

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

Mutual Exploration of the Truth of Suffering and Joy

TIM BOYD

WHENEVER there is a speaker and an audience, there is a transaction that takes place. The audience is paying something. Often it is simply paying attention to the speaker. Hopefully, the speaker has something to say that is worth the payment. The ideas and communication expressed are usually fresh to those who are hearing them. But the speakers have been there, they have thought it through, put it together, and then present what to them is “yesterday’s news”. While it can be something that is uplifting or meaningful, or informative, to those who are hearing it, the process of the presentation excludes, in part, the speakers themselves. The creativity and exploration has already occurred prior to the presentation.

Very often during the time we are speaking, things that were unexpected somehow find a way into our minds and perhaps even into our words. So today my thinking is to make our time together a process of mutual exploration.

A foundational process of any genuine spiritual practice is inquiry, which is nothing more and nothing less than asking questions. Rightly approached it leads us in a direction of deepening, freedom, or understanding. In a setting such as this, where there are no computers or books

at hand in the audience, we are forced to rely on pausing, becoming still, and looking for answers, really, waiting for answers to appear.

One of the things that we speak about repeatedly and emphatically in the Theosophical Society is Truth. The motto of the TS is: “There Is No Religion Higher than Truth”. So what *is* Truth? For most of us, even though Truth itself is difficult, maybe impossible, to adequately define, we feel more at ease with a synonymous word — Wisdom. We can point to a body of teachings known as the Ageless Wisdom; study them, discuss, and analyze. And depending on the depth and regularity of our study we can have experiences confirming a connection with Wisdom.

Even though there is no possibility that we can read anything that *is* wisdom, we can read the words and thoughts of people who were genuinely in touch with wisdom.

Many people have come before us and dedicated their lifetime attempting to communicate something about Wisdom/Truth, always unsuccessfully. Often spiritual/religious traditions were formed to perpetuate the teachings. If we look to any spiritual tradition, part of what is attractive to us about the tradition is that

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we can feel, or sense, at some deep level, that in this place there is the possibility of connecting with truth. Most spiritual traditions utilize ritual as a means to connect us to this illusive, but ever-present, wisdom.

I have mentioned on other occasions that over the years I have spent a great deal of time being involved in the practice of Tibetan-style Buddhism, which is highly ritualistic and visual. Even though I am not naturally a person who is attracted to ritual, because there was such a rich field of teaching and practice, I found myself involved. One aspect of Tibetan Buddhist practice involves “empowerments” — ceremonial affairs with the idea that it is a connection with enlightened beings.

Each of these enlightened beings, or Buddhas, have their own mandala, or graphic symbol of the universe. It is like a territory of the imagination where all sound is mantra, liquid is Amrita or spiritual nectar, populated by celestial beings, with the enlightened being at its center. It is a spiritual, pure land to which the empowerments and their practice give one access. The tradition is the setting for this specific imaginative system which when pursued opens the possibility for the experience of merging these parallel realities. These are an enactment of something with which we are very familiar. Initially our entrance to sacred space is through the doorway of knowledge.

Always it seems that our greatest work is with the mind. Our inquiry can begin with simple questions. We all have training from family, the nation into which

we were born, the gender we inhabit, the religion we ascribe to. These have imprinted certain ways of seeing the world that we come to take for granted. But are they correct? The first teaching of the Buddha was that suffering is the universal experience of sentient beings.

Our normal tendency is to associate suffering with pain, but are they the same? We step on a rock and it is painful. When we stay out in the sun too long there is pain associated with that. These are physical sensations, but is that suffering? If not, then what is suffering?

When a painful experience occurs a constellation of emotions and thoughts group themselves around the experience: “I’ll have to watch out in the future”, or “Oh my gosh, my leg hurts, poor me!”, or “I am angry at whoever left this rock in the path”. There is a range of internal states that our thought creates as a result of pain. The pain goes away, but these thoughts and emotions linger. If we give it a few minutes, our foot no longer hurts, but the anger toward the lazy person who did not take care of the road stays with us. We create patterns that we fall into so easily. They become repetitive and unquestioned, and therein lies the suffering.

We suffer when what we want does not line up with what *is*. We do not want to step on the rock, but we did, and because of that experience we carry it to levels of thought and emotion. When reality does not suit what we want, suffering arises. We should think about this for ourselves. This inquiry process gives us a certain power.

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If we can inquire our way through to the other side of this imagined cause of suffering, then there is the possibility for release. We do not have to remain bound to a rehearsed pattern of reaction. The certified reality of our emotional reactions can dissolve. This is the question: What is it that is holding me/us into this repetitive pattern of suffering?

When we find ourselves in that state it is possible to engage in a process of inquiry. Is this cherished thought of mine actually true and correct? If, on examining, we find it is not true that someone, or something else, is the cause of my suffering, we have the opportunity for insight and for the freedom that comes with accepting what is real.

Another question is “What would it be like if I could let that go?” It is an imagination question — what would it be like, who would I be, how would I relate to my surroundings if in some way I could have even a moment of freedom from this thought that I find myself attached to. Can I let it go? Then, if I let it go, what happens? If we regard unfoldment as becoming more in touch with and accepting of reality, this is a central question.

Wherever in the world we live it seems that more and more frequently we are faced with challenging news. As a citizen of the USA, almost daily there are reports of random, massive, and sudden violence. On a personal level this is not the reality that I dreamed or imagined for that country or for this world. Faced with such news what do we do? I am in touch with

many people who are deeply saddened and angered by the events that are taking place. For some their internal suffering in response to events over which they have no control over raises the question: “What is wrong with God, or the universal consciousness, to allow such things to occur?”

But, what can we do? There is an idea expressed in the Bible, and also in the life story of the Buddha. The statement in the Bible was said by the Christ: “If I be lifted up, I will draw all people to me.” The legend of the Buddha’s death recounts that many of his disciples flowered into enlightenment with his passing. When they were sitting there with him in life, it was not happening, but when the Buddha was “lifted up”, at his passing, the scope of his influence expanded. In terms of legend, there is something that is there. Two times I have had this experience of someone who is close to me passing. I was not with either one of them at the time. The experience was that some hours before they were pronounced as having died, or left the body, being completely involved in something else, something really joyous arose in me.

Whenever we experience joy, there is always a sense of upliftment, of freedom, of expansion. If we, through our inquiry and examination, attain to some level of freedom, anything, anyone that we touch experiences a measure of that. Once this becomes active, it makes it easier to take root and become a pattern of activity in others. But first comes the inquiry. ✧

Light, Love, and Hope — I

RAGHAVAN N. IYER

Light is the first begotten, and the first emanation of the Supreme, and Light is Life, says the Evangelist [and the Kabbalist]. Both are electricity — the life-principle, the anima mundi, pervading the universe, the electric vivifier of all things. Light is the great Protean magician, and under the Divine Will of the architect [or rather the architects, the “Builders” (called One collectively)], its multifarious, omnipotent waves gave birth to every form as well as to every living being. From its swelling, electric bosom, spring matter and spirit. Within its beams lie the beginnings of all physical and chemical action, and of all cosmic and spiritual phenomena; it vitalizes and disorganizes; it gives life and produces death, and from its primordial point gradually emerged into existence the myriads of worlds, visible and invisible celestial bodies.

H. P. Blavatsky

The Secret Doctrine, vol. I, p. 579

THE metaphysical *mantram* “Light is Life and both are electricity” intimates a profound insight that is realized only at the highest levels of meditation. Empty the mind of all objects and subjects, all contrasts and contours, in a world of names and forms and colours, and one can plunge into absolute Divine Darkness. Once in this realm of pure potential, one may apprehend the hidden noumenon of matter, that ultimate substance or primordial substratum which is the sum total of all possible objects of perception by all possible beings.

At the same time, one may apprehend Spirit as the totality of all the possible

expressions, manifestations, and radiations of one, central, divine energy or Light. In that Divine Darkness, the realm of boundless potential where no one thing exists, love is like the Light that is hidden in the Darkness. That Light is the origin of all that is latent, of all that will ever emerge and persist, all that will depart from form and yet remain as immaculate rays.

This primordial realm of potential Light and potential Life is also the realm of potential energy. In this pregenetic realm, wherein there is no manifestation, one may apprehend a wholly potential energy which does not produce any interaction between the latent Spirit and

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noumenal matter. This is not electricity in any manifest sense, nor any force that can be construed in terms of ordinary language or common sense-perception; it is a primordial current. Even the most abstract conceptions of pure science cannot reach this realm, wherein there is a cosmic electrical vibration so fundamental and all-pervasive that it cannot be localized or characterized in any particular way.

Out of this Divine Darkness — out of this potential Light, latent Life and hidden energy — there is a coming into manifestation. There is a process of radiation and emanation in which myriad sparks fly. There is a coalescence of the initial primordial ray of light-energy and the latent life-currents which releases pulsations, radiations, and currents that flow forth in every direction.

At this stage of the incipient cosmos, *gupta vidya* affirms the presence of great beings, great minds and hearts, great souls perfected in prior periods of evolution. Remaining awake during the long night of non-manifestation — yet having no particular object of reference and no particular conception in the state of *mahāpralaya* — they abided in a state of vigilant, ceaseless, harmonious contemplation of all that was potential.

These beings emerge with the burgeoning of primordial Light and Life, the primal reverberation of divine energy throughout the glassy essence of space. They become the focussing instrument in what then comes to be known as Universal Mind or *mahat*. They become

the living lens through which all that is latent within the night of non-manifestation is stirred into active life.

These perfected beings, who are later mythified in all the religions of the world as *dhyāni buddhas*, Archangels, Lords of Light, become self-conscious agents for the direction and focussing into an emerging world of primary particularizations of an essence that is otherwise universal, purely potential and entirely homogeneous. For the sake of meditation, they may be thought of as shooting out rays of colour and emitting sounds within transcendental musical scales. One may then, in turn, think of them as belonging to seven classes, each corresponding to a subliminal note or a colour. Each of them corresponds to a particular number or degree of differentiation, and they all work in unison.

They may be imagined as having their own differentiated notes, colours, and numbers, but also as uniting and synthesizing the multiple potencies of the manifested *Logos*. In that ontogenetically prior state, just before manifestation, there is a tremendous subtle field, a pre-cosmic electrical energy that is sometimes called *daiviprakṛti* — the noumenal Light of the *Logos*.

In the world of visible manifestation, the phenomena which are identified as electricity and magnetism, light and heat, are observable effects of this primary Logoc radiation. Gigantic and titanic as they are, they are nonetheless nothing but shadows of supersensuous matter in motion on a noumenal plane

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prior to the realm of phenomena. The study of light-energy in manifestation involves complex curves and relationships and requires the use of many categories and instruments.

This is the realm of diffraction and diffusion, of reflection and refraction, wherein there are complex possibilities owing to the interference and overlapping of waves upon waves of light-energy. It is simultaneously the realm of photons, particles of light-energy traveling at an incredible speed, such that light from the moon arrives at the Earth within a second. The notion of light as a complex, though virtually instantaneous, agency having an impact at every level of the cosmos stirs the heart long before it can be truly grasped by the mind.

The heart understands the vital significance of life because it resonates to that which is primordial, all-pervasive, and instantaneous. Within every human heart there burns a fire of light-wisdom and love-compassion, *prajñā* and *mahā-karuna*. This spark of the One Fire flickers fitfully in the neophyte at first, but it can be stoked into a powerful flame which burns vigorously, steadily, and ceaselessly. In its fullness it directs and guides individuals in the expansive and wise application of the boundless energy flowing from the fathomless love-compassion and light-wisdom within the spiritual heart. The monadic heart of every human being is an exact mirror of the heart of the cosmos, that swelling, electric bosom from which the dual stream of spirit-matter emerges.

The Sixth principle in Man (*Buddhi*, the Divine Soul) though a mere breath, in our conceptions, is still something material when compared with divine "Spirit" (Ātman) of which it is the carrier or vehicle. *Fohat*, in his capacity of DIVINE LOVE (*Eros*), the electric Power of affinity and sympathy, is shown allegorically as trying to bring the pure Spirit, the Ray inseparable from the ONE absolute, into union with the Soul, the two constituting in Man the MONAD, and in Nature the first link between the ever-unconditioned and the manifested.

The Secret Doctrine, vol I, p. 119

The presence of this divine Light, Fire, and Flame within the secret heart means that every human being is capable of seeing and illuminating a much vaster sphere of existence than he or she is typically prepared to inhabit self-consciously. Similarly, every single human being has a much richer and more profound capacity for effortless love than he or she imagines, love that is spontaneous and selfless, asking nothing and willing to give freely, graciously, and generously to all.

Yet little of that immense love and light-energy has a chance to come forth in a world of masks and shadows, a world of lies and fears and personal loneliness. Such is the predicament of humanity. Yet this same orphaned humanity, which has barely begun to draw upon a minute fraction of its fathomless boundless potential, can do so if it seeks to sustain a conception of existence that goes beyond all habitual divisions and dichotomies.

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One must transcend distinctions such as youth and old age, social roles, and external labels. Even though the mind has become blunted and the heart tainted, one must unlearn all stifling habits and become able to withdraw the mind and heart from false and fleeting allegiances. Only so can one restore plasticity and resilience to the mind and heart.

In diverse societies at different times in recorded history, seekers have tried to meet this challenge by undertaking systematic monastic discipline. They have tried to be helpful to each other and to bind themselves by self-chosen and inexorable rules, vows, and pledges. Through a repeated reinforcement of those fundamental resolves, they have sought to develop a way of life aimed at spiritual self-regeneration. Yet in spite of this, again and again in history these monastic institutions, having flourished for a time, invariably degenerated. The vital impulse went out of them and people came to be caught up merely in imitation, in game-playing and in ritual, hollow mimetics.

The lesson of this repetitive pattern is that no amount of regimentation on the outside can work unless it is matched by sufficient concentration and continuity of ideation through meditation from within. One cannot force another human being to become a man or woman of meditation. A human being has to sustain a desire to do this which is sufficiently strong to permit him or her to see through the masquerade of that which is false and deceptive in this world.

Each human being must individually come to a deep reflection upon the meaning of death and its connection with the moment of birth. And each must make for himself or herself a decision which enables one to undertake a freely chosen set of spiritual practices. These self-chosen exercises will, now and again, prove extremely taxing, and they can be sustained only by the momentum of a tremendous motivation.

As all the greatest benefactors of humanity have taught, we must be ready to give up everything for the sake of the whole. Unless one releases a motivation which is universal, rooted in a love for all humanity, one cannot keep oneself upon the spiritual Path. It is fatal to rush into any pretence that one loves all humanity. Instead, though it will take time, one should dwell again and again upon the sublime and extraordinary nature of that fundamental and all-embracing motivation which is represented by the Kwan-Yin Pledge and the Bodhisattva Vow. Only through that motivation, authentically released and maintained intact, can there be an awakening of the spark of *bodhichitta*.

The redemptive love of the part for the whole springs from the immortal soul. It is deathless in origin and is the individual's share in what is universal and immortal. Behind all the modifications and manifestations of *prakṛti* there is *purusha* — the single indivisible universal Spirit known by many names. It is indestructible, beginningless, and endless. It is itself a pristine reflection of the

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very essence of the Divine Darkness. The spark or ray of that Spirit within every human soul is the power of love. It can illuminate the mind and enlighten the heart so long as one is ready to give up all, willing to be alone and whole-hearted, single-minded, and one-pointed.

Then that love becomes a form of wisdom, a ray of light, assuring one in the hour of need and seeming gloom and doom that there is hope. It tells one where to go and what to do, it advises whether one should stand and wait. It gives one immense patience whereby one may recognize those tendencies that come in the way of releasing that spiritual energy.

There is that in the lower nature which wants to grab and seize, which also at the same time is insecure and fickle, uncertain of itself and desirous of something from outside. One must learn to wait, to relinquish and wear down that side of oneself which is the weaker, if one is to release the stronger.

Meanwhile, before one is able to release the true strength of the heart, and while one is still in the grip of that which is weaker, one can learn. One can discover the patterns, the instabilities and the vulnerabilities of one's nature. This process of diagnostic learning cannot, however, come to fruition unless it is

balanced by a deep adoration of those *dhyāni buddhas* who sustain the cosmos.

One must deliberately place the mind and the heart within the magnetic field of attraction of the ideal, the mighty Host of *dhyānis* and *bodhisattvas*. One can think of them as galaxies of enlightened beings who are cosmic forces, living facts in invisible Nature, and at the same time shining exemplars to humanity in the visible world. Through hearing about them and through studying the sacred texts and noble traditions that have preserved their Teachings, one may begin to assimilate the way of life exemplified by such beings.

Thus one can learn to live in a state of learning and letting go — learning joyously and vigorously while at the same time letting go slowly of the fickle, fearful, and furtive self. After a point, one cannot even conceive of living in any other way. One finds a profound satisfaction in this way of life, and as a result one is able to look upon the world not as a receiver but as a giver. In the solitude of one's own contemplation, one will naturally think of hungry hearts and neglected souls to whom one may try to reach out through an ardent longing of the heart and intense thought.

(To be continued)

**I am not this body which belongs to the world of shadows;
I am not the desires which fill my mind;
I am not the mind itself.
I am the Divine Flame within my heart,
eternal, immortal, ancient, without beginning, without end.**

From a Vedic Invocation to Meditation

The Battle of Theosophy

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

IT is not uncommon to meet members of the Theosophical Society (TS), or even newcomers, who say that when they first came in contact with the teachings of Theosophy, they had the impression that they knew them before coming to the Society. Plato advocated that to know is to remember, implying that the soul in us, the higher consciousness, has knowledge of those things which are worth knowing.

Contact with theosophical literature expands the mind, inspires the heart, and gives the student a sense of logical perception regarding life and its processes. Several authors, looking at the various aspects of the teachings, present their unique understanding of them and contribute to show that only one presentation can never exhaust the subject.

So, gradually, Theosophy assumes a key position in our world view and in it we find answers to many questions. However, the knowledge of Theosophy comes with a test: will it remain a notional “wisdom”, inspiring as it may be, or can it transform our lives completely? Reading many books may give us the impression, masquerading as certainty, that we *know* what Theosophy is.

But the difference between that idea and its realization is called daily life.

T. S. Eliot, in his poem *The Hollow Men*, wrote:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

The shadow is the self in us. That is when the Theosophy battle begins. For Theosophy to reach the very core of our consciousness and cause in it a complete and irreversible transformation, it has to fight its way through layers upon layers of the structure called “self”. And it is not only the deeper teachings of Theosophy that point to this archetypical battle; many other traditions also do so like Vedanta; ancient Gnosticism, as distinguished from the parody that goes under its name today; Sufism; the Gospel of Thomas; the Zen Buddhist tradition; the Buddhist teachings; mysticism as well as classic and contemporary poetry; among others. They all denounce “self” as the biggest impediment to the discovery of the undivided nature of all life and consciousness.

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For Vedanta, the self is just a notion, with no real substance in reality. It is built by *ahamkāra*, the “I”-building faculty enmeshed in the very activity of the mind. Every one of our thoughts, actions, and emotional responses tends to build and strengthen the sense of self. That faculty has successfully convinced us that we are the self, and it creates an exclusion zone around it, so that nothing can challenge it.

For the Buddha, the self was a structure, put together by Māra, the powerful demon of duality and separateness. The structure of the self is cemented by *trshna*, the thirst for more experiences, which looks at life as an acquisition counter, with plenty of things for us to acquire and possess. Such desire dominates the mind completely, moving between the extreme poles of “I want” and “I do not want”, the latter being also a form of desire. According to Buddhism and to other traditions, this thirst is unquenchable although it lasts for hundreds of incarnations.

For Meister Eckhart, the self is what prevents the mystical birth to take place within our souls. The Gospel passage, “There was no room in the inn”, according to Eckhart, is the metaphorical representation of a mind which is so crowded with images, concepts, self-will, memory, that it cannot provide that quiet, humble, and peaceful space for that consciousness which has been described as “the well of Compassion” to be born in us.

One of the intrinsic aspects of the self is to be alive to sensory things but dead to spiritual realities. This is

what the Gospel of Thomas says (113):

His disciples said to him, “When will the kingdom come?”

Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘here it is’ or ‘there it is’. Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the Earth, and men do not see it.”

Self-centred activity makes us blind to the unimaginable beauty of the Earth and existence. Thomas Traherne shared something of this life-altering perception when he wrote: “You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars . . .”

Theosophical teachings also point out the insidious nature of the self. Rule 4 in *Light on the Path* compares the self to a giant weed: “. . . it is a plant that lives and increases throughout the ages. It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences.” And it adds: “Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the eternal. This giant weed cannot flower there: this blot upon existence is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought.” What we call the “present” is very often the past speaking to us through our personal minds.

What are then the obstacles Theosophy has to face on its journey to the core of our consciousness? Here we need to remember that they are all aspects of the personal self, our own creation through numerous incarnations. One of these obstacles is conditioning which manifests as the incapacity to consider new ideas.

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It is like a set background from which the mind sees itself and the world. Such a view is bound to be stale and not dynamic, and is out of sync with the movement of life and consciousness. It is self-evident that Theosophy finds it difficult to penetrate this barrier of conditioning.

Another obstacle on the path of Theosophy to the depths of human consciousness is reaction. Most reactions are non-rational. Suspicion is a form of reaction. We are introduced to someone we do not know and the subtle movement of reaction sets in: "Who is this person? What does he or she want? Can they be trusted? Will they take advantage of me?" There was a member in Sydney some years ago who was a gentle man, caring, cooperative. He once told me: "I like Theosophy but I cannot accept its teachings on reincarnation." Probably his Catholic background made it impossible to consider this aspect of Theosophy. Fortunately, he was aware that the Society did not impose any teaching on its members or sympathizers. However, he could not even consider that reincarnation could be a possibility that could explain, perhaps, the mysteries of human evolution.

Self-importance is, perhaps, one of the strongest obstacles faced by Theosophy as it tries to approach the depths of the human heart. It emanates from what the Sanskrit language calls *svārtha*, "self-interest", attributing excessive value to oneself. As Madame Blavatsky described it, the personal mind is full of desires, which are constantly magnified by its self-centred activity. She called it *kāma-manas*, "the desire mind" and every one

of its activities is a projection of its core desire: to be a separate self. It would be very hard for Theosophy to penetrate this ego-created fortress.

Finally, another obstacle on the path of Theosophy to enter the human heart is inattention. With so many desires, images, memories, comparisons, guarding the fortress of self, our minds tend to be governed by inattention. The essence of inattention is to be incapable to see the wholeness of life in the present moment. The mind's self-centred contents create a confused and noisy screen which distracts it from life which is unfolding always in the present moment.

Therefore, such a screen is a denial of compassion. The meaning of the name Kwan-Yin, the Goddess of Mercy and Compassion, is "she who hears the cries of the world". When we look at the suffering of the world, which never ends, we look through the noisy screen of our deep-rooted self-centredness. When Kwan-Yin looks at the same suffering she does it out of a condition of absolute emptiness, and her response is boundless compassion.

In spite of all obstacles, once the student perseveres in the enquiry which is Theosophy and ponders over passages of deep significance, a momentous change may begin to occur. One such passage comes, again, from *Light on the Path*: "To work for self is to work for disappointment." Extraordinarily and simply put, that little book echoes a timeless truth: nothing can really satisfy the self and its pleasurable structures. The pursuit which selfishness engages in never ends

The Battle of Theosophy

and such pursuit is in reality the architect of suffering. It is a web of isolation from the wholeness of life.

Another passage that can lead to a profound change in our perception, if we ponder over its meaning and implications is this: “Service is the great illuminator. The more we serve the wiser we become, for we learn wisdom not by studying but by living.” (*The Theosophic Life* by Annie Besant). Selfless service can erode the citadel of self-centredness and reveal the truth that none of us lives for ourselves. It builds a pure conduit through which the gifts of the uncreated Spirit can flood the human heart and mind and recreate a person as a beneficent force in the world.

Gradually, the study of Theosophy becomes a yoga of self-transformation, when new depths are discovered, and new insights appear like little epiphanies which disclose the ever-present mystery that has always been here with us. Theosophy is thus discovered to be not a doctrine or a teaching to be memorized, holding the copyright of truth, but a Wisdom that emanates from the very depths of life, a Wisdom that was lost in our journey guided by the will-o'-the-wisp of isolationist self-importance. Theosophy is discovered as a living Wisdom, a transcendence that has come to visit us in the quietness of a heart made simple by selfless service.

We are told in theosophical literature that in those dimensions of Theosophy as a living Wisdom the student finds the sacred, that uncreated wholeness which

has been untouched by the personal mind and its worldly attitude to life's mystery. The sacred is “the meeting place of saints”, the holy ones. Each one of them does not live for themselves, as they walk the untrodden ground of oneness without beginning and without end, wholly free from time and its processes, bringing to the world the fragrance of that consciousness which embodies the very spring of newness. The holy ones live to bless the world in its entirety and prevent its destruction.

Theosophy, breaking all the barriers built by selfishness through the ages, reaches at last the very heart of the dedicated student, the core of his or her consciousness. It has ceased to be a description of universal and human processes, an inspiring world view, a hallowed doctrine. It ceases to be Theosophy as we understand it and becomes the pure light of infinite goodness, truth and beauty. And the student is lost in its unlimited field of sacred awareness which the great teachers called “love”, an unending love for humanity.

The battle is over; the enemy — selfishness — lies lifeless, assimilated into the glory of universal life. Those who win become an irresistible force for the good. They become one with the all-giving Soul that animated the Theosophical Society since its hallowed beginnings. And many in the TS have won this battle in the past 145 years. They became pillars of light in the Society and poured strength, wisdom, peace and unity into its life. They are our great benefactors and mentors. The battle is calling. Are we ready for it? ✧

“The Golden Stairs” — II

DAVID P. BRUCE

6. A Brotherliness for All

Those who have had a genuine experience of an unveiled spiritual perception — however brief or slight it may have been — now see the world through new eyes. A single moment of transcendence has revealed a universal outlook on life, one that inspires and conjoins, leaving an indelible impression in its wake, even as the tide of old habits and patterns of thought attempt to reassert their influence. The fact that this vision of numinosity is described as *unveiled* is important. To *unveil* something indicates that what is being revealed was there behind the curtain all along. We were just unaware of its existence. Similarly, this innate spiritual faculty — termed *buddhi* in theosophical literature — has just been waiting for the right catalyst or set of conditions to activate it. It may have been largely inactive or dormant before, but once awakened and brought into daily consciousness, it cannot be put back to sleep.

One of the fruits of this inner awakening is the distinct sense of solidarity we have with other members of the human family. We no longer feel quite as isolated

or separated from others. We sense that there is some invisible bond uniting us to the rest of the human beings on the planet, even though most of them are, and will remain, complete strangers to us, our paths never destined to cross, at least not in this lifetime. This sense of connectedness is expressed in the sixth step of “The Golden Stairs” as “a brotherliness for all”. It is also expressed in the first Object of the Theosophical Society, which speaks of a “universal brotherhood of humanity”.

Those who have not experienced a true moment of transcendence tend to dismiss the ideal of human solidarity as a pipe dream, a noble vision of dreamers and poets, but not likely to be achieved in a world divided by race and religion, language and culture. They will say that in a world governed by self-serving interests that thrive on pitting one group of people against another for their own selfish gain, such dreams of unity and universal brotherhood are idealistic but unrealistic. However, those who have been blessed by a moment of deep spiritual insight know that true brotherhood and sisterhood is no pipe dream; it is not

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some distant utopia as envisioned by imaginative writers. It is a reality in Nature, but it is one of those deeper realities not visible to the profane eye. In other words, because we cannot see it does not mean it is not there. The law of gravity operated long before it was discovered by Newton. So, too, the unity of spirit that binds all of humanity together is there, has been there, and will continue to be there. It is for each person to discover that reality for him or herself.

When the spiritual aspirant experiences the unity of spirit first-hand, revealing all of humanity to be brothers and sisters, this moment of insight leaves a vivid and lasting impression, fundamentally changing how the world is viewed. No longer does universal goodwill and harmony seem to be unattainable. Of course, that idyllic state will not be realized in the foreseeable future and it certainly does not exist now, but the vision of transcendence leaves an undeniable sense that it will be realized at some point in our evolutionary journey.

For the time being, however, there is still mistrust, hatred, and conflict among the factions of humanity. Human nature will not change overnight and many will agree with Gothic architect Horace Walpole, who said: “The world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel.”

It is easy to play the cynic while seeing only the worst in people; those who take this stance say they are being realistic, citing examples from history to justify their views. They say human nature is

flawed by selfishness and greed, that it has been so for thousands of years and will continue for thousands more. They point to turbulent times of societal upheaval when reason and civility vanish, the resultant vacuum being filled by violence and chaos, as happened in the 18th and 20th centuries during the Reign of Terror in France, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the Killing Fields of Cambodia.

As Alexander Hamilton said in *Federalist No. 16*: “When the sword is once drawn, the passions of men observe no bounds of moderation.” When observing the absurdity of human behavior throughout history, one does not know whether to laugh or cry. The philosopher Montaigne seemed to choose the former when he quipped: “When it is so common to do evil, it is practically praiseworthy to do what is merely useless.”

The cynics have a point. Human nature is indeed flawed; but just because you cannot see a glacier moving does not mean there is no movement. A difficult task is not necessarily an impossible task. Moreover, seeing the worst in people is a habit, even a choice. Why not see the good? That can become a habit, too, if we so choose. When we notice the good in other people, rather than their faults, we are actually helping them grow. The recognition of our oneness with others provides an inner imperative for the aspirant, one that is stated quite clearly in H. P. Blavatsky’s (HPB) *The Key to Theosophy*: “It is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by

practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity . . . can ever be attained.”

7. A Readiness to Give and Receive Advice and Instruction

The Secret Doctrine contains numerous passages that may strike the reader as mysterious, abstruse, or even unfathomable. This is part of its allure. However, this passage from the Proem is not one of them: “An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so common, so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is very easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe.” Even the casual reader will see that there is nothing abstruse or cryptic in that assertion, for the truth of it has been affirmed by human experience throughout the ages.

This principle of polarity is intrinsic to the seventh step of “The Golden Stairs”: *a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction*. Giving and receiving are part of life. Over the span of a person’s lifetime, the giving and the taking may reach a kind of balance. It is natural for an infant, a child, or an adolescent to be in need of food and shelter, love and guidance, and much more. Upon reaching adulthood and becoming a productive citizen, he or she may have the opportunity to give back to their family, community, or nation. Many people do this freely and joyfully — some from a sense of gratitude for the opportunities they have had in life; others

from a belief that sharing the fruits of one’s labor is simply the right thing to do.

Giving and receiving play a role in our inner life as well. As we tread the lower steps of “The Golden Stairs”, we depend on wise elders for advice and instruction. As we ascend that stairway, gaining valuable knowledge and experience, we soon find ourselves in a position to help others who stand today where we stood yesterday. While the impulse to help is praiseworthy, discretion is needed. This line from *Poor Richard’s Almanac* is just as true today as it was in Benjamin Franklin’s time: “Fools need advice most, but wise men only are the better for it.”

I am reminded of an assignment I was given many years ago. My job was to revise an out-of-print booklet called “The Mysteries of Existence” for a new edition. At that time, I had an inflated opinion of my editing skills. After spending many days working on the text, I gave my draft to a seasoned editor, expecting her to respond with profuse words of praise. Instead, I was given a reality check: the manuscript came back with red markings on every page. I was surprised and disappointed, but I quickly set my emotions aside and decided to use it as a learning experience. You may have noticed that people are generally more willing to dispense advice than accept it. The point is that when good advice comes our way, we may need to get our ego out of the way first in order to benefit from it.

8. A Loyal Sense of Duty to the Teacher

Throughout her entire adult life — all the while having to endure adversity,

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ill health, and personal attacks — Mme Blavatsky unwaveringly exemplified the eighth step of “The Golden Stairs”: *a loyal sense of duty to the teacher*. The teacher-pupil relationship is an important one, carrying obligations on both sides. This applies in the secular realm as well as in the spiritual. As a young woman, the lifelong bond that HPB forged with her spiritual teachers was one built on trust, confidence, and respect. While acknowledging that the word *teacher* is open to various interpretations, let us first consider it in the ordinary sense of the word.

In his commentary on “The Golden Stairs”, John Algeo points out the hierarchical nature of this relationship: “Teacher and student are on different levels with respect to the knowledge that joins them.” He also points out that whereas today we are a student, tomorrow we may be a teacher — even to the one that teaches us now, but perhaps in a different field of knowledge. Theosophy teaches that we evolve through many lifetimes. The transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson used the metaphor of a stairway to depict this process: “We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight.”

We see this loyalty to one’s teacher in the life of Ludwig van Beethoven, who as a young man traveled to Vienna to study with Joseph Haydn. Beethoven had already established himself as a virtuoso pianist, but now wanted to hone his skills

as a composer. Haydn was a prolific composer of symphonies, concertos, string quartets, and other musical genre. According to Jan Caeyers’ book, *Beethoven: A Life*, since the death of Mozart, “Haydn had taken [Mozart’s] place as the most influential and modern of all composers.” He agreed to mentor Beethoven three times a week, an arrangement that was extremely beneficial for Beethoven’s musical growth.

But as Lewis Lockwood notes in his book, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, “On the personal side their relationship seems not to have been easy.” Tensions arose due to generational and political differences; after one year they parted ways. “Ruffled feelings on both sides stemmed from innate artistic differences,” adds Lockwood. In spite of this, Caeyers affirms that “on musical grounds, there is no doubt that Beethoven revered Haydn as a master of the highest level”. In fact, several weeks before Beethoven’s death, a friend gave him a gift: a lithograph of the small house where Haydn was born. With only weeks to live, says Caeyers: “Beethoven then made a final symbolic gesture and had the artwork framed”, thus rising above personal differences and demonstrating a loyal sense of duty to his teacher.

Students of esoteric literature are familiar with the adage: “When the pupil is ready the teacher will appear.” This venerated maxim has been repeated so often that it has devolved over time into a cliché, a familiar phrase devoid of the power to inspire critical thinking and one

that is generally taken or rejected at face value. Recognizing that human nature has a tendency to foster self-delusion, one wonders how many “pupils” there are who remain content to wait for a teacher while doing precious little to get ready for that relationship. We can easily see how effort and training are required to become a competent teacher, but what about the pupil? What is his responsibility? Is not some sort of preparation required of the pupil? Can you study calculus without having first studied geometry? Algebra without first having mastered basic arithmetic?

At the very least, is it not incumbent upon the pupil to cultivate an open mind, free of preconceived ideas and prejudices, and a mind free of distractions? In reality, the relationship of teacher and pupil is one of giving and receiving, with preparation required on both sides. So, if there is any truth to the maxim quoted above, it probably has very little to do with *waiting* but a lot to do with *doing* — doing whatever it takes to bring oneself to a state of readiness and receptivity.

As to teachers, we may have many during our lifetime, all of whom contribute something to our overall growth and development. Some function as guides, as in the case of a music appreciation teacher who introduces the students to music from different styles and eras. Others function as coaches, helping students learn specialized skills, such as wrestling, archery, or playing a musical instrument. A great many serve as merchants of information, which they convey

in a clear and organized fashion to those who are able to pay for it. In all these cases, the teacher plays a valuable role, for as the Greek philosopher Plutarch noted, “Natural ability without training is blind.” However, learning is not just about accumulating skills and facts. Plutarch also said, “The mind is not a vessel that calls for filling.” In a similar vein, the French philosopher Montaigne lamented, “We labor only to fill our memory, and leave the understanding and conscience empty.” In *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran asserts, “No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge,” thus echoing Plato. As to teachers from the wisdom tradition, some serve as guides, others as coaches, and still others as retailers of occult knowledge. All that is well and good, but perhaps the most valuable mentor is one who has lived the life, and consequently serves as an authentic exemplar of wisdom.

9. A Willing Obedience to the Behests of Truth

Sometimes a spiritual precept is best understood not by what it says, but by what it does not say. This counter-intuitive approach can be useful after prolonged and repeated exposure to an aphoristic statement. The once-inspiring words have become overly familiar, are repeated mechanically, yielding no further insight or understanding.

Consider, for instance, the ninth step of “The Golden Stairs”: *a willing obedience*

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to the behests of Truth. There is the voice of Truth and our response to it. Let us dwell on the word “obedience”, which, admittedly, can be problematic. We all have had the experience of being told to obey our parents, our teachers, the rules of society, and so forth. For a child, such guidance is generally beneficial and necessary.

As an adult, however, one begins to ask questions and think for oneself, rather than blindly following the dictates of authority, whether secular or religious. As Emerson noted: “The faith that stands on authority is not faith.” The ability to exercise free thought is a distinctively human capability. Most people resent being told to blindly follow laws or regulations that they see as unjust or unwise. I say “most people” because there are individuals who exhibit a docile and supine acquiescence to authority of any kind.

Immanuel Kant defined freedom as “independence of the compulsory will of another”, further describing it as “the one sole original inborn right belonging to every person in virtue of his humanity”. One cannot ascend the stairs if one remains a compliant captive of conventional thought. The obedience mentioned there is not a begrudging conformity to outer authority, but a voluntary alignment to the Truth revealed by an unveiled spiritual perception.

Once again, it is worth returning to Beethoven. In J. W. N. Sullivan’s *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development*, the author explains: “For the development

of a personality a rich and profound inner life is necessary, and for that reason it is usually great artists and religious teachers who impress us as being complete persons.” As he matured, Beethoven remained true to his vision of the truth.

Sullivan adds: “The states of consciousness with which he was concerned contained more and more elusive elements, and came from greater depths.” Had Beethoven not remained steadfast to his vision, had he lowered his standards and composed for the masses, the world would have been immeasurably poorer. In an *Epoch Times* article entitled “Ludwig van Beethoven: The Triumph over Suffering”, Raymond Beegle says: “What was within him, his sublime music, was not written for classrooms, or scholars, or critics. It was written for the human heart and precludes either analysis or criticism.”

Like Beethoven’s most sublime music — his late string quartets and late piano sonatas — “The Golden Stairs” was not composed for scholars or intellectuals. Its appeal is to the heart and not the head. In simple language, it presents practical precepts without ornamentation or ostentation. Although Blavatsky employed an impressive array of esoteric terms in her other writings, in this case a determination was made to eschew sophistication in favor of simplicity.

Having said that, it is interesting to note that the thirteen precepts of “The Golden Stairs” contain only 89 words, yet there is one word that stands out from the rest. Modern writers rarely use it.

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It sounds old and *it is* old, which is no surprise, since it derives from Middle English. It seems like a word you might find in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. In fact, you *do* find it in *Canterbury Tales* as, for example, in this line: “Go now . . . and do my lord’s behest.” We find that same word in the ninth step of “The Golden Stairs”: *a willing obedience to the behests of truth*.

The word *behest* refers not to an ordinary request, but to a command or directive that carries the weight of authority. It has a regal tone and may also carry a sense of urgency. Throughout our lives we have received numerous orders — first from our parents, then from our teachers and coaches, and later from employers, public officials, and religious figures. Regardless of how one responds, all these orders have one thing in common: they come from an external authority.

That is not the case with “The Golden Stairs”; it does not tell us to be obedient to an outer authority, but to the voice of truth that speaks from within. It is an interior prompting, sometimes referred to as “the still small voice”. It is always present, but we do not hear it. We *cannot* hear it, because we are distracted by outer things. The first four steps — *a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect* — prepare us to become receptive to that inner voice. If we find that our lives are out of balance — overstimulated from without, impoverished within — we need to regain our equilibrium. We can begin to cultivate a rich, inner life by learning the value of silence.

Doing so will provide us with the necessary ballast against the unending turbulence and turmoil of the outer world. Only then may we become receptive to the behests of Truth.

Recapitulation

At this point in our discussion, we may find it useful to recall an observation made earlier: the thirteen precepts of “The Golden Stairs” is not a random list of items bearing no relation to one another. In his insightful commentary, Sidney Cook poses the question: “Does not the fact that she [Blavatsky] names them a stairway suggest that there must be order and sequence to the steps on the stairs; that the stairway has structure and form and that every step must therefore be trodden in its proper turn?” The obvious answer is in the affirmative. However, this may not be so apparent if one loses sight of the whole by concentrating exclusively on the individual steps, so Cook’s point does bear repeating.

The thirteen steps consist of three groups. The first four steps — *a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect* — are preparatory and deal with broad principles of ethical living. A person whose life is guided by those principles has already achieved a high level of development; but what may be lacking is an awareness of any greater purpose to human life, such as is provided by the teachings of Theosophy. This knowledge of a divine plan — along with a realization of a greater Self within and the recognition of one’s deeper connection

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to all of humanity — is brought into view by the next step: *an unveiled spiritual perception*. This seminal awakening to one’s true nature and underlying unity with others leads to the second group, steps 6–9, which are more specific and deal with training and relationships: *a brotherliness for all, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the teacher, and a willing obedience to the behests of truth*.

The third group (steps 10–13) is the most difficult, for it represents the testing that the learner (disciple) will have to undergo before reaching the Temple of Divine Wisdom. Success is hoped for, but it is not guaranteed. The experience of countless saints, sages, and yogis who

have scaled the spiritual heights speaks to the unalterable fact that at some point the aspirant will be tested. *The Voice of the Silence* attests to this: “The more thou dost advance, the more thy feet pitfalls will meet.” A similar passage is found in the Book of Sirach: “For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity.” But it is not all doom and gloom. The advice given by Geoffrey Hodson is “continue, continue, keep on at all costs”. (*Call to the Heights*) “Falls may occur . . . and if they occur, recovery must be made quickly.” *The Voice* also offers encouragement: “Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure.” No failure is permanent as long as one perseveres.

(To be continued)

**Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy.
It is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks, and invents.**

**Music is the one incorporeal entrance into the higher
world of knowledge which comprehends humankind,
but which humankind cannot comprehend.**

**Don’t only practice your art. But force your way into its secrets;
art deserves that, for it and knowledge can raise
a human being to the Divine.**

Ludwig van Beethoven

Our Current Predicament

CECIL MESSER

TRUTH is not a spectrum of colors, it is a single coherent beam of light that pierces the heart of delusion and can only be known through the lens of insight — an open mind. The color of truth is stainless and pristine, like the clear light of deep space. To approach the truth, we must first recognize and then acknowledge our current life predicament.

On the surface, we may appear like the smiling face of a donkey with lips drawn back, carefully munching blackberries through a picket fence. Some of us are relatively content much of the time; however, many are not: witness the pervasive homelessness, addiction, and poverty around us. How acceptable is the quality of our personal happiness when confronted with the fact of the suffering of other living beings? We may mask our fundamental dissatisfaction, the feeling that something is not quite right or complete, by fabricating distractions to avoid facing the issue. Nevertheless, these realities inform our subconscious mind and mark our every action.

Can we be consistently happy when our direct experiences of happiness are brief and transitory? Unfortunately, the

causes of our unhappiness, mental and physical, lurk in the background of our lives, ready to manifest under the right circumstances. Is this existential situation inevitable and beyond our control? It is asserted that we may liberate ourselves by looking deeply into the nature and causes of suffering.

Imagine yourself as a child lying in the grass in a woodland meadow. While gazing at the sky, view in wonderment the ever-changing cloud formations. Bring to mind a scene of sitting on a river bank or ocean beach watching the wave patterns constantly dying and renewing themselves in their ebb and flow. Recall witnessing unexpected changes in the circumstances of life and the despair of death.

Reflecting on these experiences, we may conclude that impermanence or change is inherent in all situations. How does this understanding relate to our existential situation, our stream of life experiences? Because we live in a constantly changing world, uncertainty is inevitable and arises in parallel with the subtle feeling of insecurity that underlies all relationships. The anticipation of

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Our Current Predicament

change often brings a measure of anxiety, which may escalate into a feeling of dread. However, because things do change — seeds sprout, plants grow and yield harvest, and life refreshes itself and continues — it is possible to develop a sane relationship with the painful aspect of impermanence.

Individual freedom is a myth and an illusion because we are imprisoned by our particular physical and mental limitations. Our thoughts, emotions, and actions are conditioned by deeply ingrained ego-driven habit patterns that dictate our behavior. Present circumstances and our relationship with others are created by this conditioning. Witness the operation of confusion, desires, hopes, and fears as they govern the manner in which we respond to life situations.

Attempting to escape perpetual boredom, we may get caught up in compulsive consumerism, addictive pursuits of pleasure, and obsessive forms of entertainment. The imposition of restrictive controls and regulations by parents or government officials leads to rebellion and violence. Even self-imposed minor compulsions such as wearing appropriate attire — fine linens to the temple, suit and tie to the office, or punk rags to school — cause resentments to fester and influence our behavior.

Spiritual ideals and aspirations may degenerate into a state of superficial satisfaction. A young woman wished to become a nun and serve God; however, having witnessed priestly improprieties, misogyny, and other hypocrisies, she felt

betrayed and her faith was devastated. So she became a corporate administrator and merely attended prominent churches on the Sabbath. A young man aspired to travel to India and become a religious ascetic or perhaps join the Peace Corps and give service to the sick and hungry; instead, he became sidetracked by the desire for money — the pleasures of the good life, and became a bank manager with a mansion in the suburbs.

To satisfy the desire for a deeper meaning of life, some of us settle for nominal membership in a church or temple. We may be drawn towards a variety of so-called spiritual pursuits and join an exotic religious sect or a fashionable cult movement. If these are disappointing, the search for meaning changes to a rejection of all spiritual matters and result in our becoming a hedonistic materialist. Loss of our original aspiration may lead to a generalized apathy towards the well-being of others. This attitude accommodates blind and deluded participation in destructive societal norms such as our failings in the stewardship of the planet, violent conflicts, apartheid, genocide, and a variety of perverted racial, economic, and class distinctions.

There is a journey that illuminates the way out of the darkness of uncertainty and confusion into the bright space of joy and peace. With meditation practice as the basis, the process of coming into relationship with our innate spirituality yields the fruits of altruism, love, clarity, peace, and well-being. ✧

The TS: Meeting Ground of the Wise or Playground of the Foolish? — I

MARCELLO R. SERINI

THEOSOPHICAL lore and the Ageless Wisdom

It is a validated sociological truism that, through its teachings, the Theosophical Society (TS) spearheaded the way for the present “New Age Movement” in the West, and the ever-increasing acceptance of the notion of *karma* and reincarnation, these ideas appearing even in films as a “*déjà vu*” affair. But, in contemplating the state of the TS in the third decade of the 21st century, we have to question whether its century-old, established approach is viable, or ask if there are attitudinal modes or areas that need improving, and if it would not be wise to differentiate between theosophical lore and Ageless Wisdom rather than pairing the two as being the same.

Whilst “Modern Theosophy”, as promulgated by the founders of the TS, incorporates much of the Ageless Wisdom tradition, we have to ask whether the subsequent writings of later theosophists can be said to form part of, or to be in the same class of, that ancient lore handed down through the ages. We also have to query whether these works carry the

same “transformative energies” capable of awakening the dormant soul.

At times we also appear to be over-influenced by former theosophical writers or teachers, quoting them as reliable authorities or sources, without bothering to really do the investigative work or cross-checking the information. Yet we know that H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) did not teach reverence for the messenger but only for the message. And whilst she placed (an understandable) high respect for those whom we call “The Masters”, it is worthwhile noting that They do not even see themselves as being central to the issue and only the humble disciples of incarnating High Lamas.

Yet the seeming personality cult of the founders is hard to deny, as is the almost sacrosanct reference to the “Secret Doctrine” as the only source of wisdom. May this not be a carry-over from a religious indoctrination that is subconsciously still at work?

In the Great Hall of the TS at Adyar, one may behold the anomaly of seeing a large monument dedicated to the founders but smaller commemorative

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tablets that refer to other great teachers of humanity or religions of the world. In contrast, the whole emphasis of HPB was the impersonal wisdom that has existed through the ages. But, the way things are expressed in theosophical writings, it is almost as if one has to pay respect to a past event before proceeding to formulate a current view. This may be better illustrated by bringing to attention the parallel “enthralment” of “modern scientists” with the Darwinian concept of evolution that is generally regarded as holding, in a logical and self-evident way, all the answers to embodied life which, however, does not stand up to closer scrutiny.

The biggest obstacle: tradition of two kinds

If we study the hurdles crossed by Western thinkers in their quest for the objective knowledge that gave rise to modern science, one perceives that, whilst a scientific method was evolved, a decided rise in consciousness also took place. This “awareness” made possible the perception of those existing limiting factors, giving rise to the questioning of dogma, challenging the classical scholarly inheritance, as well as the Church and other established orthodox bodies.

But this path to knowledge has never been a clear-cut affair leading to a transcendental gnosis. Rather, it has been a series of superimposed systems of thoughts and outlooks that evolved with time, dominated by leading lights to the point of virtually influencing the outlook of an entire age — before being supplanted

by others. Thus, writing on *The Origins of Modern Science*, Herbert Butterfield refers of Copernicus: “He is himself one of those individual makers of world-systems, like Aristotle and Ptolemy, who astonish us by the power which they showed in producing a synthesis so mythical — and so irrelevant to the present day — that we should regard their work almost as a matter for aesthetic judgment alone.” Yet their influence held for millennia.

This statement equally applies to some of the “post-HPB” theosophical writers, whose works have often been regarded as “Theosophy”, but that, in fact, reflected their own interpretations of the Ageless Wisdom. Given the above elucidated trend and historic circumstances, a clear presentation of the Wisdom remains paramount, promulgated, more importantly, in a meaningful and recognizable way for today’s seekers.

But what is the recognizable way in a time of flux when established landmarks have lost their meaning and fail to inspire the “media-saturated masses”? Is, perhaps, “The Message” now being conveyed in a different form? Looking at world events since the 1970s, when the “new impetus” was expected to emerge, the most striking event has been the proliferation of Eastern Wisdom, Yoga, yogic centres, ashrams (pioneered in the West by C. W. Leadbeater (CWL) with the Manor Community in the 1930s) and meditative techniques centred upon “Self-realization”.

These are practices and teachings that

instil a sense of equilibrium, a striking sociological phenomenon of synchronization. All of this is very far removed from the century-old approach and format that has characterized the TS since its inception. In essence, this is a move away from abstract conceptualization to experiencing causation, focused in individualized consciousness as a portal to the Universal Whole beyond this physical dimension.

This comes, significantly, at a time when it was becoming clear that unchecked growth was fast becoming detrimental to the Planet (refer to: *The Limits to Growth* [A Report for the Club of Rome] and to *Mankind at the Turning Point* [The Second Report to the Club of Rome]), almost as if initiating that process of “countering the forward motion of becoming”, to one of “being and stillness”.

Let us explore these implications:

◆ Looking at past events within the TS, of the related saga to Annie Besant’s and CWL’s interpretations of the young J. Krishnamurti and the subsequent outcome, one can see that there has been a complete lack of perception that “Consciousness” needs to express its own unique ways *untrammelled by former concepts*, views, or notions of what a Teacher or “The Teachings” should be like. This, despite the unquestionable clairvoyant powers of the above people (refer to the work of Stephen M. Phillips — *Remote Viewing of Subatomic Particles*, etc.), who could, obviously, perceive the greatness of Krishnaji but were victims of past constructs within their minds,

conditioned by their post-Victorian age.

The same may be said of the approach taken to instruct and spiritually evolve the young people under the care of CWL living at The Manor in Sydney. The whole effort came to nought. Why? Were similar factors at play (a lack of proper understanding of the nature of Consciousness itself) or “something”, *evident at work and manifesting in the Ashrams of the East*, was, obviously, missing in the West.

◆ Given the historic record of humanity, of all biological species, of adaptation to environment and circumstances, we can safely infer that “Consciousness” ever expresses itself anew in consonance with that “ever-present now in changing formats”. If that is true, the question then arises: “Is the TS, despite breaking so much new ground in the late 19th century, currently doing so?” But why ask this question? After all, much useful work has been done within the TS itself to streamline and modernise its books and general literature, its websites, its bookshops and modes of presenting lectures and other undertakings.

◆ However, given the results, the diminishing return by way of membership to population ratio, fading public image and impact, inability to come forth with worthwhile reforming social programs, all of it would indicate that the approach and measures undertaken are insufficient.

The Nature of the Universe: Matter / Energy / Mind / Consciousness

The 20th century has, through the discoveries of science, demonstrated that

the Universe is not what it appears to be, its seeming solidity and mechanistic paradigm of the past centuries giving way to energy fields and interactive fluxes capable of being affected by the mind. Strangely, despite all of the resulting experimental evidence, the notion that this world, or plane of existence, continues to be regarded as “the (only) reality”, remains unassailable, and not as a relative dimension perceived by our human consciousness alone.

It would seem then, “at a time when atheism is not only spreading everywhere, but is set up as the sign of civilization and of a truly advanced, liberal, and secular state” (Greenlees, 1949), there is an urgent need for humanity to move beyond this outlook, and for any spiritually oriented organizations to point the way, through appropriate knowledge and relevant methods of application.

◆ But how to do it? Given that Consciousness remains, possibly, the greatest challenge for the human intellect, this most elusive issue can become, in the light of The Third Object, the most promising and useful area of contribution by the TS in our present century.

◆ Well ahead of his time, Swami Vivekananda said: “We must take up the study of the superconscious state just as any other science. On reason we must have to lay our foundation; we must follow reason as far as it leads, and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane.” (*Spirituality and Science of Conscious-*

ness, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2010).

It is the modern way to place great faith upon science and its outcomes, in the firm belief that the sought-after answers will, logically, be obtained and, as a consequence, all problems resolved.

At this juncture it is wise to note that Einstein remarked: “The scientific method can teach us nothing beyond how facts are related to and conditioned by each other”. Clearly perceiving this anomaly, the brilliant theoretical physicist, Wolfgang Pauli, saw the need to focus beyond rationality and to open science to consider the nature and functions of the psyche (Refer: *Pauli and Jung — The Meeting of Two Great Minds*, D. Lindorff).

In the same light, we had Dr Dean Hamer in 1998 (of the “God gene” fame) of Gene Structure Laboratory at the National Institutes of Health, USA, use the TCI (Temperament and Character Inventory), essentially attempting to measure “spirituality” by correlating volunteers’ answers through ranking with changes in the structure of genes known as mood regulators. More sophisticated studies followed, others in this past decade using neuroimaging and functional MRI to test meditators, leading, eventually, to the possibility of accurately pinpointing neural correlates with any given “consciousness” experience.

Yet as far back as 1980 Amaury de Riencourt writing in his book, *The Eye of Śiva*, stated: “However much identification may take place in future

research between the filament-like *nadis* and nerves . . . or between the seven chakras . . . and the sympathetic and parasympathetic ganglia of the autonomic nervous system, the fact remains that the practical usefulness (of the Yogic approach) has nothing to do with . . . scientific accuracy. But, even though this “scientific approach” will not give us an understanding of the underlying nature of the experience; it may be used with advantage to show, conclusively, the correlation between the workings of consciousnesses and the embodied being.”

Therein, and no further, is illustrated the usefulness of science and any dreams that it will be able to come up with a final answer related to the so-called “riddle of life”. In plain words, what all this is leading to is that we are coming up with systems of data that are logically correlated to give consistent and measurable results, that is, information about fields or targeted areas of analysis that lead to a deeper understanding of our nature and relationship to the universe.

But even though the results are forthcoming and reveal, as in Quantum Physics, a deeper reality, we fail to perceive its significance and consequence, the failure stemming, more than anything else, from our ingrained sense of duality and separateness from Nature and the rest of life.

A fresh portrayal of the Ageless Wisdom and of the necessary “yogic techniques” needed to understand consciousness would overcome the issue. For example, the 39th verse of the “Vishnu Sahasranama” mentions that

“unrivalled, luminous Self, all bodies . . . whose best worship is the vision of equality, known through different methods of inquiry”. We are dealing here with Puranic lore that describes, among other things “natural creation and renovation (Cosmogony)” pertinent to this topic.

We find, furthermore, that in the *Naradiya Purana*, “the dharmas change over time”, whilst in the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* the same sage teaches that “The creation of the universe is nothing but the transformation of Brahman”. Hence, we are dealing with aspects of a transforming wholeness or one consciousness that, when exposed to a field — “matter” — varies in qualities, property, and expression over time limits. In keeping with the Puranic lore we find that the stories and allegories most consonant with the above are the legendary stories of Śiva (Rudra), and that in contemplating these teachings a deeper understanding of the “workings of consciousness” dawns.

In observing events of the past 100 years with seemingly never-ending wars, devastations, and emerging new structures, one is struck by the dynamic pace of change and transformation of society, almost as if a new age has begun to dawn, with the need for new “global ethics” becoming paramount. It is said that, when the first atomic bomb was detonated on 16 July 1945, Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, hummed the verses of the *Bhagavadgītā*: “I am become death; the shatterer of worlds”.

The TS: Meeting Ground of the Wise or Playground of the Foolish? — I

It would seem that Śiva has come forth and is indeed “holding the sword”, or that terrible *Jin*, that emerged from the Brahmajñāna sacrificial pit in the Himalayas of long ago (ch. 166, “Śānti Parva”, *Mahabharata*) is no mere speculation but is reflected in the aforementioned events and proliferation of yoga centres, yogic literature and acceptance of the concept of “Self-realization” — traditionally ascribed to its archetypal patron “Śiva”.

If we analyze these main trends, we can perceive that what is manifesting is a way to “self-empowerment” and a retuning to Cosmic Nature that was absent beforehand, involving both the spiritual as well as the environmental dimensions. In technological terms, this implies the interaction between merging systems — leading to (transitory) “turbulent states” — before settling down to a higher potential or level of activity.

In Puranic imagery, this is a transition from the more tranquil age and teachings dominated by Vishnu to the more dynamic, eccentric, seemingly unpredict-

able and occult Śiva. Employing (his/its) feminine powers, or “Śaktis”, in consonance with female deities (conscious, directing energies), it coincides, interestingly, with the worldwide emergence of the “Woman Movement” and of dynamic techniques (such as Kundalini Yoga), required to reach a transcendental awareness of the whole Cosmos, and by inference and direct perception, one’s own essential nature.

Based on teachings that emphasize *a once-thought remote and inert Parabrahm (as taught by Sāṅkhya, Patanjali Yoga, and Vedānta) to a dynamic, living, throbbing, and creative “Energy-Self”* (refer to “Spanda Kārikas” [Śaiva philosophy]) is consonant to the findings of quantum physics — despite all of its physical and cognitive limits.

To understand the import implied in the above, is to perceive the next step for the TS as well as the radical change in outlook that will be required by its members, if it is going to maintain a role in the promulgation of the Ageless Wisdom.

(To be continued)

**Your own Self-realization is the greatest service
you can render the world.**

Ramana Maharshi

The Soul's Journey to Divinity

(Based on a Mass held at Our Lady of All Angels Liberal Catholic Church (LCC), Ojai, California, on Sunday, 27 March 2022)

GASPAR TORRES

THERE are two cycles of preparation for the two fundamental epochs that guide the soul's journey to Divinity. In both cycles, although the main emphasis is on developing those virtues that prepare the soul for such an elevation, there are two moments exclusively dedicated to Love as the most essential quality for the completion of this journey. This is due to the fact that Love is the real key to Divinity.

In the Christian tradition this is symbolized in the life of Jesus as his birth, through Advent as the nativity of Christmas, and in the passion and resurrection, through the period of Lent. In the early centuries of the Christian Church both of these periods were 40 days long; now Advent is only 4 weeks long. But the retention of the number 4 in both periods is its association with the quaternary, or lower human nature, called "constitution" in theosophical terms.

From the psychological point of view, we have seen that our constant examination of our weaknesses in order to purify our nature, leading us to a

higher consciousness, could cause us to feel depressed or defeated if we do not have periodic pauses, such as the above two resting periods (Advent and Lent), in order to regain our strength and recharge our energy to continue our self-observation. We need hundreds of reincarnations to be able to become really human.

The complete glorification and illumination of the human spirit is found at the center of not only humanity, but this Divinity is also found in all the other kingdoms of Nature: the mineral, vegetable, animal, and angelical. The Unity of the Divine life penetrates all of manifestation, from subatomic particles to the most highly evolved beings. This Unity is the one Reality. All the rest is what appears as separate forms, but they continue constituting the same Unity.

To be able to pause for these periods of self-observation allows us to shift our attention from our animalistic desires and tendencies, and our sensual passions to our center of Love, where our spiritual faculties lie dormant. Only with this

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The Soul's Journey to Divinity

superior passion are we able to reach “the peace that passeth understanding”, which “abides in the hearts of those who live in the Eternal”.

It is easy to find fault for our suffering in the behavior of our parents, teachers, neighbors, politicians, and so on, but the real cause of suffering is in our minds, thoughts, words, and actions, which originate within us. Only Love will bring peace within every one of us, humanity as a whole, and our planet. This is due to the fact that the human kingdom is the most important of all other kingdoms because it is the only one with the necessary self-consciousness to develop the sense of responsibility to guide all the rest.

One of the things that we unconsciously keep repeating is that there is cruelty in all of Nature and that all around us struggles for self-preservation. But we forget that it is in us that conflict originates and that as long as we cannot understand this and live it, we cannot help other kingdoms to avoid their apparent cruel behavior. As stated in Isaiah 65:25, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”

Another example is found in the well-known “miracle” of the bread and the fish (Mark, 8:15–19) when Jesus and his disciples reach a high mount and realize that a hungry multitude of 5,000 people have followed them. The numbers involved in this parable (5,000 people, 5 loaves of bread, 2 fish, 12 baskets, and so forth) are not to be taken literally. They are symbols of the result of Jesus's teaching that only through his love and compassion could he, first awaken, and then transform a great part of human consciousness, so that through that Love humanity could elevate itself to a new phase of its evolution. The 12 baskets symbolize the 12 constellations surrounding our solar system, during the sidereal year, and every constellation takes around 2,100 years giving its influence over our solar system. It is also the cycle of influence of a Great Spiritual Instructor for Humanity as Krishna, the Christ, the Buddha, and so on. (*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. II, p. 330 footnote.)

Just as there is no real Christmas unless the heart vibrates each year with a new realization of Love, there cannot be a real Resurrection Sunday unless the heart is reborn with a new deepening of Love within our being. ✧

May it not be that the primordial force,
the stream of influence, force, and light
which is the Holy Spirit, when stepped down
to the level of differing manifestations,
is Love and nothing else?

N. Sri Ram
Thoughts for Aspirants, First Series
TPH, Adyar, Chennai, India, 1957

147TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION INFORMATION

Theme: *Our Responsibility in the Interconnected World*

The 147th International Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the International Headquarters, Adyar, **from 31 December 2022 to 4 January 2023** (departure 5 January). All members of the Society in good standing are welcome to attend as delegates. Non-members are not eligible for accommodation but can register for the Convention and meals at the canteen. For online programs, registration is required.

ACCOMMODATION FOR MEMBERS ONLY

Western style, Leadbeater Chambers: LBC has rooms with two beds and an attached bathroom in each room. Some rooms are large enough to have three beds.

Indian style: The Indian-style accommodations have been upgraded but the number of accommodations will be limited. Hence be early to register.

Allotments: Accommodations will be decided by the Convention Committee during the first week of December 2022 and the result will be informed by email.

PACKAGES

The rates are per person from 30 December 2022 dinner to 5 January 2023 lunch. LBC is Leadbeater Chambers.

Overseas delegates:

- A. LBC: US\$ 360 — incl. registration fee, accommodation, and meals at LBC.
- B. Indian style: US\$ 100 — including registration fee, accommodation, and meals at Indian canteen.
- C. Attending the program without meals and accommodation: registration fee US\$ 70.

Indian delegates:

- D. LBC: Rs. 12,000 — including registration fee, accommodation, and meals at LBC
- E. Indian style: Rs. 5,000 — including registration fee, accommodation, meals at Indian Canteen
- F. Registration and meals at Indian Canteen without accommodation — Rs. 3,500
- G. Attending the program without meals and accommodation: Registration fee Rs. 500.

(See over)

PAYMENT

Overseas delegates: Register online and make the payment. If for some reason you cannot pay with the online sheet, payments will be collected from you “on arrival”. Then you may pay the applicable package rate by Master Card, Visa credit card, or in cash in foreign currency (with a copy of your passport). Please remember to take your travel insurance before arriving at Adyar.

Delegates from India: Register online and make the payment in INR either (a) online with registration (preferred), or (b) by cheque / bank draft payable to *The Theosophical Society* couriered to the Convention Officer, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600020, India. (Telephone: +91-44-24917198). It is important that you send an email about payment to the CO <convention@ts-adyar.org> soon after completing the payment process, mentioning the following: delegate(s) name, bank name, date of transfer, and transfer reference ID.

REGISTRATION FORM

Last date to register with accommodation is 26 November 2022

Online registration with instructions for paying will appear on the Convention website <<https://convention.ts-adyar.org/>> (opens in September). *If accommodations become full the status will be intimated on the website.*

Delegates who are (or cannot be) allotted accommodation will be intimated by email on 7 December 2022.

Delegates who cannot be allotted but have paid will have their payment returned after the Convention.

Canceling by 10 December 2022

For delegates wanting to cancel their registration and accommodation requests, the last date will be 10 December 2022. After this date, no amount will be refunded. If the cancellation request is received before 10 December then the package amount (in INR) minus the registration fee will be refunded after the Convention.

Convention Officer:

Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, **email:** <convention@ts-adyar.org>

Post: The Convention Officer, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600020, India.

Convention website: <<https://convention.ts-adyar.org/>>



Theosophical Work around the World

General Council at ITC Naarden

After two years the Adyar Theosophical Society (TS) General Council (GC) had the “planning days” (the annual planning activity of the TS) in June at the International Centre, Naarden, the Netherlands, for four days. GC members attending were 15 in person and 13 online part of the time. There were also 7 observers, including 2 representatives of the World Federation of Young Theosophists (WFYT) who presented the progress in formulation of the Regulations of the WFYT.

The projects initiated in 2018 during the “strategic planning days” are progressing in various phases. Twelve projects have been completed. Some projects are ongoing, such as: The information on the Theosophical Centres around the world listed on the Adyar website, <ts-adyar.org>, will be updated with more information. The future of Theosophical Publishing Houses requires a model to correspond to the changes in making available printed as well as e-books. The intention of creating more theosophical schools is progressing well, a good example being the Adyar Theosophical Academy, already running at full steam under the direction of Mrs Sonal Murali.

Mr Vic Hao Chin, Jr, who has established several theosophical schools in the Philippines, has prepared a paper

on “What is Theosophical Education” and a book on “Meditation Course for the Public”. Ricardo Lindemann has written a document on “Techniques for Opening New Lodges”. The Theosophical Resource Centre, <theosophy.world>, in New Zealand, has been ready with increasing content, including in Spanish and French.

Substantial attention was given to the propagation of Theosophy and plans are being made. Mrs Erica Georgiades presented the history, purpose, and plans for the School of the Wisdom (SOW). It was concluded that the SOW organized by Adyar is the one to be called “The School of the Wisdom”. Other similar schools should have slightly different names, like “Wisdom School” or “School of Theosophy in <country name>”.

Young theosophists (less than 41 years) have good inspiration for the work. It was recommended that Sections would budget some amount to support young members to attend theosophical events.

As reported in more detail in the July issue of *The Theosophist* journal, there is a major development at Adyar in the leasing of Damodar Gardens to the Shiv Nadar Trust to run a school with high standards of education. This lease will help secure the functioning of the TS now and in the future.

International Gathering of Young Theosophists at ITC Naarden, the Netherlands

Ms Sara van Vloten, a young member of the Spanish Section of the Adyar Theosophical Society (TS), reports that from 3 to 7 June 2022 an International Gathering of Young Theosophists with the theme “Treading the Path to Self-Transformation” took place at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC), Naarden, the Netherlands. It was the first in-person international gathering of members under 41 years old since the global pandemic began. It was organized by a team of young members from Europe, and sponsored by ITC Naarden, the European Federation of the TS (EFTS), and various European Sections of the TS .

After months of preparation, 31 participants attended from 16 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and the United States of America. We were glad that a diverse group of like-minded young people could be gathered, since multiplicity of points of view, cultures, backgrounds, and so on enriches the outcome when all come together with the same goal.

The place chosen to host the gathering had such a positive effect because one feels immediately immersed and connected with Nature. A welcome and safe atmosphere was created, like entering a sacred space leaving the ordinary world, allowing to relate with others in a profound manner, with genuine and sincere

sharing of the highest aspirations, points of view, curiosity, inquiries, questions, and so forth, as well as laughing, singing, and playing games. All workers at the ITC were welcoming and supportive of the gathering. The program included morning meditations, workshops, a panel of talks, sessions with guest speakers, Tim Boyd (international President of the TS) and Vicente Hao Chin Jr (former President of the Philippines Section), and volunteering at the ITC.

Workshops promoted involvement, brainstorming, and active participation while focusing on the theme through several topics: the future of the TS and the role of young theosophists; different aspects and experiences of service; and the arts as a means of portraying the process of self-transformation, including a fun painting session to creatively illustrate our highest aspirations. Tim Boyd shared captivating anecdotes and enlightening perspectives that conveyed the importance of focusing attention and capacities towards building a better world, starting with oneself; and Vic Hao Chin dived into a practical way to “process” emotions when triggered by reaction patterns, and gave useful tools for daily practice.

It was a very meaningful event, providing interaction and sharing many precious moments together, building fraternal bonds, friendships, and a deep sense of unity, working in harmony. All of it ignited a renewed and stronger sense of responsibility and willingness to serve within the TS and our communities.



One of the four planning meetings of the Adyar TS General Council held in the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, the Netherlands, in June 2022



Participants of the International Youth Gathering of Young Theosophists held at the International Theosophical Centre, Naarden, the Netherlands.
Standing in the middle (*w/gray scarf*) is international President Tim Boyd with his wife, Lily, on his right

Theosophical Work around the World



General Secretary of the Italian Section, Antonio Girardi, with young Theosophists participating in the Annual Congress of the Italian Section of the TS



The Italian Section Congress meeting room



The Italian Section Theosophical Order of Service charity bazaar



Participants of the Adyar TS Italian Section annual Congress

Theosophical Work around the World

Italian Theosophical Society — 108th National Congress

The 108th National Congress of the Italian Theosophical Society (ITS) took place in Vicenza from 17 to 19 June 2022, in a fraternal and positive atmosphere, with the theme “Theosophy and Spiritual Masters”. The lectures were given by Pier Giorgio Parola, Graziella Ricci, Luigi Antonio Macrì, Enrico Stagni, Diego Fayenz, Patrizia Moschin Calvi, and Marina de Grandis. All the speeches were followed by lively discussions. The lectures were broadcast live online, so that those who could not be present in Vicenza could also participate. The videos of the lectures will be uploaded on the ITS YouTube channel.

The Congress was also the occasion

to present three new books, published by Edizioni Teosofiche Italiane: *L'educazione come servizio (Education as Service)* by J. Krishnamurti, *Gli aiutatori invisibili (Invisible Helpers)* by C. W. Leadbeater and *Vita Impersonale — Io Sono (Impersonal Life — I am)* by Joseph Benner.

There was also a report by Nicoletta Boriello on the recent international gathering of the Young Theosophists, held at the beginning of June at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in Naarden, the Netherlands, on “Walking the path towards self-transformation”. (See p. 38.)

The Congress was also an important opportunity to boost personal connections and relationships; the participants really enjoyed being together in the spirit of Universal Brotherhood. ✧

**We are not human beings having a spiritual experience,
we are spiritual beings having a human experience,
and infinite love is the only truth;
everything else is an illusion.**

Pema Chodron

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

Date	Section	General Secretary, etc.	Address	Magazine	Email address
1947	Africa, East and Central	... Mr Narendra M. Shah	... PO Box 14525. 00800, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya	... <i>The Theosophical Light</i>	narendrashahi999@gmail.com
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1956	Africa, West	... Dr K. A. Tutu	... PO Box 720, Accra, Ghana	... <i>The West African Theosophist</i>	katutu@gmail.com
1929	America, Central *	... Mrs Beatriz Elisena Martinez Pozas	... Colonia Universitaria Norte, Calle Julio Mejia, Poligono, E-7 Mejicanos, San Salvador, EL SALVADOR		bemapo03@hotmail.com
1920	Argentina	... Mr Esteban Langlois	... Pje. Florencio Balcarce 71, Buenos Aires (1405)	... <i>Teosofía en Argentina</i>	secretaria@sociedadteosofica.org.ar
1990	Asia, East and Southeast †	... Mr Chong Sanne	... 540 Sims Avenue, No. 03-04 Sims Avenue Centre, Singapore 387 603	... <i>Newsletter</i>	sanne@theosophyasia.net
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1911	Belgium	... Mrs Sabine Van Osta	... Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	info@ts-belgium.be
1965	Bolivia †	... Mrs Maria Luisa Cabrera	... c/Valdivieso N° 541 Cochabamba	... <i>Revista Teosófica Boliviana</i>	mlcp2@hotmail.com
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