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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mrs Radha Burnier

Vice-President: Mrs Linda Oliveira

Secretary: Mrs Kusum Satapathy

Treasurer: Miss Keshwar Dastur

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA Emails: Below

Secretary: theossoc@dataone.in

Treasury: ts_treasury@sify.com Fax: (+91-44) 2446-3464

Adyar Library and Research Centre: adyarlibrary@vsnl.net

Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com & tphindia@adyarbooks.com

Fax: (+91-44) 2490-1399

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

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.



On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

Life as a Whole

Theosophy, it is said, has two sides to it. One caters to people who are concerned about how to deal with the small problems that come up in life. These are worrying to the minds of those who regard what matters in the immediate as of great, if not utmost, importance. They have in mind some solutions or attitudes which make the problems loom larger than they are in fact. Then there is a smaller group of real enquirers who look at these problems, big or small, in the light of questions which refer to life in its depth. This larger view of life is more difficult, of course, to accept and adopt. None of us can be sure that we are taking into account everything that needs to be considered. But by looking at small things in a large perspective there gradually come into the mind matters that really pertain to life as a whole.

So, the generation of enquirers whom we have to deal with is not really composed of only one type of person. There are those who are far-sighted and regard the questions which come up in one life in the perspective of a larger existence, and there are those who consider the problems of this life, isolated from an extensive experience of this and other conditions in which we have to live. This

makes all the difference between the Theosophist and one who has no acquaintance at all with a view of life which comprehends not only this life, but life as a whole, including the prospects which he will have to face under different conditions in other lives.

Life as a whole includes what we might regard as non-existent or frightening or a relief, depending on the level which we have reached at present. To those who are not frightened, intuition can point to the nature of the larger life which includes both the one we are about to leave, and hitherto unknown beauties which we will delve into as we proceed on the journey. First of all there may be an awareness that all life is undivided. Many problems in this life are created by imagining that it is the only life; or we imagine that we shall be pleasantly settled in a beautiful land which we had not imagined earlier. But the idea of moving on may not affect the minds of many people. When they do, they perceive little glimpses of the real nature of existence.

When there is no division in the mind between this and another life and living is a flow — not stagnation — from one set of circumstances to another, then life becomes different. The eyes begin to see

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in a different way. It is then only that we realize the most important truth of Theosophy that there is but one life; there is no division between this and another life, between this and other seemingly different versions and so forth. This is the real beginning of knowledge — to know that we are non-different from everything else. The little beetle, the birds that fly in the air, fishes which play and live in water, all kinds of animals, and ourselves form part of one life. The distortion caused by division into numerous or innumerable parts, which affects the outlook of people who live the ordinary life is more than a distortion. It is like a dream, very real at the moment but which will disappear in no time if right action is taken.

This is the difference that takes place when our life is seen as a part of the whole. And this difference is one of consciousness, not a difference in what we see. It is said that the enlightened person sees the life which is in front of us as embodying the most beautiful truth of the sacredness of things. This is one of the well-known statements from sources which we cannot perceive at present, but of which we may gain glimpses.

The new vision may change and reappear but it will make much difference to the person who experiences the new state of consciousness. The whole understanding of life will be different when he becomes aware of the unity of it. Compared to this, all other knowing is unimportant and we begin to see this. People who have seen it are the real Saints, the Liberated who have lived upon Earth.

The Category of Mental Knowledge

The other category of people know about some truths mentally and may even believe in them to an extent. But they revert back to the mundane existence much of the time and completely forget what they know mentally at other times. To these people Theosophy is a philosophy known intellectually, but not really. They do accept that there can be a change of consciousness which can make life different, but they do not experience it; they only know about it. When we speak about a Theosophist, we sometimes mean one who belongs to this category or to the other, so there is confusion. A Theosophist is really one who has a deep conviction of other worlds and does not have to be told about them. When he speaks to an enquirer, it is something of which he knows and so he communicates, not something which he has heard and talks about. So when we speak to an enquirer, do we speak with a clear voice or with much knowledge of a mental kind — not the real Knowledge which makes a person different, even if he is aware of it partly, not wholly. This is the question which we have to ask ourselves.

The more we have of real Knowledge the more effective can our contact be with those who do not know. This is not a matter of explaining better, of saying things which would appeal, and so forth. It is a question of saying what has penetrated deeply into our own consciousness. This will make much difference to what we say to a person

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who enquires. Of course there are enquirers who cannot understand, but there are others who feel there is some truth in what is being pointed out to them; this matters very much. When Theosophy is a reality to us, not just a theory which has appealed, and we pass it on to the enquirer, it makes some impression on the listener. The listener is touched in a way which we cannot explain. So the question is, do we meet enquirers as a Theosophist or as someone who has merely studied books?

The Theosophical Response

The enquirer may be serious or superficial; we do not know and it does not matter, but we are mainly concerned with the serious enquirer. Only through him can the objects of the Theosophical Society, our objects, possibly get fulfilled. It is important that those who understand should promote a view which others can follow when they are ready. There are many things that may be talked about by Theosophists, but behind them all should be an attitude which will be relevant, and carried forward for a sufficient time to make evolution beyond the human stage possible.

One of the purposes of the Society has been dealt with above very briefly, that is to know in one's heart and spread as far as possible the ideal of brotherliness. This includes not only understanding but a feeling for the origin and source from which all have come into existence. That source is unique, and there is nothing that can come into existence in any way

except what the one source intends. This is what all enlightened persons have realized; there is only one source and in manifestation it displays something of its own beauty and other qualities of a transcendental nature.

So the first of the few important qualities that must characterize the living background of the communicator is the consciousness of one existence. The second point that we should perhaps realize is that human transformation into the superhuman field or level takes place as we make progress. All of evolution is moving in that direction. We may study details but to be aware deep in oneself of the direction towards which all are moving is important. Evolution is not just a journey like any other, but an unfolding of divine powers in oneself. The unfolding is crucial and some will be nearer to it than others, which does not matter; because ultimately all will reach the source. As we have already mentioned, time is an illusion from the point of view of the heights and is of some importance only at the lower level. From the point of view of growth in awareness, time has no meaning at all.

In the process of the journey to fulfil one's real destiny and come nearer to the Supreme, certain necessities arise. Much has been said of reincarnation but reincarnation is only one part of the entire process through which enlightenment is gained. It is obvious that the vast millions are not going to be saved all at once. This superstition of living one life and going to heaven, hell or nothing, as

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taught by some so-called teachers, is not acceptable to a Theosophist, who realizes that living in certain conditions in a certain kind of body is not enough for consciousness to mature. Each person takes many bodies and passes through varied conditions before becoming free of false ideas and desires. Reincarnation does take place but that has not the importance which people tend to give it. What is important is the change that must happen in order to wake up to the new.

The journey towards the Supreme involves the acquisition of various qualities which are spiritual, like kindness, universality, the capacity to look at what is essential and discard the unessential, etc. This involves dropping other features acquired on the way. The animal-man has naturally, and almost inevitably, qualities that make the innocent animal charming and lovable. These are the unconscious characteristics of animal life — wanting without knowing what others need, looking after oneself at the expense of others and so on. When the mind is not developed, innocence directs the animal to do what is wanted by it and we are charmed, but when the mind becomes active as in human beings and

can think of the effect of actions, it has to be completely different.

The mind of man need not be under the command of animal characteristics, but must work in an entirely new way. It is this new mind which makes the human being really human, and not subject to circumstances. It is a mind, which is impelled to make a person respond kindly to an unkind attack, to act with goodness even in the midst of conflicting situations. It is this new mind which makes for superhuman living.

We will not go into details but a person who wishes to change the world needs to bring about change in himself. The answer to an enquirer therefore must confirm a feeling for doing the unusual from the worldly point of view. The great spiritual teachers have shown the way; they have responded so that the listener has changed. The good Theosophist must be somewhat like that; he who listens must be deeply affected in one way or another, filled with more wisdom than with foolish impulses and ideas. It is said that the new races at the end of evolution on this earth will be unlike the present, showing characteristics of a spiritual nature. But the change must begin now. ✧

**The Self-existent pierced sense openings outward;
therefore a man looks out, not in.
But a certain wise man, in search of immortality,
turned his gaze inward and saw the Self within.**

Katha Upanishad

Theosophy for a New Generation of Inquirers:

Seven Facets of Esoteric Science

COLIN PRICE

SINCE Madame Blavatsky received the antagonism of the religious establishment in nineteenth century London the intellectual climate has greatly changed. Nowadays there is widespread apathy in a Society dominated by materialism. However, there remains a small minority who still wish to challenge her teachings on other but religious grounds.

Principal among these challenges are those in the scientific community for whom anything that does not provide proof as justification is unacceptable if not derided. Of course their attitude is much more compatible with materialism and atheism than those who believe in some sort of afterlife.

The battle is not quite as one-sided as it might seem, however. It is obvious that if a good argument can be made for a continuation of individual human consciousness beyond death then that will have profound significance to those who ask 'What is life all about and is there an underlying plan and purpose to it?'

It is here that Theosophy and those who propound its teachings have a real

contribution of some substance to make. The amazing repeatability of the NDE (Near Death Experiences) of those who undergo dangerous surgery and who have to be resuscitated when they die in the operating theatre provide solid evidence, which is up to scientific standards, that some consciousness can survive the unconsciousness of the physical brain.

In the Mahatma Letters we read that 'they forget, or never knew that he who holds the keys to the secrets of death is possessed of the keys of life' (chron. ed., No. 136).

Furthermore, in the *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, Ianthe Hoskins writes:

The second assertion of the Secret Doctrine is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all parts of nature. An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend

Mr Colin Price is a National Lecturer and a former National President of the English Section of the Theosophical Society.

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that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe.

This really meets the modern man who looks for reliable evidence, on his own ground. This is playing to the rules which makes it much more difficult for him to be dismissive. The concepts of karma and reincarnation continue to attract attention from people with a wide variety of viewpoints and are both theosophical subjects which can be easily presented to a new generation of enquirers. The motive behind an enquiry may influence the ability of the enquirer to accept explanations.

Just as Autumn sees the fading of Nature's Summer bloom and she prepares through Winter for another Spring; so man's physical strength weakens while his spirit grows in wisdom and lays the foundation for another earth life. However, the concept that we live an earth life for spiritual development and the acquisition of qualities of unselfishness, altruism and loving concern for others does not seem to be widely held. More often it would seem that man is motivated primarily by selfish desires with little concern about what their fulfilment has on the lives of others.

Relevant Concepts for a New Generation

1. The doctrine of karma.
2. The doctrine of reincarnation.
3. A view of time measured by the frequency of events which determines its duration.

4. The concept of occult or dimensionless space.

5. The seven principles of man.

6. The teaching of the various states of consciousness within this hierarchy.

7. The notion of 'ever-becoming' as nature in all her cycles progresses towards a limitless horizon of perfection and evolution.

1. The Doctrine of Karma

There is widespread appreciation of the idea that nature is governed by immutable laws. In fact modern science and engineering totally depends upon this changelessness in all aspects of its activities. Consequently it is relatively easy for enquirers with this background to accept that the fundamental laws which govern human life and consciousness have similar characteristics. The idea of natural justice has a universal appeal. Furthermore the extension of the principle of cause and effect, so fundamental in science, to man's spiritual side seems imminently reasonable.

This all neatly obviates the need for a 'Day of Judgement' in the future and substitutes a far more credible alternative in the automatic operation of the law of karma. This is why the consideration of the whole cycle of life is so essential. Where the earth life is a life of causes, the bardo state between lives is that part of the cycle where the effects are experienced. Each individual reaps the harvest they have sown. Without fear or favour the inexorable and immutable law of karma pays the wages of good and ill.

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The process is not enacted under anaesthetic like a hospital operation. The persistence of some consciousness after physical death ensures that justice is not only done, but seen by the individual to be done.

2. The Doctrine of Reincarnation

The acceptance of the concept of life as a cyclic process where physical earth life alternates with the bardo state virtually demands the idea of reincarnation as an integral part of the overall process. Naturally the enquiring mind will need answers to many fundamental questions before accepting that life is a cyclic process on the scale suggested, and if consciousness really does persist between lives.

The development of spiritual qualities during life is a major theme for many of the world's religions, but the significance of events after death is not widely addressed. There is also a lack of authoritative, credible detail about such events and until recent times little information that would be classified as reliable evidence. By contrast, H. P. Blavatsky and even more so the Mahatmas in the Mahatma Letters, give us a great deal of information derived mainly from that huge accumulation of occult knowledge called the Ancient Wisdom.

Concepts of space and time have been developed enormously by modern theoretical physics and it is here that esoteric science has a significant contribution to make. With its concepts of subjective time and duration together with occult or

dimensionless space a framework is provided within which answers to questions such as 'Where do we go between lives and how long do we have to wait to reincarnate?' can be made.

3. A View of Time Measured by the Frequency of Events

The entry into Devachan does not only complete the withdrawal from 3-dimensional space, but it also marks the end of earth time for the deceased. Time is much more complex than it appears to be. The variability of time in relation to earth time across the vast distances of the universe which can only be measured with reference to the speed of light has been shown by Einstein's Theory of Relativity. It is hardly surprising that withdrawal from 3-D space into abstract or occult space would have a significant effect upon time as we know it.

In fact, even now we experience the same subjective variability in time. When we are enjoying ourselves time seems to go quickly. When we are unhappy and particularly when we are in pain, time seems to go more slowly. If we look more deeply into this subjective experience of time, we see that we really measure time by the frequency of events. The more things that happen to us and around us in an hour, the faster that hour seems to go for us. When we are busy time flies! The converse is also true.

4. The Concept of Occult or Dimensionless Space

Esotericism teaches that there is an inner and an outer aspect of many

things including space. Outer space is that which contains everything to do with this realm of physical matter which is located in different places throughout the universe. Inner space is that which contains the world of thoughts and ideas, concepts that do not occupy physical space. It is a fundamental step in the progress of the student when he grasps this idea of the reality of the inner or hidden side of existence.

We are told: 'Devachan is a state, not a locality' (*ML*, chron. ed., No.104).

5. The Seven Principles of Man

There seems to be an ongoing acceptance of the idea that man consists of three parts: body, mind and spirit. It is a relatively small step to ask the student to accept a further division into seven parts for the purpose of study. This analytical approach is a virtually universal scientific method to achieve progress in unravelling problems in nature. So Theosophy names the seven parts or principles of man: Ātmā (spirit), Buddhi (vehicle of spirit), Manas (mind), Kāma (desire, emotion), Prāna (motivating life-force), Linga Śarira (astral body) and Sthula Śarira (physical body).

The combination of Ātmā and Buddhi is called the Monad; Manas or Mind is divided into two parts, upper and lower. The upper or higher *manas* is combined with the Monad to form the Individuality which then becomes a vehicle for the Egoic Consciousness. The lower *manas* is often combined with Kāma and called the *kāma manasic* principle because they function so closely together (sometimes called the middle duad). This combines

with the three lower principles or lower triad to form the personality and is the vehicle for our normal waking consciousness. It is this consciousness which fades as these lower principles finally disintegrate during the after-death processes, so that only the Egoic consciousness remains to enter Devachan.

6. The Teaching of Various States of Consciousness

There are different states of consciousness associated with man's seven principles. The highest spiritual consciousness is said to be achieved by the egoic individuality, i.e. with the Monad combined with upper *manas*. This can only be achieved by the practice of meditation and contemplation of spiritual things.

The higher consciousness is able to watch and direct the lower mind's thinking consciousness. Something we do every day when we decide what we wish to think about.

The Kāmic consciousness is that of the emotions and we are all aware when we are emotionally aroused and our focus is in our emotions. Likewise, our focus of consciousness can be entirely in our physical bodies and this is particularly true when we are very hungry or thirsty or in great pain.

7. The Notion of Ever-Becoming

It is the cultivation of our higher consciousness which is necessary to prepare us for our journey through the bardo state between lives and ultimately to enter the Nirvāna (state) to begin a

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different, higher more advanced cycle beyond earth life to continue our spiritual evolution.

There is a general acceptance of the theory of evolution of physical life from simple beginnings to the incredible physical complexity of man and it seems that future generations are unlikely to quarrel with this basic hypothesis. As we have seen elsewhere there is an inner as well

as an outer side and it is a reasonable supposition that man also evolves spiritually to similar levels of complexity.

In fact, the study of the past and of the principles underlying evolutionary advance points to the inescapable fact that we all, individually and collectively, *are* the humanity whose evolution is the central theme of Theosophy and Esoteric Science. ✧

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home —
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet: I do not ask to see
The distant scene — one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

John Henry, Cardinal Newman

An Emerging World View

SHIRLEY J. NICHOLSON

OUR world is vastly different in many ways from that of Madame Blavatsky's late nineteenth century environment, not even taking into account the miracle of current technology and communication. Blavatsky was involved with Theosophy near the end of colonialism, when a world power could dominate a smaller country and impose rule from outside. Her world was structured into classes with the aristocracy and upper class dominating the common person. In her world science and religion were at odds with no concept of a meeting ground between them to unify the material with the spiritual.

These divisions in society were the result of and also the cause of the then current world view, a mental set based on current knowledge about the world. We inherit a world view, a way of perceiving the world and what is 'right', and it is rare for this to be questioned. Against this background the Masters experimented with promoting an organization based on brotherhood and unity. The Master KH wrote to A. P. Sinnett, an early Theosophist: "The term "Universal Brotherhood" is no idle phrase. . . . It is the only secure foundation for universal

morality . . . and it is the aspiration of the true adept' (*Mahatma Letters*, p.20).

Today after 134 years of the notion of unity and brotherhood filtering down into the world mind, we still find divisions and domination. However, there are no colonial empires to dominate other countries, and ironclad social structures are not prominent. The United Nations has introduced the idea of a world community, and the realization has dawned that all countries, all societies, all peoples are interconnected at many levels and have deep roots in the earth and in nature itself. Discoveries in science have shown that the material world is upheld by a restless non-material base of subatomic particles or quanta. Yet the attitudes and values of the scientific-materialistic world view, which has dominated the West for more than 400 years, still persist today.

However, there are many voices from science, religion, social sciences, and environmentalism that proclaim that a new world view is emerging, that the emphasis on materialism is no longer valid. One such voice is that of Edmund Bourne, PhD, psychologist, researcher, and author of *Global Shift: How a New*

Mrs Shirley J. Nicholson is a long-standing member of the Theosophical Society in America and author of many books, including *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Insight*.

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Worldview is Transforming Humanity (Noetic/New Harbinger, 2009). Bourne lists assumptions and values that characterize this emerging world view. He includes such themes as a conscious universe, multidimensional reality, interconnection of all minds, the complementarity of science and spirituality, consciousness as a causal influence. Some of the values that arise from this new world view are a sense of inclusiveness towards all humanity, compassion, valuing intuition, the primacy of unconditional love (Bourne, pp.28, 30).

This list is impressive when compared to the new ideas Blavatsky introduced to the West in the late nineteenth century. It seems that more of the Theosophy she taught has crept into public awareness through various means than we might have suspected. The Ancient Wisdom teaching is prominent in the emerging world view.

A major shift in values Bourne points to as occurring today is 'a sense of inclusiveness', which is surely part of the primary reason the TS was founded, the promotion of brotherhood. Bourne's 'inclusiveness toward all humanity' recognizes that 'all human beings are part of the same family, regardless of racial, ethnic, national, or religious differences' (Bourne, p.30). Compare this with our First Object. Blavatsky told us that 'The TS is first of all a universal Brotherhood' (*Mahatma Letters*, p.443). Bourne, of course, did not mean to say that all people now hold brotherhood as a truth in nature, but rather that it is a

feature of the shift in attitudes and opinions now taking place.

Another idea introduced by Blavatsky and included by Bourne in the emerging world view is: 'The universe as a whole is a conscious and creative process, not a mechanistic object' (Bourne, p.28). Theosophists are familiar with the notion that consciousness came first; forms and organisms emerge from the Divine Mind before they become physically embodied. Everything has an interior, a sort of consciousness appropriate to the nature of the creature or object. According to Blavatsky, 'Everything in the Universe, through all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS: i.e. endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. We men must remember that because *we* do not perceive any signs — which we can recognize — of consciousness say, in stones, we have no right to say that *no consciousness exists there*. There is no such thing as either "dead" or "blind" matter, as there is no "Blind" or "Unconscious" Law' (*The Secret Doctrine*, I.274).

According to Bourne, 'both science and spirituality lead to an understanding of the cosmos' (Bourne, p.28), as Blavatsky also taught. The full title of her magnum opus is *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. There are religionists who hold that the Bible is literally true and science wrong, and some scientists regard religion as just symbolic or even superstition. According to the new world view, religion and science complement

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one another, science offering ‘an understanding of its outer, objective aspect; and spirituality . . . of its inner, subjective, and symbolic aspects’ (Bourne, p.28).

Radical empiricism, or ‘intuitive and visionary forms of knowing are as valid as sensory-based forms’, according to Bourne (p.28). Clairvoyant investigations reported in Theosophical literature are based on a ‘visionary form of knowing’, which could mean inner images arising but also would cover clairvoyance. In *The Mahatma Letters* the Master advises Sinnett to develop his intuition, another non-ordinary form of knowing. Blavatsky taught her students: ‘All these Stanzas [of Dzyan in *The Secret Doctrine*] appeal to the inner faculties rather than the ordinary comprehension of the physical brain’ (*The Secret Doctrine*, I.86).

We in the TS do not need new teachings to bring us up to date. We can see in this partial list and short discussion a

few of the elements of an emerging world view. What we need, perhaps, are new ways of presenting the Ancient Wisdom to show its relevance to our world today. As we have seen, many major Theosophical ideas and principles are out there in current thinking. Rather than presenting Theosophy only as a reasonable and comprehensive teaching, which it is, our twenty-first century presentation could stress its principles as practical and in keeping with current ways of conceiving the world.

If we as a worldwide group were to concentrate on this approach, we could speed the development and broadening of the new world view. This would help people throughout the world at a basic level of understanding. This knowledge would help bind people together in a net of brotherhood, based on the realization that unity lies at a deep level within the apparent world of divisions. ✧

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If [man] thinks of the totality as constituted of independent fragments, then that is how his mind will tend to operate, but if he can include everything coherently and harmoniously in an overall whole that is undivided, unbroken, and without a border then his mind will tend to move in a similar way, and from this will flow an orderly action within the whole.

David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*

What is Theosophy?

H. P. BLAVATSKY

THIS question has been so often asked, and misconception so widely prevails, that the editors of a journal devoted to an exposition of the world's Theosophy would be remiss were its first number issued without coming to a full understanding with their readers. But our heading involves two further queries: What is the Theosophical Society; and what are the Theosophists? To each an answer will be given.

According to lexicographers, the term *theosophia* is composed of two Greek words — *theos*, 'god', and *sophos*, 'wise'. So far, correct. But the explanations that follow are far from giving a clear idea of Theosophy. Webster defines it most originally as 'a supposed intercourse with God and superior spirits, and consequent attainment of superhuman knowledge, by *physical processes*, as by the theurgic operations of some ancient Platonists, or by the *chemical processes* of the German fire-philosophers'.

This, to say the least, is a poor and flippant explanation. To attribute such ideas to men like Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, Proclus — shows either intentional misrepresentation, or Mr Webster's ignorance of the

philosophy and motives of the greatest geniuses of the later Alexandrian School. To impute to those whom their contemporaries as well as posterity styled 'theodidaktoi', god-taught — a purpose to develop their psychological, spiritual perceptions by 'physical processes', is to describe them as materialists. As to the concluding fling at the fire-philosophers, it rebounds from them to fall home among our most eminent modern men of science; those, in whose mouths the Revd James Martineau places the following boast: 'matter is all we want; give us atoms alone, and we will explain the universe'.

Vaughan offers a far better, more philosophical definition. 'A Theosophist', he says — 'is one who gives you a theory of God or the works of God, which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis.' In this view every great thinker and philosopher, especially every founder of a new religion, school of philosophy, or sect, is necessarily a Theosophist. Hence, Theosophy and Theosophists have existed ever since the first glimmering of nascent thought made man seek instinctively for the means of expressing his own independent opinions.

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There were Theosophists before the Christian era, notwithstanding that the Christian writers ascribe the development of the Eclectic theosophical system to the early part of the third century of their Era. Diogenes Laertius traces Theosophy to an epoch antedating the dynasty of the Ptolemies; and names as its founder an Egyptian Hierophant called Pot-Amun, the name being Coptic and signifying a priest consecrated to Amun, the god of Wisdom. But history shows it revived by Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the Neoplatonic School. He and his disciples called themselves 'Philalethians' — lovers of the truth; while others termed them the 'Analogists', on account of their method of interpreting all sacred legends, symbolical myths and mysteries, by a rule of analogy or correspondence, so that events which had occurred in the external world were regarded as expressing operations and experiences of the human soul. It was the aim and purpose of Ammonius to reconcile all sects, peoples and nations under one common faith — a belief in one Supreme Eternal, Unknown, and Unnamed Power, governing the Universe by immutable and eternal laws. His object was to prove a primitive system of Theosophy, which at the beginning was essentially alike in all countries; to induce all men to lay aside their strifes and quarrels, and unite in purpose and thought as the children of one common mother; to purify the ancient religions, by degrees corrupted and obscured, from all dross of human element, by uniting and expounding them upon pure philosoph-

ical principles. Hence, the Buddhistic, Vedantic and Magian, or Zoroastrian, systems were taught in the Eclectic Theosophical School along with all the philosophies of Greece. Hence also, the pre-eminently Buddhistic and Indian feature among the ancient Theosophists and Alexandria, of due reverence for parents and aged persons; a fraternal affection for the whole human race; and a compassionate feeling for even the dumb animals. While seeking to establish a system of moral discipline which enforced upon people the duty to live according to the laws of their respective countries; to exalt their minds by the research and contemplation of the one Absolute Truth; his chief object, in order, as he believed, to achieve all others, was to extract from the various religious teachings, as from a many-chorded instrument, one full and harmonious melody, which would find response in every truth-loving heart.

Theosophy is, then, the archaic *Wisdom-Religion*, the esoteric doctrine once known in every ancient country having claims to civilization. This 'Wisdom' all the old writings show us as an emanation of the divine Principle; and the clear comprehension of it is typified in such names as the Indian Buddh, the Babylonian Nebo, the Thoth of Memphis, the Hermes of Greece; in the appellations, also, of some goddesses — Metis, Neitha, Athena, the Gnostic *Sophia*, and finally the Veda-s, from the word 'to know'. Under this designation, all the ancient philosophers of the East and West, the Hierophants of old Egypt, the Rshi-s of

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Aryavart, the Theodidaktoi of Greece, included all knowledge of things occult and essentially divine. The *Mercavah* of the Hebrew Rabbis, the secular and popular series, were thus designated as only the vehicle, the outward shell which contained the higher esoteric knowledge. The Magi of Zoroaster received instruction and were initiated in the caves and secret lodges of Bactria; the Egyptian and Grecian hierophants had their *apporrheta*, or secret discourses, during which the *Mysta* became an *Epopta* — a Seer.

The central idea of the Eclectic Theosophy was that of a simple Supreme Essence, Unknown and *Unknowable* — for — ‘How could one know the knower?’ as enquires *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad*. Their system was characterized by three distinct features: the theory of the above-named Essence; the doctrine of the human soul — an emanation from the latter, hence of the same nature; and its theurgy. It is this last science which has led the Neoplatonists to be so misrepresented in our era of materialistic science. Theurgy being essentially the art of applying the divine powers of man to the subordination of the blind forces of nature, its votaries were first termed magicians — a corruption of the word ‘Magh’, signifying a wise, or learned man, — and derided. Sceptics of a century ago would have been as wide of the mark if they had laughed at the idea of a phonograph or telegraph. The ridiculed and the ‘infidels’ of one generation generally become the wise men and saints of the next.

As regards the Divine essence and the

nature of the soul and spirit, modern Theosophy believes now as ancient Theosophy did. The popular *Diu* of the Aryan nations was identical with the *Iao* of the Chaldeans, and even with the Jupiter of the less learned and philosophical among the Romans; and it was just as identical with the *Jahve* of the Samaritans, the *Tiu* or ‘Tiusco’ of the Northmen, the Duw of the Britains, and the Zeus of the Thracians. As to the Absolute Essence, the One and all — whether we accept the Greek Pythagorean, the Chaldean Kabbalistic, or the Aryan philosophy in regard to it, it will lead to one and the same result. The Primeval Monad of the Pythagorean system, which retires into darkness and is itself Darkness (for human intellect) was made the basis of all things; and we can find the idea in all its integrity in the philosophical systems of Leibnitz and Spinoza. Therefore, whether a Theosophist agrees with the Kabbalah which, speaking of En-Soph propounds the query: ‘Who, then, can comprehend It since It is formless, and Non-existent?’ — or, remembering that magnificent hymn from the *R̥g-Veda* (X.129) — enquires:

Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?

Whether his will created or was mute.

He knows it — or perchance *even He knows not*.

Or again, accepts the Vedāntic conception of Brahma, who in the Upanishad-s is represented as ‘without life, without mind, pure’, *unconscious*, for

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— Brahma is ‘Absolute Consciousness’; or, even finally, siding with the Svabhāvika-s of Nepal, maintains that nothing exists but ‘Svabhāvāt’ (substance or nature) which exists by *itself* without any creator; any one of the above conceptions can lead but to pure and absolute Theosophy — that Theosophy which prompted such men as Hegel, Fichte and Spinoza to take up the labours of the old Grecian philosophers and speculate upon the One Substance — the Deity, the *Divine All* proceeding from the Divine Wisdom — incomprehensible, unknown and *unnamed* — by any ancient or modern religious philosophy, with the exception of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Every Theosophist, then, holding to a theory of the Deity ‘which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis’, may accept any of the above definitions or belong to any of these religions, and yet remain strictly within the boundaries of Theosophy. For the latter is belief in the Deity as the ALL, the source of all existence, the infinite that cannot be either comprehended or known, the universe alone revealing *It*, or, as some prefer it, *Him*, thus giving a sex to that, to anthropomorphize which is *blasphemy*.

True, Theosophy shrinks from brutal materialization; it prefers believing that, from eternity retired within itself, the Spirit of the Deity neither wills nor creates; but that, from the infinite effulgency everywhere going forth from the Great Centre, that which produces all visible and invisible things, is but a Ray containing in itself the generative

and conceptive power, which, in its turn, produces that which the Greeks called *Macrocosm*, the Kabbalists *Tikkun* or Adam Kadmon — the archetypal man, and the Aryans *Purusha*, the manifested Brahm, or the Divine Male. Theosophy believes also in the *Anastasis* or continued existence, and in transmigration (evolution) or a series of changes in the soul¹ which can be defended and explained on strict philosophical principles; and only by making a distinction between *Paramātmā* (transcendental, supreme soul) and *Jivātmā* (animal, or conscious soul) of the Vedāntin-s.

To fully define Theosophy, we must consider it under all its aspects. The interior world has not been hidden from all by impenetrable darkness. By that higher intuition acquired by *Theosophia* — or God-knowledge, which carried the mind from the world of form into that of formless spirit, man has been sometimes enabled in every age and every country to perceive things in the interior or invisible world. Hence, the ‘*Samādhi*’, or *Dhyān Yog Samādhi*, of the Hindu ascetics; the ‘*Daimonion-photi*’, or spiritual illumination of the Neoplatonists; the ‘*Sidereal confabulation of soul*’, of the Rosicrucians or Fire-philosophers; and, even the ecstatic trance of mystics and of the modern mesmerists and spiritualists, are identical in nature, though various as to manifestation. The search after man’s diviner ‘self’, so often and so erroneously interpreted as individual communion with a personal God, was the object of every mystic,

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and belief in its possibility seems to have been coeval with the genesis of humanity, each people giving it another name. Thus Plato and Plotinus call 'Noëtic work' that which the Yogin and the Śrotriya term *Vidyā*. 'By reflection, self-knowledge and intellectual discipline, the soul can be raised to the vision of eternal truth, goodness, and beauty — that is, to the *Vision of God* — this is the *epopteia*', said the Greeks. 'To unite one's soul to the Universal Soul', says Porphyry, 'requires but a perfectly pure mind. Through self-contemplation, perfect chastity, and purity of body, we may approach nearer to It, and receive, in that state, true knowledge and wonderful insight.' And Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who has read neither Porphyry nor other Greek authors, but who is a thorough Vedic scholar, says in his *Veda Bhāshya (upāsana prakarana ank. 9)* — 'To obtain Dikshā (highest initiation) and *Yog*, one has to practise according to the rules . . . The soul in human body can perform the greatest wonders by knowing the Universal Spirit (or God) and acquainting itself with the properties and qualities (occult) of all the things in the universe. A human being (a *Dikshit* or initiate) can thus *acquire a power of seeing and hearing at great distances*.' Finally, Alfred R. Wallace, FRS, a spiritualist and yet a confessedly great naturalist, says, with brave candour: 'It is "spirit" that alone feels, and perceives, and thinks — that acquires knowledge, and reasons and aspires . . . there not infrequently occur individuals so constituted that the spirit can perceive

independently of the corporeal organs of sense, or can perhaps, wholly or partially, quit the body for a time and return to it again . . . the spirit . . . communicates with spirit easier than with matter.' We can now see how, after thousands of years have intervened between the age of Gymnosophists² and our own highly civilized era, notwithstanding, or, perhaps, just because of such an enlightenment which pours its radiant light upon the psychological as well as upon the physical realms of nature, over twenty millions of people today believe, under a different form, in those same spiritual powers that were believed in by the Yogins and the Pythagoreans, nearly 3,000 years ago. Thus, while the Aryan mystic claimed for himself the power of solving all the problems of life and death, when he had once obtained the power of acting independently of his body, through the *Ātman* — 'self', or 'soul'; and the old Greeks went in search of *Atmu* — the Hidden one, or the God-Soul of man, with the symbolical mirror of the Thesmophorian mysteries; — so the spiritualists of today believe in the faculty of the spirits, or the souls of the disembodied persons, to communicate visibly and tangibly with those they loved on earth. And all these, Aryan Yogins, Greek philosophers, and modern spiritualists, affirm that possibility on the ground that the embodied soul and its never embodied spirit — the real *self*, are not separated from either the Universal Soul or other spirits by space, but merely by the differentiation of their qualities; as in the

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boundless expanse of the universe there can be no limitation. And that when this difference is once removed — according to the Greeks and Aryans by abstract contemplation, producing the temporary liberation of the imprisoned Soul; and according to spiritualists, through mediumship — such an union between embodied and disembodied spirits becomes possible. Thus was it that Patañjali's Yogin-s and, following in their steps, Plotinus, Porphyry and other Neoplatonists, maintained that in their hours of ecstasy, they had been united to, or rather become as one with, God, several times during the course of their lives. This idea, erroneous as it may seem in its application to the Universal Spirit, was, and is, claimed by too many great philosophers to be put aside as entirely chimerical. In the case of the Theodidaktoi, the only controvertible point, the dark spot on this philosophy of extreme mysticism, was its claim to include that which is simply ecstatic illumination, under the head of sensuous perception. In the case of the Yogins, who maintained their ability to see Ísvara 'face to face', this claim was successfully overthrown by the stern logic of Kapila. As to the similar assumption made for their Greek followers, for a long array of Christian ecstatics, and, finally, for the last two claimants to 'God-seeing' within these last hundred years — Jacob Böhme and Swedenborg — this pretension would and *should* have been philosophically and logically questioned, if a few of our great men of science who are spiritualists

had had more interest in the philosophy than in the mere phenomenalism of spiritualism.

The Alexandrian Theosophists were divided into neophytes, initiates, and masters, or hierophants; and their rules were copied from the ancient Mysteries of Orpheus, who, according to Herodotus, brought them from India. Ammonius obligated his disciples by oath not to divulge his *higher* doctrines, except to those who were proved thoroughly worthy and initiated, and who had learned to regard the gods, the angels, and the demons of other peoples, according to the esoteric *hyponia*, or under-meaning. 'The gods exist, but they are not what the *hoi polloi*, the uneducated multitude, suppose them to be,' says Epicurus. 'He is not an atheist who denies the existence of the gods whom the multitude worship, but he is such who fastens on these gods the opinions of the multitude.' In his turn, Aristotle declares that of the 'Divine Essence pervading the whole world of nature, what are styled the *gods* are simply the first principles'.

Plotinus, the pupil of the 'God-taught' Ammonius, tells us that the secret *gnosis* or the knowledge of Theosophy, has three degrees — opinion, science, and *illumination*. 'The means or instrument of the first is sense, or perception; of the second, dialectics; of the third, intuition. To the last, reason is subordinate; it is *absolute knowledge*, founded on the identification of the mind with the object known.' Theosophy is the exact science of psychology, so to say; it stands in

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relation to natural, uncultivated mediumship, as the knowledge of a Tyndall stands to that of a schoolboy in physics. It develops in man a direct beholding; that which Schelling denominates 'a realization of the identity of subject and object in the individual'; so that under the influence and knowledge of *hyponia* man thinks divine thoughts, views all things as they really are, and, finally, 'becomes recipient of the Soul of the World', to use one of the finest expressions of Emerson. 'I, the imperfect, adore my own perfect' — he says in his superb Essay on the *Oversoul*. Besides this psychological, or soul-state, Theosophy cultivated every branch of sciences and arts. It was thoroughly familiar with what is now commonly known as mesmerism. Practical theurgy or 'ceremonial magic', so often resorted to in their exorcisms by the Roman Catholic clergy — was discarded by the theosophists. It is but Iamblichus alone who, transcending the other Eclectics, added to Theosophy the doctrine of Theurgy. When ignorant of the true meaning of the esoteric divine symbols of nature, man is apt to miscalculate the powers of his soul, and, instead of communing spiritually and mentally with the higher, celestial beings, the good spirits (the gods of the theurgists of the Platonic school), he will unconsciously call forth the evil, dark powers which lurk around humanity — the undying, grim creations of human crimes and vices — and thus fall from *theurgia* (white magic) into *göetia* (or black magic, sorcery). Yet, neither white, nor black

magic are what popular superstition understands by the terms. The possibility of 'raising spirits' according to the key of Solomon, is the height of superstition and ignorance. Purity of deed and thought can alone raise us to an intercourse 'with the gods' and attain for us the goal we desire. Alchemy, believed by so many to have been a spiritual philosophy as well as physical science, belonged to the teachings of the theosophical school.

It is a noticeable fact that neither Zoroaster, Buddha, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Confucius, Socrates, nor Ammonius Saccas, committed anything to writing. The reason for it is obvious. Theosophy is a double-edged weapon and unfit for the ignorant or the selfish. Like every ancient philosophy it has its votaries among the moderns; but, until late in our own days, its disciples were few in numbers, and of the most various sects and opinions. 'Entirely speculative, and founding no school, they have still exercised a silent influence upon philosophy; and no doubt, when the time arrives, many ideas thus silently propounded may yet give new directions to human thought' — remarks Mr Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie IX^o . . . himself a mystic and a Theosophist, in his large and valuable work, *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (articles *Theosophical Society of New York* and *Theosophy*, p. 731).³ Since the days of the fire-philosophers, they had never formed themselves into societies, for, tracked like wild beasts by the Christian clergy, to be known as a Theosophist often amounted,

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hardly a century ago, to a death-warrant. The statistics show that, during a period of 150 years, no less than 90,000 men and women were burned in Europe for alleged witchcraft. In Great Britain only, from AD 1640 to 1660, but twenty years, 3,000 persons were put to death for compact with the 'Devil'. It was but late in the present century — in 1875 — that some progressed mystics and spiritualists, unsatisfied with the theories and explanations

of Spiritualism, started by its votaries, and finding that they were far from covering the whole ground of the wide range of phenomena, formed at New York, America, an association which is now widely known as the Theosophical Society. And now, having explained what is Theosophy, we will, in a separate article, explain what is the nature of our Society, which is also called the 'Universal Brotherhood of Humanity'. ✧

Notes

1. In a series of articles entitled 'The World's Great Theosophists', we intend showing that from Pythagoras, who got his wisdom in India, down to our best known modern philosophers and theosophists — David Hume, and Shelley, the English poet — the Spiritists of France included — many believed and yet believe in metempsychosis or reincarnation of the soul; however unelaborated the system of the Spiritists may fairly be regarded.
2. The reality of the Yog-power was affirmed by many Greek and Roman writers, who call the Yogin-s Indian Gymnosophists; by Strabo, Lucan, Plutarch, Cicero (*Tusculum*), Pliny (vii, 2), etc.
3. *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia of History, Rites, Symbolism, and Biography*, edited by Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie IX° (Cryptonymous), Hon. Member of the Canongate KD-winning Lodge, No. 2, Scotland. New York, J. W. Bouton, 706 Broadway, 1877.

Until final emancipation reabsorbs the *Ego*, it *must* be conscious of the purest sympathies called out by the esthetic effects of high art, its tenderest cords respond to the call of the holier and nobler *human* attachments. Of course, the greater the progress towards deliverance, the less this will be the case, until, to crown all, human and purely individual personal feelings — blood-ties and friendship, patriotism and race predilection — all will give away, to become blended into one universal feeling, the only true and holy, the only unselfish and Eternal one — Love, an Immense Love for humanity — as a *Whole!* For it is 'Humanity' which is the great Orphan, the only disinherited one upon this earth, my friend.

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett

Theosophy for a New Generation of Enquirers

SURENDRA NARAYAN

THE theme chosen for this issue of *The Theosophist* is very relevant for our times. I wish to begin by mentioning here that what is presented in this article is based not only on my personal views but also the views and suggestions given by some of our children, grandchildren, and their spouses, who are members of The Theosophical Society. I felt it was very desirable to consult them also.

Theosophy seeks to provide a framework of knowledge and insight which meets the criteria of wisdom and integrity. Today, access to teachings of all ilk and variety are available instantaneously, and although many are attracted by what is different or exotic, the truth is much simpler — oneness of all life and the divine essence embedded in each and every expression thereof.

Today, in the field of our daily lives, advances in technology and often lopsided economic growth have given rise to ugly 'consumerism' worldwide. It leads to growth of selfish acquisitiveness, glaring social disparities and crime. We do not need to quote scriptures to understand a commonsense truth that physical and psychological cravings

cannot ever be satisfied. Robert Frost, in one of his poems, beautifully puts it thus:

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold,
Her early leaf is a flower,
But only so an hour,
Then, leaf subsides to leaf,
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day,
Nothing gold can stay.

The vision of wholeness or oneness of all life and the natural flow from it of love, compassion, kindness and consideration for others have been stressed by the great teachers of all religions, but that vision seems to have become hazy. It is, therefore, heartening to note that some respected teachers of our times have begun to revivify that vision of wholeness or oneness of life. One feels further encouraged and happy to notice that modern science is also gradually veering towards a perception of wholeness or oneness of all life. Albert Einstein wrote: 'A human being is part of the whole . . . He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest — a kind of optical

Mr Surendra Narayan was for many years international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society.

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delusion of his consciousness.’

Proper and carefully selected study and pondering over what one studies, help to acquire knowledge and provide inspiration for moving towards a perception of oneness of life and living a life of goodness. However, warnings also find place in the teachings of sages against allowing study to lead to mere ‘learnedness’.

People today everywhere are searching for guidance in everyday life, searching for core truths to embrace at a time when everything around them is changing. Fortunately, we have in the Theosophical Society a large number of very beautiful, helpful and inspiring books. However, one often notices that our books and journals do not attract much attention among the new generation of enquirers. Dara Tatray, in her talk at the last international Convention at Adyar, referred to the need to ‘clothe the original teachings in a form appropriate to the times, which need not entail any sacrifice of depth’.

The demography of the world has changed. The percentage of youth has gone up considerably. Apart from the demographic appeal, youth is the time for idealism, the time for questioning parental and social values and desire for a better world. There is, therefore, urgent need to provide help to younger people, as also to an extent to others, in their exploration, for example, of the following questions:

1. What does living a theosophical life mean in relationships, marriage and family life?

2. What does Theosophy mean in starting, running and managing one’s own business or profession?

3. What does Theosophy mean in how one lives and the choices one makes?

4. What is the role of competition, of ethical and moral values in our lives in the world?

5. What is religion? Should religion be allowed to play a role in our lives?

This can be done partly by bringing out attractive small booklets in simple language, including life stories of some of the great men and women of the present and past, the dilemmas they faced and the decisions they made.

One, however, considers it necessary to mention that there is still a large number of existing books published by the Theosophical Society in the past, which do make very good reading and are useful, informative and provide good guidance both to the old and the new generation of enquirers. Taking a simple example, in the book *Man Visible and Invisible* by C. W. Leadbeater, looking at the plate of the astral body of a person in intense anger makes one instantly feel how despicable it is to lose one’s temper.

Interested inquirers outside the Theosophical Society, however, often complain about non-availability of books published by the Theosophical Society at prominent bookshops in the cities, while many books of a similar nature brought out by other publishers are readily available. Concerted efforts need to be made at all levels to resolve this problem.

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To ensure a wider reach, publication rights for some of the selected books/booklets may, subject to minimum conditions, be given to one of the reputed publishers like Shambhala and Penguin. Also, more and more of our books which attract younger minds need to be put on the Internet websites and blogs. Another way to involve our younger brethren is to host online discussions and chats on topics relevant to daily living, where senior members of the Society can interact and answer questions. Apart from the Internet, the old radio still continues to be useful. One noticed some years back that a Section of the Theosophical Society had arranged with a radio station to allow one hour to the Society every weekend. That time was utilized for one member reading a few sentences from a booklet like *At the Feet of the Master* and making short comments thereon and the second member adding his comments also and asking questions. Appreciation started coming on the phone from many listeners and some began attending the weekly meetings/lectures at the headquarters of that Section.

One important point may be mentioned here. The theme for this special issue of *The Theosophist* is 'Theosophy for a New Generation of Enquirers'. This new generation of enquirers, which includes some new members of the Theosophical Society, relates largely to the new generation of non-members growing outside the precincts of the Theosophical Society. Are some of our programmes in the Lodges, National Societies or Section headquarters open to

them and is adequate information made available to them through newspapers or other means of communication? Are the programmes in our Lodges attractive and inspiring to those present or do they consist mainly of dull, drab unprepared talks given every week by one or two old members in a routine manner? Are study camps/retreats held, covering particular books or topics? Are younger members encouraged and asked to contribute to the programmes, even to lead studies and discussions, realizing that the future is with them? The way we conduct the programmes of our Sections and Lodges determine the interest in Theosophy of non-member enquirers, even of new members of the Society.

An aspect of theosophical life is meditation. During the last two decades, meditation has attracted a lot of attention, particularly among the younger generation. Many books have appeared and some individual teachers of meditation are also going round lecturing or taking classes/courses on meditation. It is, however, not always pure meditation but often linked with 'yoga' — a physical culture. Some books and booklets on meditation have been published by the Theosophical Society. One single type of meditation cannot be prescribed for everybody, but the basics of pure or deep meditation are more or less the same. Seeing such an awakened interest in meditation, it seems very desirable that the Theosophical Society publishes a short book or booklet on meditation for the guidance of serious-minded aspirants/

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enquirers. Lectures on meditation at the annual conferences/conventions of the Theosophical Society at the international and national levels and at meetings of Lodges would also be very desirable.

Another relevant aspect needs mention here. That relates to the ceremonial sphere and includes Co-Masonry, the Ritual of the Mystic Star and Order of the Round Table. These convey in beautiful forms dedication to selfless and efficient service in various spheres of life. The Ritual of the Mystic Star and Order of the Round Table are especially attractive to the younger generation of members. One notices that the ceremonies of both these at the annual international Convention are extremely popular. Encouraging the expansion of these Ceremonials will, one believes, be widely welcomed by the new generation of enquirers, for these try to represent Theosophy in an attractive form.

There is also a palpable thrust, especially among the young adults in many parts of the world, towards volunteering to help others in various ways in times of need — in sickness, in facing calamities like floods and cyclones, etc. Many like to help, but do not know where to begin. The Theosophical Order of Service, which is open to both members and non-members of the Theosophical Society, can play a bigger and useful role in a wider sphere of relief work. It is desirable that its objects, the work it is doing and the opportunities for welfare work it provides should be made known widely through various means of communication and contacts.

Study, meditation, attending lectures

and courses, participating in ceremonies like the Ritual of the Mystic Star or serving under the Theosophical Order of Service do certainly provide encouragement, support and inspiration for moving towards goodness in the larger sphere of responsible life in the world. But what ultimately matters is the way we *actually live, think and work*. An oft-repeated anecdote in the life of the Buddha needs to be mentioned here. A very rich businessman, supported in his work by a large number of employees, once approached the Buddha and requested his advice on how he should live. And the Buddha replied thus: It is not life and wealth and power that enslave men, but the clinging to life and wealth and power. And whatever men do, whether they remain in the world as artisans, merchants and officers of the king, let them put their whole heart into their work, let them be diligent and energetic; and if they are like the lotus, which, although it grows in water, yet remains untouched by it; if they struggle in life without cherishing envy or hatred, if they live in the world not a life of self, but a life of truth, then surely, joy, peace and bliss will dwell in their minds.

If we think of it carefully, the responsibility for forming a noble society, which is free, responsible, peaceful and happy, lies with thoughtful individual members who are earnestly trying to understand one's deep relationship with all that exists in Nature. Sometimes one tends to lose heart, seeing the condition of the world as it is today, and begins to ask what can a lone individual, or a small

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group of individuals, do to change the wide world. When once questioned, J. Krishnamurti simply answered — change yourself and then see what happens. He would often repeat: ‘Sir, you are the world. The world is you.’

One is tempted to quote here a piece from Walt Whitman, who, in one of his poems refers to good men and women in different lands who consider themselves as equal, above narrow beliefs, who are compassionate, with a sense of deep understanding and who, therefore, cooperate with others in promoting the larger good:

We walk silent among disputes and assertions
we walk upheld, free, the whole earth over,
journeying up and down,
till we saturate time and eras,
that men and women of races,
of ages to come, may prove brothers and lovers, as we are!

Perhaps, some of what has been mentioned above may, in some measure, help to present Theosophy to a new generation of enquirers in a manner which arouses keener interest therein and thus promote growth of goodness in the larger life. ✧

Spiritual life and love are not exhausted by being spent. Expenditure only adds to the store and makes it richer and intenser. Try and be as happy and contented as you can, because in joy is the real spiritual life, and sorrow is but the result of our ignorance and absence of clear vision. So you should resist, as much as you can, the feeling of sadness: it clouds the spiritual atmosphere. And though you cannot entirely stop its coming, yet you should not altogether yield to it. For remember that at the very heart of the universe is Beatitude.

Annie Besant
The Doctrine of the Heart

The Eternal Values of the Divine Wisdom

BHUPENDRA R. VORA

THEOSOPHY or the Divine Wisdom, is the body of spiritual teachings that constitute the Truths and the Mysteries of the Universe. They are profound in their meaning and, therefore, are of the highest importance in guiding humanity in the process of evolution. The principles enunciated are timeless and consequently applicable in every age. An understanding of the real nature of things and the laws governing the universe give a more holistic perspective of life and lead one towards right living.

Outlining the tremendous potential of the human soul and the possibilities that await him in the course of evolution, the Three Great Truths of Theosophical teachings state:

1. The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.
2. The principle that gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard, or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

3. Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

A serious enquirer after Truth would find much in these statements to lead him to greater wisdom and the way to leading a balanced life. The statements assure man that glory awaits him if he leads a life in accordance with the laws of nature and that the life principle pervades the entire manifestation. Therefore one should lead a life in which there is concern for the well-being of all other sentient beings and nature, generally.

In a similar vein, the Proem to *The Secret Doctrine* puts forward the Three Fundamental Propositions for our consideration:

1. An omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable principle on which all speculation is impossible . . .
2. The eternity of the universe in toto . . . periodically 'the playground of numberless universes, incessantly manifesting and disappearing' . . .
3. The fundamental identity of all

Mr Bhupendra R. Vora is a member of the Nairobi Lodge of the Theosophical Society in East and Central Africa, now living in England.

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souls with the Universal Oversoul and the obligatory pilgrimage for every soul . . . through the Cycle of Incarnation in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law.

These principles or laws of nature advise man that he is on an evolutionary journey in accordance with the Law of Cause and Effect and that he is solely responsible for his progress. How should these teachings deal with the issues of the twenty-first century, when the influence of materialism is so strong and selfishness and exclusivity are seen everywhere? Theosophy must be able to show that it has answers to the problems of this age.

The great Adept, The Mahachohan, analysed the human condition in his letter at the end of the nineteenth century. He states:

The intellectual portion of mankind seems to be fast dividing into two classes, the one unconsciously preparing for itself long periods of temporary annihilation or states of non-consciousness owing to the deliberate surrender of their intellect, its imprisonment in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition, a process which cannot fail to lead to the utter deformation of the intellectual principle; the other unrestrainedly indulging its animal propensities with the deliberate intention of submitting to annihilation, pure and simple, in cases of failure to millenniums of degradation after physical dissolution.

In the letter the great Adept states:

The Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation stone of the future religions of humanity.

He mentions further that the established religions and philosophies had failed because they did not possess the Truth. A century since then, the human condition has not changed much.

The larger proportion of humanity is still caught up in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition. But there are also many who are questioning the values of formalized religions that do not seem to offer solutions to the problems of the world. In an age when the world has become a global village and interactions between people of different races, religions and ideologies is inevitable, only the principle of Universal Brotherhood that does not distinguish between the origins of people or their belief systems offers a peaceful way of existence.

Blind acceptance of dogmatic teachings and misinterpretations of the scriptures of religions, have created fanaticism and intolerance of other faiths. Combined with social inequities they have created fertile grounds for terrorism. As the Mahachohan states:

To be true religion and philosophy must offer the solution of every problem. That the world is in such a bad condition morally is a conclusive evidence that none of its religions and philosophies . . . have ever possessed the Truth.

An understanding that the core teachings of all the religions are similar, would create greater tolerance amongst people.

Theosophy is the body of truths that forms the basis of all religions. As it illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of

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religions, it removes misunderstandings between peoples of different faiths and brings about the realization that all paths lead to the same goal. Its holistic view of life is unique and gives to the earnest enquirer a grand vision of the evolution of life under the workings of the Laws of Karma and Reincarnation. The principles enunciated in the Three Great Truths, the Three Fundamental Propositions and other Theosophical teachings result in a deeper perspective of life and therefore can change the mode of living.

The challenges facing humanity in this century are many. With great advancement in the fields of science and technology, touching every aspect of life, material aspects of comfort have never been so good before. And yet happiness and contentment have proved to be illusive. As the Lord Buddha advised his monks thousands of years back: the world is on fire; fires of desire, fires of greed, jealousy and selfishness are burning furiously. The Lord said that *trishnā* was the cause of human suffering.

This fire of human greed and selfishness could be seen in the recent turmoil in the financial markets of the world. The people running the banks and financial institutions that were in difficulty and went under, due to excessive and injudicious lending and risky investments, did not feel even a twinge of conscience when declaring large bonuses for themselves. It did not seem to bother them that many depositors stood to lose their life's savings. A large number of people throughout the world were caught up in

these upheavals and saw their capitals dwindle or lost completely. Wealth that was expected to provide security and happiness proved illusionary. This excessive greed for wealth and material things has resulted in dissatisfaction and grief for many. Mahatma Gandhi once said that there was enough in the world for the needs of everyone but not enough for the greed of one.

A self-centred policy of what is beneficial to themselves in the present, guides policies and decisions of nations and individuals, who do not consider the future implications of their actions. Therefore serious issues like those of environmental damage caused by cutting down of trees, pollution of rivers and mountains, release of toxic gases, etc., are not given adequate attention. A large number of species are facing extinction due to man's greed for animal products. With so much human interference and destruction of nature's resources, dire predictions are being made by environmental scientists about increase in temperatures, melt-down of glaciers at the poles and rise in sea levels that will submerge many coastal cities in the coming decades. Man has alienated himself from nature and disturbed the harmony.

The Mahachohan refers to this 'struggle for life' as 'the real and most prolific parent of most woes and sorrows and all crimes'. 'Why has that struggle become the almost universal scheme of the Universe?' he asks. He states further that 'life on earth even the happiest is but a burden and an illusion, that it is but our

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own karma, the cause producing the effect, that is our own judge, our saviour in future lives, and the great “struggle for life” will soon lose its intensity’.

Life need not be lived with such intensity and the singular purpose of attaining wealth, fame, power, etc., as if this existence was the only one to be experienced. Amongst right thinking people this intensity for living seems to lose its vigour and greater attention is paid to searching for the meaning of life. Evolution is a long process in which this one existence is but a sojourn. Equally important for the human being to realize is that he is shaping his future from moment to moment by the thoughts and actions he is generating. Nature’s law of Cause and Effect is operating impersonally and shapes his future purely on the basis of his own karma. Understanding this Law of Accountability, not only in terms of the consequences for him alone but to the harmony of nature is essential for his growth.

It is not merely the outer amenities of life like better cars, televisions or opulent houses that will give the inner peace and happiness that everyone aspires for. The quest for more and more of these worldly goods is in reality a search for happiness. However, happiness cannot be acquired by aspiring for more, but by being content with whatever one has. It is in enjoying the beauty of a sunset or the majesty of trees reaching out skywards, or the sound of a flowing river that the real joy of living can be experienced. The changing colours of the sky and the grandness of the night

sky with its twinkling stars give a joy that is sublime. Man must learn to live close to nature and enjoy the beauty it provides in so many ways.

Unfortunately, human beings have alienated themselves from nature and lost the sensitivity to appreciate the beauty that is all around them. The great philosopher Krishnamurti talked about the need to cultivate awareness. In that state of awareness, one can experience life pulsating all around in beauty and harmony. When there is an inner state of peace and contentment, Nature speaks and the Voice of Silence can be heard in all manifestation.

An understanding of the laws of the Universe and the nature of reality can lead one to saner living. The ‘struggle for Life’ which is really the desire for sentient living and material attainments loses its intensity and there appears contentment with what one has. A realization comes that material comforts do not provide peace and happiness and that each human being is responsible for his own progress through the laws of karma and reincarnation. Similarly the knowledge of and appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life, results in concern for its well-being. As a great man once said, the plucking of a flower here affects a distant star.

Theosophy gives a holistic picture of life and ethics of living. It provides the basis for leading a balanced life in which the worldly and the spiritual are harmonized as one. It proclaims the divinity of man and the glory that awaits him at the end of his evolutionary journey.

The Theosophist: Past is Prologue

JOHN ALGEO

What's past is prologue. (Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 2.1.253)

MADAME BLAVATSKY and Colonel Olcott started planning for a Theosophical magazine in mid 1879, while they were resident at 108 Girgaum Back Road, Bombay. According to Boris de Zirkoff's chronology (*CW* 2:xxviii), the decision to launch publication of a magazine was made on 4 July (American Independence Day). A prospectus was written on 6 July, and first proofs of the prospectus were corrected on 9 July. On 16 July 1879, Blavatsky wrote as follows to Abner Doubleday, who had been left in charge of the Society in the United States when the Founders left for India:

My dear General,
Did you think I would not write? And you were *right* then; for I might have intended and promised myself to send you a few words till Doom's Day, and have put off the job for months with my usual laziness, were it not for the important news I have to communicate. The protracted and remarkably long pregnancy of Mrs Theosophy — the wife of so many husbands, one of whom is represented by yourself — has come to an end, at last.

She is happily delivered of a child, our sweet and holy virgin. And, henceforth, this progeny must either prove her death, or, New Saviour of the 19th century, born among the crumbling ruins of the Past and the hallucinations of the Present — it will make her famous throughout the world as — The Mother of the New Saviour — the '*Theosophist*'. The parcel of Prospectuses sent to you today, will tell you all. The *Journal* was needed and — here it is. Since our arrival, here, we were gradually shut out of the local papers, and tried to be smothered by calculated neglect & indifference. . . .

Do you think, you could get us a few subscribers in New York. Look here, dear General, our paper is not to be an organ of spi^{ts} [spiritualists] and such flapdoodle, but a serious philosophical organ, giving much of that, which no member of the *Asiatic* or other Oriental Societies could ever get from the natives. We are their brothers; and, as they find it in their own interest to make themselves heard in the West, & appreciated; and that our organ is the only one in the whole world, edited

Dr John Algeo is a former international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society and Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia, USA.

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for their benefit and impartial to every religion, they (the native pandits) — will try to do their best to contribute to it that which their scoffers the Christians are unable to get.

On the same day as the preceding letter, HPB wrote also to the Russian spiritualist Alexander Aksakoff as follows:

Have you forgotten us? Permit me to remind you of the orphans who are now happily settled in Bombay, amid the wonder-working sannyasins and fakirs, yogins and cobras-di-cappella. As for psychology, our magazine knocks all the spiritualistic papers into a cocked hat. Am I never to have one little line more from you? Colonel Olcott sends his most respectful compliments. Be good and let me know if I can send the paper to you in Russia without an envelope, in a simple wrapper. As you see, there is *not a word* of politics in it. It is all about philosophy, psychology and metaphysics.

HPB's invented term 'cobras-di-cappella' seems to be a play on Italian *maestro di cappella* 'choir master', *cappella* being Italian for 'chapel' or 'choir'. It is also a punning reference to the fact that cobras have a hood, or 'little cap' (*cappella*). Her language in both these letters is typical of her playful style when she was writing to colleagues.

HPB continued to be preoccupied with the anticipated magazine. On 20 July, four days after the preceding letters, she wrote in a postcard to Alice Gordon, the wife of a British Lt Colonel in Bengal:

For the last three days, sending *Prospectuses* all over the Planet Earth. Busy — beyond descriptions.

Colonel Olcott also joined in the promotion. On 26 July, he wrote to the Arya Samaj Pandit Mohunlal Vishnulal Pandia:

The paper we are starting will help to make our true character and motives known to the Indian world. . . . The tone of the paper is pretty well indicated, I think, in our Prospectus. It will be scientific, religious, philosophical, and practical — as interesting to Western as to Eastern people. . . . Just as the Society has room for the most dissimilar members . . . so *editorially* the paper will be liberal and impartial. *Individuals* will be responsible themselves for the articles they sign with their names, and not the paper, or the Editors, or the Theosophical Society. One of us believes one thing, another another thing, and those ideas each of us when putting forth will sign & be responsible for. Thus there is room in the columns of the *Theosophist*, for articles upon the philosophy & creed of your Maharajah, just the same as there is for articles upon the Arya Samaj by the Swami. We only stipulate that each writer shall use polite language and refrain from personal abuse.

In August, articles were being edited. Edward Wimbridge had designed the cover for the magazine on 31 July, and on 2 September he began engraving it. On 1 September, HPB wrote to Ellen Burr, whose brother was an editor of the *New York Times*:

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Our paper (*The Theosophist*) will appear Oct. 1st, and will be, I think, a credit to the Society. There will be articles by some of the first native scholars here, and stories calculated to raise the wig on Huxley's head, if he has one — a wig, I mean, not a head.

On 30 September, copies of the first issue arrived for an official publication date of 1 October 1879. Blavatsky's correspondence during this period includes a number of other references to the new magazine. All of these will appear in volume 2 of *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky*, now in preparation (cf. *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky*, vol. 1., ed. John Algeo, as part of Blavatsky's Collected Writings [The Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, Wheaton, IL, 2003]).

The references to the new magazine in these letters, in addition to their refreshing humour (so often lacking in Theosophical prose), are notable for both their enthusiasm and their emphasis on certain characteristics that the new publication was intended to exhibit. Those characteristics were thought also to apply to the Theosophical Society as a whole. They include seriousness; emphasis on philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, science, and religion; impartiality; political neutrality; practicality; liberality; orientation to both the East and the West; politeness; and openness to diversity.

Also notable is the fact that the *Theosophist* was to serve as a method of carrying on the Society's work by using

the best, most effective method of communication available at the end of the nineteenth century. Periodical journalism was at its height at that time. English magazine publication had begun in the early eighteenth century. From the second quarter of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, the number of such periodicals had increased exponentially. That increase was due partly to technological developments in typography, printing, and distribution that lowered the production costs of periodicals and partly to an expanded readership with increased literacy resulting from compulsory education. When it began publication, the *Theosophist* was riding a crest wave of technology and social progress.

That crest wave was at its full 130 years ago. It has now ebbed considerably. Today print journalism is struggling to stay alive. Just this year the distinguished and (despite its name) independent *Christian Science Monitor* ceased daily publication to become a weekly. Other formerly well-established periodicals are going out of business or ending print editions and turning instead to electronic ones. Much the same is true of book publication. For a complex of reasons (technological, financial, and social), print media are facing a challenging time.

Such changes cannot be resisted, only adapted to. An old story tells of the English king Canute, whose courtiers flattered him by telling him that he was so powerful that the whole world would have to obey him — whatever he said

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would have to be done. The king, who was no fool, told his courtiers to come with him. He led them down to the edge of the sea, where the tide was coming in, and commanded the tide to stop. Needless to say, the waves washed over them, and the courtiers were all wet — both literally and figuratively. The fact that all life is constant change was a basic principle of the Buddha and also of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who said that the only unchanging thing is change itself.

If Blavatsky and Olcott were alive today and wanted to carry on the Society's work by the most effective means available, what medium would they choose? Almost certainly it would not be a print medium. Books and periodicals will be with us always, but they will not fill the same role that they have in the past. In ages long ago, oral communication, mouth to ear, was all human beings had. Then writing was invented. That technological change did not eliminate talking, but it did significantly change the uses to which talking was put. Later, the printing press was invented. It did not eliminate handwriting, but it did significantly change the uses we had for manuscripts. New technologies often do not eliminate old ones, but rather modify how the old techniques are used.

Today the new technologies are electronic: PowerPoint technology, television, the Internet, and so on. It seems very likely that if HPB and HSO were alive today and looking for a way to carry on the Society's work, they would think

first of all about the vast array of electronic tools available for communication. They might decide to use a website, not a static one with set information on it, but an active one with constantly revised and updated information. The advantages of the World Wide Web are many. It is relatively cheap, freely available around the globe, and powerful in its effect.

The great power of the Web can be seen from the reaction of governments that want to control their people and therefore seek to block access to the Web or to censor its contents. In one country recently, popular opposition to a disputed election was channelled primarily by communication via the Internet. In another country, the state seeks to limit access to the Web by requiring censoring devices to be installed on computers. The Web is, above all else, a means of free and open communication. Such communication is the best antidote to oppression.

The Web has its failings, to be sure. The free access it affords anyone who wants to use it results in a great deal of trivia and foolishness — and in not a little mean-spiritedness and mischief. But, as an old saying has it, to light a candle is to cast a shadow. All things can be perverted. But many believe (and it is likely that HPB and HSO would have been among them) that in an open competition between truth and falsehood, usefulness and uselessness, goodness and meanness — the true, useful, and good will always win out in the long run.

The future of the Theosophical Society rests with our judgement of the best

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contemporary ways to communicate the ancient wisdom. The *Theosophist* has had a long and distinguished past, and it will doubtless continue to fulfil that calling — but not necessarily in the same form or with the same technology. The past is prologue to the future. New electronic technologies are being adopted eagerly by

the younger generation and increasingly by all socio-economic groups. The wave of technological change cannot be held back, but needs to be used effectively if the Society is to continue as a force in the world. Merely to do what we have always done is not enough. We must use our past as a prologue to an even better future. ✧

‘Lift thy head, oh Lanoo; dost thou see one, or countless lights above thee, burning in the dark midnight sky?’

‘I sense one Flame, oh Gurudeva, I see countless undetached sparks shining in it.’

‘Thou sayest well. And now look around and into thyself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in anywise from the light that shines in thy Brother-men?’

‘It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, “Thy Soul and My Soul.”’

The Secret Doctrine

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

ONCE a man came and knocked at the door of his friend. His friend said, 'Who art thou, O faithful one?'

He said, 'It is I.'

He answered, 'There is no admittance. There is no room for the "raw" at my well-cooked feast. Naught but fire of separation and absence can cook the raw one and free him from hypocrisy! Since thy "self" has not yet left thee, thou must be burned in fiery flames.'

The poor man went away, and for one whole year journeyed burning with grief for his friend's absence. His heart burned till it was cooked; then he went again and drew near to the home of his friend. He knocked at the door in fear and trepidation lest some careless word might fall from his lips. His friend shouted, 'Who is that at the door?'

He answered, 'It is Thou who art at the door, O Beloved!'

The friend said, 'Since it is I, let me come in. There is not room for two "I's" in one house.'

Jalaluddin Rumi
Masnawi

The Theosophical Society for a New Generation of Enquirers

DARA TATRAY

IN my view there are a great many things about the Theosophical Society of potential appeal to the intelligent enquirer not yet a member. A quick inventory reveals the following likely candidates: the three Objects; the three fundamental propositions in *The Secret Doctrine*; the Freedom of Thought Resolution; the profound non-sectarianism of the Society; the motto of the Society; the stand against dogmatic theology and scientific materialism, which was well ahead of its time in the late nineteenth century and is still pertinent; the key ideas regularly discussed and explored at TS meetings and outlined below; the fact that Theosophy is not defined in the Constitution of the Society and so left open to enquiry; the considerable cultural impact of Theosophy and the Society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; and the admirable absence of mercantile interests when it comes to organizing seminars, retreats and lectures. Collectively this amounts to an extremely attractive package, but then the question arises: is this what we are putting forward to the public? In many cases I fear not.

The prevalent view of the Society is

that it exists to promote certain teachings found in the works of Madame Blavatsky, Annie Besant and other authors published by the Theosophical Publishing House; and that basically, therefore, it is a kind of sect grown up around a philosophy or religion it calls Theosophy. It is no good saying that the passer-by has formed this opinion due to some defect in his or her reasoning or understanding, because some of those passers-by are intelligent enquirers who would find the Theosophical Society and Theosophy very appealing if they were presented in a slightly different way than is presently the case.

What is Theosophy?

The term Theosophy admits of various interpretations and has levels of meaning in which a child can swim and a giant drown, as Annie Besant once put it. It is clear, however, that within the Theosophical Society it is used principally in two ways:

1. To mean 'divine wisdom', from the Greek, *theosophia*.
2. To mean a set of teachings on the subject of divine wisdom.

This distinction is important because

Dr Dara Tatray is National President of the Australian Section of the Theosophical Society.

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it is easy to get caught up in studying the teachings about divine wisdom and the way to it — and presenting endless lectures on the same — at the expense of focusing on the nature of divine wisdom or the absence of it in our lives. I would suggest however that if the TS wishes to remain vital a greater emphasis be placed on exploring divine wisdom and the obstacles to it than on speaking to the converted about various religions and philosophies. The teachings of course are extremely interesting and may be presented to the public and to members to great effect, especially if we take an eclectic approach encompassing philosophy, science and religion.

As a system of thought by that name, Theosophy can be traced back to the third century AD when the Alexandrian philosopher Ammonius Saccas founded the Eclectic Theosophical System based on what has since been called Neoplatonism. At that time there was no distinction between science, philosophy and religion. All philosophy was what we now describe as esoteric or occult. In any case, the teachings of this system were summarized by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Key to Theosophy* as follows and I think they would have a strong appeal today:

1. Belief in one absolute, incomprehensible and supreme Deity, or infinite essence, which is the root of all nature, and of all that is visible and invisible.

2. Belief in man's immortal nature, identical in essence with the Universal Soul.

3. *Theurgy*, or *divine work*, which

entails making oneself as pure as the incorporeal beings so that 'the gods' might impart the Divine mysteries.

These Neoplatonic ideas were revived in works such as *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, along with the idea that there once existed throughout the world a Wisdom-Religion known to the priests of ancient Egypt, the magi of Babylon and Persia, the ancient Greeks and the Brahmana-s of India. In this Madame Blavatsky was in company with the Renaissance Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), the Cambridge Platonist Henry More (1614–1687) and Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), who each subscribed to this notion.

It is important to note, however, that no matter how archaic the language used may be, the TS is not a dead-poets' Society merely repeating what has been said before. Nor is it the only place these ideas are discussed. They were put together in a new synthesis by HPB, her Teachers and her followers, with recourse to Vedānta, Buddhism, Plato, the Kabbalah, Alchemy, the ancient Mysteries and various other sources (including direct intuitive perception). And they have since been synthesized anew by the likes of Aldous Huxley, Paul Brunton and Ken Wilber. Indeed, in one form or another they have gained a fairly wide currency since the 1970s. But to give credit where it is due, the TS was well ahead of its time in its vindication of ancient traditions and its critique of dogmatic theology and scientific materialism — a stand that is as relevant today as it was in 1875.

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The Key Ideas

A number of ideas have been circulating around the TS since 1875 and treated as hypotheses, propositions and premises not binding on any member. Perhaps when giving consideration to the question of how to present Theosophy to a new generation these might be explored in depth with recourse to the leading edge of modern science, which is still likely to be our greatest ally, particularly as it is now suggesting that the following picture is much closer to reality than that suggested by modern evolutionary cosmology according to which consciousness is a by-product of matter.

1. There is one fundamental law and that is the radical unity of the ultimate essence of each part of nature.

2. The universe is eternal and exists in two basic modes, manifest and unmanifest; it is the site of the periodic appearance and disappearance of worlds and of life.

3. There is no dead matter, everything is endowed with some form of consciousness, and everything is a product of consciousness.

4. The human being is a microcosm.

5. As it is above so it is below, each reflecting the One.

6. The universe is guided from within and everything takes place on the inner planes first.

7. There is a fundamental identity of all souls with the universal Over-Soul. Each soul is like a spark of the Over-Soul, and those sparks go through a process of spiritual evolution in a series

of incarnations, according to cyclic and karmic laws.

8. Everything that happens is the result of natural law.

The name given to these ideas by H. P. Blavatsky was Theosophy but it should be borne in mind that, principally, Theosophy is divine wisdom and not these or any other ideas, no matter how fine they may be. However, as suggested above, the most urgent matter, in my view, is how best to present the Theosophical Society to a new age of enquirers; for which we must re-conceive it in our own minds.

The Theosophical Society

The first thing to emphasize here, I believe, is the Freedom of Thought Resolution; but it is no good paying lip-service to it if we do not keep a watchful eye on things that inevitably creep in as unacknowledged articles of faith or subtle dogmas. For example, a number of articles of faith, or assumptions, appear monthly in *The Theosophist* (and in many other TS magazines) just after the Freedom of Thought Resolution and before the Watch-Tower. There may be nothing wrong with the statement in itself, but it does appear to contradict the Freedom of Thought Resolution.

Reading the Freedom of Thought Resolution, one learns that members of the TS do not follow any particular school of thought and that the sole condition of membership is approval of the Three Objects. From this the reader is likely to gather that one can assume very little about the habits, desires and beliefs of

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TS members. Then one reads on to find, two pages later, what amounts to a profile of the typical member, who is portrayed as a student wishing to remove religious antagonisms; who studies certain truths and endeavours to share the fruits of that study with others; who aspires towards the Truth and maintains that Truth is to be found by purity of life; and who has Peace as his or her watchword. Then the reader is told that Theosophy teaches one to know the body and the mind as a servant and that it preaches reincarnation. Finally it says that everyone willing to study, be tolerant, aim high and work perseveringly is welcomed as a member: whereas the fact of the matter is that everyone who is willing to sign that they are in sympathy with the Society's three Objects is welcomed as a member. Members do not necessarily believe in reincarnation; and even if every single member now, in the past and in the future was to believe in it, that still does not necessarily equate Theosophy or divine wisdom with reincarnation, which is either a belief or a fact about certain processes taking place in the material world.

The Freedom of Thought Resolution ends with a plea that members of the TS defend that fundamental principle and it does in fact require defending from each and every one of us. That and the Freedom of the Society Resolution protect the TS from sectarianism on the one hand and dilution on the other. The price of this kind of freedom however is eternal vigilance and perhaps we could begin by ceasing to make public statements purporting

to describe members of the Society (especially if those statements are incorrect in fact and not only in principle); and replace them with factually correct statements. One attempt at such a statement is this:

The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers, belonging to any religion or to none, who are in sympathy with its Objects. The motto of the Society is *There is no Religion higher than Truth*. The word *Religion* in this statement is a translation of the Sanskrit *dharma*, which among other things means practice; way; virtue; teaching; law; inherent nature; religion; and that which is steadfast or firm. The word *Truth* in the motto is a translation of the Sanskrit *satya*, meaning among other things, true, real and actual. It derives from the root *sat*, sometimes translated as boundless unconditioned existence.

Theosophy is not defined in the Constitution of the Theosophical Society, or in any official document. It literally means divine wisdom, *theosophia*, but members of the Society are left to discover what it is for themselves, taking as guides whatever religions or philosophies they wish.

Then it would be also well to emphasize something else of which the TS can be justly proud: that it does not impose any doctrines, tenets or beliefs on its members, not even the so-called key ideas listed above, which have consistently been explored and presented. These ideas are not the creation of the Theosophical Society; nor its possession. As HPB put it in *The Key to Theosophy*,

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the TS is a repository and guardian of truths uttered by the seers, initiates and prophets of all ages; without ‘any wisdom of its own to support or teach’. She and other members of the Society, including W. Q. Judge, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, certainly did promulgate specific teachings on meditation, karma, reincarnation, evolution, the subtle bodies of the human being and much more. But these authors do not hold any special authority in the TS; or at least they should not — if this is really the Theosophical Society and not a sect grown up around certain teachings and teachers.

Members of the Society are free to study what they wish, and many of them will never read *The Secret Doctrine*, the magnum opus of the principal founder of the Society to which they belong. There is no authority in the TS to say what should be read or practised, or even what is meant by Theosophy, the object for which the Society was founded. As to the value of Blavatsky, Besant and other authors published by The Theosophical Publishing House, the reader may be the judge. They have remained in print for such a long time because generations have benefited from their works. But it would be a serious error to assume that only the books published by TPH are on Theosophy. For example, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is on Theosophy, the *Tao Te Ching* is on Theosophy and the *Dhammapada* is on Theosophy; because they are each about divine wisdom and the way to it.

To remove the mistaken but understandable impression that the TS feels it

has some kind of special relationship with Theosophy or divine wisdom, it might be an idea to remove the label from the shelves of our bookstores saying ‘Theosophy’ and replace it with a more factually correct sign saying ‘Theosophical Publishing House’: because the books on that shelf are invariably published by TPH and if called Theosophy it naturally looks as though we think that Theosophy is to be found there as opposed to the books on the nearby shelf.

The eclecticism and openness of the Theosophical Society is not for everyone. There is no set teaching offered here, no single Teacher to take one’s hand. One is, however, presented with the spiritual teachings of the ages — minus the compunction to believe or to follow — and that is something highly valuable which would appeal to a significant number of intelligent enquirers.

Some of the above suggestions may appear to be fairly trivial, but if we wish to appeal to a new generation of enquirers we should put our best foot forward; and they are the eclecticism, non-sectarianism and one-pointedness of the Society as enshrined in its Objects, its motto, the Freedom of Thought Resolution and the Freedom of the Society Resolution. Anything which obscures these from view should, I believe, be moved out of the way so that what the Theosophical Society essentially is can shine forth. Theosophy may be found anywhere and is not ours to protect; but the Theosophical Society is unique and there is none to defend it but ourselves. ✧

Back to Blavatsky will Fossilize Theosophy — Forwards with Blavatsky will Vitalize Theosophy

EDI D. BILIMORIA

AFTER poring over each single word in H. P. Blavatsky's monumental *The Secret Doctrine* over two decades ago, if someone had then asked me 'which book contains the acme of spiritual wisdom?' I would unhesitatingly have answered '*The Secret Doctrine* of course. What a silly question!' Now, some twenty-five years on, I venture to state that it is only such a response on my part that would have been silly and childish, not because there are books greater than *The Secret Doctrine*, but because the very question 'what book contains the acme of spiritual wisdom?' is utterly meaningless. For it is absurd to measure the immeasurable on the artificial scales of human ratiocination and attempt to formulate a pecking order of superiority amongst wisdom teachings. It is as ridiculous as to ask whether Bach is the greatest of all composers, an analogy that we shall revert to later on.

Theosophy, *Theosophia* if you prefer, means Divine Wisdom, or Divine Knowledge or Science; not ' "Wisdom of God" . . . but *Divine Wisdom* such as possessed by the gods'.¹ As such there is

no specific teaching according to just one particular system or creed about such godly wisdom. It is up to each one of us to discover this divine wisdom for, and within ourselves, but assistance in the form of pointers and guideposts has been provided in the sacred scriptures and doctrines of the world, both ancient and modern, and of all cultures, races and religions. Referring to Fig. 1, we may liken this unbounded and limitless characteristic of Theosophy to an ocean with no boundaries, that is, shoreless and infinite in depth. But just as energetic whirlpools, waves and currents make their periodic appearance in the ocean, so also according to the law of periodicity, centres of energy up-rise from the still depths of the ocean of divine wisdom. One such concentrated energetic core appeared in the late nineteenth century when a portion of the divine wisdom was revealed and given expression to humanity by the Founders behind the Theosophical movement. Now it is in the nature of a highly compressed core of energy to expand outwards as a wave and so the first wave of teachings was bequeathed to the world by the

Dr Edi D. Bilimoria is a consulting engineer, musician, and well-known member of the TS.

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Masters through their chief emissary, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB). This is depicted in Fig. 1 as the first strata or wave given out as the Mahatma Letters² plus the voluminous writings of HPB. Known by some as First Generation Theosophy, or classical Theosophy, these writings were elaborated upon by other students such as Geoffrey Barborka, Gottfried de Purucker and Geoffrey Farthing with strict adherence to the original meaning, or rather, a literal interpretation of that meaning. With the exception of the Bowen Notes, input from other sources was often discouraged, or at best a condescending attitude was maintained towards later theosophical writers (such as Annie Besant).

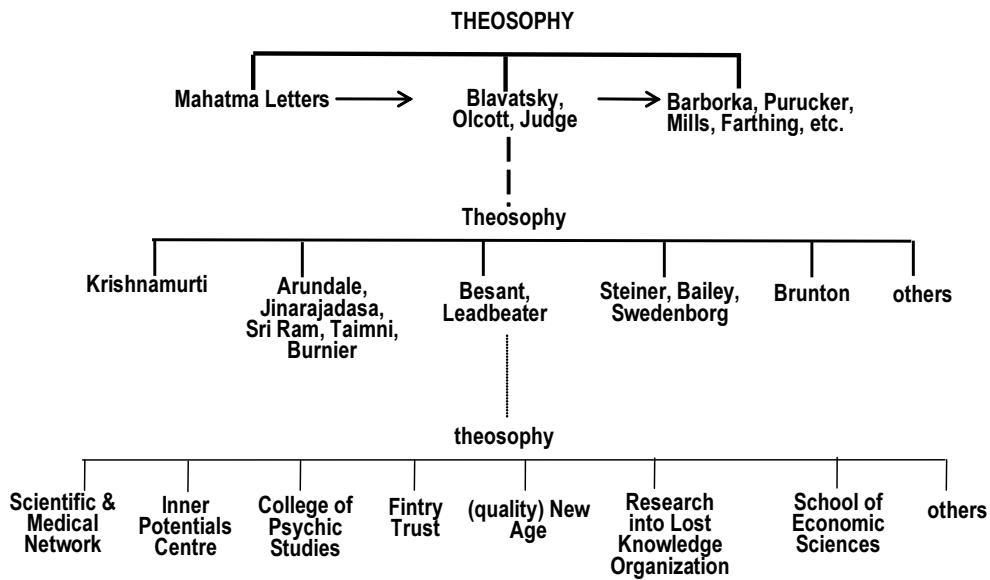
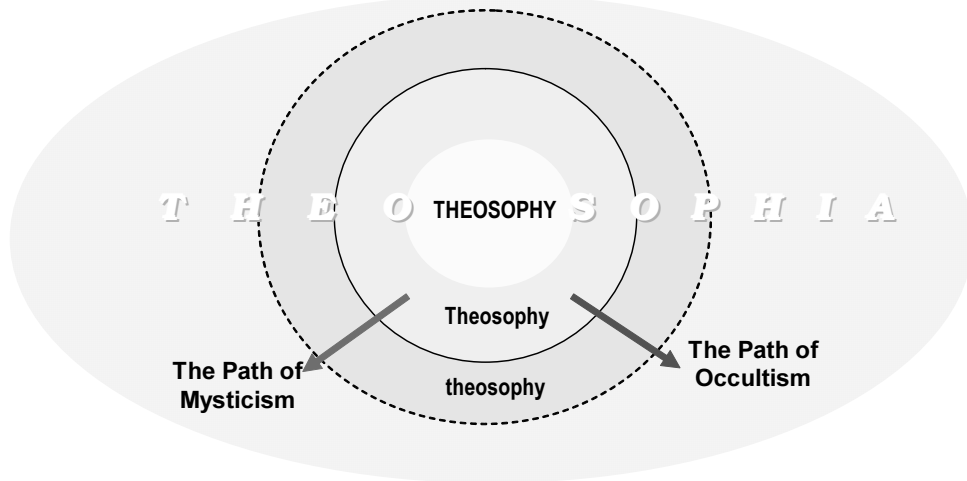
As with the ocean, when an expanding wave eventually reaches its zenith and turns back on itself to commingle with the surrounding water to generate a new wave, so this first wave of classical literature produced in its turn a new wave of inquiry and teaching. Fig. 1 depicts this second wave or strata as the books written by Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater and their contemporaries both within and outside the formal Theosophical Society (TS). Far from diluting (still less polluting) the classical literature as some die-hard HPB adherents would ungenerously claim, these so-called Second Generation theosophists were indeed 'assist[ing] in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists',³ as the best of their works⁴ rendered the extremely abstruse and difficult classical literature more accessible using simpler language and drawing upon metaphors and analogies

pertaining to their age, hence amenable to a wider public. Furthermore, the researches of Besant, Leadbeater and Hodson amongst others, provided a spur to our Third Object — the unseen powers in Nature and the powers latent in Man — put on a scientific footing by their systematic and painstaking occult and clairvoyant investigations.⁵ Viewed in isolation, the second wave would be untenable without its parent first wave source, but considered *in union with* the latter, the result has been an enriching, not a weakening of the theosophical doctrine and outreach. To reiterate, the perennial wisdom was made available on a 'horses for courses' basis by being presented in simpler, digestible chunks that we can choose from depending upon our personal temperament, mental capacities, time and energy.

The second wave has in its turn generated a third wave as depicted also in Fig. 1. These several offshoots of the original teachings have appeared in the form of New Age societies plus many other more or less spiritual or esoteric organizations each with their own declared aims. Yet, with the best of these, it is possible to trace a common underlying thread of wisdom going back to the parent source — the perennial wisdom tradition and in some cases, the Theosophical Society. A fine example of this is undoubtedly the international Scientific and Medical Network with aims and objectives broadly similar to our own in terms of freedom of expression, ethical standards and the interdisciplinary

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The Ripples of REALITY -
From Ever-Being to Always-Becoming
From the Core to the Periphery



THEOSOPHIA (Divine Wisdom) has rippled outwards in ever-expanding spheres of influence which may, for practical purposes, be categorized into the three strata shown in the two diagrams above.

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emphasis on the quest for truth.⁶

What of the future? There needs to be a sustainable fourth wave of inspiration and teaching that draws upon its parental source, but takes it still further to meet the spiritual hunger of present-day humanity. What shall this new wave comprise?

The Way Forwards

To understand the way forwards, we have to go back to Bach — in the metaphorical sense, of course. There is a recorded story of an itinerant musician asking the great composer, pianist and philanthropist, Franz Liszt, to play a Bach Prelude. Liszt inquired: ‘How do you want me to play it?’ to which the musician remarked in surprise: ‘What do you mean? Just play it!’ So Liszt played the piece faithful to Bach’s score, not a single note added or subtracted and all the dynamic markings followed to the letter. Then Liszt said: ‘This is exactly how Bach wrote it, but now let me play it to you as Bach would have wanted it to sound on a modern instrument.’ Whereupon the great pianist played the Prelude again, enriching it this time by utilizing the fuller sonorities and wider compass of the modern grand piano.

Was Liszt going ‘back to Bach’? In his first literal rendition, yes; but not at all in his second performance of the same piece. The whole point here was that Bach’s vision, necessarily constrained by the limitations of the keyboard of his day, was released and realized by Liszt using the richer harmonies and extended keyboard range of the modern pianoforte. The

primal impulse of Bach’s music was taken forwards through a superior milieu of expression.

Again Liszt remarked: ‘But the musically uninformed public would not appreciate this Bach Prelude. I’ll play it for you as I would do for the public.’ A third time Liszt played the Prelude, now embellishing the original score with rolling arpeggios and scales, and with a cigar in his mouth.

We theosophists may prefer to speak to our audiences without resorting to a cigar, but what resources shall we draw upon to move forwards, realize and communicate some of the vision of our Founders, as opposed to becoming hide-bound in a prison of words and inflexible interpretations. Three steps are proposed.

Firstly there is modern science of the quantum era. The insights of enlightened scientists like Heisenberg, Schrödinger, Pauli, Eddington and Einstein, and contemporary scientists like Sheldrake, Goswami, Olsen, Phillips and Ravindra, to name but a few, have penetrated well beyond just the fringes of esoteric science.⁷ They have demonstrated by rigorous mathematical theory and painstaking laboratory experiment what the sages of yore spoke from acute reflection and meditation: that consciousness is the ground of our being; that a Higher Power (call It by whatever name) governs the Universe and therefore Man; that this Power is both Transcendent and Immanent, so there is no dualistic conflict between the ‘Creator God’ of popular religion and his ‘creations’; that Darwin’s

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theory of evolution is quite incomplete and demands a complement from creative, discontinuous (quantum) leaps.

The modern theory of morphogenesis in biology and by all accounts, the finest discovery of quantum physics — non-locality/non-temporality⁸ — have played a crucial role in the difficult but developing marriage between science and spirituality. So it behoves future generations of theosophists to understand and build upon these insights that the Masters and HPB could only allude to in their day.

Arguably the greatest contribution from such progressive scientists is that we should take the moral precepts of true religion in earnest. The popular notion that science explains everything, so has obviated any need for divinity, is erroneous. On the contrary, science has in fact corroborated the notion of Universal or Cosmic Intelligence⁹; only the orthodox, crudely anthropomorphic concepts about God have been consigned to the garbage bin — and rightly so¹⁰. For without a firm ethical basis we may never be allowed more than tantalizing glimpses into Nature's higher forces and man's higher capabilities — the Chapter on 'The Coming Force' in *The Secret Doctrine*¹¹ makes it quite plain that Nature's invisible forces may not be revealed to mankind unless the rampant self-interest and greed of current humanity be displaced by altruism and unselfishness. The blessings of higher knowledge when misused in the hands of the selfish for commerce and traffic can turn into curses.¹² The Third Object of the Theosophical Society

demands a solid ethical foundation for its practical realization, and it must be the task of future theosophists to ensure that this continues to happen.

Our next proposition is that the contemporary expression of the perennial wisdom through sages and saints like Krishnamurti, Paul Brunton, Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi¹³ should be given as much serious consideration as the classical theosophical writings.¹⁴ These modern savants of the universal ancient-wisdom tradition have reset and restored the balance between occultism and mysticism by placing the emphasis upon the latter. (Whether or not these sages were officially members of the Theosophical Society is immaterial. Ramana Maharshi certainly was not!) This is one way of saying that the centre-seeking, centripetal characteristic of the classical literature must be balanced by a centrifugal, eclectic dimension in order to avoid fundamentalism creeping in by maintaining the universality of inquiry which is a primary feature of theosophical inquiry. In the writer's opinion, more than enough occult doctrine has been unveiled principally through HPB to last future generations of mankind (and theosophists) for at least one half of a century more. This profound wisdom needs balancing with *philosophical*¹⁵ as opposed to emotional mysticism incorporating at its heart an active 'Who Am I?' search for Self. The Doctrine of the Eye must yield to the Doctrine of the Heart as HPB herself counsels in *Practical Occultism*, no less.

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Krishnamurti has shown the need for independent inquiry freed from the bonds of conditioning and the tyranny of thought (including concepts about spirituality, religious traditions and occult teachings). Ramana Maharshi and Paul Brunton (a disciple of the former) have emphasized the indispensable need for meditation and provided practical guidance on how to discover our own divine nature. They have given us steps towards self-realization suited for all grades and temperaments of seekers from neophyte to advanced, for devotional-mystical and intellectual-scientific natures.

Thirdly and allied to the above, there is the way of Art¹⁶ and Mysticism. There seems to be an attitude amongst a few who maintain that occult science is superior to mysticism, the latter applying to lesser mortals, or representing a lower stage on the Path. We maintain, however, that whenever one is in the foreground, the other must be in the background. Both are necessary in wise proportion although each of us is free to place the emphasis upon the occult or the mystical depending upon our temperament — whether we be intellectually or devotionally inclined. That said, however, it appears to the writer that a healthy dose of practical, philosophical mysticism is long overdue in the TS. The indispensable search for Self through meditation, contemplation and quiet service is more important than excessive debate over occult teachings, for example which system of occult taxonomy we should employ over the numbering and labelling of the principles of Man and

planes of Nature, or the technicalities of Rounds and Races. The wise approach surely is to *balance* the occult with the mystic approaches to self-realization. Each has its dangers when overdone. However the dangers of occultism are far worse than those of mysticism. At worst, the mystic path gone awry can lead to woolliness and self-delusion. The occult path gone wrong leads at best to useless academic debate with division and conflict as each side arrogantly claims to have sole authority and ownership over the teachings.¹⁷ Any persons or group claiming to be the only correct interpreters with an attitude, ‘I know, but you do not’ are building the foundation for the very opposite of Universal Brotherhood. Moreover, did not the Maha Chohan declare, ‘rather perish the TS with both its hapless founders than we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic, a hall of occultism’?¹⁸ This could well be the case if occultism and mysticism are not balanced. In fact it seems to the writer that the occult side of the *Mahatma Letters* and HPB’s works have been vastly overstated at the expense of their philosophical, mystical and above all else, ethical import.

Conclusions and Recommendations

So to conclude, let us take a leaf out of Paul Brunton’s book, so to say. Several of his students asked him to form a Brunton Society based on his teachings. But he always resisted with the quiet injunction: ‘You have to find the real PB [Paul Brunton] within yourself’.¹⁹ We echo

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these sentiments resorting to HPB's very words by requesting students of only-Blavatsky to find the true HPB (and the *SD*) within themselves, and not to attempt to convert the freedom-loving Theosophical Society into a Blavatsky Society which would be a sure way for the former to 'degenerate into a sect underpinned by hard and fast dogmas and so lose that vitality which living truth alone can impart'.²⁰ A disciple of HPB (or other spiritual teacher or sage for that matter) would certainly qualify for being a theosophist; but a puritanical devotee of HPB would not so qualify because of an attitude veering towards that fundamentalism which is so inimical to our Society. We are all drawn towards particular teachings that resonate with our nature and meet the needs of our personal spiritual quest. This is the natural human condition. Moreover, we are entitled to, in fact we must share our enthusiasm with others regarding those who have inspired us on our journey. But we may not impose upon or try to convert others to our mode of thinking or cause schisms when others disagree with us. There is no overriding spiritual authority in the TS. Anyone who sets up another as the ultimate authority and clones himself on such a person is merely projecting his own ego onto the imagined authority figure. What further proof do we need than this statement again in our Principal Founder's own words:

'In its capacity of an abstract body, the Society does not believe in anything, does not accept anything, and does not teach anything.'²¹ Surely this implies that if the TS were to establish any one teaching as exclusive and authoritative, the individual search for truth necessarily demanding freedom and liberty of members to do so, would be stifled.

Do we then want to adopt an ethos of 'back to Blavatsky'? If so, we must rest content with future generations of theosophists merely brain-rehashing²² her words. We would have a museum of circumscribed esoteric fossils — guarded by a cult of fossilized esotericists. But moving forwards with Blavatsky and other seers would generate that practical, Truth-based regenerating brotherhood for which our principal Founder devoted her whole life and every ounce of her energies. This means that we enrich the legacy of our Founders²³ by harmonizing the pioneering, classical literature with added insights and practical means drawn from the teachings of sages, enlightened scientists and inspired artists from other spiritual realms than just the traditional theosophical, and from contemporary as well as ancient times. An unquenchable, but selfless passion for truth at all costs and from all sources is therefore obligatory. To restore a feeling for divinity in Nature and Man in a currently materialistic world view would be our noblest achievement.

Notes

1. *The Key to Theosophy*. Note the pluralization of the word 'gods'.
2. Addressed not just to A. P. Sinnett but several others like Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, C. Jinarājadāsa, Dāmodar and other early pioneers of the theosophical movement.

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3. *The Key to Theosophy*.

4. Let us desist from harping upon the fact that some of these writings certainly did run off the rails; but we are entitled to point to the best of their output of which there is plenty in evidence.

5. For example the magnificent volume on Occult Chemistry by Leadbeater and Besant, subsequently taken forwards and interfaced with modern physics by Stephen Phillips. Also the controlled clairvoyant descriptions by Hodson on antediluvian races which the present writer has found to be remarkably similar to the accounts of the Sins of the Mindless in the Anthropogenesis sections of *The Secret Doctrine*.

6. Networking could be seen as the modern equivalent of brotherhood. It means a sharing and exchange of ideas, and aspirations, mutual respect for alternative or differing viewpoints and no attempt to proselytize or poach others for one's own organization.

7. Plus several writers in the Scientific and Medical Network.

8. Instantaneous, signal-less interaction, i.e. action-at-a-distance everywhere, irrespective of the intervening space.

9. Krishnamurti and the great quantum physicist, David Bohm, stated in conversation that the term God could be seen as a metaphor for Universal Intelligence.

10. We do not need science to eliminate such anthropomorphic ideas. HPB and Krishnamurti clearly made the distinction between the god made in the image of man and the Universal Higher Intelligence-Power, call It what you will.

11. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2 (Adyar ed.), Pt 3 Addenda, Section 9.

12. What man has done with Nature's secrets of the atom is just one example.

13. This is an ad hoc list and merely represents those who have inspired the writer most, in addition to HPB. Each earnest aspirant is perfectly free to be drawn to the sage of his choice.

14. Please recall our opening remarks: there cannot be a pecking order of superiority amongst self-realized sages, each bearing an illimitably unique message for the contemporary need of mankind.

15. Italicized in order to stress the fact that by mysticism we do not mean woolliness or rosy fantasy.

16. Naturally we emphasize the role of the Queen of the Arts — Music.

17. At worst the misuse of occultism leads to massive ego inflation and ultimately to black magic.

18. The Maha Chohan's Letter.

19. This is no different from the Christ's saying: 'the kingdom of Heaven lies within', or Buddha's injunction: 'be ye lamps unto yourselves'.

20. Adapted from H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*.

21. *The New Cycle*, H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. II.

22. A highly appropriate term used in a similar context by Jeanine Miller, *Insight* 1999. She went on to say that 'this note of devotion to truth, NOT TO ANY PERSONALITIES OR SET OF DOCTRINES OR CONCEPTS, sounded by Madame Blavatsky and taken up by our leaders is far too often overlooked'.

23. The phrase drawn from the title of a lecture at the 2008 International Convention at Adyar.

Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable. It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps the Theosophical Society a living and a healthy body, its many other ugly features notwithstanding.

H. P. Blavatsky
Five Messages to the American Conventions

Statement by Members Assembled in Brasilia, July 2009

At the First Spanish-Portuguese Seminar on Theosophy, held on July 15–19, 2009 in the city of Brasilia, Brazil, 220 members of the Theosophical Society from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Spain, the USA, Greece, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, unanimously approved the following

Declaration

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, at a time when slavery was common in many parts of the world; when the invasion of a country by another was considered to be normal; when religious hatred and the violent clash of materialism against religions were frequent; when women, youngsters and children were considered to be on an inferior level; when there was discrimination among races and ethnic groups as well as other negative barriers and misconceptions. There were no planes, cars, telephones, electricity, radio, television or computers at that time, and the United Nations Organization had not been created either.

In that historical background, the Theosophical Society states that: to be a freethinker it is not necessary to be a materialist; Divine Wisdom — or Theosophy — does not belong to any person, religion or organization; there is an intelligence

governing the Universe, expressed in its laws; ‘there is no religion higher than truth’, which must be sought by everyone; human brotherhood is essential to build a world of peace and solidarity, and being based on the acceptance of Unity of all Life, it must comprise all creatures belonging to all kingdoms; religions should not fight against one another, recognizing in the heart of their essential teachings, their origin in the same common nucleus; it is necessary to study the laws of nature and the powers latent in man, so as to live in harmony with them.

Taking a look at human society at present, after 134 years, it is evident that the Theosophical Society has been a pioneer in expressing the value of Eastern culture and in bridging the gap between East and West; its fundamental propositions being totally or partially accepted.

Today society acknowledges the need to avoid religious wars; that all religions must be respected; that brotherhood among human beings must be present, moreover it needs to be present for the survival of the human species; that men, women and children are equally important and must be respected; that science, philosophy and religion can be found in the leading thought systems; that it is possible to be a freethinker without being a materialist; that there are great spiritual

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beings in the different religions; that wars are wrong and have to be swept away from our earth (this includes the manufacture of weapons, especially nuclear ones); that the planet is being destroyed by the lack of respect towards nature; that our survival depends on the ecological awareness that has to grow in each one of us.

It is evident that the existence of the Theosophical Society has been highly valuable, as some basic principles that it proclaimed are widely acknowledged by people nowadays.

So, what remains to be considered is the work of the TS in the twenty-first century.

Mainly, human society in this century is dependent on consumerism, entertainment and advertising; there is a rough competitiveness among people, institutions and enterprises, with man exploiting his fellow beings; fanaticism and fundamentalism are still present in many so-called religious movements; ignorance of the basic facts of life causes humanity to suffer a lot; selfishness is still deeply rooted in modern man and so is violence which, disguised in many ways, is present almost everywhere.

The TS has important work ahead to show modern man that the road to spirituality is not so much theoretical or intellectual as it is experiential, and it will lead to the disappearance of suffering caused by ignorance. The items to be taken into account are the following:

- The world cannot be changed if we do not change ourselves.
- Theosophy, as wisdom, cannot be

separated from self-knowledge. We cannot set up the conditions for wisdom to be manifested in our lives unless we know ourselves. Self-observation is the basic tool for self-knowledge, allowing Theosophy to be a living reality in our lives.

- The study of Theosophical literature widens our horizons about life and the universe through very clear explanations. But mere intellectual study does not bring about the power to transform man. It does not lead him to a loftier and more dignified life, with richer and more harmonic relationships, away from conflict. So we need to find wisdom inside ourselves through self-perception, which will make of Theosophy a transforming reality.

- Intense public work needs to be done. What is sought is not to convert people to a single thought pattern but to influence the collective mind. The doors of the TS must be open to those willing to work for humanity. The dissemination of Theosophy must have the keynote of respect for the other.

- Meetings specifically for members should be held with the purpose of studying in depth. Emphasis should be put on listening so that, with a mind void of prejudice, communion can be reached in the common quest for Truth

- Forums, seminars, workshops, discussion groups, courses should be carried on besides the traditional lectures, highlighting the exchange of ideas and using questioning and investigation.

- Public work should make use of technological resources available today: television, internet, meetings online

Statement by Members Assembled in Brasilia, July 2009

via Skype, newspaper and magazine publications. This should also be used to strengthen bonds among members belonging to different countries and religions.

- Political problems should be kept outside the TS. People should hold office in a natural and spontaneous way, without greed, and they should do their work in an impersonal, integrating way, without any prejudice and not trying to impose any spiritual authority.

- At the TS, the principle of Brotherhood makes us work with people who favour the Cause of Humanity, without any distinction or prejudice, especially those of a personal nature.

- Electronic communication must be used with care and responsibility so as not to produce unharmonic vibrations, which are not compatible with the serenity that must exist in our Society.

- Disruptive factors such as mere theoretical study, emotional reaction and intellectual vanity must be perceived and carefully set apart.

- The Theosophical Society in the twenty-first century is what we are. Its degree of success depends on the wisdom and unselfishness of its members. Future generations will receive as a legacy a living, agile and enlightening body only if

each one of us takes responsibility for it.

- An interest for the Cause should be awakened in young people, based on the beauty of the teachings and the happiness that can be reached understanding them. By creating a proper environment, they should be encouraged to meet and develop through unselfish work.

- The TOS can expand its work in community centres, Unions, different neighbourhoods, helping to take the teachings to those who cannot come to the TS. Ecology and Arts are two important avenues to be included.

- The TS has had extraordinary leaders such as Blavatsky, Olcott, Besant, Leadbeater, Jinarājadāsa, Sri Ram, Coats, Taimni, among others. Our present International President, Mrs Radha Burnier, has conducted Theosophical work for the last few decades, permeating it with a strong spirituality. It is the responsibility of each individual worker to add to the quality of the work, not allowing any distortion to interfere in the awakening of wisdom through the search for Truth.

- We, members of the Theosophical Society, must humbly fulfil our part of working to elevate the consciousness of Humanity without sectarianism but with compassion and love. ✧

The essence of the higher thoughts of the members in their collectivity must guide all action in the T.S. . . . It is the collective aspect of many such thoughts that can give the correct note of action.

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom