

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



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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.

At the Feet of the Master

TIM BOYD

OVER time little books like the one by J. Krishnamurti (Alcyone), *At the Feet of the Master (AFM)*, and by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), *The Voice of the Silence*, find us returning to them again and again. One of the beauties of these short texts is their richness and that although small in size they seem to be inexhaustible in their potential to convey a new sense of meaning. They give us a multi-layered approach to the spiritual life.

In Tibetan Buddhism one of the foundational texts is called *The Graded Path to Enlightenment*, also known as the Lamrim teachings. It is quoted by HPB in *The Secret Doctrine* and elsewhere. The basis for the Lamrim is that there is a progressive and ever-deepening “path” to wisdom, a graded path. At its beginning we enter it with a minimally developed level of understanding and unfoldment. But as we work with it that unfoldment deepens and broadens. In the words of the Bible: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man [or a woman] I put away childish things.” With the extension of awareness our understanding has a way of altering.

One of the things that makes *AFM* precious is that it is the unelaborated ex-

pression of a young mind trying to transmit the teachings given to him by an elder, by his Master, in a form that could be understood by a 14-year-old boy. Its author went on to become an utterly unique spiritual influence in the world. When we think of him today we tend to call to mind the unfolded person that he came to be in later life. But at the time *AFM* was written he was a young boy, a highly evolved young boy, but yet with the capacities of a 14-year-old. So the language is simple and the expressions are not complicated or overly elaborated.

The material that comprises the book was communicated to Krishnamurti over a period of five months. It is said that at night he would be taken in his astral form by his Master and given instructions. Each night the teachings would be summarized. Upon awakening, the boy would write it down. These writings were compiled and published as *AFM*. Krishnamurti lived another 77 years after writing the book. One of the beauties of this little book is that we have been able to witness his unfoldment from this initial seed.

Superficially, his teachings in later life bore no resemblance to this first work. However, on closer examination, we find that the life and thought he came to

embody was an elaboration of this very early first teaching. What he spoke about in his later life had ever-increasing, nuanced, subtle, and original depths on the subjects of Freedom, Love, Right Perception, recognition of and liberation from habitual patterns, the same things we find expressed in a different form in *AFM*.

When he was nine years old, Albert Einstein had a dream. In it he was on a sled going down a snowy hill. The sled kept going faster and faster, ultimately approaching the speed of light. He looked up and saw the starry light of the night sky refracted into a brilliant spectrum of unearthly colors he had never seen before. Filled with a sense of awe and reverence, he intuitively understood he was witnessing an event that contained his calling in life — all the answers, as well as questions he would need to ask. He said “I knew I had to understand that dream . . . and I would say that my entire scientific career has been a meditation on that dream.”

With Krishnamurti we witnessed a similar process. *AFM*, his first book, has four sections: Discrimination, Desirelessness, the six points of Good Conduct, and Love. He describes those four things at ever-deepening levels. When he talks about Discrimination, there are various levels of it that the Master communicated to him. Ultimately it is about discrimination between the real and the unreal, but he writes that “of the real and the unreal there are many varieties”. Similarly, with Desirelessness it is not just the base passions that constitute desire, it is

desire for recognition, to do good, but to be known for doing good — all of the ever-increasing subtleties which describe a spiritual path.

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patañjali one encounters a curious expression, that we must “Avoid the misery that is yet to come”. What does this mean? This misery is not here, and yet somehow we must avoid this thing that we have no immediate knowledge of. Patañjali’s admonition relates to karma. HPB more than once made the point that an understanding of the teachings on Karma and Reincarnation would be the salvation of humanity, that a deep grasp of these two teachings would have a liberating effect on our mind and behavior.

Karma is described as having a three-fold nature: (1) Karma which has ripened. It is the effects of past actions we experience in the present: the pains in the body, the habits of the mind, the many different factors that are ripe for their expression. This is the most familiar aspect of karma for us. (2) There is a stored karma, the one for which the conditions are not yet provided for it to ripen. It is like the seed in the ground. Until it is given the proper moisture, sunlight, and nutrition, it lays dormant beneath the surface. (3) This is the karma that we are in the process of creating in this moment. The classic example given is of an archer. Ripened karma is like the arrow which has been shot from the bow. Stored or latent karma is like the quiver of arrows the archer carries on his back. The karma we are currently

creating is like the arrow we are preparing to shoot.

“Avoid the misery that is yet to come” relates to this stored karma and our current behaviors. In Buddhism there is the idea that there is nothing one can do that is so wrong, so bad, or so evil, that it cannot be purified. In the Buddhist tradition, probably the worst thing one could do would be to kill a Buddha, yet *that* also can be purified. The great Milarepa, an enlightened being, was poisoned by a jealous Geshe (Buddhist sage). Milarepa took the poison knowingly, sat, and gave a spiritual teaching to the Geshe who had poisoned him and, in doing so, the pundit became a great disciple after Milarepa’s death.

Everything can be purified if we approach it with the proper knowledge and motive. *The Art of War* is a book whose title would suggest that it is about military strategies, which it is to a great extent. But it is also a treatise on the spiritual life. It teaches that the greatest warrior is not the one who conquers cities and wins 100 battles, but the one who can conquer cities without fighting *any* battles.

In the Introduction to one version of the book (Shambhala Pocket Classics edition) there is a story about three brothers who are known to be healers. The question is asked of one of the brothers, a doctor renowned throughout the empire: “Who among you is the greatest healer?” His answer is instructive: “My oldest brother sees the spirit of sickness before it takes form and cures it. His name is not known outside of our home. My next

brother sees illness in its minute stages, and he cures it. His name is not known beyond our neighborhood. I, on the other hand, prescribe pills, puncture veins, massage skin, and my name is known by all the Lords in the kingdom.”

Similarly, the teachings we have been given, that we understand as Theosophy, function on all three of these levels. The great doctor, the one known throughout the land, was the one who worked in the visible realm, with the forms of the material world, so his fame was universal in the worldly realm. His effectiveness only came into being when diseases had been manifested. Theosophy provides cures at that level.

As we become increasingly aware of our tendencies before they manifest — habits of thought, reactions to people and situations, hidden desires, and so on — we are able to witness these ongoing processes, observing them much like we witness the weather: now cloudy, now sunny, now stormy. In the same way we are able to witness the ever-changing climate of our thoughts and emotions, and adjust accordingly. At its minute stages we can recognize and adjust.

The highest level of healing coincides with the most profound level of awareness. In the example of the brothers, one sees the spirit of sickness before it has assumed any form, in its formless, or *arupa*, state. That is the level of perception from which the Masters speak to us — the level from which Theosophy originated. They try to describe the world and its governing processes as they exist,

even without their physical trappings. This is the practice that is described in the four sections of *AFM*. It is a practice of attenuating, reducing, or diluting the force of humanity's fundamental illness, of recognizing imbalance in its nascent state, and so "avoiding the misery which is yet to come".

The Buddha often described himself as a doctor. According to him he came to minister to the causes of suffering that we continually generate for ourselves and others. His method was to heal at the level of the mind. All of the practices, philosophies, and techniques that have been passed on relate to a process of attenuating the potential for this misery-producing seed to take root and flower.

What is the agent that is added to dilute these negative tendencies? Often we think of it as teachings, the instruction handed down to us through the great teachers. At a certain level this is correct. As we become exposed to a particular approach to the wisdom, it has its effects. But the alchemical agent that is added to this mixture of consciousness that changes everything is *awareness*. Every genuine teacher has given instruction to students. Particularly in the initial stages of unfoldment instruction is our need. In essence, *AFM* was a repetition of instructions the young Krishnamurti had received. The basis of his later teachings was exploration and application of an ever-unfolding awareness over 77 years.

As awareness grows, we see more and more clearly. The actual meaning of the word "clairvoyance" is clear seeing. People

who have not made the effort over the years to increase their level of awareness necessarily encounter difficulties in relationships of all types. For example, they only become aware of their anger *after* the explosion. Only once the arrow has left the bow and is headed toward its target, or once the focus of their anger has been struck, do they become aware and respond with remorse or self-righteousness.

There is an expression: "Speak when you are angry, and you will make the greatest speech you will ever regret." Once the arrow leaves the bow, or the angry word leaves the mouth, it cannot be taken back. One of the things that seems to occur with the practice of awareness is that we move closer and closer to the present moment. At an early stage we become aware that the anger is expressing through us. This has its value.

As we deepen in this practice, we begin to become aware *before* our anger is expressed. Before its components have come together and assumed a form, we see it. At that point, because of our awareness, we have choices. In many ways this is the purpose of Patañjali's statement that we must avoid the misery that is yet to come. We must be ever-more-deeply aware to perceive the movements that occur within us and *choose* to give direction to these energies. Whether we find ourselves at the beginning, middle, or advanced stages of the path, we come back again and again to the simple, but inexhaustible *AFM* teachings on Discrimination, Desirelessness, Good Conduct, and Love. ✧

Are You Not Saying What the Buddha Said? — I

J. KRISHNAMURTI

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

Walpola Rahula: I have been following your teaching — if I may use that word — from my younger days. I have read most of your books with great, with deep interest, and I have wanted to have this discussion with you for a long time.

To someone who knows the Buddha's teaching fairly well, your teaching is quite familiar, not something new to him. What the Buddha taught twenty-five hundred years ago you teach today in a new idiom, a new style, a new garb. When I read your books I often write in the margin, comparing what you say with the Buddha; sometimes I even quote the chapter and verse of the text — not only Buddha's original teaching, but also the ideas of the later Buddhist philosophers, those too you put in practically the same way. I was surprised how well and beautifully you expressed them.

So to begin with, I want to mention briefly a few points that are common to Buddha's teaching and to yours. For instance, Buddha did not accept the no-

tion of a creator God who rules this world and rewards and punishes people for their actions. Nor do you, I believe. Buddha did not accept the old Vedic, Brahmanic idea of an eternal, permanent everlasting, unchanging soul or *ātman* — Buddha denied this. Nor do you, I think, accept that notion.

Buddha begins his teaching from the premise that human life is a predicament, suffering, conflict, sorrow. And your books always emphasize that. Also, Buddha says that what causes this conflict, this suffering, is the selfishness created by the wrong idea of self, my self, my *ātman*. I think you say that too.

Buddha says that when one is free from desire, from attachment, from the self, one is free from suffering and conflict. And you said somewhere, I remember, that freedom means freedom from all attachment. That is exactly what Buddha taught — from *all* attachment. There is no discrimination between attachment that is good and attachment that is bad — of

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

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course there is in ordinary practical life, but ultimately there is no such division.

Then there is the seeing of truth, the realization of truth, that is, to see things as they are; as the Buddha says, in Buddhist terminology, *yathā bhutam*. When you do that, you see reality, you see truth and are free from conflict. I think you have said this very often — in, for example, the book *Truth and Actuality*. This is quite well known in Buddhist thought as *samvṛti-satya* and *paramārtha-satya*: *samvṛti-satya* is the conventional truth, and *paramārtha-satya* is the absolute or ultimate truth. And you cannot see the ultimate or absolute truth without seeing the conventional or relative truth. That is the Buddhist attitude. And I think you say the same thing.

On the more popular level, but very importantly, you always say that you must not depend on authority — anybody's authority, anybody's teaching. You must realize it yourself, see it for yourself. This is a very well known teaching in Buddhism. Buddha told the Kalamas, "Don't accept anything just because it is said by religion or scripture, or by a teacher or guru, only accept it if you see for yourself that it is right; if you see it is wrong or bad, then reject it."

In a very interesting discussion that you had with Swami Venkatesānanda, he asked about the importance of gurus, and your answer was always: "What can a guru do? It is up to you to do it, a guru can't save you." This is exactly the Buddhist attitude — that you should not accept authority. After reading the whole

of this discussion in your book *The Awakening of Intelligence*, I wrote that Buddha has said these things too, and summarized them in two lines in the *Dhammapada*: "*tumhehi kiccam atappam/ akkhataro tathagata* — you must make the effort, the Buddhas only teach." This is in the *Dhammapada*, which you read long ago when you were young.

Another very important thing is your emphasis on awareness or mindfulness. This is something that, as explained in the *Satipatthāna-sutta*, is extremely important in Buddha's teaching, to be aware, to be mindful. I myself was surprised when I read in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, a discourse about the last month of his life, that wherever he stopped and talked to his disciples, he always said: "Be aware, cultivate awareness, mindfulness. It is called *satipatthāna*, the presence of awareness or mindfulness." This is also a very strong point in your teaching, which I very much appreciate and follow.

Then another interesting thing is your constant emphasis on impermanence. This is one of the fundamental things in Buddha's teaching: everything is impermanent, and there is nothing that is permanent. And in the book *Freedom from the Known*, you have said that to discover nothing is permanent is of tremendous importance; for only then is the mind free. That is in complete accordance with the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha.

There is another lesser but interesting point showing how your teaching and the Buddha's go together. I think in *Freedom*

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from the Known, you say that control and outward discipline are not the way, nor has an undisciplined life any value. When I read this, I wrote in the margin:

A Brahmin asked the Buddha: “How did you attain these spiritual heights, by what precepts, what discipline, what knowledge?” Buddha answered: “Not by knowledge, not by discipline, not by precepts, nor without them.”

That is the important thing — not with these things, but not without them either. It is exactly what you say: you condemn slavery to discipline, but without discipline life has no value. That is exactly how it is in Zen Buddhism — there is no Zen Buddhism, Zen *is* Buddhism. In Zen, slavery to discipline is seen as attachment, and that is very much condemned, but there is no Buddhist sect in the world where discipline is so much emphasized.

We have many other things to talk about, but to begin with I want to say that there is fundamental agreement on these things, and there is no conflict between you and the Buddha. Of course, you are not a Buddhist, as you say.

Krishnamurti: No, sir.

WR: And I myself don't know what I am, it does not matter. But there is hardly any difference between your teaching and the Buddha's; it is just that you say the same thing in a way that is fascinating for today's human beings, and for those of tomorrow. And now I would like to know what you think about all this.

K: May I ask, sir, with due respect, why you compare?

WR: This is because when I read your books as a Buddhist scholar, as one who has studied Buddhist texts, I always see that it is the same thing.

K: Yes, sir, but if I may ask, what is the necessity of comparing?

WR: There is no necessity at all.

K: If you were not a scholar of Buddhism and all the sutras and sayings of the Buddha, if you had not gone very deeply into Buddhism, how would it strike you on reading these books, without the background of all that?

WR: That I can't tell you, because I was never without that background. One is conditioned, it is a conditioning. We are all conditioned. Therefore I cannot answer that question because I don't know what the position would be.

K: So if I may point out, I hope you don't mind . . .

WR: No, not at all.

K: Does knowledge condition human beings — knowledge of scriptures, knowledge of what the saints have said and so on, the whole gamut of so-called sacred books, does that help humanity at all?

WR: Scriptures and all our knowledge condition human beings, there is no doubt about that. But I should say that knowledge is not absolutely unnecessary. Buddha has pointed out very clearly that if you want to cross the river and there is no bridge, you build a boat and cross with its help. But if, on the other shore, you think, Oh, this boat has been very useful, very helpful to me, I can't leave it here, I will carry it on my shoulders, that is a

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wrong action. What you should say is: Of course this boat was very helpful to me, but I have crossed the river, it is no more use to me, so I'll leave it here for somebody else. That is the attitude toward knowledge and learning. Buddha says that even the teachings, not only that, even the virtues, the so-called moral virtues, are also like the boat and have a relative and conditioned value.

K: I am not doubting what you are saying, sir, but I would like to question whether knowledge has the quality of liberating the mind.

WR: I don't think knowledge can liberate.

K: Knowledge can't, but the quality, the strength, the sense of capacity, the sense of value that you derive from knowledge, the feeling that you know, the weight of knowledge — doesn't that strengthen the self?

WR: Certainly.

K: Does knowledge actually condition the human being? Let's put it that way. The word "knowledge" all of us surely take to mean accumulation of information, of experience, of various facts, theories and principles, the past and present, all that bundle we call knowledge. Does, then, the past help? Because knowledge *is* the past.

WR: All that past, all that knowledge, disappears the moment you see the truth.

K: But can a mind that is burdened with knowledge see truth?

WR: Of course, if the mind is burdened, crowded, and covered with knowledge . . .

K: It is, generally it is. Most minds are filled and crippled with knowledge. I am using the word "crippled" in the sense of weighed down. Can such a mind perceive what is truth? Or must it be free from knowledge?

WR: To see the truth the mind must be free from all knowledge.

K: Yes, so why should one accumulate knowledge and then abandon it, and then seek truth? You follow what I am saying?

WR: Well, I think that in our ordinary life, most of the things which we have learned are useful at the beginning. For instance, as schoolchildren we can't write without ruled paper, but today I can write without it.

K: Wait a minute, sir, I agree. When you are at school or university we need lines to write on and all the rest of it, but does not the beginning, which might condition the future as we grow up, matter enormously? You understand what I am saying? I don't know if I am making myself clear. Does freedom lie at the end or at the beginning?

WR: Freedom has no beginning, no end.

K: Would you say that freedom is limited by knowledge?

WR: Freedom is not limited by knowledge; perhaps knowledge that is acquired and wrongly applied may obstruct freedom.

K: No, there is no wrong or right accumulation of knowledge. I may do certain ugly things and repent, or carry on with those ugly things, which again is part of

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my knowledge. But I am asking if knowledge leads to freedom. As you say, discipline is necessary at the beginning. And as you grow older, mature, acquire capacities, and so on, does that discipline not condition the mind so that it can never abandon discipline in the usual sense of that word?

WR: Yes, I understand. You agree that discipline at the beginning, at a certain level, is necessary.

K: I am questioning that, sir. When I say questioning it, I don't mean I doubt it or am saying it is not necessary, but I am questioning it in order to inquire.

WR: I should say at a certain level it is necessary, but then if you can never abandon it . . . I am talking from the Buddhist point of view. There are two terms in Buddhism with regard to the Way, *śaikshya* and *āśaikshya*: *śaikshya* refers to people who are on the Way but have not yet arrived, for whom there are disciplines, precepts, and all those things that are good and bad, right and wrong. And an arhat, who has realized the truth, is called *āśaikshya*, and has no discipline, because he is beyond that.

K: Yes, I understand this.

WR: But that is a fact in life.

K: I am questioning that, sir.

WR: I have no doubt about it in my mind.

K: Then we have stopped inquiring.

WR: No, it is not so.

K: I mean we are talking about knowledge: knowledge being useful or necessary, as a boat to cross the river. I want to

inquire into that fact or that simile to see whether it is the truth, whether it has the quality of truth — let us put it that way for the moment.

WR: You mean the simile or the teaching?

K: The whole of that. Which means, sir — just a minute — which means accepting evolution.

WR: Yes, accepting it.

K: Evolution, so gradually, step by step, advancing, and ultimately reaching. First I discipline, control, use effort, and as I get more capacity, more energy, more strength, I abandon that and move on.

WR: There is no plan like that, there is no plan.

K: No, I am not saying there is a plan. I am asking, or inquiring, whether there is such a movement, such progress at all.

WR: What do you think?

K: What do I think? No.

Irmgard Schloegl: I very much agree with you, I can't believe that there is.

WR: Yes, all right, there is no progress like that.

K: We must go into this very carefully, because the whole religious tradition, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian, all the religious and nonreligious attitudes are caught up in time, in evolution — I will be better, I will be good, I will eventually blossom in goodness. Right? I am saying that there is a root of untruth in this. Sorry to put it that way.

IS: I entirely agree with that, for the very good reason that as far as we know,

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ever since human beings have existed, we have always known that we should be good. If it were possible to progress by something like this we would not be the human beings that we are today. We would all have progressed sufficiently.

K: Have we progressed at all?

IS: Precisely, we have not progressed — very little, if at all.

K: We may have progressed technologically, scientifically, hygienically, and all the rest of it, but psychologically, inwardly we have not — we are what we were ten thousand or more years ago.

IS: So the fact that we know we should do good, and have evolved so many systems of how to do it, has not managed to help us to become good. As I see it, there is a specific obstacle in all of us, and it is the working through this obstacle — because most of us want in our hearts to be good, but most of us do not bring it about — that seems to me at stake.

K: We have accepted evolution. Biologically there is evolution. We have transferred that biological fact into psychological existence, thinking that we will evolve psychologically.

WR: No, I don't think that is the attitude.

K: But that is what it means when you say "gradually".

WR: No, I don't say "gradually." I don't say that. The realization of truth, attainment of truth, or seeing the truth, is without a plan, is without a scheme.

K: It is out of time.

WR: Out of time, exactly.

K: Which is quite different from saying that my mind — which has evolved through centuries, for millennia, which is conditioned by time, which is evolution, which is the acquiring of more and more knowledge — will reveal the extraordinary truth.

WR: It is not that knowledge will reveal truth.

K: Therefore why should I accumulate knowledge?

WR: How can you avoid it?

K: Avoid it psychologically, not technologically.

WR: Even psychologically, how can you do that?

K: Ah, that's a different matter.

WR: Yes, how can you do that? Because you are conditioned.

K: Wait a minute, sir. Let's go into it a little more. Biologically, physically, from childhood up to a certain age, adolescence, maturity, and so on, we evolve, that is a fact. A little oak tree grows into a gigantic oak tree, that is a fact. Now, is it a fact, or have we simply assumed it is, that we must grow psychologically? Which means, psychologically, that eventually I will achieve truth, or truth will take place if I prepare the ground.

WR: No, that is a wrong conclusion, that is a wrong point of view, the realization of truth is a revolution, not evolution.

K: Therefore, can the mind be free psychologically of the idea of progress?

WR: It can be.

K: No, not "can be", it must be.

Are You Not Saying What the Buddha Said? — I

WR: That is what I have said — revolution is not evolution, not a gradual process.

K: So psychologically, can there be a revolution?

WR: Yes, certainly.

K: Which means what? No time.

WR: There is no time in it.

K: But all the religions, all the scriptures, whether it is Islam or whatever, have maintained you must go through certain systems.

WR: But not Buddhism.

K: Wait a minute. I wouldn't even say Buddhism, I don't know, I haven't read about it, except when I was a boy, but that has gone out of my mind. When you say that you must have discipline first and then eventually let go of that discipline . . .

WR: No, I don't say that. I don't postulate it like that, and neither did the Buddha.

K: Then, please, I may be mistaken.

WR: The question I have to ask you is: How does the realization of truth come about?

K: Ah, that's quite a different matter.

WR: What I am saying is that we are conditioned. Nobody can avoid that, however much they try. The revolution is to see that you are conditioned. The moment you see that, it has no time, it is an entire revolution, and that is the truth.

K: Suppose one is conditioned in the pattern of evolution — I have been, I am, I shall be. That is evolution, isn't it? My action was ugly yesterday, but today I am learning about that ugliness and freeing myself, and tomorrow I will be free of it. That is our whole attitude, the psychological structure of our being. This is an everyday fact.

WR: Do we see that? Understanding may be intellectual, merely verbal.

K: No, I am not talking either intellectually or verbally, I mean that is a fact. I will try to be good.

WR: There is no question of trying to be good.

K: No, sir, not according to the Buddha, not according to scripture, but the average human being in everyday life says: "I am not as good as I should be, but — give me a couple of weeks or years, and eventually I will be awfully good."

WR: Certainly that is the attitude that practically everybody has.

K: Practically everybody. Now wait a minute. That is our conditioning — the Christian, the Buddhist, the whole world is conditioned by this idea, which may have come from biological progress and moved into the psychological field.

WR: Yes, that's a good way of putting it.

(To be continued)

Verily, in whom un wisdom is destroyed by the wisdom of the SELF, in them wisdom, shining as the sun, reveals the Supreme. . . . they go whence there is no return, their sins dispelled by wisdom.

The Bhagavadgita, V.16–17

Truth and Beauty

SHIKHAR AGNIHOTRI

TRUTH and Beauty: the two aspects of One Reality. The two aspects being prominent in Nature, we often become conditioned to the illusion of duality, and assume that this world is full of dualities like Day / Night, Ebb / Flow, and so on. But just take a careful look at the events around and it becomes crystal clear that there is no duality — instead, always a Trinity — because whenever manifestation takes place from the Unmanifested, it has to be in three aspects. With every day and night, there is always a dawn or dusk, with every ebb and flow, there is always slack water, and in the same way, wherever there is Truth and Beauty, there is always Goodness.

So, this title is in a sense, enigmatic (from the Greek *ainigma* — riddle), that it contains in its womb something more than it seems to have on a first look. It reminds and expects all of us to aspire and search for that hidden “Goodness”, which is very conspicuous by its absence in this title. The way of expressing deep-rooted philosophical truths in the form of sutras or aphorisms has been adopted since time immemorial by almost every

esoteric discipline. The purpose is that the student must meditate on the given aphorism to go deeper and deeper within oneself and reach a state of consciousness which is universal. The aphorism “*satyam* (Truth), *śivam* (Goodness), *sundaram* (Beauty)” is one of the most wonderful of such expressions in ancient philosophy.

But again, as it always happens with every such word or expression, everyone understands it in his or her own way. And that is why, although the words are the same, their meaning changes from person to person, just as in the case of words like God or Love. But here, we shall try to explore the meaning of these words as an aspect of the divine. So, what is this Truth and Beauty? One thing is certain: it belongs to “a field beyond” — a field that is beyond our present scheme of things, which are governed by the mind.

Truth is expressed in different ways in spiritual literature. But one thing we must be aware of is that opinions are not the truth because they may be true for somebody, but they may not be the *whole* truth. For example, if I write the digit “6”

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on a piece of paper and show it to someone standing in front of me, that person will most likely read it as the digit “9”. Both the persons may think that they have the truth, but actually both of them hold only an opinion, a partial truth.

In this case, however, the truth is very easily understandable by both the individuals. But it does not happen so easily in other day-to-day events, and people find it utterly impossible that the two completely contradictory opinions, in fact, can be reconciled perfectly by a higher understanding — *prajñā* or Wisdom — a field beyond.

Since a lot has been said and discussed about Truth, let us try to explore this subject through the aspect of Beauty. We *must* arrive at the same result, because all three of them — Truth, Beauty, and Goodness — are of the same origin, and if we go to the root of the one, inevitably it has to be the root of the other two as well.

What Is Beauty?

Very often we find ourselves saying that “such-and-such object” is beautiful. That object may be a person, a natural scenery, a painting, a piece of music, a car, or a piece of cloth — it can be anything or anyone — and we are so convinced about this fact (that Beauty is in the object) that the *beautiful object* in front becomes extremely significant, and the struggle to possess or secure that object creates everything except Beauty.

We rarely put across the enquiry whether the Beauty is in the object. If so,

the same object would be beautiful to everyone, is it not? But all of us know that such is not the case. For someone a rose is beautiful, and for someone else it is the thorn that is so. Someone may find a tree full of lush green leaves beautiful, and yet there will always be someone who finds a tree, stripped naked of all its leaves, standing tall in the early morning sun against a blue sky, the most beautiful object in the whole world. Yet, if we observe carefully, this description does not tell us about the beauty of the *object*, instead, it tells us about the *likes or dislikes, or the aesthetic sense of the observer*. So, the perception of an object is subjective and hence fragmented.

Thus, if Beauty is *not* in the perception of an object, then where does it exist? Most of us would agree with Margaret Wolfe Hungerford when she says in her book *Molly Bawn*, written in 1878: “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” But again, this is a subjective statement which means the perception of Beauty will change from person to person; and again we are back to square one. The Beauty that we are talking about here is one of the aspects of Divinity, and Divinity is *universal*, so *Beauty must have a universal connotation to its real meaning*. It has to have an *integrated, not fragmented* meaning.

That is why I would like to put forth a thought for further exploration to everyone: “Beauty is not in the perception of an object; Beauty is in the absence of the subject”, which implies that the famous quote that we had just discussed would become: “Beauty is in the eye

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when there is no beholder.” The beholder that we are talking about here is the *lower self, or personality, or sense of separateness* that develops over a period of time during the evolution process.

What sort of eyes are these which have Beauty?

The Voice of the Silence by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) replies: “Before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained, and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion” — the illusion of the sense of separateness. HPB makes it more lucid in her *Theosophical Glossary*, p. 117:

The “eyes” the Lord Buddha developed in him at the twentieth hour of his vigil, when sitting under the Bo-tree, when he was attaining Buddhahood, they are the eyes of the glorified Spirit, to which matter is no longer a physical impediment, and which have the power of seeing all things within the space of the limitless Universe.

That is the relationship between Beauty and Beatitude — coming from the Latin, *beatus*, meaning blessedness, benediction, bliss — *it does not depend on anything external*.

Here comes a very interesting correlation between “materialism and objectification”, and “spirituality and inner beauty — which is simplicity outside”. A cultural approach that is more materialistic will always look for Beauty/ Love/ Peace/ Happiness through the objects outside. On the other hand, a cultural approach that is more spiritual will try to

realise Beauty/ Love/ Peace/ Happiness within. But, of course, not every culture remains the same forever. It is a cyclic process, and everyone goes through the change as per the plan of evolution.

However, the more important question is how to realise this Beauty or Bliss. And we all are aware of the fact that in Nature the solution exists where the problem is!

So, those of us who are willing to go deeper into this may do a small memory exercise. In the next five seconds, let us try to remember the most beautiful object that we have ever come across in our life. Now, staying with that moment, let us try to see our reactions to that object of beauty — we might say: Wow! It is beautiful/ awesome/ cool/ amazing/ O-my-God/ and so on. But the fundamental fact is that the verbalization occurs. Now, let us take the step before the verbalization. What could have happened? Obviously the *thought* of those words would have arisen in the mind. Although this process happens with everyone, it happens so fast that we may think it does not exist at all, but it does, because without thought speech is not possible.

Let us go another step back, before the thought even arose in the mind. *What could possibly be there? Now this is really very significant*; please be very vigilant about it because this is the door to the field beyond — the door to Beauty/ Truth/ Goodness. What was there?

I would say that there was a sense of wonder/ astonishment/ freshness/ maybe an element of surprise. Whatever it was, it was a matter of realisation and awareness

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at that moment. But one thing is for sure: there was *no thinker as yet*. It does not matter if this state lasts for ten seconds, one second, a microsecond or a nanosecond. What matters is that it does exist in the very daily life that we are living. *This is the field beyond*. As Mabel Collins said in *Light on the Path* (I.4): “Live neither in the present nor in the future, but in the Eternal.” This is that moment of the eternal now, or at least a doorway to it. It is not just about living in the present moment, but rather in the eternal now.

How long this state lasts depends a lot on our habit: whether we have developed a habit of reacting to everything immediately instead of being aware with silence. Because, in this reaction, we miss the eternal now — the moment of Truth and Beauty — seeing the thing *as it is* — and hence all our experiences remain incomplete, never whole. This is not something alien to us. We all have been through this as children. Look at how full of wonder children are — whether they see a butterfly, a pebble, a frog, a spider, *anything*. But as we become adults we lose this capacity to feel the *freshness/wonder* in the small things of daily life and then we look for benediction in churches/ temples/ mosques/ monasteries.

In spite of all the hustle and bustle of our modern daily life, every now and then, for a fraction of a second, something catches our “attention”, something that our limited, busy mind did not expect. That “something” can be anything — it can be one of the seven wonders of the world, a leaf falling from a tree and

flying hither and thither with the wind, a cactus flower fighting its way up in the middle of the desert, a smile on the face of some coworker in an otherwise stressed and monotonous workplace. It can be anything — that is not important.

What is important is that it opens up a window, even if it is for a fraction of a second, through which the bliss of Beauty enters when there is no personality. A better way of imagining it would be to think of a sudden gust of wind scattering dark clouds and the warmth of sunlight being realised; but soon after, the clouds gather again to form a temporary barrier. In this whole process the element of surprise plays a very important role. This is because surprise is something that is unexpected, unanticipated, and beyond imagination.

But we all know that the mind does not like surprises, especially if the surprise is not a pleasurable one, because it wants security. And Beauty is to see that there is no security in Life and the surprise shatters, even if only for a moment, the castle of pseudo-security built by the mind and makes it realise its own limitation.

That is why Love is beautiful, because in it there is no security. It is the most vulnerable state of being, and yet it is the most *fearlessly blissful* and the most powerful binding-transforming force *in the whole universe*. That is why it welcomes everyone and everything with open arms. It does not differentiate between saint and criminal, because when it has its way, it transforms even the criminal into a saint — that is the alchemy of Love, and that is Beauty.

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Still one of the most misunderstood words is Love, just as Beauty is.

A most unfortunate thing, perhaps, is the classification of Love into various types, like conditional-unconditional, material-spiritual, human-divine, and so on. What this does is to give the mind some leeway in the name of human love, and now human love has everything in it that is not Love. It has attachment, expectations, security-seeking, possession-pleasure, envy, even hatred — along with the occasional good wishes for the loved ones.

But just as Beauty and Love have nothing to do with human love, many wise individuals have expressed it clearly: as long as there is “I” and “you”, there is no Love. So, shall we stop saying “I love you”? Of course not, that will make the world and life very dry, and our planet is already drying up. But still, while expressing these three words, one can be *aware* of the *truth* behind them, whether or not there is an asterisk at the right upper corner implying “Conditions Apply”.

In the end, when that potential moment of Beauty and the Eternal presents itself to us next time, let us *attend* to it *totally, completely*, without verbalization, without taking pictures, without making any noise, and Truth-Goodness-Beauty will be there in that eternal now. When we live like that, then gradually, because old habits die hard, all moments become full of freshness and Beauty, irrespective of the external circumstances. As *The Voice of the Silence* says:

For:

When to himself his form appears unreal, as do on waking all the forms he sees in dreams;

When he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the ONE — the inner sound which kills the outer.

Then only, not till then, shall he forsake the region of *asat*, the false, to come unto the realm of *Sat*, the true.

May each one of us realise that *Trinity* within, and express it without, in his or her own way. ✧

You cannot be one with ALL, unless all your acts, thoughts, and feelings synchronize with the onward march of Nature.

Mohini Chatterji, “Morality and Pantheism”
The Theosophist, Sep. 1882, p. 317,
and H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. 5, p. 337

Theosophy and the World Crisis

WAYNE GATFIELD

HOW has it come about that the words of all the great world Teachers have been ignored and the complete opposite has been practised in society and by the religions themselves?

This is mainly due to the fact that the followers of these religions were unable to live up to the high moral standards set by the founders as put forward in the “Sermon on the Mount” and many other teachings. In fact, to call them “founders” is a mistake, as the founders of religions were their followers, who introduced rules and regulations that arose from their limited views and their attempts to seriously water down the original teachings.

Also the “natural” brutality of human nature compelled them to seek in the teachings any excuse to enforce that brutality on those they consider inferior. Islam and Christianity are the religions most guilty of this. This brutality arises from the failure of society in general, including orthodox religion, to develop the spiritual nature and a misunderstanding of the teachings due to literal interpretations.

Given the fact that Theosophy teaches

that man has been on this Earth for many millions of years and that even orthodox science has come to realize that it seems very remiss and cruel of the Christian God to have waited until just over two thousand years ago to send down his son to save us all! What about the trillions who have lived before! This idea arose from the fact that until relatively recently the Christian Church believed mankind to be only a few thousand years old.

The theosophical teaching that there have been a long line of such saviours appearing at certain times in history following certain cycles makes much more sense. As Krishna is reported to have said: “Whenever virtue subsides and vice prevails, I come down to help humankind.” In other words, the forces that watch over humanity will send someone or something to cast a light into our darkness when needed. In this Age of Kali the best they can do is try to at least win some converts to the way of Light, so that the true teachings are kept alive for future generations and there will be some comfort and inspiration for those who need it.

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But what is meant by a Saviour? In an article, “The Beacon of the Unknown”, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) states:

Every country has had its Saviours. He who dissipates the darkness of ignorance by the help of the torch of science, thus disclosing to us the truth, deserves that title as a mark of our gratitude, quite as much as he who saves us from death by healing our bodies. Such a one awakens in our benumbed souls the faculty of distinguishing the true from the false, by kindling therein a divine flame hitherto absent, and he has the right to our grateful reverence, for he has become our creator.

What matters the name or the symbol that personifies the abstract idea, if that idea is always the same and is true? Whether the concrete symbol bears one title or another, whether the Saviour in whom we believe has for an earthly name Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, or Asclepius — also called the “Saviour-God”. . . — we have but to remember one thing: symbols of divine truth were not invented for the amusement of the ignorant; they are the *alpha* and *omega* of philosophic thought.

The problem now is severe. The motto of the Theosophical Society is “There Is No Religion Higher than Truth”. The theosophical movement in general was started to promote a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity regardless of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour, and there is a lot of work to be done in that direction in the world today, where numerous forces are sowing seeds of dissent in the minds of many. There are very few groups in the world

that are devoted to this ideal of realizing the ultimate Oneness of all living things, and the illusory nature of all man-made obstacles that prevent that realization. The theosophical Masters have stated in Letter No. 88, chron., (ML–10) of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*:

And now, after making due allowance for evils that are natural and cannot be avoided, — and so few are they that I challenge the whole host of Western metaphysicians to call them evils or to trace them directly to an independent cause — I will point out the greatest, the chief cause of nearly two-thirds of the evils that pursue humanity ever since that cause became a power. It is religion under whatever form and in whatsoever nation. It is the sacerdotal caste, the priesthood and the churches; it is in those illusions that man looks upon as sacred, that he has to search out the source of that multitude of evils which is the great curse of humanity and that almost overwhelms humankind. Ignorance created gods and cunning took advantage of the opportunity.

Look at India and look at Christendom and Islam, at Judaism and Fetishism. It is priestly imposture that rendered these gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it. It is belief in God and gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them. Is not man ever ready to commit any

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kind of evil if told that his God or gods demand the crime — voluntary victim of an illusionary God, the abject slave of his crafty ministers?

The Irish, Italian, and Slavonian peasant will starve himself and see his family starving and naked to feed and clothe his padre and pope. For two thousand years India groaned under the weight of caste, Brahmins alone feeding on the fat of the land, and today the followers of Christ and those of Muhammad are cutting each other's throats in the names of and for the greater glory of their respective myths. Remember the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, morality, and universal charity, the altars of their false gods.

We can see this still continuing in modern society; “the great dire heresy of separateness” is indeed trying its best to “wean us from the rest” and countless lives have been affected by those acting on mistaken views taken from their holy books. Finding sections that can be interpreted to support their views and ignoring any that contradict them. The symbolic meaning of the words is lost to those whose whole lives revolve around violence and materiality, hiding under the cloak of religious feeling. They will never have the sensibilities to appreciate the inner meanings, which can only appeal to the intuition which in its turn is cultivated by the development of the truly human feelings of love and compassion. Without these we cannot claim to be truly

human in the true sense of the word.

Love of profit has made the world blind to the beauties of Nature and the powers that be have no qualms about destroying the natural world to secure a profit in some business enterprise. *The Voice of the Silence*, translated by HPB, tells us:

Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance. And she will open wide before thee the portals of her secret chambers, lay bare before thy gaze the treasures hidden in the very depths of her pure virgin bosom. Unsullied by the hand of matter she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit — the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.

As long as we look upon Nature with a material eye and plunder her riches for material gain we will never discover her secrets and her hidden treasures.

So what is the attitude we should develop towards our fellow man and the world in general? *The Voice of the Silence* also tells us this in sublime language:

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye. But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

Although the world seems in a poor state at the moment, natural disasters and

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those brought about by the actions of humankind do bring to the fore acts of heroism; and there are many individuals and organizations that work for the benefit of humanity on many levels.

Theosophy has an important part to play in providing another dimension that is rarely touched on and provides

the basis for a Brotherhood and Sisterhood not based upon the instability of social or political considerations, but on the solid rock of True Spirituality rooted in the ONE SPIRIT in all of us. This wipes out all differences created by a merely superficial view of what it means to be truly HUMAN. ✧

Most of the ontological truths are common to the “Jewish Bible, the Hindu Veda, the Parsi Zend-Avesta, and the Mohammedan Koran”. But neither the Buddhist Pitaka nor Buddhism in its full presentation can be called religion; for Buddhism in its esoteric sense is the grandest world philosophy, while in its popular aspects it is but little higher than any other so-called religion — generally a cobweb of foolish and unscientific fables. Therefore, Buddhism proper ought never to be classified with the groups of theistic religions, since it is a philosophy entirely apart from, and opposed to, other religious systems.

H. P. Blavatsky, “Review of a Lecture”
The Theosophist, September 1882, p. 317,
and *Collected Writings*, vol. 4, p. 201

Dr Annie Besant — Humble Servant of Humanity

C. A. SHINDE

ENLIGHTENED ones have always spoken a language of Love, Light, and Life that brings harmony, kindness, and peace. In the Indian tradition the following Guru Mantra imparted by gurus to their disciples is matchless:

The root of meditation is the form
of the guru,
The root of worship is the feet of the guru,
The root of mantra is the word of the guru,
The root of liberation is the grace of
the guru.

Dr Annie Besant gave us a mantra for meditation to have integrity or harmony within, in the form of a Universal Prayer:

O Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;
O Hidden Light, shining in every creature;
O Hidden Love, embracing all in oneness;
May each who feels himself as one
with Thee,
Know he is also one with every other.

Dr Besant composed this prayer, or invocation, on the request of certain serious students from South India, and gave it to them as the mantra for medi-

tation and contemplation. The hidden trinities Life-Light-Love, Will-Wisdom-Love, *ātma-buddhi-manas*, or *sat-chit-ānanda* are hidden, so one has to learn to see them. There is a sculpture hidden in a rock, but only a sculptor can see it. There is a painting hidden in a blank white canvas, but only a painter's eye can visualize it. So if one blends his heart and mind together, a masterpiece comes alive. It is only such passion, dedication, and talent that can transform a person.

Dr Annie Besant, second International President of the Theosophical Society (TS) from 1907 to 1933, was a reformer, stateswoman, author, and the world's greatest female orator. Her essential teaching was that human progress is not only in material advancement but also in the moral foundation and the spiritual insights of the people. Her service to India and the world are in many ways incomparable. Her life, speeches, and writings considerably moulded many people and their philosophy of life. Her great gift to humanity is the knowledge of Theosophy.

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Dr Annie Besant — Humble Servant of Humanity

She was not only a theosophist but also an occultist, and all her greatness was rooted in her living faith in the Masters of the Wisdom and her teacher, Madame H. P. Blavatsky, the messenger of Theosophy. As a seeker of truth, an original thinker, a forceful lecturer, clear writer, and person of action, she worked as a humble servant of humanity. In fact her name has to be inscribed in golden letters in Indian history as a pioneer in the struggle for Indian freedom and the renaissance of the Hindu religion.

Dr Besant gave a series of lectures in London in mid-1909. In one of them she asked: “What shall Theosophy do in the coming civilization for society? — society as we see it today, which is a battle, not a social order; which is an anarchy, not an organism.” How much truer is this description today in India, after 72 years of independence! In present-day society, in India and in the world, we still have tensions, conflicts of ideologies, hatred, and intolerance, group rivalries, and caste wars. With this in mind, J. Krishnamurti said: “The man who really wants to find out whether or not there is a state beyond the framework of time must be free of civilization, that is, he must be free of the collective will . . . therefore, capable of discovering for himself what is true.” The following are excerpts from one of Dr Besant’s lectures mentioned above:

It is often thought that changes will only be brought about by the menace of the starving, by the dread of revolution. . . . You will think me a dreamer, perhaps; and yet I tell you a truth when I say that not by

the uprising of the miserable, but by the self-sacrifice of the comfortable will the future society be realized on Earth. . . . You can make a riot, you can make a revolution by starving desperate people, but there is no stability in that which follows revolution. You cannot take, but you can give . . . I tell you there is no joy on Earth like the sacrifice of the lower nature to the higher, and the giving to others of the higher, that asks nothing for itself. Along those lines our social redemption will come . . . That is the future to which we look, for which we labour, proclaiming everywhere the ancient words that “joy lies in giving, and not in taking”; saying once again the old truth that only where self-sacrifice is found, there is also a religion and civilization that can endure.

Thinkers of the present day, both philosophical and religious, have often asked the question: What is the place of religion in the modern world? All of them are agreed that the influence of religion is on the wane. It is often regarded not only as useless for removing the ills of society and bringing happiness to humanity, it is even said to be a hindrance to it. True religion is that of love and service. It solves the many problems that affect mankind in the present day. It is such a religion of love and service that is essential to remove the tensions and conflicts that exist between nations, groups of men, and individuals. The only way to save humankind is by the spiritual inspiration that is derived from the pursuit of the religion of love and service, which is the common meeting ground for all the great religions.

In the present world it is important to understand that spirituality is not identical with religion, because a person may be both religious and spiritual, religious and not spiritual, or spiritual but not religious. Spirituality is the direct experience of realizing the divinity within, and religion is to relate with all existence, that is, being in tune with the surroundings. The second Object of the TS encourages the study of comparative religion, so that the student of Theosophy can find the truth that the source of all religions is one, and all religions have the common teaching of oneness of life or one Universal Consciousness.

There are apparent religious differences, but their deeper essence is the same. The concept of God has been expressed in all religions as unmatched embodiment of love and compassion, and helping to save humanity through different manifestations, incarnations, and prophets. As per Hindu mythology, during the churning of the ocean, Śiva drank poison to save creation. The Bible narrates that when Jesus was being nailed to the cross He asked his Father to forgive his executioners. Likewise Zarathustra forgave his assassin by throwing his prayer beads at him. There are several such anecdotes that describe the compassion of all preceptors and prophets.

Buddha once told a king that if he believed that sacrificing an animal will take him to heaven, then sacrificing a human being will perhaps help him even better. He requested the king to spare the animals and accept himself as sacrifice. Guru Nanak happily accepted captivity so he could use it as an opportunity to enlighten

an emperor to set free all prisoners of war.

Dr Besant spoke much about man and his bodies and the Law of Karma. Man, as we know, normally lives in three worlds, the physical, emotional, and mental. He therefore creates results in each according to their respective laws and powers, and all come within the all-embracing Law of Karma. During his daily life in waking consciousness he is creating karma, that is, results, in these three worlds by action, desire, and thought, while in his sleeping state he is creating karma in two worlds, the emotional and the mental. The amount of karma created by him depends on the stage he has reached in evolution.

We may confine ourselves to these three worlds, for those above them are not inhabited consciously by the average man. But we must remember the *Bhagavadgītā* teaching that we are like inverted trees, the roots of which are fixed in the higher worlds, and in the branches spread in the three lower worlds dwell our personality and mortal bodies, where our consciousness is working.

Let us remember harmony is the Law, order is its beauty and love is its perfume. Life is a song; let us live it joyfully. Where there is law no achievement is impossible, and karma is the guarantee of man's evolution into moral and spiritual aspects. Life is beautiful, if only we know how to live it; pleasure is sensual, whereas Joy is blissful.

One of the Elder Brethren said that Theosophy is the study of the relationship between the mortal and the immortal, the finite and the infinite, the transitory and the eternal. ✧

Where Am I Going?

RAMI SHAPIRO

YOUR answer to this question, “Where am I going?” depends on your answer to the question, “Where did I come from?” If you believe you came from somewhere else, then chances are you believe you are going somewhere else. And if you believe that you arose from here, chances are you believe you are staying here as well. Where we are going, of course, refers to death: where are you going when you die? And, like our previous questions, there are two basic responses: Somewhere and Nowhere.

A few months ago I was watching early morning television while staying in a Holiday Inn Hotel in Canton, Ohio, USA. My hotel TV selections were limited: three or four sports channels, a couple of channels recycling old movies, a few 24-hour cable news shows, several channels trying to sell me tangible products, and three channels trying to sell me intangible products based on Catholic and Protestant doctrines of one sort or another.

One of the latter caught my attention, and I listened intently as the preacher/guest explained to the preacher/host that the word “Bible” was an acronym for

“Best Instructions Before Leaving Earth”. The host pretended never to have heard that idea before, and feigned excitement. It was new to me, however, and I was genuinely excited. Best Instructions Before Leaving Earth — how clever is that?

Of course these were Bible believers, so their preference for the Bible over, for example, the *Quran* or *Bhagavadgītā*, is to be expected, but what they had to say about the Bible as best instructions before leaving earth could be said about any book a believer in “going somewhere” may hold sacred. The point is not which book is the best book for leaving Earth, but that you will be leaving Earth sooner rather than later, and it helps to prepare.

“It only makes sense”, a neighbor said when I mentioned the Bible acronym to her. “If I’m taking a trip to Alaska, or Europe, I would want to read up about the place and learn how best to get there. What is true of going to Europe or Asia or someplace is all the more true of going to heaven. After all, if I can’t make it to Europe I could still opt for Alaska and both would be fun, but if I can’t make it

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into heaven the alternative is not fun at all, so it is only smart to read up on how to get where you want to go.”

Makes sense. If you came from somewhere you must be going somewhere. And where you are going is usually one of two places: heaven or hell. I am, of course, using language associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but the Hindu hope that you can break the cycle of birth/death/rebirth, and both the Tibetan Buddhist *Book of the Dead*, both make it clear that the Abrahamic faiths are not the only ones that harbor plans of getting off-planet.

The Perennial Wisdom teaches otherwise. You came from here and you will still be here when you die. There is nowhere to go, because it is all God or Absolute Reality or Tao or whatever name you choose to speak of that infinite reality that manifests as all finite existence. This is the organic view of life.

Most people opt for the going-somewhere scenario, and there are two basic ways of speaking about this: eternal-somewhere or perpetual-return. Eternal-somewhere speaks to heaven and hell. Religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam by and large fall into the eternal-somewhere camp, and while they differ as to how someone might end up in heaven or hell, they agree that the someone who does is the same someone who lives on Earth.

Think about this for a moment: Say you believe that when you die you are going to go to heaven and there you will be reunited with loved ones — your

parents, spouse, kids, and so on. If this scenario is comforting to you, it can only be so if the “you” who goes to heaven is the “you” you are now. After all if those in heaven are radically different from the persons they were on earth, how would you recognize them? Just because you are told this total stranger is your deceased mother does not mean you are going to rush into her arms if she looks nothing like your mother.

When we speak of being united with loved ones we assume that they and we will be as we remember them and ourselves to have been on Earth. Otherwise heaven is no comfort.

Similarly, when we speak of people being tortured in the fires of hell for some heinous crime or equally heinous belief, it makes no sense that the tortured soul in hell is anyone other than the evil person it was on earth. The whole point of eternal damnation is to inflict punishment on people we despise here on earth, and if the soul being punished is not the person we want punished, where is the satisfaction?

It is not so different with reincarnation, the notion of perpetual return. While there is no expectation that the body that dies is the body that returns, there is an expectation that the soul that dies is the soul that returns. Otherwise what is the point of reincarnation?

Reincarnation is either a punishment or an opportunity. Either you are forced to return to earth because you did something horrendous for which you must pay, or you reincarnate because there is more to learn or accumulate than can be learned

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or accumulated in one lifetime. In either case the “you” that comes back must be the “you” that left. In other words, there is something fundamentally egocentric about these afterlife scenarios, something that imagines a “you” that lives on after this life.

While I cannot prove or disprove any of this, none of it speaks to me or to my understanding of reality. Rooted in the Perennial Wisdom and its understanding that there is no separate self, but simply myriad expressions of the singular Self, the Eternal Tao, God, or Absolute Reality, I find the notion that there is a “me” separate from Reality alienating and discomfiting. I feel a part of the whole and not apart from it. I know, as best as I can know anything, that I am a wave of an endless sea, and that when I die, I will return to what I already am: the ocean itself, and while the sea will continue to wave it will never again wave “me”.

In my last essay I mentioned a conversation I had had with a priest about birth control. He told me that souls lined up in heaven waiting to be born on earth, so that they might get baptized and reserve a place in heaven when they die. When pressed to explain why souls already in heaven would have to come down to earth in order to secure a place in heaven, he took refuge in mystery. Lots of believers do.

I do not mind this response as long as it applies to things that are in fact mysteries. But theology is not mysterious, and its positions are not mysteries. When theologians take refuge in mystery they are simply dodging inconsistencies

or irrationalities in their system of belief.

A couple of years ago a neighbor wrote to our local newspaper, *The Daily News Journal*, challenging several Christian pastors, our local imam, and myself to publish a statement in the newspaper decrying violence in the name of God. I contacted the man and the ministers, and we met over coffee to draft just such a statement for the newspaper. It took about ten minutes, and that included preparing the coffee.

Since we were so in sync with one another I suggested we expand our statement to decry not only violence done in the name of God in this world, but also violence done in the name of God in the world to come. The pastors and the imam each believed that believers were going to heaven and nonbelievers (in the case of the pastors) and wicked people and infidels (in the case of the imam) were going to be tortured for all eternity in hell. Let us decry this violence as well, I urged them. You would have thought I had asked them to allow for marriage equality. With one voice they said, “Impossible! That’s up to God!”

No it is not; it is up to your ideas about God. If your story of God includes eternal damnation and torture, we can conclude that you value this torture because you value this story, but we cannot conclude anything about God. The God of this or that theology is like the self of this or that story: a character in a narrative rather than an ontological reality.

You may or may not believe in God; and whether there is a God or not is beyond proof, but the God we cannot

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prove or disprove has nothing to do with the God of theology. This God is a narrative creation of a tribe of theological fiction writers. This is why Christian theologians never discover that Krishna rather than Christ is God, and why Jewish theologians never discover that God prefers Mormons to Jews. Our stories always present ourselves in the best light. And while it is politically correct to say that all people worship the same God, the facts are otherwise.

The Jewish God, for example, dictated Torah to Moses but not the Quran to Mohammad. The Christian God has a Son, while the Jewish and Muslim Gods do not. The Muslim God made Mohammad the seal of the prophets, while the Jewish God said Moses was the superior prophet, and that prophecy itself stopped centuries before Mohammad was born. Krishna came to earth as a charioteer and flute player, whereas we have no reason to believe the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim gods know anything about managing a team of horses or playing a woodwind instrument. When we say there is only one God, or when we say that all believers in God believe in the same God, we are saying that what different religions say about their respective Gods is irrelevant.

My point is this: when you say that the reason God does what God does is a mystery, you are really saying that you have no idea why your story has a God that does things that you cannot understand; or worse, things you would not countenance in someone other than God.

My clergy friends would never torture

a person for five seconds, let alone for all eternity, yet they were more than content to let God do so. Why? Because they imagine they are powerless over their narrative, but they are not powerless. We create the Gods we believe in, and then insist to the contrary. This is like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle creating the fiction that Dr Watson wrote the stories about Sherlock Holmes, and then believing in his own fiction as fact. If Sir Arthur actually denied authoring the Holmes stories people would think him mad, yet when we deny authoring our narratives about God we are celebrated as people of faith. If your scenarios about the afterlife embarrass you, change them.

Here are some teachings from the Perennial Wisdom that I find more enlightening.

I am all-devouring Death;
I am the Origin of all that shall happen . . .
(*Bhagavadgītā*, X.34)

Krishna is being honest here. God is reality; reality includes birth and death. YHVH is no less honest in the Hebrew Bible:

I create light. I fashion darkness.
I make good, and I make evil.
(Isaiah 45:7)

When we know this, when we know that all reality is God, when we know that we come from the infinite, we cannot help but know that we return to the infinite as well. And where is the infinite if not right here!

They said to Jesus, “What is the place we are going to?”

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Jesus said to them, “Stand in the place you can reach.”

(Dialogue of the Savior 77–78)

What an odd and enticing challenge: *Stand in the place you can reach*. What is this place? I suggest it is only here. Here is the only place you can reach and stand. And how do you reach this place? You cannot reach it, you are already in it!

This is the heart of Perennial Wisdom: you are God; the infinite is happening in you as you are right here and right now. You lack nothing, you need nothing, you are everything.

Knowing that there is nowhere to go frees you to be where you are without distraction. “I always have one eye on heaven,” one man said to me during a lecture I gave on Perennial Wisdom. “I always have to consider whether what I’m doing in this world will get me into or keep me out of the place I want to go in the next world. If I let my guard down even for a minute, I might sin and lose my place in heaven.”

This seems like a very anxious way to live. And it does not make all that much sense since this fellow also believed that Jesus died for his sins, so what does he have to fear from death? But the confusion simply speaks to the inconsistency of his narrative.

My suggestion is to opt for a different story. I prefer the following narrative:

There was once a man who dreamed of a great treasure hidden on the underside of the bridge leading to the palace of the king.

Having dreamed the same dream three nights running, the man set out to find the treasure beneath the bridge.

Arriving in the capital he found the bridge heavily guarded, and as he loitered on the bridge wondering how to proceed, the captain of the guard accosted him demanding to know what he was doing. The man was honest, and told the captain of his dream. The captain laughed, and recounted his own dream about a poor man living in a house with a treasure buried under his stove. Listening to the captain describe the house and the stove, the poor fellow realized it was his house and his stove the captain had dreamed of. Racing home, he dug up the treasure and became a great benefactor to all the poor in his village.

Commenting on this story, Martin Buber writes:

There is something that can only be found in one place. It is a great treasure, which may be called the fulfillment of existence. The place where this treasure can be found is the place on which one stands. . . . [I]t is there and nowhere else that the treasure can be found. The environment which I feel to be the natural one, the situation which has been assigned to me as my fate, the things that happen to me day after day, the things that claim me day after day — these contain my essential task and such fulfillment of existence as is open to me.

The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism, p. 37–38

Here is what matters. ✧

Beyond Suffering

SVITLANA GAVRYLENKO

THE efforts of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) reflect the Theosophical Society's (TS) worldwide spiritual maturity and altruistic devotion, just like selfless devotion and service for the sake of the common good is a measure of spiritual maturity, and disciple qualification or efficacy, of each individual aspirant including each TS member.

Certainly, we perform our service not only as a part of TOS activities, and this should not be ignored. For example, currently in our country, Ukraine, the voluntary movement associated with the long military and humanitarian crisis has spread widely. However, there is a tendency not to present such TS voluntary service activities as those of the TOS.

Now, I would like to ask: What is the meaning of suffering? According to Wikipedia, it is a set of extremely unpleasant, burdensome, or painful sensations experienced by a living being, associated with physical and emotional discomfort, pain, stress, or torment. Other definitions describe it as a physical or mental pain or torment; or the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship.

Suffering is familiar to each one of us.

It is unlikely that anyone has succeeded in escaping from it. Many think it is like a never-ending labyrinth. While suffering, one makes an effort to get rid of it. However, very often these efforts subsequently bring about even more suffering, both to oneself and to others. We are beating around the bush as long as we place the blame for our suffering on external circumstances or other people.

The biblical myth maps the source of suffering back to eating the Apple of Discord and the consequent expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. The first discomfort they felt was about their nudity, which made them hide from God. Thus, suffering is a tool of evolution which allows one to become trained and gain experience on how to overcome an unpleasant condition.

What is the nature of suffering? If we look at animals or early men, the basic sources of their suffering were illness, physical trauma, or threats to their life. These conditions generated pain and fear. These were the dominating factors of suffering. After the individualization of man, in the process of developing the psychic sphere of life, mental experiences

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began to prevail over the physical ones.

Even in the known period of history, we see how medieval customs led to the loss of honor and dignity of a person which became a source of suffering, torment, and grief. We are familiar with a genre of French romance novels describing suffering due to unrequited love, infidelity, or jealousy. Contemporary youth perceive these stories with derision. Times have changed. Today it is possible to define lost self-respect or hurt false pride as the dominating tone of suffering. The suffering associated with the so-called “creativity torments” are also increasing.

We can see that the evolutionary progression of humankind is associated with the change of the dominant in the very nature of suffering. Is there any consistent pattern in such a development? Can we say that suffering makes us move in a certain direction?

When I was informed that the topic of this session was “Beyond Suffering”, I first looked up the meaning of the word “beyond” in the dictionary. The word “suffering” was familiar to me. I would like to thank the English language for the variety of nuances provided by the word “beyond”, especially in the context of the words “beyond suffering”, such as “further away than”, “on the far side of”, “later than/ after”, “greater than”, “in addition to”, “in the distance”, “above/ over”, “outside/ outward”, and so on.

Let us take a look at the Christian concept of suffering. The Doctrine of Christ teaches us that suffering inevitably accompanies human life and that it is a result of

their sinfulness. Suffering is inevitable because sinfulness is not only an acquired but also inherited quality of human beings. Christianity teaches us that suffering purifies the soul and considers it to be a ladder for spiritual ascension. It also teaches us to be merciful to those who suffer and calls for giving alms to the needy. It offers individuals relief from suffering and sins through repentance and forgiveness. These recommendations have powerful potential for transformation: they are able to awaken the conscience, the internal moral code of a person, and its latent internal divinity.

This is the way for getting *out of* suffering, where it gets dissolved and disappears. Why are the results achieved in two thousand years so modest? Maybe because, despite the deep truth which is embedded in this formula, the Christian church makes money from selling the indulgences. [These are grants by the Pope of remission of the temporal punishment in purgatory, still due for sins after absolution. The unrestricted sale of indulgences by pardoners was a widespread abuse during the later Middle Ages.]

Now, let us turn to the Buddhist tradition. The Buddha also taught us that suffering is inevitable in our life. Desires and passions as well as ignorance and lack of knowledge of the true nature of things are the reasons for suffering. Compassion towards sufferers is a duty of each true follower of the Buddha’s Doctrine. In order to get rid of suffering, it is recommended to do away with desires and to acquire the ability to distinguish various

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manifestations of the surrounding world. These recommendations also possess a potential for internal transformation and induce us to establish control over our lower nature, to shift the consciousness focus to the mental level, that of the observer, and to take the position *outside* or *apart* from things that deliver suffering.

In *The Voice of Silence*, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB) describes seven gates through which the traveller, who has the courage to follow the spiritual way should pass. It is just the midpoint, the fourth gate, detachment, or *vairāgya*, which opens the way to acquiring the indifference to pleasure and suffering. Certainly, in this fragment, the internal way is described and the indifference concerns first of all the personal suffering of man. The point is that in order to develop the wisdom of perceiving various life lessons and the understanding of causal relationships, we should drain the cup of our grief and reach the threshold of suffering. Such indifference is a consequence of the apperceptive life experience; thus for such a meaning, the word combination “*after suffering*” is more appropriate. In addition, we should not forget that it is only the midpoint of the Spiritual Way.

What does the overcoming of suffering and going beyond the limits of suffering bring about? First, compassion, mercy, and sympathy. Suffering refines our soul and opens our heart. It allows us to clear and pacify our personal nature to enable the manifestation of divine qualities, the higher merits and virtues. It is only then that we can help others to rise

above themselves. In today’s world, a lot of people are ready to demonstrate their compassion towards the needs of humanity and of other kingdoms of Nature. People are uniting for joint actions; the influence of such associations increases every year. It is one of the aspects of the modern globalization process. Our planet is called a vale of grief, but it is also a forge for Bodhisattvas.

On the one hand, suffering can be understood as the manifestation of our weakness, lack of ability to control ourselves, to soberly evaluate the circumstances and our own capabilities, to take responsibility for our deeds. It often happens that a person succumbing to such weakness runs into depression or apathy. They accuse the entire world, and begin drinking or taking drugs because they are unable to cope with themselves. This means the loss of control over themselves when strong-willed efforts cannot make a way through a veil of gloomy thoughts and feelings.

Our spirit, or true self, or *ātman*, does not have the power to affect our personality, or personal self. To be more exact, our personality becomes unreceptive to our own higher nature. Sometimes, a person, who is short-sighted and willing to help, starts consoling a suffering friend and takes over the responsibility for solving the problem that causes the suffering. For example, what is the reaction of parents in a situation when their children do not know how to fasten their shoelaces? Often, being in a hurry, the parents themselves fasten the shoelaces because it is easier for them. They thereby offer their help, which

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only makes the child weaker and more dependent on others and circumstances.

In cases of strong emotional outbursts, the best option for the compassionate helper is to wait quietly and kindly, and then to follow with a friendly discussion. In case of chronic depression, it is recommended to gradually return the person to the positive perception of the world through dialogue using Beauty — any form of the arts, such as music or poetry, or Nature.

On the other hand, suffering can be perceived as the manifestation of strength of a person. It is a kind of a check of their virtue, of stability, indestructibility, or firmness. By overcoming suffering, people become more human, loving, and wise. They apprehend their strengths and weaknesses better and become masters of their personality. It goes without saying that it is possible and necessary to help them in such an effort.

What could be the compassion in such a case? I would like to refer to the classics. The Bible provides a perfect example. God tested Job and delivered a terrible blow to him. All Job's children died. His body became covered with ulcers, and he appeared sitting on a mound of manure. Then, his friends arrived to console him. They sat down at a distance from him, and they did not say a single word to him for seven days. It was the manifestation of compassion containing the power. In this case, we can use the phrase: to rise *over* the suffering. Such compassion is demonstrated by surgeons, experienced psychologists, lawyers. Such a strategy is often applied by spiritual guides to their disciples.

Now, I would like to establish the association between what I have just said about suffering, and the activity of the Theosophical Order of Service. Charitable activity is an internal need for many of us. Moreover, at a certain stage of the spiritual life, the selfless, disinterested aid for the sake of the common good becomes the natural lifestyle, the way of least resistance. Such activity is art rather than just work or fulfillment of duty. We should always focus our efforts on the elimination of causes of suffering, and not just on the correction of consequences. The causes are in the sphere of a person's perception of the world. We should learn how to make our charity, both individual and collective, not indulging the weaknesses of a person, not creating their dependency on other people or circumstances. Our aid and participation should promote the finding of the power of love by those for whom it is assigned.

The priority directions of charity include nurturing and education, enlightenment, public involvement in joint creative or charitable activity, and so on.

In summary, it is necessary first of all to emphasize the following:

- ◆ Our suffering is inevitable; it is associated with the very nature of our self-being. This is the way our personal nature reacts to the impact of the surrounding world and apprehends this world and itself.
- ◆ Suffering develops the spiritual sphere of people by opening their heart to love, compassion, and mercy.
- ◆ To show compassion to another person is not an easy task and requires experience, wisdom, patience, and ingenuity. ✧



Cuban and other Hispanic TS members gathered on the terrace of the Cuban Section national headquarters' building in Havana during the Section's annual summer school. At the very center of the back row, the gentleman in the middle of a group of three men is the National President of the Cuban Section, Mr Carlos Fernández, and the only lady standing in the second row, far left, is the immediately former National President of the Section, Mrs Barbara Fariñas

Theosophical Work around the World



The day before the start of the Cuban Section summer school, the visiting members went on a trip to contemplate the beauty of the famous Viñales Valley, reinforcing links of fraternity



Fr l. to r.: A member from the Hialeah Lodge in Florida, Mr Ricardo Basurto, and two former National Presidents of the Cuban Section — Ms Nilda Venegas and Mr Gaspar Torres

Theosophical Work around the World

Cuba - Summer School

The recently appointed National President of the Cuban Section, Mr Carlos V. Fernández Pérez, reports that they held their traditional summer school from 25 to 27 July 2019 at its national headquarters in Havana for the seventh year in a row. This was a special occasion, as Cuban members were joined by others from abroad, who gave their support and shared their brotherhood toward the Cuban theosophical movement.

Members came from Dharma Lodge in Costa Rica, and from Bhakti, Bilbao, Arjuna, and Ceres Lodges in Spain. From the American Section came members of Jinarajadasa Lodge in Hialeah, Florida, and the Ojai Valley Lodge in California, as well as the Presidential Representative of the TS in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Mrs Magaly Gracia de Polanco. In total, the school had a participation of around 50 members, including those from the seven Lodges in Havana, the Island's capital.

All three days of the summer school were dedicated to share a group of seven presentations which were meant to honor the memory of eminent theosophists, as well as reflect on the importance of meditation. The speakers and titles of their presentations were:

Gaspar Torres Martínez, Ojai Valley Lodge, USA, and former National President of the Cuban Section: "First Theo-

sophists in Cuba: A Legacy for the Americas";

Josefa Martín Aguado, Ceres Lodge, Spain: "Tibet and Theosophy: The last legacy of Mario Roso de Luna";

Carlos Vicente Fernández: "Joy Mills: The Price of Liberty";

María Auxiliadora García Pérez, President of Ceres Lodge, Spain: "Theosophy and Meditation";

Patricia Montoya Calderón, Dharma Branch, Costa Rica: "Everyday Living in the Light of Theosophy";

Magaly Polanco, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic: "Theosophy from the Heart"; and

Nilda Venegas Bernal, Rama Arjuna, Spain, and former National President of the Cuban Section: "Meditative Practice and Working with Emotions".

All participants felt united by sharing the same Spanish language and culture, which was advantageous to efficiently transmit, and facilitate experimenting with, the teachings presented. This spirit of unity also contributed to the truly fraternal atmosphere and happy camaraderie that persisted throughout the three days, giving a beautiful boost to Theosophy in Cuba.

The Cuban Section of the Theosophical Society is pleased and grateful for the success of this year's summer school, which revitalized theosophical ideals via study, investigation, and brotherhood. ✧

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