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Cover: Painting from the Adyar Archives depicting Sri Krishna and Radha

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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.

Science, Scientists, and Scientism

TIM BOYD

THERE is a movement in the world today that promises something special for our future. It embraces the idea that the apparent chasm between Science and Consciousness can be bridged. Since taking on the role of the Theosophical Society's international President, I have done a good deal of travelling and everywhere I go I find people who feel that we are on the cusp of something significant.

There are very few people these days who do not have the sense that something of vast proportions is imminent in the world today — that something great is on its way. This can be a good thing, but, like everything else, it can express itself in two ways. Although many people are expecting something great, when they try to formulate it in their minds the only thing that they have to build their image upon is popular media, or the nightly news. This should be a disturbing thought for us, given the focus of normal news media on wars, violence, and all forms of antisocial behaviours. For people who adopt that point of view, what is this great thing that we are sensing within us going to look like?

We cannot be too critical of this way of thinking. It is not mere imagination

that there are strong crises facing us in the world. It is not untrue that all around the planet we are at war with ourselves. There is an American Indian expression: 'No tree is so foolish as to have its branches fight among themselves.' But as a collective humanity, we are. Statistics tell us that right now sixty-four wars are taking place around the planet, and that 600 different groups are involved in those wars. I do not understand it. With so many different groups in the fray, how does one even know who to shoot at? In addition to wars worldwide, there are deserts spreading where there used to be fertile land. The air, soil, and water are massively polluted. This is not fiction; it is all happening right in front of us.

The year 2008 brought a landmark in human history which will necessarily change the way we live on the planet for both good and ill. Regardless of educational level, few people were even aware of this remarkable event. In that year for the first time in human history the world's population became predominantly urban — more than fifty percent of the people on earth now live in cities, and that percentage is rapidly increasing. This condition has conse-

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quences that will necessarily accelerate many of the crises now facing us. So someone who looks at the world and says: 'This great thing that I sense is something that I must fear', is in tune with a strong current that is afoot in the world right now.

On the other hand, we have a perspective that groups around the world, such as IONS (Institute of Noetic Sciences) and others of its kind, are embracing. This is the idea that we are standing on the cusp of a breakthrough in terms of the way that we are able to see and interact with this world in which we live — a new manner of seeing the world through the eyes of an awakening consciousness. It is something that will enable changes in the way that we behave towards one another — a restoration of the natural order.

Years ago I used to think that what we were facing in terms of pollution and so on was a terrible thing because my poor daughter was going to have to live through all of the consequences. I was sorry for her because according to the scientific opinion of that time I would be dead and gone by the time these crises matured. Of course, science has progressed since then, and they have upgraded those computer models. Now we are being told in no uncertain terms that unless action is taken now the consequences will be experienced during *our* lifetime. It is no longer only our poor children, but us. Will we be able to right this ship and behave in those most natural ways that are both respectful to each

other and to the planet in time to avert a catastrophe? I do not know. It is my hope that we will. It is my day-to-day effort to try to stimulate and awaken this consciousness. But I do not know that this consciousness will be born in time.

During World War II Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States of America went to war. It took a total of three days for the entire nation to be put on a footing to face this crisis. In extreme and demanding situations we are forced to respond. Although it is always better to respond from choice than from compulsion, the latter is another avenue by which crises can be faced. A great scientist, Robert Oppenheimer (best known for the work he did in overseeing the project that produced the atom bomb), had a number of great quotes. One of them was: 'The optimist thinks that we are living in the best of all worlds; the pessimist fears that this is true.' We have two options, and no matter which way the scale tips, we can be sure that Science, in whatever form it comes to take, is going to be one of the leading influences guiding us into this new world that we will come to inhabit. One way or another, we need to figure it out and make our peace with Science.

Often in speaking about the scientific community, it is easy to focus on its limitations, particularly the almost religious dogma that confines reality to that narrow band we perceive as the material world. But Science itself is such a wonderful thing. It is progressive, always moving ahead by disproving itself from

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stage to stage. We used to live on a flat Earth that was the centre of the universe, with the stars and the heavens revolving around it. This was the scientific wisdom of the past, but all of those ideas have been superseded. Our problem is, as with many other things, that we are passive recipients. Science is for the experts, and in the words of a Zen saying: 'To the mind of the expert there are few options, but to the beginner's mind there are many.' The beginner's mind is the mind that we seek to apply to *all* things. We are consumers of science: we like the results, we enjoy the cell phones and the other toys, we like the little technologies, but for us it is a somewhat distant process than it is for those who are versed in such things. This is a mistaken idea and an unhealthy model to base our life on or to deal with the world.

I tend to focus on the spiritual dimension of life, although often I choose not to talk about it in those terms. This is because it is often difficult for people to see the difference between spirituality and religiousness. Nowadays I talk more about consciousness, because, like spirit, it is universal. Consciousness pervades all just like in the religious conception the Divine pervades all. Consciousness and spirituality tend to be the focus that is important to me because they are universal and therefore shared by all. Whether we acknowledge it or not, consciousness is the overarching, shared dimension of our being.

When we talk about science and about scientists, we should ask ourselves who

are these scientists who are leading the thought of humanity? Basically we are talking about women and men, people who have hopes, fears, who sleep and dream, who have peak experiences of joy, happiness, and intuitive insight, people just like the rest of us. The difference being that in order to be viewed as a contemporary scientist there is a very specific high level of training that goes into that process. What has become unfortunate is the fact that the same sorts of inner experiences that are the heritage of every living person, are denied any scientific validity within the culture that has developed into 'scientism'.

This means that if we are dealing with something that is measurable (which consciousness is not), something that can be known by our senses or instruments that expand them, we can discuss it. But the elephant in the room, consciousness, the one thing that everybody shares and that is required to perform any experiment or to even breathe, is the one thing that a practising scientist must avoid examining professionally, or their career will be damaged. There is something fundamentally wrong with this; particularly because even though it is something that is rarely spoken about, it is common knowledge that some of the greatest scientific breakthroughs have occurred as a direct result of dreams, intuitive awakenings, and visions.

Anyone who ever had to take chemistry probably heard of Mendeleev. When sleeping he had a dream based on which he created his own version of the

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periodic table of elements, used it to correct the properties of some already discovered elements and to predict eight elements yet to be discovered. Niels Bohr, the famous quantum physicist, dreamt about the structure of the atom. The person who is described as the father of neuroscience, Otto Loewi, had a dream indicating that nerve impulses were being passed by chemical means, not electrical. He had the dream, woke up, and forgot it two nights in a row, but on the third night he captured it. That is what got him his Nobel Prize.

The list would not be complete unless we mention Albert Einstein. When he was a teenager he had a dream that he was sledding down a hill. The sled kept going faster and faster until he felt he had reached the speed of light. He said he then looked up at the stars and saw that they were refracting a light that he had never seen. He said that his entire scientific career was a meditation on that dream he had as a teenager. These interior experiences of consciousness are the basis of some of the most profound revelations to come into the scientific world, yet we are barred from their consideration.

One of the greatest scientists of the 20th century has gone largely unrecognized. He was a botanist responsible for completely reorienting the agricultural practices of the southern portion of the United States of America, which was

involved in the monoculture of cotton. His name was George Washington Carver. He was a very religious man. Every morning he would go out into the woods and commune with Nature. As he did this, he would also commune with God, and he would ask God what it was that he needed to know for that particular day. He would get an answer, and that would be his work for the day. As a result, in addition to many other breakthroughs, he came up with 300 different products you could make from a peanut. He made rubber, paint, face powder, not just food, and revolutionized the agriculture of the American South.

One of the things that Carver said was: 'Anything will give up its secrets to you if you just love it enough.' Anything reveals itself to us if we develop the capacity to be loving. This was the scientific methodology of this great man of science. That is a methodology I can empathize with.

With the changes that we are facing, with the direction that we know we have to go in, it is uncertain, unsure. Security is a fiction. It does not exist anywhere in Nature. But there is one thing we can be sure of, that the greatest safeguard and source of our future illumination is the capacity that we develop for love. It is already resident within us. All of us know how to do it, maybe imperfectly at the moment, but we know. ✧

The public has a distorted view of science because children are taught in school that science is a collection of firmly established truths. In fact, science is not a collection of truths. It is a continuing exploration of mysteries.

Freeman Dyson

The Public Work of the Theosophical Society

PABLO SENDER

IN an article by Cristian Conen, published in this journal in December 2014, he began to examine the work of the Theosophical Society (TS) based on ideas expressed by our late international President, Mrs Radha Burnier. Here, we are continuing this inquiry, particularly in connection with our work in the field of spiritual education. What kind of public programmes should our organization offer in order to help the spiritual growth of humanity?

Two Extremes

My work for the Society has provided the opportunity to present programmes in different countries and cities, interacting with members from many Theosophical branches. In doing so, I have seen a variety of approaches to the work of our Society and the different ways in which members are responding to the challenges they encounter. To illustrate, there are two attitudes representing the opposite ends of the spectrum of responses I have observed. Different groups tend to lean towards one direction or

the other, some of them actually getting quite close to either of the extremes. When we are too close to an extreme we are in danger of getting too far off-track, thus losing our way. If we are going to accomplish the aims of our organization, it is important to strive to find the highly desired, though equally elusive, middle path.

At one end of the spectrum lies the idea that the success of the work of the TS can be judged by the number of people attracted to our activities. When the primary goal is to draw as large an audience as possible, the public programs offered begin to be decided based on what can be more palatable to the public at large. Chosen subjects tend towards the fashionable, exciting, flattering, or pleasing. Often we hear that the Theosophical teachings are too difficult, demanding, or antiquated. As members lean more in this direction, the typical effect is that programmes promoting core Theosophy get progressively pushed to the periphery until they all but disappear. Since in this approach the depth of the mes-

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sage provided and its potential to change people's lives is generally overlooked, the result is a gradual movement from spiritual education towards a kind of spiritual entertainment.

The other end of the spectrum places modern Theosophy as the last word of the esoteric philosophy, labelling all other teachings as 'exoteric', and giving them little value. These members tend to emphasise the exclusive study of traditional Theosophical literature and the use of technical words and terminology. They are generally not very sensitive to what the general public may need nor too interested in finding effective ways to share their understanding with newcomers. They work under the assumption that only the few are called to the TS and he who wants to join us has to make the effort to understand our language and concepts. This leads to the existence of groups proficient in a certain specialized knowledge, which, although satisfying for these few members, is little relevant to the world at large.

Two metaphors illustrate the two approaches. The first is like a person lacking self-confidence, always looking at those around him or her and deciding his behaviour according to what will make him liked by his peers. The second approach is like a self-centred person, absorbed in the contemplation of his or her own ideas and interests, expecting others to come to his way of thinking and recognize its grandeur.

These two extremes bring with them different sets of problems. The first

approach produces a large but loose membership, where people are not committed to the Society or united in endeavour. There is an open and all-embracing attitude, accompanied by a lack of clarity or direction. The second approach generates a small and compact membership composed of active and devoted people. These members tend to have strong ideas and lean towards dogmatism, with the conflict that normally accompanies rigid interpretations.

It seems apparent that a healthy Theosophical organization must find a balanced attitude that embraces the positive features of the two extremes while avoiding their flaws. This article is an exploration in that direction.

The Original Experiment

An outsider reading this description of the different approaches existing within the Society could naturally ask — how can these two opposite attitudes find room in a single organization? This is due to a rather unique feature of the Theosophical Society, which, according to one of its Inner Founders, was established as an 'experiment' for which most of the Mahatmas seemed to think humanity was not yet prepared.

Before the founding of the TS in 1875 the model followed by most spiritual traditions was to develop around a central figure or figures, and the purpose of the movement was to spread a particular body of teachings. For example, Buddhism is based on the teachings of the Buddha and Christianity on what Jesus preached.

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Many of the organizations that were introduced after the TS also follow this pattern — the Anthroposophical Society studies the teachings of Rudolph Steiner, the Krishnamurti Foundation those of J. Krishnamurti, and so forth. The Theosophical Society was founded under a different plan. Even though Mme H. P. Blavatsky, one of its Co-Founders, disseminated a definite body of teachings, the TS was never meant to be a ‘Blavatskian Society’. In time, a rather large number of Theosophists contributed to form a rich and diverse body of teachings that we call ‘modern Theosophy’. However, our Society was not founded to restrict its activity to the spreading of this world-view. The TS was, in fact, the first organization in modern times to promote a systematic study of the various spiritual, philosophical and scientific teachings available — both ancient and modern.

About a century after the birth of the TS this new trend slowly began to be adopted by other organizations, and today there are many that offer lectures, retreats, and workshops on a variety of ‘spiritual’ subjects. These new centres, as a rule, do not have any teachings of their own. They have become popular as neutral ‘umbrella-organizations’ for the promotion of various traditions, philosophies, and movements.

The uniqueness of the Theosophical Society lies in the fact that it embraces, in one single organization, two seemingly opposite natures. As in the case of traditional spiritual movements, the Society

has a particular worldview to offer, represented by the Theosophical teachings. But its work does not stop there. The Society also encourages the study of other traditions, as is the case with the modern neutral centres of spirituality. The presence of these two aspects together is an essential and distinguishing feature of the TS. If our organization were to exclude one of them, it would become either a Theosophical ‘church’ with its own dogma, or a mere eclectic Society with no voice of its own. Either fate would mean that the TS would have ceased to be what it was intended at the moment of its formation, and that the experiment initiated by the Mahatmas would have finally failed.

Recognizing the value of these two sides and learning how to honour them both is not as difficult as it may first seem. When rightly understood, these aspects are not contradictory but rather complementary.

Committed members of the Society have before them a serious but inspiring responsibility, that of participating in a work designed by the Masters of the Wisdom to help humanity move in a new direction, to set an example that inspires other movements. As stated by the Mahachohan: ‘The Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity.’¹

Public Work

For many years after the Theosophical Society was founded, our organization

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was one of very few spiritual options to traditional religions, especially in the West. But today there are thousands of organizations promoting what we can loosely call 'spirituality'. What is the role of the TS in the midst of this wealth of offerings? Is it still relevant? Does it have anything unique to offer?

Throughout the years, the Society has been influential in many ways and in several fields. It was pivotal in the promotion of esotericism in modern times. It was fundamental in reviving the Buddhist movement in the East. The TS helped India regain confidence in its ancient teachings, which, at the time, were generally seen as superstitions. Our organization stimulated the translation, study, and spreading of Sanskrit literature among the general public. In fact, it was essential in bringing the Eastern teachings to the West. The Society pointed out the connection between science and spirituality at a time when the two were seen as irreconcilable opposites. It also emphasized the need for the study of comparative religions and interfaith dialogue when the field was basically unknown, and even unthinkable, to most people. Members of the TS were central figures in spreading knowledge of Esoteric Christianity in general, and Gnosticism in particular, decades before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi codices. Theosophical teachings also influenced the fields of art, education, healing, and others.

It is important to note that, in the past, if the TS did not organize programmes

and produce literature on, for example, Buddhism, Hinduism, or Gnosticism, the general public in the West would have had practically no other sources to study. Today the situation is very different. In most countries there are many organizations working along each of these lines. Kabbalists, Sufis, Healers, and so on, each spread their own teachings quite effectively, lectures and books being easily accessible in most places. So the question naturally arises, what place should these subjects have in our public programmes?

Suppose there is a Theosophical group in which the programmes for the season consist mainly of inviting people to talk about modern religions, healing, angels, crystals, and so on. Although each of these subjects is valuable in itself, we must ask — how relevant are these programmes within the context of the Theosophical work? Of course, there are special cases to be considered. If we are talking about a group in a city where these subjects are difficult to access, then programmes along these lines may be a positive influence. Also, in the case of a religion that is misunderstood, like, perhaps, Islam is today, programmes about it can be an important part of the Theosophical work. But in normal circumstances, is it intelligent for a group to exhaust its time, money, and resources to produce talks and publications on subjects that are widely available outside the TS?

To evaluate what programmes we should promote so that our work for humanity remains relevant, we could ask

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the following question: If the TS were to disappear, what would be missing? Would the Buddhist, Hindu, or any other religion suffer a loss? Would the field of science and spirituality be affected? The same question may be asked about other traditions and fields, and the answer will probably be that none of these areas would notice the lack.

So, what would suffer if the TS were to go away? The first and most obvious answer is — the Theosophical teachings. If our organization did not spread Theosophy, who would? Would the followers of any religion teach Theosophy? Would those in the field of gestalt psychology or the Mindfulness Movement? Who else would? To be sure, the books could still be available on the internet, but without an organization promoting these teachings and helping people to understand them they would soon fall into oblivion. Blavatsky said that the Society was ‘formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities’.²

It seems clear that, besides the field of work that our three Objects lay out, the preservation, development, and spreading of Theosophical teachings is a fundamental aspect of our mission.

Does this mean we should only teach Theosophy? Should we become like most spiritual traditions, a kind of Theosophical sect teaching only the words of our founders and leaders? Here again, asking ourselves what the world would

miss if the TS became one more spiritual sect can bring some clarity. One may realize that the TS can offer a special kind of study that is still quite unique in the modern world.

As stated in its Second Object, part of the purpose of our Society is ‘To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science’. When applied to our public work, this seems to imply that we should have a variety of lectures on different subjects, for example, one on Yoga, another on Mysticism, then on Greek Philosophy, and so forth. However, this is not quite a *comparative* study. All we would be doing is offering a series of different approaches with no apparent connection between them. In my view, the Second Object involves more of an effort to *compare* the different worldviews, arriving at a synthesis in understanding that is more holistic than the mere sum of the fragments. When we do this, we have something unique to offer, a new element of understanding that may bring order to and bridge the myriad of spiritual viewpoints available today.

A simple example is Mainstream Christianity, which tends to emphasize that we are sinners, unable to win salvation for ourselves. We need to believe in Jesus and give up our personal will to follow the Will of God. In contrast, modern Advaita teachings propose that we are already enlightened and therefore need no saviour — or practice, for that matter. If our Theosophical group offers two consecutive lectures on these sub-

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jects, people will learn two apparently contradictory doctrines with little to suggest a unified view. What are they supposed to do with the information?

In the past, people were often unaware of the worldviews offered by other religions. The very act of coming in touch with a different perspective had an intrinsic beneficial effect, allowing them to think ‘out of the box’. But today, people know that there are all kinds of different religious views, quite easily accessed. In fact, many feel overwhelmed and confused by such diversity. Merely providing different perspectives is no longer sufficient.

If we want to remain relevant, we cannot just repeat old formulas that do not address the needs of the moment. This does mean that teaching about other traditions is no longer necessary. In fact, the Society can offer something in this field that, generally speaking, no other organization is able to do. Coming back to our example, if these religious philosophies — the Christian and the Advaita — are truly contradictory, then they are mutually exclusive; only one of them will be valuable or true for an individual, and the other will be false. But if we use the deep understanding that Theosophical teachings provides, we can shed a new light on their seemingly contradictory nature and arrive at a more unified and profound realization.

For instance, when seen from a Theosophical perspective, Christianity is describing a necessary attitude at the level

of the personal ego (*kāma-manas*). This level of consciousness is intrinsically limited and cannot perceive the truth. The personal ego needs to move out of the way so that the Divine can manifest. Modern Advaita, in its turn, is talking about the wisdom (*buddhi-manas*) that is an inherent part of our spiritual individuality. Our true nature is already enlightened, but it gets obscured when it has to express itself through the personality. Bringing these two teachings together we realize that, if our inherent wisdom is to manifest in the waking state, the personal ego has to be abandoned.

When these worldviews are looked at from this perspective, they both make sense. They are not talking about different realities, but about different *aspects* of the same reality. They both have a place and complement each other, providing together a more coherent picture than either of them can offer separately. Isn't this message far more valuable than simply offering two unconnected programmes leaving people with apparently contradictory views?

Granted, to do this a speaker needs to have some degree of knowledge of Christianity, Advaita, and Theosophy. Simply inviting people to talk about their traditions is far easier than presenting a comparative study, but no organization can hope to be a meaningful influence in the world while approaching its work with a commonplace attitude.

Members Work

It is obvious that the quality of our

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Theosophical work in the public arena depends on the quality of our membership. In countries where the National Section and the branches do not stimulate a well-rounded education of their members, public activities become either more reliant on non-Theosophical speakers, or are dry and uninspiring. Here, the importance of the work of the branches, pointed out by Cristian Conen in his article, becomes self-evident.

It is necessary to mention here that Theosophical education is not limited to intellectual study. If in our public programmes we want to communicate more than mere words and concepts; if we want to inspire those who come to our meetings, we need to make a sincere effort to live a Theosophical life to the degree that it is possible for us at the moment. Only thus will we be able to present the teachings as a living power that can transform our lives. In the words of a Master of the Wisdom:

The problems of true Theosophy and its great mission are, first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethical ideas and duties . . . and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation [to] daily life . . . where they may be applied.³

In this article, however, we can only examine the role of the TS in providing a rich understanding that can serve as a foundation for the spiritual practice.

The study of modern Theosophy should be a regular activity of branches and committed members. This statement

is not inspired by a dogmatic spirit, but simply by the fact that the Theosophical teachings themselves provide that unique approach that our organization can contribute to the world. Unless we are familiar with these teachings, we will be unable to offer anything original.

However, if Theosophical teachings are studied to the exclusion of everything else, we will become one more group promoting a fragment of the Truth, unable to discern the whole. We need to create opportunities for our members to learn about other traditions and integrate this knowledge.

In this endeavour, we must expose ourselves to philosophies from their own sources, rather than simply repeating what Blavatsky (or some other Theosophist) says that this tradition says. We must be careful not to see everything as if through a 'theosophical filter'. If, for example, a tradition says that one can reincarnate in animals, we should not immediately declare that this is not true. We need to be able to understand its logic, even if we do not entirely agree with it. Once we have accomplished this step, the subject can be examined from a Theosophical point of view, to shed new light upon obscure points or add a new dimension of interpretation.

At the beginning, this comparative work may seem difficult, but great erudition is not really necessary. The example I gave above requires only a basic knowledge of the traditions involved. As it is the case with many things in life, practice develops skill, and eventually we are

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able to do the work quite effortlessly.

Moving in this direction, the Theosophical Society can continue to be a living influence in the evolution of

humanity and, perhaps, become indeed the cornerstone of future religions, exemplifying a deeper, holistic, and non-exclusivist approach to life. ✧

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The Theosophical Society began its mission in the last century with a strong sense of purpose and much inspiration, without which it could not have expanded rapidly throughout the world as it did. Not only the Founders and the leaders who succeeded them, but a galaxy of lesser known Theosophists kindled a light in the hearts of a vast number of people by communicating to them new ideas about life and mutual relationships. Their example of self-sacrifice and service gave vitality to the branches of the Society, and the work done stimulated members of the public to higher ends. Such a sense of inspiration as well as the example of members dedicated to the welfare of the world are essential if the Theosophical Society is to remain vibrant and influential in raising human consciousness to higher levels.

Radha Burnier
Presidential Address, December 1996

On Relationship, Part VII — Higher Purpose and Sense

RAPHAEL LANGERHORST

WE scale the mountains, we travel the sky. We bend the waters, our cities grow high. We wield the power of life and death for everything but ourselves, and the fate of this world is subject to our fancy, to which we are ourselves but slaves. We have mastered everything but our self, even unaware of the very presence of such a self. We are lost . . . slaves of our own creations — and we try to compensate with even more creations, which binds and blinds us more strongly still to the chains of darkness. How can we relate to each other if we do not even relate to our self?

What is driving the world? Maximization of passion, excitement, possession, and bondage as well as soothing of our personal (and much self-inflicted) dilemmas? All this, however, is puja to King Mara, keeping us quite safely off-track, because we are thus lost in the non-self. Our inner freedom extends even that far . . . we create heaven and hell, such is the power veiled and wielded. Ignorant of our nature we even degrade spirituality to serve our personal wellness with great

self-assurance, all of which buries our divinity beyond recognition, enslaving us in fear. We have to gain clarity of our purpose in this our own creation, and fearlessly take up our responsibility.

Beyond the World of Passion and Excitement

Living in this world, what is our motivation? What is it that keeps us alive at all? Bound to our personality, we are driven by desires, Manas (the mind) being enslaved by Kāma (personal desires). We seek comfort, love, wealth and excitement. Even our altruistic goals are ultimately based on personal attachment to our ideas and images, thus veiling our selfishness.

It is a key process for us to understand our limitations as long as we are enslaved by our lower principles. All our achievements, all our apparent strength and knowledge are but dust at best, and our doom in the worst case, without that single ingredient — our awareness, however dim, of that same essence pulsating in all life, that same light shining in your

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heart and mind alike. Only from this awareness comes love, the genuine, unselfish recognition of our ultimate and ever-present unity. To this we sacrifice all that we are, gladly, for only thus are we able to build eternity, and our capabilities can finally be directed with a higher purpose and sense at heart.

The Plan

Only such awareness can unleash, however dim initially, some comprehension of the bigger picture and our own place and role in the continuous flow of life, from eternity to eternity. That flow, emerging from eternity and dissolving into eternity, follows a pattern, a divine impulse which is but our inner self. It is but divine love that carries on that flow, forms moulded by our consciousness cycling through creation and destruction, ever adapting to our evolving consciousness, which is ultimately seeking but itself, which is everything there is. Such an initial idea and glimpse of that eternal process can be sought through Theosophy; but all knowledge gained may even form yet stronger chains around our inner freedom, fixing our mind on fanciful ideas if such knowledge remains without awareness, without the expression of love to humanity, our family, and our true home — without that intense longing for that higher wholeness — without Buddhi (universal Soul or Mind).

Cooperation

When knowledge is turned into

wisdom through compassion, cooperation becomes natural. Care must be taken that such readiness for cooperation is not entangled by selfishness, either our own or that of others we intend to serve. Thus we must apply discernment with love for humanity as a whole and reduce our own needs to the minimum, so we may be free for that greater work, for our evolving consciousness, instead of being — blind as we are — bound to our selfish desires.

The Nature of Buddhi

Why cooperate? What is it that makes us part of a greater wholeness? Whence love arises? Whither love goes? How can there be wisdom, if not by being truth itself? How to recognize the whole if that wholeness is not part of our very being? Can there be recognition without oneness?

The Nature of Slavery

The playground of existence is between Purusha — pure consciousness — and Prakriti — inert matter. Consciousness immersed in matter yields form and objective existence. Matter untouched by consciousness is chaos. Consciousness without matter is unaware of itself, lacking its own reflection. As long as matter imposes its own blind ruling on the consciousness it is ensouled by, the indwelling life is enslaved, incapable of expressing its divine serenity and subjected to darkness. Such darkness can only be enlightened by mastering Prakriti, such that the form becomes devoid of its

blind self-will and thereafter is a pure expression of the inherent life.

Such moulding of form must be impressed consciously, persistently orienting matter towards divine consciousness within. From the perspective of matter, sacrifice is impressed from within and our experience is tainted by loss and suffering as long as we, the life within, identify ourselves with form, which is but our objective expression and reflection. Finally, matter becomes perfectly impressed by consciousness, now fully oriented to divinity within. The lower and the higher, united in such holiness, oriented towards each other, slavery dissolves into full sacrifice, and as such, ultimate freedom.

Eternity Engineering

Whence self? Whither self? How and why, if not through that one life in all, that flame burning in all our hearts, that boundless ocean, eternal, imperishable, ever-flowing, never-changing.

Relating Divinity

Bound in chains to our own existence, it is our duty to regain that serenity once sacrificed, recognizing but our self in each other, divine beings married to and marred by each other in exile. Reflecting and stirring the highest possible awareness of self in each other ultimately brings us home, establishing that network of living relations which upholds eternity and brings about divine serenity in all reflections of that Oneness that is.

Archetypes

At this stage of evolution humanity manifests through the duality of male and female. This leads to various considerations. Is there some higher archetype, some ideal for this pair of polarity so they can coexist in harmony? If so, what are these higher abstract prototypes we ought to manifest and reflect?

Point and Circumference

Consciousness by itself is a point without extension, yet everywhere. Space is inherently empty, yet provides distance which can be penetrated by consciousness to link to itself through that space. Consciousness can become aware of itself through that linking and reflecting in space.

That which glues together these primaries of existence, consciousness and space, is love — and the result is what we call life. From perfection in what is, arises harmony.

Consciousness then, able to move in space, like travelling along the circumference of a circle, finds nothing but itself, circulating endlessly, through the reflection in space. Awareness of self and Wisdom can thus only be gained through manifestation and reflection of consciousness in space with the appropriate perfection. That perfection of cooperation is manifested truth and harmony.

We find an analogy in man and woman, resembling that pair of consciousness and space, respectively, brought into proximity, resulting in

awareness. The appropriate perfection lies, on the one hand, in directing consciousness towards that universal oneness that *is*, and in immaculate purity of reflection on the other.

Our Challenge

However, instead of this required perfection, we find our consciousness lost in the multitudes of external objectivity, and our capacity of reflection tainted with the mud of passion, possessiveness, excitement, and blind selfishness — selfishness always implies blindness.

Perfection is required both in consciousness and in reflection, only then may wisdom arise. Diverted consciousness can never find itself, while impurity in reflection leads to darkness. Hence, as a child of both, we human beings have to master all our aspects. As males and females we manifest either one or the other aspect more strongly and thus have the opportunity, through focused attention, of raising our existence to its respective ideal. To the degree we fail, we inevitably cause and experience conflict as a natural result. To the degree of our perfection, divine harmony and wisdom can manifest through love and enlighten our existence in exile. Reflecting and expressing our higher divine nature in our purified lower principles and stirring

that divine awareness in each other, let us manifest peace — for humanity, our family.

Darkness

Unaware of our real nature, the one Self, we are passive, our attention resting on our illusive identity, isolated from those other illusive selves. Lacking a true basis of being, our illusive self is a self of scarcity, passively attracting all it can hold on to, ultimately leading everything to destruction, and nothingness — its own nature. Such darkness can never be satisfied; scarcity, attachment and longing being its very principles, veiled as desires, enslaving and appealing to our mind in its vain attempt at establishing an identity. We are imprisoned in a never-ending series of experiences — in darkness.

Light

Light there is, but it is in that, what is. However, that universal light cannot reveal itself while our mind is arrested in self-delusion. Only sacrifice and letting go of our own slavery disentangles our mind so that it can reflect that fullness from within, that wholeness that we are, imperishable, eternal, forever giving and self-sufficient. There we find peace, calm freedom, pure love, aware of the one glorious divine light in each other. ✧

To put an end to pain is the final reason for philosophy, and that is not true wisdom which does not conduce to the finding of PEACE.

Annie Besant

The Theosophical Society in the 21st Century

MARCELLO R. SERINI

FEW will deny today that humanity as a whole is at a critical turning point, one that will either make possible the rise of a genuine world civilization, or usher in another dark age wherein whole populations will be decimated and continents laid waste. Within this context, we as Theosophists, if we hope to play our part, will need to clarify the role of the Theosophical Society, or, more objectively, *what the Ancient Wisdom can offer* — through its teachings — to assist humanity, and what the TS can do to facilitate its effective promulgation.

More importantly, we need to see what hinders the progress of the Society and to jettison ‘institutionalized’ archaic ideas that hold back its development; amongst these is the notion that — as an organization — the TS embodies the cornerstone of future religions; and that, just by trundling along it will play its preordained part in times to come.

Leaving aside for the time being the above postulates, in order to see more clearly where best the TS could help, it will be wise to define the situational context or paradigm, wherein we, in the 21st century, find ourselves and, what

best can be done to positively influence humanity.

Early last century, Oswald Spengler, the German ethnologist/historian, with an insight matching that of a seer, wrote a monumental opus, *The Decline of the West* (1947, A. A. Knopf, NY) that best illustrates our present situation. Some of his points are listed below.

1) Western View of World History

Whilst Westerners may think otherwise, according to Spengler: There is no privileged position for the West as against other cultures. Its conventional vision of world history not only being partly based on the ‘Magian’ Middle East perspective (linear time oriented), but also on the later (since the 10th Century) ‘Faustian’ view being: Expansion, Conquest of Space, and Infinity. Within this paradigm, there is no polarity of ‘good or bad’. ‘Western’ being equated with European-American — modern and progressive; dominated by ‘The Economy’; but, ‘Economic thought and action are a side of life that acquires false appearance when regarded as a self-contained kind of life; all economic life is the expression

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of a soul-life'. And, while: 'Economic thought . . . sets in only where art and philosophy have irrevocably passed away, politics sacrifices men for an idea . . . the economy merely wastes them away'. This acquisitive kind of economy uses as an object, as a source of nourishment (for its survival), *tribute and plunder*. (*The Form-World of Economic Life*, chap. xiii)

2) Being and Becoming

Becoming is the mode of activity of the uncreated deity.

H. P. Blavatsky

According to Goethe, 'The Godhead is effective in the living and not in the dead, in the *becoming*, . . . not in the *become*. . .'. Once the creative impulses abate and the critical impulses of daily living ascend, a transformation takes place and a 'Culture' (focusing inwardly) becomes a 'Civilization' (focusing outwardly). Thus Buddha, Rousseau, Socrates, are 'turning points' where cultures become transformed into civilizations, or, where Rationalism overcomes the soul, burying centuries of spiritual growth. Henceforth, the intellect rules with logic alone, making use only of the 'become' imperative.

For Spengler, a population becomes a race when it is united in outlook. From this arises blood-feeling, being born out of events that shape the soul and of the landscape that exercises a secret force upon the extinction of the old and the appearance of the new one. Ultimately,

'Blood' as a power defeats 'Money', but not through the 'Free Press' which does not spread free opinion, for it 'generates opinion'. The power of money is eventually overcome by the rise of a nobler form of power — 'Spiritual Socialism'. (One hopes that this will soon take place before we irreparably damage our planet.)

3) The World-City and Province

According to Spengler, the two basic ideas of every civilization and the very problem or issue that we are living through today — with hardly the remotest conception of its immensity — are:

- ◆ In place of a world, there is a 'city', a point, in which the life of a whole region is collecting while the rest dries up.
- ◆ In place of a genuine people, born of and grown on the soil, there is a new sort of nomad, cohering unstably in fluid masses. The parasitical city dweller, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, and deeply contemptuous of the countryman.

4) Historical Development

When it comes to understanding the 'impulses' that are presently affecting humanity; the following historical perspectives carry enormous significance for the student of the Ancient Wisdom. According to:

Joachim of Flores c.1145~1202: There are three historical ages consisting of: 'The Father', 'The Son', 'The Holy Spirit' (currently, we are in the latter).

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Hegel: Self-expansion of the world spirit.

Herder: The education of the human race.

Age of Reason: The greatest happiness of the greatest number, enlightenment, economic progress, national freedom, conquest of Nature, and world peace.

Organic Logic: Pure civilization — as a historical process — consists in a progressive taking-down of forms that have become inorganic or dead. (*Form and Actuality* [Bk. 1], p. 32)

This is precisely what is happening to today's world: it is undergoing a kind of major crisis.

In light of the above, we should, therefore, also consider the following point of view by Richard Tarnas:

The crisis of modern man is an essentially masculine crisis, and I believe that its resolution is already now occurring in the tremendous emergence of the feminine in our culture: visible not only in the rise of feminism, the growing empowerment of women, and the widespread opening up to feminine values by both men and women, and not only in the rapid burgeoning of women's scholarship and gender-sensitive perspectives in virtually every intellectual discipline, but also in the increasing sense of unity with the planet and all forms of Nature on it, in the increasing awareness of the ecological and the growing reaction against political and corporate policies supporting the domination and exploitation of the environment, in the growing embrace of the human community, in the accelerating collapse of long-standing political and

ideological barriers separating the world's peoples, in the deepening recognition of the value and necessity of partnership, pluralism, and the interplay of many perspectives'. (Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Pimlico, 2010)

From the above we may see that there are a variety of perspectives to be considered, and that, whilst there are in place decidedly degrading trends affecting Western civilization, there is, unquestionably, also the rise of a new dimension — 'the feminine' — suffusing our human existence and acting as the harbinger of a new age.

5) The Emergence of (New) Values

Looking at the world in the light of 'Systems Dynamics', the resulting interactivity between what have previously been separate units, requires 'stability' that is achieved through 'shared values' that essentially become 'power fields', acting as injunctions. Under these conditions hierarchical structures no longer apply. Relationships between dissimilar organizations become correlated resulting in cooperation and accommodation between parties (The current 'struggle' to maintain unity within members of the EU is such an example). But this requires a new mode of thinking that takes cognizance of simultaneous interactive outcomes across a broad spectra of events and circumstances, away from former one-to-one relationships. However, 'relational thinking is so firmly rooted a habit that the transition to system thinking is at

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least as difficult as the transition from a three-dimensional to a four-dimensional geometry'. (A. Angyal, *Precedents to Systems Theory in Unity in Diversity*. Nicolas A. Nyiri & Rod Preece. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario)

It should be understood that the transformation of the former status quo does not provide environments identical to the original; and 'established landmarks disappear', whilst the transformation process itself takes an indefinite, variable, accelerating period of time of which we are, presently, only conscious of its speed.

6) Time

Time is no longer consonant with generational change. But the influence and pace of the Media and the Internet foster new awareness. These, in turn, give rise to new 'collective values' that emerge to alter the aggregate consciousness of society.

At the personal level, these force the individual to simultaneously:

- ◆ Redefine one's identity
- ◆ Reverse basic values
- ◆ Refashion one's organization or lifestyle

The New Setting

We have noted that with the shift in populations to cities, the rise of economic values, the concentration of financial power, the influence of money, the 'compression of time', and the emergence of new values, an internal shift appears to have taken place within the human collective consciousness that may be

described as a move from the state of 'being' to one of 'becoming', implying that 'an outward focus' has taken place, transforming what was once a spiritual culture, into a secularized civilization.

It is this outward-looking focus that the TS should seek to redress, by imparting the values of the Ancient Wisdom through a new mode, manner, and perspective that is 'in tune with the 21st century'; that nonetheless and paradoxically, runs counter to the trend of our times by shedding the path of becoming; and, by following the way of that eternal unchangeable 'consciousness' that we feel in the depths of our very hearts, sometimes called 'Parabrahman — That Eternal, Undefinable, Silently Still, Being', the very source of Life.

Parabrahman is attained through a 'Higher Yoga' and by initiatory rites capable of awakening the 'Higher Consciousness' in an individual; this last being the prerogative, grace, and measure of the highest Yogi Adepts. But to pave the way for that, the TS as a whole should seek to firstly see the limitations of its 'current' teachings and mode of presentation; secondly, seek to attract fresh minds able to impart alternative views and interpretations of the age-old teachings; and thirdly, by infusing vigour and vitality within our slumbering Lodges.

Suggestions of how to do that will be discussed in subsequent articles.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Brotherhood, a Fact and a Challenge

ELS RIJNEKER

THE theme of this convention is 'Theosophy in a Changing World'.

What is Theosophy? What is change? What is the world? And what can we say about Brotherhood?

Theosophy: Many attempts have been made to define Theosophy. Let us consider the sentence in every issue of *The Theosophist* magazine (on p. 4 of the October-November 2014 issue): 'Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any.'

We human beings have the capacity and the mission to use our *manas* or mind in two ways: practical and spiritual, and both are essential. Through an open-minded and deep enquiry we have the possibility to understand and thus break through the dogmas of our education and our civilization towards higher spiritual insights. The consequence of such insights can be an ethical life and an attitude of service and altruism.

Change: Talking about breaking through our mental hindrances, the first chapter of the book of our late President Radha Burnier, *Human Regeneration*, is

titled 'TS Work and the Fundamental *Change* in Man and Society.' Nothing is permanent in this material world; all forms change periodically. We have learned that the One Reality is permanent and that all reflections of it are impermanent. We human beings are changing constantly, and the phrase in the third Object of the Theosophical Society, 'the powers latent in man', refers to the aspect of transcendence by our higher faculties. According to J. Krishnamurti, insights can bring immediate changes.

World: According to the 'Bowen Notes' (Madame Blavatsky on '*The Secret Doctrine* and Its Study'), the student must hold fast to four ideas: (a) the fundamental unity of all existence, (b) that there is no dead matter and every last atom is alive, (c) that man is the microcosm with all the hierarchies of the heavens within him, and (d) the great Hermetic axiom, which sums up and synthesizes all the others: 'As is the Inner, so is the Outer; as is the Great so is the Small; as it is above, so it is below; there is but one life and law; and he that worketh it is one. Nothing is Inner, nothing is Outer; nothing is Great, nothing is Small; nothing is High,

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nothing is Low, in the Divine Economy.’

According to the ‘Bowen Notes’, “‘The World’ means Man living in The Personal Nature’. The world we know is formed by our personal impressions of what we perceive or sense, feel, and think. Our task is to learn to see things as they really are. As the Upanishads say: ‘From the Unreal, Lead me to the Real; From Darkness, Lead me to the Light; From Death, lead me to Immortality.’ Learning to see things as they really are, making these connections, is a task for many lifetimes.

Brotherhood, or how to realize ‘Theosophy in a Changing World’: In the leaflets of national activities at the International Theosophical Centre in The Netherlands, theosophical themes abound. The titles of those leaflets are interesting and inspiring, because they point in the direction of various aspects of this indefinable, deep concept of Theosophy. I mention the titles in alphabetical order here:

Anthropogenesis
At the Feet of the Master
BB and HPB, the ‘Big Bang’ and
H. P. Blavatsky
Creative Powers in Nature and in Man
Discovering Silence
Egyptian Esotericism
Entering the Stream of Learning
Evolution and Consciousness
From Cosmic Ideation to the Human
Mindscape
Integral Spirituality
Life and Death
Listening to the Voice of the Silence
Man, Visible and Invisible

Mysticism and Music
Noblesse Oblige
Steps of Spiritual Realization
Symbolism and the Tree of Life
The Challenge of the Soul
The Eternal Mother
The Pāramita-s, or Transcendental Virtues
The Path of Science
The Path of the Mystic and Occultist
The Path towards Truth
The Purpose of Life
The Voice of the Silence
Theosophy and Art
Theosophy, Unity, and Helping the World,
Where Do We Go from Here?
The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
Viveka Cudāmani, The Crest Jewel of
Discrimination
Ways of Meditation

‘Theosophy in a Changing World’: So, what is new? The content of Theosophy seems to be at all times as the title of Radha Burnier’s *Human Regeneration* implies, and surely, it should be presented in a modern way to make it attractive and accessible for many, including the younger generations.

The title of my talk is ‘Brotherhood, a Fact and a Challenge’. This seems to be just a short statement, but to me it has an important message and implications: we are each unique and different, but in fact we are all interconnected and one. The monthly Link Officers Meditation at the International Theosophical Center in Naarden, the Netherlands (more about that later) states: ‘Let us be clear channels to transmit the Powers of Unity and Peace to the World . . . , all representing the

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Oneness of Life, like a unique jewel with many facets: Unity in Diversity.’

Every morning, we recite Annie Besant’s universal mantra here. Every atom has a ‘vibrant hidden life’ in its essence, like a sparkling ray from the One Life. This One Life is our common ground, but we are not aware of it. We perceive different forms, aspects, and functions in each species, in every living creature in nature; all have the One Life within, despite outer differences. It is amazing how birds and fish quite naturally move together as one, in a wave, in a ‘flight’ or ‘school.’ Nature acts as one periodical flow, building and dissolving by the help and cooperation of all kingdoms, a brotherhood, restoring equilibrium in the cosmos.

Each human being consists of various organs and functions, all acting as one. Look at the human physical body: skin, bones, heart, lungs, stomach, bowels, arms, fingers, legs, feet, movements, perceptions, chemical processes, digestion, mental activities — an enormous machinery. Everything is doing its job and is interconnected, working together, readjusting the equilibrium. If you eat, your digestive system will work hard to take nutrition and send the energy to the places in your body that need it. If you do not sleep enough, your body will give you signs to slow down and relax (and it is up to us to listen to these signs). Only a few such aspects are mentioned here, just some parts and functions of the physical body, and in addition are all those of the subtler bodies!

So we are all connected with each other, in a brotherhood, all being part of the One Life. What is the challenge of brotherhood then? Here the main human principle comes in: thought or *kāma-manas*. After a sensory input, we react, we name it, we think, we add emotions from our memory, we interpret, and thus the pure experience itself is gone. We all have our backgrounds of family, school, community, society, nation. Those backgrounds implant ideas, opinions, and prejudices, based on feelings, pains, thoughts, and memories. Shortsighted as we are, we for instance often are greedy, wanting wealth and wellbeing for our own group (for our family, religious community, political party, city, nation, and so on). We do not understand that in fact there is no property at all, because there is no ‘we’! My mother, not being a Theosophist, always said that children are not one’s property; parents only have them ‘on loan’: what a beautiful and wise way to consider this enormous task of parenthood!

We own nothing, and we can understand the absurdity of property if we consider how all kingdoms in Nature are sharing oxygen, sunlight, and water. We human beings are confronted with opinions, misunderstandings of good intentions, quarrelling, and gossip. I have personally experienced that mistrust and gossip can poison our work and have a paralyzing effect in Lodges and boards, preventing Theosophical work from being done properly. On the other hand, we can be encouraged by seeing the goals

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being reached. Here lies the important task for all of us of brave enquiry, trying to see things as they really are, as mentioned above. We ourselves are the only ones who can do that.

This is our Theosophical work: reflecting on our thoughts and deeds, living a pure and ethical life, striving for self-realization, and thereby giving our share to the total mental sphere of *manas*, to humanity, to our planet, to the world. One insight can bring about immense change, and just because everything is interconnected and one, that one insight can affect the whole, like a stone thrown into a pond, moving the water in the whole pond by concentric ripples. Is this Theosophical work easy? No, not at all! It requires brave self-enquiry to be part of this immense cloud of human thoughts and emotions, distinguishing between what is real and what is unreal.

We can learn from nature to complement each other, to cooperate and work together as one. Doing so requires that we see that there is no 'me,' or as an old sports cliché puts it: There is no 'I' in 'team'. Or as the mantra 'O Hidden Life' puts it: 'May each who feels himself as one with Thee, know he is therefore one with every other.'

Theosophy in a Changing World: Theosophy can help us understand how to change: to surmount difficulties, to transcend. The fact that this world is changing incessantly gives us tremendous opportunities for growth and sharing. Everything changes. With the passing of our former President, Mrs Radha Burnier,

on 31 October 2013, the Theosophical Society entered an entirely new cycle, with Tim Boyd as our new international President. Let us now combine our different qualities of uniqueness and excellence with cooperation and brotherliness, knowing that we are One. This is our challenge of brotherhood, and yes, this could be the apt moment to transcend old disagreements and understand the major work for humanity. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder to do the work for the Masters. Let us not fall into 'the great dire heresy of separateness' that H. P. Blavatsky mentions in verse 37 of *The Voice of the Silence*. Let us form our nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. Together we stand!

I end with some sentences from the monthly Link Officers Meditation at the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden mentioned earlier. The work of the Link Officers was started in 1938 by the international President George Arundale, who was very concerned about the increased tension between nations in Europe before World War II. He probably foresaw the great need for cooperation between nations to prevent the recurrence of catastrophes in the future:

There is One Life, One Will, and One
Brotherhood of Nations.

May the spirit of Unity and Love, that
knows no barriers

Make Brotherhood in the world a living
reality.

Let us invoke the blessing of the Great
Ones upon our work

And upon the whole world. ✧

The Future of the Theosophical Society

ANNIE BESANT

FRIENDS: We have met here this morning as members of a worldwide society, the Theosophical Society. I have often wished that we had translated that name into English, and we should then have had as our name the 'Society of the Divine Wisdom'. We should thus have avoided a danger. For when a Society has existed for many years, there is always a certain peril that it will become crystallized in its thought and in its methods of activity. If that danger should overbear freedom of thought and of discussion, then the Society will become a danger to the progress of the world, instead of being an inspiration. We cannot avoid facing that danger, as we go on year after year: but, to recognize it is really half the victory.

We must everywhere, in our influence upon the world and our influence over our young members, remember that the life of the Society depends on its remaining a Society in which thought is entirely free, and frank discussion is encouraged. Anyone who has — as he or she may believe — an idea, a truth, to give to the world, should be encouraged in its delivery, so that every member may

exercise his own free judgment as to the truth or error which that idea conveys. The intellect of man is, or should be, the great motive power in the world of thought; and that intellect, if it is to act usefully upon the world, must make the common good, the common welfare of the world at large, its inspiration to activity.

There is but one thing, as you know, which must be accepted by every one who comes into the Theosophical Society, and that is the existence of Universal Brotherhood as a law of Nature. But, merely to profess acceptance of Universal Brotherhood is a small part of our work. Every member of the Society should be doing his utmost to live Universal Brotherhood, to carry it out in his ordinary everyday life, not only to use it as a great light, a light thrown on the road of right thinking, but also to realize that Brotherhood must embody itself in brotherly activity, if it is to be worthy of its name.

Hence, it is well to be awake to the dangers which threaten every movement that goes on year after year, decade after decade. The great danger which threatens every such movement is what we may

Reprint from *The Theosophist* February 1931. Lecture delivered at the Theosophical Convention, Benares, December 1930.

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call crystallization; putting it in a common phrase, the getting into a particular rut, because it is found more easy to run along a pathway which is already made, than to strike out pathways which are new. But, the vitality of any Society, as regards intellect, must depend on the intellect being open to the entry of new thought, new ideas, judging each entirely by its value, as it does or does not subserve the welfare of all, ultimately of the world at large. We must then be on our guard against becoming crystallized. That is the first danger. We must encourage the expression of new thought, the open expression of any new idea. Every intellectual advance is initiated by an individual, by some one person who has caught a glimpse of a truth, from an angle differing from that of others who are around him.

We must make it easy for new thought to express itself in the Theosophical Society; we must encourage it actively. For instance, we should welcome it in our Lodges. In a Lodge, any subject of interest which may be brought up should be thoroughly discussed from every angle of thought of which the members are capable. To think freely is a very difficult thing, especially as the Society gets older and older. It is easier to go along a trodden path than to cut out a new way through the boundless forest of truth. We must make it easy for our members to express a new thought. The mind has — as you must know from your own thinking — a very strong tendency to repeat itself, to make a difference

which, when you come to analyze it, is only a difference of words, not a difference of thought. I consider that the life of the TS depends very largely on the encouragement that we give to thought which is new, however repugnant it may happen to be to some idea that we already hold, that we may cherish as being very noble. It is true what Milton once said: 'Let Truth and Falsehood grapple. Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?' You must lay stress on the words free and open. You must not have a man shouted down by a number of opponents, who are too prejudiced to listen to some new thought that he may wish to express. Encourage him even if he be only groping. Neither must you be too ready to accept a new thought until you have carefully examined it, analyzed it as far as your intellectual power goes, tested it, seen that it is what has been called right thinking. For, there are so many things that lead us astray from right thinking, such as old prejudices we may have; so many of our prejudices are inherited, or spring from the conventions that surround us, which become, so many of them, dangers rather than helps to the usefulness of our Society.

And regarding this, there is one answer that I read many many years ago by a great man who put it in the form of a question that was asked him by God. If God, he said, were to ask him: 'Which will you have, absolute truth or the search for truth?' his answer would be: 'I choose the search for Truth, for, absolute Truth is for Thee alone'. That is the answer of

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a man who seems to me to be as wise as he was humble. Absolute truth is illimitable, has no boundaries, no kind of barrier which should not be faced and over-climbed.

Where you doubt, suspend your judgment; do not reject the idea. Keep an open mind continually, a mind that tries to see whether any belief needs fresh revision, so as to adapt itself to new circumstances. See whether your beliefs are becoming habitual, lifeless, instead of throbbing with new intellectual life.

Let us realize that as our Society grows older and older, we have to be on our guard against a special danger — the repetition of a phrase which is not really a living expression of our own thought, and thus let ideas grow into dogmas. Now, a dogma means an opinion which rests on authority. Examine it. Do not accept it blindly, without a very careful examination of the credentials, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, which are shown by the person who propounds it.

One great duty we old people have to the youth of a country is to remember that the forward advance of a country depends on the thinking of its youth. Expressions of new thought by the young should not be hindered in any way by the older people. Elders may ask questions to help the young thinker, leading him to test the value of his thought, but it should not be repressed by authority. Let it be considered, even encouraged to go out into the world to make its own way, or to fail to make it, according to its real value. What we call a mistake is, as Ford pointed

out, a lack of experience merely, and the lack is supplied by the so-called mistake. Youth is necessary for the continuing life and growth of the Theosophical Movement.

Then, there is another danger which may be regarded as more contentious than the one noted, and that is fear. We need fearlessness. It is true that danger sometimes exercises a sort of fascination for some people, and this dulls the purely intellectual judgment. Yet this may not be an essential part of a thought, but attractive from its outer appearance. Nor must we fear to suspend our judgment, and to say so frankly. There is no necessity that we should express an opinion on everything; but it is vitally important that we should have some great central principles that guide our life. But even these we should not fear to re-examine from time to time, in case other outside circumstances, or our own youth, rather than our own growth by evolution, should bring about the possibility of some fresh angle of vision which we feel has a right to careful examination.

There are some ideas which seem to me to be vital to the growth of the Theosophical Society. Personally, I consider that the growth of the Theosophical Society very largely depends on the existence of a proportion of the members who believe strongly in the existence of the Masters; but these must never try to enforce that opinion on others, while, at the same time, they are always ready to give the reasons for their own strong belief. The moment any idea falls back

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on authority as a reason for blind acceptance, that moment you should begin to suspect that authority. Truth should be able to face every difficulty, to try to meet every question; and if one is unable to meet a question, we ought frankly to say that we are not able at present to decide in favour of a definite opinion. We ought to examine and re-examine our convictions, being always ready to listen to arguments against them, and to weigh those arguments fairly and without prejudice, as far as we can. It is quite possible that we are not yet sufficiently developed to weigh the value of a thing at first sight. We feel a certain repugnance to weighing it fairly in the balance of the intellect; but, unless we try to examine and re-examine our convictions, we shall check our intellectual growth.

There is one phrase which I very often quote from the Hebrew Scriptures, because to me it has an enormous importance, whether you put it in an allegorical form, such as is sometimes used for its expression, or whether you put it in ordinary plain and simple language. Take, for instance, the striking illustration in allegorical form of the thinker occupied in the search for God: 'If I ascend up to heaven, Thou art there' — that seems natural enough; but 'If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there also'. That is put in what I may call an allegorical form; but, it contains a profound truth. The only thing that enables a falsehood to live is the fragment of truth that the falsehood contains.

A very well known Hindu Scripture says that 'truth alone continues; falsehood passeth away'. In matters of enormous importance to ourselves or, still more, to others, we must be scrupulously careful to exclude, as far as we possibly can, our own preconceptions, our own inherited ideas; to examine them and to see how far they are our own, or are the mere echo of the thinkings of others.

There is never any danger in examining and re-examining a truth. It comes out the more illuminating the more we test it by each new light. Hence, we should, every one of us, be careful, especially with those over whom we may have some authority, either from age or from experience, to test and retest our intellectual and emotional conclusions, to give to every idea propounded to us its fair weight. Some problems you may decide very quickly. Some, though of no use to yourself, may be useful to other people. Now and then, in the Hebrew Scriptures to which I just alluded, you have one of these deep thoughts flashing out: 'The Divine Wisdom', we are told, 'mightily and sweetly ordereth all things.' So that everything is worth examining from the very fact of its existence by virtue of a truth, however fragmentary, that it may contain. Or again: 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Does not that suggest that evil is only imperfect good? That it will grow into good?

Keeping that as a rule of life, we are likely to avoid prejudices to some extent, and I am inclined to say: examine every

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new idea which comes to you, which appeals to you or repels you. Each is growing; do not reject it without consideration; even if you cannot see in it anything useful or good, you will fulfil your duty by leaving it on one side. We cannot, without danger of error, make our own knowledge, our own thought, the measure for the truth that another may have glimpsed. When there is an opinion that is repugnant to us, we should look into it the more carefully, and see first whether our personal repugnance is not making a barrier to a fair examination, or whether perhaps it is only repeating some old idea in a new form of words.

Freedom of thought, then, is vital for the future of the Theosophical Society. Encourage discussion; listen to it fairly and patiently; be willing to test your own opinion again. You might have grown between the time when you formed an opinion and your present stage of consciousness. It does not follow that, because it is true under one set of circumstances, it is necessarily true under another set of circumstances. A certain congruity is necessary before we should act upon a thought.

The other main danger that we have to avoid, I think, is letting the superiority of our own belief in a particular truth that we hold, lessen the keenness of the analysis that should enter into the examination, and in this way carefully exclude it, even if cognate to the subject under discussion. There are some beliefs we have which are so useful to us, that some of us think that infallibly they must

be useful to everyone. We are a little inclined to force them unduly. Whether a truth is useful to a person or not is determined by his own stage of consciousness. Whether he can respond to it or not, that is the real test. If he cannot respond to it, either he has passed beyond it, or has not yet grown up to its height. Above all else, let us never discourage the free thinking of a brother. Let his thought go its own way, unless you can add to it a helpful idea. It may be that the holder is struggling after a fragment of truth enveloped in a husk of error; that sometimes a truth, the most difficult to find, is the most valuable when found. Let us, in thinking of the future of the Society, make freedom of thought within it an essential condition.

There is another point which is very much more debatable than those mentioned, and that is when we hold an opinion very strongly which is congruous to our own, but lessen its value in expression, because we have a certain prejudice lurking in the mind. It may be a national prejudice, it may be an inherited prejudice, it may be the general force of opinion all round us which dulls our perception of an error. Thus, it all comes back really to the idea: 'Keep an open mind.'

There is one point that arises that I think I can quite frankly mention to you, that I once heard put by a Master, when He said, that if people held what may be a true idea, but one which would not be suitable to the person to whom it was expressed, you might hinder that person

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instead of helping him. It arose out of a curious discussion whether it was a good thing for people to see both sides of a question. Most people would say hastily: 'Certainly it is. Let us always help people to see both sides'. The idea which was put forth was: 'Suppose an ordinary person were to see both sides quite equally, so that each of them has a similar attraction or repulsion for him, then he probably would not act at all. That is an idea of the value of one-sidedness that you might think over'. There is a deep truth in it. It is quite possible to be inactive, because you see both sides either so imperfectly, or so very perfectly, that the mind fails to perform its real function of thought, the direction of activity. It might paralyze instead of guide. It struck me so much, because I had not thought of that particular difficulty. When one comes to think of it, one sees that a certain amount of one-sidedness is necessary for action, except in the case of the perfect. It would be for others like putting equal weights into the balance of a weighing-machine.

Test your thought in every way possible; you cannot do it perfectly, I know; none of us can. But, use your utmost discrimination, especially if you know that the person who propounds a statement is very much more advanced in his knowledge than you are. We must, as a matter of fact, accept many things on the authority of the expert. We are unable to go into everything from the beginning by experiments made by ourselves; in that way, there grows to be a certain body of accepted truths, but even with those, I

think we should examine ourselves to see whether some imperfection in ourselves is not our difficulty in accepting a truth presented to us.

For a Society like the Theosophical, keenness of intellectual perception is of enormous importance. There are so many Theosophical teachings which fascinate us naturally and inevitably. I do not think that any of Krishnaji's many valuable teachings is more valuable than his exhortation to examine everything before you accept it. If you find you cannot understand it with your best efforts, wait until you grow a little more, and try again. Keep an open door, even though it be risky. But take care what kinds of thought they are which are coming through the open door, and are establishing themselves as pieces of permanent furniture in your mind. An idea may be true when it came in, but it may come into contact with something in you which diminishes and destroys its present value for you.

So, let us stand in the Society for complete Free Thought. I do not say there is no risk in it; there is. But the risk is a lesser risk than the acceptance of everything, unless the authority relied upon is that of One who is infallible. We may take authority as a guide to experiment; but I do not think that we do wisely to take it as an authority for action, unless we have tested our own capacity to judge it, and are not overpowered by some fascination it may have, possibly because it confirms a prejudice of our own. That is one question that you may

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well discuss at present, and that is the reason why I am speaking about it.

There is one other question that I would ask you to think over very carefully, and that is a question which to me is of vital importance for the future of the Society: 'What is your own attitude to the Masters?' If you have really thought over that as strongly and as carefully as you are able to do, if you arrive at a decision, or if you do not, have you the courage to say frankly to yourself: 'I have' — or, 'I have not — sufficient evidence, either to convince me of the existence of the Masters, or to enable me to say that They do not exist'? It is a far better method to cultivate the suspension of judgment than to deny too hastily. The question arises for those of us who believe in Them, or know Them. If we know Them, and if we find that knowledge beneficial to us, we should not, even then, try to impose it on anybody who does not want it. But also we should never withhold our testimony from fear of ridicule, from that kind of fear which does not appear in its own ugly guise, but only as a 'wise caution'. The existence of the Masters is such a vital question that it seems to me unwise to leave it untested, without examining it to the very utmost of our power, and re-examining again later on, when we may hope we have grown somewhat more. If we know it, I think then, without unduly pressing it on anyone, we should, if the question arises, very quietly say that we know of Their existence, and quite frankly and readily

answer the question: 'Do you know of your own judgment, of your own experience, or only on the authority of someone whom you think superior to yourself?' It is better, I think, to wait, without coming to a full decision, for the time when no lurking doubts remain in the heart. If They exist, your belief or non-belief makes no difference to Them. But it makes an enormous difference to you. They do not press Themselves on anyone. . . .

I do not for a moment hide from you, or wish to hide, that my devotion to my Master is the dominant motive power in my mind and heart. It is so, because from experience, which has now lasted for a little more than half my life, I have had the joy of knowing what it is to live with Them. That that will expand and increase, I have no doubt. It is the ruling motive in my life for service.

Every one had better make his choice. No one has a right to dictate to another. Only this I can say: it is my own experience that the more I have believed in Them, the more I have found that I understand, and that I serve. I propose to cling to that belief, and only to put it by if I find it hampering further service. But I close with the statement: 'Do not believe, because someone else believes; out of your own knowledge you should judge'. That was the advice of the Lord Buddha, the most illuminated so far of our humanity. The longer you are in the Society, you love it the more. That is my experience. ✧

Theosophical Work around the World

Brazil

The XX Brazilian International Theosophical School was held from 23 to 26 July 2015 with the theme ‘The Transforming Way: “Seeking the Diamond”’. Guided by the General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Australia, Mrs Linda Oliveira, and former International Secretary of the TS, Mr Pedro Oliveira, the School was attended by more than 120 members who came from many parts of the country to listen to their inspiring talks. The inner life was the main focus of the School, with lectures in the morning and group discussions on the topic in the afternoon. These were held at the Theosophical Institute in Brasilia, known for its well-preserved natural and beautiful environment.

President’s European Tour

England

The English Section of the TS held their annual Summer School from 31 July to 6 August near Birmingham. More than 100 were in attendance, including members from Wales, Scotland, Brazil, and New Zealand. The theme of the School was ‘The Relevance of Theosophy: Spirituality in Daily Living’ and talks included ‘Living in the Presence of the Soul’, ‘Being a Theosophist in Principle’, and ‘Embracing the Dragon of Wisdom’. Eight three-day Study Courses were also held on ‘The Essential Tools of Practical

Theosophy’, ‘The Secret Doctrine’ and ‘Meditation’.

Of course the big attraction for many was the presence of the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, his wife, Lily, and daughter, Angelique. He gave three talks, the first being the Blavatsky Lecture on ‘Theosophy in Daily Life’. Later he gave a public lecture called ‘The Habit of Dying’, and he finished the week with a talk on the future of the Society in which he also showed some slides of the Adyar Estate.

Finland and Estonia

The Finnish Section hosted the international President and his family from 7 to 14 August on their first visit to Finland and Estonia. The visit began with a weekend seminar attended by around 70 participants of theosophical sister organizations in Kreivila, the summer school centre of the Finnish TS. There Mr Boyd gave a lecture, ‘The Imprint of Theosophy’, and participated in an English-speaking discussion group.

Mr Boyd and family then travelled to Helsinki, where on 9 August he gave a lecture on ‘The Solution to All Problems’. About 80 listeners were eager to hear what that solution might be. Before the lecture he had meeting with a group of thirteen Swedish TS members who had come to attend the lecture. The lectures given in Finland can be watched online:

Theosophical Work around the World



Lecturers, course leaders, and workers of the TS in England Summer School held in Birmingham. *Seated, third from left:* Mrs Lily Boyd; Mr Tim Boyd, international President; Mrs Jenny Baker, General Secretary of the English Section; and Mr Colin Price, former General Secretary of the same



Members of the Finnish Section during the visit to Helsinki of the international President, Mr Tim Boyd. *Standing in front, fourth from left:* Mrs Mirva Jaatinen, General Secretary of the Finnish Section; Ms Marja Artamaa, international Secretary; Mr Tim Boyd; and Mrs Lily Boyd

Theosophical Work around the World



Swedish Section members travelled to Finland for the public lecture given by the international President at the Rudolf Steiner School in Helsinki. *Front row, second from left:* Mr Pertti Spets, former General Secretary of the Swedish Section; Mr Tim Boyd; and Mrs Lily Boyd



A session with members of the TS in Estonia after a public talk given by the international President in Tallinn. *Seated, third from left:* Ms Marja Artamaa, international Secretary; Ms Angelique Boyd; Mr Tim Boyd; Mrs Lily Boyd; and Mrs Mirva Jaatinen, General Secretary of the Finnish Section

Theosophical Work around the World

<<https://vimeo.com/135812804>> and <<https://vimeo.com/135761932>>.

On 11 August, after a two-hour tour of the old town of Tallinn with a group of Estonian and Finnish theosophists, Mr Boyd gave a lecture on 'The Forgotten Truths', with about 40 people in attendance. Afterwards there was a meeting with members, at the end of which a newly accepted member of Tallinn's HPB Lodge got her membership diploma from Mr Boyd.

Next day a members' meeting at the TS headquarters in Helsinki had about 40 participating. Discussion covered a variety of practical questions. The Finnish, Estonian, and Swedish members were delighted to be with the President and hoped for his early return.

Vice-President's European Tour

During the first fortnight of August 2015 the international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, visited the headquarters of the Dutch, Belgian, and French Sections in Amsterdam, Brussels, and Paris, and held discussions with the General Secretaries of these sections on theosophical work and administrative issues. He also visited the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, the Netherlands, and was a guest at the annual ceremony of the Order of the Round Table held there. He also spoke on topics relating to Theosophy in daily life and Krishnamurti's teachings in Brussels and in Naarden.

In between, he participated in the International Theosophy Conferences

(ITC) 2015 held from 6 to 9 August in The Hague on 'H. P. Blavatsky through different eyes with one heart'. There he met representatives of various theosophical organizations from different parts of the world and apprised them about the work, including improvements being done in Adyar.

Recent Changes

During the summer, changes have taken place in the following Theosophical units: The Netherlands has a new General Secretary, Mr Wim Leys, after the two terms of Mrs Els Rijnker. The Canadian Regional Association has a new Organizing Secretary, Mrs Maryze DeCoste, following Mr Merdardo Martinez Cruz. In Indonesia, the General Secretary, Mr Herry Ispoernomo, passed away earlier this year. His successor will be announced in due course.

'Tim Boyd: Tour of Adyar'

A video presentation by our President looking at the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Chennai, India, and the plan for its future development is available at the website below: <<https://youtu.be/y9w6iJNSYuI>>.

The Theosophist in Spanish

The translations of *The Theosophist* journal articles into Spanish since 2006 are published in the following website: <www.revista-el-teosofo.com.ar>.

The two links announced above may also be found on the Home page of the Society's Adyar website at: <<http://www.ts-adyar.org/>>. ✧

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