

## 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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# 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.

# Inaugural Talk at the Easter Conference

*(96th Easter Theosophical Conference, 19 April 2019)*

TIM BOYD

THIS is the 96th time that this Conference has taken place. However, this is the first time it is taking place in the newly renovated and restored Blavatsky Bungalow. It is a beautiful and wonderful space for this meeting to take place.

This gathering has been renamed the “Easter Conference”. In previous times it was called the South Indian Conference. It was renamed in order to de-emphasize the idea of regional differences and to link the date with a time which was predictable from year to year. The significance of Easter might not be quite as meaningful in India as it is in the Western world, where Christianity and the sacred stories underlying that tradition are familiar.

Generally, when people think of the most significant holy days in the Christian calendar, Christmas is regarded as the “big day”. The pageantry and celebration surrounding the birth of the Christ child seem to dominate. But in terms of the religious practice and spirituality of the Western world, Easter is without question the most sacred day of the year. There is some wisdom in linking this Conference to this moment when there is a rising energy in the world — a sense of reverence and devotion to the Divine. It benefits us

all to be able to draw on this energy that supports the work of the Theosophical Society (TS) and *any* spiritual organization.

Traditionally, Easter is celebrated by remembering the story of the birth, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a story, it is inspiring, if aspects of it may be unlikely in a historical sense. Growing up as a child in New York City, I remember that even if you did not go to church on any other day of the year, *this* was the day when everyone attended to acknowledge and celebrate the “risen” Christ.

It was the day when little children got new clothes and shoes that would hurt your feet as you walked to church. Always the story of the importance of the day was retold from a historical perspective. For an inquisitive person, mere history would most likely be insufficient, because as with all truly great stories, the meaning of the myths underlying every spiritual tradition is not found in mere facts, but in the divine symbols that communicate a deeper message.

It might help us to dwell on the importance of this Easter moment. This day on which we gather in the Christian tradition is called “Good Friday”, and it always precedes Easter Sunday. In Christian tradi-

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tion this is the day when Jesus the Christ was crucified. So what is so good about it? From a historical view it is a sad story. It is the day when Jesus was brought to trial and shown that he would escape punishment only if he would renounce his claim to be the son of God. He not only refused it, but affirmed it.

Good Friday is the day of deepest sadness and fear for the disciples of Jesus. It is the day when the Christ himself, in the torturous moments on the cross, questioned his link with the Father, God, saying: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” In theosophical terms it is symbolic of a profound initiatory experience. The crucifixion is the binding of divine spirit to the cross of matter, the symbol of the spirit linked to, and confined in matter, and of the death of spirit by virtue of its limitations in association with this body. Good Friday is “Good” because it is the fulfillment of the eternal “prophecy” of a self-declared and self-earned divinity for man.

In the Yoga Sutras the same condition is described when speaking about the union of Purusha and Prakriti — the union of spirit and matter. This is for a purpose: to reveal an awareness of the true nature of spirit, and for the qualities of matter to be expressed. In this nailing of the spirit to the cross of matter there is a limitation, depicted as a death in the Bible, but out of it comes the wonder that is the rising from the dead, the supremacy of the Hidden Life, that occurs on Easter Sunday. If anything, the theosophical message is intended to turn our awareness

toward this evolutionary process of the arisen Christ consciousness, the arisen ātma, unveiled of the material attachments that have hidden it for innumerable lives. It is the story of the confinement and ultimate liberation of spirit.

The theme for this Easter Conference is “The Real Purpose of the Theosophical Society”. I do believe that if we have some sense of the significance of Easter, it speaks directly to that purpose. There are two words which are different — purpose and mission. The purpose of anything relates to the intention in bringing that thing into being. Its mission is the activities and the actions that are taken in furtherance of that purpose. We will be exploring that purpose while we are here together, but I would like to share with you the stated mission of the TS. It will contribute to our thinking as we explore during the course of this brief weekend.

The mission of the Theosophical Society is “To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.” So whether we trace our way back to the purpose through its mission or trace our way to the mission through its purpose, there is power at Easter gathering, there is power in the fact that there *is* a purpose that only becomes meaningful as we do the necessary work to reveal it within ourselves, and there is power in the fact that wherever two or more gather in the name of Truth, that Truth is magnified and is present among us. ✧

# Theosophy and Hope for the Future

ROBERT ELLWOOD

WHEN we ask about the future, what do we hear? A time there was when the talk would be good. For a couple of centuries, roughly from the Enlightenment in the 18th century to the fading dream of the 1960s foreseeing a coming Aquarian Age, progress appeared to be the way the modern world worked. We saw advances propelled by unceasing new developments in science and technology: telephones, cars, radios, computers. On the social scene ever-expanding democracy, combined with rises in the standard of living of many of the planet's people, made life better for more and more of them. Some of us recall looking forward to a future of everyday space travel and universal prosperity, as in the *Star Trek* universe.

But the future is not what it used to be. Now answers to our question give us ominous references to generations worse off than that of their parents, subject to overpopulation and declining standards of living and, above all, looming climate catastrophe, bringing as its minions rising oceans, millions of refugees, plagues, and battles over what is left. It is as

though the Four Horsemen of the biblical Book of Revelation — Conquest, War, Famine, and, on a pale steed, Death — were getting ready to ride again.

What happened? How did a good future turn so much the other way? The Aquarian Age of the 1960s became, in the following decade, the “me” generation. The “me’s” of the 1970s and, even more, their millennial successors, looked ahead and saw trouble. To get more concerning coming disasters in sky and sea, mixed with war and rumors of war, see the fascinating books of Bryan Walsh, *End Times: A Brief Guide to the End of the World*; and David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. Also, in the movie *The Day After Tomorrow* one visualizes a planet only a few years from mass starvation, cities flooded or frozen, and armies of the displaced — those not too sick to walk — on the move to take whatever they can by any means necessary. Moreover, there are those who practically seem to welcome disaster to a world they no longer like, and even say they just want to watch it burn (or flood, or explode, or whatever).

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Of course there is also the other side: books like Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature* and *Enlightenment Now*, and Matt Ridley's *The Rational Optimist*, make a convincing case that, despite all the bewailing, the world is overall much better now than ever for the great majority of its inhabitants and can continue to get better; it is still up to us. War is not what it was: far less since 1945 in terms of numbers and areas than before, with relatively little likelihood of another world war or war between major advanced powers. (War is really obsolete as a way of solving international problems; we just do not fully realize it.)

Bear in mind as well the well-known tendency even of well-informed people to magnify current problems while idealizing the past. One can find evidence of this in every generation all the way back to the Hebrew prophets, or the ancient Greeks who postulated a Golden Age back then, and perceived plenty of evidence their own times were the age of iron. Nonetheless . . .

World life expectancy has doubled since 1900, and major countries in Asia and increasingly Africa, all representing more than half of the world's population, not so long ago enmeshed in poverty and subject to appalling famines, have in recent decades experienced remarkable advances in education, medicine, and way of life. One does not deny the immense remaining problems and that looming climate catastrophe, but some perspective is essential. What I have seen since the year of my birth, 1933, at the depths of the depression, the Dust Bowl (those

years' climate disaster), the year of Hitler's coming to power, followed by a World War II childhood, assures that perspective, as do attitudes, radically changed for the better based on what I have witnessed in my own civilization toward race, gender, children, and lifestyles. Is the Golden Age really only in the past?

Nonetheless, it will be said, all that might indeed have indicated a golden future, but then came the karma that went with all that "progress at whatever cost to the planet", and climate change will probably wipe it all out by mid-century. We have all had personal dreams that were shattered; now it is the world's turn. We wanted too much; we got too little. Yet, what if it were possible to say that even now the good is inwardly moving the world to better levels, and that even climate catastrophe is only a part of that benign process? I think it is possible, and the answer is, in a word, Theosophy, or rather, the kind of vision of the future which Theosophy offers, whether recognized by that name or not.

To start with, let us consider the classic theosophical paradigm of history as a succession of Root Races. Admittedly, the term is unfortunate in light of all-too-common misuse of the concept of human races, especially with reference to supposedly superior or inferior examples. "Racism" has quite appropriately come to be seen as an evil. But in the 19th century the term "race" could be used to mean little more than what we might call "nationality", as in "the Irish race".

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H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), in writing of Root Races, often saw them very flexibly, able to combine and replace one another. They were more like cultural levels than biological races, and most theosophists see them as such today. After the first two, the succession was the Lemurian, the Atlantean, the present Fifth Root Race, and the coming Sixth — and ultimately the Seventh — Races. In my way of thinking about it, I see the Lemurian as corresponding to what anthropologists call the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age in human development, based on hunting and gathering; the Atlantean as the Neolithic or New Stone Age, the time of archaic agriculture with all its animal and human sacrifices, magic, and darkness as well as light in its mind; the Fifth Root Race as the world, beginning around the 5th century BCE, which followed the first development of science, philosophy, and the major religions of today at the time sometimes called the Axial Age, discussed in a moment.\*

The Fifth Root Race was above all the age of science and the scientific way of thinking. That meant reasoning with precision, following established natural laws or probabilities, and distancing the observer from the observed to preserve objectivity. This careful mode led to tremendous advances for humanity both intellectually and in ways of life. But there was a downside too: the tendency to carry the scientific mentality, including scientific materialism, into other areas, such as religion and philosophy. The cost was dogmatism and rigid systems in areas of inner

life, where they were far less beneficial than in understanding the outward natural world. Often, as in much modern psychology, the inner life, like the outer, became materialistic.

In the world of the Fifth Root Race we have gotten much scientific understanding, from the atom to the farthest galaxies, and technology from the wheel to space flight, from counting with fingers to the computer. But we also have had to put up with misguided imitations of science (as so understood) in religious fundamentalism, in ritual technology, in materialistic psychologies.

Now it seems that the Fifth Root Race epoch has nearly fulfilled its mission and is coming to an end. Whatever time frame one adopts, we can see evidence around us that part of what the world is going through is a deep-level shift from Fifth-Root-Race to Sixth-Root-Race mentality, along with our shift into the third millennium. Materialistic and dogmatic science is beginning to break down to let in the light of even profounder images of the universe around us, views that, like Theosophy, include many levels of consciousness as well as of matter throughout its unimaginable expanse.

One early signal of the new universe was quantum physics, which admits of probability — the uncertainty principle — rather than dogmatic absolutism, and allows quanta particles to act in ways that look as though governed by some level of consciousness, to move “unpredictably” and maintain “entanglement” with other particles across the universe. We are

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also beginning to see reflections of that fluidity of thought and action in human affairs as well: in thought about religion, human life, and values.

As we continue into the 21st century and the third millennium, a perceptible feeling hangs in the air that the world is rapidly approaching one of history's decisive shifts, and this in areas far removed from the climate disaster and demographic crises to which we have alluded, though parallel to them. These are changes in our spiritual attitude toward the universe and one another. What is out there, on its way in, is more than just the rise of one superpower and the fall of another, or the rise of one religion as another declines. The upheavals of mind may be more revolutionary in the end than even the French or American revolutions, or the Protestant reformation, as profoundly as those turnings influenced centuries after. I would think of what is going on as a new Axial Age.

Axial Age was a term first proposed by the philosopher Karl Jaspers for, as we have seen, the 5th century BCE, the time of the Buddha, Confucius, Laozi, plus major Greek philosophers and Hebrew prophets. I like to think of it as, at least religiously, also extended to embrace all the founders of major religions, including Jesus, Muhammad, and those Hindus of around the same time who created the Upanishads and the *Bhagavadgītā*. This was of tremendous importance, because, as these new faiths spread it meant that for more and more people the key event that gave ultimate meaning was not the

creation of the world but a moment in historical time: the enlightenment of the Buddha, the life and death of Jesus, the giving of the Qur'an to the Prophet. As Phillips Brooks said of Jerusalem, birthplace of Jesus, in the familiar Christmas hymn: "The hopes and fears of all the years: Are met in Thee tonight."

These new religions significantly followed on the invention of alphabets, so their messages were conveyed not in myth or tribal lore, but in writing the sacred scriptures upon which they depend, together with subsequent commentary and theological discourse. The bibles so treasured by all founder religions derive from this era. We also find that the new faiths put far more emphasis than before on the individual: his or her sin or virtue, belief or disbelief, salvation or condemnation. Before, all this was more collective, likely related to family, tribe, or nation, children suffering for the sins of their parents, or a nation for those of its king; some of this mentality, and actuality, has lingered, but in the new religions it was the individual who, in the end, did spiritual practices, confessed, and was forgiven, or not. Finally, these religions created for themselves newly complex hierarchies, institutions, and ways of life that spread through vast areas and finally around the world.

But now, it may be that these great faiths have more history than future, and that the world is preparing to break through into a new kind of spirituality and all that goes with it, as if we are ready for a new Axial Age. Of course much

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may be carried over from them into the new, just as they carried over much from what went before the founders: in Christianity, many remains from before Bethlehem, from Christmas trees to the Hebrew scriptures as what is called the “Old Testament” in the Christian Bible; in Islam, the star and crescent symbol and Mecca as sacred center. But the ultimate focus is new, as though a curtain had been pulled back and a new shaft of light had fallen into the spiritual world, making everything look different.

To be sure, plenty of iron-hard attitudes remain in the world today centering around religious nationalism and dogmatism. But much has changed dramatically at the same time. Virtually everyone must now recognize that arguments about religion take place in a pluralistic world, and this realization changes even the concept of religious truth. Every conservative or traditionalistic worldview must now be recognized as a choice made in the face of other possible choices, rather than simply imposed by tradition or authority.

Regarding the Sixth Root Race, HPB says in *The Secret Doctrine* that it will be more spiritual than the Fifth: “The Cycles of Matter will be succeeded by Cycles of Spirituality and a fully developed mind.” (II, p. 446) To my mind this means greater sensitivity to nuances of personality and character, to individual differences, understood intuitively by mind rather than governed by rigid law as in the Fifth, in which the model of science as supposedly based on laws of Nature (now better

understood as probability) is too often applied to philosophy, theology, and even psychology, making them overly dogmatic. Now this is breaking down as we become more accepting of differences of religion, character, mood — and these developments are signs of the coming Sixth Race and its spiritual cycles.

In two words, the Fifth Race is law, the Sixth love.

Law is not always bad. Acceptance of scientific laws makes science possible, both theoretically and in the form of technological improvement. In human life, laws, even if sometimes unfairly applied, are better than chaos; moral rules and regulations better than living only according to individual impulses. Yet we are ready for something better, if we accept the idea of a Sixth Root Race based on love more than law, for this would be the dominant quality of a cycle of spirituality and a fully developed mind.

Love means unity. Compassion is the ethical expression of our recognition of oneness, between peoples, between all constituents of the universe. This recognition, even if not always acted upon, is basic to Theosophy and to all major religion and philosophy. Other motifs for behavior like fear, hate, ignorance, and attachment defy oneness, and so defy the ways things really are, therefore failing in the end.

Love also means the ability to engage with another’s inner life and to see through another’s eyes. It is like the way a parent, or lover, can intuit what the child or beloved is thinking virtually before they

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express it. Now this power is suggested by what is changing in human mentality as, despite setbacks, we increasingly accept the validity of differences of race, gender, beliefs. These patterns are the incoming foundations of the Sixth Root Race.

Finally, we must note that the end of one Root Race and transition to the next is always marked by a catastrophe — the combustion and submersion of Lemuria, the sinking of Atlantis. These traumatic events can be viewed as the consequence of the accumulated negative karma of the era, but also more positively as an initiation necessary to unfold fully the evolved consciousness of the next age. In this light I believe we can see the coming climate disasters of the mid-21st century. It is certainly the result of excessive materialism, too much use of fossil fuels, of meat agriculture, in general satisfying physical desires while forgetting about spiritual evolution. The calamity undoubtedly could have been avoided if we had been less greedy and more sensible in recent centuries. Yet, like the earlier catastrophes, it can also be seen as a virtually necessary means for transformation of the world as it is.

Facing the consequences and undergoing suffering will help purify the surviving human race, and will even prepare for new values and roles, those who do not survive but are reincarnated later.

Initiations always involve the symbolism of death and rebirth. Often those being initiated are said to be taken and devoured by a monster, or even as in certain New Guinea tribes literally buried

in shallow graves. The initiation of young men in traditional societies like the Native American, whether to tribal manhood or as a shaman, can involve long periods of isolation, fasting in an isolated hut as a kind of quasi-death, until selected by a god.

C. W. Leadbeater, in *The Masters and the Path*, described the crucifixion of Jesus in very vivid terms, painting such a death enacted on every plane of being. After his betrayal:

Then follows a shower of obloquy and abuse, and his rejection by the world. After that comes the scene in the garden of Gethsemane, when the Christ feels himself utterly forsaken; and then He is held up to derision and crucified. Finally there is the cry from the cross: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” . . .

That appalling trial has, I think, two objects — first, that the candidate may be able fully to sympathize with those to whom *Avichi* [the lowest Buddhist hell, characterized by utter isolation] comes as a result of their actions; and secondly, that he may learn to stand absolutely apart from everything external, triumphant in his utter certainty that he *is* one with the Logos . . . (ch. 10)

This passage suggests two possible meanings for what is learned from initiation. First, we learn anew to empathize with others, realizing neither we nor they are really alone and we need to stand with each other — for we see how terrible true isolation is.

Second, everything *except* the Logos,

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the creative expression of the Divine in Christ and ultimately within all of us and of the world as a whole in its creative evolution, is let fall away. With this initiation humans would not need anything else than knowing their inner identity with the Logos, neither hatred nor fear, pleasures nor anger. The evolution of the Logos continues in the background, as it were, even while the initiation takes the apparent foreground.

The climate crisis initiation of the world will not mean human perfection, any more than most individual initiations do. But it will mean some very important learning — how to be reconciled, how to live in accordance with human oneness on a symbolic and practical level. Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater in a 1913 work, *Man: Whence, How, and Whither*, portray life in the Sixth Root Race. It is characterized by simple dress and lifestyles, lived in plain but comfortable and equal houses — though outdoors as much as possible. This world is vegetarian, involving no killing.

Through a means which almost seems to anticipate the Internet and Google by some eighty years, “Every house is provided, gratis and as part of its permanent fittings, with a sort of encyclopedia of the most comprehensive nature, containing an epitome of practically all that is known, put as tersely as possible and yet with great wealth of detail, so as to contain all the information that an ordinary man is every likely to want for any subject.” (p. 428) So also are newspapers replaced by a machine in each house “which is a kind

of combination of a telephone and recording tape-machine”.

So is much else described, indicating a chastened society of simple homes, noble thinking, unobtrusive yet useful science and technology, and enlightened education. It is what intelligent people ought to want after the almost necessary initiatory crisis of climate change: keeping the best from before, like newspapers, applying the lessons learned about human limits in this particular world, so that fooling with climate does not happen again, and, at the same time, the Sixth-Race way of being human is not a bad life at all.

Let Theosophy present this hope before, during, and beyond the coming initiation, so that we see it as the result of bad karma, yes, and from this we must learn, but also as an ordeal we must go through, even as we must endure and learn from the mandatory initiations of our own lives, like birth, puberty, child-bearing, parenting, serious illness, death. All initiations call for giving up much of the old in order to receive in its place something new.

The fetus at birth surrenders life in the womb, with its darkness, warmth, and security, for life in this world, with its darkness and light, pleasure and pain, and has some reason to cry in the process. So also with further initiations, mandatory or voluntary, like those of education, marriage, parenting, major illness. Anyone who has been through a serious illness or accident, perhaps life-threatening, knows that one never thinks of life quite the same afterwards: a real initiation.

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Societies and religions usually offer symbolic accompaniments to these changes, like baptism and marriage ceremonies. They also make available individual spiritual initiations, from shamanism to masonic rites to entering a special religious order or path.

The climate initiation will be like this on a world scale, and one hopes humanity will learn, as from the ordeal of birth or that of life-threatening crises, and change at least as much as you and I have in the great initiations of our own lives. It will be a new world like that of Besant and Leadbeater, of smaller numbers, of better relationships to the environment and to

each other; a world essentially without war, vegetarian, given to profound but simple lifestyles. (If not, and we humans come out of the climate crisis as perverse as ever, the lords of evolution may be ready to turn to another species.)

In summary, then, we as Theosophists do not share the pessimism about the future of so many today. We affirm that spiritual evolution is continuing, and that in fact it is about to undergo a major transformative event — a world initiation — in which the planet must suffer, even seem to die, for the sake of a new race, or cultural level, to emerge out of it. We can indeed then live in hope. ✧

### Endnote

\* It must be acknowledged that this view of the Sixth Root Race as coming in our time may seem to collapse the long passages of time suggested by HPB's *The Secret Doctrine* for transition from one race to another — hundreds of thousands of years. I can only say that I see the Root Race or at least their reflection in human history as governed by thousands rather than hundreds of thousands of years. (See my articles "The Next Stages of Human Spiritual Evolution", Part One and Part Two, *Quest*, March-April 2001 and May-June 2001.) This is due to a view that such large numbers can be symbolic or significant in importance, like the extreme ages of biblical figures and others in ancient myth (Noah died at 350; Abraham at 175); that theosophical teachings should align with those of the best contemporary science (even if sometimes challenging them) so that I see the Lemurian age as paralleling the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age, the Atlantean the Neolithic New Stone Age with the beginning of archaic agriculture, and the 5th Race as that created out of the Axial Age; and finally the view that predictions can never be absolute if we also affirm free will — if we humans decide to do so, we could move on into the Sixth Race any day we choose to.

**We need only glance at the pages of history  
to see that the ruin and ultimate extinction  
of national power follow the extirpation  
of forests as surely as night follows day.  
Nature has provided the means for human development;  
and her laws can never be violated without disaster.**

Helena P. Blavatsky

# Are You Not Saying What the Buddha Said? — III

J. KRISHNAMURTI

(In dialogue with Buddhist scholars Walpola Rahula  
and Irmgard Schloegl, with Professor David Bohm)

**Walpola Rahula:** I would say that we are talking in dualistic terms.

**Krishnamurti:** All language is dualistic.

**WR:** You can't talk, I can't talk, without a dualistic approach.

**K:** Yes, for comparing. But I am not talking of that.

**WR:** At the present moment you are speaking about the absolute, the ultimate. When we talk of good and bad we are talking dualistically.

**K:** No, that's why I want to move away.

**WR:** You can't talk about the absolute in terms of good or bad. There is nothing called absolute good or bad.

**K:** No. Is courage the opposite of fear? That is, if fear is nonexistent, is it courage? Or is it something totally different?

**Irmgard Schloegl:** It is something totally different.

**K:** Therefore it is not the opposite. Goodness is never the opposite of bad. So what are we talking about when we say, "I will

move, change, from my conditioning, which is bad, to freedom from my conditioning, which is good"? Therefore freedom is the opposite of my conditioning. Therefore it is not freedom at all. That freedom is born out of my conditioning because I am caught in this prison and I want to be free. It is a reaction to the prison, which is not freedom.

**WR:** I don't quite follow.

**K:** Sir, could we consider for a minute: Is love the opposite of hate?

**WR:** The only thing you can say is, where there is love there is no hate.

**K:** No, I am asking a different question. I am asking: Is hate the opposite of affection, love? If it is, then in that affection, in that love, there is hate, because it is born out of hate, out of the opposite. All opposites are born out of their own opposites. No?

**WR:** I don't know. That is what you say.

**K:** But it is a fact, sir. Look, I am afraid, and I cultivate courage. In order to put

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**J. Krishnamurti** (1895–1986) was one of the great spiritual teachers of the 20th century. From e-book: *Can Humanity Change? — J. Krishnamurti in Dialogue with Buddhists*, ed. David Skitt, 2003. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boulder, CO, USA, <[www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com)>.

### Are You Not Saying What the Buddha Said? — III

away fear I take a drink, or whatever, all the rest of it, to get rid of fear. And at the end of it I say that I am very courageous. All the war heroes and the rest of them are given medals for this. Because they are frightened, they say, “we must go and kill”, or do something or other, and they become very courageous — heroes.

**WR:** That is not courage.

**K:** I am saying anything born out of its opposite contains its own opposite.

**WR:** How?

**K:** Sir, if someone hates you and then says, “I must love”, that love is born out of hate. Because he knows what hate is, and he says, “I must not be this, but I must be that.” So that is the opposite of this. Therefore that opposite contains this.

**WR:** I don’t know whether it is the opposite.

**K:** That is how we live, sir. This is what we do. I am sexual, I must not be sexual. I take a vow of celibacy — not “I”, people take a vow of celibacy — which is the opposite. So we are always caught in this corridor of opposites. And I question the whole corridor. I don’t think it exists; we have invented it, but actually it doesn’t exist. I mean, please, this is just an explanation; don’t accept anything, sir.

**IS:** Personally, I regard, as a working hypothesis, this channel of opposites as a humanizing factor, and we are caught in it.

**K:** Oh no, that is not a humanizing factor. That is like saying, “I have been a tribal entity, now I have become a nation, and then ultimately I will become international.” It is still tribalism going on.

**David Bohm:** I think both of you are saying that we do in some sense make progress in that we are not as barbaric as we were before.

**IS:** That is what I mean by the humanizing factor.

**K:** I question whether it is humanizing.

**WR:** I don’t like to go to extremes.

**K:** These are not extremes, these are just facts. Facts are not extremes.

**DB:** Are you saying that this is not genuine progress? In the past, people were far more barbaric than they generally are today, and would you say that this really doesn’t mean very much?

**K:** We are still barbarous.

**DB:** Yes, we are, but some people say we are not as barbaric as we were.

**K:** Not *as*.

**DB:** Let’s see if we can get this straight. Now, would you say that this is not important, that this is not significant?

**K:** No, when I say I am better than I was, it has no meaning.

**DB:** I think we should clarify that.

**WR:** In the relative, dualistic sense I don’t accept that, I can’t see that. But in the absolute, ultimate sense there is nothing like that.

**K:** No, not ultimately — I won’t even accept that word, “ultimately”. I see how the opposite is born in everyday life, not ultimately. I am greedy, that is a fact. I try to become non-greedy, which is non-fact, but if I remain with the fact that I am greedy, then I can do something about it

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actually, now. Therefore there is no opposite. Sir, take violence and nonviolence. Nonviolence is the opposite of violence, an ideal. So nonviolence is non-fact. Violence is the only fact. So I can then deal with facts, not with non-facts.

**WR:** So what is your point?

**K:** My point is that there is no duality even in daily life. It is the invention of all the philosophers, intellectuals, utopians, idealists who say there is the opposite, work for that. The fact is I am violent, that is all, let me deal with that. And to deal with it, don't invent nonviolence.

**IS:** The question now is: How am I going to deal with it, having accepted the fact that I am violent?

**K:** Not accepted, it's a fact.

**IS:** Having seen it.

**K:** Then we can proceed, I'll show you. But first I must see what I am doing now. I am avoiding the fact and running away to non-fact. That is what is happening all over the world. So don't run, but remain with the fact. Can you do it?

**IS:** Well, the question is, can one do it? One can, but one often does not like doing it.

**K:** Of course you can do it. It's like seeing something dangerous and saying, "It's dangerous, so I won't go near it." Running away from the fact is dangerous. So that's finished, you don't run away. That doesn't mean you train, that you practice not to run, you don't run. I think the gurus, the philosophers, have invented the running. Sorry.

**WR:** There is no running away, that is

entirely different, it is a wrong way of putting it.

**K:** No, sir.

**WR:** You can't run away.

**K:** No, I am saying, don't run, then you see, don't run, then you see. But we say, "I can't see because I am caught in that."

**WR:** I quite see that, I see your point very well.

**K:** So there is no duality.

**WR:** Where?

**K:** Now, in daily life, not ultimately.

**WR:** What is duality?

**K:** Duality is the opposite, violence and non-violence. You know, the whole of India has been practicing nonviolence, which is nonsense. There is only violence, let me deal with that. Let human beings deal with violence, not with the ideal of nonviolence.

**WR:** I fully agree that if you see the fact, we must handle that.

**K:** Therefore there is no progress.

**WR:** That is just a word you can use any way.

**K:** No, not any way. When I have an ideal, to achieve that ideal I need time, right? Therefore I will evolve to that. So, no ideals — only facts.

**WR:** That is perfectly so. What is the difference, what is the argument? We agree that there are only facts.

**K:** Which means, sir, that to look at facts time is not necessary.

**WR:** Absolutely not.

**K:** Therefore, if time is not necessary, I can see it now.

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**WR:** Yes, certainly.

**K:** You can see it now. Why don't you?

**WR:** Why don't you? That is another question.

**K:** No, not another question.

**DB:** If you take it seriously that time is not necessary, one could perhaps clear up the whole thing right now.

**WR:** Yes, that does not mean all human beings can do it, there are people who can do it.

**K:** No, if I can see it, you can see it.

**WR:** I don't think so, I don't agree with you.

**K:** It is not a question of agreement or disagreement. But when we have ideals away from facts, time and progress are necessary to get there. I must have knowledge to progress. All that comes in, right? So can you abandon ideals?

**WR:** It is possible.

**K:** Ah, no, the moment you use the word "possible", time is there!

**WR:** I mean seeing the fact is possible.

**K:** Do it now, sir — forgive me, I am not being authoritarian — when you say, "It is possible", you have already moved away.

**WR:** I mean to say, I must say that not everybody can do it.

**K:** How do you know?

**WR:** That is a fact.

**K:** No, I won't accept that.

**IS:** Perhaps I can come in with a concrete example. If I stand on a high springboard over a swimming pool and I cannot swim,

and I am told, "Just jump in and relax completely and the water will carry you," that is perfectly true, I can do it. There is nothing that prevents me except that I am frightened of doing it. That is, I think, the issue. Of course we can do it, there is no difficulty, but there is this basic fear, which does not stand to reason, that makes us shy away.

**K:** Please forgive me, I am not talking of that, we are not saying that. But if one realizes that one is greedy, why do we invent non-greed?

**IS:** I wouldn't know, because it seems to me so obvious that if I am greedy, then I am greedy.

**K:** So why do we have the opposite? Why? All the religions say we must not be greedy, all the philosophers, if they are worth their salt, say, "Don't be greedy", or something else. Or they say, "If you are greedy you will not reach heaven." So they have always cultivated through tradition, through saints, the whole gamut, this idea of the opposite. So I don't accept that. I say *that* is an escape from *this*.

**IS:** Which it is. It is at best a halfway stage.

**K:** It is an escape from this, right? And it won't solve this problem. So to deal with the problem, to remove it, I can't have one foot there and one foot here. I must have both my feet here.

**IS:** And if both my feet are here?

**K:** Wait, that is a simile, a simile. So I have no opposite that implies time, progress, practicing, trying, becoming, the whole gamut of that.

**IS:** So I see I am greedy or I am violent.

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**K:** Now we have to go into something entirely different. Can a human being be free of greed *now*? That's the question. Not eventually. You see, I am not interested in not being greedy next life, or the day after tomorrow, who cares? I want to be free of sorrow, pain, now. So I have no ideals at all. Right, sir? Then I have only this fact: I am greedy. What is greed? The very word is condemnatory. The word "greed" has been in my mind for centuries, and the word immediately condemns the fact. By saying, "I am greedy", I have already condemned it. Now can I look at that fact without the word with all its intimations, its content, and its tradition? Look at it. You cannot understand the depth of the feeling of greed or be free of it if you are caught in words. So as my whole being is concerned with greed, it says: "All right, I won't be caught in it, I won't use the word 'greed'." Right? Now, is that feeling devoid of the word, divorced from the word "greed"?

**IS:** No, it isn't, please go on.

**K:** So as my mind is full of words and caught in words, can it look at something, "greed", without the word?

**WR:** That is really seeing the fact.

**K:** Then only do I see the fact, then only do I see the fact.

**WR:** Yes, without the word.

**K:** Therefore it has no value, it's finished.

This is where the difficulty lies, sir. I want to be free of greed because everything in my blood, my tradition, my upbringing, my education, says, "Be free of that ugly thing." So all the time I am making an effort to be free of it. Right? I was not educated, thank God, on those lines. So I say all right, I have only the fact, the fact is that I am greedy. I want to understand the nature and structure of that word, of that feeling. What is it? What is the nature of that feeling? Is it a remembrance? If it is a remembrance, I am looking at the present greed with past remembrances. The past remembrances have said, condemn it. Can I look at it without past remembrances?

I'll go into this a little more, because the past remembrance condemns greed and therefore strengthens it. If it is something new, I won't condemn it. But because it is not, it is new but made old by remembrances, memories, experience, I condemn it. So can I look at it without the word, without the association of words? That doesn't need discipline or practice, that doesn't need a guide. Just this — can I look at it without the word? Can I look at that tree, woman, man, sky, heaven, or bird without the word and find out? But if someone comes along and says, "I'll show you how to do it", then I am lost. And "how to do it" is the whole business of the sacred books — sorry — all the gurus, the bishops, the popes, the whole of that. ✧

**Listen to Those who open the Path to you. Listen and don't say a word.**

Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

# Theosophy and a Life Worth Living

ELTON A. HALL

*It is time that Theosophy should enter the arena.*  
The Great Master (Mahachohan)

WHAT is a life worth living? This is the great challenge for each human being today and is directly relevant to our three “hot topics”: (1) religious intolerance, (2) end-of-life issues, and (3) depression. Religious intolerance, manifest in a spectrum, from shunning and denigrating those whose religious convictions and actions vary from one’s own, to outright violence, suppression of others and even their destruction, is all too present in our complex and chaotic world. Those of a secular bent who reject all religions can still easily fall in this spectrum.

Sigmund Freud’s belief that religion is an illusion, a neurotic condition to be banished in a mature, healthy individual, is simply wrong. “There is no religion higher than Truth” does not attack religions, but points beyond them to their Source, *theosophia*. Truth is not attained by one approach, such as the so-called scientific method, or by one discrete form of meditation, or by one approach to the

sacred and divine. Truth is spiritual and has many reflections, all partial, and none a perfect mirror. Hence the distinction between absolute and relative truth. For an evolving human being, absolute truth, *paramārthasatya*, is a goal, not an accomplishment to be set on a shelf with other awards. The view that one has the truth in its ultimate form is the foundation of religious intolerance.

End-of-life issues are fundamental, for karma and reincarnation teach us that there is a very real sense in which life is a preparation for death, as Socrates says in Plato’s *Phaedo*. Although a life worth living should prepare us for death, it should also give meaning to every moment in life, even though we may find it difficult to grasp the meaning of every day, much less every moment. Depression, for many, arises out of the inability to discern meaning in events, the events in their own lives, and for some, events in the world at large. There is much in the world that invites depression and despair,

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so individuals ultimately must rely on inner strength when encountering the world.

But the question “What is a life worth living?” is hardly new. It has been the great challenge for individuals from the dawn of thinking. So we find this question in Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, in the Hellenistic Stoics and Epicureans, but even earlier in the Upanishads, Hindu schools, and Buddhist texts. And we find it in the earliest Taoist teachings, in Confucian thought, and in Jewish and Christian history. One can readily recall Boethius, Nicholas of Cusa, Meister Eckhart, and Jacob Boehme, among many others. It is present in the Persian Sufi mysticism of Suhrawardi and the Andalusian philosopher Muhyiddin ibn Arabi, and in the Quran itself. But conditions change, and in human evolution the question is ever new. The challenges of life today in a world that is both increasingly fractured and globalized, only add intensity to the question: What is a life worth living?

It will help us approach these crucial topics from a perspective that starts with universals and moves to particulars. In 2017, the International Theosophical Conferences (ITC) met in Philadelphia. It was concerned with practical ways to nurture a nucleus of universal brotherhood, the first Object of all theosophical organizations. Among the many valuable and useful ideas and suggestions that emerged from presentations and working groups, two are especially relevant to this conference (ITC 2018 in Berlin). The first centered on how to make Theo-

sophy practical and readily shareable, especially those without a background in the Teachings. The second wrestled with the fundamental meanings of the One Life. Both of these concerns are relevant to the three topics of this conference.

The One Life is the foundation for the creation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood, but it underpins the whole of evolving humanity, no matter how few recognize or acknowledge it. These facts have two direct and immediate implications. First, the nucleus exists not just for itself but to reach out to all humanity. It is integral to the Bodhisattva Ideal, and so to the Masters’ work in the world. The nucleus of universal brotherhood, in so far as it really exists, reflects that ideal and that work. Secondly, this nucleus involves deep, profound and ongoing individual transformation. For those of us who have the great good fortune of encountering Theosophy, the challenges we invariably face are karmic opportunities to realize that nucleus and to make Theosophy practical. In this conference, we will focus on our three “hot topics” — religious intolerance, end of life issues, and depression — because the world cries out for practical solutions.

As the Great Master (Mahachohan) said: “The true religion and philosophy offers the solution of every problem.” It is our task to nurture those solutions in those whom we encounter in this world rife with distraction, chaos, confusion and suffering. All problems are ultimately rooted in what the Great Master named as “the great dual principles, right and

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wrong, good and evil, liberty and despotism, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism”, and our three topics involve them all.

At a superficial level, these three topics have easily discernable causes. Religious intolerance occurs when individuals believe that they know and others are simply wrong, and being stubbornly wrong, are deserving of condemnation, even eradication. But why does an individual come to this conviction? The reasons vary, from fear to delusion, and we have to have a sense of the mental and spiritual environment surrounding that individual to know how to address intolerance.

Depression arises from a sense and even a conviction that life — especially one’s own life — is utterly meaningless and without purpose. Even the world can be seen as meaningless and without purpose. Physicist Steven Weinberg once famously said, “The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless”, a view that hardly draws science closer to *theosophia*. Fortunately, many other physicists disagree. Again, we have to discern the basis for the depression, which might be intellectual, but often comes out of a belief that one is a victim of a heartless world, or that no one understands, or that no one cares, or all of these and more.

End-of-life issues arise from various combinations of fear of death, fear of dying, the belief that death is somehow the complete end of oneself and experience, and denial of death as a crucial

part of life. We live in a world, especially the medically sophisticated and technologically modern world, in which there is a tendency to find a medication for every kind of suffering, including psychological suffering.

It is not surprising then that the prospect of aging with its degradation of faculties and possible pain might as well be avoided by hastening death through some artificial action. A view of the finality of death may lead to attempts to prolong life no matter what, which is the flip side of inducing it — medical practice can do either in many cases. One detects the atavistic, archaic, pull of Atlantis here.

But as already suggested, these explanations of our “hot topics” only skim the surface of the soul dynamics behind them. Human souls have complex histories which weave a karmic fabric that requires great insight even to begin to understand. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) willingly served, despite illness and calumny, under the direction of those Wise Beings who tirelessly labor to benefit humanity. She was the channel that brought Theosophy in its modern form into the world for the sake of humanity. These mysterious beings do not interfere in the karma of individuals or of collective bodies such as nations and cultures; rather they nurture the evolution of human beings and indeed all of Nature in myriad ways. But Theosophy as they offered it through HPB in the last quarter of the nineteenth century does not aim to produce occultists who gain new psychic powers — though such

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powers are quite real — but to provide the basis for the transformation of humanity, including self-transformation.

We all have vast powers already, powers of speech, thought, will, intention and action. And as we know only too well, these immense powers can be used for evil as well as good. Theosophical teachings, rooted in the doctrine of the One Life and the twin doctrines of karma and reincarnation, aim to help human beings in the transformation that includes harnessing these powers for the good of all. And we know from experience that the ego rapaciously attempts to expropriate every spiritual thought and intention for its own self-aggrandizement. Getting past that ego to a sense of one's true Self is not easy or without much continuous effort.

*The Voice of the Silence* shows clearly that the theosophist comes to a point where he or she must choose a path, a fork in the road of life: one branch leads to benefits only for oneself; the other for endless service to humanity, which includes one's own self. The Great Master says that the first path is “after all only an exalted and glorious selfishness”. The second path is, he says, “the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbor, to cause to benefit by it as many of our fellow-creatures as we possibly can . . .”, and it is this path “which constitutes the true theosophist”.

The true theosophist chooses this path which is marked by the seven virtues enumerated in *The Voice*. Only to the degree that we tread that path, which is

ourselves, can we transform ourselves in increasingly fundamental ways. Each of us is that path, and fortunately, we do not have to be masters of the path before we can be of genuine help. The Masters insist on direction, not perfection.

That path has practical implications for each of us every day. Indeed, every hour and minute. So we know that the life worth living is a life of challenge and opportunity. The situations we find ourselves in vary from individual to individual, rather like fingerprints. The people we encounter, the work we do, the relationships karma provides and takes away, our own dispositions, are all dynamic and change from moment to moment. Yet the challenge of a life worth living remains constant. It is our destiny to be challenged, and to be afforded ever new opportunities to serve humanity. In terms of our three topics — religious intolerance, end-of-life issues, and depression — we have the great good fortune of theosophical guidance and models we can look to today.

The present Dalai Lama has made several radical moves in respect to religious intolerance. While remaining firmly in the Gelugpa traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, he has opened that spiritual path of meditation and study to active engagement in and with the modern world. It is as if the tragic karma of Tibet is resulting in a painful birth, as all births are painful, resulting in the spread of Tibet's spiritual insights throughout the world. He teaches that his religious tradition is not the exclusive holder of truth and not the best path for everyone.

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The first step in eliminating religious intolerance is this recognition: all sincere seekers have insights; and none short of total Enlightenment has the whole truth. The challenge to us as theosophists is to draw on the truths of all religions to discern their pristine origins in the Wisdom-Religion. We can use that understanding to engage others, not in debate, but in dialogue that looks deeper into each one's own religion and to look beyond distorting reflections to more fundamental truths. Notice the criterion the Dalai Lama gives to religion — it must lead the devotee to increasingly compassionate action. With individuals we encounter, like doctors, we must know something of their convictions and concerns to compound effective theosophical medicine to offer them. The medicine will be Theosophy, but what is compounded must vary with the patient.

The travel and cultural author Pico Iyer once asked the Dalai Lama how one can change the hearts and minds of dedicated Chinese communists who are oppressing Tibet. The Dalai Lama answered: "Through one Chinese communist at a time." What we do in each encounter with another matters at the moment, and also for the future of humanity.

Personal suffering is not the necessary and sufficient condition for depression. This has been shown repeatedly by the survivors of tragedies who flourish even after passing through horrors most of us have not known. Depression is rooted in the twin conviction that one's life is somehow meaningless, pointless,

without purpose, and that life in general and even the universe are equally meaningless and pointless. The theosophical teacher Raghavan Iyer offers a model for overcoming depression in oneself and in others who despair. He gently but firmly urges one to take stock of oneself as dispassionately as one can, meditating on the fact that we are reality-assigning beings, which means both discerning value in karma and whatever it brings and recognizing that we give value to or withhold value from things, events, and actions. Understanding our motives and the consequences of our thought and action enables us to correct what can be improved. It also leads naturally to sympathy and compassion for the struggles of others and for replacing judgmentalism with non-interfering assistance. To the degree we rectify in ourselves our orientation toward *theosophia*, we rectify our orientation in respect to others.

Raghavan Iyer drew attention to Dr Viktor Frankl as an example of someone who recognizes the centrality of the moral and psychological environment in which people live and struggle today. As theosophists we should be in the position of acknowledging, in the words of Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā*, the divine in every human being. In speaking to the Krishna within, we appeal to the best in another being. Given the inscrutable mathematics of karma, we likely will not know the results of such encounters, but we may have opened a vista on meaning and purpose that may manifest sometime in the future of that being, perhaps even in a future

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life. Just as we should not overestimate what we can do for another human being, we should not underestimate it. In Frankl's terms, the former is idealism, the latter is realism.

Socrates and Plato provide a broad perspective for end-of-life issues. Socrates held, like Theosophy, that all life is a preparation for death, and Plato showed in "The Myth of Er" not only why this is so but also why such preparation is at the same time a preparation for the next life. The story Er tells, at the end of Plato's *Republic*, is a myth, and Plato warns that we should not take it literally.

Yet a close reading of the Myth of Er is quite illuminating. Those who lived life without a focus on the soul — what we would call the Higher Self — are confused after death and wander about lost and aimless. Those who had such a focus move directly into the processes that lead to the next life. The good are rewarded with a pleasant long afterlife — we may think of it as Devachan. Those who were evil suffer in proportion to their deeds — we might think of the disintegration of the *kāmarupa*. What is most important is that after this period, individual souls choose the next life.

There are three significant points worth considering in the myth. First, it says that those who were so pure in their last lives that they would not benefit from another life on earth are taken away to some unspecified place of endless peace and bliss. Secondly, some very few have been so evil that no amount of suffering for their deeds and no range of

opportunities in another life would afford them any chance at redemption. These few are called out and disappear from the rebirth process forever. Plato draws extended attention to this tragic group as if he were issuing a dire warning. He seems to be referring to that rare and horrifying annihilation that HPB speaks of only with great care. But he speaks of those pure souls who transcend the cycle of rebirths, in a single phrase in the original Greek, as if reticent in the presence of such deep spiritual mysteries. Some translations of the myth have missed it entirely, so subtle is the reference.

The third point is that, in the myth, when souls have the chance to choose their next lives, Plato observes that they do so in reaction to their past life and its consequences. Those who lived good lives often choose lives of power and drama, not noticing the dire results of such lives, though they are plainly pictured. Those who suffered the consequences of bad lives choose quiet, retiring lives that hide from the world. Only a few wise individuals who have clarity regarding the nature and purpose of life can dispassionately choose lives that really matter, that will further their spiritual growth and be of help to others.

Upon choosing, all souls are compelled to cross the dry, dusty plain of Lethe — forgetfulness — and then drink from the waters of the stream Amelete — oblivion — before being whisked into new births. Again, the less wise drink heavily, being very thirsty, and will remember

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none of this or of their past lives. The very wise will only take a sip or two, and in the next life will be open to remembering a great deal.

Plato has clearly set out the great doctrine of karma, told as a story not to be taken literally as fact, but yet is full of theosophical wisdom. One might recall another story of lives, like pearls being threaded on a golden thread, in this regard.

When is it appropriate to let go? And the flip side of this is the choice for euthanasia, exiting before the body ceases to function, often to avoid excruciating pain but increasingly because one has given up on life and meaning and purpose. One thinks of ancient Rome, where suicide was at times considered an appropriate exit in the face of dishonor. One might also think of the return of Atlantis, with the technology to prolong life indefinitely or cut it short medically. So a life worth living includes understanding death as a part of life. Knowing that karma is precise and entails reincarnation is crucial, but it is not the whole story.

At present, we find ourselves in a world where nations cannot agree even on what the moment of death is. Some link it to the stopping of the heart, others to ceasing of brain activity as measured in one or another way. And yet, even with the cessation of brain activity, sometimes the body can be artificially sustained for weeks, even months and years. Even the issue of cessation of brain activity is debated — is it when the frontal cortex ceases to give off electrochemical signals, or when the brain stem stops functioning?

Thinking of life in the light of death, Dr Atul Gawande of Harvard University and a surgeon at a prominent hospital in Boston puts end-of-life issues in what may be a fresh perspective for many people. Dr Gawande does not raise those deeper spiritual questions that we are likely to ask, at least for ourselves, but he shows where the end of life can make more sense for everyone than it does now. He notes that it is quality, not quantity of life that matters, and this is true at every level. So he puts the question, “What are you continuing life for?” Here Theosophy can give answers, both in the most universal perspective and for any particular individual. We need to consider relevant answers that can be meaningful and helpful to diverse peoples in various situations.

So our topics are hot indeed, both as current issues generating intense discussions around the world, and as challenges which apply to ourselves and to all human beings. We are reminded of the tripod in the inner sanctum at Delphi, where the oracle sat and delivered Apollo’s mysterious and ambiguous oracles. For theosophists, the tripod is *tapas*, whose three legs are study of Theosophy, meditation, and self-study. One leg alone will not suffice, and any two will not let us mount the seat of the oracle, the center from which true insight comes. All three are necessary.

How we engage in this triple work depends upon our karma, what is necessary for each individual, and what opportunities for the present each has generated in the past. Deep study of Theosophy requires the reflective questioning that the

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Buddha taught: accept nothing as the truth, not even Buddha's words, without testing them in one's own life. Some fortunate seekers have found Theosophy, but that is hardly the end of the quest. Rather, it is the beginning, for once a seeker has found, the real seeking begins, for one now dives into the ocean of Theosophy at ever greater depths, never reaching bottom because this ocean is bottomless. Study is not just to master complex and subtle doctrines, but to affect consciousness, breaking up the mindset of the age, purging cultural assumptions and unreflective beliefs and biases, so that we see ourselves and others more clearly within a large view, consonant with the whole of manifestation.

Pythagoras taught that before we sleep we should review the day just lived to see what we did well, what erroneously or inadequately, and what might have been done better. Doing so takes courage, because the ego — taking everything for itself if allowed to do so — sees this activity as beating oneself up. That can be disheartening, even depressing.

But the point is not to denigrate oneself, not even the ego, which, after all, is an instrument for living in the world. The point is to engage in this self-study dispassionately, in order to learn and for the sake of one's bodhisattvic growth. As we understand ourselves at ever more profound levels, we will understand others at those levels, and this strengthens our ability to be of genuine help to all. If we can glimpse the Krishna within, we can begin to glimpse the Krishna

in one another, as the *Gītā* advocates.

So we need to meditate, if theosophical teachings are to become practical. Yet Theosophy does not teach a system of meditation. Why? The theosophical teacher Raghavan Iyer explained that the meditator “will conclude that, by definition, there could not be any fixed technique of meditation upon the transcendent. Technique is . . . a mechanistic term. A *techne* or skill has rules and can be reproduced. On the other hand, that which is transcendental cannot be reproduced. It does not manifest, and it is beyond everything that exists, so there can be no technique for meditating on it.” Each human being is ultimately this transcendent reality, and so what we come to know within cannot be said, yet it affects everything we do in relationship to others.

The wisdom of the Master becomes clear. Theosophy was presented to the world in its most unveiled form, though veil upon veil remains, to nurture those who would serve others, not merely so that individuals might learn complex doctrines and terminology and feel like elites “above the fray”. We might say that to be true theosophists, we have to take ourselves less seriously, and more seriously than our present culture suggests.

To the degree that we practice these teachings in thought, word, and deed, we will be able to do what Plato demonstrated in the Socratic dialogues, engaging with one another as spiritual beings, learning and teaching together in dialogue. We can do this with anyone we encounter who has a minimally open and questioning

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mind, beginning with where they are spiritually, mentally, and morally. We most likely will not know the results of these encounters, but under karma, we can hope that at some time in the future our encounters may bear fruit. As Krishna advises, we act and let go the fruits of action.

Being able to work at transforming ourselves for the sake of helping others, and to see all beings as souls with a destiny as vast as cosmic evolution, is the underlying challenge. In taking up that challenge in life, including the hot topics before us as opportunities for bodhisattvic service, we begin to live a life that is indeed a life worth living. Our light may be small or large, but it will shine in the darkness of *samsāra* and cast its illumination on all.

In closing, one can do no better than recall the words of HPB:

Men cannot all be Occultists, but they can all be Theosophists. Many who have never heard of the Society are Theosophists without knowing it themselves, for the essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his godlike qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, goodwill to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to one's self, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of goodwill; and the converse of this is true also — he who preaches the gospel of goodwill teaches Theosophy.

*Five Messages*, 1888



\* Multimedia visual artist David Orr was provided access to an early manuscript of *The Private Instructions of HPB* from the Philosophical Research Society's library, Los Angeles, California whilst being artist in residence there for several years. His kaleidoscopic images — which refract words and shapes from sages like Pythagoras, Plato, Francis Bacon, the Buddha, Confucius, Aristotle, Jesus, and Muhammad — are dye-infused onto 30-inch black aluminum discs, transforming pages of timeless wisdom into mind-bending shapes. This is done by multiplying the photograph of the text by a number symbolically associated with the particular spiritual tradition, constructing a compelling visual, “a whole greater than the sum of its parts”, hopefully leading to a symbol of contemplation and wonder.

\* This note corresponds to the artist of the cover image of this issue.

# Gandhi on Theosophy and the Global Civilization of Tomorrow — II

JAMES E. TEPFER

## Gandhi and the Global Civilization of Tomorrow

East and West are no more than names. Human beings are the same everywhere. He who wants to, will conduct himself with decency. . . . If we look into the future, is it not a heritage that we have to leave to posterity, that all the different races commingle and produce a civilization that perhaps the world has not yet seen?<sup>14</sup>

M. K. Gandhi

The above quote from Gandhi could not only prove to be true of India, which I revere, but true of my beloved America as well. It is my belief that America will in time grow into its noble vision and join hands across the “great divide” with Mother India. In so doing, they will bring together science and spirituality in such a unique way that it will give birth to a spiritual, intellectual, and social renaissance that the world has yet to witness.

Let us now turn toward the uncharted future, toward a possible global civilization of tomorrow. In doing so, we will

humbly embrace Rainer Rilke’s intriguing observation: “The future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens.”<sup>15</sup> In this sense, the “global civilization of tomorrow” is here now — in embryonic form.

Our age is often characterized as one of *avidya*, or spiritual ignorance, of intuitive obtuseness, of moral confusion, and of the supremacy of material values over spiritual ideals. There is a keen awareness by many of the cancer of greed, the pervasive fear of suffering and death, the debilitating epidemic of loneliness, and the unhealthy alienation of many from their cultures and communities. In short, the spiritual has spiraled down and crystallized into a materialistic mentality. But is this the whole story of our tilting “age of transition”? Is it not possible that there is more incubating beneath the surface that is as yet unborn, or perhaps even partially pushing itself up through the soil?

Fortunately, there are subtle signs of a dawning Aquarian awareness in which the valorous, creative spirit of man is

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shown to be as yet undaunted and resilient. The most significant indicator of man's "solar possibilities" is rooted in the irreversible recognition that human and global interconnectedness are established facts; culturally, economically, ecologically, intellectually, and in a thousand other ways we are bound together in a common destiny. No man, no woman, no country, no religion is "an island unto itself".

We are painfully inching our way toward a new kind of inclusive mentality, a new kind of cross-cultural compassion. For instance, there is now a plethora of NGOs across the globe rendering various forms of timely assistance to the needy and dispossessed. On virtually every continent, spontaneous initiatives to alleviate poverty and ignorance are taking place. What is more, ecological awareness of the fragile web of interdependence that bind together man and Nature has made us more conscientious trustees of our natural resources. Even empirical science, with its built-in materialistic assumptions and narrow methodologies, shows signs of becoming more philosophically open, if not exactly socially responsible.

For example, most theoretical physicists now acknowledge that they cannot empirically prove either "string theory" or the "multiverse hypothesis" without contemporary philosophers helping them conceive of new, non-empirical criteria of validity. Also, groundbreaking brain research has discovered the power of meditation to create new neuron pathways to awaken empathy and even compassion.

Beyond this, heretical researchers at

the University of Virginia's School of Medicine have compiled over 2,500 case studies of children across the globe who have credibly recalled past lives. These intrepid researchers have concluded that the only rational explanation that fits all the facts is that consciousness, in some sense, survives death and is reborn. Finally, there is the deep feeling amongst the young and the young at heart that the spiritual is open-ended and that it is up to each one to engage in acts of self-definition, self-determination, and self-transcendence.

If all of this constitutes an "indicating vector" toward a more hopeful, humane, and regenerated humanity, then let us raise an overarching question: "Could there emerge in the decades and centuries ahead a *novus ordo seclorum*, a 'New Order of the Ages' for the whole of the human family?" Yes, there could, if we are only courageous enough to think big, to think comprehensively, to dream and to dare.

Well, if a "New Order of the Ages" (or a "City of Man") is genuinely possible, then it is only appropriate that we turn to Gandhi for pointers toward a more hopeful future. In fact, Gandhi is vitally relevant to the present and to the zigzag unfoldment of the ensuing epochs. If this is true, then what role might Gandhi's guiding principles of Truth and nonviolence, innovative social and economic reforms, and ashram experiments play in helping to bring about, if not a global civilization, then at least a multitude of "civilizing centers" in which the initiative is on the side of inclusiveness, universality, gener-

osity, cooperation, and trusteeship rather than on the side of suffocating tribalism, insatiable greed, self-destructive competition, and cowardly coercion?

In answer to that question, let us first recognize that Gandhi has already left his indelible imprint on generations yet to come. Look at what took place on the world stage in the years and decades immediately after his death. First, there was the pivotal incident that took place in India itself on 18 April 1951 — almost 100 years to the day of the birth of that great theosophist, William Quan Judge. On that day in 1951, Vinoba Bhave (one of Gandhi's truest disciples), began the revolutionary *Bhoodan* land reform movement. This movement, in my view, saved India from decades of violence and ideological conflict.

This nation-altering movement originated in the following way. For some time, Bhave had been mulling over the problem of what to do about the millions of landless peasants in India. The antiquated and unjust zamindari feudal system was suffocating the landless. Furthermore, and most significantly, the communists were fomenting violent revolution among the desperate peasants. There was chaos and mayhem throughout the major province of Telangana (then called Hyderabad State). To make matters worse, the new, national government of India was struggling with a host of problems and had not yet found a solution to dismantling the zamindari system or for coping with fiery communist insurgents.

Fortunately, Bhave stepped into the

epicenter of this dangerous situation and appealed to the wealthy landowners to voluntarily redistribute a small percentage of their land to the starving poor. At first Bhave's appeal fell on deaf, unsympathetic ears. But in the Pochampalli village, a landlord spontaneously stood up and offered 100 acres of his land to be allocated to forty families in his village. Bhave was delighted and intuitively saw this generous act as providential. This wealthy zamindar had spontaneously brought together in his concrete gesture the Gandhian principles of trusteeship and non-coercive, social transformation. The Bhoodan "Land Gift" Movement had begun and would, in time, slowly spread across India.

A few months after the start of the Bhoodan Movement, Prime Minister Nehru stood before the Indian Parliament and made the following comment about Vinoba Bhave and his burgeoning land reform efforts:

This frail man has just accomplished, solely by the force of nonviolence, what all the military power of the (Indian) Government would be unable to do.<sup>16</sup>

In the end, Bhave collected and redistributed over four and one-half million acres of arable land to the landless. And, just as importantly, Bhave — and the gifts of the wealthy — halted a teeming communist revolution.

Turning to America, we have the prophetic observation made by Gandhi during a meeting with an American Negro delegation in 1936:

... It may be through the (American)

## Gandhi on Theosophy and the Global Civilization of Tomorrow — II

Negroes that the unadulterated message of nonviolence will be delivered to the world.<sup>17</sup>

This of course brings us to the sterling example of Martin Luther King, Jr, the Christian exponent of nonviolent social and racial reform. At a critical turning point in King's early life, he was encouraged by a remarkable mentor to read the writings of Gandhi, which he did. It was only then, he admitted, that he understood that it was possible to take the Christian principle of unconditional love and apply it to the social, economic, and racial problems of America.

By the mid-1950s, King emerged as the leader of the American civil rights movement and was responsible for initiating economic boycotts and civil disobedience campaigns across the racist South. His activities became a fundamental challenge to the conscience of America. During these creative and tumultuous times, King conceived the wish to travel to India. That wish finally came to fruition in 1959 when he made what he termed a "pilgrimage" to visit the land of his revolutionary mentor, Mahatma Gandhi.

King's five-week pilgrimage to India had a profound influence on his understanding of nonviolent resistance and his commitment to America's struggle for civil rights. During his stay in India, King met with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, with the reformed communist and socialist leader, J. P. Narayan, with Vinoba Bhave and, most importantly, with hundreds of local Gandhians, social workers,

and untouchables across the subcontinent.

On his final evening in India, King made a moving radio address to the Indian people. In that eloquent address, he said:

Since being in India, I am more convinced than ever before that the method of non-violent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for justice and human dignity. In a real sense, Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation.<sup>18</sup>

King returned to America with a deeper understanding of the dynamics of non-violent resistance and a tremendous appreciation for the Indian peoples and their ancient culture. Four years later, on 2 July 1964, the United States Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act, legally ending racial discrimination across the USA. This act, and the collective sacrifice that inspired it, continues to sustain all concerted efforts toward American racial justice and equality.

Turning now to Gandhi's influence on Europe, we have the nonviolent revolution that took place in former Czechoslovakia in 1989. This revolution of the Czech masses was called the "Velvet Revolution". It spontaneously began on 17 November 1989, exactly one hundred and fourteen years to the day of the founding of the Theosophical Society in New York City. It ended a mere six weeks later.

The intrepid nonviolent demonstra-

tions and acts of civil disobedience by the oppressed Czech peoples resulted in the peaceful abdication of the ruling Communist Party and the establishment of a Parliamentary Czech Republic. Four years later, in January of 1993, Czechoslovakia separated into two independent countries: the Czech and Slovak Republics. It was a bloodless, nonviolent act of political division called “the velvet divorce”. It was no less amazing than the nonviolent overthrow of Communist rule four years earlier.

There is now worldwide recognition that nonviolent non-cooperation is a constructive form of social, political, and economic protest to correct perceived injustices. In fact, the word “nonviolence” has entered into our common social and political vocabulary. This global fact is Gandhi’s gift to our grandchildren’s grandchildren.

But the world still has much to learn from Gandhi if it is to give birth to a “universal civilization”. The world’s seminal thinkers and dedicated revolutionaries have yet to understand the signal importance of Gandhi’s philosophical distinction between Absolute and relative truth. Nor have many New Age thinkers and ecumenical devotees quite understood Gandhi’s rich conception of the sacred. Nor have social historians ever intuited the broader significance of Gandhi’s ashram experiments. Nevertheless, all three are critical to the human family if it is to pass through its current “dark night of the soul”, its *nityapralaya*, the very painful, inevitable process of consciously “dying into a new life”.

As pointed out in *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* by Raghavan Iyer, Gandhi made a crucial distinction between absolute and relative truth, a distinction which is the heartbeat of the First Fundamental principle of the Theosophical philosophy. Gandhi noted that absolute truth is ever beyond us, while relative truth functions as our immediate guide through the labyrinth of daily life. Sadly, Gandhi recognized that the failure of sincere religionists, ideologues, reformers, and rebels to clearly distinguish between absolute and relative truth in their own minds and hearts had created many of the world’s tragedies.

By unconsciously lending a narrow sense of self to our perceptions of truth we create intense attachments to them and a subsequent narrow-heartedness toward the beliefs and practices of others. So many activists, observed Gandhi, fall prey to the tenacious tendency to “absolutize the relative”, to take an idea, an insight, or a revered truth, and treat it as final, ultimate, as the only possible interpretation, as the only viable practical application. This mulish perversity spawns the world’s political and religious “isms” and increases violence and divisiveness.

Despite the clash of political ideologies and religious sects today, people of coming decades will need to freely acknowledge the relative truths imbedded in perspectives, beliefs, and practices of themselves and others. They will need to gradually transmute their “absolutizing tendencies” and move closer to the synthesizing power of *buddhic* intuition.

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It could well be that out of collective pain, disillusionment, and suffering the people of tomorrow will gradually learn to honor the Absolute in the relative by becoming humbler in the realm of self-assertion and claim-making. Thus the best minds will grow in their understanding that universalization does not mean homogenization but rather the recognition of “unity within diversity”. This flexible attitude will no doubt be aided by the progressive deglamorization of all forms of political and religious power.

Speaking of truth, it is important to note that Gandhi saw Truth as the foundation of all forms of beauty, especially moral beauty, involving the harmonic relationship between theory and practice, belief and behavior, knowledge and application. The more one can creatively and courageously integrate truth and nonviolence, the more one’s actions will radiate an intelligent and uplifting influence. From this perspective, then, disharmony or “moral ugliness” is not poor practice or weakness of will, but hypocrisy or disingenuousness — a lack of inner integrity which leads to soul blindness and a disfigured personality.

Theosophically speaking, spiritual beauty seems to involve the rational integration of the macro and the micro, the global and the local, the parapolitical and the political. This is elusive but will become perhaps the primary focus of the best academies of the future. But more importantly for students of Theosophy in the present, it is important to recognize that beauty is double-edged. It can beguile, seduce, intoxicate, and divert us as well as exhilarate and inspire us to persist in our arduous journey to the summits of impersonal truth.

Unthinking fascination with beauty per se can easily mislead and blind us such that we forget the suffering of the world around us. The intoxicating spiritual beauty experienced at times by the student of Theosophy can unconsciously transform his bodhisattvic commitment to rescue humanity from its ignorance and suffering into a desire for the ecstatic experience, for spiritual self-absorption, for *nirvāna*. This Calypso-like enticement must be resisted. The pursuit of universal fellowship with its trials and tribulations must trump all, even the desire for beauty.

*(To be continued)*

### Endnotes

14. As quoted in *The Jewel in the Lotus*, Concord Grove Press, 1983, p. 533.
15. *Letters to a Young Poet*, “Letter 7”, Franz Kappus, 1929.
16. *Gandhi to Vinoba: The New Pilgrimage* by Lanza Del Vasto, Rider and Company, p. 91.
17. *Harijan*, M. K. Gandhi, 14 March 1936.
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# How to Treat Animals

## Animal Rights: A Scientific and Spiritual View — II

MICHIEL HAAS

### Introduction

In part I of this article we learned that most scientists agree that all vertebrates — mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish — are conscious to varying degrees, have feelings, and can suffer pain. From a spiritual perspective there appears to be a strong suggestion that animals have a soul, often a group soul, but there are surely animals that have already been individualised. And there are clear indications of reincarnation of animals, as appears from conversations with these animals. In this part 2 of the series of 3, we will try to answer the question of how we should treat animals with this knowledge, after looking at the effects of our current relationship with animals in intensive livestock farming.

### Should we discern between groups of animals?

This is a very difficult question to answer. Still, I will try. From the introduction above, can we conclude that the other animals, for example, insects, are less valuable or even less worthy? And what

do we think about bacteria and fungi? For example, we have long viewed insects as troublesome or even reprehensible creatures. But now that the world is facing an 80% decrease in the insect population due to the use of agricultural poison on land, and this is starting to have consequences for human life, we are forced to change the way we think. Insects play an important role in the Gaia ecosystem, as they are at the bottom of the food chain, and small animals and fish depend on them. The story of the bees is well known, they are responsible for pollinating many plants that are important to us humans for our survival. It seems that we have long underestimated the importance of insects.

And when you read the stories of Piek Stor,<sup>1</sup> a fly suddenly sounds very different. She writes about her conversation with a fly on her houseboat. She shares honestly that she is a bug swatter. The fly says: “Could we possibly coexist? Insects also belong here.” It knows that people want a clean world by removing insects. “We are here for a reason. The balance disappears due to human interference.

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**Mr Michiel Haas**, a long-term member of the TS Adyar and an architect, switched to consulting for decades and then to professor of sustainable architecture with emphasis on climate change at TU-Delft. Then, he became interested in animal rights and a holistic view of Nature. He is active in the Adyar renovation project.

You can ask us to go somewhere else. There is plenty of space.” But then the fly infestation comes in the summer and Piek asks the fly — it turns out to be a spokesperson for all the flies — whether it is possible for there to be less of them. “That depends on how you look at it.” It is a bit tricky for Piek. She thinks there are too many of them, but she also has a young common swift to hand-rear, and the flies could be used for that. The choice for the flies is: move or serve as food. “That is possible, that sounds reasonable. Serving as food is something completely different than disappearing into the bin. Moreover, we can return as a fly.” Finally, the flies that stay inside are willing to serve as food, the others leave.

Many bacteria and fungi are important for a healthy soil and we humans are in turn dependent on this through our food chain — the 38 trillion bacteria that live in our colon and digest our food for us. They are also important and deserve our protection, even though we hardly notice their existence.

The question remains: should we distinguish between groups of animals? It seems that all animals, including insects, worms, cockroaches, bacteria, and fungi play a role in the ecosystem, and even though we may not understand that role, we cannot just let them fade away. Although, when I think of that tick . . .

### **How do farm animals live nowadays?**

The biggest problem in our interaction with animals lies with how farm animals are treated — they are often housed in

intensive livestock farming. Here are a few statistics indicating the size of the industry: There are around 1 billion pigs, 1.5 billion cattle, and 50–60 billion chickens, totalling 70–75 billion animals per year. These animals are hardly, with a few exceptions, considered living creatures that can experience pain and stress, but are seen as machines for the production of meat, milk, and eggs. They are bred in the most “efficient” way so that they produce more milk and meat or lay more eggs in a shorter time. The length and quality of their existence is determined by their economic value. Animal welfare only plays a role as enforced quality.

In addition to the land animals, 2.7 trillion animals are fished from the sea every year. Around 75% of global fishing areas are exploited or are already exhausted. About 40% of the fish caught is thrown away because it is of the wrong species or too small. A study “Mapping the Global Distribution of Livestock”, published in 2014 in the *Plos One* magazine<sup>2</sup> shows that “All captive-bred animals worldwide weigh around 1 billion tonnes. For comparison: the total world population weighs around 500 million tonnes. Wildlife weigh around 40 million tonnes.” This ratio will not have improved five years later.

We owe this thinking about animals as machines to one of the great thinkers of our Western history, Descartes, who put man at the centre of the Universe in 1637, because he has a “mind”, while animals are only objects, things that are incapable of thinking. The fact that this worldview

is totally outdated in today may be clear from the many scientific publications on animal intelligence and on the ability of animals to have feelings and pain. There is a need to find a way to treat animals differently than before. We mainly see this in intensive livestock farming and in agriculture, with the enormous quantities of pesticides used in the latter.

### Should we give animals rights?

It is clear that carnivores do not want to dwell on how animals are treated in the meat industry, but in the entertainment industry (circuses and films), zoos, labs, and other situations also, animals play a role that is not in line with their own existence. This can only be changed if we give animals rights that protect them.

Perhaps we should see this in the context of an increasingly conscious civilization. The black slave trade started in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries because there was a need for cheap, strong and healthy labourers. This was only possible because the white race considered itself superior to the coloured people of Africa in particular. Slavery was gradually made illegal during the second half of the 19th century. Parties that made a profit out of it struggled for a long time, but in the end, everyone agrees that this is a deplorable page in the history of humanity, although unfortunately it still exists illegally in many races and ages around the world.

The parallels with intensive livestock farming are obvious. But there is increasing awareness that the way we treat ani-

mals is no longer acceptable. In this sense it would help enormously to create laws that protect them, *really* protect them, instead of offering them a life only a little less horrendous. Animals must have fundamental rights of their own.

A pig has its own will. When people regard and treat pigs as their property, we make their fundamental interest in self-determination subordinate to our wishes. The point is that we give beings rights based on their own nature. A pig has the right not to be a possession and not to be used as an instrument. That applies to every animal that has the capacity to suffer. There is no logic that justifies drawing a hard line between people and other animals.<sup>3</sup>

Animals are things by law. You can own them and do with them what you consider useful or necessary, within the limits that we have set by law. That is why we need to change the legal status of animals. We must recognise that they are like people in many ways. They have their own character, their own will; they are unique individuals who have the capacity for feelings.

The karma that humanity creates by this cruel exploitation and the killing of animals has never been so intense. Tolstoy said: "As long as there are slaughterhouses, there will also be battlefields." I would add to that human torture and slavery. And Richard Branson said: "I believe we will look back and be shocked at what was accepted — the way we kill animals en masse for food."

### What is the environmental impact of the meat industry?

The production of animal food entails costs for a lot of raw materials (such as fertilisers, pesticides, fuel for agricultural vehicles, and so on, and accounts for more than a quarter of all man-made green-house gas emissions. The vast majority of these emissions, up to 80% of that 25%, is the result of livestock farming.

Meat and dairy are not an efficient way to feed the world's population. The efficiency of the conversion from animal feed to animal food is largely inefficient. For example, only 3% of vegetable calories are converted into calories in beef, a loss of nutritional value of 97%. The yield is better for other meats, but still only 20% for chicken, the best-scoring category of meat.

Research shows that without meat and dairy consumption global agricultural land use could be reduced by more than 75%, an area equivalent to that of the US, China, the European Union and Australia combined, and the world can still be fed. Loss of natural areas to agriculture is the main cause of the current mass extinction of wildlife.<sup>4</sup>

This new analysis shows that while meat and dairy products only contain 18% of calories and 37% of proteins, it

uses the vast majority, 83%, of agricultural land and produces 60% of agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. Scientists have also found that even the lowest impact of meat and dairy products still causes much more damage to the environment than the least sustainable vegetable and grain crop.

Humans make up only 0.01% of all life, but are responsible for destroying 83% of wild mammals.

### Conclusion

We cannot go without a single animal species in the ecosystem. If we think that we can do without insects and therefore use a lot of pesticides, this is turning against us. Insects are an essential part of biodiversity.

In today's intensive livestock farming, animals are used as machines for meat, milk, and eggs, and mostly also treated that way. In light of our current knowledge, this is no longer acceptable. In addition, intensive livestock farming makes a major contribution to global warming.

It is inevitable that we are going to give animals rights based on their own nature and capabilities. Avoiding meat and dairy products is the best way to reduce animal suffering associated with intensive livestock farming and its environmental impact on the planet.

*(To be continued)*

### Endnotes

1. Piek Stor, *In the Silence You Hear Everything*.
2. <[journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0096084](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0096084)>.
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4. <[theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-Earth](https://theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-Earth)>.

# John Algeo — In Memoriam

ON Sunday 13 October 2019 John Algeo died after several months of declining health, aged 88. Within the Theosophical Society (TS) he is known for the positions he held as Vice-President and President of TS in America, International Vice-President, and his brilliant and insightful lectures and books. Outside of the TS he was a giant in the field of English language scholarship. His 1964 *The Origins and Development of the English Language* is still regarded as a “must-read” on the subject. Among his many scholastic achievements he served as President of the American Dialect Society, the American Name Society, and the Dictionary Society of North America. Although a world-class scholar, he was surprisingly flexible, often playful, in his understanding of the use of language. In an article for a serious scholarly publication he coined the accurate, but humorous, term “lexicographicolatry” for a reverence for dictionary authority amounting to idolatry.

In both his scholastic and theosophical work, and family life, his soul mate, helpmate, and constant companion was his wife, Adelle. I have seen couples work together harmoniously and efficiently, but John and Adelle were special.

There are moments that can define a person for us. My moment with John occurred at a meeting of the TSA Board in the early 1990s. I was a new member of

the Board and John was the VP. Under his guidance *Quest* magazine, the former *American Theosophist*, had gone public — being sold at newspaper stands and bookstores across the country. It was a high quality, glossy magazine, a source of pride to us all, but particularly to John. After a few years of struggling to navigate the confusing intricacies of the magazine business, the financials were painting a dim picture for the magazine’s future.

When John committed to an idea or a project he could be formidable in his fight to defend it, and he repeatedly did so for the magazine’s continuation. Being new to the Board, I developed an impression that John’s love for and pride in this theosophical offering to the world had become a personal attachment.

When the magazine’s future was again being discussed, board members were lining up on both sides of the issue. I have never seen anything like John’s response. In the midst of fighting for the magazine’s survival he examined the latest financial figures. In that moment he completely reversed his stance and declared that it was not in the TS’s interest to continue *Quest* as a public magazine. He had fought and labored for it for years, but the moment it became clear that it was negatively affecting the TS, only the good of the TS mattered to him. That moment became who John was to me. He will be missed.

TIM BOYD

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