

THE EFFECT OF THE FUTURE

Tim Boyd

(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 4.1.2017)

As humans we are future-oriented beings. Whether it is our as yet unexpressed genetic material or the “powers latent” within us, we are continually under the influence of an ever-unrealized future condition. In *The Idyll of the White Lotus* “three truths” are given. The first of them is: “The soul of man is immortal and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor has no limit.” Try as we might to live in the moment, the focus of spiritual practice is on a state of being profoundly different from our normal present, a state that to our limited capacity seems separate from this moment, something arrived at through an unfoldment in time — a process of becoming.

The future weighed most heavily upon H. P. Blavatsky, who on occasion stated that the teachings she was sharing could not be understood or clearly implemented until the next century. In the Western world the language to express its concepts as

still forming, and the science capable of reaching into the unseen world around us was also in its formative stages. The founders of the Theosophical Society (TS) were keenly focused on the future. In order to “stem the tide” of the two currents in human thought, the “brutal materialism” of a too materialistic science and the “superstition” of dead-letter religion, the wisdom teachings of Theosophy were reintroduced and the TS was begun. The future direction which it defined was characterized by a radical unity described as “universal brotherhood”. Paradoxically, this union is both potential, a future possibility, and also quite actual and immediate. Our current capacity to consciously experience this broader dimension of our being is limited, and we look to the future for this consciousness to unfold. At the same time we are told, and occasionally experience, this greater, all embracing consciousness in moments of overwhelming love and insight. The

teachings and the practices which arise from Theosophy are said to be able to move individuals toward the experience of that brotherhood.

We find ourselves living in a universe that seems vast beyond our comprehension. To most it is enough of a challenge trying to understand ourselves without having to consider our relationship with the greater, universal life. The Ageless Wisdom tradition suggests that not only do we have within us the “mind to embrace the universe”, but that in a fundamental way we and the universe are not separate. The future is continually

reaching into this present moment—shaping and guiding it.

The Great Ones see and occasionally share their visions of future events. To their eyes both cataclysms and peaceful times are incidents in the cycle of unfoldment of that future whose “growth and splendor” is without limit. Towards the end of HPB’s life she commented that, “If you could foresee what I foresee, you would begin heart and soul to spread the teaching of universal brotherhood. It is the only safeguard!” An awareness of unity brings healing, power, and peace to daily life.



TO DARE TO MOVE BEYOND ONESELF

Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 4.1.2017)

A Hermetic maxim advises: “To know, to will, to dare, and to be silent.” Very likely each one of us knows something about each of these four points. I would like to take the third “to dare” and share some comments about it.

To dare is to have the courage to act differently from habits of thinking and expectations. Courage commonly does not exclude fear, but it is to act despite fear. To dare is beyond courage. It pertains to audacity in which the element of earthly ego has vanished. Audacity is linked with what H. P. Blavatsky called (real) courage as the highest acquisition in her Meditation Diagram.

At that stage there is no question of fear because fear is one of the characteristics defining the ego. When

the ego vanishes, fear also does. The disappearance of the ego implies consequently the disappearance of its defining factors.

To understand real courage needs a serious exploration into the nature of fear, which takes several forms on different levels of consciousness. In fact, whenever consciousness is fragmented, the fragmentation creates a state of separateness, and this separateness generates fear, the great fear of disappearing, the fear of death. This corresponds to attachment towards life, the desire to continue to survive. This state is the last of the five afflictions (klesa-s) described in Raja Yoga as *abhiniवेशa*.

Before consciousness comes to this

fragmentation, four other afflictions precede it. Why is one so attached to life? Is it not because “life” as it is seen on a coarse level is a play of attraction and repulsion (*raga-dvesha*)? This pair of forces is the expression of duality inside the sensation field. Interestingly, *both* possess the power of attraction. Yet, consciousness gets bogged down in self-identification (*asmitya*) that lets it feel “I am”. And with this certainty of “I am”, the state of ignorance (*avidya*) cannot be denied.

At every step of bondage, the self can be conscious of its state. Can one be free from the fear of dying? Can one be free from the spell of attraction by the pair of attraction-repulsion? Can one have the awareness any time one identifies oneself with whatsoever? And finally, at the first and deepest of its

levels, can consciousness return to its pristine state, pure, undivided, and unfragmented?

And a smaller question: can one rid of habits of thinking and expectations? Not so small a question though, because habits of thinking and expectations are in daily life like ready-built grooves for consciousness in movements.

To summarize, all self-identifications fragment consciousness. From the first to the last affliction, consciousness passes through divided states which are illusiory. One’s way of living likely contributes to the making of one’s own illusions. Is there a way of living which leads one out of the vicious circle of illusion-making? If yes, does one dare to tread that way and move beyond the prison of one’s self?



TO SEE THE SELF AS A PASSING GUEST

Pedro Oliveira

(Summary of Short Lecture delivered on 4.1.2017)

One of the great obstacles to human transformation, which is recognized by all great spiritual traditions, is the notion that our sense of a separate self is real. The Buddhist teachings about the *skhandas*, for example, suggest that this notion is very ancient and has been perpetuated through countless incarnations.

At the very core of such a sense of self, we find thought, and memory, but also desire. The “I”-notion has a firm basis in the thought process which is

dependent on memory for its function, and is fuelled by desire, described as *tanha* in the Buddhist tradition and manifesting as a veritable thirst for more experiences, more gratification. The craving for more is one of the hallmarks of the self.

The self is behind all our activities. When we are praised it manifests as a more or less glorified sense of self-importance; when we are criticized it expresses itself as anger or withdrawal. It is not uncommon for people to feel

suspicious of a person whom they have never met before, and therefore do not know, but suspicion is another way in which the self exhibits itself. The tendency to criticize betrays an attitude based on the notion that we know better, that we know exactly how people should conduct themselves, or not, in life. When we become violent, verbally or otherwise, the sense of self is overcome with rage — an uncontrolled emotion — and we may say or do things that later on we may come to regret.

What gives an apparent reality to the sense of self? A possible answer lies in the meaning of the word *ahamkara*, the I-making faculty. Antonio Damasio, a well-known neuroscientist, while investigating the nature of the self from the point of view of neuroscience, suggested that one of the deeper layers of the self in us is what he has called the “autobiographical self”. We tend to dwell on our personal history most of the time: reminiscing about the past, trying to relive certain experiences, finding it hard to let go of hurtful memories, going back in thought to experiences that yielded pleasure, and so on.

When the Mahatma KH returned from his retreat, what he then wrote to Mr Sinnett has profound relevance for our subject:

My Brother — I have been on a long journey after supreme knowledge, I took a long time to rest. Then, upon coming back, I had to give all my time to duty, and all my thoughts to the Great Problem. It is all over now: the New

Year’s festivities are at an end and I am “Self” once more. But what is Self? Only a passing guest, whose concerns are all like a mirage of the great desert. . . .

The passage seems to imply that during the period of his retreat the Mahatma experienced an order of consciousness much beyond the personal self.

Mystics like Jalaluddin Rumi, Meister Eckhart, Sant Kabir and Rabindranath Tagore, to name but a few, also pointed to the same abiding reality: the essential unreality of the personal self. When the inflation created by the mechanism of self-image ends, the consciousness within is liberated and comes to an awareness of its own essential nature — *svarupa*. It then experiences freedom as its own intrinsic nature and becomes a citizen of life’s sacred oneness. Every expression of such consciousness becomes suffused with goodness.

An extraordinary aspect of the mystical experience is that it also occurs outside the confines of the religious or spiritual worlds. Arthur Koestler, a British intellectual and author, went to Spain around 1936 to oppose the Fascist regime. He was eventually arrested and put in jail, where many of his colleagues were being shot dead. It was then that a profound experience came to him. While in jail, an intellectual contemplation of Euclid’s theorem led him to a profound insight into beauty. At its depth the experience led him to a complete loss of the sense of self and its accompanying feeling of blessed-

ness. He experienced a sense of abiding unity. It may be worth mentioning here that Mr Koestler was a staunch atheist.

Most of us cherish a sense of self-identity and can become rather perturbed if any remark about it tends to either challenge it or criticize it.

Sometimes this leads to a feeling of personal hurt that can last for a long time. But, in the words of the Mahatma, the self in us is just a "passing guest". It is not the true Self which is eternal in its beneficent intelligence, and whose very fabric is unalloyed bliss. No guest stays forever.



RENOVATION UPDATE

Tim Boyd and Michiel Haas

(Summary of Presentation given on 3.1.2017)

Last year we all gathered under a beautiful new roof. This year, however, we have gone back to sitting under a temporary roof. As is well-known by now, in May of last year the new roof collapsed during a storm and heavy rainfall. Why did this occur and what is it we can learn from this misfortune?

In January 2016, we started fundraising for Adyar's renovation. During last year's Convention, we collected the first donations by organizing a telephone campaign, offering the possibility to donate while receiving phone calls. Since then, nearly one-third of the needed funding for all the projects planned in the forthcoming five years has been raised. The list of renovation projects includes: Headquarters building, Raja House, Leadbeater Chambers

and the Blavatsky Bungalow. Details are also being worked out for a new theatre roof and a better location for the Adyar archives.

You will not be able to see the results yet. Our very first project, the theatre roof, was not successful and turned the clock backwards. It takes time and lots of effort to make a restart, but we will show what has been accomplished during the year by initiating other renovations. A great deal of work has been done. These projects have been less dramatic and not so eye-catching, but they were all essential. You will notice that many are working tirelessly, completing necessary repairs and improvements on buildings and the infrastructure of the campus.



Number of delegates registered as on Wednesday, 4 January: 884

GLOBAL RHYTHMS CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Global Rhythms Children's Choir, with its Director Mr Srinivas Krishnan, performed a concert with much enthusiasm by the children. This time we had the joy of listening to about 300 young voices from various schools and several professional singers and musicians performing together.

The choir was born under the project called LEAP (Leadership Engagement in Artistic Performances). LEAP aims to promote the learning of diverse art, music, dance, literary and film traditions, and enhance understanding and co-operation among people from different geographies and communities. It works with schools and other organizations. With music they enhance awareness of movement and music, which is medicine to our lives, but it also builds bridges and makes us connect to the entire universe. Doing something like this together the children learn team work and can express their excellent skills, and become more confident in their life.



VIOLIN CONCERT

R. Ganesh and R. Kumaresh gave a joyful performance on the evening of 4 January to the delight and enjoyment of the audience. They are a noted pair of violin players who are part of the Carnatic (South Indian) music fraternity. Also known as "Fiddling Monks", these brothers are modern contemporary artists who have done a lot of service to classical music (*shastriya sangitam*). These child prodigies were introduced to the violin at the very early ages of 3 and 2, and completed their 100th stage appearance by the time they were 13 and 10 years of age respectively. Within a short period thence, they were rubbing shoulders with veterans in the musical field. They are a dynamic duo of violinists, who have gone deep into the realm of the music and brought out refreshingly original content and style for the instrument.



We behold creation's face as though
reflected in a mirror
misted out with our breath.
Sometimes a speechless beast
lifts its docile head
and looks right through us.
This is destiny: to be opposites,
always and only to face
one another and nothing else.

Rainer Maria Rilke

THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

The **Indian Section**, with 11,323 members in 408 Lodges under 16 Federations, held its annual Convention in January at Adyar, inaugurated by me and chaired by international Vice-President Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy. Their second day of Convention consisted of short talks by Shikhar Agnihotri (UP); Geetha Jaikumar (Adyar), and S. U. Mahesh (Karnataka). Their talks were appreciated and published in the March issue of *The Indian Theosophist*. The 93rd South India Conference was held during the Easter holidays in March at Adyar with 137 delegates. The theme was Mabel Collins' *Light on the Path*. It had 10 speakers and was inaugurated by Dr Satapathy, who also released a new book combining four classics, *The Theosophic Life and the Three Gems of Theosophy*, published by TPH Adyar. The North India Study Camp was held in Varanasi during October and I directed the study on "The Three Objects". While there, I was also invited to the Besant Theosophical School to inaugurate a new building. Other study camps were held at Gwalior, Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, and Bhowali through the year on far-ranging topics. A first-of-its-kind School of the Wisdom course was conducted in Spanish on "Beyond Physical Death" by Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig at Bhowali in September, with 35 enthusiastic participants from 8 countries.

The 125th anniversary of the Indian Section was marked by a special

edition of its journal, *The Indian Theosophist*, in November, and by a two-day seminar on "Looking Ahead in the Context of the Theosophical Society" organized in Varanasi in the same month. Other seminars were also conducted in July in Delhi, and in December in Varanasi. Almost all the Federations held their annual conferences, and I delivered the inaugural address at the Bombay Federation conference in November on "The Illumined Mind". I was also the chief guest at the Kerala Federation conference in October, where the theme was "Man — the Problem and the Solution". Dr Satapathy was the chief guest at the Utkal Federation conference in February. General Secretary Mr S. Sundaram officiated at two of the annual conferences. National lecturers B. D. Tendulkar, G. Dakshina Moorthy, S. K. Pandey, Shikhar Agnihotri, C. A. Shinde, L. Nagesh, and Avatikaben Mehta visited and gave talks at various places during the year. The 14th East Zone Conference of the TS and TOS was held at Guwahati in April, with Mr Sundaram as the chief guest. The TOS had their National camp in Varanasi in March, conducted by their director, Mr B. L. Bhattacharya, and secretary, Mr T. K. Nair. The North Zone Conference was held at Noida in August, and the South Zone Conference at Salem in September. In order to manage the properties of the Society it was decided to set up a Central Property Committee at Varanasi headquarters to

expedite the decision-making process.

The new National Committee of the **Indonesian Section** analyzed their organizational problems and designed improvements such as amendment of the national rules to better regulate the work of the Section and prevent abuse of funds and positions through transparency; development of human resources through study, networking, and venturing; training in leadership; standardization of administration and accounting, and other reforms. The need is to venture on enterprises to generate funds to implement still needed changes and programs. They request moral and material support from the international theosophical world.

The **Sri Lankan** Presidential Agency reports that their activities included five administrative committee meetings, meditation programs, and several lectures by various speakers. Their membership stands at 182 in 3 Lodges.

The Presidential Agency in **Pakistan** has no official membership, but it reports that the political climate is now good in Karachi, so they have started activities in their buildings there and in Hyderabad (Sindh). Cataloguing is also progress-ing in their Library. Their Montessori School is working nicely, and they have started another Institute for training Montessori teachers.

Covenant Lodge in Tel Aviv, **Israel**, with 66 members in 6 study centers, reports that they had five seminars totalling 248 participants, and one convention with about 220 in attendance, most of whom are sympathizers and

those who studied Theosophy in the past. A study group of young participants who previously attended their courses is meeting monthly. More members are active on Facebook, disseminating Theosophy and the Lodge's activities, with about 1,500 followers. They also have a channel on Youtube presenting theosophical talks and short clips.

In addition to the Covenant Lodge, there are 6 other **Lodges attached to Adyar**, totalling 85 members, and there are 35 **Fellows at Large**.

At the **International Headquarters** the Adyar River clean-up started in April by volunteers mainly from the Chennai Trekking Club and friends; clean-up has been done each Friday morning. Also the Dhyana Yoga, Naturopathy, and Ayurveda Clinic started in August in part of the Bhojanasala on a part-time basis.

The **Archives and Museum** has continued scanning documents, especially those of H. P. Blavatsky. The availability of many volunteers, mainly from abroad, has been helpful in this regard. A new catalogue is being prepared. Audio and video tapes are also being digitized. Several of them were publicly viewed, including talks by J. Krishnamurti and C. Jinarâjadâsa, and an interview with Radha Burnier.

The work of digitization of palm-leaf and other manuscripts initiated last year by the **Adyar Library and Research Centre** was continued in earnest, with the help of new equipment such as lights, camera, scanners, storage devices and so on, obtained

through purchases and donations. They started a research affiliation with the American Institute of Indian Studies. Conservation of old and rare books and manuscripts continued to be done.

The **School of the Wisdom**, for the first time, had a session in Spanish, a one-week programme conducted in September at the Himalayan Study Centre in Bhowali, India, on “Beyond Physical Death”, directed by Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig. This was in addition to the sessions at Adyar by Dr Pablo Sender on “The Yoga of Theosophy”, Prof. R. C. Tampi on “Life’s Deeper Aspects”, Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr on “Self-Transformation and the Spiritual Life”, and Ms Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu on “Glimpses into Chinese Philosophies in the Light of Theosophy”, each lasting two weeks.

The **Theosophical Publishing House** brought out 28 books (1 new and 27 reprints) during the year. The Editorial Office brought out a special issue of *The Theosophist* on Joy Mills in December, commemorating the first anniversary of her passing.

The **Olcott Education Society** suffered a great loss when Mrs Lakshmi Suryanarayanan, who joined the Olcott Memorial School as its headmistress in 1999, and later became the School’s Director, passed away in April 2016. Her contributions have been invaluable. Also, the HPB Hostel is being renovated, and it has a new warden on board, Mr P. Perchamy.

The renovation of the **Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary** has started.

The new veterinary surgeon Dr R. M. Kannambal, who took charge in June is an expert in animal birth control procedures. There were about 2,800 cases attended during the year.

The **Besant Scout Camping Centre** had thirteen institutions and scout groups utilizing its services. Around 1,400 children benefitted through camping activities in line with theosophical values.

The **Theosophical Order of Service** (TOS) continued its work with Mrs Nancy Secrest as its international Secretary. Carolyn and Geoffrey Harrod who were producing the quarterly e-newsletter — the latter was also the webmaster of the TOS website — retired this year, and Ms Rozi Ulics is the new webmaster. Activity on the Facebook Page started last year, has been growing. Efforts in raising a corpus fund for the Olcott Memorial School has begun. TOS Italy was involved in helping the Syrian refugees with material aid, and even constructed a small paediatrics clinic. A notable event was the First National Conference on Theosophical Education in Bhubaneswar, India, last September, for implementing a theosophical education model for schools linked to the TS and TOS, along the lines of similar work done in the Philippines.

As to **travels by international Headquarters officers**, last January I went to Australia to speak at their National Convention and a public meeting; I spoke in Brazil at a Lodge and public meetings, and attended the first International Young Theosophists con-

ference, both in Brasilia. I also spoke at Lodges in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo and to the public, and conducted a three-day workshop at the Raja Center near Sao Paulo. In Cholula, Mexico, I gave talks at an Inter-American Federation meeting and at a public meeting. In Argentina, I spoke at the Lodge in Buenos Aires and gave a public talk, as well as conducted a workshop in the San Rafael Center. I also presided over and spoke at the TS in America National Convention and at public meetings, ending with the centenary of the Detroit Lodge. On to Europe, I held a private meeting with the National President of the TS in Italy, and spoke at three meetings in the Netherlands. After returning to India, I spoke at the Kerala Federation annual conference in Alleppey and at the 125th anniversary of their Lodge in Kochi. Later I spoke in New Zealand at the Indo-Pacific Federation gathering and at Lodge and public meetings in three other cities. Finally, I went to Delhi at the invitation of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations to speak on "The TS: India's Gift to the World".

The **international Vice-President** went on a lecture tour of Europe

in June, visiting Perugia, Vicenza, and Trieste in Italy; Ljubljana and Kranjska Gora in Slovenia; Barcelona and Madrid in Spain; and Lisbon, Evora, and Porto in Portugal. In Paris, he spoke at the French Section's Headquarters for their National Conference, and gave a public lecture. He also travelled in India throughout the year to Tanjore, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Bangalore, New Delhi, and Bhowali, to speak in different capacities.

In March the **International Secretary** gave a talk on "Brotherhood" for the Theosophical Seminar of sister-organizations in Helsinki, Finland. She attended the European Federation meeting in Barcelona in April, and the annual meetings and Europe Day at Naarden in September. In October she was invited by the Karnataka Federation to meet theosophists on their premises in Bangalore, and on to Huliyaar to give the inauguration address at the Golden Jubilee of their Lodge.

This ends my report and I offer my warm good wishes to everyone present and also to every one of our members worldwide.



How does the Meadow flower its bloom unfold?
Because the lovely little flower is free down to its root,
and in that freedom bold.

William Wordsworth

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