itself. When we look at the teachings from this perspective, we can realize that we truly are the microcosm of the macrocosm. The sayings “As above, so below” or “As within, so without” come to mind. And if we follow the qualities of the Divine, such as selflessness, we will live a life that brings us back into touch with our own divinity and our connection to the All That Is. We are once again reunited with the Beloved. What greater love story is there? And, as mentioned earlier, none of this has to do with romance for real love is more than poetic words and gestures. It goes beyond the human desires. Love has to do with self-sacrifice, freedom, compassion, and the wisdom to know thy Self. Interestingly, as a mental health counselor, these are the same qualities I encourage clients to have in their relationships. But sadly, I can’t seem to get them to read the *Secret Doctrine*. I really can’t understand why.

It is very easy for us to get caught up in the descriptions in H. P. B.’s writings and forget that they are clues to who we are. Her work *Isis Unveiled*, I feel, is an introduction to the basis of Theosophy and gives us a better understanding of the ancient teachings and our connection with the world around us. In this work H. P. B.’s descriptions of rituals of purification and initiation performed by ancient societies give us a glimpse into the unseen

world and our connection to it. She begins by asking “Is it too much to believe that man should be developing new sensibilities and a closer relationship with nature?” We can begin to understand that our life is more than this physical realm and that by having a closer relationship with nature, we will have the ability to discover hidden powers latent within us to create the world we want to live in. It is also here that we realize that if we want to awaken the powers within us, we must, without question, choose love in our lives.

When we chose love it is a path of self-sacrifice. We are choosing to sacrifice the personal wants and desires, the personality, in order to know the Higher Self. This choice is not made lightly by those who commit to it. The Road is Steep and Thorny and the Divine Witness is forever reminding us of the karmic repercussions that we will endure when right thought, action, and word is not followed. If we truly commit to the path of love, we step into a world where vibration and energy dominate, leaving aside the physical realm, and we wait for the Voice of the Silence to speak to us in a whisper. It is truly a world of self-sacrifice, because the self is no longer the focus. Like a mother caring for her young, gone are the days where one thinks of themselves first. Every action is based on what is best for the whole. Karma rules the tongue so words are watched carefully and the guardian of the gate keeps watch over our thoughts. We know within our heart of hearts that this physical realm is just a breath of the Divine Mother, breathing us into existence.

Choosing the path of love and living a life of altruism are two very different actions. Here is where things get sticky. H. P. B. deciphers between being a member of an organization, i.e. choosing a path of love with all the good intentions, and being a Theosophist, i.e. living an altruistic life. Trying to live altruistically can get difficult when we are active in the world and are in contact with more people who can irritate us. It is easy to be a member of an organization, and say we are loving, but to live the ideals of the organization every day is difficult. We are “to be in the world, but not of it.” In other words, to rise above the irritations of the world and this takes a lot of inner work which leads to self-sacrifice. Awareness in our daily lives is one of the most difficult tasks we can undergo, but one of the most crucial stepping stones to an altruistic life. It is the awareness that allows us to discern reality from illusion; keeps the ego in check and opens our minds to new experiences. Theosophy waits for those who knock.

H. P. B. states in *The Key to Theosophy* “Much must necessarily be left to the individual judgment” about whether our actions are in line with the commitment we have made. As Theosophists, we must promote true brotherhood “by inculcating those higher and nobler conceptions of public and private duties which lie at the root of all spiritual and material development” and “our daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow man.”

The individual journey is left to the individual alone. There is no dogma, there are no hard and fast rules, there is no guru to tell us what to do. However, there are keys as I mentioned earlier such as H. P. B.’s opening question in *Isis Unveiled* and our connection to Nature. Another key are the “Golden Stairs” which are simple instructions for our own individual journey, but difficult to achieve. And yet, they are instructions to a life of spiritual fulfillment and love. I have personally found that by meditating and living by the “Golden Stairs,” as well as one can, one’s life can be transformed. We begin to have compassion for everything around us, including ourselves.

A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one’s co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the teacher, a willing obedience to the behest of truth once we have placed our confidence in and believe that teacher to be in possession of it, a courageous endurance for personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science depicts. These are the Golden Stairs.

We can take these words at face value by doing the minimum of eating a nutritious diet, keeping our body and surroundings clean, and basically being of good character. We can keep an open mind by being accepting of others and generally being open to new experiences and so on. In order to be pure hearted we can make sure we think good thoughts — whatever that may mean to one — and try not to talk disparagingly about another, and on it goes. Face value is basically touching just the surface where it is comfortable.

However, if we decide to live an altruistic life – which eventually brings us into touch with the love that brought us here in the first place — we

cannot touch the tip of the iceberg. We need to go deep, deep within ourselves to places where a serpent lies coiled under every flower. It is only when we truly question ourselves that we can break apart the Real from the Unreal. *The Voice of the Silence* states that “The Mind is the great slayer of the Real. Let the disciple slay the slayer.” (I think of the Goddess Kali holding a human head in her one hand and a saber in another.) In other words the work we need to do cannot be done by the mind. It must come from a deeper place within us where the ego does not reside, where we give up our attachment to being right, to feeling powerful and having control, to our feeling of importance. So when we state that we are living a clean life — are we? Are we honest with ourselves? Do we give freedom to the other sentient beings around us or is it a relationship based on what is best for us? Are we who we say we are, or are we living a life according to an image? Are we transparent like a clean piece of glass?

A great test for open-mindedness is to walk in circles where we aren't comfortable, to be with people who live differently from ourselves, whether culturally, economically, or even personally. I often think of the number of people H. P. B. met who were so different from herself. Can we still be as loving with others as we are with those whose lifestyles match our own? Are we being genuine or are we just “tolerating” others? This is where our pure heartedness comes into question. Are we being pure hearted? What does pure hearted mean? How do we know when we aren't being pure hearted?

It is only the individual who can answer these questions about his or her life. No one can walk the journey of another and we should try — “try” being the key word here — as much as possible to step back to allow others to make their own decisions. And we should try never to judge another for what they have chosen to do or experience. We are not living their life. Every experience can only be seen through the eyes of the experimenter.

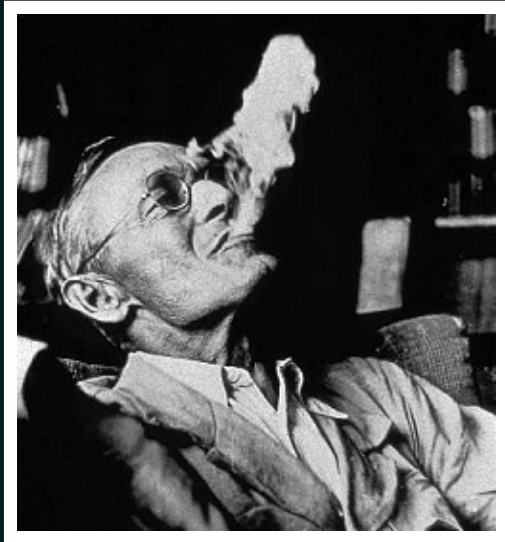
It is no wonder that H. P. B. discusses the Path as an arduous journey. Not only do we have to contend with the emotions of the personality, but the mind as well. And knowing this to be so, she is careful to note that through our own will, we are the makers of our own destiny. She is constantly stressing the need for the individual to decide what is right for them. Thus she provides an example of one of the qualities of love: freedom. Connecting to the Higher Self cannot be achieved if we are restricted in our journey. We must

find our own way. While she gives an outline for us to follow, there is no one there to tell us whether we are following the outline correctly. Only the individual knows what is right for them.

In my counseling practice, I have come across so many people who are completely out of touch with themselves. I believe this happens because we live in a society where we are constantly being told we are doing things wrong or that there is someone more knowledgeable to go to who can tell us what we need. I find myself constantly asking the question "What do you feel is best for you?" I don't ask what do you *think* is best for you, but what do you *feel*? We, as humans, are often out of touch with what our bodies are telling us. In reality, our body is our conscience. It will tell us whether we are following our own path or someone else's. It will tell us whether we are being ourselves or pretending to be someone else.

As we all know, the soul incarnates to experience and learn so it may know itself. Incarnation in itself is an act of divine love because we come into this life to continue a journey so all of humanity may progress. It is not just about our own individual journey. We are part of the One. Whatever progress we make in this blink of a lifetime, impacts the One. We, all beings great and small, do not incarnate without purpose. Every sentient being has a purpose in this life given to it from the Divine. As humans, we forget that every moment is a moment we need to be aware. Aware of what we think, say, and do and just by that awareness we are treading the path of altruism.

When we know ourselves, meet and greet every sentient being as we would want to be greeted, and truly see ourselves as a part of the Divine, there is a connection to the seen and unseen worlds that cannot be put into words. A peace that passeth understanding surrounds us and every action we do, is done from the heart. There are no words, there is only a feeling of oneness and this is altruism.



Whether it is good or evil, whether life in itself is pain or pleasure, whether it is uncertain-that it may perhaps be this is not important-but the unity of the world, the coherence of all events, the embracing of the big and the small from the same stream, from the same law of cause, of becoming and dying.

Hermann Hesse

(A German-born, Swiss poet, novelist, and painter).



Silence

The Voice of the Silence

9 (Verses 101-122)

by John Algeo – USA

Fragment II of *The Voice of the Silence* is entitled “The Two Paths,” and that title identifies its dominant metaphor: a road that branches into two paths, between which a choice must be made. Neither path is wrong; and ultimately both lead to the same place, but they pass through different landscapes on the way. However, the choice between the two paths is not an inconsequential one, and the Fragment is clearly urging us to choose a particular one of the two.

The importance of choice in our lives cannot be overstressed. The doctrine of karma tells us that every action has an inevitable consequence. But karma does not determine what action we will take. When faced with the need to act, we, like Arjuna in the Gita, must choose what we will do. And our choice determines what follows; it also determines our own natures, for by choosing, we create or discover ourselves. In a fantasy story that is very popular around the world, a wizard guru tells a young boy who is in the process of discovering who and what he is, “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, p. 245). That statement is neither fiction nor fantasy but plain and sober truth. It is what Fragment II is about.

A. VERSES [101-111].

One of the great teachers said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7.7). So the candidates ask the teacher for instruction about how to proceed, just as Arjuna asks Krishna in the Gita, and the teacher tells them about the two paths:

[101] And now, O Teacher of Compassion, point thou the way to other men. Behold, all those who, knocking for admission, await in ignorance and darkness to see the gate of the Sweet Law flung open!

The voice of the candidates:

[102] Shalt not thou, Master of thine own mercy, reveal the Doctrine of the Heart? Shalt thou refuse to lead thy servants unto the Path of Liberation?

Quoth the Teacher:

[103] The Paths are two; the great Perfections three; six are the Virtues that transform the body into the Tree of Knowledge.

[104] Who shall approach them?

[105] Who shall first enter them?

[106] Who shall first hear the doctrine of two Paths in one, the truth unveiled about the Secret Heart? The Law which, shunning learning, teaches Wisdom, reveals a tale of woe.

[107] Alas, alas, that all men should possess Ālaya, be one with the great Soul, and that possessing it, Ālaya should so little avail them!

[108] Behold how, like the moon, reflected in the tranquil waves, Ālaya is reflected by the small and by the great, is mirrored in the tiniest atoms, yet fails to reach the heart of all. Alas, that so few men should profit by the gift, the priceless boon of learning truth, the right perception of existing things, the knowledge of the non-existent!

Saith the pupil:

[109] O Teacher, what shall I do to reach to Wisdom?

[110] O Wise One, what, to gain perfection?

[111] Search for the Paths. But, O *lanoo*, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. Learn above all to separate head-learning from Soul-Wisdom, the “Eye” from the “Heart” doctrine.

B. COMMENT.

Fragment I ended with the *lanoo*, the learner, seated beneath the Bodhi tree, “which is the perfection of all knowledge,” having become “the Master of Samādhi — the state of faultless vision.” The image is clearly that of the Buddha at his enlightenment. But enlightenment, like everything in this world, is a cyclical phenomenon. Having become enlightened in one cycle, the

lanoo who has become Master assumes his new role in another cycle of enlightenment, in which he instructs other candidates to approach the same goal, but in different terms.

Thus, verse 101 addresses the figure beneath the Bodhi tree as a “Teacher of Compassion” and asks him to point out the way to all the others who are still on the outer side of the door, trying to enter, waiting in the darkness of ignorance for him to open that gate. The allusion to the enlightenment of the Buddha is still being carried on. For after the Buddha attained enlightenment, he considered keeping what he had learned to himself and retiring from the world. But instead he arose from under the tree and went forth to teach the “Sweet Law,” that is, the dharma, to others.

The voice of the Candidates in verse 102 is that of those in ignorance and darkness, awaiting the light of knowledge. They ask the Teacher of Compassion to reveal the Doctrine of the Heart. A gloss on that term introduces the dichotomy that is the principal theme of this Fragment:

Gloss 1. The two schools of Buddha’s doctrine, the esoteric and the exoteric, are respectively called the “Heart” and the “Eye” Doctrine. Bodhidharma called them in China — from whence the names reached Tibet — the *tsungmen* (esoteric) and *kiaumen* (exoteric) school. The former is so named because it is the teaching which emanated from Gautama Buddha’s *heart*, whereas the “Eye” doctrine was the work of his head or brain. The Heart Doctrine is also called the “seal of truth” or the “true seal,” a symbol found on the heading of almost all esoteric works.

The Teacher replies in verse 103 by beginning the exposition of the esoteric Doctrine of the Heart. He mentions two Paths, three Perfections, and six Virtues. The two Paths are the subject of this Fragment; their identity is unfolded as we read through it. The Sanskrit term *pāramitā* is translated as either “perfection” or “virtue,” and there are several lists specifying various numbers of such perfections or virtues. In the third Fragment, one of the three Perfections is said to be “entire obliteration of all earthly concerns” (gloss 34 to verse 306). The six Pāramitā Virtues are treated at length also in the next Fragment (verses 198, 207-13). They are said in verse 103 to “transform the body into the Tree of Knowledge,” explained as follows:

Gloss 2. The “tree of knowledge” is a title given by the followers of the

Bodhidharma (Wisdom Religion) to those who have attained the height of mystic knowledge — adepts. Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika school, was called the “Dragon Tree,” dragon standing as a symbol of Wisdom and Knowledge. The tree is honored because it is under the Bodhi (wisdom) tree that Buddha received his birth and enlightenment, preached his first sermon and died.

Verse 106 refers to “the doctrine of two Paths in one.” This alludes to the fact that, however different they seem, the two Paths lead to the same goal. A gloss explains that “Secret Heart” refers to the esoteric Heart Doctrine:

Gloss 3. The “Secret Heart” is the esoteric doctrine.

This verse also implies that, as Wisdom is taught by the esoteric Heart Doctrine, so learning is taught by the exoteric Eye Doctrine. The Wisdom of the Heart Doctrine reveals a tale of woe perhaps for two reasons. First, exoterically, the Buddha’s teaching is that life in this world is woeful. Nothing has a stable core, everything is changing, and all is painful because greed, anger, and ignorance affect our perceptions of this world. It is only by blowing out the fire of our greed, anger, and ignorance that we can escape the world’s woes. Second, esoterically, we are called upon not to abandon our fellow beings in this woeful world, even when we can escape it ourselves — not to forsake them, but instead, even when we can enter Nirvāna (the state of having blown out the fires of passion), to remain in this woeful world to help others.

Ālaya, first mentioned in verse 107, is said in *The Secret Doctrine* (1:47) to be the same as anima mundi, the “soul of the world,” and *The Theosophical Glossary* says it is identical with ākāsha and mūlaprak ti: “it is the basis or root of all things.” The Sanskrit term means literally a “storehouse.” Ālaya is thus the Fullness, the Plenum, the infinite potential of all that is, was, will be, or might be. We are all one with it because we are realizations or expressions of it. And because we come from it, we share its unlimited potential of being and becoming. Ālaya, the whole, is reflected in every part of the universe. When we know that we and all else in the multifarious universe are rooted in Ālaya, we have a right perception of existing things and a knowledge of the source of all.

In verses 109-110, the pupil wants to know what to do. Like all

students, indeed like all of us, this pupil wants to be told simply and clearly the answer, to be given unambiguous directions. But the Teacher answers, as all true teachers must, that the pupils must search for themselves, find the Path themselves. All the Teacher can do is to give directions for the preliminary preparation. Those directions are to “be of clean heart” and to “learn to discern the real from the false ... the ever-fleeting from the everlasting ... Head-learning from Soul-Wisdom.” Those two directions are echoed by other guides to the Path.

Thus in “The Golden Stairs,” the first and third steps are very similar to “be of clean heart”: “Behold the truth before you: a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one’s co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the Teacher, a willing obedience to the behests of Truth, once we have placed our confidence in, and believe that Teacher to be in possession of it; a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science (*Gupta Vidyā*) depicts — these are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom.”

And in *At the Feet of the Master*, the first qualification for entering the Path is discrimination (in Sanskrit, *viveka*), which is the ability to “discern the real from the false” and in general to distinguish between alternatives. The second qualification is desirelessness or dispassion. The Sanskrit term for this qualification, *vairāgya*, means to be “without passion or attachment,” that is, “of clean heart.” In effect, then, the Teacher is telling the pupil to practice the first two qualifications for entering the Path. This is all any teacher can do — not teach the pupil knowledge, but only show the pupil how to learn.

C. MEDITATION.

1. T. S. Eliot wrote: “In my end is my beginning.” Meditate upon that sentence as a koan.

2. Robert Frost wrote a poem about a road that divided into two and about taking “the road less traveled by,” which made all the difference in his

life. Visualize a road that branches. Think about the dividing roads you have encountered in your own life, the choices made, and the roads untraveled.

3. Visualize a moon reflected in tranquil waves. What is the visual effect of the reflection in the waves? How many moons appear in them? How does that relate to the concept of Ālaya?

A. VERSES [112-122].

The next eleven verses introduce a series of vivid images, all relating to our need to establish contact between our personalities of this lifetime and our timeless Selves: a bird enclosed in a jar, a mirror gathering dust, a fool at the top of a high tower, and bread made from flour ground in a mill. They also continue the theme of head-learning and Soul-Wisdom, the Eye doctrine and the Heart doctrine, which appeared at the end of the last group of verses. The images are appropriate to that theme, for the Eye doctrine of head-learning pertains to the personality, whereas the Heart doctrine of Soul-Wisdom pertains to the timeless self within us.

[112] Yea, ignorance is like unto a closed and airless vessel; the soul a bird shut up within. It warbles not, nor can it stir a feather; but the songster mute and torpid sits, and of exhaustion dies.

[113] But even ignorance is better than head-learning with no Soul-Wisdom to illuminate and guide it.

[114] The seeds of Wisdom cannot sprout and grow in airless space. To live and reap experience the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul. Seek not those points in Māyā's realm; but soar beyond illusions, search the eternal and the changeless Sat, mistrusting fancy's false suggestions.

[115] For mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions. Seek, O beginner, to blend thy mind and Soul.

[116] Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses; they are false. But within thy body — the shrine of thy sensations — seek in the impersonal for the "Eternal Man"; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha.

[117] Shun praise, O devotee. Praise leads to self-delusion. Thy body

is not Self, thy Self is in itself without a body, and either praise or blame affects it not.

[118] Self-gratulation, O disciple, is like unto a lofty tower, up which a haughty fool has climbed. Thereon he sits in prideful solitude and unperceived by any but himself.

[119] False learning is rejected by the wise, and scattered to the winds by the Good Law. Its wheel revolves for all, the humble and the proud. The “Doctrine of the Eye” is for the crowd; the “Doctrine of the Heart” for the elect. The first repeat in pride, “Behold, I know,” the last, they who in humbleness have garnered, low confess, “Thus have I heard.”

[120] “Great Sifter” is the name of the “Heart Doctrine,” O disciple.

[121] The wheel of the Good Law moves swiftly on. It grinds by night and day. The worthless husks it drives from out the golden grain, the refuse from the flour. The hand of Karma guides the wheel; the revolutions mark the beatings of the Karmic heart.

[122] True knowledge is the flour, false learning is the husk. If thou wouldst eat the bread of Wisdom, thy flour thou hast to knead with *am ta’s* [immortality’s] clear waters. But if thou kneadest husks with Māyā’s dew, thou canst create but food for the black doves of death, the birds of birth, decay and sorrow.

B. COMMENT.

Verses 112-116 have as their theme a three-way contrast between ignorance, illusory information or “head-learning,” and true knowledge or “soul-wisdom.”

Soul-Wisdom is the gnosis, true knowledge, knowing which, as the Upanishad says, one need not know anything else. It is Self-knowledge, knowledge that we are the one Self, which is in fact everything that is. Only the truly wise have this gnosis; they are the Masters of the Wisdom.

Ignorance is lack of the gnosis (literally: *in-* “not” + *gnoscere* “to know”).

Head-learning or illusory information is having a store of facts without knowing what they mean. Today we live in what has been called an information

explosion, but the explosion is of facts, not wise knowledge. Oscar Wilde said that a cynic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. That is head-learning. It is mistaking illusion or fancy's false suggestions for real knowledge.

Of the three, Soul-Wisdom is obviously favored by *The Voice*. But ignorance is preferable to mere head-learning, because those who have the latter are likely to suppose they know something important and therefore to be unaware of their own lack of Soul-Wisdom. On the other hand, the truly ignorant will be aware of their lack of knowledge and thus have the potential to acquire Soul-Wisdom. The genuinely ignorant will be looking for the truth. Those who are learned only in the head will suppose they know and hence will be closed-minded.

This three-way contrast is like that of the three gunas (or qualities of matter), which are sattva (or harmony), rajas (or hectic activity), and tamas (or inertia). The gunas traditionally are evaluated, with tamas being the least desirable because it is hard to get a static body to move. Rajas may be disorganized movement, but it is at least movement that can be converted into harmony. Head-learning is tamasic. Ignorance is rajasic. Soul-Wisdom is sattvic.

A related fourfold classification says that there are four kinds of people: (1) those who know and know that they know — whom we should follow because they are in possession of sattvic Soul-Wisdom; (2) those who know but do not know that they know — whom we should awaken because they have a type of ignorance; (3) those who do not know and know that they do not know, whom we should teach because they have another type of ignorance; (4) those who do not know and do not know that they do not know, from whom we should flee because they have head-learning only and thus are a source of mischief.

The bird in the closed vessel of verse 112 is reminiscent of a Zen koan: There is a bird in a jar with only a pin-sized opening at the top. How do you get the bird out of the jar without harming the bird or breaking the jar? Zen koans have no logical answers because they are not logical puzzles. One answer to this koan is, "The bird is out of the jar." That is, the bird got out of the jar the same way it got into it — by words. Many of our problems are artificial

ones, created by the words we use. It is natural for the soul to come to wisdom, just as it is natural for a bird to fly free in the air.

Verse 114 mentions the “Diamond Soul,” that is, one who has soul-wisdom. A gloss explains:

Gloss 4. “Diamond Soul,” Vajrasattva, a title of the supreme Buddha, the Lord of all Mysteries, called Vajradhara and Ādi-Buddha.

Vajra means “diamond” or “thunderbolt” and, when used alone, refers to “enlightenment,” which is as sudden as lightning and as indestructible as the diamond. It is a term particularly associated with Tibetan Buddhism, one form of which is known as Vajrayāna, “the diamond vehicle.” Vajrasattva is literally “diamond harmonious nature” (*sattva* being the *guna* referred to above), which is the nature of the Buddha. Vajradhara is “He who holds the vajra.” Ādi-Buddha is the first, original, or primordial Buddha, a term for the Absolute.

The same verse mentions *sat*, glossed as follows:

Gloss 5. *Sat*, the one eternal and absolute Reality and Truth, all the rest being illusion.

Sat is the present participle of the Sanskrit verb for “to be,” hence “being.” It is used, however, as a term for the Absolute, the nature of which is, as HPB calls it in *The Secret Doctrine*, “be-ness,” the ultimate essence of what is. It is what Soul-Wisdom is about.

Verse 115 contains the famous metaphor: “mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects.” HPB did not invent the metaphor, but identifies her source for it in a gloss:

Gloss 6. From *Shin-Sieu’s* doctrine, who teaches that the human mind is like a mirror which attracts and reflects every atom of dust, and has to be, like that mirror, watched over and dusted every day. *Shin-Sieu* was the sixth Patriarch of North China who taught the esoteric doctrine of Bodhidharma.

The metaphor is universal, being used also, for example, by St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (13.11): “For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” The “glass” in that passage is a looking-glass, that is, a mirror. The idea, which is basically the same as that in *The Voice*, is that what

we know is only a reflection of reality, subject to the distortions of an ancient mirror or the dust that gathers upon it. The dust is our accumulated experience of illusory head-learning, which obscures our vision of reality.

The reference in verse 115 to mind and Soul suggests another triplicity that matches the one treated centrally in these passages: namely, body, mind, and soul. The body is ignorance; the mind is head-learning, and the soul is Soul-Wisdom. We have all three within ourselves, and to be whole (holy or enlightened), we must blend them.

Verse 116 advises us to shun the ignorance (of the body) and the illusion (of head-learning) but, being in the body, to seek in the impersonal aspect of ourselves the eternal Buddha nature, that is, the persisting reincarnating self, which becomes enlightened through a conscious union with the highest reality. Two glosses comment on these matters:

Gloss 7. The reincarnating Ego is called by the Northern Buddhists the “true man,” who becomes, in union with his Higher Self, a Buddha.

Gloss 8. “Buddha” means “Enlightened.”

Verses 117-119 are cautions against pride, the special vice of head-learning. The image in verse 118 of a tower to whose top a fool has climbed may suggest the picture on the Tarot card of the Tower, which shows it collapsing and a figure, a fool perhaps, falling from its top.

The reference in verse 119 to the “Doctrine of the Eye” and the “Doctrine of the Heart” relates those to, respectively, head-learning and Heart-Wisdom, and gloss 9 on the former refers back to the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teachings:

Gloss 9. [See gloss 1 on verse 102, p. 2] The *exoteric* Buddhism of the masses.

The following gloss on the confession of those who follow the esoteric Doctrine of the Heart, “thus have I heard,” emphasizes the caution against pride and self-aggrandizement:

Gloss 10. The usual formula that precedes the Buddhist scriptures, meaning that that which follows is what has been recorded by direct and oral tradition from Buddha and the Arhats.

This confessional formula is not an appeal to arbitrary authority, but a disclaimer of personal authority. It says, as HPB did herself repeatedly in her writing, “I have not made this up, but rather it is what I have learned from those who know more than I do.”

Verses 120-122 introduce a new metaphor, that of the mill which grinds the flour from which bread is made. The mill is the “good Law” or the “Heart Doctrine,” that is, the esoteric teachings. It is operated by the hand of karma, that is, by the results of our own past actions. The grain which it grinds is human experience. The husks or refuse it separates out is that part of our life’s experience that is not eternally useful — all that is shadowy, petty, narrow, and limited in our lives, and especially false learning or head-learning. The flour that the mill produces is true knowledge, gnosis, self-discovery. If we try to combine that flour of true knowledge with Māyā’s dew (the illusions of this world, head-learning), the result will not endure, being fit only as food for the doves of death. But if we mix it with the waters of am ta (which HPB notes means “immortality,” or what survives an incarnation), the bread that rises is Wisdom, which feeds the soul.

These three verses are saying that we come to the esoteric teachings by our own self-created karma. If we submit ourselves to those teachings, they will separate what is transitory and worthless in us from what is of enduring value, which can be absorbed into our permanent reincarnating Self, and that is indeed the Bread of Life.

C. MEDITATION.

These verses contain a number of striking and dramatic images. Take one of these images and visualize it clearly. See every detail of the picture and of the action involved with the picture. Hold it firmly in mind. Let it speak to you.

- A bird shut into an airless vessel, from which it must escape.
- A mirror gathering dust, which is then brushed away by gentle breezes.
- A high tower to the top of which a haughty fool has climbed, where he sits alone.
- A mill grinding grain into flour, which is mixed with sweet water to make bread.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SAUNDY KUMARIE

In the Light of Theosophy

[This article appeared in the July 2013 issue of The Theosophical Movement. For more articles published in this excellent magazine follow this link:

http://www.ultindia.org/previous_issues.html]

According to World Health Organization figures, more than a million people commit suicide each year worldwide. There is a rising trend in youth suicide. Recently, a young actress of Indian cinema committed suicide because life seemed hopeless, as she was depressed over her career and her love life, making people wonder if suicide was the only remedy for pain.

If death obliterates pain, it also obliterates hope. If she had remembered to look over the hill she would have seen the rising sun just waiting to break through the dark clouds. It is only when things cannot get any worse that they start getting better. She forgot that time is a great healer, and if given a chance, it would work a great wonder. "They say there is no greater sin than that of suicide because you are kicking god's gift of life in the face and proving you are not worth it. If you believe in afterlife and rebirth, books on the subject suggest that people who quit life voluntarily without learning their life lessons are bound to be born to such lives again and again till the lesson is learnt. Life is not always easy and it is the duty of parents to ground their children and instill values that will help them deal with the tougher moments. And, it is our duty to ourselves that we learn to accept the brickbats with the bouquets, that we learn to deal with difficulties just as we learn to enjoy the benefits of life and living. There is no greater cowardice than enjoying your spot in the sun and quitting the stage the moment life gets a little rough," writes Vinita Dawra Nangia.

Some of the reasons for increase in suicide rates are breakdown in traditional family system, financial insecurity and unemployment — with the young, it is pressure to perform, and to prove themselves repeatedly. Nothing is worth ending your life for, and hence a person contemplating suicide would do well to remember that "when the going gets tough, the tough get going." Try

to think of those who are less fortunate than you. "Look at life in its entirety and understand the smallness of your present depression. Never take a drastic step in the darkest moment. Things will look better soon," advises Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life!* [*SundayTimes of India*], June 16, 2013.)

It is true that there has been unprecedented increase in the number of people committing suicide and some of them for trifling reasons. True and lasting happiness does not arise from money, amenities and luxuries of life, is the lesson which is generally learnt the hard way. Weakening family bonds and deteriorating human relationships wherein we are not sensitive to the needs and sorrows of another human being, are also to be blamed for increasing number of suicides. Modern man is too busy and has no time to listen to the problems of another and give him solace.

Ultimately, what we need is the right philosophy that by ending our life, we are trying to run away from a person or the situation in which we are placed under Karma, in this life. We may seem to succeed in escaping, but not forever. The fact is that even the most unbearable and painful situation we are placed in has come to us under Karma, and only we are responsible for it. All we need to do is to try and learn the necessary lesson, if we are unable to change it. In any of our next births we will be once again placed in that same situation from which we tried to escape by committing suicide, till we have learnt to handle that situation and learnt the lesson. Hence the advice is, "Accept the woes of birth." "Life is better than death, for death again disappoints the Self."

Theosophy also teaches that a person committing suicide finds himself in the astral atmosphere only partly dead, only minus the physical body. Such an entity moves around in the astral atmosphere, near the earth, wanting to satisfy certain desires but unable to do so in the absence of the body and the consequent risk of generating terrible karma by trying to satisfy them through some living body. If the person committed suicide at the age of thirty and his natural life term was seventy then the astral entity will remain in the astral atmosphere for next forty years, only after that there is final separation of the Ego from the lower principles.

How could values degenerate if God is omnipresent? When people see evil all around, they wonder if God really exists, and if he does, why does

he not do anything to make things better. On the other hand, there are those who believe that God is omnipresent — present in every creature, and every particle. If God is everywhere, why are things going from bad to worse? Why should anyone pray? If we argue that God has given free will and all that is evil is the result of human failings, then what purpose is served by God's omnipresence? The very act of prayer is contrary to belief in God's omnipresence. If God is omnipresent why does he need to send messengers to mankind at different points in history in order to rid humanity of evils? If God is present everywhere in the world there should be no need to undergo penance in order to attain to *moksha* or liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

The belief in the omnipresence of God is most likely an erroneous extension of God's omnipotence. Since God is Almighty, the faithful believe that He is also present everywhere all the time. But if a person or thing is present somewhere, the qualities of that person or thing can be experienced there. For example, a jovial person spreads cheer, a kind person spreads kindness. Likewise, if God were present everywhere and in everyone, we should be experiencing His virtues and powers all the time. If God were omnipresent, the world would not witness any moral or spiritual degradation that would necessitate

His intervention. Mistaken beliefs, including that of an omnipresent God, are the result of human ignorance. Those who truly love God can experience His company everywhere and at all times. His powers and virtues are boundless but for that reason He need not be omnipresent. (*Purity*, June 2013.)

In Theosophy God is described as an omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable Principle. Perhaps, to admit that God is not omnipresent is to accept that God is finite — probably a person sitting on a golden or lotus throne, on the outskirts of a planetary chain or a solar system. God, in Theosophy, is symbolized by Absolute Abstract Space. Space is really the container of everything — itself limitless, without beginning or an end. It remains unchanged by presence or absence of objects contained within it. Coming into existence of the Solar systems and Galaxies or their destruction has no effect on Space. There are two aspects of One Reality or God: transcendental and immanent. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, "I created this

whole universe with a single portion of myself and yet remain separate,” alluding to His transcendental aspect. The Eighth Chapter of the *Gita* is entitled, “Devotion to the Omnipresent Spirit named as Om.” This Omnipresent Spirit refers to *Atman* or Spirit or Life or Consciousness which pervades and animates all worlds and beings.

The Spirit or the Self shines in all but it does not shine forth equally in all. It is the Great or Eternal Spectator mentioned in the Thirteenth Chapter of the *Gita*, which has been observing the drama of evolution. *Atma*, the One Life, mirrored in *Buddhi*, or *Atma-Buddhi* monad, is the *Eternal Spectator*. The *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* triad is the *Eternal Pilgrim*, which is the experienter, the sufferer, the enjoyer who learnt in the mineral and grew in the vegetable and moved in the animal, and acts, feels, wills and thinks in the human. The Spirit in man has nothing to learn, and it does not evolve, but from it comes the power to create, to preserve, to destroy and to regenerate. The God in us, though omnipotent on its own plane, is quite helpless on our plane, till it is reflected in or assimilated by *Manas* or Mind. Mind is dual: (1) When involved in desires and passions, it is *kama-manas*, making man an animal-man, leading to degeneration of values. (2) When mind turns to the God within, the divine nature, it makes man divine, and then a human being is able to manifest all the virtues of kindness, compassion, fearlessness, as also, other “god-like” qualities.

H. P. B. writes: “Eastern wisdom teaches that spirit has to pass through the ordeal of incarnation and life, and be baptized with matter before it can reach experience and knowledge. After which only it receives the baptism of soul, self-consciousness, and may return to its original condition of a god, *plus* experience, ending with omniscience,” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 26*, p. 8). Each one of us is *essentially* and *potentially* divine, which we must actualize.

When we are able to transcend the self-identifying attachment to not only family and loved ones, but also to physical form, ideas, desires, emotions, and overcome all sense of separateness, we reach the realization that “I am verily the Brahman,” while we are in the body. The *Avatars* and messengers come to this world, again and again, to remind us of the presence of the divinity within us.

Silence

by Alvin Ochanda – Kenya

[This article was a talk by Alvin Ochanda, at the Nairobi Lodge in Kenya, on July 24, 2013. Here it has been edited for style and coherence.]

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, [Keep silent for five minutes.]



That has been some silence. But have we really been silent? We were not talking, no one made a sound, and scientifically silence is the absence of sound, or relatively very low vibrations of sound. So, were we really silent? Superficially, yes, but when we look at that silence more closely, we realize that there was a lot going on in and outside us, so much so that what we have just experienced as silence was not silence in a deep sense. So what was going on? What is the purpose of noise on the outside?

Maybe, in our minds, we traveled home to attend to some chore, or maybe we even traveled great distances to the other side of this earth. Looking into someone's eyes immediately starts a conversation, talking without making a sound. Is that what silence is?

Silence can at times be more disturbing than noise, probably even irritating or scary, because it reveals the complicated mechanisms of our thought patterns. Only through silence are we able to realize how our mind jumps from one thought to another, not being able to settle on one thought for a long period of time. That jumping about reveals the restlessness of the mind. It brings to surface our weakness in concentration. Therefore silence is a good thing because it is the great gate through which we are able to see our true behavior of mind, and thereby to hold the mind still so that it's able to dwell on one thought for a longer while, whatever other thoughts may arise. Mental stillness gives us power because, when we are able to dwell on one thought for a long time, then we are able to understand completely the subject of that thought, thoroughly covering the subject of the thought and thereby mastering it. This is the quality of concentration.

Fear of silence results when the mind gives rise to fearful thoughts brought about by uncertainty or unfamiliarity with silence. Basically, that is fear of the unknown. But silence is the source from which everything springs forth, the beginning of existence and awareness.

Most people today suffer unconsciously from a fear of silence, common symptoms of which are the following: when someone enters a house, immediately switching on a TV or radio; humming or singing when alone; or if young people lose their ear phones, having a mild panic attack — so grave is this disorder that they will spend all the money they left to buy a new pair of earphones. Another symptom is feeling so uneasy in a crowd of people that

you say something that embarrasses you. This phobia gives rise to many sorrows; to transcend this fear, we have to understand that there is no place in this world that is empty or silent or lonely. Presumably in a world of six billion people, it is very hard to find such a place. But in trying to find it, you just have to retreat back into yourself, into your thoughts.

Trying to evade the fear of silence only postpones the fear. You must face the silence head on and start being mindful and appreciative of the silence. Listen to the quiet, and grow accustomed to the silence, bit by bit. because silence is everywhere, in the spaces between the noises, before and after a piece of music. It is the canvas for the painting of life. Mindfulness (living in the present) tames the mind and makes it able to face the silence in peace and calm, without giving rise to doubt or to fearful and weird thoughts.

In 1951, a musical artist and composer, by the name of John Cage, wanted to experience complete silence. He feared for the future of music, thinking that with silence there would be an end to music. To experience complete silence, engineers created a room in which there was no sound, called an anechoic chamber (meaning without echo). An anechoic chamber is a room designed in such a way that the walls, ceiling, and floor absorb all sounds made in the room, rather than reflecting them as echoes. Such a chamber is also externally sound-proofed. So, Cage entered the chamber expecting to experience complete silence. But to his shock that was not what he experienced. He later wrote, "I heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge, he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation." Cage had gone to a place where he expected total silence, and yet heard sound. Cage concluded: "Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music."

Cage's experience of the impossibility of silence led to his concluding that there is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. Sounds occur whether intended or not. And so the art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion is called music. The purpose of music is to sober and quiet the mind, thus rendering it susceptible to divine influences.

We therefore realize that silence is hard to find, if you are searching or looking in the wrong places, especially with all the electronic devices and machines we have, roaring and making all forms of sounds. Have you ever heard a song that keeps ringing in your mind over and over again. Such noise occupies our minds and make silence hard to reach, But the silence is inherently always there. We have to search for silence in the right places and make time to enjoy it every day. Everyone instinctively knows that deep inside each one of us there is a beautiful realm that relaxes, revitalizes, and welcomes us with open arms to dwell in the peace within, untouchable. That is the place to search for the silence we so much long for.

As Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said, "In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness. Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth."

It is good to be silent. When we are at the feet of the master, we are advised to keep silent, we should have no desire to speak. And if we must speak, to speak little. It is best to say nothing, unless what is to be said is true, kind, and helpful. The qualifications for chelaship are said to be — to know, to dare, to will, and to be silent. To be silent is the hardest of them all. We should always think well before speaking. It is difficult to keep quiet, especially when we learn something new, or with great enthusiasm. Then words will vex us and will seem to want to leave our mouths. But practice and time give us strength to overcome that feeling. Silence will help to prevent us from displaying our stupidity in public. Others may even think we are wise, even though silence may not be a mark of wisdom. Silence is a giver, and noise is a taker. So always opt for silence. An old adage says, "Empty vessels make the most noise."

The universal symbol for silence is placing the index finger in front of closed lips. This gesture can be used to demand silence without raising one's voice. The rose, sometimes depicted clasped by or on top of closed lips, is another well-recognized symbol of silence.

We should strive for silence. No one will hand us silence on a silver platter. We must find our own silence and hold on to it, because silence is golden, and like all good things, it does not come easy. The sweetest and most

nutritious fruits may come from thorny trees. So it is that silence may not look appealing at first. It is often associated with boredom, sleep, and loneliness. But after experiencing it, we will not be able to hold ourselves back from getting more and more of it. For example, we may decide to observe a silent fast. That is, we will fast from talking for a day or two or even a week, during which we may meet with so much resistance or even hostility that we will be shocked at how so few people can stand silence. People will keep asking us, are you OK, is everything all right, are you sure you're not sick, and so on and so forth. Some may even feel offended by our silence and may even press us to make us speak.

Silence is the great gateway to the self; through it one may be able to reach depths of intuition. And for such a great reward no one should abide any interruption in the process. Take silence seriously. A right to silence has been incorporated into the basic laws of almost all the countries in the world in order to protect us against a charge of perjury (lying under oath). But again this raises a question: Does being silent make you not a liar? Of course not, because when the truth is replaced by silence, then that silence is a lie. As Robert Louis Stevenson put it in *Virginibus Puerisque*, "The cruelest lies are often told in silence." When a wrong is committed, it is wrong not to speak it out against it. In the "Golden Stairs" we are advised to make "a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked."

Silence is a healer. It should be a hushed, peaceful silence. Let any depressing thoughts come to the surface and, after a thorough examination of the thoughts, let them go, knowing that through Mother Nature all will be well and that nothing is impossible.

Listening is also a kind of silence that will relieve the suffering of another person, also known as compassionate listening. You listen with only one purpose: to let the other person pour out his or her heart. Even if they say things that are full of wrong perceptions or bitterness, you are still capable of continuing to listen with compassion. Such listening gives the other person a chance to suffer less. If you want to help the other person to correct their perception, you wait for another time. At that moment, you don't interrupt. You don't argue. If you do, the other person loses their chance. You just listen with compassion and help the other to suffer less. Time spent like this results in transformation and healing.

All the great teachers advocated silence: Orpheus, Pythagoras, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Apollonius of Tyana, Ammonius Saccas. The Pythagorean students who went to his school in Crotona were required to burn all their belongings and give away all their money. Then they stayed for three to five years in silence, immersed in deep study.

After a period of profound and sustained silence, people are able to break through in great ways. For example, Nelson Mandela, imprisoned in 1964, was able to experience prolonged silence until he was released in 1990. After his release, he plunged himself wholeheartedly into his life's work, striving to attain the goals he had set out almost four decades earlier. He is an icon of Black history.

All the great teachers had their moments of silence. Gautama Buddha sat under the Bodhi or pipal (fig) tree, where he vowed never to arise until he had found the Truth. Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness. Mother Teresa said, "In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence."

Identifying the Silence: Most of us have not made any noise for a very long time, but now we are going to make noise, not really noise but a sound for two seconds. It does not have to be loud but at least make a sound, any sound of your choice that you feel most comfortable with will do, Make it as loud as you feel comfortable doing. If you want to shout, fine; you are allowed to do so. For example, I will make the sound WAAAA! So at the count of three, let us all make some such noise in unison. O.K., 1, 2, 3 ...
WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

(After silence for a few seconds:) That was good. Let's do it again. (Repeat the noise.) Right there is the silence we are looking for. You may have noticed immediately at the end of the noise, there was a silence. Just before the mind starts to churn out more thoughts, a profound silence lasted for almost a second. At that moment, you could not tell what was happening, because you were stuck in a kind of limbo, a silence that you temporarily got lost in. You could not measure the moment of that silence. You could not differentiate between yourself and the silence. You could not define your

physical location. But you were powerful at that very moment. That is the silence we are looking for. We have just tasted what silence is.

There is a silence when you have been asked a question to which you have no answer. There is a silence when you are told something so honest that you need a few minutes to digest it. There is a silence after a door closes and you are all alone in a house. These are very small, temporary moments in which we are able to experience real silence. Sometimes we let the silence slip away, without noticing it, but we can capture such small exquisite moments if we pay a little more attention to their occurrences. Nature will give us a glimpse into the eternal by various hints. For example, when the last drop of water falls from a tap into a bucket, there is a silence. With practice we can pause and prolong that silence for a deep experience. Silence is not the absence of something; it is the presence of everything.

Now that we have a vague idea of the type of silence we are looking for, join me in a little exercise to try to experience the basic wholesome silence. (1) Sit comfortably in an upright position. (2) Gently close your eyes. (3) Observe the silence of your physical body. We are not talking and the body is not moving. (Spend 5 minutes doing this.) (4) As we observe the silence of the physical, we are not talking and the body is not moving; let us observe the silence of our emotions, feeling nothing. (Spend 5 minutes doing this.) (5) Let us observe the silence of the mind, placing our full attention on the breath, naturally going in and out. (Spend 5 minutes doing this.) Gradually return to your usual awareness of the world around you.

A few quotations on Being Silent

“Be silent or let thy words be worth more than silence.” — Pythagoras

“My friend, I am not what I seem. Seeming is but a garment I wear — a care-woven garment that protects me from thy questionings and thee from my negligence. The “I” in me, my friend, dwells in the house of silence, and therein it shall remain forever more, unperceived, unapproachable.” — Kahlil Gibran

“Make peace with silence, and remind yourself that it is in this space that you’ll come to remember your spirit. When you’re able to transcend an aversion to silence, you’ll also transcend many other miseries. And it is in this silence that the remembrance of God will be activated.” — Wayne W. Dyer

“And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” — Jesus in Matthew 15:10



Loving kindness

The Yoga of Compassion

by Ramu Sudarsan – India

[This talk was given during 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference held in August 2013 in New York. The theme title of the conference was “How to Awaken Compassion? - H. P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine”]

Yoga means attuning, literally. Attuning can be to any state of being. Fundamentally, each one of us is a being and there is a state of being. *Yoga of Compassion* is attuning to a compassionate state-of-being.

What is Compassion?

Compassion is keen awareness of, and sensitivity to, the suffering one witnesses coupled with a deep yearning to see it relieved. Compassion literally means “to suffer with,” which implies a basic mutuality in the experience of suffering. Compassion is loving kindness, expressed in the context of suffering.

Our attempts to awaken compassion have to be through sensitizing people to the suffering of others.

Buddha means the ‘awakened one’. He was awakened to compassion when he was sensitized to the suffering he witnessed.

“Compassion is not a relationship between the giver and the recipient. It's a relationship between equals. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.” — [Pema Chödrön](#)

Compassion is not mere display of kindness or sympathy to someone in distress. It calls for complete identification with the suffering experienced by another and relieving that suffering as a means of relieving the agony experienced by himself. (Not possible without the realization of oneness of life.)

Suffering & Compassion - A New (?) Theosophical Perspective:

Suffering is part of the ‘*unexplained laws of Nature*’ notwithstanding the many sources of pleasure, joy and beauty, which are also not fully

understood. Compassion is one of the '*powers latent in man*' that alleviates suffering. Theosophy teaches us that the cosmos is guided by justice and love. There are different kinds of love such as patriotic love, filial love, conjugal love, etc. One type of love is kindness expressed as compassion to relieve suffering.

Genuine compassion often pours out only from a heart that has suffered. The heart that is pained at the suffering of others is more creative to alleviate suffering effectively than a mind that is distressed at the sight of suffering.

Does suffering sensitize people to be compassionate?

Annie Besant was moved to deep compassion by the terrible plight of the girls toiling in the match industry perhaps because she suffered so much through her marriage and childcare. Her heart's suffering could be a catalyst for her becoming a compassionate person. It is suffering caused by sheer injustice by man against man that made people like Annie Besant, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King take up compassionate causes.

The overwhelming suffering of humanity is caused by intolerance, lack of compassion, hatred, prejudice, anger, fear, greed, cravings for gratifying desires, religious superstitions, blind materialistic pursuits, selfishness, and violent tendencies. Illusions about nature of existence and ignorance of the fundamental truths that govern life, and all the relationships life entails. Hence the Theosophist alleviates suffering as well as strives to remove the root causes of suffering.

Suffering is a Truth but Compassion is a greater Truth.

The Buddhist philosophy of the truth of suffering is a profound but only a partial or lesser truth but compassion as the universal remedy of suffering is the greater truth. Hunger is a truth but food that quenches hunger is a greater truth. Higher truth prevails over lower truth.

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.” “Only the development of compassion and understanding for others can bring us the tranquillity and happiness we all seek.” — Dalai Lama

XIV

Compassion ennobles the life of all.

Compassion begins at home:

I have to be in a state of compassion to be able to be compassionate. This implies compassion to my own condition, which is marked by the facts that I am imperfect, my knowledge is partial, I am a partaker of the collective suffering and of the predicaments of all beings, suffering will continue to educate me in my evolutionary process, I am still evolving and I will probably continue to evolve eternally, which may include some struggle based suffering.

Suffering & Compassion. Another New Theosophical Perspective.

H. P. Blavatsky said that 'To be true, religion and philosophy must offer the solution of every problem.' 'But Religion and philosophy are as far from the solution as they ever were' ... but 'to these there must be somewhere a consistent solution.' I dare to complete what H. P. B. left a bit incomplete and say that the possible '*consistent solution*' referred by H. P. B. may well be Compassion.

The Compassionate Theosophist:

The true Theosophist is a Compassionate Yogi. The Theosophist earnestly allows constant unfolding of the power of compassion 'latent in him'. The Theosophist preaches only what he practices and knows that only by his compassionate living can he awaken compassion in others. "The simplest acts of kindness (or compassion) are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer." — Mahatma Gandhi.

A Theosophist is a compassionate spiritualist.

Spirituality has to do with level of consciousness. And there are markers or signatures of higher consciousness. 'Compassion is the signature of Higher Consciousness. Great sages have felt compassionate for even the suffering due to the entanglement of the spirit in matter or the spiritual being entangled in materialism, which ultimately is the illusion of mistaking the phenomenal world for Reality. "It is compassion, the most gracious of virtues, which moves the world." — Thiruvalluvar, (Tamil Poet of 1 AD and author of Tirukkural) "The one who is without loving kindness is just a bundle of bones clad in skin" *ibid*.

Importance of Compassion in Hinduism:

Two of the qualitative names of the Hindu God is Dayasagar & Karunasagar. Sagar means Ocean. Daya and Karuna also imply compassion, kindness, pity, mercy, sympathy, philanthropy. I can't think of better names for the newborns now. These names are gender neutral. They are even species neutral and one's pet animal can also be named Daya or Karuna. The two names, Daya and Karuna, by themselves, are beautiful names. (Many erroneously question how can there be so many gods in Hinduism. There are not many gods but only names that signify certain qualities of godhood. Like every one of us has official name and then pet name, e-mail name, and descriptions by our roles such as dad or mom, boss or executive, president of a Lodge, brother, son etc)

Creativity – A Marker of Compassionate state of being:

Compassionate state is marked by a raised level of consciousness when one is deeply moved by suffering. In that state of compassion filled consciousness, a jet of creative goodness springs from oneself. Valmiki, Vyasa, Shakespeare, probably Homer too are examples of such creativity. These authors gave us masterpieces of creativity, poignantly moved by the fundamental human predicaments and the endurance tests, the pain and suffering in life, their characters had to go through. Ultimately, it is creativity that solves real human problems and alleviates suffering and adds joy to life.

Universal Compassion:

“Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.” — Albert Schweitzer. “The assumption that animals are without rights, and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance, is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity. Universal compassion is the only guarantee of morality.” — Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Basis of Morality*. “For as long as man continues to be the ruthless destroyer of lower living beings, he will never know health or peace. For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other.” — Pythagoras

Compassion has no exception:

In suffering 'there are no others'. Suffering of every living being is my suffering. Compassion to all without exception is the universal religion that is

the basis of all true religions and even sound economic policies. “We must learn to regard people less in the light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.” — [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#)

“Samatvam Yoga Uchyatte” — ‘Sameness’ is a superior Yoga (Bhagavad Gita). I am emboldened to say that the ‘right understanding’ or the ‘right knowledge’ mentioned in the various scriptures means non-discrimination and oneness. Discrimination is dangerous for the practice of the yoga of compassion because when we compare and discriminate, we get spun off from the yogic path of compassion. A superior Yoga is the capability to consider everything as ‘the same’ — in the sense of each and every entity of men and materials around as ‘being a bit of Brahman — the Primordial energy’. In Chapter 5/19 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, being established in ‘sameness’ and equanimity, is recommended for flawless in yogic action. The Spirit of oneness is the foundation of genuine compassionate actions.

We are naturally compassionate but we (artificially) suppress it.

Compassion is our basic and first instinct. All mammals, the Dalai Lama says, practice a basic compassion that stems from the mother-infant bond. We humans thus have, by nature, a sense of love and affection. We are even hardwired to be compassionate but then some other inputs short circuit it. Compassion is probably encoded in our genes with provision for more positive mutation.

Our natural instinct to be compassionate is impeded by the analytical intellect of our conditioned brain and its thoughts. Consciousness is our essential quality and compassion is its innate faculty. But other super-imposed faculties supersede this innate faculty of compassion. In the awareness of this conditioning, there is the possibility of transcending the limitations and awakening of compassion. Egotism is a strong impediment to the practicing of the Yoga of Compassion.

Why is Compassion at a low level?

Why haven't the teachings of sages, saints, philosophers and humanists lifted our individual and collective consciousness to the desired level of compassion? Why is there such stark absence of sensitivity? Why are we benumbed? Why is human compassion in sleep mode? Even when compassion is seen, it is an occasional experience, more as a relief from a life

dominated by conflict. “It’s a little embarrassing that after 45 years of research and study, the best advice I can give people, is to be a little kinder to each other.” — Aldous Huxley People are enthusiastic about bringing about unity amongst various groups of students of Theosophy. But I say let us diagnose the causes of disunity first. “The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself.” Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Law and its criminal justice system, religious moralities, nationalism and its so-called patriotism, The United Nations and its so-called peace keeping force are poor substitutes for any kind of efforts to awakening of compassion in the human beings to solve human problems. Methods other than awakening of compassion are bound to be more knotty.

Countries like America spend huge amount of precious resources in rapidly increasing security systems, crime detection and criminal justice system and also on life-style related health abuses. If the leadership ponders on education at formative years, on universal values such as compassionate living, and modest life style instead of indulgence, there is scope for preventing the unnecessary spending of resources and they can be used towards more productive causes. Parents, teachers and caregivers should set an example for modest lifestyle and compassionate living. President Obama said, while commenting on a recent man-made tragedy due to an act of violence, “*we should ask ourselves if we’re doing all we can to widen the circle of compassion in our own communities.*”

But he has a tough job, if he really meant what he said. A society that promotes indulgence, gratification and too much competitiveness and that is grounded on exploitation and the ideas such as survival of the fittest, which means marginalization or even annihilation of the less fit, is highly unlikely to be sensitive to suffering of fellow human beings and show compassion and hence one should not but expect social tension and increasing acts of cruelty, violence and galloping crime rates. Economic wealth created without the parallel nurturing of values such as compassion, will only lead to envy, social tension and violent crimes. Many think that tougher laws will take care of such ills, not to speak of the easy availability of guns. It is surprising that interconnectedness and compassionate living is hardly taught to children and the youth; and all efforts here are towards competitive living and material

success. And yet people complain about growing conflict and violence. Education is designed to make 'people think that only intellect counts: knowing how to solve problems, knowing how to get by, knowing how to identify an advantage and seize it. But the functions of intellect are insufficient without love, friendship, compassion, and empathy.'

Ego dampens true Compassion.

The intellect is a tool of the ego and looks at everything from the point of 'What is in it for me?' One cause for lack of compassion is we are conditioned to judge, evaluate and ask 'what is in it for me'? Can we transcend that psychological compulsion so that compassion can flow unhindered? "What is in the intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and there it stops" said Swami Vivekananda. "If it is not tempered by compassion, and empathy, reason can lead men and women into a moral void." — [Karen Armstrong](#). One human face of the ego is selfishness. This demon called the ego lacks any capacity for empathy, compassion, generosity or love; and, worst of all, will *never* ever acknowledge that which is sacred. Awakening compassion willy-nilly requires sublimation of the ego. But you do not try to restrict your ego in order to experience our true compassionate self; we experience our true compassionate self first, and that is what liberates us from identification with the ego. When the light (of oneness of being) comes, darkness (of absence of compassion) disappears.

Why is compassion not a reality?

Because compassion as we know, is not rooted in the Ultimate Truth which is oneness of 'beingness'. The root cause of absence of compassion as the root cause of most human predicaments is ignorance, ignorance of fundamental truths of life.

The Yoga of Compassion has to be rooted in the Yoga of Oneness of being.

No doubt compassion is the highest wisdom, but to be actualised and sustainable, it has to be rooted in the realization of the truth of oneness of being. Attuning to 'oneness of being' is the ultimate Yoga. *True Theosophist is a Compassionate Yogi*. True yogi, more so the practitioner of yoga of compassion, is one who does not suffer from a sense of separateness; nor, more importantly, can cause such a suffering, i.e. will not create a sense of

separation or division in others too. In his yogic state of oneness of being, the collective human predicament is his and all sufferings form part of the yogi's duty or dharma to understand and alleviate. In that sense Christ was a true yogi, Buddha was a true yogi. And they were compassion personified. "The 'beingness' is the same in all." said Ramana Maharshi, one of the greatest practitioners of Advaita (non-dualism). Every being has an experience of "I am" and that is the same in all. I am this and you are that (identity) is a superimposition that appears to give rise to separateness. The illusion of sense of separateness and wholesome compassion cannot coexist. Compassion is communion of spirit with spirit, and spirit being the same in all beings, oneness of being is automatically implied. In other words, compassion, to be true, has to be rooted in the spirit of oneness. Compassion cannot be generated, taught, awakened or practiced in isolation. Compassion is the automatic outcome of the realization of oneness of being, like happiness is an automatic outcome of right living and not by pursuing it as a separate goal. Many may ask 'How to Awaken Compassion'. But 'how' implies a process which works mostly for changing something that is made up of matter. In the spiritual context, it is realization rather than processes that bring about fundamental transformation.

How to Awaken Compassion or create a compassionate state?

Children and youth should be encouraged and helped to spend more to time in situations where compassionate acts take place and to associate with compassionate people. "Those who unlock your compassion are those to whom you've been assigned." — [Mike Murdock](#). An affluent, lavish and protected life of indulgence and merrymaking, not sensitized to some suffering, is an unlikely source of compassion. "One should be mindful of the misery in the universe in general and of all living beings in particular. Be mindful and aware of it; feel it! By feeling it, you will develop loving-kindness and compassion for all sentient beings, and to the extent that compassion unfolds within you, your delusion of self will decrease. These two qualities of compassion and loving-kindness in a person indicate the he is beginning to develop spiritually. Perhaps, at first, he will show them in small ways but later he will embrace the whole universe. The powers of compassion and wisdom are much stronger than the powers of ignorance and hatred. This being so, we should fill our minds with compassion, loving-kindness and wisdom and radiate

these to all living beings together with a strong wish for their happiness. Never forget to send out the force of loving-kindness to all sentient beings.” — Samdhong Rinpoche. Group Meditation has the ability to foster a view that all beings are interconnected.

For the future to be marked by peace, harmony, freedom and joy, all our efforts, especially in the field of education in the formative years, but not just in the school but by exemplifying compassionate living at home too, should be towards awakening compassion that is in all of us but made dormant in varying degrees.

Suffering is a Truth. That suffering can be and must be alleviated, is a greater Truth. That Compassion alleviates suffering is a much greater Truth. Oneness of being awakens Compassion is the greatest and the most fundamental Truth. Wake up to these Truths. There is no Dharma higher than these Truths.



Why Not Study What H. P. B. Taught?

by Daniel Caldwell – USA

H. P. Blavatsky (1831-1891) was the first person in modern times to claim contact with the Theosophical Adepts, especially the Masters Morya and Koot Hoomi. She affirmed that in her writings she was giving out the teachings of the Adept Brotherhood.

In 1877 in Volume I of *Isis Unveiled*, Madame Blavatsky told her readers about these Adepts and her role in giving out the fundamentals of the Esoteric Science:

“... we came into contact with certain men, endowed with such mysterious powers and such profound knowledge that we may truly designate them as the sages of the Orient. To their instructions we lent a ready ear.” (p. vi)

“The work now submitted to public judgment is the fruit of a somewhat intimate acquaintance with Eastern adepts and study of their science.” (p. v)

But in *The Key to Theosophy* published in 1889, H.P.B. pointed out that various people had made bogus claims to being in contact with her own Masters K.H. and M.:

“Great are the desecrations to which the names of two of the Masters have been subjected. There is hardly a medium who has not claimed to have seen them. Every bogus swindling Society, for commercial purposes, now claims to be guided and directed by ‘Masters’ often supposed to be far higher than ours! Many and heavy are the sins of those who advanced these claims, prompted either by desire for lucre, vanity, or irresponsible mediumship. ... The sacred names of Occultism and the holy keepers thereof have been dragged in this filthy mire, polluted by being associated with sordid motives and immoral practices, while thousands of men and women have been held back from the path of truth and light through the discredit and evil report which such shams, swindles, and frauds have brought upon the whole subject.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 301)

H. P. B. in *The Secret Doctrine* stated quite forcefully that certain students had indulged in “wild and fanciful speculation”:

“The publication of many of the facts herein stated has been rendered necessary by the wild and fanciful speculation in which many Theosophists and students of mysticism have indulged, during the last few years, in their endeavor to, as they imagined, work out a complete system of thought from the few facts previously communicated to them.” (S.D., original edition, Vol I, p. viii)

And Master K.H. in his August 1888 letter to Olcott had also written on this same subject:

“I have also noted, your thoughts about the ‘Secret Doctrine.’ Be assured that what she [H. P. B.] has not annotated from scientific and other works, we have given or suggested to her. Every mistake or erroneous notion, corrected and explained by her from the works of other theosophists was corrected by me, or under my instruction. It is a more valuable work than its predecessor, an epitome of occult truths that will make it a source of information and instruction for the earnest student for long years to come. ...” (*Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Series I, p. 47)

But after H. P. B.’s death in 1891, numerous individuals started claiming to be in contact with her Adept Teachers and stated that they were new “messengers” of the Masters conveying even more esoteric teachings.

As Dr. Gordon Melton has written:

“A number of individuals have claimed contact with one of the Masters first described by Blavatsky and [some of them] have begun new organizations based upon the individual revelation imparted.”

Here is a partial list of the claimants:

(1) In the 1890s, William Q. Judge said he was in contact with H. P. B.’s Master Morya as well as the deceased H. P. B. Judge claimed he precipitated letters from Master M. and gave out further esoteric teachings.

(2) Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater affirmed that they were in direct communication with H. P. B.’s Masters and the deceased H. P. B. They gave out various Theosophical teachings in their voluminous writings.

(3) Katherine Tingley, the occult successor of Judge, said she was in contact with H. P. B.'s Masters and claimed to have met on at least two occasions the Master Morya in his physical body.

(4) G. de Purucker, Tingley's successor, testified that the Masters M. & K.H. came to visit him in 1929 at Theosophical Society headquarters, Point Loma, San Diego, California. Purucker claimed that he was allowed to give out deeper esoteric teachings than H. P. B., Judge or Tingley had given.

(5) Alice Bailey said she was in contact with Masters K.H. and D.K. and wrote more than 20 volumes of teachings said to be from D.K. She even gave out further installments of the Stanzas of Dzyan.

(6) Mrs. Francia A. La Due (of the Temple of the People) gave out messages from the Masters, especially from Hilarion. She also published more Stanzas from the Book of Dzyan.

(7) Guy Ballard (of the "I Am" Movement) claimed to be in communication with the Masters, especially St. Germain.

(8) Helena Roerich (of the Agni Yoga Society) published some 13 volumes of communications supposedly from the Master Morya.

(9) Mark Prophet and his wife Elizabeth Clare (of the Church Universal and Triumphant) claimed to be the emissaries of the Great White Brotherhood and have channeled thousands of messages from El Morya, Kut Humi, the Virgin Mary, Hercules, Chastity and a variety of other Masters and entities.

(10) Earlyne Chaney (of Astara) believed she was in communication with Kut-Hi-Mi and Zoser and other Masters of the Great White Brotherhood. She has given out various so-called esoteric and occult teachings.

(11) Nada-Yolanda (of Mark-Age, Inc) has channeled numerous messages from M., K.H., and others Masters associated with UFOs.

(12) Max Heindel, Rudolf Steiner, Geoffrey Hodson and George King have claimed clairvoyant powers and to be in contact with various Masters — Rosicrucian, Theosophical or otherwise.

(13) Other supposed communications from H. P. B.'s Masters have come from Brother Philip in his book titled Secret of the Andes, from Cyril Scott

in his series of books starting with *The Initiate*, and from David Anrias in his book *Through the Eyes of the Masters*.

And the list could go on. ...

But who would have the inclination, time and energy to study the hundreds of books put out by these various individuals and to try to sort through the morass of claims, counterclaims and various contradictory teachings given out by these numerous latter-day messengers of the Masters?

Instead of trying to wade through even 1/10th of all these latter-day teachings, it is suggested that inquirers and students of Theosophy should turn to H. P. B.'s own voluminous writings and seriously study them.

If no other Theosophical writer had ever written a book on Theosophy after H. P. B. died in 1891, we would still have more than twenty volumes of H. P. B.'s own writings to read, study, ponder and apply. And we also have *The Mahatma Letters* and *The Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (Series 1 and Series 2) to read and study.

There is enough metaphysics, occult information, practical advise, ethical counsel, devotional material, spiritual exercises, etc. in H. P. B.'s and the Masters' writings to last most of us a lifetime or two!

In 1884, Master KH wrote that “we have broken the silence of centuries” in giving out the teachings of Theosophy (as found in H. P. B.'s writings and the Masters' letters). Yet far too many students of Theosophy down through the decades and even today consider these original writings not important enough to read, let alone to study.

Students of Theosophy can believe or disbelieve in whatever they want; they can read and study whatever they choose. But why not go to the FOUNTAIN SOURCE of the modern Theosophical Movement (i.e., H. P. B.'s writings and the letters of the Masters) and study these writings — without having these writings filtered through and interpreted by later claimants?

Check out Daniel's outstanding site:

Blavatsky Study Center

<http://hpb.cc>

THEOSOPHIA

A LIVING PHILOSOPHY FOR HUMANITY

TRIBUTE ISSUE

SUMMER, 1981



BORIS MIHAILOVICH de ZIRKOFF
1902-1981

Theosophy: The Need Of The Hour

by Boris de Zirkoff – USA

In the crisis of our age is heralded the birth of a new civilization. Out of the ashes rises, Phoenix-like, the shape of things to come. The temporary dissolution of ethical standards, the wide-spread suppression of Truth, and the suicidal gospel of brute force and opportunism, are here neither denied nor disregarded. But to the eyes of a deeper observer they are only the scum rising to the surface of the boiling cauldron wherein is enacted the alchemical process of racial transmutation, a spiritual regeneration of the vital streams of Humanity.

That which seems to be the debasement of many a lofty ideal, or the stormy overthrow of once noble traditions, is but the clearing of the ground upon which nobler ideals and more enduring traditions will be erected in the course of cycling years. The psychical and intellectual conflagration which dissipates into impalpable ashes what some had mistaken for unshakable edifices of Thought and Conduct releases at the same time the pent-up flood of a new spiritual vigor with which to build a brighter future for all men. And while, in the dismal gloom of a temporary spiritual blackout, we see ancient and familiar lights going out one by one, greater and more effulgent Beacons already now pierce the enfolding darkness with their shafts of redeeming light.

The crisis we are in must be faced and overcome. None can seclude himself behind an imaginary wall of intellectual isolation. Humanity is one and indivisible. Every man or woman is an integral part of the Karman of the race, and has contributed his constructive or disruptive part towards the shaping of this or any other crisis. The appalling misery of today is our own handiwork. The World of Tomorrow will not be built for us by some Gracious divinities descending into our midst from a modern Olympus. If it is ever to become an actuality, it will have to be erected, stone by stone, through our own self-devised efforts and under the guidance of our own spiritual manhood. There is no other way!

There is a road which leads into the dawning light of a New Era. There is a message which fully answers the yearning of men for peace. There is a knowledge which can solve our baffling problems and a code of conduct which can provide an unshakable foundation for a better and nobler World to be. That road, the message and that Knowledge is Theosophy, the ageless universal spiritual tradition which no cataclysm has ever been able to obliterate.

The lofty metaphysics of the Ancient Wisdom are only for the few, though they may be many. The simple teachings of that timeless wisdom are, however, for the broad masses of the people, and they can be understood by all, rich and poor, educated and illiterate.

Cause and Effect, the potential Divinity of man, Reincarnation, Ethical Responsibility, the Unity of all Life, the Solidarity of all the peoples of the Earth, their indissoluble Brotherhood or Oneness, the true nature of Death, the great precepts of conduct which the Sages of all times have outlined for us - these and other simple teachings, presented in understandable language and with the conviction of the heart, striking a responsible fire in the hearts of others, could usher in a new Order of the Ages and accomplish that inner change of minds and hearts which neither centuries of organized religion, nor generations of scientific research, periodically prostituting its findings to the wholesale destruction of the human race, have been able to bring about.

The present journal is devoted to the dissemination of the message of Theosophy: simple, for the many; somewhat more technical, for the few. The time is ripe for a wider sowing. It is our earnest hope that the reader as well as the welcome writer will find in this journal an open channel to spread broadcast the soul-healing teachings of Theosophy, and of Theosophy alone. We remember these words of H.P. Blavatsky, and we feel in them an endorsement of our own modest efforts:

"Look around you, my brothers and sisters. Not a sect, not a guild, or Society, however insignificant and useless, and far smaller than our Theosophical body, but has its recognized organ. ... One weekly or even monthly sheet of only four pages is better than none; and if we had not an absolute and immediate necessity for such a defensive organ now, it would serve at all times for the dissemination of our theosophical teachings, the

popularization of Theosophy and Eastern Ethics suited for the intelligence of the masses. ... Teach the common laborer the truths he fails to find in the churches, and you will soon have saved half of the mankind of civilized countries, for the PATH is easier to the poor and the simple of heart than to the cultured and the rich." — Issued by H.P.B. from 144 Madison Avenue, New York City, 1889-1890.

Let this be our Banner, the Watchword of THEOSOPHIA, the Secret Wisdom through the Ages, hoary with time, yet perennially young. May its pages guide the footsore pilgrim through the murky clouds of the present, to the Hills of Discernment where is breaking even now the "Dawn of the Mystic East."



Theosophy and the Society in the Public Eye

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Already in 1993-1994 when I was working on the exhibition, "Piet Mondrian 1892-1914, The Amsterdam Years" in the Amsterdam City Archives, now housed in the building designed by Mondrian's co-theosophist Karel de Bazel, I had several talks with my colleague Robert Welsh about the horoscope. I wondered what insights Mondrian had drawn from it, concerning his personality and his career. Judging from the vast network I uncovered during my investigations, it had become clear that Mondrian was not the stiff, introverted man he has always been judged to be. A better characterization would be: a solitary person among his fellow people, someone who weaved in and out of social circles in a receptive and playful, but at the same time reserved, independent and reflective way. 'Piet, now you see him, now you don't', was the jokey description of him at gallery openings in Paris.

On 7 March 2013, the birthday of Mondrian, the website www.mondriaan.nl was launched. Posthumously Mondrian received an impressive and modern birthday present. Mondrian himself celebrated his birthday on 7 March 1908 by treating himself to a lecture Rudolf Steiner gave in Amsterdam. He kept the Dutch transcription of Steiner's lectures all his life, together with his horoscope. Apparently they meant much to him.

The image is a screenshot of the website www.mondriaan.nl. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Omslag', 'Collectie Overzicht', and 'Actueel'. A quote by Katherine Dreier is displayed: "Holland has produced three great painters [...] the first was Rembrandt, the second was Van Gogh, and the third is Mondrian." Below this, there is a section titled "Lees hier de brieven van Piet Mondriaan aan Harry Holtzman" with a blue button. To the right, a diamond-shaped artwork made of small colored squares is shown, with the text "OPENED BY CENROA" below it. A yellow button at the bottom says "Zoom hier in op Mondriaans meesterwerk!". On the right side, there is a profile picture of Piet Mondrian and a section titled "Piet's Parijse platencollectie" with a red play button icon. Below that, a section titled "Liefde & inspiratie: Kwartet over de vrouwen in het leven van Piet Mondriaan" is visible.

The maker of the horoscope was Adriaan van de Vijssel, it is typeset at the back of the horoscope. Ah, Adriaan! Another name I know from the membership list of the Theosophical Society. Adriaan was an office clerk and



Adriaan van de Vijzel

became a member in March 1905. His brother Arie and his nephew, also named Arie, were or became members too. I also knew that Adriaan had married the daughter of the sculptor Bart van Hove. His father-in-law had been the director of the Quellinus Art School (from which e.g. De Bazel graduated) and after that he taught sculpture at the Rijksakademie, which Mondrian attended. Also, Bart van Hove was president of the artists' club *Arti et Amicitiae*, of which Mondrian was a member.

In 1994 surfing the internet for more information about Adriaan – back then Google was not so prolific in its sources – I discovered, to my surprise, that his daughter was still alive and alert. Next week, on the 12th March, she will turn 95. I tracked her down and visited her two weeks ago for more information on Adriaan and also for photos. Who was he? What was he like?

Adriaan was a descendent of a line of wood traders. As the oldest son he would have had to take over the company, but apparently he was better with books. On several photo's he sits there, studiously reading a thick book. But Adriaan was not a boring guy. He appears to have been adventurous from an early age. Even though he found a replacement for his army service in Holland, he served in the Dutch colonial army in the East-Indies and traveled around the islands until 1905, after which he returned to Amsterdam. His early interest was in alchemy and especially medicinal herbs. He translated a book by Paracelsus from Latin into Dutch in 1913. Adriaan was immersed in every esoteric organization existing then. In 1916, he bought a 40 hectare piece of woodland in Den Dolder – a place then especially known for its notorious clinic for the insane. Adriaan worked his butt off and with his second wife he successfully turned the woods into an enormous herb garden. With his wife he traveled Europe with a rucksack, trying to find rare herbs. The garden products were sold to apothecaries and factories of homeopathic medicine. The Van de Vijsels kept an open house for like minds.

But how did Adriaan and Piet Mondrian meet? Without concrete evidence – except for the horoscope – I will have to describe the possibilities.

Mondrian obviously needed wood for his picture frames. Brother Arie van de Vijzel, theosophist since 1908, had a lumber store at Ceintuurbaan 330. You can spit from there to Mondrian's house at Sarphatipark 42, where he lived since 1908. That would narrow the evidence down conveniently. But

Mondrian lived at Albert Cuyppstraat 158 before that, which is also not far away. So this does not solve the issue.

Would his sister Constantia van de Vijssel be a better option then? She was a member of Arti et Amicitiae, like Mondrian. She studied at the Rijksakademie from 1902 until 1910.

Then, there is the sister Ida van de Vijssel. In 1910 Ida van de Vijssel married Hendrik Teves in the Dutch Indies and she lived there for a long time, possibly until 1928. But Ida is in the database of the Netherlands Institute for Art History as an artist. She was also trained at the Rijksakademie, by Nicolaas van de Waaij. In his list of students several names pop up in direct connection with Mondriaan. The 'Amsterdam joffers (misses)' Lizzy Ansingh, Betsy Westendorp-Osieck and Betsy Repelius. Mondrian painted two ceilings for the last-mentioned Betsy in 1904. Then Leo Gestel and Jan Sluijters, the Dutch 'luminists'. Sluijters, Mondrian and the theosophist Kees Spoor exhibited

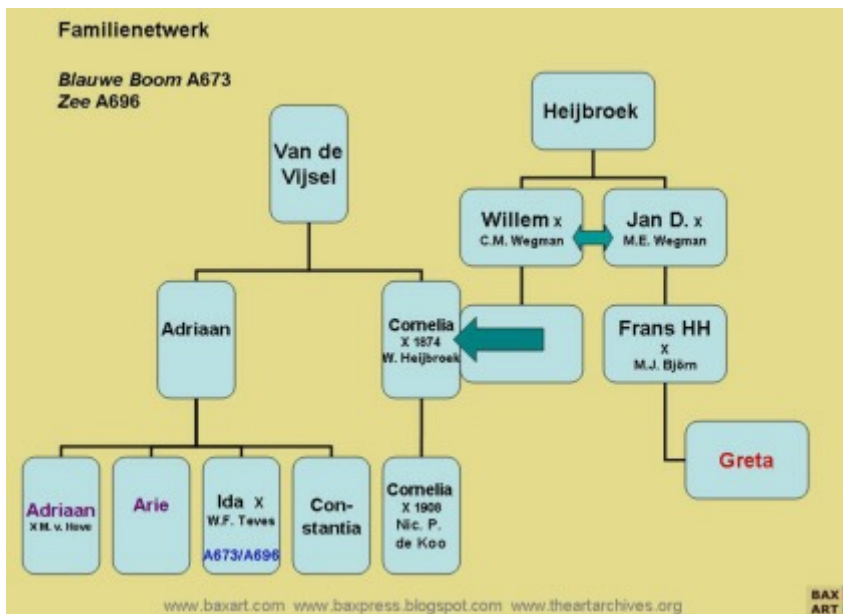


The Blue Tree

together in the Stedelijk Museum in 1909; this exhibition actually was the 'coming out' of Mondrian as a theosophical painter. In the list also the theosophists Loe Reelfs and Herman Mees are mentioned, and Pieter van der Hem who lived in the same house as Mondrian at Sarphatipark. In short: this small network offers a lot of possibilities.

Ida is an interesting link, because Adriaan van de Vijssel's daughter told me thus. The two works mentioned in the Mondrian Catalogue Raisonné as *The Blue Tree* (A673) and a seascape (A696) and dated by Welsh at 1907-1909, show a wrong provenance. They were not in possession of either Adriaan or W.C. van Dijk, who are mentioned as the first owners. No, Adriaan received these works after WWII from his sister Ida. Adriaan however had read what the market value of these works had become, and refused to accept them for various personal reasons, one of them not to attract thieves.

Then there is a last but interesting link. Namely: Greta Heijbroek. Mondrian is said to have given her painting lessons in 1909. In 1911 they became engaged, to everybody's surprise! Heijbroek ...? The name also



surfaces in the Van de Vijssel family. Yes, by Jove! Greta was a cousin through her aunt! Now I become interested in the guest book of the family Heijbroek again! Who else is mentioned?

All in all however: no conclusive evidence, but a lot of leads. Maybe dating the horoscope is best done through the horoscope itself? Better said: horoscopes, in plural. Mondrian had, in fact, two prepared. First he asked for a 'trial horoscope'. It is numbered 1422 – Adriaan apparently was a productive and experienced astrologist. He had skilled himself in the new type of astrology, developed foremost in theosophical circles, which system is now commonly used in the Western world. Jutta Lehmann wrote a dissertation on it in 1998.

The trial horoscope is, by nature, brief. It only provides a short description of Mondrian's most important elements: sun sign (Pisces), rising sign (Aquarius) and moon sign (Aquarius). Adriaan called the relationship between sun and moon 'the polarity' – a term Mondrian would use profusely in his abstract art.

The synthesis of the influence of Sun in Pisces and the Moon in Aquarius, representative of your individual and personal characteristics, shows love for nature in its most basic appearance, and at the same time your typical reserve and inclination to come into contact with the unseen. It shows views which are generally regarded as 'strange'.

Your longings and wishes are strong and will often be satisfied. You will soon make friends, move easily among men and you will only be happy in a publicly oriented life, where you can mingle among people.

A love of nature but then in its simplest form, an inclination to the occult and 'strange' views. It is as if here Mondrian's abstraction and his position in modern art is predicted. And it also contains the reason, why Mondrian must have felt that moving swiftly to the hustle and bustle of Paris would be of advantage to his career.

The trial horoscope was essentially a prognosis. I did not expect such a prognosis, because this is not the 'normal' procedure in astrology. People are foremost interested in a character description, based on a birth horoscope. In Mondrian's case, it was the other way round. The short version tickled him to buy a complete birth horoscope for 3 guilders. This one must have been

made after January 1912 – when he was in Paris already – because a letter exists from the Civil Registry in Amersfoort, dated January 30 1912, in which Mondrian receives the time of his birth, which is needed to make an exact birth horoscope.

Which prognoses were in the trial horoscope, which may explain his rather sudden move to Paris?

The years corresponding with certain prognoses were written in the margin by Adriaan afterwards. Marked by '1911' it reads: 'You are now more susceptible and more impressionable than usual, sensitive to the dispositions of your surroundings.' Then, struck out: 'During the last months you have tied new knots and you will do this during the next four months.' This deletion may indicate that at the time Mondrian received this horoscope, this transit had already passed. Or that he did this after he was firmly settled in Paris.

Left from the section on 1912 Mondrian wrote 'Jan.[uary]' over the date '1912' written by Adriaan in the margin. Then Adriaan wrote 1912 left from it again. It looks as if the two men had been discussing the horoscope together and that at that moment the dates were written in the margin. The astrological aspect in question was the influence of Uranus, because Adrian hinted at 'sudden and temporary changes'. His explanation reads: 'The time is favorable for applying some new idea to practice, your sphere of influence is growing just as your frame of mind.'

The year 1913 would bring Mondrian new ties, '... yes, it can even be the case that you decide to marry.' The aspect concerned was the Moon (feelings) moving through the seventh house of partnerships from the end of 1912 and at the same time Mars conjunct Venus.

This prediction was contrary to Mondrian's current opinion about relationships; he had broken off his engagement to Greta Heijbroek not long before. Or did he break off the engagement, because of the hidden promises in his horoscope? However, nothing is known about a love relationship in 1913, let alone a plan to marry.

Well, astrological prognoses are interpretations of energy constellations, and these interpretations contain advices as to how you could and should go with the flow of aspects and transits, because these belong to your unique 'learning curve' in life. Opposing them will only cause needless

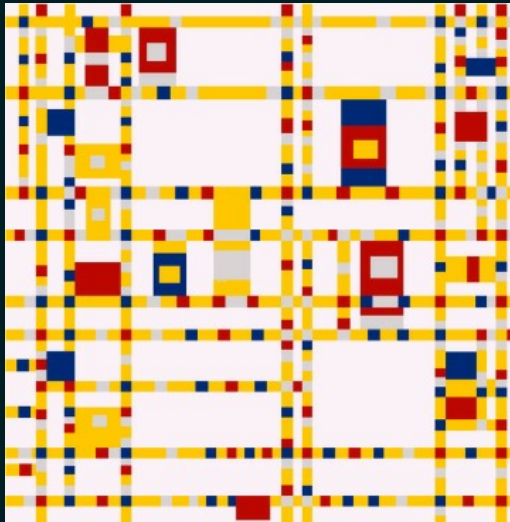
frustration. (Then you also learn of course, but not what was originally intended, cosmically.)

So how did this 1913 transit work for Mondrian? Venus in astrology not only symbolizes love, but also creativity and the arts. Mondrian made use of this energy to go to Paris, mingle with new artistic people and find inspiration for a new visual language. This is in accord with the last sentence of the section '1913', because Adriaan wrote: 'If you put your effort into it, your work can attract more attention and more appreciation.'

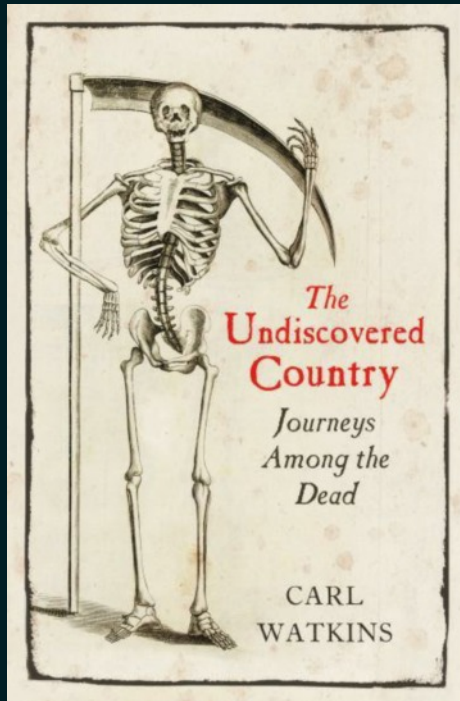
The 1914 prognosis coincides with the period in which Mondrian, because of the outbreak of WWI, was forced to stay in Holland after a visit to his sick father. 'An anything but favorable period', Adriaan wrote, 'It is better not to induce changes or to travel, although this may not be preventable. It is a time of great strain and exertion, for which you will need all your strength to work your way through, but it, will have a positive effect.'

Mondrian worked very, very hard in Holland. He rose out of this transit as an abstract artist and as the inspirational source within the 'De Stijl' movement.

For more, follow this link: <http://baxpress.blogspot.nl/>



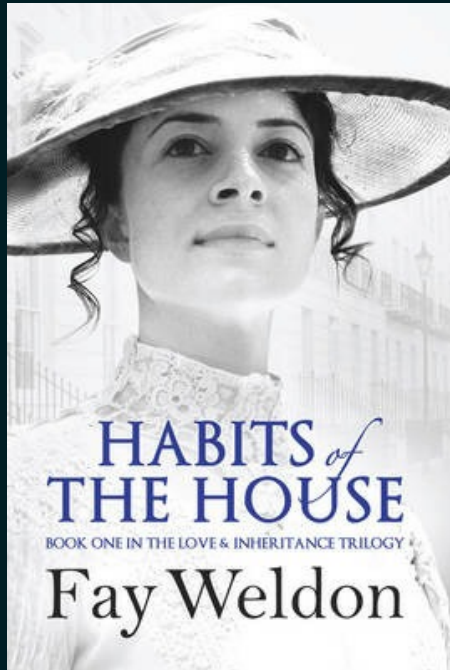
Besant, Séances, and Grammar



“I have only one criticism of his [Watkins’s] book: he has a terrible way with hanging modifiers. The Theosophist Annie Besant’s life in measured out in heinous danglers, doggedly modifying the wrong noun (‘Intimate for a time with Annie Besant . . . , they had drifted apart in his later years’ . . . ”

Theo Tait, reviewing *The Undiscovered Country: Journeys among the Dead*, by Carl Watkins (Bodley Head) in the *London Review of Books*, June 6, 2013, p. 20.

Habits of the House



A recent novel, *Habits of the House*, by Fay Weldon (New York: St. Martin's, 2013), includes two references to Annie Besant:

"The Countess d'Asti . . . had lately revealed herself as an admirer of Annie Besant, an earnest and influential mystic who campaigned for peace between nations, the end of world misery, anti-vivisection and so forth" (p. 80).

"Rosina glared but did not deign to reply when her father . . . teased her by saying that the Hague conference was a frippery inspired by Annie Besant and her friends" (pp. 82-3).

A silhouette of Mary Poppins in her signature outfit, including a long coat, a hat, and a large umbrella. She is walking across the rooftops of a city, with her right hand holding the umbrella and her left hand tucked into her pocket. The background is a stylized city skyline with various building shapes and some windows glowing with light.

MARY POPPINS

©1999 Walt Disney Pictures
THIS IMAGE IS THE ORIGINAL WORK OF ALICE BURNHAM WOOD, 1934

Theosophy, Fantasy, and Mary Poppins

by John Algeo – USA

Chapter 5: A Review of the First Three Books and a Look Ahead

This last part of the present series on Mary Poppins offers some comments on books other than the three basic ones and sums up a Theosophical view of the subject. Those first three basic books, considered in chapters 2-4 of this series are *Mary Poppins* (1934), *Mary Poppins Comes Back* (1935), and *Mary Poppins Opens the Door* (1943).

The fourth book in the series, *Mary Poppins in the Park*, 1952, is a collection of six episodes:

Travers, Pamela L. *Mary Poppins in the Park*. San Diego: Harcourt, Odyssey/Harcourt Young Classic, 1997, c. 1952.

In that book, a beginning note tells us that its events “should be understood to have happened during any of the three visits of Mary Poppins to the Banks family. This is a word of warning to anybody who may be expecting they are in for a fourth visit. She cannot forever arrive and depart. And, apart from that, it should be remembered that three is a lucky number.”

For that reason, the present series of commentaries has been limited to the lucky first three volumes, the two last books in which Mary Poppins takes the children at Number 17 Cherry Tree Lane on adventures are, however, also especially worth noting:

Travers, Pamela L. *Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane*. New York: Dell, Yearling Book, 1983, c. 1982.

Travers, Pamela L. *Mary Poppins and the House Next Door*. London: Puffin Books, 1990, c. 1988.

These two, like *Mary Poppins in the Park*, are not stories of additional visits, but episodes to be understood as happening earlier, both during book 2

(*Mary Poppins Comes Back*) or book 3 (*Mary Poppins Opens the Door*) as they have the new baby Annabel in them and *House Next Door* is about a reappearance of the Holy Terror Euphemia Andrew, both of those characters first appearing in book 2.

On the last page of an article entitled “The Interviewer,” originally published in *Parabola* and reprinted in *What the Bee Knows: Reflections on Myth, Symbol and Story* (Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian Press, 1989; London: Penguin, Arkana, 1993; pp. 203-9), Pamela Travers gives an insightful description of the process by which she wrote the *Mary Poppins* books, which is the same process that every reader goes through in responding to them: “C S Lewis, in a letter to a friend, says, ‘There is only one Creator and we merely mix the elements He gives us’ — a statement less simple than it seems. For that ‘mere mixing’, while making it impossible for us to say ‘I myself am the maker,’ also shows us our essential place in the process. Elements among elements, we are there to shape, order, define, and in doing this we, reciprocally, are defined, shaped, and ordered. The potter, moulding the receptive clay, is himself being moulded.” As Travers indicates elsewhere, every reader is also a co-author of what is read, because reading involves more than recognizing the words printed on a page. It also involves understanding the meaning of those words, and every reader’s understanding will be uniquely his or her own, shaped by the past experiences of personal history and changing as passing time changes the reader.

The point just made is also stated in an April 13, 2012, *Times Literary Supplement* book review entitled “English Made Me: We Are Different People When We Read a Book a Second Time — and We Are Often Reading a Different Book.” The review ends (p. 4) thus: “As we revisit the objects of our reading, like recognizable but weathered landmarks, there can be no full going back, because we are not exactly the same people we were; but the consolation of rereading is the knowledge that we are these different people in part because of what those books have made of us.”

Pamela Travers also emphasizes in many ways that life is a mixture of opposites, a fact graphically illustrated by the Chinese cosmological symbol of the “Great Ultimate” *Tai Chi*:



The complementary halves of this symbol are the black yin and the white yang, representing all opposites: dark/light, female/male, soft/hard, low/high, contemplation/action, sustaining/dominating, sensitivity/intellect — each turning into its opposite complement in harmonic equilibrium. Every person is likely to favor one or the other of those complements, generally or at least at particular junctures in life. Travers states that she gravitates to the dark complement, even when it is embodied in the villain, rather than the light complement embodied in the hero: “It is the lineaments of the villains — dwarf, giant and stepmother, wicked fairy, dragon, witch — that leap to me now across the years. Each one is different, each is its own — pitted, grained and cicatriced [i.e. scarred], battered by passion and power.” That statement may remind us of other similar ones in the great literature of the world. The novel *Anna Karenina* opens with the memorable line “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” And a witticism about the two main characters in the novel *Vanity Fair* (the cynical anti-heroine Becky Sharp and her opposite, the good-natured but naive Amelia Sedley) is “Moralists may preach and carp in platitudes most deadly; the world remembers Becky Sharp and not Amelia Sedley.”

It may say something about us that we find wickedness more interesting than goodness, and imperfection than perfection, but it is a very human reaction. A well-known observation is that “evil” is “live” spelled backward. Evil and good are ultimately our responses to various stages in the evolution of the cosmos and to the stages of our existence. That complex interaction is the theme of all the *Mary Poppins* books.

Miscellany and Trivia

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Anecdote about an elephant



A troop of elephants were accustomed to pass a green-stall on their way to water. The woman who kept the stall took a fancy to one of the elephants, and frequently regaled her favorite with greens and fruits, which produced a corresponding attachment on the part of the elephant toward the woman. One day, the group of elephants unfortunately overturned the poor woman's stall, and in her haste to preserve her goods she forgot her little son, who was in danger of being trampled to death. The favorite elephant perceived the child's danger, and taking him up gently with his trunk, carefully placing him on the roof of a shed close at hand.

Anecdote about a gorilla



On August 16 1996 in the Brookfield Zoo, a 3 year old boy fell into a Gorilla enclosure and lost consciousness. Binti Jua a female Lowland Gorilla, guarded the young boy from the other Gorillas in the enclosure, she then cradled him in her arm (while her own 17 month old baby was on her back) and carried him 60 feet to an entrance where zoo-keepers could retrieve him.

This isn't an isolated case, on August 31 1986 at Jersey Zoo a 5 year old boy fell into a Gorilla enclosure and lost consciousness, a large male Gorilla named Jambo stood guard over the boy not allowing any of the others to come near, when the boy woke up and started crying all of the Gorillas backed off and zoo-keepers (along with an ambulance) were able to retrieve him safely.

Anecdote about a Watusi calf



Janice Wolf was in the back pasture of the refuge she operates in Arkansas when her 11 month old Watusi Calf suddenly turned and blocked her path, she couldn't understand why it was doing this, so she took hold of its horns and tried pushing it, but it tossed its head and knocked her off balance, that's when she spotted a copper-head snake on the ground exactly where her foot would have been had the Watusi calf not intervened.

Copper-head venom usually isn't fatal to adults; however it could well have been fatal to her because she had been extra sensitive to insect bites in the past and had just come out of hospital for a lung operation.

Anecdote about a cat



Dianne Busscher was woken up at 4:45 a.m. by the cries of the family cat, Oreo, coming from the garage. Busscher went down stairs to see what the fuss was about. What she saw was smoke and flames; she quickly grabbed the cat and rushed back inside to wake up her husband and their five children.

The fire destroyed the garage and a bedroom. None of the family was harmed thanks to the cat's cries. As an interesting side note, none of the family had been too fond of the cat before this incident; however Jesse Busscher claimed "We love it now. This thing is getting some tuna tonight!"

Anecdote about dolphins



Rob Howes, a British-born lifeguard, had gone swimming with his daughter, Niccy, and two of her friends off Ocean beach near Whangarei on the North Island of New Zealand, when a group of dolphins suddenly appeared. The dolphins started to herd the humans; they pushed all four of them together by circling around them. Howes tried to drift away from the group, but two of the bigger dolphins herded him back – just as he spotted a 10ft great white shark heading towards him. “I just recoiled,” he said. “It was only about two metres away from me, the water was crystal clear and it was as clear as the nose on my face. They had corralled us up to protect us.”

The dolphins kept this up for 40 minutes until the shark lost interest, and the group could swim the 100m back to shore. Another lifeguard, Matt Fleet, on patrol in a lifeboat, saw the dolphins circling the swimmers and slapping their tails on the water to keep them in place. He told the Northern Advocate newspaper that he also had a clear sighting of the shark. “Some of the people later on the beach tried to tell me it was just another dolphin; but I knew what I saw,” he said. Ingrid Visser, of Orca Research, an environmental group, said the dolphins’ behavior was understandable, as they attack sharks to protect themselves and their young, similar incidents had been reported round the world. “They could have sensed the danger to the swimmers, and taken action to protect them,” she said.

Anecdote about a dog



In Texas, way back in 1982, a 2 year old child had been walking with his grandmother when Arf, the family dog, became very agitated; the dog became so agitated that the grandmother thought it best to take the child inside. Mrs. Sparks, the child's mother, came out to find Arf in a fight with a 24 inch north-American coral snake, she shot the snake but Arf had a lot of bites and scratches and had to be admitted into a veterinary hospital for 24 days where it made a strong recovery.

Check this site:

<http://listverse.com/2010/03/14/top-10-cases-of-animals-saving-humans/>



A choir is made up of many voices, including yours and mine. If one by one all go silent then all that will be left are the soloists. Don't let a loud few determine the nature of the sound. It makes for poor harmony and diminishes the song

Vera Nazarian

(An Armenian-Russian - by ethnicity - American writer of fantasy, science fiction and other "wonder fiction").

The Society

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Editorial

by Jan Nicolaas Kind

Many moons ago, it must have been in the summer of 1968 while I still living in Amsterdam, that, for the first time in my life, I was told that such a thing as Theosophy exists. The man who was good enough to open that door for me was an elderly, well-known Jewish musician who miraculously had survived the horrors of World War II. I was fascinated to hear from him about the laws of cause and effects, karma, reincarnation, the visible and invisible worlds, tolerance and compassion, freedom of thought, and how music creates energies, influencing people's minds and their environment.

I remember it vividly how we took walks in a park in the capital of The Netherlands. When we would sit down on a bench, he always started to tell me



about his long and interesting life as a violinist and conductor, the artists and composers he had met, his years in Paris, the loves of his life and ...
Theosophy.

At the time, the colorful and vibrant sixties, my head was filled with Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and the Iron Butterfly. I was certain that I was going to change the world. Bob Dylan was my hero, the war in Vietnam was horrible, Woodstock was still in the making, and at night I sat down together with some student friends of mine, trying to understand what Jean Paul Sartre meant when he wrote that humans are condemned to be free. In addition to all that, this old man was talking to me about Theosophy.

Was not aware of the existence of anything like a Theosophical Society, but intrigued by his many tales, one day I asked him if he had ever joined a group or circle of people interested in Theosophy. His reply was significant; he had never considered joining any Theosophical Society because as far as he was concerned, Theosophy was wonderful, it had been a beacon all through his life, and helped him to live through the war years, but one had to be very careful with Theosophists. When I asked why one needed to show caution when dealing with them, he said that brotherhood was embedded in their first object, but that there was so much disharmony among them that, as a classically trained violinist, he couldn't participate in what he called "Karlheinz Stockhausen's cacophony." (Stockhausen was a modern and controversial German composer known for using a twelve tone technique that often assaults one's hearing.)

It took me more than twenty-six years to join a Theosophical Society. The words of my old Jewish friend had apparently been implanted in my memory, and my fascination for Theosophy was still there. From November 17, 1994 onward, as a member of the TS Adyar (much later I joined all existing Societies), I witnessed all the good but also the bad that active members in the Societies cause.

It is apparent that some people live very much in the past or gain their inspiration solely from the many conflicts that took place in the past. In an earlier editorial, I referred to that as "hijacking" a conflict, thus making it one's own. Although good people are energetically trying to live up to what sister and brotherhood stand for, a small isolated group seems to point out continuously

to other Theosophists who are not sympathetic to their cause that those others are nothing but a bunch of naïve dummies. Their contradictive, pseudo-intellectual “bla bla” is extremely boring, often referring to historical events but then hopelessly misinterpreting those, and the persons whom they condemn are always the same. Presenting themselves as gurus in need of followers, their remarks are bigheaded, repetitious, uninspiring, and unconstructive, not in any way related to what Theosophy is supposed to represent.



bla bla

Friends sometimes send me links to threads on the Net containing such squabbles, but I cannot read those dreary epistles any longer. I do not underestimate the importance of discussions in cyberspace, but it is evident that some hardliners with their predictable one-liners who post there have simply vowed never to give up their crusade against others who they consider to be misled and dumb. Well so be it, the Law always works, so we will see.

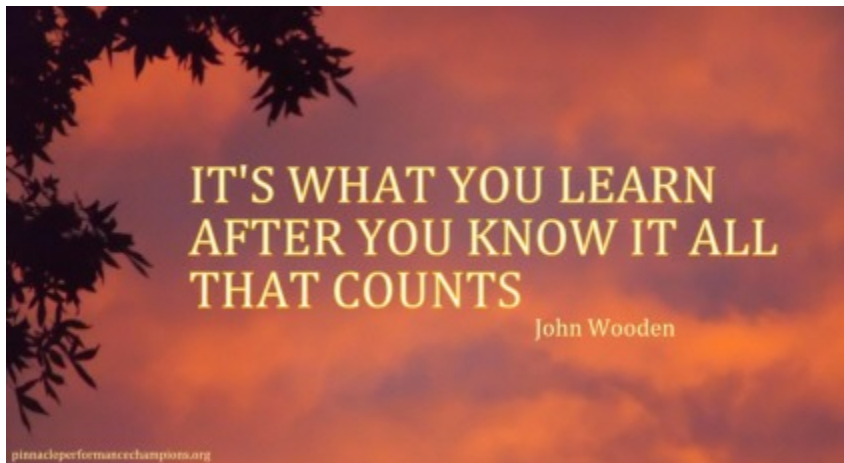
I fail to understand why some Theosophists are constantly dwelling on the personal egos of prominent Theosophists of the past, especially when these same folks claim to be trying to suppress the personal ego. We cannot know the full truth about Besant, Judge, Olcott, or even H. P. B. herself. Charges against any or all of them amount to gossip, one of the “sins” that H.

P. B. most condemned. If we want to follow H. P. B., then let's stop gossiping about the past and live Theosophy TODAY as sisters and brothers, *no matter what each of us believes.*

I may disappoint my respected readers, so I apologize beforehand, but I have never met Annie Besant, William Judge, Henry Olcott, or Katherine Tingley, let alone Helena Blavatsky, in the flesh. Oh, I wished I had! What I know of them, I know from what I read in books and what historians have passed on. So when I read about the history of the modern Theosophical movement, I read the story of women and men who all in their own particular ways tried hard to uplift our troubled world. In that process, along the way, some things went well, but at the same time painful mistakes were made; there was light, but also darkness, there was good and bad. Doesn't that sound familiar?

I respect those old pioneers who dedicated their lives to the cause, but it's now up to us to create a future, and we cannot create a tomorrow by constantly looking back at yesterday, pointing fingers, accusing others, slandering good people, and proclaiming our own limited truth.

We can learn from the past, but we should never judge; instead we can try to do things better and, if we fail, try again.

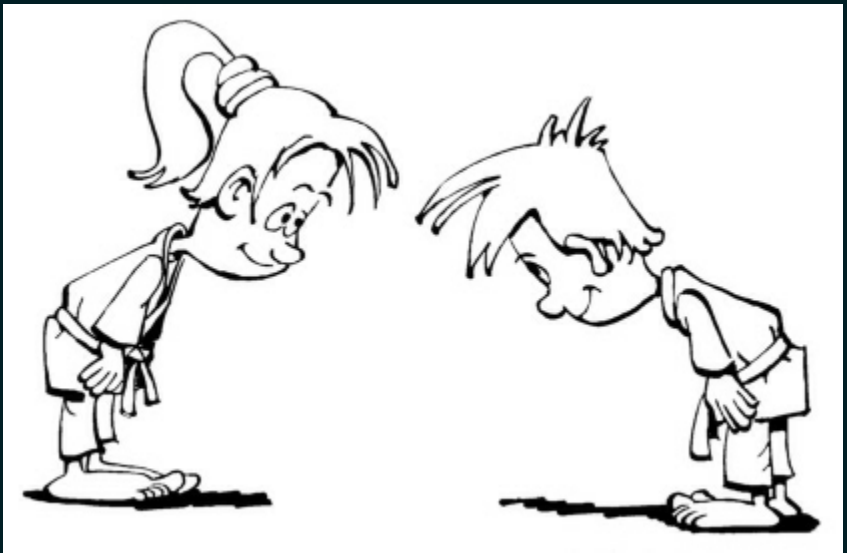


IT'S WHAT YOU LEARN
AFTER YOU KNOW IT ALL
THAT COUNTS

John Wooden

Let's remain seekers first and foremost: Theosophy is not about telling other Theosophists that they are wrong. Theosophy is all about *servng* mankind, now and tomorrow, into the future, so let's focus on that. Let's do away with the cacophony, turning it into a symphony, the world is desperately waiting.

From *The Voice of the Silence*: The "Doctrine of the Eye" is for the crowd, the "Doctrine of the Heart," for the elect. The first repeat in pride: "Behold, I know," the last, they who in humbleness have garnered, low confess, "thus have I heard."



Respect means valuing others, so let's compose this symphony together



lead·er·ship (lĕ'dar-ship)
a leader. 2. A group of
ability to lead.
lead glass. Flint glass
lead-in (lĕd'in') n.
intention, that pre
that leads
ing card

Theosophical Leadership

Introduction:

Jan Nicolaas Kind – Brazil

“For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”

— John F. Kennedy

In 2008 members of the Theosophical Society Adyar democratically elected their International President. It turned out to be a highly controversial election. Until today the aftermath of that unfortunate epoch is still felt. It is not the intention now to open old wounds or to launch another series of useless bickering, on the contrary. But every self-respecting organization, so also the TS Adyar, should have the courage to look at certain events retrospectively and learn from them, so that any mistakes made may be avoided in the future.

Before long, at the latest in 2015, once more an International President will have to be chosen and it is quite possible that this time more than one candidate will be on the ballot. But having learned from the 2008 debacle, and looking forward to the future, even if there should be only one candidate, it is a good exercise to ponder on the subject of Theosophical leadership. What are the requirements and challenges for a modern leadership that will enable the largest Theosophical organization to find its rightful place in the world, serving humanity? Who could be suitable candidates? And how should members prepare themselves for that inevitable election looming on the horizon?

Theosophy Forward invites its readers to reflect on this subject and express their reflections, because the 2008 election proceedings were an example of how not to elect a leader. A repetition must be avoided. Constructive contributions are welcomed by the editor and will be carefully

considered for publication in the magazine. Thoughts in general, names, wishes, questions, suggestions, or demands, would be appropriate as long the tone remains positive.

The magazine Vidya, <http://www.theosophysb.org/site/publications.html>, edited by associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists in Santa Barbara, USA, published in its winter 2013 issue the following article. It deals aptly with the subject of leadership and is germane to all Theosophical traditions. Hopefully this fine piece is a first start leading to a worthy dialogue.

Send your reaction to: siteowner@theosophyforward.com

THEOSOPHICAL LEADERSHIP

Challenges to and changes in leadership are a very pronounced part of current news. Whether by secret conclaves, elaborate protocols, election upsets or violent coups, new leaders are presented to the world community in a dizzying and dramatic proof that we live in turbulent times when no leader can assume that his or her position is secure. Although ambition for power and wealth may motivate those who seek leadership positions, one cannot but sense that deeper currents of karmic justice are at work in magnifying the failures of contemporary leadership and stirring the enormous protests glimpsed on the nightly news. Not even the most venerated authority of religious institutions or popular monarchies are escaping the turmoil of dissent. As the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats observed, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." What is the problem? Why is respect for leaders and their power dissolving? Why are even the best and well-intentioned leaders failing to gain support and cooperation? Why won't the center hold?

What are the qualities of effective leadership? Some ideas easily come to mind.

A leader is one who initiates actions and shows a way for others to follow. A leader can articulate and connect some sort of vision or sense of a purpose to practical needs in a particular situation. A leader has courage and a willingness to take risks. A leader perseveres and finds a way to overcome

hindrances to a chosen path of action. A leader shows a compassion that inspires others to rise above the fears and divisions that inhibit cooperation and to do their best.

We can recognize and be inspired by historical leaders as well as those in more visible, contemporary affairs, but the question is: What is the difference in leadership referred to by the term, 'Theosophical leadership?' The answer in one fundamental way is found in the word "*theos*." Among its many rich meanings *theos* could be understood as that which is divine in wisdom and illumination, that which expresses the sacred and the spiritual, that which gives forth the most rich and comprehensive truth. Although the word "*theos*" may be attached to a being or to an entity, according to Theosophical teaching it conveys a central, abstract idea about what exists. That is a reference to the divine spark — that divine, sacred light that is at the core of everything that exists. It is the *Christos* in every atom. This divine spark or *atman* is the essential identity and higher self of every human soul. That spark is what enables us to perceive and to learn. The *atman* most directly activates and illuminates two very important principles in the human soul — the ability to discern what is true and right and good and the ability to reason at a level of understanding universal principles. When activated, those core capacities of the human soul called in Sanskrit the *buddhi*, and the *manas*, can in turn enlighten and guide the lower principles of the human being. Thus, we can integrate our highest powers with the more worldly of our principles, the lower quaternary of the physical body, the astral body and the forces that course through them.

Therefore, Theosophical leadership is leadership that is illuminated and guided by the *theos* within each human soul. That source brings a special kind of illumination and a special kind of understanding into the human consciousness and into communication and interaction with other human beings. One current ideal of Theosophical leadership is the Dalai Lama. We read about his discipline, his thorough commitment to a life of seeking sacred illumination, and we witness his tremendous energy, his sense of humor, his boundless compassion in the way he reaches out to each and all. Thus the Dalai Lama is a good example of leadership that is enlightened by the highest spiritual powers and energies available to a human soul. What is remarkable about him is that, having come as a refugee at a fairly young age, plunged into

a foreign land, he had to develop a concept of spiritual leadership in a secular society. When one reads about the hordes of people who make their way to the city in which he resides, it sounds like a circus. Yet he is there preserving something very sacred. As an exemplar of Theosophical leadership, he is seeking to awaken the best in each and every human soul. That does seem to be a particularly important motive for leadership that is empowered by the theos.

A spiritual leader wants to awaken a human soul and inspire it to do better. A leader encourages a pilgrim to tread the path that leads towards realization of a better, truer self, and ultimately to become an exemplar of spiritual evolution. Thus, a Theosophical leader would want to liberate a human being from all the kinds of karmic limitations of conditioned existence and promote the spiritual freedom of each and all. This aim would be pursued by a combination of wisdom and adaptive understanding of the needs of particular individuals in particular situations at particular times. Leadership is truly an art.

Theosophical leadership is also to be understood as that kind of leadership that is in line with the wisdom, purpose and mission of Theosophical adepts and all the great teachers who come to teach, to arouse, to awaken and to promulgate the great message of *Theosophia*. This might seem like a kind of leadership that is simply beyond most of us. One might hope to glimpse and be inspired by such a leader who brings light and knowledge into the darkness of an iron age. Yet this is a rare experience. Cannot more immediate examples of Theosophical leadership be found and understood at the level of ordinary people in ordinary life seeking to do the right thing? How could an ordinary person of average competence become a leader somehow reflecting the ideals and the capacities of the highest exemplars of Theosophical leadership? Thinking about that question several qualities of leadership in action in everyday life and for more immediate purposes come to mind. We have all had the experience of being in some kind of group trying to do something, build a house, print a magazine, organize a youth group, or whatever. Is not a faith in human brotherhood and the ethics of cooperation required for the success of any such project? How can we lead while just being one worker among many?

One of the first requirements of Theosophical leadership in daily life is to approach each and all with kindness — a virtue that the Dalai Lama speaks of often — to approach every human being, every situation with a heart filled with kindness. That is easier if one recognizes the fundamental identity of every human soul with every other and assumes that spark of the divine is in everything that lives. A strong sense of human solidarity implicit in this fundamental source of shared identity could be an unspoken but effective basis of communication and activity. That mental attitude right away brings those who perhaps not by choice, but by necessity, would lead, into a *rapprochement* with others. A leader must listen and engage in discussion and recognize the perspectives and the statements of the needs of others. Listening leads to a sense of mutual purposes and opens a mind to fresh opportunities for creative action. Thus emerges a synthesis of ideas that unites and inspires a community.

H. P. Blavatsky explained that all she did was to bring together several Theosophical ideas descended from ancient sources. She simply provided the ribbon that tied them together. We think that is a good metaphor for Theosophical leadership. In other words, it is not a leadership of imposing a particular idea, a particular plan of action, a dominant will, but a leadership that is open to suggestions and ideas and then has a way of synthesizing those ideas into an expression of a principle and then into a plan of action with a sense of future as well as of present needs. This is what distinguishes a leader from a follower who is yet to become a leader because, Theosophically, every human being could become a leader in some situation, somehow, somewhere. A leader may have only a little more knowledge or insight into the objective needs that are part of the cycle of the time. These needs according to Theosophy would have to do, again, with the inspiration, the liberation, the evolution of the human soul. This is leadership that enables others to see the benefits of becoming more like the sage, more able to be detached from the elements of the personality, more able to engage in a commitment with less baggage and fewer karmic anxieties.

A Theosophical leader would be able to adapt the teaching to a particular situation, finding ways to express it and yet never compromise on what is essential to the teaching and essential to the goals that promote human evolution. A Theosophical leader would have a very definite sense of

the sacred and thus, could bring into a situation opportunities for others to experience that very sense of the sacred. Ideally, Theosophical leadership will bring people together so that everyone can experience the brotherhood realized in a community of purpose that strengthens each and all as well as improves the likelihood that the goal of whatever task it is can be achieved.

Theosophical leadership would educate both in terms of the Teachings as well as in terms of the possibilities of effective practice. That is no easy purpose if you think of how many ways our lower natures pop up with opinions and negative reactions and various ways of increasing separation. Theosophical leadership would encourage everyone to engage in a kind of individual leadership by developing a discipline and ultimately a transformation in both consciousness and magnetic energy. That effort would then make them a better participant in a team or community, more willing to look for leadership in others than to demand a position of leadership.

This leadership would also recognize the need for ceaseless evaluation and correction. That is sometimes the tough thing to do because, when you are leading, there is a tendency to want to respond positively to everybody's ideas because that is in one way, part of the process. On the other hand, leadership will fail if it does not have an element of an objective evaluation of whatever the task is. Leadership may include some sort of admonishment of somebody in a group or a situation who is disturbingly off track. In serious, hostile situations one would at first try to learn from one's enemy or from any personality that has gone haywire in some way, and approach it with compassion. One would always draw the larger circle, holding out the possibility of transformation. Any particular person who is expressing negative emotions, perhaps caught in some bad karma, could, in the end, be made to feel that he or she has opportunity to do better. There is a major lesson to be learned from the story of the Buddha sitting outside the cave where a very dangerous evildoer was caught in his own pride of accomplishment, but was nonetheless attracted to the Buddha. The Buddha was displaying the calm of being in the still centre of the situation. Eventually that evildoer became one of his disciples, accepted responsibility for his evil actions and engaged in a full transformation.

The regeneration of human beings as well as the guidance of human beings is firmly the responsibility of the Theosophical leader. In the end he or

she seeks to help people experience the highest potential in their very being and thus increase their loyalty and their dedication to the common enterprise helping them become Theosophical leaders in turn. Must not leaders in secular positions also learn and practice some higher principles of human growth, brotherhood and environmental care? While contemporary monarchies delink their authority from claims of divine rights and sacred authority, could they not recognize the sacred aspects of their responsibilities? Must not all who would be leaders recognize the heartfelt aspirations of humanity for peace and opportunity for true fulfillment within the great harmony of cosmic evolution?



Mini interviews

Bianca Peeters
Barend Voorham
Carl Ek
Paulo Baptista
Ruth Richards
Sieglinde Plocki
Wim Leys

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.

Bianca Peeters



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

My name is Bianca Peeters. I am from The Netherlands. I have been a member of the Theosophical Society Point Loma- Blavatsky House since 2003.

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

When I became a member I became part of the editing team of our magazine *Lucifer- The Messenger of Light*. This magazine addresses current topics and problems viewed in the light of Theo-Sophia. It is for those who want to examine the wisdom of the bringers of light and the practical applicability of this wisdom in an open-minded and unprejudiced way. First I helped editing articles and later I started to write articles as well.

Since a few years I am also a member of our team of lecturers. Every year we discuss the needs of society that we see and we make a

program of lectures to address these problems in the light of the Theosophical teachings. We give lectures in eight different cities and also on request.

Every year in May we organize a symposium weekend on a specific theme. We prepare lectures and workshops for this symposium with a team of our volunteers. And we organize the sound and live stream, the logistics, and simultaneous translations from Dutch into English and from English into Dutch. I often volunteer to be involved in the lectures and workshops team and I am part of the translating team as well.

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

In December 2000 I read a small announcement in a local newspaper in my home town The Hague of a lecture on Buddhism given by the TS Point Loma. I was interested in the topic and decided to attend this lecture. What struck me first when I arrived at the hall was that I saw people handing out a brochure at the door and directing me to the lecturing hall. There I saw people giving explanations about the books on sale, others were behind the bar serving coffee and tea and some were working on the sound system. What was so special was that everyone worked together in such a harmonious way; everyone knew what to do and all were cheerful in a calm sort of way. And they noticed me and were friendly but nobody wanted to push me in any direction, but just let me be. This was very pleasant. Then I thought that if this was the result of what these people lecture about, I certainly wanted to know more about it! This is how I first learned about Theosophy: I saw how it was applied first and then I learned about the teachings in the lectures.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

I took the courses the Blavatsky House organizes for those interested to know more about Theosophy (*Thinking Differently* and *Wisdom of Life*). This gave me the keys to build a vision of life based on spiritual unity and boundlessness, of ONE life permeating all manifestations. Studying Theosophy has helped me to realize that we are all one and that brotherhood is a fact of life. Theosophy guides my thoughts and actions. I try to make Theosophy a living power in my life. I try to apply the Theosophical values in everyday life by approaching all as equally valuable spiritual beings who just like I, are learning to express this.

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

I do not have one favourite book but several. The most spiritual inspiration I get from *The Voice of the Silence*. It speaks to our compassionate Self and gives guidance to those who chose the Bodhisattva Path. And when I try to understand the technical teachings better, and this is also necessary to be able to help others, *Fundamentals* and *The Esoteric Tradition* of Gottfried de Purucker are very enlightening. De Purucker has the talent to structure the teachings in a very clear way and this stimulates the reader to think about them from a scientific, a philosophical and a spiritual point of view. And in *Letters That Have Helped Me* (William Quan Judge) I always find hints whenever I need to deal with a challenging situation in my life.

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

I think that the biggest challenge for the Theosophical Movement — for the Theosophical Society Point Loma-Blavatsky House and of all Theosophical organizations in the world — is to spread the original teachings as given by H. P. B., to deepen our understanding of them and to find the best ways to give them to the 21st century open minded seekers for truth. The most important question we stand for is how Theosophists can be good co-workers of the Lodge of Wisdom in helping mankind to overcome suffering.

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

The best I can wish for the Theosophical movement is that Theosophists consider themselves first and foremost part of this movement and feel mutually supported and connected by their common goal to help mankind and all other beings to bring out their spiritual essence for the good of all others.

Barend Voorham



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

My name is Barend Voorham. I am from the Netherlands and I have been a member of the TS Point Loma since 1981.

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

Yes, I am an active member of the TS Point Loma Blavatskyhouse. I study in my lodge, give lectures in different cities in the Netherlands, give the courses *Think differently* and *Wisdom of Life*, I am editor of the Dutch and English *Lucifer* and help to organize our symposium. By the way, it doesn't matter to me what kind of work I do. So if there is some other Theosophical work, I am glad to contribute to it.

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

When I was a teenager I was involved in politics. I thought that by

changing the structures of society I could help my fellow humans. But at the age of 20 I began to doubt it and started to look for a better way to alleviate the suffering in the world. A friend took me to the Blavatskyhouse. I was deeply touched. Theosophy gave answers to all the questions I had asked myself since I was a boy. It was that for me has never before an unknown mixture of logic, mysticism and above all compassion that overwhelmed me. I understood that only by changing mankind's mind can you create a better world.

Because of the fact that I had already planned a journey abroad, I attended the lectures just for a couple of months. But I could not forget Theosophy and when I came back in the Netherlands, I immediately took the courses, *Think differently* and *Wisdom of life* and became a co-worker.

4. *What does Theosophy mean to you?*

I cannot imagine my life without Theosophy. For me it is the very essence of life. Everything I undertake, I try to do in a Theosophical way. Just like a pregnant woman who, although she is doing her daily work, is always aware of the fact that she is going to get a baby, I try, while doing the duties of daily life, to have in mind the inspirational Ideal of Universal Brotherhood that thanks to Theosophy I have built up. I think that if Theosophy only plays a role in your life when you are in your lodge or among other Theosophists, you didn't get the point. Theosophy should play a role in everything you think and do: at your work, in your family, in your street and so on. Theosophy gives purpose, meaning, understanding, tools to cope with the problems and difficulties in life. And above all, it inspires to live a compassionate life. And that gives happiness.

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

The Voice of Silence by H. P. Blavatsky. It inspires to live the life of a chela and it brings you in the compassionate sphere of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. It clearly shows that compassion is the Law of Laws. But the *Secret Doctrine* is also very important for me, because it gives answers to the questions from where we came and where we are going to. But without the books of Gottfried de Purucker, especially *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, I would have grasped very little of the S.D. So this book is also one of my favorites.

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

That challenge is the same as in 1875 when the TS was founded: how can we realize the objectives of the TS?

We have to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. Theosophists of all organizations should be united in mind and heart to form that nucleus. We have to work for it. If we are not able to do this, we never can give Theosophy its rightful place in the world.

We have to keep the teachings pure and vivid. Therefore we should study Theosophy, ponder on the core ideas and change ideas in an open, impersonal way. Degeneration starts when scholars don't study Theosophy with an open mind and stick to their own personal opinions. The Theosophical principles should be the touchstone for all kind of scientific and social issues. Only when we have a clear idea of the Theosophical basis teachings, we are able to reach our fellow humans. We should use the language of today, without any concession to the original teachings as outlined by H. P. Blavatsky. We have to proclaim Theosophy loudly and clearly. We have to explain Theosophical core ideas in simple words to the public, so they recognize the value and will apply them.

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

I wish that all Theosophists work together brotherly in order to spread the Theosophical light among all peoples.

But wishing doesn't help much. We have the responsibility to *work* for it. The spiritual welfare of mankind depends to a large extent on the fact whether Theosophists are able to work selflessly and wisely for mankind. According to H.P. Blavatsky in the *Key to Theosophy* the 21st century will be a heaven in comparison with the 19th, provided that the TS succeeds better than its predecessors. The success of the TS depends on our work, devotion, wisdom and perseverance. I really wish that every student of Theosophy is aware of the importance of the Theosophical Movement and will do his utmost to contribute to the Work that the Masters and H. P. B. started.

Carl Ek



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

My name is Carl Ek, from Gothenburg in Sweden. I have been active within the Theosophical Movement for close to 25 years now. Five years ago I saw it was time for a revival of the Point Loma tradition in Sweden, and formed an Independent Lodge within that Tradition in Gothenburg. I have then had contacts with Point Loma groups in the US for a number of years, and via them I got contacts with the TS Point Loma, International headquarters Blavatsky House The Hague. Last year we were re-Chartered as a National Section of the Theosophical Society Point Loma. Sweden has a long and strong history within the Point Loma, so that felt as a natural step for us. I worked in other Theosophical groups from different traditions before, but it was in the Point Loma Tradition I really felt that I belonged.

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

National President in Sweden and Lodge President of the Lodge

Balder in Gothenburg. I give public lectures twice per month in Gothenburg, and lead study groups in our Lodge here in Gothenburg and in our Isis group in Stockholm (that soon will be formed in to a lodge we hope). I also participate a bit in the international work within the Point Loma Theosophical Movement. I also do quite a lot of work related to my interest in Theosophical history, and are now working on rebuilding the Swedish Point Loma archive (along with the pre-Point Loma time during the 1880's and 1890's of course, as much as possible, as it was partly shattered and partly destroyed during the 1950's).

I am also running our website: www.teosofiskasamfundetpointloma.se

Since about 17-18 years now I have been working as lecturer, national, and during the last years internationally as well, and also as a study group leader. Writing articles also.

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

I have Theosophists back in my family history, but none in my closest family when I grew up were Theosophists. I really can't explain how it happened, but when I was twelve years old I "fell over" some Theosophical books at the public library, along with some books about Theosophy written by none-Theosophists. It was W. Q. Judge's Ocean of Theosophy among others. In 1989 I attended my first Theosophical lecture. It was with Curt Berg of TS Adyar, and he talked about Reincarnation. About a week after I joined a study group run by Herbert Edlund, a member of TS Pasadena, on the Seven Jewels, and after that I knew that I had found the Movement that was my spiritual home. But it didn't take long until I found that it was in the Point Loma Tradition that I belonged to.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

It means a lot to me. It is my view on life and the world, as it teaches me my place in universe, and my relations with all other living beings. Theosophy gives me logical explanations to all the classical existentialistic questions, and all other questions I may have.

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

It is really hard to say just one, as there are so many. The Secret Doctrine, as for most Theosophists I think. But besides that Light on the Path

and G.de P.'s Esoteric Tradition are those two Theosophical books that mean most to me in my daily life. Two beautiful books that cover many of the aspects of my life and thoughts. When I read Gordon Plummer's The Way to the Mysteries, I read it first time during the mid-90's, it was a real eye opener for me, and it is book I found always useful in my study groups for those new in Theosophy.

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

In general for the Theosophical Movement I think one big challenge is to learn to not get stuck in its own history. But it is easier said than done, I know that myself.

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

Work for greater unity and respect among the various Theosophical Traditions, and by that we could together find a way to spread the light and blessing of Theosophy to a far greater number of people that are searching for meaning in life and seeking to know who they are and way they are. To show them the positive force Theosophy could be in their daily lives.

And another thing: never forget where we are coming from, our roots and what we were put here to do.

Paulo Baptista



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

My name is Paulo Baptista. I live in the same place where I was born 37 years ago, which is the very small archipelago of Madeira, located in the Atlantic Ocean, close to the North African Coast and which belongs to the Portuguese Republic. Despite its 800 km² (310 sq miles), Madeira is actually mentioned twice in *The Secret Doctrine* when H. P. B. quoted scientific research while trying to gather arguments put forward by contemporary researchers about the existence of Atlantis.

I am not affiliated with any of the Theosophical organizations.

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

I can speak of my very small contribution as an independent Theosophist. On the 11th November of 2011, I started my blog *Lua em Escorpião* (<http://lua-em-escorpio.blogspot.pt>) — the Portuguese words for

Moon in Scorpio — which is focused mainly on Theosophy, although many of the first articles dealt with astrology, something that I was studying more deeply at the time. Although there are some articles written by myself, on the last year or so the majority of the texts posted are translations of pieces written by Theosophists which belong to different organizations. David Pratt, Odin Townley, Pablo Sender, Barend Voorham and Jan Nicolaas Kind are some of the names who have given me permission to publish their texts in Portuguese on my blog and I am very happy for that. The writings should be valued for their content and not because they came from source X or Y. And that is what I try to do, to pick interesting pieces that can give new insights and information to the Portuguese-speaking readers.

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

Around the year of 2002, I received an invitation to go to a book presentation in my old high school. As the invitation was sent by my friends of the local delegation of the Portuguese Buddhist Union I attended the book presentation, although I had no idea of what was the subject of the books. It happened that one of the books was about Theosophy. The writer talked about root races, Lemuria and Atlantis and used strange words that I have never heard about. I went home intrigued and started searching the web about Theosophy. Not much time afterwards, I began ordering books and buying everything related to Theosophy in the local bookshops.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

Theosophy is the best framework that I have found until now to understand Life, and I do not think that I will ever find a better one. Theosophy gives me the best answers to all those classical questions that I believe that everyone should be asking themselves and that are related to the meaning of Life.

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

My favourite all time book is *The Voice of Silence*, because I consider it to be different from every other book I have read until now. It is hard to describe the experience of reading that book; it touches really deep your inner being. You understand what you are reading in a very peculiar and unusual way, but this is of course my own personal experience.

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

I feel that the biggest challenge is still to popularize Theosophy, without distorting it. It is difficult to hear the voice of Theosophy in a very noisy environment, full of distractions. The web is a tremendous powerful tool, and there are many out there looking for a way to understand Life and the Universe. But it seems to me that some of the organizations have not succeeded in spreading the word, and they are not taking advantage of the modern technologies. There are other challenges, but this appears to me the most important one.

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

In the short term, I wish that the effort that is being done by Theosophy Forward and many others can be successful in bringing together Theosophists from the different traditions that exist within the Theosophical Movement. I believe that cooperation between the various bodies of the Movement is paramount so that we can be successful in helping mankind to better face the challenges that lie ahead.

Ruth Richards



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

I'm Ruth Richards, MD, PhD, and pleased to be a member, with you good folks. I live in the Berkeley area of California, USA, work as Professor at Saybrook University, San Francisco, and continue a research affiliation with McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School in the Boston area, where I also lived, earlier on, for 20 years. But I'm back to this Berkeley area where I grew up and have much family. I have been a member of the TS for a long time, not even quite sure how long, but 10 years at first as a sort of mail-order Theosophist, just reading the membership literature and journals. Then I discovered that colleagues involved with me in interfaith spirituality activities in an organization called AHIMSA (www.AhimsaBerkeley.org) where I'm on the Advisory Board, were also Theosophists. One of them, Alex Pappas, was even President of the Oakland TSA Chapter. Surprise! I've been involved with that chapter since then.

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

We meet regularly, study the Secret Doctrine, help plan and put on public events, and I will be speaking at one of these as well this coming year. I am also on the Advisory Board for this group. I have also been privileged to be a participant for the last three years in the ITC conferences, which I heard about through Garrett Riegg, another member (and current President) of our group. I am definitely an advocate of Theosophical Unity — as part of our greater efforts in recognizing and honouring our brotherhood of humanity. If we can't do it, then who can?

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

Interestingly I don't recall the first contact. What I do recall is going to the post office to mail my application, and feeling the stirrings of a sacred act.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

We are all beyond privileged to know there is more to our existence than our mundane daily life and daily self. Without the teachings and teachers I've been honoured to encounter, in many contexts including Buddhist, I would know basically ZIP. Zero. Let us be grateful and let us share. Here is a door and a path, indeed a path to share joyfully, in the spirit of love, compassion, and brotherhood. Just think of those who have no clue. As in Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, this involves a path of practice — and not an easy one (speaking again as a practicing Buddhist and inter-faith advocate) and a path of knowledge which interacts with and furthers our ability to practice and to help others.

As per the 2nd and 3rd objects of Theosophy, let us maintain open minds, tuned to possibility, not anchored in the fixations, beliefs, and biases of the past. Let us pursue cross-disciplinary learning (after all, it is we humans who have chopped it us into disciplines). Let us deepen our understanding. Let us not shirk from considering possibilities not yet embraced by the mainstream scientific community — and this can refer directly to the brave and fascinating ITC keynote address this year by Dr. Dean Radin, who shows how anomalous phenomena are anything but — and furthermore are intrinsic to progress on the spiritual path. So see his earlier book, *The Entangled Mind*, and his new one, *Supernormal*. Yes, we can and all should be supernormal!

How the norm will change. My own talk at ITC built on this theme as well (very much an interest of H. P. Blavatsky) while looking at the powerful and sometimes sneaky or unconscious ways we humans can resist the new, in ourselves or others, and especially resist findings that may threaten our entire worldview.

5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?

The Voice of the Silence, one of H. P. Blavatsky's last two books, is a book of practice as well as knowledge, surely known to most or all readers here. It brings wisdom along with beauty in its writing and in its truths. The steps are not simple, but even the earliest attempts can bring new peace and joy. In the longer run we can fundamentally transform, and in a way that arches across lifetimes and aeons, and will necessarily also benefit all beings.

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

For the TS in general, surely a huge challenge remains communicating the message, and helping open minds and hearts. How do we offer what is truly of value to our greater purpose in a world of distraction, where people (us too!) can be pulled mindlessly here and there by what in Buddhism is called the three poisons (greed, hatred, ignorance) and in Theosophy represents dominance of the lower self.

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

That we may all consistently live what we study and believe, practice each day (however briefly), offer benefit to others (only we can change ourselves) and keep the greater promise of our possibility always before us. Easier said than done? Thanks for this thoughtful interview!

Sieglinde Plocki



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

My name is Sieglinde Plocki, I live in Berlin, Germany and have been a member of the TS since January 1982.

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

In 1955 President Mary Linné converted Die Theosophische Gesellschaft, Deutsche Abteilung into the organizational independent Die Theosophische Gesellschaft – Arbeitskreis Unterlengenhardt –. Mary Linné's Presidency (starting from 1955) was followed by Irmgard Scheithauer (1984) and myself (2009) as actual President. The Society re-chartered in June 2013 as German Section of The Theosophical Society Point Loma – Blavatskyhouse (Die Theosophische Gesellschaft Point Loma – Blavatskyhaus / Deutsche Abteilung).

I am also active in the Lodge Sûrya in Berlin, which has a study group open for members and non-members. Furthermore I am editor of the German

quarterly: *Der Theosophische Pfad*, and I am holding introductory courses to Theosophy upon request.

A yearly Convention and Summer School at Bringhausen/Edersee (mostly in June) and participating at international conferences as much as possible are also on the agenda as well as various translating activities (e.g. W. Q. Judge, *Echoes of the Orient*, articles from various Theosophical magazines) and other things. Those activities are planned and prepared now in working groups.

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

A friend of mine in 1981 told me about open meetings of the Sûrya Lodge of Die Theosophische Gesellschaft – Arbeitskreis Unterlengenhardt – which were held then at a private apartment by Irmgard Scheithauer. I went there only once and from the first time I knew: this was what I was searching for all my life. There was no doubt, no questioning afterwards, no need for further search in other groups or societies. I had found my place, and life changed from that very moment.

4. What does Theosophy mean to you?

Theosophy gives answers to all questions of life – it gives hope and takes away all fears and insecurities: We are part of the Eternal One. Nothing can harm us, nothing destroy us – we have the security, that all our deficiencies can and will be overcome during our course through the universes and times on our eternal journey, we can and will, with the help of Karma, balance out all our failures and get rid of the dust of the lower personalities faults. We cannot be separated from anything or anybody, because we are one in essence – this makes the experience of death of our beloved ones so much easier to bear. The unlimited space lies ahead on our endless journey – ever becoming more and more awake, widening our consciousness. What greater help could we get to master our lives and fulfil our duties? The broadness and depth of the Teachings which give the deepest thinker fields to explore, but they can at their shores also be understood by the developing mind of a child. In short: for me Theosophy is life itself.

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

This question is difficult to answer. It has changed during the years I am studying Theosophy. At the beginning it was Judge's *The Ocean of Theosophy*, which I liked because of its overview on the system of Teachings. Then came *The Esoteric Tradition* by Gottfried de Purucker – he managed in an extraordinary way to explain the teachings in today's language in his very special way from heart to heart – we had it in Germany published in single chapters. This gave us the possibility to recommend them to interested “newcomers” in accordance to their special field of interest – be it Buddhism or Natural Sciences or else. One little book by GdP – as we call him – was always in my handbag: *The Golden Precepts*. I had the custom to open it randomly in the morning and always found the right words for the day in it.

In the evening my best company was and is *The Voice of the Silence*. *The Secret Doctrine* was always my companion for the preparation of studies at Lodge meetings and – whenever there was a possibility also for my studies (which I must admit: due to the manifold duties I have to fulfil were less than wished) – at home.

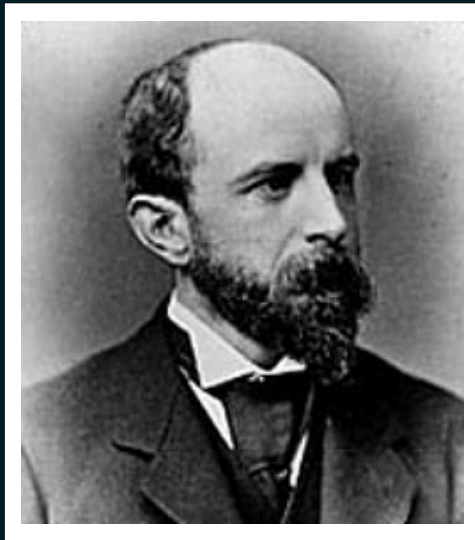
6. *What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS) is facing at the moment?*

I'd like to speak for the challenge all Theosophical organizations are facing: We all have experiences from the past, traditions, thought patterns and behaviours, which are the result of past actions and from which we can and must learn – this is important for all of us. But on the other hand, times and conditions are constantly changing. We cannot change the past anymore, but it is important to have visions for the future, to be as open minded as possible to the point of view of other students of Theosophy – unimportant from which organization – and to use the touchstone of the Teachings to broaden our own view, while keeping to the pure originals at the same time. Mutual respect and trust is the basis for cooperation and brotherhood. We made a good start, e.g. with ITC, but this has to be deepened and continually practised.

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

I do wish, that our striving for more harmony, for that brotherly working together which we have started for the benefit of mankind gets

stronger and stronger and students of Theosophy – the becoming Theosophists – stand united (not necessarily organizationally, but in mind and heart) and show to the whole world, what universal brotherhood means in practise. To live, what we have learnt and still learn and to demonstrate, that Theosophy is no theory or just a philosophy, but THE LIFE, is my greatest wish. Let us all together be servants for humanity and all that lives.

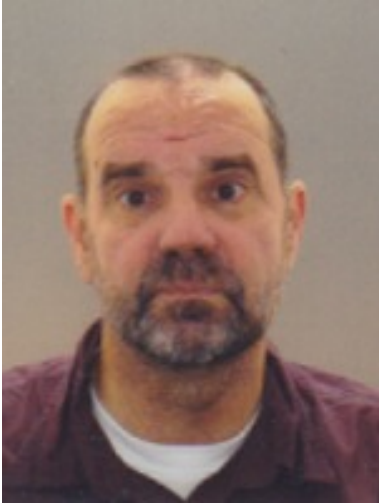


Unity is vision; it must have been part of the process of learning to see.

Henry Adams

(American journalist, historian, academic and novelist).

Wim Leys



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

Wim Leys from The Hague, The Netherlands. I've been a member of the TS (Adyar) since 2003, but I have been studying Theosophy since the 1970's.

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

I am active in the Lodge of The Hague as chairman for the second term of three years now. Before, I had been treasurer for three years. With other members of our lodge I'm involved in creating our program of public lectures, courses and study groups every year. I give an 'Introductory course to Theosophy' each year, and lead a study group 'Secret Doctrine'. Since June of this year, 2013, I'm also a member of the National Board of the Dutch section.

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

My background is that of a friendly and un-dogmatic Christianity. In my teens I became interested in mysticism and eastern religions. In my twenties, the late 1960's and the 1970's, I expanded that quest. I got acquainted with most of the esoteric groups in The Netherlands, and started studying the esoteric in a broad sense, including Theosophy, anthroposophy, astrology, Rosicrucian teachings and so on. I chose to become a member of a Dutch Gnostic Rosicrucian group until 2002, when I found it had become too sectarian and dogmatic. In 2003 I decided to join the TS Adyar, because it was the most tolerant and un-dogmatic of the esoteric societies, where freedom of thought and a universal outlook are self-evident. Thousands of people organised in hundreds of spiritual directions of good will and striving against materialism. Don't say they are wrong or evil just because there are differences with your group and your teachings. Recognize the truth in each and every individual and in each group. The TS Adyar does that.

4. *What does Theosophy mean to you?*

A compass for self-realization; a standard for living; a guide for acquiring knowledge; a touchstone for philosophy; a companion on the Path; daily inspiration.

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

There are quite a few. At the feet of the master by Alcyone, who was indeed Krishnamurti (See '*Did J. Krishnamurti write 'At the feet of the master'?*' by S. Lloyd Williams in Theosophical History Vol XIV, no. 3-4, 2010). But of course also *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, *The Key to Theosophy* and Annie Besant's *The Path of Discipleship*.

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

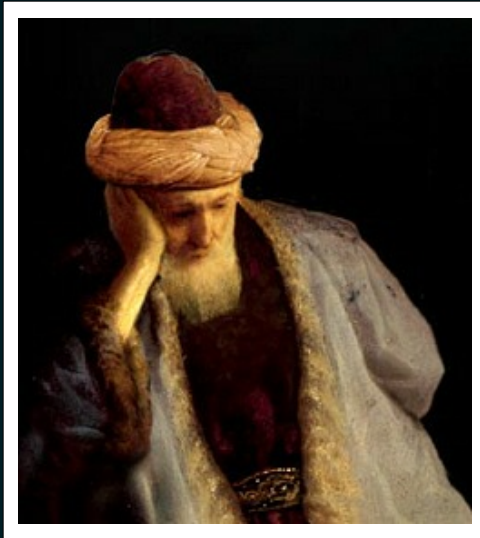
To appeal to the younger generations and to attract new members all over the world; the TS must still exist in the 22nd century. I hope all members understand that means work to do. So not only studying together and looking inwards, but also looking outwards and spreading Theosophy, especially the idea of the one truth underlying all religions because a lot of religious

ntolerance in the world is still opposing progress and the establishment of peace and freedom, hindering evolution. Here Theosophy can help.

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

I'd wish for the diverse Theosophical groups to stop negative judgement of the others through speaking, writing and the internet. We don't have to forcefully unite; we can stay ourselves, but let's understand that to all the others in the different Theosophical societies *The Voice of the Silence* evokes the same devotion and sincerity every day in them as in ourselves. Who am I or who are you to judge and criticize the other person's heart of hearts?

And what kind of impression do you think Theosophists quarrelling about things that happened more than a hundred years ago, and at the same time advocating universal brotherhood, make on other people striving for spiritual development, in or outside of groups?



Why struggle to open a door between us when
the whole wall is an illusion?

Rumi

(a 13th-century Persia poet, jurist, theologian,
and Sufi mystic).

Good News

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Good News from Bhubaneswar, India

Educating about violence to women in Bhubaneswar, India

We are happy to announce a TOS project that we are adopting for international support over the next two years. We invite you to share the information with your fellow TS and TOS members and friends.



As the media show relentlessly, violence against women continues to know no boundaries. The TOS has decided to reinforce its activities to defend women who are being subjected to unthinkable abuse.

For many years, the TOS has been giving attention to education and vocational training for young girls, as well as medical attention and parenting skills training for mothers. Dr Deepa Padhi, Vice-President of the TOS in Odisha State in India and President of the Mahabharat TOS group, is going a step further. In the state capital of Bhubaneswar (pop. 850,000 or 1.7 million if including larger metropolitan area), she has launched a multi-faceted programme to change people's mind-set and stop violence against women. We hope that what she is doing will serve as a model to TOS groups elsewhere. This is only a beginning.

The campaign was officially launched in January 2013 by State Governor, Sri Murlidhar C. Bhandare, who invited the hundreds present to take a New Year pledge to treat women with respect and not discriminate against them at home or in the workplace. The book *Living Courageously*, written by Lipa Rath, a TOS member and herself a victim of violence, was released at the event.

"We have now begun creating awareness among different sections of society," TOS President, Deepa Padhi said to the many reporters present. "We are working initially in slum areas to educate people on the importance of gender equality, of schooling for female children and on the cruelty of stigmatizing the victims of violence. We are using street plays, documentary films, posters and banners. Our first awareness programme took place in mid-February 2013 in Niladri Vihar slum. We have many presentations planned for this year."

Deepa Padhi reports that her team also intends to make women aware of the support available from the State Women's Commission and Mahila Police Station. Legal literacy workshops will be organized in various educational institutions and work places by the TOS. A counseling centre for women's rights will be opened. Violated women and girls will be given free legal and social advice. Pre- and post-marital counseling will also be available.



Odisha Governor, M.C. Bhandare, signs a saree with the affirmation “Empower women, empower society (humanity)”.

Deepa’s most ambitious plan includes direct citywide communication through billboards, banners and posters in English and in the local language, Odiya. She explains that slogans have to be chosen according to what is suitable and understandable in the local culture, of course. Here are the ones used so far:

Empower women, empower humanity.

Change the mind-set to stop violence against women.

From womb to tomb, woman is being abused.



TOS President, Deepa Padhi (centre), is flanked by a member of the State Commission for Women in Odisha and a researcher on gender equality. They are presenting an awareness programme in a slum area about the rights of women.

Enough is enough.

Women demand justice now.

Here are some of the slogans we have submitted to Deepa for her publicity campaign:

To assault a woman is the work of a coward. To protect a woman is an act of courage.

Don't blame the raped, blame the rapist.

It is never right to raise your hand against a woman. End abuse!

Break the silence on men's violence. Stop abuse of women.

Sexual relations without consent is RAPE.

Women's rights are human rights. End abuse!

Love shouldn't hurt. Say NO to abuse.

Men of quality respect women's equality.

Educate a man and you educate an individual. Educate a woman and you educate a family.

Empower women, empower humanity.

Men: Violence towards women is a choice you don't have to make.

Don't let women's rights in India get left behind.

When men are oppressed, it's a tragedy. When women are oppressed, it's a tradition.

Deepa has written to schools and colleges seeking permission to put up billboards and banners. She has written to banks and companies for sponsorship of billboards. (Commercial billboards are too expensive for the TOS to rent without help from companies. So far, one has agreed to help.) Banners have already been put up in slum areas where awareness programmes have taken place.

In mid-May, Deepa had a breakthrough: the Mayor of Bhubaneswar unveiled the first billboard and dedicated it to the people of Odisha. He was so



Here we see the unveiling of the first billboard by the Mayor of Bhubaneswar

impressed by the design and text of the hoarding that he declared that he would sponsor four billboards in the city. He also expressed his desire to be a member of the TOS group.

Would you like to support Deepa and her TOS team as they raise their voices against violence? How about sponsoring your own billboard poster as the TOS in Australia and New Zealand plan to do?

If you would like to help, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please write to the International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin at tosinternational@wanadoo.fr

For more information regarding the TOS click here: [....](#)



Good News from Switzerland and Italy

From March 15th to 17th in 2013, an annual seminar of TS Switzerland and TS Italy took place in a quiet and beautiful Hotel, Ascona, situated in Tessin, Switzerland.

It has become a tradition over the years that members and sympathisers from both Switzerland and Italy gather in Ascona to investigate and to ponder deeply on Theosophical principles.

This year the overall theme of the seminar was “Evolution – Theosophical Perspectives.”

Some 60–70 people took part in the seminar, creating a warm atmosphere with a sense of serious inquiry. The idea of evolution was approached from different standpoints by many people from various countries.

Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Chairperson of EFTS, shared with the audience some inspiring thoughts about changing the paradigm – how a shift should take place from “I, me and mine” to the losing of self-centredness. Using practical examples, she described this process from the standpoint of purifying different planes of human nature – ethical, intellectual and spiritual – and how they correlate with the Three Objects of the TS. She pointed out how the first Object is related with the ethical side of one's life, the second Object corresponds to intellectual aspect and how the third Object is related with the spiritual aspect of one's nature, and how, without laying the foundation through the first two points, it is futile to expect any progress on the spiritual sphere.

Each morning of the seminar Lama Yeshe Losal, from Samye Ling Buddhist monastery in Scotland, gave some instructions about meditation. In his lecture he explained how Western people are often worrying too much about unnecessary things and how they have the tendency to over-think, suggesting at the same time some simple ideas: among them Shantideva's guideline: “Why be unhappy about something if it can be remedied? And what is the use of being unhappy about something if it cannot be remedied?”

Besides Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu and Lama Yeshe Losal, some ten members from different lodges in Switzerland and Italy – among them Antonio Girardi (GS of TS Italy) and Andrea Biasca Caroni (President of the lodge in Ascona) – shared their thoughts about evolution. EFTS Executive Committee member, Krista Umbjarv also gave a short talk on the same theme.

The seminar came to a close with a distinct feeling by members and sympathisers of being glad that they had had the opportunity to participate, and that they were able to carry back, along with themselves, some inspiring thoughts on the journey home.



Ascona

Good News from ITC

The 15th Annual International Theosophical Conference held from August 8 - 11, 2013 in New York was a grand success with more than 250 registered participants.

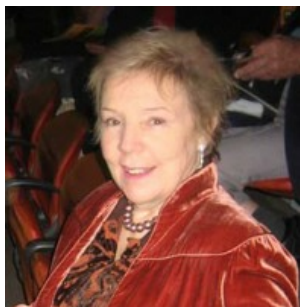
Intercommunication among all Theosophical traditions is a fact and that is good! The 2014 Conference will take place at the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, Holland from August 15 - 18. Next year's theme title will be: **Theosophy, Unity and Helping the World ... where do we go from here?** More details will follow soon.

Watch all the recorded talks of the **ITC Conference in New York**, including the **Convivium** that preceded it here: [....](#) and here: [....](#)



Participants of the 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference in New York

Good News from New Zealand



Pamela Zane Keys

[Pamela Zane Keys is learning via a mystic path leading through an early and valuable Christian experience to special interests in the Sufi Way, Gnosticism and Buddhism. Theosophy, she says, 'made sense' of her life. Pamela's formal studies included Education, Psychology and Theology. She has also travelled widely.]

Pamela's teaching has spanned more than 50 years and she enjoys editing *TheoSophia*, the magazine of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand.

In Finding A Different Way – Part 1, Pamela wrote, "While we may think of the latent powers referred to in the Third Object of the Theosophical Society as extraordinary and spectacular, I have recently realized that they may also be small and outwardly indiscernible yet inwardly life changing."

In Part 2, she talked of how important it is to allow other people into the learning and healing process.

Finding a Different Way – Part 3

It has been a year since I found the lumps in my breast that sent me to see the doctor who confirmed I had breast cancer for the second time and needed a full mastectomy. Around the same time, I lost a dear friend to cancer. The burden of that combined grief threatened to crush me and it was only

through the re-discovery of the power of forgiveness that I was able to shed past hurt and grief to better cope.

Now I seem to be fully recovered from the mastectomy. At a recent visit, the surgeon who usually talks statistics and percentages with me, as well as issuing dire warnings since I gave up the anti-cancer medication, has pronounced me healed. He added, to my surprise, that I will stay well because of my positive attitude and that positive people heal faster and stay healthier, according to recent scientific research.

However, my thoughts have not always been what the surgeon might call positive.

Over this last year, I have practised my death in my mind many times as well as planned the funeral. I have cleaned out cupboards and given things away. I made myself ready to die by silently reviewing my past in the wakeful night hours, by telling those I love how much I value them, and writing stories that have been in my head for years. Having prepared myself to go, I am also keen to stay and so I research and action healthy habits, ways to live, think and be. These ways mainly involve daily prayer and meditation, religious practice, improved diet, daily walks, simple exercises, hugging, laughing, smiling and being connected with lovely people.

Fortunately, I had a near death experience about 15 years ago which freed me from the fear of dying. I had been rushed to hospital in septic shock and as I lay on the bed with my body shaking uncontrollably, I made the decision to stop trying to fight it. I had been silently calling out to God for help but finally, I let go and prayed, "I've had an interesting life; if it's time to go, I am ready." ... and I gave up.

With that yielding came a wonderful peace. I was finally physically still but somehow I was also looking down from above on my two daughters standing beside the bed where I could see my body looking like an old coat I'd cast off. I heard my elder daughter say in a shocked tone, "She looks like she's dead!"

In my high place, surrounded by peace and joy, I found her reaction funny because suddenly I was aware that my old body was nothing. I'd just outgrown it. I knew there was no need to be sad. It was the same as looking back into childhood and remembering how wonderful and precious those first

shiny shoes seemed. Now we know there are far finer things both to have and to be experienced in life. We have grown in wisdom and understanding. So it was that day. I began to laugh inside me but then I saw my daughters' sorrow and realised they didn't understand. When I felt how sad my daughters were, their grief called me back to be with them. I wanted to comfort them and help them to know that all was well.

The next thing I was aware of was being in a private room with a nurse sitting near the foot of my bed. Over me, as if in a dream, figures worked to heal me. Every time I woke they were there but in the morning the nurse told me no one else had been in the room with us.

Friends came to the hospital to give me spiritual healing and when the Charge Nurse declared, "There will be no healing in this ward!", some sympathetic nurses quietly found us a room to work in and supported the complementary practice.

Looking back on this time, I am grateful for the experiential inner knowledge that after this life there is much more and that we leave this world behind just as we left our toys behind when we grew up – reaching out for more wonder-filled things.

One of the wonder-filled things I have found in this life has been finding a different way of being, through this last year. I had recalled that researchers report that rats, given the task of finding their way through a maze to a reward, will eventually change and try different ways to achieve their goals. Yet we humans tend to keep acting in the same old ways while still expecting outcomes to change. For me, that realisation of the need to change came when I had breast cancer for a second time and lost my dear friend Jan, to cancer. It made me wonder if there was more for me to learn through the experience of cancer and if somehow I had missed it the first time. That is when I decided I would find a different way to experience cancer this time round.

Jan, who had died the same week as I had been diagnosed with breast cancer, had taught me the difference between being brave and being stoic. They are two quite separate things to my mind. I was stoic the first time I had breast cancer in 1991, secretive about its effects on me and I busily carried on with my life – barely touched by the whole experience. Perhaps it

was through this denial of the situation that I missed the true lesson of the cancer experience and now had an opportunity to do it again – properly this time. Dear Jan was brave and endured to the end, always caring and loving her friends as well as all of life. However, she was not stoic but highly articulate in her descriptions of the pain, discomfort, indignities and disappointment she experienced. Jan was inspirational in her eloquent style that meant we friends shared her journey. She also moved me to treasure even more deeply the relationships I have and to reach out to others just as Jan herself invariably did.

The learning through Jan's example, prevented my keeping this cancer journey quiet this time and pretending it was of no consequence – as I did 20 years before. Now I let my husband Warwick come with me to clinics, investigative imagery appointments and follow- up treatments. I also asked for prayer when it was offered and unexpectedly received a bodily experience – in every cell – of infilling of Spirit for which I was and am still, deeply grateful. This was indeed part of a different way.

While I determined to be positive, I eventually shared how badly the post-operative medication was affecting me so that I not only felt so ill I wanted to stay in bed but also doubted that life was worth living any more. After realising my symptoms were side effects of the medication, I chose to terminate the treatment and began to feel well again. Soon after, on my birthday, I was fortunate to hear Mother Maya Tiwari speak and read her books. She is a cancer survivor who has become a healer and a type of guru. Through her I learnt: I am not the mind [or body], I am awareness and I took the Ahimsa (non-violence) vow: I make inner harmony my first priority. This was a very different way for me and challenged old habits of thought and action.

These insights kept me well and happy for many months until eventually I found myself wondering again what I was still here for. I had physically recovered from surgery and medication. I could now look at myself without crying or wishing I hadn't lost my breast. I was well and wanting to be engaged with life again. Not content to be a human being, I tend to be a human doing and now wondered how I could contribute even though I was not teaching any more. While I was glad that I had been able to continue editing a

quarterly esoteric magazine, there was a need to do more. I intensified my meditation practice, prayed and waited.

Eventually, into my mind came the memory of being asked years before to write inspirational texts sharing my teaching experience, philosophy and practice for teachers in some theosophically-oriented Manila schools that provide free education for impoverished children who could otherwise miss out. Hesitantly, I emailed the theosophist who had set up the schools and enquired if he still wanted articles for his teachers. He did. So has begun a very happy and inspired period of writing for the teachers doing such good work. With the writing has come a feeling of excited happiness within me which I think is actually pure JOY. I just hope the articles help to encourage the teachers – they certainly encourage me. I almost feel guilty that what I hoped could be a service to others is in fact blessing me, perhaps demonstrating the New Testament words (Acts 20:35), “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

In following this different way, I have stopped many times over this last year when I have caught myself feeling defeated, negative or unworthy and consciously chosen to change that. I have done it by praying, meditating and expecting to discover a new and different way to be. Sometimes I need to forgive or accept and sometimes I need to change my responses and expectations. We are not meant to be victims and everything that happens to us can be turned to the good. I need to stop judging – myself, others and circumstances. People and events are what they are. It's up to me how generously and lovingly I can respond.

In the past I doubted my entitlement to ask for good things for myself and stoically accepted as my lot, the hard and horrible events that came along. It was a sad habit.

Now I am expecting the highest and the best and have recently asked that my life be loving, strong, healthy, long and productive. This is certainly a different way for me.

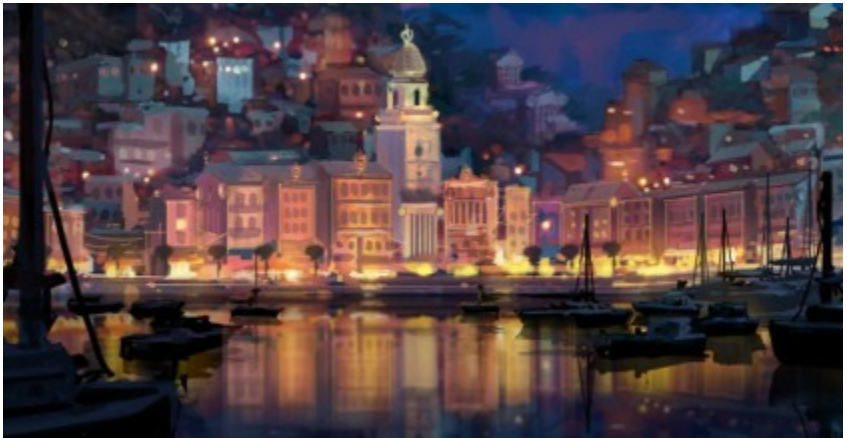
Good News from Portugal

The Portuguese Section of the Theosophical Society (Adyar) expresses its happiness for having received Miss Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Chairman of the European Federation of the Theosophical Society, from the 23rd to the 28th of May, 2013. Miss Kim-Diêu is very well-known among the members of the Portuguese Section, and the wisdom which she has shared with all in the last ten years has been always a great source of inspiration.

Miss Kim-Diêu visited Porto, Lisbon and Évora.

At Porto a talk was delivered to the members and sympathizers of Dharma and Horus Lodges. The theme was “The Dharma of the Theosophical Movement.” About 25 participants attended the session.

The second talk, open to the general public, was delivered at Lisbon. The theme was “Crisis, Progress, Evolution: Which Perspectives?” About 50 participants attended the session.



Porto

The last talk, also public, was delivered at Évora, which is a World Heritage Site at the Public Library of the town. As during the previous visits to Évora, where Miss Kim-Diêu is always appreciated, the municipality of the town integrated her talk in its weekly cultural program. The theme was “The Salvation of Humanity Resides in the Revolution of Oneself.” About 45 participants attended this event.

The three talks were complemented with sessions of questions and answers, giving the opportunity to all the participants to reflect on and deepen different aspects of the themes.

The talks which formed a trilogy were deeply interlinked. From “The Dharma of the Theosophical Movement”, deepening our understanding of various aspects of the theosophical movement and its importance in the today’s world, to “Crisis, Progress, Evolution: Which Perspectives?” giving an ampler view of crisis and clarifying the difference between progress and evolution, the last talk emphasized the urgent need of the revolution of oneself as the means to the salvation of humanity. Indeed a subtle link between the



Évora

three talks gives to this trilogy a deep theosophical meaning, based on a vision where tradition and modernity are interwoven without any contradiction.

The Portuguese Section of the Theosophical Society, in a very respectful but also affectionate way, thanks Miss Kim-Diêu for having shared with us her pragmatic vision and her deep thoughts on the different subjects, always with great attentiveness and clarity interlaced with humor.



Lisbon

Good news from the EFTS

INVITATION

You are invited to the
European Congress 2014

Bridging Science and Spirituality

30 July to 3 August

Paris, France

(Opening: 30 July morning—Closing: 3 August before lunch)

Working languages of the Congress are English and French

* * *

Organised 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 expected and will be announced.

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)



The Adyar Theatre

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.

Registration

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. The last day to register for the European Congress is May 15, 2014.

Meals/Drinks

Vegetarian lunch (lacto-ovo-vegetarian) will be served daily (from 30 July till 2 August included) by a special caterer either on the premises of the TS France or nearby. On special request vegan lunches will also be served.

The price of meals is 60 Euros for all four days or 17 Euros for one meal.

During breaks drinks (coffee-tea) are 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 are published on the website of the European Federation of the Theosophical Society www.ts-efts.org

At the same time registration will begin via the website of the EFTS or other channels.

While waiting, if any urgent information is needed, you can contact us via email at: congress@ts-efts.org

Come and join us in wonderful Paris!!!

Good News from the IPF

The Indo Pacific Federation Conference, Bali, Indonesia, November 1– 6, 2013.

The Indo-Pacific Conference will be held in Bali, Indonesia from 1 to 6 November 2013, starting with arrivals on 1 November and 6:00pm dinner, and finishing with breakfast on 6 November and departures.

This special Triennial event is hosted by the Indonesian Section.

Guest Speakers to include Ravi Ravindra from Canada and Vicente Hao Chin, Jr. from the Philippines with further distinguished speakers from many of the Indo-Pacific Sections.



Ravi Ravindra



Vicente Hao Chin Jr.

Theme of the Conference: “Practicing Theosophy”
Conference Venue: Wantilan Convention Centre



Accommodation: Aerowisata Sanur Beach Hotel, Bali (twin share rooms). Sanur Beach Hotel Bali is located on the sandy beach at Sanur. The resort is surrounded by 7 hectares of tropical gardens with many mature trees and coconut palms and is about 25 minutes from Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport.

Convention Costs: Rp 3,850,000 (approx. US \$400.00)

The costs include:

Twin shared accommodation,

Breakfast, lunch and refreshments during the conference.

Wifi access from room.

Coffee and tea making facilities

2 bottles of mineral water in your room daily.



Accommodation



Conference room

Dinner on the 1st and 5th November. As there are a lot of quality dining establishments outside the Hotel area we will be eating out on 2nd, 3rd and 4th at the venue of our choice.

There will be an outing on one of the days (4th) arranged by the Indonesian Section where we will visit some of the places of spiritual significance on the Island of Bali. There will be an extra cost for this outing.

For detailed information regarding this event follow this link:

<http://ipf-ts.org/>

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Maria Montessori (1870-1952)



Maria Montessori

Italian educator and Theosophist who was born at Chiaravalle near Acona on August 31, 1870. She gained her degree in medicine from the University of Rome in 1894, the first Italian woman to do so. She also earned a degree in literature. As a doctor, Montessori became involved in the treatment of children with disabilities and devised a special method of treating and educating them. Her method soon proved suitable for more general application and became known as the Montessori Method.

During the First World War, Montessori, who was then in India, risked internment as an enemy alien and was given sanctuary at the Theosophical Society (TS) headquarters at Adyar near Madras (now Chennai). She died at Noordwijk, Netherlands, May 6, 1952.

Montessori's method of education focused on two essential elements: gaining the sustained interest of the child by the provision of various educational items that have significance in developing skills and also allowing the child a considerable degree of latitude for individual choice of study. Under her method, children learn to read, write and count before they are six years of age. Montessori Schools have been established in many countries and flourish to the present time. Her last book, *The Absorbent Mind* (1949) was devoted to the education of children under the age of three years and a book published a year earlier, *To Educate the Human Potential*, demonstrated the value of teaching children about pre-history.

Anna Kingsford (née Bonus) (1846-1888)



Anna Kingsford

Was born September 16, 1846, at Stratford in Essex, England. She joined the Theosophical Society (TS) in January 1883. Kingsford never enjoyed particularly good health and as the youngest, by a margin of several years, in a large family, she tended to be isolated and solitary. From her earliest childhood she seems to have been conscious of a “mission” and according to her own recollection she came into reincarnation to fulfil it, even though she was strongly discouraged from doing so because of the extreme suffering that awaited her. She seems to have tended to disregard her human parentage and claimed to have “fairy” origin. The story is told of her first visit to a pantomime; when the fairies appeared on the stage she insisted that they were her proper people, crying and struggling to get to them with such an uproar that it became necessary to remove her from the theater.

During her girlhood she seems to have been chiefly occupied with the writing of poems and stories and had a poem published in a religious magazine when she was nine years old. A story she wrote when she was thirteen years of age, “Beatrice: A Tale of the Early Christians,” was accepted and published.

One gift that Kingsford manifested early in life was that of clairvoyance, but due to the hostile reception she received from her family she learned to hide the knowledge she had of the destinies of those around her.

In 1867 Anna married a cousin, Algernon Godfrey Kingsford, with the understanding that she should be free to pursue her "mission" no matter where her destiny should lie. Her husband decided to study for holy orders and she enthusiastically joined with him, thus gaining a considerable theological knowledge. She also joined the woman's suffrage movement, but became disenchanted when she discovered that the leaders tended to deny their femininity.

In 1870 Kingsford became very ill and returned to her parent's home to be nursed through a long convalescence. At this time she claimed to have received angelic visitations at night pressing her to join the Roman Catholic Church into which she was confirmed on June 9, 1872. The following year she embarked on a quest for a medical degree by entering and passing the matriculation examination at the Apothecaries Hall. Forthwith the English medical authorities closed their schools to women. Nothing daunted, she pursued her studies in Paris and eventually qualified as a medical practitioner.

During the years when she was studying Kingsford had formed an association with Edward Maitland and in the summer of 1881 they presented lectures to a London audience which in the following year were published under the title *The Perfect Way, or the Finding of Christ*. The book dealt with esoteric Christianity and attracted the attention of Helena P. BLAVATSKY who wrote in praise of its authors (CW IV:296). After the arrival of *The Perfect Way* in India, Henry S. OLCOTT invited Kingsland and Maitland to join the TS as President and Vice-President of the British Branch, commenting that "He and Blavatsky recognized in that book knowledge of which the Eastern Adepts had believed themselves to be the exclusive possessors, having been safeguarded by them from the remotest ages" (*Light*, 1893, p. 104). In January 1883 Kingsford and Edward Maitland, her associate, were elected, on the nomination of Charles C. MASSEY, President and Vice-President respectively of the British Theosophical Society.

In 1884, Olcott visited the London Lodge and found that all was not well. Kingsford, single-minded as usual, had insisted that the members should concentrate on the study of Christian and Egyptian oriented mysticism to the exclusion of the more Indian leaning of theosophy as promulgated by Alfred P. Sinnett and Blavatsky. The two factions seemed irreconcilable, so Olcott suggested to Kingsford that she form a new lodge for which he would grant a

charter. This was done and for a while the new branch, called the Hermetic Society, flourished, but the premature death of Kingsford in 1888 left the new Society without a leader and it soon ceased to exist.

During her short life Kingsford embraced many causes, but she is chiefly remembered for her uncompromising stand against the torture and maiming of animals in the cause of scientific experimentation. She combined beauty, intelligence, and high ethical standards. She pursued her course in life with great courage, never allowing the rampantly male dominated society in which she lived to deflect her from that course.

Publications include:

The Perfect Way; or the Finding of Christ (with E. Maitland), *The Credo of Christendom, Addresses & Essays on Vegetarianism* (with E. Maitland), *Clothed With the Sun, Dreams and Dream Stories*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Life of Anna Kingsford* (2 vols) 1896, by E. Maitland.

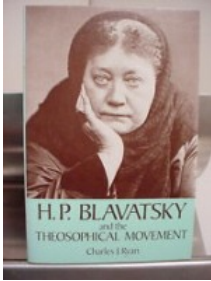
The Theosophist, Aug. 1917 p. 570.

Theosophical Year Book 1938, p. 191.



Charles James Ryan

(1865-1949)



Artist and author. Ryan was born in Halifax, England. His father was Irish, descended from the Ryans of Idrone, Tipperary; his mother was English. Ryan became an artist like his father whom he succeeded as headmaster of the government School of Art in Ventnor, Isle of Wight. Both father and son exhibited at the Royal Academy, London.

In 1894, Ryan joined the Theosophical Society, Point Loma, and in 1900 was invited by Katherine Tingley to its international headquarters then in Point Loma, California. For a near half-century until his death Ryan contributed his literary, artistic and scientific talents to instructing both young and adult students there and at Covina, where the headquarters and university were transferred in 1942. Ryan is best known to theosophists for his work, *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement* (1937).

Ianthe Helen Hoskins

(1912-2001)



Ianthe Helen Hoskins

Prominent member of the Theosophical Society - Adyar. Hoskins was born December 23, 1912, in Florence, Italy. She was one of twins born to Richard and Ida Hoskins. Her twin sister was named Aglaia. At the outbreak of World War I the family was repatriated to Britain in August 1915.

After the war the family resided in Enfield, Middlesex, and it was here that Ianthe Hoskins graduated from Enfield County Grammar School, continuing her education at Westfield College, Hampstead, where she gained a B.A. degree in French and Latin. Work was hard to obtain during the years of the Great Depression, but eventually she secured a post as teacher at King Edward VI Grammar School.

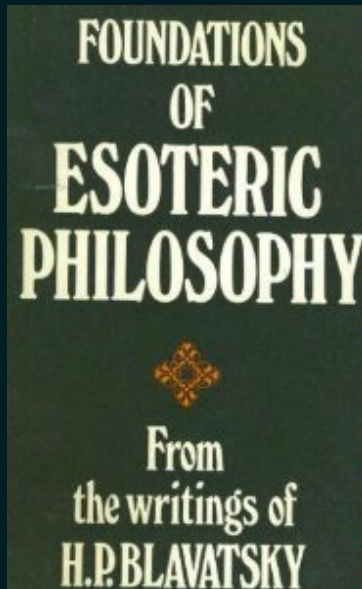
Hoskins joined the Theosophical Society in 1936 and her professional work took her to many places in England and as a consequence she was, over time, a member of seven different lodges. In 1950, at the age of 38, she delivered the prestigious Blavatsky Lecture entitled *The Science of Spirituality*.

Hoskins retired from teaching in her mid-fifties to devote her time to her Theosophical work. In 1968, 1970 and 1993 she was Director of the School of the Wisdom at the International Headquarters, Adyar, and conducted courses in 1983, 1986 and 1989 at Krotona, California. In 1982 she helped to launch the European School of Theosophy at which she served as an instructor every year until the late 1990s. Being fluent in English, French,

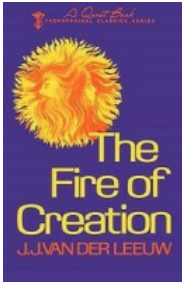
Spanish and German she was welcomed in many countries as a speaker for the Theosophical Society.

She was a keen exponent of Raja Yoga and published a book on the subject entitled *The Flower of Yoga*. Hoskins served for a number of years as General Secretary of the English Section.

She died in London and her body was cremated in Eltham Crematorium, South London, on September 20, 2001.



Johannes Jacobus van der Leeuw (1893- 1934)



Eminent Theosophical writer. He was born on August 26, 1893, and joined the Theosophical Society – Adyar in 1914. Van der Leeuw gained his LL.D. at Leiden for a treatise on cyclic law. He was ordained a priest of the Liberal Catholic Church. He was General Secretary of the Netherlands Section 1930-31, was awarded the Subba Row Medal in 1925 for his book *The Fire of Creation*, and founded the King Arthur School for boys in Sydney, Australia, which continued only for a year. He was killed in June 1934 when his aircraft crashed during a solo flight in South Africa.

His small book, *Gods in Exile*, (1926, T. P. H., Madras) is particularly significant as one of the few Theosophical texts that offers a way to apply the teaching to practical ends, that is, to raise consciousness to a higher level. First published in 1926, it has remained in print to this day, running through eight editions.

Publications include: *The Conquest of Illusion*, (1928); *Gods in Exile*, (1926); *The Fire of Creation* (1925).

Theosophy in Uruguay

In 1896 an enigmatic person known as Count De Das, visited Uruguay, as recorded in a 1912 issue of a magazine entitled *Faro Oriental* (Eastern Beacon). After his visit, the word “theosophy” became known in Uruguay through the foundation of a group known as “Centro Ocultista y Teosófico” (Occult and Theosophical Center). Many intellectuals became members of this group, one of whom was Joaquín Carbonell, born in Spain but working at the University of Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay, as professor of lineal and topographic drawing.

About 1896 or 1897, Mr. Carbonell publicly declared he believed in the existence of an occult world, a declaration that shows how much interest existed in the study of Theosophical ideas. By 1900 two Theosophical Lodges and some study centers operated as part of the Argentine Section.

In 1921, Annie Mennie Gowland, born in England but residing in Buenos Aires, capital city of Argentina, started visiting Uruguay to lecture in various parts of the country. In Montevideo, she stayed in the *Alhambra Hotel* and gave lectures in its main hall. Consequently, the Bhakti Marga Branch was founded, followed by the Leadbeater Branch. Sophia Branch, which had been dormant, was revived, and the following new Branches were formed: Gowland, Morya, Ariel, and Gautama.

In 1923, the Hiranya Branch of Montevideo operated as part of the Theosophical Society in Argentina. One of its members, Juan Geis, helped to form the “Centro Libre de Estudios Teosóficos” (Independent Center of Theosophical Studies), which met in the headquarters of *Círculo de la Prensa* (Press Center), a highly respected organization.

On October 10, 1923, Besant Lodge was created, whose committee members were Luis Vigil, President; Mario Radaelli, Secretary; Francisco Díaz Falp, Treasurer; with Francisco Alvarez Alonso, Lumen Cabezudo, Carlos de León, Alberto Casinelli, and H. Casinelli, as additional members.

On November 7, 1924, members of the above-named Lodges applied to Annie Menie Gowland for a Section Charter as the Theosophical Society in Uruguay. The application was sent to Adyar, and the Charter of the Theosophical Society in Uruguay was issued on January 5, 1925, signed by J. R. Ciria on behalf of President Annie Besant. The Charter listed the following Branches, with the names of their Presidents: Ariel, Mario Radaelli; Besant, Washington Zarza; Bhakti Marga, Enrique Dieste; Hiranya, Juan Geis; Krishna, Fernando Casanova; Leadbeater, Doroteo De La Sierra; and Sophia, Constante Corso. After many years of activity in a rented place, the members were able to buy an old two-story building in the central part of Montevideo. Although it needed repairs, it accommodated the Section's library, a hall for public lectures, a kitchen for vegetarian meals, and a back garden. In spite of its present centralization in Montevideo, the Theosophical Society in Uruguay has had, and still has, members who reside in other cities and in the countryside who work to spread Theosophical teachings.

Since the celebration of the centennial of the Society in 1975, the work carried out in lodges and through lecturers has transmitted the new spirit in the orientation of the movement which was introduced in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The Theosophical Order of Service has been active, mainly through the regular work of two groups: the Healing Ritual and Circles for Peace. The Theosophical Society in Uruguay or its members have published several magazines, synthesizing culture and spirituality. Theosophical lecturers often come, particularly from Argentina and Brazil. Those two Sections also participate with the Uruguayan Section in holding events in Montevideo as well as elsewhere in Uruguay.

In 1975, a weekly radio program broadcast was started reaching almost the whole country and part of Buenos Aires city in Argentina. The name of the program was "For a Better World." After twenty years of broadcasting, the National Committee of the TS took over responsibility for the program, but unfortunately after a short time, that work stopped.

The T.S. Library is considered as one of the most important on spiritual and esoteric topics in Uruguay, receiving requests from many parts of the city and also foreign countries. Members can visit it to borrow books and the general public can use it to read books, free of charge. It has publications from 1895, Theosophical magazines from many parts of the world, special

sections in English, French, German, Portuguese and even *The Secret Doctrine* in Russian. It has about 5,000 books and other publications collected from 1895 to the present time, audio cassettes containing lectures and music, and a collection of video cassette recordings on Theosophical and related subjects.

After membership declined, the National Section charter, was replaced by a certificate of Regional Association issued on 20 April, 2000. In 2012, only five Lodges remained, meeting regularly once a week, with public lectures on Saturday evenings. The Theosophical Order of Service is active helping the community in several ways, as well as members who face difficult circumstances. The Section also offers classes on vegetarian cooking two days a week. The income from those classes covers the expense of the materials they use. These classes provide cooked food for all who attend them.

Thanks to Dolores Gago



Uruguay from space

Bahmanji Pestonji Wadia (1881-1958)



B. P. Wadia

A Theosophist who was one of the pioneers for the cause of the common laborer, and for independence for India. He established the first labor union in India, and worked in the Home Rule Movement of India, leaving perceptible theosophical traces on all he supported; this was in the teens and the twenties of the 20th century. Wadia joined the Theosophical Society (TS) in 1903. During the thirty-five years after his resignation in 1922 from the TS he lived and labored anonymously through the UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS (1922-1958) for the cause of Those whom Theosophists call the Masters of Wisdom.

Wadia was born on October 8, 1881, in Bombay, India. He was a direct descendant of the philanthropic brothers Bahmanji Pestonji and Ardeshir Harnosji Wadia, the founders of the Wadia Parsi (i.e., Zoroastrian) Fire temple in Bombay.

Wadia's studies took him up to the "matriculation examination" (1899). Thereafter, for a short time he worked for an English firm, but resigned when he found that service in its business house meant at times a deliberate departure from truth, on occasions, when business interest demanded it.

During 1899, he received two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* written by Helena P. BLAVATSKY. As he read and studied it, it seemed that he awakened to deeper purposes for living. He deliberately chose Blavatsky as

his guru. His daily contact with this work remained virtually unbroken throughout his life.

Looking around for a suitable organization through which he might channel his efforts, Wadia chose the Theosophical Society. He made application in 1903 and was accepted. He worked thereafter in the Bombay Branch of the TS. Shortly after the death of President Henry S. OLCOTT 1907 he went to work at the Headquarters at Adyar.

The plight of low-paid laborers in the Buckingham and Karnatic textile mills at Madras (now Chennai) came to his attention when a delegation of these called upon the then President Annie BESANT, asking for assistance. She asked Wadia to attend to the matter for her, as her delegate. He entered into that work with enthusiasm, and campaigned with success for the cause of the laborer and in April 27, 1918, he founded the first Labor Union in India. In 1914, India was involved in the fortunes of Britain during WWI and it was been assumed that India would be granted independence as a result of its cooperation with Britain in that War. When this proved false, Besant launched her Home Rule Movement and Wadia volunteered to assist in this work. He was interned in June 1917 by the British Indian Government along with Besant and George ARUNDALE, only to be released in September of that year.

When in America in 1919, Wadia became acquainted with the work of the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT) and decided that William Q. JUDGE had been dealt with unfairly by the Theosophical Society, Adyar. In 1922, he resigned from the TS, Adyar, and joined the U. L. T.

On the 18th of February, 1955, Wadia laid the corner stone of a seven floor building that was to house the Bombay U. L. T. The new building was opened by him with an inaugural talk on November 17, 1958, to an audience of over 700 who came from all over India and from several foreign countries. The U. L. T. also maintains a lovely building, containing a lecture hall and extensive library, in Bangalore, India.

Wadia died in Bangalore, India, after a short illness on August 20, 1958.

Medley

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Friendship

by David Bruce – USA

[As a young child, David Bruce learned about Theosophy from his mother, Vera Bruce. In 2003 he joined the staff of the Theosophical Society in America where he worked as the director of education until 2010, at which time he assumed the responsibilities of national secretary, a position he holds to this day.]

Aristotle, Facebook, and Friendship

I'll begin with a question: "Who doesn't need friends?" To pose that question is to beg the obvious, because the need for friendship is so deeply ingrained in human nature. The young need friends ... and so do the elderly. The poor need friends ... as do the prosperous. Ordinary people need friends ... and so do celebrities. People in positions of power need friends ... as do the rest of us. So, to rephrase the original question: Who needs friends? The answer, of course, is everybody.

It may be said that a life of wealth without friends would be a sad and lonely existence; but a life filled with the laughter and love of dear friends would be a life that is rich indeed. Throughout the ages, this has been one of those enduring truths of human existence. But what exactly is friendship? And who can define it? Ask ten people and you will likely get ten definitions, similar perhaps, but not identical. Even Plato, in his dialogue on friendship, *Lysis*, does not provide us with a conclusive definition.

The English writer Hugh Kingsmill once amusingly referred to friends as "God's apology," meaning that by allowing us to choose our friends, God was making amends for our families. So, what is a friend? Most of us would agree that a friend is different from an acquaintance. But that doesn't get us very far. When it comes to friends, we talk of those who are "close," "old," "out-of-town," "professional," "male," "female," "fair-weather," and sometimes "high-maintenance." In regard to the last, Oscar Wilde once said of a certain individual, "He has no enemies, but he is intensely disliked by his friends."

We might also consider whether the nature of friendship has changed in recent times. For example, has it been permanently altered by the Internet and social media? Will traditional friends eventually be replaced by the new “virtual friend”? I don’t pretend to know the answers to these questions, but I do suggest that we start our inquiry by looking at what some of the great intellects have said on the subject.

With friendship being such an essential part of human happiness, you would think there would be an abundance of literature on the subject. Oddly enough, there isn’t. But there are some thoughtful comments, and we can begin with Aristotle. Why Aristotle, you might ask? Because more than most other thinkers, Aristotle had a profound and lasting influence on Western culture. Moreover, he wrote an in-depth treatise on friendship, which, after more than 2300 years, still bears examination.

Aristotle said that a person who took delight in solitude, who did not feel the need for human companionship or friendship, was either a wild beast or a god. That may be a slight exaggeration, but he had a point. You and I are social creatures and very few of us could do without human contact for a prolonged period of time. If Aristotle had gone to the Oracle of Delphi, and asked her to look into the twenty-first century, no doubt he would have been amazed at today’s Internet technology, which has brought us a host of social networking sites, making it easier than ever to have more friends. Take Facebook, for example. Do any of you know how many users it has? The number is one billion (as of October 2012 and doubtless rising).

Before the Internet, landline or cell phones, e-mail — how did friends communicate in those days? If you had been living in sixteenth-century Europe, how would you have stayed in touch with your friends? Well, the way most people did so then was simple. They got together and talked, face-to-face. If your friend lived far away, you wrote letters. Of course, then it took longer to deliver mail; communication generally was much slower. But letters were written by hand and therefore were very personal, each person’s handwriting being unique.

Today, people still talk to one another, but you have to wonder if our reliance on technology is not causing us to lose some of the skills that go into making artful conversation. You have to wonder if we are not sacrificing quality

for quantity, thoughtfulness for speed. Today, instead of talking face-to-face, we resort more and more to texting or postings on social media sites. That enables us to stay in touch with a greater number of people than was possible twenty or thirty years ago and to do so much more quickly. As one writer pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal*: “Texting is all about speed and convenience ... It’s about making brief comments ... It’s about getting quick answers (“Love Is a Many-Splintered Thing,” by Jim Sollisch, 8/21/12). OK. That may be a good thing. We’re all busy and we appreciate the efficiency that technology brings. But what happens if all, or most, of our communications take this form? As the *Wall Street Journal* writer pointed out: “In all this hurry, there isn’t time to explore emotions, and the end result is often a deep-seated feeling of loneliness.”

Moreover, are all the people on our Facebook page *really* our friends? Or is the Facebook “friend” a clever marketing euphemism, which we apply indiscriminately to all those who fall within our ever-expanding circle of contacts? You sometimes hear people boast that they have 100 or 200 friends on Facebook. That may be a good thing ... or not. As social psychologists have recently discovered, there is a profound sense of loneliness among people who spend inordinate amounts of time on social media sites. The apparent irony is this: “How can you be lonely with 200 friends?” In her book *Alone Together*, clinical psychologist Sherry Turkle says: “Research portrays Americans as increasingly insecure, isolated, and lonely. We expect more from technology and less from each other.”

When I mentioned the apparent irony of increasing loneliness despite an abundance of Facebook friends, I chose the word “apparent” deliberately. Because any intelligent person, upon reflection, will realize that all those contacts on social media sites do not constitute true friends. Some may be, but many are not. In light of all this, social networking technology (despite its obvious benefits) has a potential downside, which consists of (1) A watering down of traditional friendship to a fragmented relationship of convenience; (2) A blurring of the lines between casual acquaintances and real friends; and (3) An erosion of the virtues that traditionally have made friendship special, to be replaced by the trivial, artificial, and superficial. As a result, many people have deluded themselves into thinking they have more friends than they really do. They’ve confused quantity with quality, popularity with durability, and

grandstanding with intimacy. Therefore, it is time to revisit the idea of what constitutes a friend — for which the best way is to begin with Aristotle.

Aristotle wrote a detailed treatise on friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The fact that it is still read today, some 2300 years later, is a testament to his enduring insights into human nature. Aristotle viewed friendship as a necessity. Unless one is a god or a wild beast, one is going to be in need of friends for various reasons: The young need friends to guide them and help them from making mistakes. The elderly need friends to help them with things they can no longer do for themselves. The poor need friends for assistance and as a refuge from their troubles. The prosperous need friends with whom they can share their prosperity. People in positions of power and influence need friends to help protect their status and to bestow favors and beneficence.

Another prominent writer from antiquity was Cicero. Three centuries after Aristotle wrote his treatise on friendship, Cicero wrote an essay entitled “De Amicitia” (On Friendship), in which he expanded upon the thoughts of Aristotle. Cicero said that with the exception of wisdom, the greatest of all possible gifts was friendship.

A millennium and a half later, the English Renaissance writer Francis Bacon said this in his essay on friendship: “When we share our joys with our friends, we rejoice all the more; and when we share our troubles with our friends, the burden becomes less.” About the same time, the French philosopher Montaigne also wrote an essay on friendship in which he noted that “our free will has no product more properly its own than affection and friendship.” In other words, we have the ability to pick and choose our friends. As Hugh Kingsmill remarked, friends are “God’s apology” for our families.

What constitutes friendship? Aristotle listed two qualifications: (1) Friends must be well-disposed towards each other: goodwill and (2) This feeling must be recognized and returned: reciprocity. He pointed out that sometimes people confuse a feeling of good will with friendship. For example, we can have a feeling of good will for people we don’t know personally, but whom we admire or respect from a distance. Or we may confuse friendliness with friendship. For example, you may project congeniality in all of your social interactions. But mere good will and congeniality do not constitute friendship. These qualities, rather, provide the basis upon which a friendship may be built. Cicero added another qualification for friendship: the willingness to give and

receive advice. Everybody likes to give advice. How many enjoy receiving it? If there is a feeling of mutual goodwill, as Aristotle stipulated, then such an exchange of advice is possible. Being the astute observer of human behavior that he was, Aristotle listed three basic types of friendship according to their basis: (1) utility, (2) pleasure, and (3) goodness.

Friendships based on utility are relationships in which each party hopes to gain something from the other: a case of quid pro quo. They're often based on business or professional relationships. In friendships of this type, the people involved tend not to spend a lot of time together. They may not even like each other very much. But even if they do have a positive and warm feeling toward each other, these friendships are temporary and often come to an end when that relationship is no longer useful to one or the other. For example, when I worked in electronic distribution, we had a number of manufacturer's sales reps call on us. They'd take us out to lunch, give sales presentations on their newest products, and sometimes go golfing with the boss. However, if our company decided for some reason to drop their product from our line card, that relationship quickly came to an end.

Another characteristic of friendships based on utility is that they can easily give way to complaints if either party thinks he's not getting what he should out of the relationship. I experienced that with our sales reps. Difficulties often arose if they felt that we weren't promoting their product line, or if we added one of their competitors to our line card. Aristotle would call these types of friendship incidental because those involved are not loved for their actual qualities of character, but for whatever benefit each party derives. This view is echoed by the philosopher Montaigne who said: "What we ordinarily call friendships are nothing but acquaintances and familiarities, which are formed by chance or convenience." The philosopher Seneca, who lived a hundred years after Cicero, called these "fair-weather friendships": "This explains the crowd of friends that clusters about successful people and the lonely atmosphere about the ruined — their friends running away when it comes to the testing point."

On a lighter note, the Chicago writer Joseph Epstein, in his book *Friendship — An Expose*, speaks affectionately of "foul-weather friends." They meet only in the winter, or when it is raining, because on all other days one friend is out on the golf course. Seneca also talked about the temporary nature

of friendships not grounded in anything beyond convenience: “The ending inevitably matches the beginning: a person who begins to be your friend because it pays will similarly cease to be your friend when it pays him not to be a friend.”

Friendships based on pleasure are pointed to by Aristotle as friendships formed between young people, because their lives are largely regulated by their feelings. And, since feelings are prone to change, these types of friendships are often ephemeral and short-lived. But adults also enjoy friendships of this type: Some examples might be your tennis partner, the members of your local hiking club, the guys you play poker with on Friday nights. And there is nothing wrong with these relationships, for we all need time for fun and relaxation in our busy lives. But we should remember that such friendships can quickly come to an end when one or the other party no longer derives pleasure from the association. And that, in fact, is often what happens.

Friendships based on goodness, according to Aristotle, are the ideal type of friendship. They are based not on utility or pleasure, but on mutual goodness. And by goodness, Aristotle is referring to the classical virtues of character: courage, compassion, generosity, steadfastness, loyalty, sympathy, and so forth. Friendships of this type tend to last a long time. As Theosophists, we might say for lifetimes. This is the type Cicero was talking about when he referred to friendship as “the greatest of all possible gifts.”

At this point, a skeptic might ask if it is even possible in this day and age to find a friendship that lives up to ideals set forth by philosophers such as Emerson, Montaigne, and Aristotle. In this increasingly fragmented world, is such a friendship possible? Is it realistic? Perhaps the best we can hope for are specialized but limited types of friendship, such as your workout partner at the gym, a co-worker with whom you often go out to lunch, your friend on the softball team, your neighbor from the local PTA.

Maybe a friendship based on noble qualities of character is no longer feasible in these fast-paced times. But this much is certain. You cannot create a friend simply by adding another contact to your Facebook page. You cannot maintain and nurture a friendship by simply “texting” at your convenience, while expecting the other person to drop everything and respond immediately.

And you cannot develop intimacy and trust when your every casual remark is posted online to be read by scores of people. But why is this? Why can't we simply use modern technology to have all the friends we want? We depend on technology to solve all our other problems — or so it seems.

Aristotle has already given us the answer. It takes time to develop the trust needed for friendship to develop. It takes time to really get to know a person, to get beyond the surface façade that we often project on social media sites. As clinical psychologist Sherry Turkle says in her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*: “The ties we form through the Internet are not, in the end, the ties that bind. But they *are* the ties that preoccupy.” Remember Aristotle's two qualifications of friendship: (1) mutual good-will and (2) reciprocity. Without either of these two conditions, you don't have a friendship.

Another point is that true friendship touches us deeply. Kahlil Gibran says in his book *The Prophet*: “Let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.” There is nothing wrong with friendships based on utility. Nor is there anything wrong with those based on pleasure. Chances are, many of our relationships fall into those two categories. But while these are useful and necessary, they rarely touch the core of our being. Furthermore, problems sometimes occur when we confuse those secondary types with friendships based on goodness. That happens when one or the other partner in a friendship fails or forgets to remember the basis of their relationship. Aristotle observed that most quarrels between friends arise when that happens. And it sometimes occurs when one person deliberately misrepresents his motives to the other.

Comparing true friendship with the secondary types, Montaigne said: “Let not these other, common friendships be placed in this rank.” “I advise you not to confuse the rules of the two. You must walk in those other friendships bridle in hand, with prudence and caution. The knot is not so well tied that there is no cause to mistrust it.”

Finally, we can end with a question raised by Aristotle in his *Ethics*: What is the optimum number of friends one should have? The answer depends on the type of friendship involved. (1) Utilitarian: Some are necessary, but not too many. Life is too short for us to be obligated to return favors to a

large number of people. (2) Pleasure: Again, a few are sufficient, just like a pinch of seasoning in our food. (3) Goodness: Because of the requirements of time and intimacy, there is a limit. Generally, a small circle of intimate friends is sufficient. In this case, less is more.

As we make use of today's Internet technology, let us not mistake the "virtual friend" for the genuine article. Although we may find it helpful to use social media sites to network with others for reasons of job or career or to use those sites as a convenient and efficient way of staying in touch with family and other acquaintances ... if we are looking for something of value, something timeless, something more precious than any gift, then ... in the end ... all we need is a few good friends.



Christians Tweet More Happily, Less Analytically Than Atheists

A computer analysis of nearly 2 million text messages (tweets) on the online social network Twitter found that Christians use more positive words, fewer negative words and engage in less analytical thinking than atheists. Christians also were more likely than atheists to tweet about their social relationships, the researchers found.

The findings are reported in the journal *Social Psychological & Personality Science*.

"Whether religious people experience more or less happiness is an important question in itself," the authors of the new analysis wrote. "But to truly understand how religion and happiness are related we must also understand why the two may be related."

To identify Christian and atheist Twitter users, the researchers studied the tweets of more than 16,000 followers of a few prominent Christian and atheist personalities on Twitter. They analyzed the tweets for their emotional content (the use of more positive or negative words), the frequency of words (such as "friend" and "brother") that are related to social processes, and the frequency of their use of words (such as "because" and "think") that are associated with an analytical thinking style.

Overall, tweets by Christians had more positive and less negative content than tweets by atheists, the researchers report. A less analytical thinking style among Christians and more frequent use of social words were correlated with the use of words indicating positive emotions, the researchers also said.

"If religious people are indeed happier than nonreligious people, differences in social support and thinking style may help to explain why," said University of Illinois graduate student Ryan Ritter, who conducted the research

with U. of I. psychology professor Jesse Preston and graduate student Ivan Hernandez.

The findings are also in line with other studies linking greater levels of social connectedness to higher well-being, Ritter said.

“Religious communities are very social. Just being a member of a religious group connects people to others, and it may be this social connection that can make people happier,” Preston said. “On the other hand, atheists had a more analytical thinking style in their tweets than Christians, which at extremes can make people less happy.”

Previous research has found a positive association between religion and well-being among Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims. But most such studies rely on individuals to report how satisfied they are with their lives or their experience of positive and negative emotions at a given time.

“What’s great about Twitter is that people are reporting their experiences — good or bad — as they occur,” Preston said. “As researchers, we do not need to ask them how they feel because they are already telling us.”

Christians appear to be happier than atheists on Twitter, but the authors caution that the results are correlational and “this does not mean atheists are unhappy overall or doomed to be miserable,” Preston said. “If religion improves happiness indirectly through other factors, those benefits could also be found outside religious groups.”

For more interesting articles look here:

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/06/130626143106.htm>



Focus

by Leo Babauta – USA

A simplicity manifesto in the Age of Distraction

Part four

Focus rituals

**“My only ritual is to just sit down and write,
write every day.”**

Augusten Burroughs

Focus and creating are about more than just disconnecting. You can be connected and focus too, if you get into the habit of blocking out everything else and bringing your focus back to what's important.



One of the best ways of doing that is with what I like to call “Focus Rituals”.

A ritual is a set of actions you repeat habitually — you might have a pre-bed ritual or a religious ritual or a just-started-up-my-computer ritual. One of the powerful things about rituals is that we often give them a special importance: they can be almost spiritual (and sometimes actually spiritual, depending on the ritual). And when they become special, we are more mindful of them — we don’t just rush through them mindlessly.

Mindfully observing a ritual is important, especially when it comes to focus, because often we get distracted without realizing it. The distractions work because we’re not paying attention. So when we pay attention to a ritual, it’s much more conducive to focus, and then to creativity. Mindful attention to a ritual also helps keep it from becoming too rote or meaningless.

It’s important to give importance to each ritual, so that you’ll truly allow yourself to focus and not forget about the ritual when it’s not convenient. For example, you might start each ritual with a couple of cleansing breaths, to bring yourself to the present, to clear your head of thoughts of other things, and to fully focus on the ritual itself.

Let’s take a look at just a few Focus Rituals. Please note that this isn’t meant to be a comprehensive list, nor am I suggesting you do all of these. It’s a list of ideas — you should try ones that seem best suited for your situation, and test them out to see what works best.

1. Morning quiet. You start your day in quiet, before the busy-ness of the world intrudes on your peace of mind. If you live with others, you might want to wake before they do. The key to enjoying this focus ritual is not going online. You can turn on the computer if you just want to write. You can have coffee or tea and read. You can meditate or do yoga or do a workout or go for a run. Or take a walk. Or sit quietly and do nothing. The key is to take advantage of this peaceful time to rest your mind and focus, however you like.

2. Start of day. Begin your work day by not checking email or any other distractions, but start a simple to-do list on paper or with a text file. On this blank to-do list, just list your three Most Important Tasks. Or if you like, just list the One Thing you really want to accomplish today. This helps you to focus on what’s important. Even better: continue this focus ritual by starting



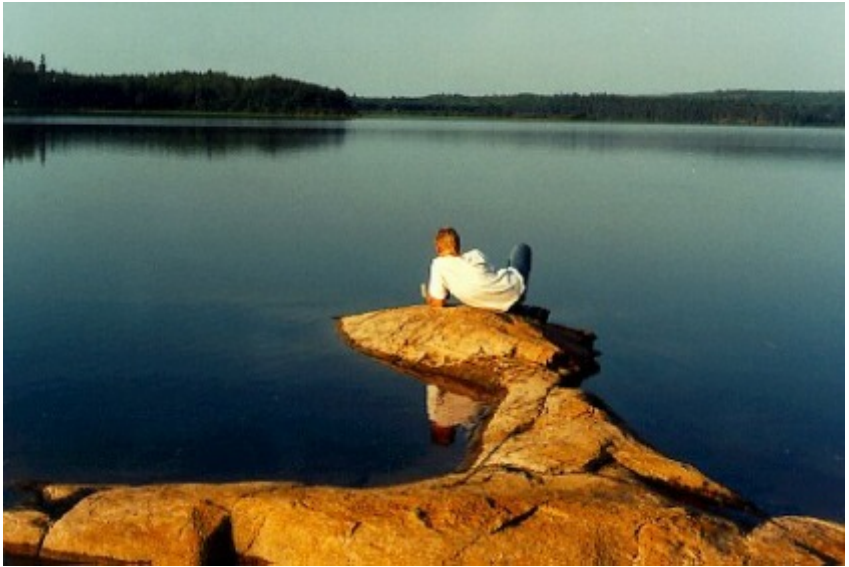
Morning

immediately on the top task on this short list of Most Important Tasks. Single-task on this important task as long as you can — ideally until it's done. Now you've started your day with focus, and you've already accomplished something great.

3. Refocus ritual. While the start of day ritual is great, there are lots of things that get in the way to distract you, to mess up your focus. So every hour or two, do a refocus ritual. This only takes a minute or two. You might start it by closing down your browser and maybe other open applications, and maybe even take a walk for a couple of minutes to clear your head and get your blood circulating. Then return to your list of Most Important Tasks and figure out what you need to accomplish next. Before you check email again or go back online, work on that important task for as long as you can. Repeat this refocus ritual throughout the day, to bring yourself back. It's also nice to take some nice deep breaths to focus yourself back on the present.

4. Alternate focus and rest. This is almost like intervals in exercise — alternating between periods of hard exercise and rest works well because it allows you to do some pretty intense exercise, as long as you allow yourself some rest. Focus works much the same way — if you give yourself built-in periods of rest, you can get some great periods of focus. There are many variations on this, but some ideas might include: 10 minutes of focus + 2 minutes of rest; 25 minutes of focus + 5 minutes of rest; 45 minutes of focus + 15 minutes of rest. You get the idea — you'll need to experiment to find the length and mixture that works best for you. Some prefer short bursts and others like longer periods of undisturbed creativity.

5. Alternate two focuses. Instead of alternating between focus and rest, you could alternate between two different focuses. For example, you could work on two different projects at once, or study for two different classes at once. I'd suggest not switching too rapidly, because there's a short period of adjustment each time you switch. But you could work for 10 minutes on one thing and then 10 on another, or stay focused on one as long as you are interested in it, then switch when your interest lags. The great thing about this method is that switching to a new project can help give your brain a rest from the other project and it can keep you creating for much longer before getting distracted.



Evening

6. Communicate first, then blocks of focus. Set a timer and give yourself 45 minutes to do email, Twitter, Facebook IM, and any reading you would normally do. Then use an Internet blocker to block these distractions for a couple of hours (up to 3-4 hours if you like) while you focus on creating. Then another 45 minutes of communicating and reading, followed by another block of distraction-free focus.

7. End of day. At the end of each day, you might review what you did, think of what can be improved, remind yourself to disconnect for the rest of the evening, and think about what you'll focus on tomorrow. It's a good time to reflect on your day and your life in general.

8. Weekly focus rituals. While it's not necessary to do a complete weekly review of everything you're doing, have done and plan to do, it can be useful to schedule 10 minutes every week to quickly bring your work and life back into the right focus. I suggest you review your projects to make sure you're not letting them get out of hand; simplify your to-do list as much as possible; review the focus rituals you've been doing to see what's working and

what isn't; and basically reflect on what you're doing with work and life and whether anything needs to change.

9. Other ideas. The rituals above are just some of the ideas I like best — you should find the ritual that works best for you. There are an almost infinite number of possibilities. Just a few other ideas: taking 5 minutes every hour to refocus yourself; taking a walk every hour to get fresh air and get refreshed; yoga or meditating at the beginning of each day; running or other exercise after work; giving yourself a “focus and disconnected hour” in the morning and afternoon where you're disconnected and completely focused on creating; breathing and self-massage techniques for relaxation and better focus.



Karma and Calder

Distributive Karma and Alexander Calder

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky talks about something she calls “distributive karma.” Most of us have a fairly simple and straightforward view of Karma — what we might call the Santa Claus view. We think of karma as something like St. Nick, a force or power that knows whether we have been naughty or nice, and punishes or rewards us accordingly. But karma is a good deal more complex than that. Part of its complexity lies in the way we influence one another karmic ally.

Because all living beings are interconnected, we all influence one another by our actions, that is, by our karma. That term is from a Sanskrit word, *karman*, meaning “action, effect.” There are, however, no karmic hermits. We do not live in isolation from one another, but rather in a vast network of mutual effects. Whatever one person does affects all other beings, and the way we are linked together through our actions and their results is what HPB called “distributive karma.” It can be illustrated by an analogy.

The artist Alexander Calder (an American sculptor, 1898-1976) created sculptures of a kind called “mobiles.” They consist of metal plates of various shapes suspended by chains from rods that are connected with one another. The construction is very carefully balanced, so if any part of the structure is pushed or even moved by a breeze, the resulting motion is transmitted to the whole construction. Its parts swing and rotate, moving up and down until the energy of the initial push is exhausted and the mobile returns to a balanced position of equilibrium. That position will, however, be different from the one the parts had before the motion began.

The mobile is a representation of distributive karma. You and I are the plates linked together by karmic ties, which are like the chains and rods of the mobile. When one of us is moved by a karmic impulse, the effect of that motion is transmitted to the rest of us until all of us are swinging and rotating, moving up and down, from the energy of that original cause. When at last the



Alexander Calder

karmic effects are exhausted, we return to balance and equilibrium — until the next karmic impulse exerted by or on one of us again sets the whole complex into motion.

Karma is not a matter of getting gold stars or black marks on our individual report cards. It is a universal law that connects all of us and maintains harmony and balance in life — sometimes by swinging us in ways we have not anticipated and may not understand. Karma distributes throughout the whole system of life the effects originating from causes we may not even know.

Karma is also a work of art, restoring a new harmony and balance to the complex system of relationships that is life whenever that system is disturbed by the movement of any of its parts. Law and art, mobiles and morals, Calder and karma — they are all connected. They are all aspects of the great pattern of the cosmos.



A Calder "Mobile"



Notes on the Number Seven

The number seven is regarded as special all over the world. Sevens are all around us: days of the week, colors in the spectrum, notes of the scale, and planets in Ptolemaic astronomy. Our lives are sectioned by sevens: seven is the age of reason, at fourteen we reach puberty, at twenty-one we come of age, and later there is a seven-year itch. There are seven directions (up, down, front, back, right, left, and here).

The Japanese have seven Gods of Luck. The Zoroastrians have seven Ameshaspentas, who are like the Judeo-Christian seven Spirits before the Throne. There are seven liberal arts, and seven virtues. The Big Dipper has seven stars, and so does the Pleiades.

Greek mythology was full of sevens. Apollo's lyre had seven strings, and his feast day was the seventh of the month. Hercules fetched golden apples from the seven Hesperides, daughters of the West Wind. Thebes had seven gates and seven champions. Niobe had seven sons and seven daughters.

Hebrew lore likewise is heptadic (occurring in groups of seven). Joshua's army marched around Jericho for seven days, on the last day seven times, with seven priests sounding their ram's horns. Delilah learned the secret of Samson's strength on the seventh day of their wedding feast, snipped seven locks from his hair, and bound him with seven cords. Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are celebrated for seven days. The High Holy Days (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) are in the seventh Jewish month.

Christianity followed right along. The Lord's Prayer has seven petitions in it. Mary had seven sorrows, seven joys, and seven glories. Christ spoke seven last words on the cross and appeared after the Resurrection to seven disciples. The Holy Spirit has seven gifts.

Theosophically, seven is very big. Humans, like the cosmos, have seven principles. The major chakras are seven. There are seven rays. Our

earth is one of seven globes on which we make seven rounds to evolve through seven kingdoms. Anthropogenesis traces human history through seven races, each with seven subraces. Each of the seven planes of matter has seven subplanes.

Even numerically seven is noteworthy. The lunar month consists of about 28 days, and 28 is the sum of the numbers 1 through 7. If you divide out a fraction with the denominator 7, something odd appears. The result is a repeating decimal (that is, it has no end, but the same numbers keep coming up in the same order). Thus $1/7$ is 0.142857142857142857 ..., the repeating sequence is 142857; no matter how long you go on dividing, you'll just get those same six numbers coming up. That is not odd, but here is what is: The decimal equivalent of $2/7$ is also a repeating sequence: 285714. And so on with other fractions of 7: $3/7 = 428571$; $4/7 = 571428$; $5/7 = 714285$; $6/7 = 857142$. Do you spot what's odd? All of those repeating sequences consist of the same six numbers in the same order, only beginning at a different place in the sequence. Seven is an odd number. In several senses.

NOTE: Several of these facts about seven are from *Zero to Lazy Eight: The Romance Numbers*, by Alexander Humez, Nicholas Humez, and Joseph Maguire (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), a book full of number lore and other ibonis (interesting bits of needless information).



In morals, Theosophy builds its teachings on the unity, seeing in each form the expression of a common life, and therefore the fact that what injures one injures all. To do evil i.e., to throw poison into the life-blood of humanity, is a crime against the unity.

Annie Besant

(a prominent Theosophist, socialist, women's rights activist, writer and orator and supporter of Irish and Indian self-rule).

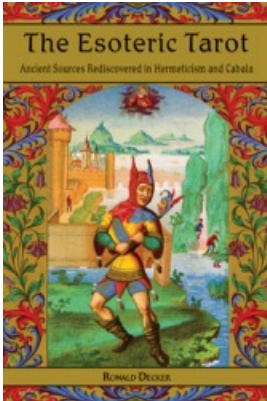
Notable Books

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A good book is like an apple...once you start....

Notable books:



Decker, Ronald.

The Esoteric Tarot: Ancient Sources Rediscovered in Hermeticism and Cabala.

Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, 2013.

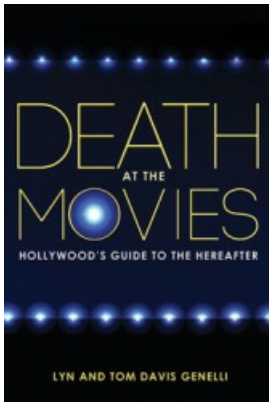
Pp. xi + 330.

\$23.95.

This book is not Theosophical in the sense of relating to the Theosophical Society, though it is theosophical in a more general sense. The author comments: “I feel certain that the Tarot designers were aware of the entire Hermetic theosophy. In my view, they used images, numbers, and symmetries to accommodate three systems — astrological, arithmological, mystagogical — each with a complete program, always enlisting all of the trumps” (p. 10).

The book is wide-ranging and exhaustive, almost to the point of exhaustion. It is a great improvement over the sort of popular books on the tarot, which are all too frequent. But its extensiveness and detail reminds one of the story of the little boy who went to his neighborhood library and told the librarian that he wanted a book all about snakes, so she brought him a 1000-page encyclopedia of herpetology. The boy said, “Thank you, but that’s more all about snakes than I wanted to know.”

The book, which is basically very impressive, has a number of problems that better editing could have avoided. It uses with great frequency an abbreviation “T de M” for “Tarot of Marseille” (one of the early decks); a more perspicuous short form would have been helpful. It uses a technical term “tetramorph” for a symbolic figure of any of the four evangelists, although properly the term refers to “a composite figure combining icons of all four evangelists.” Intrusive auctorial “I,” “my,” etc. is frequent (see the quotation from p. 10, above); the best expository style keeps the expositor out of the text.



Genelli, Lyn and Tom.

Death at the Movies: Hollywood's Guide to the Hereafter.

Quest Books. Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 2013.

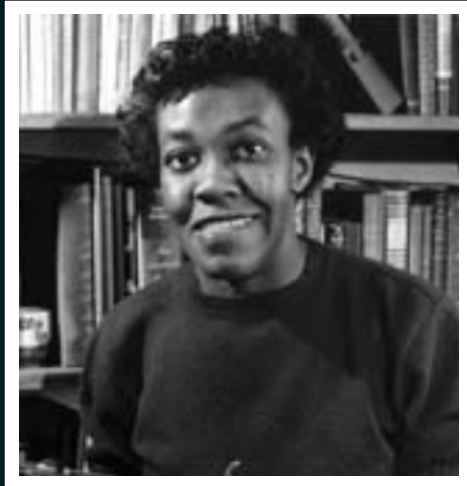
Pp. [vi] + 212.

\$16.95.

This is an unusual book — thorough, well-written and readable — on a pair of subjects not often linked together. It explores the subject of death in films beginning with *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and ending with an all-time favorite, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), chronologically spanning the decades of the 1930s to the 2010s.

Death is a subject treated by Theosophical writers from the earliest days of the modern movement until the present. It is, therefore, all the more surprising to find no references in the volume to Theosophy or Theosophical writers; that is a serious lacuna, for both the subject of the book and its publisher.

Recently, the Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, seems to be avoiding the subject of Theosophy in its books. That avoidance reminds one of the saying of Rabbi Hillel: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And when I am for myself, what am 'I'? And if not now, when?"



We are each other's harvest; we are each
other's business; we are each other's magnitude
and bond.

Gwendolyn Brooks
(an American poet)

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