

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: The **Buddhist Shrine** at Adyar, India, was built in 1925, before the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Theosophical Society (TS). This was during Annie Besant's international Presidency, under the direction of C. Jinarajadasa, born a Buddhist in Sri Lanka and later to become the 4th intl. President. (See p. 43 of this issue for more details.) Image by photographer and author Richard Dvorák: <dvorak.photography>.

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

The Land and Us

TIM BOYD

I WOULD like to share a few thoughts with you on a subject that may seem a little odd, “The Land and Us”. When we look around the world the land that we all inhabit universally seems to have great importance. No matter where we are from, or from what point of history we tend to look at, the land is the source of some of the highest human expressions.

On the one hand, there is the heroic patriotism and inspired leadership — in service to the motherland, the Fatherland, the Holy Land, and the sacred land that has motivated people throughout history. One can see the heights of selfless activity. I was in Lhasa, Tibet, some years ago. It was a space regarded as sacred by the people living there, to the point that there was a ritualized treatment of the land. One would see people every morning doing the Kora (circumambulation) around the Jokhang Temple in the central square. For many the Kora included prostrations. You could tell the people who had been devoted to the practice for many years. The prostrations involved bowing down touching the forehead to the ground. The longtime practitioners would have a callus in the middle of their forehead from having touched the sacred ground so many times!

On the other hand we are all too familiar with the land evoking a different, dark and destructive tendency, particularly the Holy Land or the Fatherland. In our recent history those very words have repeatedly sent millions of people marching toward unnecessary death and violence.

Very recently, about two weeks after the attack on the people in Israel and the beginning of the siege of Gaza, my wife and I were in Egypt for a theosophical conference. It was not the first time I had been in Egypt. As a two-year-old my family was living in Egypt with my father, who had taken on the position of Cairo mission chief of CARE, an American relief organization. This was in the aftermath of the Palestine war or, as it is called within Israel, the War of Liberation. The upshot of that war was that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced, many of them to Egypt, creating a housing and food crisis. My father was there to attend to the housing crisis. This was almost 70 years ago, and here we are in 2024, with history repeating itself. The question that we must ask ourselves is not just what have we learned, but what is the power of place that influences us in this very strong way.

Every high-school student in the

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United States is exposed to what is considered by many to be one of the greatest speeches in the English language, given by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, the fight between the South and the North, that ultimately centered on the issue of slavery. I do not remember the whole speech, but here is what I remember: “Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”. It is ingrained in my memory. The speech was given to dedicate a cemetery, the Soldiers’ National Cemetery. It was a commemoration of the death and ongoing dying in war of young people throughout that country. These feelings of not just patriotism and devotion, but simultaneously separation, isolation, racism, colonialism are our unquestioning response that the land brings out.

There is an expression that coming events cast their shadows before them. My experience lately has been that wherever I go there is a sense among people that something great is impending, that we are on the cusp of some as yet unrevealed challenging moment of change. The anticipated nature of this greatness will of course depend upon one’s perspective. To someone whose sense of reality is derived from a regular consumption of the daily news reports of war, violence, pandemic, climate change, cyber attacks, and so on, this great something that is coming might be a cause for fear. There is another way that this can be viewed. Clearly there is an impending future that is challenging,

but where some see fear, others see a need, an opportunity. There are always those who, knowingly or not, have prepared themselves to meet and address the needs of this moment in human history.

The TS was founded in 1875 in New York City, ten years after the end of the Civil War, which is to say, ten years after the legally supported enslavement and sale of other human beings was no longer permitted. The TS came into being with the vision of what this world can and should be, it was an organization that insisted on a universal brotherhood, regardless of caste, creed, race, gender, or color, the multitude of things that we have created as barriers to one another.

In one of the most important letters from the Mahatmas, the “Maha Chohan’s Letter”, some specific things are said about the reason for the TS’s formation and its potential value. The letter gave attention to an important division taking place in the human family, portrayed as if humanity was gravitating toward two separate poles of thought. One group was being influenced by what was described as “brutal materialism”, influenced by the worldview of science at that time, which was materially based and reductionist. The other was spoken of as “degrading superstition”. Between these two poles, the scientific and religious, humanity was being divided into camps. The letter asserted that the formation of the TS could provide a needed third way, free from the dogmatic assertions related to either one of those camps. The idea that a renewed connection with the Ageless Wisdom

tradition and the TS were a need for humanity is what brought it into being.

The purpose of the TS as stated by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) in *The Key to Theosophy*, one of the last books she wrote, was that its purpose is to make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists. When I first encountered this statement it was curious to me, and raised more questions than it immediately answered. What is it in Theosophy that the knowing of its existence confers some power? What is it about Theosophy that has a potency such that even the knowledge of its existence can have a transformative effect on an individual and the world?

One of the things that many people are searching for in this Wisdom tradition, knowingly or not, is an answer to the essential question: Who or what am I? One of the ways this question is answered is that the human being is highest spirit and lowest matter linked by mind. The statement is simple enough, but the depth and potentials within us that it speaks to are profound. Spirit and matter linked by mind; gives the clear indication that mind is where we find our work.

Generally we focus on the lower uses of the mind. Thinking about the world around us and how we might be able to manipulate it to our advantage is normally one of the ways that we view it. Although it is an odd and not wholly accurate expression, one aspect of what we are here to do is to “spiritualize matter”. The mind as the messenger conveys the influence of the spiritual dimension into the material world; equally the mind has the capacity

to stabilize ungrounded spiritual expression. The cultivation of the mind occurs in this moving to and from these poles of our own existence.

The human being is all of these: spirit, matter, mind. HPB described it as three schemes of evolution. Just as we talk about the material world and the land that we associate with it, we live in other lands as well. By virtue of our “human-ness” we inhabit the land of spirit, of matter, and of mind.

The way HPB described it these three evolutionary schemes are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. This is not our normal view. We tend to think in terms of layers, with spirit at the top, matter at the bottom, and mind in between. Like color and taste in water, we are simultaneously physical, mental, and spiritual beings. Our forgetfulness of this truth limits our capacity to bring a spiritualizing influence into the world of matter. That is something of the power that a knowledge of the existence of the Ageless Wisdom can bring.

So what then might be the role of those who have found some value and even had some experience of it? It is quite true that the knowledge of this threefold nature of our being has a certain power that is attractive, it is magnetic in many ways. To the extent that we become close to it we find that it affects us. Often, I use the example of a cold bar of iron placed in front of a fire. It is influenced by its proximity to the heat. The longer it sits there, the more it takes on the qualities of fire.

Part of what we have been attempting

here at Adyar, is a regeneration rooted in the mind, and spirit, but also in the land. This place is infused with the presence of great people. Wherever you walk, the ground breathes itself into you, but as only inbreathing is not possible, we are required to breath out this presence into the world we create.

There is the idea that everything that is now real was once imagined. Whatever it is, from the chair we sit on, to the clothes we wear, all of it is the product of imagination. This TS campus that we walk through is the result of imagination brought down to Earth. We have been in a process of reimagining this place that is our home. What does that mean? What are the effects of this imagination?

The Theosophical Society has the statement of its mission that is 24 words in length. I encourage everyone to acquaint themselves with it. Its first three words give the broad statement of our mission: “to serve humanity”. The question becomes: How? Our response has become: By any and every available means. For example, recently at Adyar there has been a renaissance taking place in art. We are reacquainting ourselves with the rich heritage that has been running through this place from its beginnings. It is not that we have suddenly found an interest in art; for years in our Museum we have had important works of art that are examples of various art movements influenced by this place and by Theosophy. That is making itself more and more clear.

Because we have been ill-equipped

these artworks require restoration. This restoration project, like many of the things that we do, exceeds our internal capabilities, and so in a sense it necessarily draws in others. The supervisor of our restoration project, Elif Kamisli, is from Istanbul, Turkey. I first got to know her through email in 2014, when she was involved in curating a biennale (biannual) art exhibition in Istanbul and wanted the “Thought Forms” paintings which at that time we did not have, but found later. Out of that association she became more deeply acquainted with the impact and value of this place (Adyar). What began as others assisting in the work, has now become a TS member taking on the work.

Everything of any importance that the TS has accomplished in its almost 150-year history has been the result of a dream. Invariably our experience has been that you dream a world, and from all around the resources, required to bring that world down to Earth and to expand upon it, find their way to live inside of the dream. We dream a world, we populate that world with the characters of our dreaming, nothing is apparent on the ground as yet, but we dream the dream of HPB, the dream of the Masters. There is the potential for a world that is somehow grounded in a sense of brotherhood, a dream that has attracted some of the finest minds.

Now we are in a new phase of our dreaming: this place has this wonderful forest that is an ecological resource at a time when such things are deeply needed. We are not talking about a park, but there

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is a consciousness that exudes from an intimate proximity with the natural world. This is a direction in which we are moving.

After Joss Brooks's talk last night, I was approached by a person deeply moved by Joss's passion and ecological knowledge, who pleaded with me not to let this end as just another good talk with a beautiful vision. I had to interrupt to say that Joss Brooks was here because for months we have been dreaming our way into this different world, this different approach and without knowing him, or the breadth and scope of his work, this dream had taken shape and brought us together. This campus is going to be a jewel, a refuge for animal and wildlife, an educational tool for people who are living on a planet that is burning itself up day-by-day, an education about another way, and every bit of it relates to the sense of oneness, all of it supported by a deepening awareness of reach of the Wisdom.

Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography has a brilliant title, "My Experiments with Truth". This TS Adyar campus is an experiment, it had not been tried, had not existed, and was predicted by some to wither and die on the vine. It is an experiment intended to exemplify the possibility of an awareness of oneness with the potency to affect every level of

our environment. The immediate results are uncertain. Will we help in bringing the world back from the heedless misuse of the resources and people of the planet? In the short term the outcome is uncertain. Speaking personally, I would be more comfortable if I could feel that human behavior will curb itself and move away from the denial of our destructive impact on the planet. In the long term, there are some things that are certain. It is a certainty that no effort is wasted; it is not in keeping with the economy of Nature that any action is lost. It is a certainty that there are great beings — the Masters of the Wisdom — whose attention and influence aids and supports all efforts that align with their purposes. It is a certainty that each of us can be instrumental in bringing about the changes that will bring this dream down to Earth. These are the things over which we have some control. These are the things to which we need to dedicate our efforts.

Our process is to move beyond knowledge to awareness, to bring that awareness to consciously applied activities that uplift wherever we find ourselves. If in fact there is some degree of connection to the depths of power that Theosophy indicates, it should be revealed in everything we touch. That is our responsibility and the task ahead. ✧

Teach self-denial and make its practice pleasure, and you can create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer.

Sir Walter Scott

Warnings and Promptings in *The Voice of the Silence*

DAVID P. BRUCE

There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind,
but yet a road, and it leads to the very heart of the Universe.
— H. P. Blavatsky

TWO alternating themes appear throughout *The Voice of the Silence* (*VS* or *Voice*). One is glaring, the other subtle; one is harsh, the other soft; the first gives rise to doubt and hesitation; the second inspires confidence and conviction. What are these alternating themes? They are the *warnings* and *promptings* given to *chelas* (disciples) by the guru (teacher) as part of their training for the probationary path.

The first group consists of forewarnings and cautionary advice, while the second contains notes of encouragement and support. For the student who is reading the *VS* for the first time, these signals may seem contradictory: one is like a red light saying STOP, the other like a green light saying GO. Which is it? Stop or go? Pause or proceed? The initial reaction may likely be confusion and bewilderment.

On the other hand, if the student stays with the text, returning to it again and again, meditating and pondering on key passages, eventually the relationship be-

tween warnings and promptings will be seen in a new light. At that point, the warnings and promptings no longer appear contradictory, but complementary.

Unfortunately, some readers do not stick with it long enough to make that connection. They find the numerous warnings to be dark, off-putting, and alarming; they quickly cast the book aside and move on to something else. This reaction is understandable, even predictable. As beautiful and inspiring as it may be for many of us, the *VS* is not a book for everyone. It was never intended for a mass audience. This should be obvious from the book's inscription: "Dedicated to the Few." Those who feel that their spiritual journey needs to be filled with sunshine, rainbows, and the sweet scent of lilacs will benefit little from reading the *VS*. They are not yet ready to answer the "call to the heights" that beckons from Mount Everest. Let them find repose in gentle valleys where they can be com-

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forted by conventional views and sentimental assurances. The *VS* is for those who desire an inspirational but realistic guide to the path, one that is not sugar-coated with empty promises, one that depicts its heartaches and challenges as well as its joys and opportunities.

The question may arise as to what exact audience H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) had in mind when she penned that inscription. She provides the answer in the book's preface, indicating that it was written for "the few real mystics in the Theosophical Society". While the true mystic may understand certain aspects of the *VS* at a deeper level than those who are not members of that exclusive fraternity, one does not have to be a mystic to benefit from its study. In addition to its mystical elements, it contains lofty ethics, practical wisdom, and enduring inspiration — all of which can be appreciated by a broad and diverse audience, and especially by students of the Ageless Wisdom.

Warnings

As noted above, some people will open the pages of the *Voice* and quickly become dismayed by all its red flags, which they deem to be harsh and unnecessary. Admittedly, many of the verses do carry a stern tone, but there is good reason for this. Human nature does not change. The weaknesses of human nature today are the same as they were two thousand years ago. The inner challenges that the disciple of two thousand years ago had to face are essentially the same as those faced by disciples of today, as this excerpt from *The Mahatma Letters* affirms:

As for human nature in general, it is the same now as it was a million of years [sic] ago: Prejudice based upon selfishness; a general unwillingness to give up an established order of things for new modes of life and thought — and occult study requires all that and much more.¹

The critical battles from which the disciple has to emerge victorious are *inner* battles. Age-old vices such as anger, greed, and lust have to be conquered. One of the Masters of the Wisdom affirms this in rather dramatic fashion:

The pilgrim who ventures upon it [the path to Occult Sciences] is made first to confront and *conquer* the thousand and one furies who keep watch over its adamantine gates and entrance — furies called Doubt, Skepticism, Scorn, Ridicule, Envy and finally Temptation — especially the latter.²

Those who are seriously considering taking this path need to be advised of its dangers and difficulties. For any self-proclaimed guru to imply otherwise — that it is going to be a pleasant stroll in the park on a Sunday afternoon — amounts to nothing less than quackery and spiritual malpractice. When neophytes know of the likely obstacles to be encountered, they can begin to prepare for those situations.

Before discussing some of the specific warnings found in the *VS*, it is worth noting the general way in which the path is characterized:³

The path of dire probations (17)
The steep path (73)
The long Path of Woe (194)
The rugged Path . . . winds on uphill (199)

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A still steeper path (200)

The weary Path (215)

The dreary Path of sorrow (229)

The rocky path (235)

Does the inscription, “Dedicated to the Few”, now begin to make more sense? Can you see how the impulsive seeker who fancied himself a *chela* — after realizing what he has gotten himself into — might succumb to an acute case of “buyer’s remorse”? Can you see how such a person might say, just as St Augustine did, “Please, God, make me good, but not just yet”? Clearly, the path outlined in the *VS* is not for the foolish, the capricious, or the faint of heart.

As noted above, this remarkable spiritual guidebook was not written for a mass audience. Although many can benefit from reading it without having to commit to becoming a *chela*, those who are willing to take that important step are relatively few. Success or failure in this endeavor will have little to do with whether one is a mystic or not, and everything to do with one’s vigor and strength of spirit.

In the list above, the word “woe” requires some comment, as it appears 17 times throughout the text. Below are just a few of those instances:

Woe unto him (69)

Tale of woe (106)

The woes of birth (139)

O thou candidate for woe (178)

Mental woe unspeakable (184)

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines “woe” as: misery, affliction, distress, grief, sorrow, or suffering. Why

this emphasis on painful emotions? In his commentary on verse 178, C.W. Leadbeater says:

We meet here once more the idea of the path of woe. The statement is somewhat misleading, and rather a misuse of the term “woe”. It is true that a Master who is using the physical body does not obtain the enjoyment of working on the nirvanic plane, but He would smile at the suggestion that he was in woe.⁴

Similarly, verse 229 refers to the “dreary Path of sorrow”. Again, Leadbeater responds:

Once more we have that idea of the path of woe. There is no sorrow on this Path; strenuous effort there is, but with it the greatest joy in the work. Of this joy many teachers have spoken, with the result sometimes that their pupils, encountering the early difficulties, have been disappointed.⁵

Leadbeater goes on to surmise that the reason the difficulties were emphasized was so that probationary candidates would not be misled as to the serious challenges they would face. There is some justification for that line of thinking; we see this in sports when a coach prepares his team for the big game by painting the opposing team as better than they really are. The coach does not want his team to enter the game with an overconfident attitude. Similarly, a legitimate guru does not want his *chela* to be overconfident either. As effective as this approach may be, it can have the unfortunate effect of deterring some from entering the path for lack of confidence or fear of failure.

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So, in view of all this, why is not more emphasis placed on the joyful side of the path to counterbalance all these glaring red flags? Once again, Leadbeater provides a plausible explanation:

[The joys of the higher life] cannot be expressed in terms of any worldly happiness that we know; it is somewhat dangerous therefore to hold out its joys as an attraction to the candidate, as it might cause him to fix his mind on some lower form of happiness, all unwitting, and that would delay his progress.⁶

Verse 74 echoes the message of verses 178 and 229:

Long and weary is the way before thee,
O disciple. (74)

Yes, it is a long path covering many lifetimes, but it need not be weary. Whether it is weary or not depends on one's attitude. If the final goal of liberation is always in the forefront of one's mind, if one is always thinking of his or her own progress, it will be a very long, tedious, and arduous journey.

G. de Purucker makes the point: "It is called a steep and thorny path, but it is so only for the selfish, acquisitive, passional, lower man."⁷ Throughout our long series of incarnations, we have all made mistakes, bad decisions, and wrong choices. At times we have been foolish, selfish, and even cruel. The karmic effects of those accumulated actions are worked out during the *normal* course of human evolution, over a period of many incarnations. When a person makes the decision to tread the path of holiness, thus attempt-

ing to compress the work of many incarnations into a few, those karmic effects come cascading down in an accelerated fashion. Again, one of the Masters of the Wisdom has a pertinent comment:

Life and the struggle for adeptship would be too easy, had we all scavengers behind us to sweep away the *effects* we have generated through our own rashness and presumption.⁸

Having considered warnings of a general nature, let us take a look at some that are more specific:

Strive with thy thoughts unclean before they overpower thee. (54)

This is part of the preparatory work that must be done. All spiritual traditions require some form of purification as a preliminary step to advancement. Eliminating impure thoughts is essential, but it does not have to be done in a day. It takes time. Our mental habits (*skandhas*) have been formed over a countless number of lives. If we have allowed our mind to drift in a negative direction during our past incarnations, changing that momentum and steering our thought processes in a positive direction is like trying to reverse course on a huge cargo ship in the middle of the ocean. It doesn't turn on a dime, and neither do the *skandhas* that we have been generating for ages. So, do not be too hard on yourself if you fall short of perfection:

The disciple may have many serious faults of character and, though his or her face is turned to the Light, may by no means have exhausted all the heavy karma of the past. He may be facing many a difficulty, fight-

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ing on many a battlefield with the legions of the past against him. The word “disciple” does not necessarily imply initiation or sainthood; it only asserts a position and a tie — that the person is on the probationary path and is recognized by a Master.⁹

Certain points in the *VS* are repeated for emphasis. Verse 54 was a rather gentle directive from the guru to the disciple. But just in case the disciple wasn’t paying attention, the guru repeats that directive, this time a bit more forcefully, using the metaphor of a ladder:

Beware lest thou shouldst set a foot still soiled upon the ladder’s lowest rung. Woe unto him who dares pollute one rung with miry feet. (69)

The would-be disciple, whose attitude has been shaped by a corrupt world in which rules are routinely broken, in which everything is subject to negotiation or revision, may have difficulty adapting to this new way of life that is governed by iron-clad rules:

You have to remember that you are at a hard school, and dealing now with a world entirely distinct from your own.¹⁰

On this ancient, upward path there await many trials and tribulations. Many of these have been described in our theological literature. Others are *indescribable* and can be known only by direct experience, as is indicated by the phrase “trials passing speech” in verse 264. This road is not for the kind but timid soul. Good intentions alone will not get you very far. Compassion and a good heart

are essential, of course, but so are qualities such as courage, perseverance, and an indomitable will, just to mention a few:

The more thou dost advance, the more thy feet pitfalls will meet. (239)

Sometimes the symbol of a mountain is used to represent the upward ascent. Geoffrey Hodson does so quite effectively in this excerpt:

When the mountaintop has been reached . . . then the dangers and the difficulties associated with the attempt have been overcome. . . . During the ascent, however, the case is very different. Steep places, including vertical rock-faces; the temporary disappearance of the trail and even doubts of its existence; barriers of rock formations and, on the lower slopes, of vegetation; remoteness from the world of normal living and easily available help; falls and slips — all these can and do assail those mountaineers, whether physically, psychologically, or spiritually, when they attempt to reach heights which tower above the surface of the globe. This is equally true, if not more so, when ascent to the spiritual heights is first attempted.¹¹

This next warning from the *VS* will seem unfashionable and even mildly offensive in certain precincts:

For, either he shall win, or he shall fall. (174)

The unfortunate notion that everybody can be a winner has gained currency in recent decades, at least in the West. In a misguided effort to protect children from emotional damage, some have rejected the idea of winning and losing. The *VS*

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is quite clear on this point: *failure is a distinct possibility*. You do not get a trophy for just showing up! If it were that easy, anybody who self-identified as an Adept could make that claim. Fortunately, a system of strict meritocracy and high standards has ruled in this domain since time immemorial.

We have touched upon warnings of both a general and specific nature, which may give rise to doubt and hesitation on the part of neophytes. Now let's consider the promptings that are sprinkled throughout the *VS*, and which are intended to inspire hope and confidence.

Promptings

During the formative years of the Theosophical Society, certain members were privileged to receive written communications from one or more Masters of the Wisdom. Again and again these Adepts proffered one small piece of encouragement to those who sincerely aspired to tread the path:

We have one word for all aspirants: TRY.¹²

Despite the tremendous challenges confronting all aspirants, that one word — TRY — appears over and over in the letters from the Adepts:

Not one recruit can ever be refused the right to enter on the Path that leads toward the field of battle. (173)

Knowing that the aspirant will be tested, and that there will be disappointments as well as moments of joy, the wise guru advises the candidate to maintain a good attitude:

Be of good cheer, disciple. (201)

Be of good cheer, O daring pilgrim. (251)

This is so very important. Despite occasional setbacks and lapsing into old habits, maintaining a cheerful attitude is essential. It is not hard to do, but that becomes nearly impossible if one repeatedly dwells on their past mistakes. Linger-ing over past failures, whether large or small, only erodes self-confidence and fosters self-loathing. Observe your errors — yes; learn from them — yes; and then MOVE ON. Like a good coach whose team has performed poorly in a competitive event, Purucker emphasizes the need to recover quickly:

Do not be discouraged if you fail, if you do not live up to your noblest. Do not even waste time in regretting; it is weakening. Simply make up your mind: I will not do it again!¹³

A minor point, perhaps, but interesting nevertheless, is that all the words of support and encouragement are found in the second and third Fragment. Why is that? Why are there no promptings in the first Fragment, but only warnings? In order to explain the reason for this, a short digression will be necessary.

In a talk that N. Sri Ram gave to the School of the Wisdom in Adyar, many decades ago, and which was later published in a book entitled *The Way of Wisdom*, he compared the three discourses, or Fragments, of the *VS* to the three movements of a symphony. Anybody who is familiar with classical music knows that one can listen to, and enjoy, the second or third movement of a symphony with-

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out having to listen to the first movement. Although the three movements of a symphony were composed as an organic unit, radio stations routinely play just one instead of all three movements. According to N. Sri Ram, *The Voice of the Silence* is somewhat like that:

Each of these discourses stands by itself; they are not linked together in any kind of sequence, so it is not necessary that you should read the first before the second or the third. You can open the book at random and read anywhere you like.¹⁴

While it is true that you can turn to any page and find an inspirational passage, the theosophical author Rohit Mehta would disagree with the idea that there was no sequence to the three Fragments. In his book *The Creative Silence*,¹⁵ Mehta suggests that the three Fragments correspond to three stages of development on the part of the disciple: (1) the stage of preparation, (2) the stage of discovery, and (3) treading the path. In other words, there is a natural progression here, which, if not explicit, is certainly implicit.

Note that during the entire first Fragment the *chela* does not utter a single word. He is sitting quietly and attentively while the teacher expatiates on the spiritual path. It is not until the second Fragment in verse 102 when the voice of the candidate is first heard. The preceding silence during the first Fragment is reminiscent of the first year's silence required of neophytes in the Pythagorean School at Crotona in ancient Greece.

With that short digression, we can

return to the original question. Why are the words of encouragement found only in the second and third Fragments? That is because they are not yet necessary. Fragment one is a classroom setting: the aspirant is listening in rapt silence, gaining an understanding of the journey before him. At that point he has not done anything; he has not even taken the first step.

Encouragement is only needed when the disciple has commenced his journey and begins to encounter the inevitable obstacles and pitfalls. This is why Rohit Mehta described Fragment Two as “The Stage of Discovery”. The *chela* is no longer sitting in the classroom, but is now actively beginning to apply what he has learned. Previously, the *chela* only had to pay attention to the precepts given to him by his guru. But now that he has set his foot upon the path, he is no longer in the passive mode and needs to pay attention to what he is doing. When he inevitably trips and “Karmic pebbles bruise his feet along the rocky path” (235), that is when words of positive reinforcement are needed. That is when the *chela* should hearken to the words of his guru: “Hold firm!” (252) Stay the course!

While the main theme of the *VS* is compassion and love for humanity, other qualities of character are also stressed, namely courage and boldness (but not recklessness or rashness).

The more one dares, the more he shall obtain. (239)

This may be difficult for those with a gentle and sensitive temperament, but meditating on the divine power

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within will give those kind souls the strength to brave all obstacles. A small booklet by an anonymous author entitled *An Offering to The Voice of the Silence* contains these encouraging words:

As the Path grows steeper, and the road more narrow, the pilgrim must learn to climb swiftly and daringly, lest he grow dizzy and fall. Daring all these things, he obtains all things, for Nature's laws as well as the laws of man's inner being are obedient to him who dares to command them. The fire which is lit in the heart of him who dares, gives that one the strength and force of divine will to climb over any and all obstacles.¹⁶

No failure is final as long as we pick ourselves up and keep trying:

Lose not courage: fight on and to the charge return again and yet again. (272)

No effort is wasted. Therefore one should never cease from striving:

Each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. (274)

The immediate results of our work may not be what he had hoped for, or what we had anticipated, but in the process we are building momentum for the future. Theosophists have a wonderful advantage knowing that this lifetime is only one of many, and that work left unfinished in this incarnation can be picked up again and continued in the next:

And if he falls, e'en then he does not fall

in vain; the enemies he slew in the last battle will not return to life in the next birth that will be his. (176)

To repeat a point made earlier, one does not have to be a *chela* or mystic to profit from reading *The Voice of the Silence*. It can be used as a source of inspiration and motivation. It can be used to learn about a way of life which we may not be ready to embark upon, at least in this lifetime, but perhaps in the next. And it can certainly cause us to feel immense appreciation and gratitude to those who have taken that step and gone ahead of us. We profit from their words of wisdom and their examples. In closing this article, there is perhaps no better choice of words than this short statement by HPB, entitled "There is a Road":

There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the very heart of the Universe:

I can tell you how to find those who will show you the secret gateway that opens inward only, and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore.

There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount.

For those who win onwards there is reward past all telling — the power to bless and save humanity; for those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.



Warnings and Promptings in *The Voice of the Silence*

Endnotes

1. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. and KH*, Transcribed and Compiled by A. T. Barker, Arranged and Edited by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr. (Adyar, Chennai, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1998), Letter 1, p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, Letter 126, p. 422.
3. All references to numbered verses from *The Voice of the Silence* are from the 1982 Adyar Centenary Edition.
4. C. W. Leadbeater, *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, Vol. II, (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1965), p. 240.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 290.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
7. G. de Purucker, *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1979), p. 128.
8. *The Mahatma Letters*, Letter 92, p. 294.
9. Annie Besant, *The Spiritual Life*, (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1991), p. 130.
10. *The Mahatma Letters*, Letter 21, p. 77.
11. Geoffrey Hodson, *The Call to the Heights: Guidance on the Pathway to Self-Illumination*, (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), pp. 19–20.
12. *The Mahatma Letters*, Letter 54, p. 148.
13. Purucker, p. 139.
14. N. Sri Ram, *The Way of Wisdom*, (Adyar, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), p. 177.
15. Rohit Mehta, *The Creative Silence: Reflections on The Voice of the Silence*, (Adyar, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1957), p. 8.
16. “A Brother Server”, *An Offering to The Voice of the Silence*, (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Press, 1918), p. 45.

Teach me how to trust my heart,
my mind, my intuition, my inner knowing,
the senses of my body, the blessings of my spirit.
Teach me to trust these things
so that I may enter my sacred space
and love beyond my fear,
and thus walk in balance
with the passing of each glorious sun.

Lakota Prayer

Pythagorean Harmonics: Pythagoras and the Arts of Antiquity — V

KIRK GRADIN

PYTHAGORAS was a luminous guiding star bridging the Mystery Schools of East and West, a transmitting agent of that ageless divine wisdom known as *Theosophia*. Like many such messengers of the great Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas, he was recognized and highly revered by some, though persecuted and eventually slain by others in his own day. Nonetheless, the profound impact of the oral tradition he founded resonated through the centuries, deeply influencing central strands of Western culture that could potentially serve the purposes of universal enlightenment and felicity. This not only included science, mathematics, philosophy, and religion linked to the most profound forms of mysticism and music, but also the sacred arts of sculpture and architecture.

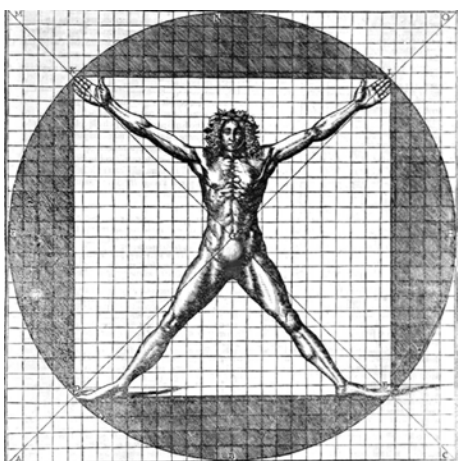
... turn to such works as those of Vitruvius Pollio of the Augustan age, on architecture, for instance, in which all the rules of proportion are those *taught anciently at initiations*, if he would acquaint himself with the truly divine art, and understand the *deep esoteric significance hidden in every rule and law of proportion*. No man descended

from a Paleolithic cave-dweller could ever evolve such a science unaided, even in millenniums of thought and intellectual evolution. It is the pupils of those incarnated Rishis and Devas of the third Root Race, who handed their knowledge from one generation to another, to Egypt and Greece with its now lost *canon of proportion*. . . . It is owing to the divine perfection of those architectural proportions that the Ancients could build those wonders of all the subsequent ages. . . . It is Vitruvius who gave to posterity the rules of construction of the Grecian temples erected to the immortal gods; and the ten books of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio on Architecture, of one, in short, *who was an initiate*, can only be studied esoterically. The Druidical circles, the Dolmen, the Temples of India, Egypt and Greece, the Towers and the 127 towns in Europe which were found “Cyclopean in origin” by the French Institute, are all the work of initiated Priest-Architects, the descendants of those primarily taught by the “Sons of God”, justly called “The Builders”.¹

Vitruvius Pollio, a Roman architect-

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engineer and polymath of the 1st century BCE, who wrote the only treatise on architecture to survive into the Renaissance, was in many ways the consummate Pythagorean of his time. He expressed high regard for Pythagoras and his “divine inspiration . . . whose influence extended to all nations”. In addition, Vitruvius is more specific than most previous writers (whose works are still available to us) about Pythagoras’ mathematical contributions. As the quote above mentions, Vitruvius was an Initiate himself and was likely part of a continuing Pythagorean oral tradition. Four centuries after Pythagoras, it is Vitruvius who provides the first and oldest surviving testimony linking the sage to the Pythagorean theorem, a fundamental geometric truth with far-reaching practical application to the practice of architecture, not the least of which enables a carpenter or builder to construct any two surfaces or walls at precise right angles to one another.



While veiled in regard to more esoteric meanings, in his treatise *De Architectura*,

Vitruvius briefly articulates several Pythagorean themes in what has come to be called the “Vitruvian” man. Humanity as the microcosm of the macrocosm is illustrated by the *symmetria* of the human form enclosed within the circle and square, two of the most primary archetypes. As examined in the previous articles in this series, the circle represented the unified whole, the perfection of Deity and the highest monadic principle, while the square was the world of becoming, the law-governed multiplicity, the four cardinal points and the nodal divisions of every cycle.

Besides being a reference to the Tetraktys, the square is also a kind of abbreviation of the cube, related to both the number seven (the cube unfolded) and with the three dimensions of space totaling ten, the number of divine perfection. In addition, the Vitruvian man is meant to illustrate how every visible feature of the human temple expresses an underlying mathematical harmonic series.

The proportions of the perfect temple, wrote Vitruvius, should follow those of the human form, which exemplifies “the greatest harmony in the symmetrical relations of the different parts to the general magnitude of the whole”. The ratios of the Doric column, for example, were determined by the measure of a man’s foot in relation to his height: 1:6. In this way, “the Doric order obtained its proportion, strength, and beauty, from the human figure”. If a building is to create a sense of *eurythmia* — a graceful and uplifting atmosphere mirroring the divine — then

it is essential that it reflect in all its parts these natural laws of harmony and beauty. Although no building designed by Vitruvius has survived, his ten books on architecture were clearly of enormous influence in antiquity. Nearly lost for over 1,200 years, they emerged and regained their status in the Renaissance as the consummate guide to the architectural beauty and wisdom of ancient Greece, the remains of which lay largely in ruins.

The Parthenon

Even in its present form, a stark marble ruin partially re-constructed, the Parthenon is revered as an icon of Western civilization. It was built between 447 and 438 BCE, roughly 50 years after the passing of Pythagoras, but before the birth of Plato and at the height of Athenian power under Pericles. While some have called it “a lavish act of civic hubris that contributed to the downfall of Athens”, others argue that it is the crowning achievement of Classical Greece. Without doubt the temple is a triumph of the Greek mastery of geometry, masonry construction, and the zenith of the Doric order. The surviving sculptures which once adorned the temple are honored as some of the finest monuments of Hellenistic art. It is also one of the most studied temples of the Western world and many attempts have been made to crack the underlying proportional code governing its design. According to recent research, that code is linked to the mathematics utilized in the *Sulba Sutras*, one of the earliest extant books of geo-

metry associated with the Vedic world. Like many other Vedic texts, these sutras are compilations of oral traditions whose authorship and date of origin is unknown to modern scholars. The *Sulba Sutras* include what we call the Pythagorean theorem and the computation of the square root of 2, prominent in the Parthenon as in other proportional themes found in the sacred arts of antiquity.

Many archeologists have recognized that the Parthenon was constructed in accordance with a simple 9:4 ($3^2:2^2$) ratio. However, it was not until early 2000 that the riddle as to the basic underlying unit of measurement, the length of the Parthenon foot, was established. It was Anne Bulckens, a graduate student at the Deakin School of Architecture in Geelong, Australia, who through a careful analysis of the temple's building parts, arrived at a module dimension that was later used to define and suggest the underlying symmetry and mathematics of the whole temple. Based on Bulckens hypothesis, Kappraff and McClain published a series of peer-reviewed articles in 2005–2008, showing how tables of integers found in “Nichomachus sequences” (triangular numbers) led to a theory of proportions found in certain forms of the Vedic fire altar, the Platonic Lambda, and the Parthenon.²

Symmetry in architecture had a broader meaning in classical Greece than what it does today. Vitruvius gives the definition: “Symmetry is a proper agreement between the members of the work itself, and . . . between the different parts and the whole general scheme, in accordance

with a certain part selected as a standard”, i.e., a module. In the Doric order all temple parts are dependent upon and related to the size of the fundamental module, though that module size may differ from temple to temple. Bulkens identified the module of the Parthenon as based upon the Vitruvian foot of 16 dactyls. A dactyl width is one fingers breadth and 16 dactyls equals 1/6 of a person’s height. Utilizing this module, the musical proportional relationships of the fundamental ratios as well as those designed into the minutest details of the Parthenon are linked. This includes the subtle but continuous geometric irregularities occurring throughout, such as the curvatures of the stylobate and the entasis of the columns. Such irregularities are so pervasive that each stone of the Parthenon is like a jigsaw puzzle: there is only one location where it fits and no other.

Yet, all the minute idiosyncrasies of the parts can be resolved, according to Kapraff and McClain, into a veritable mathematical treatise whose fundamental number is that of seven, the heptad. Among many other associations, this is the sacred number linked by the Pythagoreans with the idea of abstract purity (Parthenos), citadel (Acropolis), and the victorious protector Athena, whose 40’ tall countenance dwelt within the temple walls. As already illustrated in article IV of this series (Dec. 2023 issue), seven is also the key number associated with the music of the spheres, the seven sacred planets and the human constitution. It is a key to the *Philosophia Perennis* and the consummate number of

our manvantara. In addition, Athena is not simply the warrior protector goddess of Athens, but a symbol of the centrality of the mystery schools in antiquity and the comprehension of esoteric wisdom itself.

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 Buddha, 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 *Vedas*, from the word “to know”. Under this designation, all the ancient philosophers of the East and West, the Hierophants of old Egypt, the Rishis of Aryavart, the Theodidakttoi of Greece, included all knowledge of things occult and essentially divine.³

Doryphoros

In 1975, the classical scholar Richard Tobin brilliantly reconstructed the canon of proportions believed to have been used by Polycleitos (450–415 BCE) as a kind of geometric guide for the proportions of the ideal human form. Polykleitos was one of the most prominent Greek sculptors working in bronze in the 5th century BCE, around the time of the Parthenon construction. Alongside Phidias, Polycleitos is believed to have sculpted some of the most revered Classical Greek depictions of the human form.

According to the 2nd century physician Galen, Polykleitos wrote a treatise

entitled *Kanon* (meaning “measure” or “rule”) accompanied by a bronze sculpture called *Doryphoros*, the “Spear-Bearer”. Neither the original statue nor the treatise have yet been found, but fortunately several superb Roman copies of the sculpture have survived. With these copies as a guide, Tobin proposed that the fundamental module used by Polykleitos was the distal phalanx, the tip segment of the little finger, and each subsequent segment was then determined in both length and width using a simple, purely geometric extension, based upon the diagonal of the preceding square, thus creating a continuous proportional progression with constant ratio. This would require no mathematical calculations, but could be simply determined by a sequence of knots on a chord. In keeping with Galen’s description of the canon, such a knotted string could have served as a guide for the whole work.

Tobin concludes that this system of proportion perfected in the *Doryphoros* was built upon the most basic elements of Pythagorean geometry. The Greek idea of sculpture and aesthetics as being true to Nature, did not mean merely a more faithful representation of what is seen with the physical eye, but being true to underlying mathematical principles and laws. Integral to the “areal” harmonic series Tobin postulates, is that which in the early 1900’s came to be designated by the Greek letter ϕ (*Phi*) — and is numerically expressed as 1.61803 — a non-repeating decimal. It is what later came to be called by the Renaissance mathematician Luca Pacioli, the “divine proportion”. It has been

of immense interest to a long line of scientists, mathematicians, geometricians, artists, and architects. It is that proportional relationship which undergirds the Fibonacci series and the logarithmic spiral as found in the nautilus shell, the ammonite, and the pattern of scales on the rind of a pineapple and on the face of a sunflower. It is the same ratio that dictates the spiraling distribution of leaves on a stem as well as many other features of plant, animal, and human life-forms. It is also a proportional series inherent in the five-pointed star — since antiquity associated with the tenth sign of the Zodiac designated by *Makara*, the mythological sea dragon, symbol of the fifth class of Dhyanis which awakened the human mind. These *kumaras* also incarnated into pre-physical forms of humanity in order to emanate in unison a great Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas — initiating the nursery for all future adeptship in the Earth-chain. From this deathless fountain head of soul wisdom, Blavatsky taught, every great spiritual teacher of humanity has emerged. The five-pointed star was also the symbol of the Pythagorean Academy.

The Pantheon

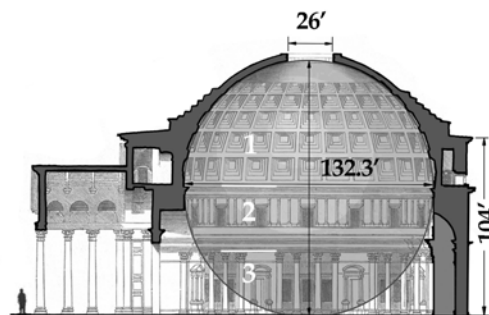
The Pantheon is considered by many architectural historians to be the greatest temple of the Western world, if not one of the grandest architectural creations of all time. It is believed to have been built in the 1st century BCE and then rebuilt in 120 CE by the emperor Hadrian. Though constructed on an unstable subsoil base and though repeatedly robbed and looted, much

of the original structure is remarkably intact. In its time, it was an innovative original, bold and breathtaking — a work of genius. Prior to its design and construction, there is no known precedent in Western architectural theory or practice which on such a colossal scale, married a post-and-lintel rectangular porch (square and triangle) to the circles and arches of a massive domed rotunda. Still today it is the largest domed rotunda ever built of unreinforced masonry.

Little is known for certain of its original purpose and use. Some scholars believe it to be a temple dedicated to Apollo, the god held in highest esteem by the Pythagoreans — not in the common anthropomorphic conception, but as a universal principle of divine light and truth, wisdom and knowledge, as well as music, prophecy, and healing. Emperor Hadrian, who financed and oversaw the design and construction of the Pantheon, was widely known as a man of learning, deeply immersed in Pythagorean and Platonic mathematics, astrology, and geometry, and in all things associated with the ancient Greece. According to Hadrian's biographers, on one of his trips to Greece, Hadrian was admitted into the highest grade of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Many architectural features of the Pantheon do indeed reflect Pythagorean cosmological ordering principles and number symbolism.⁴

Philo Judeus, a contemporary of Hadrian who synthesized Platonic and Pythagorean concepts with Christianity and Judaism, identified seven as the most revered of all

numbers. Like the heptachord or lyre, it was sacred to Apollo whose birthday was celebrated on the 7th day of each month and it is found prominently repeated throughout the building. To begin with, like the Parthenon, there are seven passages between columns facing north through which one can approach the main entrance. Not counting the 18' tall bronze entrance doors, there are seven niches at the interior perimeter wall of the rotunda. A marble statue of each of the gods of the seven planets is believed to have originally resided therein. And the interior of the domed rotunda is also dramatically subdivided both horizontally and vertically into multiples of seven.



Other than the 26' diameter oculus which opens the crown to the sky, the most remarkable design feature of the rotunda, lies in the fact that the radius of the plan is exactly equal to the interior height of the dome. A perfectly round ball whose circumference matched the circumference of the interior walls, would just touch and match the surfaces of the interior dome. As already mentioned, Iamblichus states that for the Pythagoreans, the sphere was the most appro-

priate image of divinity and was called the Monad, meaning “perfect unity” or “the one” and was the source and origin of all other numbers and forms. The experience of this unified whole, far transcending one’s personal sense of boundary, is palpable upon entrance. In addition, within the unity of the interior space, there is a fundamental threefold vertical division: a) the arched coffered dome itself, b) the mid-section of rectangular recesses and horizontal bands, and c) the lower wall of bas-relief columns and niches. These three levels may correspond to the logoic triad of Chaos, Gaea, Eros and to what Hierocles describes in his commentary on The Golden Verses as the three levels of being: the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Middle nature. Three was also considered the first true number by the Pythagoreans “having a beginning, middle and end” symbolizing the synthesis of all dualities.

Although there are no specific markings indicating that the Pantheon was used as a sundial, it is situated in such a way that a shaft of direct light crosses into the entrance portico only two times each year, at the fall and spring equinox. Apollo was not only radiant and bright, but also he who governed the sun’s motion.

The Pantheon is an engineering marvel and the work of ingenious master-builders. To support the massive weight of the dome, the heaviest, densest stone (travertine) was used at the base of the massive 20’ thick, exterior walls. Recesses and voids within the exterior walls along with arches built into the solid surfaces

lightened and distributed the enormous weight. Progressively lighter structural materials were used at higher levels of construction culminating with the use of pumice-based concrete at the top third of the dome. Pumice is so light, it will float in water. Around the circular opening of the oculus itself, however, the builders used large dense bricks in order to resist the tremendous compressive forces pushing in on it. Lead bands were also used at the steps of the roof in order to resist the forces that would push the edges of the dome outward. The roof was originally covered entirely in bronze and all the exterior walls with polished white granite to match the portico columns.

Not far from the Pantheon, is the oldest known surviving Pythagorean temple called the Subterranean Basilica at Porta Maggiore. Secretly built deep below ground in the 1st century BCE, it is believed to have been covertly utilized. Both the design of the temple and the symbols and myths depicted on the interior surfaces have allowed archeologists and scholars to identify the space as dedicated to Apollo and to Pythagorean concepts. Identical to the Pantheon, its primary source of natural light enters the temple from above through a single circular hole or oculus, centrally located at the atrium. Whether one should think of this circular aperture as the logoic eye of heaven or the path thereto is an open question.

Many forms of antique thought faded with history. By contrast, the legacy of Pythagoras grew steadily throughout antiquity. Even as Christianity came into

dominance, not only were Pythagorean numerical concepts incorporated into the visual language used by early Christianity, but the earliest Christian authorities, such as Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Saint Augustine, and many others, accepted his preeminence as a prophet who had discovered the immortality of the soul and provided a guide to a holy and virtuous life. Even while so-called “paganism” was persecuted through the Middle Ages, the sacred science symbolism of Pythagorean and Platonic geometry, and its reliable mathematics, guided the anonymous master masons of the great Gothic cathedrals. It also clearly merged with Jewish and Islamic mysticism, lending

an archetypal spiritual logic and vibrancy to some of their finest literary, artistic, and architectural expressions. But nowhere in known Western history did fascination with Pythagorean theology rise to greater prominence among scholars and leading educated men and women in philosophy, religion, science, and the arts than in the Renaissance. In a similar manner, the Pantheon became a prototype that left its stamp upon countless later works of monumental architecture. Among the most famous would be the St Peter’s Basilica in Rome, designed by Michelangelo, who when he visited the Pantheon for the first time declared it was “of angelic design, not of human”. ✧

Endnotes

1. *The Secret Doctrine*, i, 208–9, fn.
2. *The Proportional System of the Parthenon and its Connections with Vedic India*, by Jay Kappraff and E. G. McClain.
3. H. P. Blavatsky, “What is Theosophy?” *A Modern Panarion*, 1895, p. 261.
4. For a collection of photos showing both exterior and interior features along with a brief overview of the countless numeric associations, see the *Studio Vach* YouTube channel: “Pythagoras and the Pantheon: Temple of Sacred Number”.



Pantheon interior dome

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

LOOK with eyes that are not confused.
There will be confusion only when there is division
between the observer and the observed.
This division takes place when there is the image,
the formula, the concept, the ideal. Therefore
self-knowing, knowing oneself as one is,
is the beginning of wisdom, which
cannot possibly be bought in books.
One has to observe oneself, not analysing,
but observing oneself in relationship, because
in relationship all your reactions come out —
antagonisms, fears, anxieties, bitterness, loneliness.
Without understanding all that, to find out if
there is something beyond all human thought,
if there is something real, true, is not possible.
Therefore one must lay the foundation,
and to lay the foundation one must
observe one's life daily without any distortion.

J. Krishnamurti

From Public Talk 1, Sydney, 21 November 1970

Soul Education

JAMES TEPFER

THE Wisdom-Teachings of Theosophy state that the transcendent Divine (or God) is within, without, and above both man and Nature. Divinity illuminates and energizes every being and every object in every conceivable world. Furthermore, sages and seers of every culture and in every epoch have mastered this divine wisdom and, most importantly, continually find fresh means and modalities of bringing their profound knowledge to mankind. Sages such as Krishna, Buddha, and Śankara in the East and Pythagoras, Plato, and Christ in the West form a noble Brotherhood or Divine Society that is unequivocally committed to the uplift of the whole human family. These enlightened beings all affirm — in more or less veiled language — the immortality of the human soul. They intimate that each human being is on a vast pilgrimage to realize his oneness with Divinity. This spiritual quest back to God is regulated by Divine Law (karma) and takes innumerable lifetimes (reincarnations) to accomplish. Thus, all deep learning is an attempt to awaken the Divine within us which is true knowledge, true awareness, and unbounded joy.

Given this theosophical conception of the nature of true learning, what, then, is “Soul Education”?

On the great seal of the University of California is imprinted the motto: “Fiat Lux”. This translates into the compelling Old Testament invocation: “Let there be Light”. In modern secular terms, “Light” is rendered as “Truth”.

Secular education, then, is committed to the overarching pursuit of Truth. It is also about the cultural transmission of discovered Truth (called “knowledge”) from one generation to another; that knowledge is communicated from teacher to student(s) in a variety of modes.

Modern, secular education primarily pursues, discovers, and transmits knowledge through highly sophisticated intellectual means: through rational analysis, through logic, through controlled scientific experimentation, and through the memorization of verified facts. Modern education is really all about developing the “mind”. It is about the fullest possible intellectual development and the strengthening of memory. It is not principally concerned with cultivating emotional maturity, or distinguishing between wholesome and

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harmful desires, or about training the rational, moral will to do what is right and good to each and all. Thus, we find that the modern, educated person is often highly informed and skilled in reasoning within the compass of a specialized field of study. However, the quality of his personhood, his character, and his ability to creatively contribute to the uplift of his community is often sadly lacking. Is it any wonder, then, that we witness successive generations of brilliant, technologically savvy youth who are, nonetheless, culturally adrift, weak-willed, and in search of a deeper purpose in life — one beyond mere success, social status, or the accumulation of wealth?

“Soul education”, by contrast with modern secular education, plumbs the depths of “Fiat Lux” and claims that its real meaning is: “Let there be Wisdom”. In fact, there is a basis for this interpretation of “lux” in the Christian Bible and even in the great seal of the University of California, itself, which includes an artistic rendering of Athena, the goddess of Wisdom. In most Wisdom-Teachings, “wisdom” is all-inclusive and its activation releases the profoundest possible insights into a right or wholesome relationship with God, Nature, and Man. Like light, wisdom is not only cognitively illuminating, but warm, energizing, and compassionate. If this is true, then “soul education” is potentially far more existentially enriching and socially transformative than modern secular education could ever be. Wisdom, at the human level, is purest insight into the Good in any and every

situation. It is knowing what to say, when to say it, to whom to say it, and how to say it. Wisdom alchemizes and enlightens every relationship because it resonates with divine, compassionate Intelligence.

At its very core, soul education, like wisdom, is holistic. It involves enlightening the whole person. It involves uplifting the whole of society too. It leaves nothing out of the algebra of its learning equations. If so, then soul education necessarily involves training and integrating the head, the heart, and the hand. It involves clarifying our conceptual understanding of moral terms, awakening our deepest feelings and intuitions, and harvesting the lessons embedded in our suffering. In a word, soul education shifts the focus as well as the locus of knowledge from the mind-in-isolation to the all-inclusive soul. What does this mean? What is the soul?

The soul is a metaphysical unit. It is, if you will, a ray of God’s mind. As Ralph Waldo Emerson states, “I am born into the great, the universal mind.” As a ray of God’s cosmic mind, the human soul is necessarily immortal, luminous, self-moving, and all compassionate. It is the heart-center and source of infinite, penetrating insights into God, Nature, and Man. It is the origin in Man and Nature of perpetual creativity, self-sustaining preservation, and spiritual self-regeneration.

Furthermore, the immortal soul is both transcendent and immanent. It is transcendent because it is unconditioned. It is not conditioned by space-time, by

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the brain-mind, or by ordinary consciousness. Yet, it is simultaneously immanent or reflected in space-time, in the brain mind, and in ordinary consciousness. Its vitalization, radiant in the mind and heart is what allows us to aspire to its full, exalted condition of wisdom and omniscience.

Soul education naturally encourages higher aspirations. It encourages upward mental movement — what Plato described as “the ardent turning of the soul toward the Divine”. It nurtures spiritual and moral ideals which unify and heal one’s mind, one’s relationships, and one’s culture. It is concerned with inner ascent in order to gain spiritual altitude and an encompassing perspective on life. Furthermore, soul learning is not limited to any particular stage of life; it includes our sunset years as well as the halcyon years of early childhood. It is not confined to any particular location such as a classroom. Indeed, it can and does occur at home, at church, at work, at play, in the theater, and in all the informal, social contexts of life. Furthermore, even at school, soul learning can take place not only in classrooms but under the protective canopy of trees, in sparse, Zen-like gardens, or next to quietly flowing rivers. Finally, soul learning can also occur in treasured moments of serene solitude when we meditate on universal ideas in silence.

Soul Education is thus the golden thread of lifelong learning and is non-cumulative. From this perspective, society is the school for the practice of human virtues; Nature is the laboratory for the

discovery of God’s designing intelligence, and, finally, the exalted Godhead itself is the highest object of meditation for the mind’s transformation into an awareness of its own immortality and the reality of universal brotherhood. All three schools of life are in perpetual session.

As the Chinese sage, Lao Tsu, taught, soul education is about therapeutic subtraction as well as about luminous addition. We begin in spiritual ignorance but can, through effort and building on our failures, end in a sublime state of realized Wisdom. To realize our innate wisdom, we must first unlearn. We must progressively strip away our bad habits and simultaneously cure the mind of its accrued diseases: its gross misconceptions, its misperceptions, its romanticized illusions, its self-destructive habits, its false values, and above all, its grasping, aggrandizing ego. This “cleaning up” and “clearing up” of the mind through letting go of our identity-limiting attachments and prejudices creates “mental spaces” for the light of wisdom to illuminate. We might say that the purification of the mind (or unlearning) is necessarily painful but vital for spiritual, intellectual, and moral growth to occur.

Soul learning recognizes that the “child-state” is essential to learning during every stage of life. To the budding mind of the child the world has just begun; the universe has just been freshly created. Everything is virginal, touched with originality, and all intellectual discovery is an epiphany. Understandably, the legendary world of heroes and heroines, of the inevitable

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victory of love over hate, justice over revenge, and of brotherhood over exclusiveness is real to the inexperienced and innocent. Likewise, to the genuine adult seeker, to the young-at-heart, the world of knowledge is forever new. It is never settled. And it ever and forever points to Golden Age possibilities within even the darkest of times.

As we have seen, modern education is focused almost exclusively on intellectual development. Furthermore, it is based on the false theory that the mind is a blank slate on which God, Nature, and society write their respective scripts which we unconsciously act out. Modern education does not embrace the theory of innate ideas or of innate wisdom. Its stimulus for growth is unfortunately primarily based on competition between students and its educational success measured by grades and test scores. Ultimately, the competitive urge and the anxiety-driven fixation on grades are corrosive to the indwelling spirit. Modern education, sad to say, egregiously disconnects the pursuit of knowledge from the intelligent and intrepid embodiment of moral values which almost always uplift and regenerate society.

Soul education, then, is essentially noetic. It cultivates the awakening of the “inspired mind”, the mind illuminated and purified by the clarifying power of Nous (cosmic mind). It is concerned with the whole person and not just with the development of intellectual powers. It holds to the notion that there is innate knowledge and that compassion is the

irreducible moving force of life and the heart-current that releases wisdom. For that reason, soul education is equally concerned with the progressive realization of universal responsibility toward all sentient beings as it is with the critical analysis of ideas, concepts, and terms. Soul education naturally places great value on cooperation and collaboration in the pursuit of wisdom. It is likewise committed to nurturing kindness, brotherliness, mercy, and moral heroism. Soul education is the creative marriage of intuitive revelation and acquired knowledge, of spiritual illumination and thoughtful, self-determined action.

Intellectually speaking, soul education (or noetic learning) emphasizes questions over answers. It stresses critical thinking over mere memorization. It cultivates moral imagination as well as logical reasoning. It studies heroes and heroines to aid students in their efforts to train the creative, moral will and to discipline the intellect. In effect, soul education is a means of spiritualizing the intellect such that it becomes warm, expansive, multifaceted, and lit up by the over-brooding spirit.

Soul education is open to the teaching power of dreams as well as to the compelling conclusions of logic. Like Shakespeare, soul education is open to learning not only from books, but from brooks and stones and from little children and sages too. Furthermore, soul education is patient with holding contradictory views because it has faith in the penetrating and synthesizing power of pure intuition. Finally, soul education

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includes self-study in the light of high moral and spiritual ideals as well as the study of texts. Self-knowledge is ultimately the key to wisdom and is superior to any “book knowledge” — including the study of religious texts.

If all this is true, then what might be involved in reforming modern education and making it more susceptible to noetic learning and the lifelong quest for Divine Wisdom? What is needed is the recovery of what was present in “parent-child” teaching but is often lost in the early years of formal education: love, trust, and reverence for the spiritually heroic. All three heart qualities (or states of being) point to the need to cultivate the alpha heart and not just the alpha intellect. A self-replenishing love for learning is essential. Such love leads to genuine questions and the humility to listen to answers. To sustain and renew learning is possible when one increasingly appre-

ciates the hard-earned knowledge of one’s teachers and of those who dedicate their lives to using that knowledge in the service of others. Trust is likewise pivotal. How can one learn if one does not trust one’s teachers — which includes parents, friends, and even strangers? How can one merit knowledge if one does not have confidence in one’s capacity to learn? Finally, how can one learn the deepest knowledge if one does not possess reverence? We should revere not only God, but Man, not only Man, but Nature. Why? Because God is everywhere: both inside and outside of Man and Nature. If the Divine is omnipresent, then all learning of whatever kind is sacred, is consecrate. We begin to learn when we revere teachers and extend that reverence to all those who are full of goodness and light. Such reverence ultimately results in the descent of Wisdom into the alert, clear mind, and the heroic heart. ✧

All real education is the architecture of the soul.

William J. Bennett
Former US Secretary of Education

A Sense of Duty

TIM WYATT

JUST like lost continents or civilizations, lost values, and especially noble ones, always leave their traces. Some values are so fundamental to humanity that no matter how rejected or degraded they become in any particular era, they are impossible to eradicate. This is because they are core values and not subject to passing fads or fashions.

Along with truth and beauty, the notion of duty does not have the same potency it had even a couple of generations ago. Duty has not vanished, but it has certainly been consigned to the backwaters of human motivation and no longer holds centre stage.

Of course, many people display a sense of duty in terms of responsibility for themselves, their families, businesses and organizations. They may feel responsibility to their countries or even the entire planet. Despite it not having the resonance it once did, duty persists because it is an overarching spiritual imperative.

Nevertheless, these days duty is often seen as quaint and outmoded as a horse and buggy. It is no longer that old-fashioned and nationalistic notion of

“My country right or wrong”, which was a prevalent trait during the dying days of the British Empire and at other times in history.

Full self-responsibility for our deeds, words, and thoughts is at the very centre of each individual’s psycho-spiritual development. It is our duty as members of the human project to evolve through all the sweat, angst, achievement, failure, triumph, misery, loss, love, futility, and moments of transcendence offered by each incarnation on this school-cum-penitentiary planet.

The extent to which we take this evolutionary duty seriously largely defines our destiny, since ultimately we create all our own life scenarios and circumstances. However, it is also our duty to appreciate that there is a guiding intelligence behind the infinite and eternal cosmos (or multiverse) we inhabit. It did not happen by accident. It was no mere “fortuitous concurrence of atoms” to quote H. P. Blavatsky’s often-quoted and colourful phrase. Whether we recognize it or not, there is a purpose and a Grand Plan.

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Duty also involves understanding the continuum in which we operate — physically in earthly bodies, but also as subtle entities in the invisible realms. The endless cycle of births and deaths offers each of us new experiences in different epochs, in different circumstances with different bodies and personalities, each coloured by accumulated karma and with a definite soul, purpose, or mission for each life. It is our duty to both appreciate and co-operate with these adventures.

Closely bound up with duty is morality, whose strength has also been eroded by prevailing attitudes in our contemporary world. Endlessly discussed by philosophers of all the ages, morality like duty, has tended to be flexible, mutable — and sometimes optional — but always amenable to the fine-tuning of religion or politics.

Over time the teachings of antiquity and the wisdom of the ages are hijacked by fundamentalists of one ilk or another who ensure that they artificially morph and solidify into various religions or sects all with their own dogmas, catechisms, certainties and prohibitions. Each insists that it is the sole possessor of truth. When this happens — as it often does — core truths are lost or heavily distorted along with the central morality deeply embedded in the Ageless Wisdom.

In the West a nauseous culture of ‘blame’ and ‘victimhood’ predominates. Millions shriek and aggressively assert their ‘rights’. Far, far fewer are aware of their responsibilities — or duties. And in this sense, irrationality has triumphed over reason.

Arguably we live in the most selfish and self-centred world ever seen in recorded history (although the dark forces of Atlantis may have rivalled this). Individuals often regard themselves as superior to the collective. Shrill minorities dictate the agenda to majorities. Competition is regarded as a better option than cooperation. Perversely, mass communication, which was meant to link up humanity has led to mass isolation on the one hand, and the savage jungle warfare of social media on the other. For many, their only duty is to themselves.

In this fractured and atomised environment, we have developed an inward-looking, tunnel-visioned obsession with ourselves. “Selfie” pictures taken on smartphones are the perfect metaphor for this modern, machine-dominated age. These have taken on the mantle of a religious rite and individuals will risk their lives — and indeed sometimes lose them — getting that perfect image of the person concerned teetering alarmingly on the edge of a high precipice somewhere or other.

Without duty, responsibility, and an understanding that each and every one of us is part of a far wider world — and universe — humanity is doomed to wander blindly into a cul-de-sac of self-destruction.

Are human beings selfish by design? The sceptical and ultra-materialist British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins certainly thinks so. He cooked up the idea of “the selfish gene” and would no doubt bet his house on the fact that humans are indeed entirely selfish and solely concerned with themselves and no one else. For a

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scientist of his stature (or notoriety), he demonstrates a severe myopia of the facts.

And yet many would entirely agree with him and science at large. Their argument is that human beings are nothing more than sophisticated animals controlled by “wet computers” for brains with neither soul nor spirit. They insist that any finer feelings of truth, beauty, duty, morality, or selflessness are solely the result of chemical and electrical reactions in the brain.

Human beings certainly have selfish tendencies — some more than others. It is quite natural to look out for ourselves. However, it is a core spiritual principle that everything in this world and beyond it is intimately interconnected and therefore no one operates in isolation — “no man is an island” to quote the words of the English metaphysical poet John Donne. So, it is absurd to believe that we can possibly exist without connection to people, places or indeed anything else.

The mega-materialism and commercialization which completely dominate the contemporary world have undoubtedly made people more selfish than they may otherwise have been. Selflessness is not promoted as much as it should be and

some people even regard its opposite, selfishness, as a virtue. And yet this does not mean that human beings are inherently or innately selfish — quite the opposite.

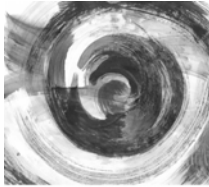
During times of stress, disaster, conflict and threat especially, human beings *do* cooperate and work together putting others’ needs before their own. When there is an earthquake, war, environmental disaster or major accident people work closely together for a greater good. Then a sense of duty is triggered. It becomes the default setting. Worldwide, regional and local agencies have developed to offer humanitarian aid and technical assistance in ways not possible before. If human beings were fundamentally selfish, this would not happen. There would be no charities. So, a kind of altruism is alive — but is often conditional and intermittent.

A clear indicator of an individual’s sense of duty is the extent to which they offer service to others. The combination of service, study and meditation is a well tried and tested formula for spiritual advancement. Service is an indispensable prerequisite for the individual on an accelerated path of evolution. Without service all attempts at enhancing spiritual unfoldment are irrelevant. ✧

All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope.

Winston Churchill

Books of Interest



APPROACHING THE
SECRET DOCTRINE
Its Teachings and Practical Application
PABLO SENDER

THE SECRET DOCTRINE: Its Teachings and Practical Application. By Pablo Sender. <fohatproductions.com>, 2022, Paperback/Hard Cover/Online/Kindle, USD 26.95 & Indian rupees 899, 313 pp., 15.1 x 22.8 cm, or 6 x 9 inches.

H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*) has a reputation that precedes itself. Due to its profound depth and chaotic organization, it sits firmly on the line between fame and infamy. Before reading Dr Pablo Sender's book, the current reviewer had no intention of exploring the *SD*'s ambiguous pages in this lifetime. It would have been beyond his reach. After reading the book, however, the reviewer finds himself with the very framework needed to attempt this seemingly gargantuan task. Moreover, he looks forward to the endeavor. This book is divided into three sections: **Foundations, Teachings, and Practical Application**. The first part gives the reader an easy-to-understand and methodical explanation of the purpose and methods of studying the *SD*. It is written in Dr Sender's own words, and gives the intellectual background that students will find useful in deciphering the *SD* on their own. The second part is meant to ease the

student into a direct study of the *SD*. By using a Q&A format, it presents the text in an intelligible, systematic, and direct way, with many quotes lifted and organized from the *SD* itself. The main ideas are arranged by topic, allowing the students to familiarize themselves with HPB's writing style and build confidence in the student's direct understanding of the *SD*. Scattered throughout the section are upwards of 25 thoughtful diagrams and tables that help synthesize and enhance the comprehension of the teachings given. The final section contains meditations, exercises, and methods of analysis inspired by and applied to the *SD*. Its pages demonstrate how the seemingly abstruse and metaphysical ideas in HPB's teachings can be concretely applied to the daily life of the aspirant. Here again, various tables and diagrams are used to aid the student, in addition to more than 20 meditations and exercises to experiment, hoping to gain one's own insights.

This book is an original work of tremendous value for any student of Theosophy. It has earned the respect and admiration of the reviewer by accomplishing something he thought impossible, inspiring him to study *SD* as a form of spiritual practice. Perhaps it can do the same for you!

SETH EDWARDS, Board Member,
World Federation of Young Theosophists,
The Theosophical Society, Adyar.

Theosophical Work around the World

International Convention, Adyar

The 148th International Convention took place in Adyar from 31 December 2023 to 4 January 2024, on the theme “Exploring and Understanding UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCE”, with approximately 675 in-person delegates and over 1,000 online ones on the opening day.

International President of the TS, Mr Tim Boyd, lighted the lamp with 4 others, and the prayers of all religions were recited as a reminder that the Divine Wisdom forms the common background of each faith. Then greetings were given by delegates from 19 countries, who were on the dais. The international officers present on the stage were Dr Deepa Padhi, Vice-President of the TS; Ms Nancy Secrest, Treasurer; and Ms Marja Artamaa, International Secretary. Mr Boyd gave the keynote address on “Adyar Extension”, elaborating on the developments that have taken place during the past few years and the works in progress. The President’s report, in the form of a video, highlighted the theosophical activities around the world during the last year.

The Besant Lecture was given by Mr M. M. Sundresh, Judge of the Supreme Court of India, on “Virtue”. The Theosophy-Science Lecture was delivered by Prof. Rajaram Nityananda, Professor of Physics at the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences, Bengaluru, on “Contemporary Science: Facts, Ideas, Questions”. Mr Joss

Brooks, veteran Australian ecologist from Pitchandikulam Forest, Auroville, gave a public lecture titled “Remembering the Future Garden”. On the last day of the Convention, Mr Boyd delivered the President’s Lecture on “The Land and Us”. All the public lectures had about 700–800 people in the audience.

The Convention mornings started with three options for the delegates: Bharata Samaj puja, silent walking meditation, or Yoga and Pranayama. The main programs were an opportunity to listen to the insights of 21 speakers who elaborated their enlightening thoughts on a multitude of aspects of universal intelligence. Short lectures were given by Dr Padhi on “Understanding Universal Intelligence”, and Mr Stephen McDonald, National President of the Australian Section on “Intelligence: The Foundation of All Life”. On the last day, two other short lectures were given on Advaita Vedanta by Dr Raghunathan on “Universal Intelligence Is to Know the Field and the Knower of the Field”, and Sri Sankara Bhagavadpada on “Advaita, Self-Knowing, and Universal Intelligence”.

There was a symposium on “Exploring and Understanding”. Participants were Mr Richard Sell (TS New Zealand) speaking on “Understanding an Explorer’s Mind”, Mrs Isis de Resende (TS Brazil) who spoke on “The Science and the Art of Living”, and Mr Gerard Brennan (TS

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Australia) whose talk on “Seeking and Knowing” was read by the moderator.

The Convention had two panel discussions. The first was on “Intelligence and Human Need”, whose members were Marcos de Resende (TS Brazil), Tr  n-Thi-Kim-Di  u (TS France), Chally Romero (TS Philippines), and led by Krista Umbjarv (TS France). The other panel on “Theosophy and Art: From Origin to Horizons” introduced to the audience the importance of safeguarding art in general, the details of the Art Restoration Project in Adyar, and future possibilities. The speakers respectively were Mrs Elif Kamisli (Turkey), Mrs Anupama Gaur (India), and Mrs Erica Georgiades (TS Greece).

Ms Nancy Secrest, the International Secretary of Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), gave a presentation on the TOS, after which a charming dance program was performed by intellectually challenged children.

Two events in other formats took place, a dialogue and an interview. President Boyd had a dialogue with Tr  n-Thi-Kim-Di  u, of the European Federation on “Theosophical Work and Universal Intelligence”. Mrs Patrizia Calvi (TS Italy) interviewed Ven. Olande Ananda Thera from Sri Lanka about his life and views.

A Q&A session was conducted by Mr Boyd based on questions from the attendees where Dr Padhi, Mr Gohil (President of the Indian Section) and Mr Douglas Keene (President of the America Section) shared their answers.

Workshops took place in different venues in the campus: “Chanting” by

Ms Jaishree Kannan (TS Adyar), “Theosophical Education — The Inner Flowering” and “Education for Life: The Art of Living and Learning” by Mrs Sonal Murali (Director of the Adyar Theosophical Academy), and “An Exploration of the Seven Rays” and “Art as a Language of the Universal Intelligence” by the World Federation of Young Theosophists.

The Indian Section had two sessions with the annual report by Mr Gohil, the National President, and many Indian speakers.

The Convention was enriched with artistic programs: New Year’s World Music Concert by LEAP Boundary Breakers, BEAT Choir, a Skit by the Bombay Theosophical Federation, and a cultural evening by members and the Adyar Choir.

Exhibitions were a big part of the Convention. There was an Art Exhibition by Indian sculptor and painter S. Hemalatha at the ALRC meeting hall, which continued till 26 January. The Surendra Narayan Archives had two displays: “The Spirit of Adyar — A Journey into the Past”, and “Radha Burnier — A Multi-Faceted Leader”. The Art Conservation Studio had an exhibition titled “The Renaissance of Art in Adyar: Paintings of Florence Ada Fuller”. The Blavatsky Museum exhibited its permanent display. Visits were arranged to the Social Welfare Centre with Mr Narendra Shah (TS East & Central Africa) as the chief guest, and to the two schools on the campus: Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, and the Adyar Theosophical Academy.

On the last day of the Convention new

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members were welcomed by President Boyd. A plenary session took place during which Mrs Catalina Isaza-Cantor (TS Colombia/Adyar) presented the status of the work of the World Federation of Young Theosophists and of the Propagation project.

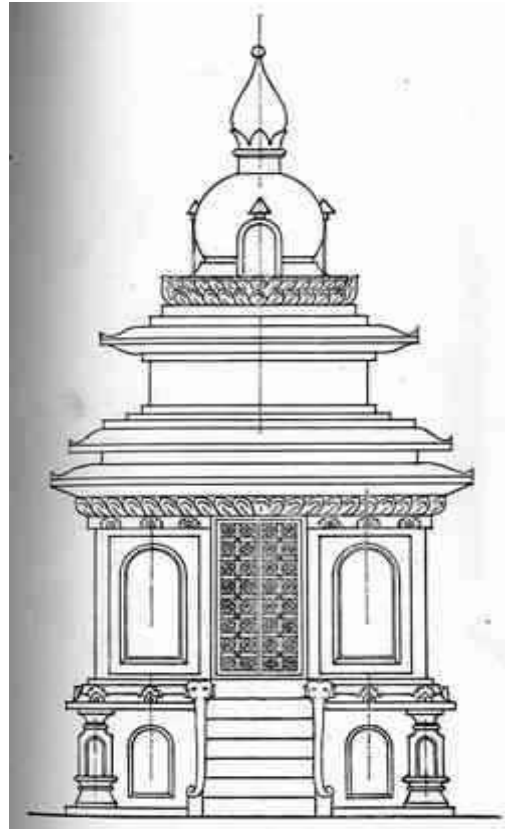
At the Closing Ceremony, the Convention Officer, Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, delivered a vote of thanks to all who had

tirelessly worked before and during the event to make the Convention run smoothly. No convention goes well without good food. The Bangalore City Lodge brought their cooking staff and volunteers to Adyar to run a canteen, in addition to the LBC kitchen. Finally, Mr Boyd declared the Convention closed with heartfelt thanks and a blessing to all the delegates, and looking forward to meeting again next year. ✧

The text below relates to the image on the cover of this issue and to the cover caption at the bottom of p. 3:

The idea of constructing a Buddhist Shrine at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS) in Adyar, Chennai, India, actually originated on 12 February 1883, while Col. H. S. Olcott, the first international President of the TS, was at Adyar, and there fell next to him a note from Mahatma KH (Koot Hoomi), along with Rs. 150 and the plan of a sanctuary for a statue of the Buddha with orders to have it constructed!

It may not be widely known these days that young Tenzin Gyatso, the XIV Dalai Lama, and the Panchen Lama traveled to India for the first time in 1956 to celebrate the birth of Gautama Buddha. During their tour, on December 18, they went to the International Headquarters of the TS in Adyar and visited the beautiful Buddhist Shrine.



*Plan of the Buddhist Shrine at Adyar,
sent by Mahatma KH to Olcott*

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Top: Group photo of the Convention delegates on 31 December 2023

Down: Public Lectures: Tim Boyd, International President (TS); M. M. Sundresh, Judge, Supreme Court of India; Joss Brooks, Veteran Australian Ecologist Pitchandikulam Forest, Auroville; Prof. Rajaram Nityananda, Professor of Physics, International Centre for Theoretical Sciences

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Top. Question & Answer session:
Pradeep Gohil, National President
of the Indian Section; Douglas Keene,
National President of the American
Section; Deepa Padhi, International
Vice-President of the TS; Tim Boyd,
International President of the TS

Middle. Short lecturers: Deepa Padhi,
Stephen McDonald, Sankara Bhagavadpada,
Radha Raghunathan

Left. Symposium:
Isis de Resende and Richard Sell

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Top. Panel: Chally Romero, Krista Umbjarv, Marcos de Resende, Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu



Middle. Interview of Ven. Olande Ananda by Patrizia Calvi

Dialogue between Tim Boyd and Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu

Bottom. Panel on Theosophy and Art: Anupama Gaur, Elif Kamisli

TOS presentation: Nancy Secrest, Intl. Vice-President of the TOS and Intl. Treasurer of the TS



Theosophical Work around the World



Top. BEAT Choir, Bank Employees Art Troop

Middle. Entertainment led by Vinay Patri with Zidango

Skit moderators Shikhar Agnihotri, Convention Officer, and Taral Munshi.

Marja Artamaa, International Secretary

Bottom. New Year's World Music Concert by LEAP Boundary Breakers

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

| Date | Section | General Secretary, etc. | Address | Magazine | Email address |
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