

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Theosophy and the Individual

(Talk given at TS, Adyar on Sunday, 11 April 2019)

TIM BOYD

RUPERT Sheldrake, a TS member and highly reputed biologist, has developed over his career some ideas related to science and consciousness that have extended the normal scientific view into the realm of consciousness. On one occasion he was asked a very broad, but deep question: “Why are things the way they are?” His answer was as brief and simple as the question itself: “Because they were the way they were.” His answer was brief, but worth exploring.

From the theosophical perspective karma would be one of the ideas that initially come to mind. The cycles of reincarnation might also describe why things are the way they are, and also the process of evolution. What brings us to this moment and the way we experience it is the consciousness we have brought to all previous moments.

In normal daily life, we each have certain motivations that propel us. In the Mahatma Letters we are told that “motive is everything”. Actions are important, but our motivation is said to be all-important. Motives spring from values; which produce actions; and actions produce reactions, which in turn react upon our original motivations.

Take the example of someone who is motivated to succeed individually based on values that say: “I’m on my own and it’s me against the world.” Out of this comes a range of self-centered actions. Those actions produce a response which confirms his motivation, “This is a dangerous world I’m in. I’m in competition with all others. Everything I do shows me this”, strengthening his motivation and ensuring that the cycle continues — a cycle of continually unsatisfactory results.

The obvious question we would ask is: “Why? Why would someone remain locked in such an unsatisfying cycle?” In Buddhism there is the idea of *samsāra*, depicted as a wheel on which all human beings are caught: birth, life, death, and rebirth. The actual meaning of the word “*samsāra*” is a flowing on. From certain innate causes flows on a series of events or actions that necessarily repeat themselves. From the Buddhist perspective, they would say that the root cause of being caught in this cycle would be ignorance, not as a lack of knowledge, but in the sense that we see wrongly; we do not perceive the world correctly and then we act on this misperception.

So, why are we in a condition where

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we do not perceive correctly? In theosophical teachings the concept of evolution, an unending process of unfoldment, is one of the keys. And there are stages, degrees of unfoldment, in this process.

The letters which comprise *The Mahatma Letters* were received by two very proud Englishmen: A. O. Hume and A. P. Sinnett. Both were fully convinced that their knowledge, culture, and civilization far exceeded the Mahatmas' views. To Hume and Sinnett it was clear that the Mahatmas needed their advice on how best to introduce the teachings of Theosophy to humanity. In the *Letters* it was sometimes gently expressed, and sometimes in very blunt terms, that Hume and Sinnett needed to be relieved of the demonstrably false idea of their superiority.

Most of us tend to think of ourselves as being at a high evolutionary stage. Our technology and the pace of our scientific advances seem to confirm our evolutionary heights when in fact all indications are that we are as yet a very childish humanity. There is a Native American expression: "No tree is so foolish that its branches would fight among themselves." No tree is that foolish, but humanity, and we as individuals, do it daily. Our degree of expansion is perhaps more limited than we care to admit. So, the choices which have created this moment have been generated from the mind of childish perception.

The human stage of unfoldment of this moment could be called the stage of the individual. The idea of the rights and

freedoms of the individual has become the hallmark of this particular time. The individual can be described as the unit of consciousness capable of identifying and operating from its own center, lifting itself up from the dependence and compulsion of the group, the tribe, the communal unity. It is a stage of development, and a necessary one. The problems that we face in the world are related to the fact that this stage of individuality has become exaggerated.

In the Letter from the Mahachohan, written almost 140 years ago, a comment is made which pinpoints this moment. It speaks about the effects of the stress being laid on the rights and freedoms of the individual and its foreseeable exaggeration. In that letter the comment is made that

In view of the ever-increasing triumph, and at the same time the misuse, of free thought and *liberty* . . . how is the combative *natural* instinct of man to be restrained from inflicting hitherto unheard-of cruelties and enormities, tyranny, injustice, [and so on].

Although cultivation of individuality is a necessary stage, when it transforms to individualism, then we face the problems of today, with seven billion people in the world demanding what they would deem their individual rights, separated from the whole. The belief in the existence of an independent operator, separate and apart from the whole, has taken root and is the source of obvious problems.

In that same Mahachohan's Letter he

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goes on to make the point that the consciousness that untethers itself from universal law necessarily separates itself from human law, with the sorts of consequences that we find ourselves now experiencing. The idea that the Earth and its resources are inexhaustible and intended for individual satisfaction is something for which we are paying the price at this moment. The idea that competition, aggression, hostility, and domination are acceptable approaches to relationship with other human beings and to the natural world equally has consequences.

There is a stage in a child's growth that is spoken of as the "terrible twos" — the two-year-old phase, when the child tries to develop its own identity. The main word that parents hear at that age is "no". It is a stage in which the child develops a healthy individuality by identifying itself in opposition to others. We see it clearly with a child, but we fail to see it at all when we think in terms of this mass of "adults" now populating the world — our resounding "no" to our inseparable connection to the natural world and to each other.

The founding of the Theosophical Society (TS) in 1875 was a deliberate attempt to bridge a gulf that was appearing on the human scene. Again, the Mahachohan's letter describes two very strong impulses, which if allowed to go unchecked would deform the course of human unfoldment. In that letter he described the two rising currents as "brutal materialism" and "degrading superstition". With the introduction of the TS,

the hope was to present another avenue that could attract high minds, willing and receptive hearts, to a different path which opened to different possibilities. An alternative direction that might avert the consequences of an individualism magnified by materialism or superstition was seen to be worth attempting. The TS was spoken of as "the cornerstone of the future religions of humanity" based on a profound understanding of Unity.

The Masters plant seeds for future generations, for the benefit of those who are yet to be born. We participate in this process. Most of what we regard as unfoldment takes place gradually, however there are moments of sudden and profound awakening. Examples are all around us in Nature and in human affairs. Within human society we have witnessed occasions where long-held barriers and conventions of behavior suddenly drop, and we wonder "why now?"

An earthquake is one of the most devastating examples in the natural world. On three or four occasions I have experienced it. As a child I had heard about earthquakes and thought it was fascinating. To my child's mind it was something I believed I would like to experience. After my first earthquake, I did not want to have that experience ever again. Sitting in a building made of brick and mortar, as the initial tremors increased in strength, I looked up and saw the "solid" ceiling above rippling just like waves on the ocean.

An earthquake is the sudden release of enormous energy that has been building

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in the Earth. In order for this to occur, floating plates within the Earth as large as continents rub against each other over *long* periods of time, building a subterranean tension until there is this apparently sudden release that takes place, which we experience as an immediate event that changes everything.

During the winters in my home in Chicago, if someone had no idea about seasons in Nature, they would believe that everything in the landscape is dead. This is because no leaf, no blade of grass or flower can be seen anywhere. But when spring comes, in a matter of days, where there was nothing, suddenly something green pops out of the earth. After three or four warm days that little sprout has grown a foot and is bearing flowers. Its apparent suddenness only occurs after an entire winter of slumber, of bringing strength to the root which then bursts forth.

In the *Mahatma Letters* an example is given based on this sudden growth: “An Adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers.” Efflorescence is literally the stage of “flowering”. The Adept is the rare bursting forth from a generation of enquirers. The point is

made that in order for this “flowering” to take place, the individual “must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity”.

Our role is not to labor in opposition to the existing current. The work that we do is the attempt to establish a prevailing consciousness that provides for a new awareness of the uses of individuality. In Sir Edward Arnold’s poem about the life of the Buddha, *The Light of Asia*, in the very last line, he talks about the dewdrop that slips into the sea. This means the consciousness that had been cultivated by the Buddha through life after life, the awareness, the purification, the teaching that was done, was done to now be offered *consciously*.

The moment that we become aware of the workings of this process of becoming an “individual”, the question arises “toward what end?” The individuality is cultivated toward the end that it can then be offered back to the whole. “The dewdrop slips into the shining sea”, adding the totality of its experiences, insights, and hard-won understanding to the reservoir of the Greater Life which sustains all beings. ✧

Fair goes the dancing when the sitar’s tuned;
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high,
And we will dance away the hearts of men.
The string o’erstretched breaks, and the music flies;
The string o’erslack is dumb, and music dies;
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high.

Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia*

“The Golden Stairs”: Ethics in the Ageless Wisdom Tradition

JOHN ALGEO

THE Ancient Wisdom or Perennial Philosophy, as it has also been called, is a body of teachings that imply a way of behaving. Through the doctrine of karma, the tradition’s emphasis on personal responsibility for one’s decisions and actions creates an ethics that is individual, situational, and relative, rather than categorical and absolute. Thus it is futile to look for a “Ten Commandments” of the Ancient Wisdom — some list of specific things that one should or should not do.

To be sure, certain general principles of this philosophy, inherited from the Indic tradition, have been extremely influential in modern thought, principles like ahimsa (harmlessness), or *viveka* (discrimination), and *vairāgya* (dispassion). Such concepts have developed a wealth of ethical associations around them. But more specific than these is a short statement published by H. P. Blavatsky [HPB], called “The Golden Stairs”.

HPB, through *The Secret Doctrine*

and other works, was a leading proponent of the Perennial Philosophy in modern times. Thus her summary of ethics in “The Golden Stairs” presents briefly what the tradition has to say on the subject. Its thirteen phrases are the closest equivalent to a set of Ten Commandments of the Ancient Wisdom.

“The Golden Stairs” was originally published by HPB in 1890, at a time when she was much concerned with injustice, loyalty, and altruism in her own life. Later a revised form of the document was made available. The differences in wording between the original and the revised versions are slight; they were made perhaps because in a few places the original is susceptible to misinterpretation without commentary. The original has, however, been printed in the *Collected Writings* and is used here, as the one that most accurately represents the statement in the form she wished to be known. . . .

(Preface) Behold the truth before you:
(1) a clean life, (2) an open mind, (3) a pure

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heart, (4) an eager intellect, (5) an unveiled spiritual perception, (6) a brotherliness for one’s co-disciples, (7) a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, (8) a loyal sense of duty to the Teacher, (9) a willing obedience to the behests of TRUTH, once we have placed our confidence in, and believe that Teacher to be in possession of it; (10) a courageous endurance of personal injustice, (11) a brave declaration of principles, (12) a valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked, (13) and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science (*gupta-vidya*) depicts — (Conclusion) these are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom. . . .

“The Golden Stairs” gives general advice that applies to a variety of situations, not a specific list of Thou-shalts and Thou-shalt-nots. It reflects a belief in natural ethics, rather than in revealed commandments. In its prefatory injunction, it stresses the naturalness and obviousness of moral action. The reader is told: “Behold the truth before you.” The ethical principles on which we should act are clear and available to everyone; they stare us in the face, and all we need do is be aware of them.

Indeed, given the reality of karma — the effects of our actions which determine our future — we have no alternative but to come to terms with the Moral Imperative of Nature. Our only option is whether we shall come to terms with karma *consciously*, in full awareness of

the meaning and effects of our actions, or whether we shall come to terms with karma unawares — whether, that is, we are to be the victors or the victims of our own actions. . . .

One more point. The prefatory statement says that the truth is open to everyone; the last step says that the basis of ethical action is derived from the “secret science”. But these two statements are not contradictory. The science in question is secret, esoteric, or concealed, not because it has been copyrighted or trademarked, to be retailed by a mysterious lodge of adepts, but rather because it is of things that cannot, by their very nature, be told by mouth or heard by ear, but which must instead be experienced by each individual alone. It is open to everyone to have that experience, but until we do, the science that studies it must remain a secret to us. . . .

Divine Wisdom can be approached only by those who lead an ethical life. . . . It is the inescapable burden of each person to make a personal judgment on the hard moral issues before us. That is the consequence of individual freedom. And respect for the decisions that others make, even when we ourselves have arrived at different decisions, is the mark of true brotherhood.

“The Golden Stairs” does not remove moral ambiguity from our lives or resolve the crises in conscience which we face from day to day. But it does point the way to our collective involvement in bettering society, in lifting a little of the heavy karma of the world. ✧

Practical Theosophy: “I Am the Whole”

DEEPA PADHI

THE topic “I am the Whole” will be explored from the mythological, philosophical, scientific, spiritual, and theosophical perspectives, starting with Hindu mythology. In the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, one finds stories relating to Lord Krishna. When Krishna was a small child, his friends once reported to his mother, Yaśoda, that he had eaten some sand. When she asked him, he denied it and asked Yaśoda innocently to check his mouth. When he opened his mouth, Yaśoda saw the whole Universe in it — the stars, planets, galaxies, all animate and inanimate beings. Again, the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* says that Arjuna had a vision of the whole Universe (*viśvarūpa*) within Krishna.

Why did Krishna show the whole universe within himself? He could have projected the whole Universe objectively. The answer is that it demonstrates that the Self contains the Whole. If it is true of Lord Krishna who had taken human form, it can also be true of every human being. Krishna could show it because he had “divine power”, and this also

exists potentially in every human being. Therefore, the Self is not different from the whole, the Universal Consciousness, and its manifestations.

Similarly, in *Purusha Sukta*, Purusha is described as having 1,000 heads, eyes, and feet. What does this mean? “One thousand” here is not any specific number but rather it means “numberless”, the Whole, the totality. Purusha is the Whole, the Conscious Principle, and it penetrates all heads, eyes, and feet of numerous beings because of which they can think, see, and walk.

Īśa Upanishad opens with the profound words: *purnam-adah purnam-idam purnāt-purnam-udachyate, purnasya purnam-ādāya purnam-eva-avaśishyate* — That is Whole and this is whole; this whole comes out of That Whole; when the whole is taken away from The Whole what remains is indeed The Whole. “That” refers to the Universal Consciousness and “this” refers to the manifestations of that consciousness. They are one and the same. The world is an integral part of the Whole, or all-containing Oneness. Let us take the

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example of gold. If gold is “That”, then “this” is a gold ornament, a bangle, for example, a particular form with a name. Gold has the possibilities and potentialities of getting manifested into multiple forms of ornaments having various names and forms, and these can never be separated from gold. Similarly, there is only one Consciousness which envelops all animates and inanimates. As H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) says in *The Secret Doctrine*: “The root of every atom individually, and of every form collectively, is . . . the One Reality. The One becomes the Universe woven out of its own essence.”

Vedanta upholds that there is One Consciousness which is the ultimate substratum of all things and manifests in myriads of entities within the universe — the sun, the moon, the stars, all living and non-living beings. The *Aitareya Upanishad* declares: *prajñānam brahma* meaning “Consciousness is Brahman”, the Supreme, the source of all things, the Absolute Reality. We can call it Brahman, Ātman, Allah, Father in Heaven, Supreme Tao, state of Nirvāna, *ekomkāṛ satnām*. Religions are many, but Truth, or Reality, is one. No matter what name we call it, there is but one Ultimate Reality, which is Consciousness. The same idea is conveyed in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, in which Yājñavalkya says: “O Gargi! That one universal imperishable consciousness has penetrated everything in this universe.” Now we come to know that the one Universal Consciousness is referred to as the Whole. Next, who is this “I” in the statement “I Am the Whole”? Human consciousness or self-consciousness is an

expression of this all-pervading Universal Consciousness. This principle of knowing by which man knows all things and shines at the centre of his being is the “*prajñānam brahma*”. In *Kena Upanishad* it is said: “That which cannot be heard but by which the ears can hear, that which cannot be seen but by which the eyes can see, know that to be Brahman (Consciousness), not this which you worship.”

Islam declared that “the Light of Allah dwells in the created human being.” Christ said: “The Kingdom of God is within.” Judaism said: “God created man and breathed His spirit into him.” This principle of knowing dwells in the heart of every being as the Self. Therefore, the ancient seers used to say *ātmanam viddhi* — “Know yourself”. In fact, before we understand anything, before we know anything, we first need to know that “I exist” — “I exist, therefore I know”. It is just the reverse of what the French philosopher Descartes said: “I think, therefore I am.” But he was mistaken because in order to think, the thinker must exist first. As thinking presupposes the existence of a thinker, without a thinker or knower, knowledge is not possible. That knower is the Self, or Atman, or the knowing principle within.

Universal Consciousness is what we are, but when Consciousness gets connected with our body and mind, it becomes a limited and distorted form of our ego. And because of this ego, we start identifying ourselves as Mr So-and-so or Mrs So-and-so. But the truth is that I am not this little man or woman cut off from all else; I am the one universal con-

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sciousness. This “I” consciousness, or ego consciousness, has the potentiality to realize its non-difference from the universal “I”, or the Universal Consciousness. When the mind is illumined by the non-dualistic consciousness of *buddhi*, self-consciousness turns into a sense of unity, of “I am the Whole”.

It is said: *yathā pinde tathā brahmānde* — as is the atom so is the Universe, as is the microcosm so is the Cosmic body, as is “this” so is “That”. “That”, as we know, is neither energy nor space, nor time, nor matter, but a field of pure consciousness — “a field of possibilities and potentialities”. HPB mentioned in *The Secret Doctrine*: “Yet, this cosmic dust is something more; for every atom in the Universe has the potentiality of self-consciousness in it, and is, like the Monads of Leibnitz, a Universe in itself, and *for* itself.” (p. 107, Stanza V, Commentary 1) Ātman is paradoxically ever united with the One and at the same time it is the essence of individual existence.

From the scientific point of view, we can take the example of a human body which has 100 trillion cells and every cell instantly knows how to correlate its activity with every other cell. Dr Deepak Chopra, a medical scientist and a spiritual teacher, mentions that our biological rhythms which are called “circadian rhythms, seasonal rhythms, gravitational rhythms, lunar rhythms are actually the rhythms of the cosmos. So our body is correlated instantly with the symphony of the cosmos.”

In fact, in Nature, everything is instantly connected with everything else. The uni-

verse is a place where there is interpenetration and interrelation. As *The Mahatma Letters* says, “Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man.”

Science tells us that we are all parts of a unified whole. The physicist David Bohm holds that in the external world of space and time, things and beings may appear to be separate or discrete but beneath the surface in the implicate or frequency realm, all things and events are intrinsically one and undivided. He pictures reality as an unbroken whole in which every fragment — every cell, atom, small chunk of matter — contains the entire universe.

Therefore, there is nothing wrong when a tide says “I am the ocean” because it is a part of the ocean and the ocean is in it. There is no separation between the two. Very aptly Sufi saint Rumi said: “You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop.”

In the state of Nature, the parts stand interrelated to one another and integrated to the whole at the same time. The interrelatedness and mutual dependence between things and beings which are remotely situated baffles the human mind. An object however insignificant and tiny it might appear to be, has a necessary place in the whole. The tiny invertebrates are indispensable for human existence because human beings are dependent on these invertebrates for their life-support system. Therefore, they are called “the little things

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that run the world”. If they are destroyed, humanity will survive only for a few months. So any violence to a part has its inevitable repercussion on the rest of the integral constituents and therefore, on the whole.

The value of the part cannot be known in isolation but only with its relationship with the whole. The idea of participation instead of observation is a recent formulation in modern physics but it is an old idea very well known in Eastern mysticism. Fritjof Capra says in the *Tao of Physics*:

Mystical knowledge can never be obtained just by observation, but only by full participation with one’s whole being. The notion of the participator is thus crucial to the Eastern world view, and the Eastern mystics have pushed this notion to the extreme, to a point where observer and observed, subject and object, are not only inseparable but also become indistinguishable. (*Tao of Physics*, p. 155)

Theomorphic field postulated by Rupert Sheldrake assumes that each and every person is connected with the morphogenetic field of mankind.

The underlying unity of the cosmos is also acknowledged in modern astrophysics and cosmology. According to Mach’s principle, the interaction and interrelation reaches out to the universe at large, to the distant stars and galaxies. This interrelation is also evident in astrology. Astrology is the theory that particular configurations of the heavenly bodies at the time of one’s birth are significantly

related to one’s personality, character and course of events.

Viewed in this perspective, the so-called individual loses his individuality. It is only the whole — the totality of individual existence — which qualifies to be the individual proper.

These new findings and connections have led to the creation of a new “paradigm” and a new set of values in the world of science. The old Cartesian or Newtonian paradigm of a dualistic world is replaced by the new holistic paradigm which is only another term for the monistic or non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta which India developed more than five thousand years ago.

In the book *The Key to Theosophy* H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) stated:

Ātman, the *Higher Self*, is neither your Spirit nor mine, but like sunlight shines on all. It is the universally diffused *divine principle*, and is inseparable from its one and absolute *Meta-Spirit*, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

One should never say “my *ātman*” or “your *ātman*”. This idea is the curse of the world for it has produced tremendous selfishness, egoism, jealousy, and hatred. It is the cause of all division and separation. *Ātman*, the Self is Universal. *Ātman* being absolute cannot be defined by relative terms as this or the other.

[*Ātman*] is simply that in which we are — not only that we live and breathe and have our being, but [so does] the whole universe. — (HPB, *The Secret Doctrine Commentaries*, p. 609)

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Everything is penetrated by all other things. Those who are evolved and sensitive are able to perceive the reality of mutual penetration beyond the realm of separation.

This oneness or wholeness is fundamental in theosophical thoughts which extends to the realm of universal consciousness in which, as HPB said, “we live and move and have our being.” In fact, Theosophy is all about the realization of the relation between the underlying unity and its manifestations whether it is through direct intuition, meditation, or inference from experience.

The realization of this oneness is expressed in the Mahāvākyas (The Great Sayings) as *aham brahmāsmi* — “I” and “Brahman” are one. Sankaracharya said: *jiva brahmaiva nā-parah*. This unity represents the fusion of the “seen” and “unseen”, the subjective and objective principles. This is the merging with the source.

Vivekananda had said:

Immortality is knowing ourselves as one with all, living in all bodies, perceiving through all minds. We are bound to feel in other bodies than this one. What is sympathy? Is there any limit to this sympathy, this feeling in our bodies? It is quite possible that a time will come when I shall feel through the whole universe.

What he means to say is when we feel the love and compassion for all, then only we will be said to have attained self-realization. At this stage one becomes extremely sensitive to the pain and sufferings

of others. This is the true experience of oneness with the Whole. It is not theoretical or intellectual. It is experiential. But this awareness is not meant for us to remain in isolation or to become a recluse, rather, it should get reflected in our daily life in positive relationships with all others.

The *Gītā* says that a yogi who feels one with every other, works for the welfare of the whole world; right actions happen through him and right action is that which is appropriate and good for the whole. Such a being becomes responsible not only for himself but for the entire world which, in the words of the *Gītā* is *sarva-bhuta-hite ratāh*. This is the practical application of the concept, “I am the Whole”.

I would like to mention in this context the most favourite song of Mahatma Gandhi — *vaishnavajana to tene kahiye, je peed parayi jaane re . . .* — which means that the spiritually awakened person is one who is empathetic and compassionate towards all his fellow beings and never lets self-conceit enter his mind.

There was a tradition in India that the one who is called the Maitreya Buddha had to take a vow that he would not become Ultimate Buddha until he had liberated other human beings too as “I” means to him “all”, the whole.

The inexhaustible fountain of love and deep compassion should take possession of each individual through self-transformation so that he embraces all with the realization “that one cannot harm others without harming oneself” as all are integrated into the whole. This is what practical Theosophy aims at. ✧

Gandhi on Theosophy and the Global Civilization of Tomorrow — III

JAMES E. TEPFER

LET us turn now to Gandhi's conception and exemplification of the sacred. This is perhaps one of the signposts of the future. While rational knowledge rather than religious belief seems to be a defining difference between the Piscean and Aquarian Ages respectively, reverence is vital for the awakening of spiritual insight. This is because the rational can be infused with reverence, and reverence can be rational; truth is sacred. To Gandhi, the vivifying sacred gives birth to the pervasive feeling of "reverence" for the divine in all its marvelous manifestations: reverence for spiritual teachers, for knowledge, for sacrifice, for moral courage, and, of course, increasing reverence and respect for the bounty of Nature.

In this sense, Gandhi saw that not only is God sacred, and Nature too, but humanity is likewise sacred. We, as human beings, are neither hopeless sinners, random cosmic accidents, bundles of instincts, nor sophisticated machines. No, we are essentially godlike and worthy of admiration when we act up to our moral, intellectual,

and spiritual potential. Thus, in the not-so-distant future, the notion of the sacred will cease to be confined to conventional religions only, nor will it be limited to certain holy activities housed in enclosed spaces called temples, pagodas, churches, synagogues, or mosques. Nor will the sacred be viewed as something forever somber or grim but as something joyous and elevating.

On the whole, there will be such a pervasive feeling of the sanctity of life that men and women will learn to honor the hidden potency of the unblemished divine as it manifests itself in everyday life. The most mature individuals in the centuries ahead will inwardly salute the presence of the divine and the divinely human whenever and wherever they witness acts of authentic selflessness, of moral and spiritual courage, of spontaneous generosity, and of voluntary renunciation.

And, in this respect, one of the litmus tests of the coming age might well be when the following takes place: when monasteries and nunneries, ashrams and

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madrasas invite into their cloistered circles agnostics and even humane atheists; when august academies invite into their forums of fearless inquiry non-scholars, non-experts and those with no formal degrees whatsoever but who have learned deep, shareable lessons from the school of life; and finally, when democratic societies establish a guaranteed annual income such that all adult citizens can participate in collective abundance at some sustainable level. Such acts of painful, courageous inclusiveness will help humankind recover its lost sense of the sacred and simultaneously expand its heart-circle of fellowship.

Amidst the complex political challenges in South Africa and later in India, Gandhi realized that it was necessary to initiate a new kind of ashram, namely a micro community of committed individuals that deliberately brought together the spiritual and the social through the transfiguring power of vows. Spiritual vows were solemnly taken to honor certain eternal, guiding principles: truth, non-violence, non-possessiveness, non-stealing, and the like. As a result of taking such comprehensive resolves, there was an active recognition and place for diverse religious teachings within the ashram. But Gandhi felt that spiritual vows and religious teachings are important unless they are creatively related to concrete social needs.

Therefore, in addition to preparing for various forms of social and political protest in British India, Gandhi and his ashram co-leaders agreed to radically

reconfigure Indian society within the parameters of their own miniature community. Over many years, they organically evolved a communal structure which eliminated inappropriate caste differences, purged it of untouchability, re-established the nobility of womanhood, honored the innate dignity of “bread labor” and integrated the head, the heart, and the hand in the education of children and young adults alike.

Gandhi’s conception and exemplification of leadership in his ashrams was as much modern as it was traditional. His ashrams were structured but not static, egalitarian but not anarchic. While Gandhi was the visionary, the one who took the initiative and assumed primary responsibility for ashram activities, he was really the “leader” by virtue of his moral example. As a leader Gandhi was rational, responsible, transparent and totally committed to the importance of public self-correction when called for.

And, when important communal issues arose, Gandhi observed the primary rule of the Pythagorean community of classical Greece; namely, he consulted and deliberated with others before acting. In this sense, Gandhi’s *panchāyat* council of elders was the living embodiment of the legendary King Arthur’s “round table” in which the King was simply “the first among equals”.

In the end Gandhi’s ashram experiments embodied a new kind of thinking, an original way of bringing together the seemingly separate worlds of religion and social reform by transforming both.

His deliberate communal centers became the transformational levers that helped to realign God within man, the sacred within the social, the citizen within the political community. Members of Gandhi's ashrams in South Africa and India sought not *moksha* or *nirvāna*, but *dharma*, skill in rendering intelligent service to the larger society and to humankind as a whole. Not surprisingly, these pioneering ashram experiments generated several internal challenges and problems, all of which were examined and thought out in ways deemed compatible with the vows of truth, non-violence, non-possession, and service.

Now, it is rarely brought to the public's attention that there are at this moment thousands of eco-villages and intentional communities busily at work on every continent. These innovative communal experiments have become quiet centers of social, political, religious, and even intellectual pioneering. They are visionary, knowledge-based as well as value-bound, and are refreshingly unostentatious. They are to be found in inner cities, suburbs, the countryside, and villages. Their historical roots are many, but they are, in some sense, subtly indebted to Gandhi's own bold ashram experiments of the last century.

All that we have discussed so far points to the fact that the global civilization of tomorrow will continue to call for a seismic shift in consciousness — an inner transformation sparked and supported by innovative social and political arrangements at the microlevel. As we have seen, this is already occurring in some fashion.

But more is needed, especially at the psychological level. What is most needed in our own time is not so much the yearning for a lost Golden Age or the determination to recover some paradise lost, but, more to the point, we need to recover a lost self-confidence, individually and collectively. We need to arouse a deeper confidence in the potential of the human being to rise from the hell of self-will into the heaven of cooperative fellowship.

How, then, do we ascend step-by-step toward an unshakable confidence in ourselves, in others, and in the uncircumscribed future? Gandhi's solution is simple, seemingly paradoxical, and very challenging. He says that the fundamental cure for lack of self-confidence is moral and spiritual courage. Most of us, he suggests, are not as morally weak, intellectually confused or as uncertain as we believe we are. Somewhere in our searching minds, we *know* what we ought to do. We *know* what is the decent thing to do, but we lack the courage or verve to do it.

In moments of quiet solitude, when we honestly scan our lives, we can clearly see that so many of our mistakes and tragedies could have been avoided with a little courage, a little daring, a little caring, a little self-honesty, a little detachment from ourselves. If this is true, then what we need to do is to arouse our moral and spiritual courage by making a Promethean resolve to reduce our personalities to a zero in specific moral situations. This unconditional resolve summons the heroic element in us and awakens our altruistic will to act rightly

and honorably, without concern for consequences or for self-image. Albert Einstein put this more metaphysically but just as compellingly when he commented that the responsibility of true religion is to help men and women remove the optical delusion of separative consciousness from the mind.¹⁹

However, while timely self-renunciation in daily life is the ideal, Gandhi was no romantic idealist nor a foolish optimist. He was, instead, an objective idealist. He understood that man and society are necessarily full of imperfections. It is part of the human condition that error, sin, and injustice shadow all human activities. So, when our actions toward others fail to measure up to our ideals of truth and love, we must have the courage not to lie, temporize, or rationalize our mistakes, either to ourselves or to others. We must correct ourselves before life does it for us. Through unwavering resolve, Gandhi became a master of self-correction in every aspect of his life, from the personal to the political.

On one occasion in South Africa, Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba, engaged in a heated argument over her doing scavenger work in the ashram. Eventually, Gandhi realized that he had lost his temper badly and was trying to force Kasturba to do something that was, as yet, completely unnatural to her. Gandhi felt bad and, overcoming his righteousness, said those magical words: “I was wrong.” He immediately followed this up with the potent mantra: “I apologize.” These acts of self-correction restored harmony

between him and his noble companion and increased their mutual understanding and respect for each other.

Gandhi carried over the principle of self-correction into that most difficult of all realms of social encounter, the political. In 1919, Gandhi initiated a mass *satyāgraha* campaign throughout India in response to the British government’s oppressive Rowlatt Act. The British army responded to the nonviolent *satyāgraha* campaign by brutally repressing protesters. Eventually, some protesters were unable to measure up to the high standards of nonviolent action and turned to violence and mayhem. Gandhi soon realized his mistake and publicly declared that he had made a “Himalayan miscalculation” in thinking that India was ready for non-violence on a mass scale. He took personal responsibility for his error and called off the national campaign despite the heated disagreement of almost all his associates.

In both cases of deliberate self-correction, we can see that Gandhi had the courage to set aside his ego. He was forced by the moral logic of his own vows to swallow his pride, his hurt feelings, his righteous anger, his high expectations, his deep disappointment and perhaps even his self-image. He consciously chose to follow the morally and psychologically demanding path of truth and nonviolence. In doing so, he purified his consciousness and, paradoxically, increased his confidence in his own capacity to learn and to grow morally and spiritually. Clearly, the Gandhian template of selfless action

and timely self-correction is vital if we wish to progress toward a better, more harmonious world.

Now it is important to note that self-renunciation is aided by two factors. According to Theosophy, Eastern philosophy, and modern cutting-edge science, those factors are daily meditation on high themes and the conscious cultivation of universal responsibility. These inner activities are the keys to positively transfiguring the mind. Meditation is alchemical and is ultimately about self-gestation. It is about calmly negating the subtle tyranny of the lesser self and gradually ascending the ladder of consciousness into the empyrean of the transcendent, all-compassionate One.

Persistence in meditation, self-study, and service helps us to progressively “unself” the mind. In time, it becomes natural for us to generate an expanding series of inclusive circles of responsibility for others — from one’s family to one’s community and, ultimately, to the family of humankind. In light of this inner dynamic, we can understand why Gandhi was said by many to “breathe compassion”. After all, one of his self-confessed disciplines was daily meditation on the plight of the starving and distraught millions. This golden thread of recurrent meditation was the heartbeat of his rich and fruitful quest for God-realization, gained through rendering timely help to others.

Broadly speaking, as a spacious sense of self dawns upon human consciousness in the decades ahead, the king faculty of

creative imagination will become a willing co-partner with impersonal reason. This happy alliance will make the personality of man more plastic, more capable of being self-shaped. If this is true, there will come about a change in the valence of the mind. It will become more noetic, more suffused with luminous insights. In a word, the mind will become more multidimensional and capable of inhabiting diverse perspectives and entertaining opposing points of view.

Furthermore, man’s empathic IQ will increase such that he will suffer and celebrate with others more easily. This new, hospitable mentality is what is really at the heart of “becoming more global”. In this sense, one can live in a village and be global or reside in a thriving metropolis and be parochial. It all depends on the quality of the individual’s state of consciousness or mental purity.

In summary then, we might say that within the intentional micro-communities of the future there could well take place the creative integration of the spiritual, the intellectual and the social. If so, this could give birth to what we might call the “magnanimous mind” — the dynamic fusion of the alpha intellect and the alpha heart. The magnanimous mind points to a sublime ethical intelligence. Its unfoldment would reintegrate our mental, moral, and spiritual lives. It would be truthful and compassionate, morally upright and tolerant, rationally exacting yet flexible and intuitive.

At its best, the magnanimous mind of tomorrow would be permeated with a felt

sense of the sacred that expresses itself in boundless generosity and consummate grace. Such a spiritual mentality would evince a marvelous *buddhic* mobility. It would excel at shifting its focus from the theoretical to the practical, from the moral to the psychological, from prose to poetry, from the local to the global and back again. And, what is more, this new kind of mentality would be as much at home in the spacious unknown as it would be in the formulated known.

Because of the emergence of the magnanimous mind, the man and woman of the future will find it natural to be many things at once: a seeker of Truth, a mystic, a lover of science, a viable contributor to the moral uplift of society, and a conscientious trustee of Nature's resources. In essence, the man and woman of generations to come will, like Gandhi, learn to be spiritually independent, intellectually open, and socially responsible. They will withdraw excessive allegiance to church and state, to sect and party, and, by holding firmly to universal principles, regenerate civil communities within a multilayered global civilization.

Finally, the magnanimous mind, when nurtured within the numerous micro-

communities of coming centuries, could well give birth to authentic "islands of brotherhood" that would grace the globe. Such iridescent centers of culture would summon to our rejuvenated earth *jñānis* from celestial spheres. These magus-Teachers would take birth once again and freely walk among men and women without threat of being "hunted as devils or worshipped as gods".

Such wise magicians of the heart would open wide the windows of perception so that the receptive and distressed might equally catch a glimpse of the Divine. They would reorient human consciousness toward a vibrant idealism and offer fresh hope to the ritualists, materialists, and spiritually downtrodden. If such exalted sages, or magnanimous teachers, were to incarnate and restore some form of *Rāma Rājya* (enlightened kingship) on Earth, then we could all join in chorus with sweet, innocent Miranda in Shakespeare's *Tempest* when she joyously declares:

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is!
O, brave new world,
that has such people in't.²⁰ ✧

Endnotes

19. See <lettersofnote.com> for a transcript of a letter Einstein wrote to a grieving father on the loss of his son (1950).

20. *The Tempest*, William Shakespeare, Act 5, Scene 1.

Esoteric and Scientific Views on Cosmogenesis

PABLO SENDER

A good deal of what H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) wrote about physics at the end of the 1800s has been verified in the course of the 20th century.¹ But when we come to the field of cosmology, few of the principles presented by her in *The Secret Doctrine (SD)* have made their way into mainstream scientific thought. We will explore the esoteric view on the origin and fundamental nature of the cosmos, vis-à-vis current scientific understanding.

The Eternal Parent

The ancient Stanzas of Dzian presented in *SD* describe the state of the cosmos during what is called “the Night of the Universe”, or Pralaya, before the manifestation of forms. The first verse of the first stanza begins by mentioning: “The Eternal Parent (Space), wrapped in her ever invisible robes, . . .” [*SD* 1, p. 35]

While current scientific theories propose that space was created with the big bang, *SD* says that it is pre-existent, calling it “the *eternal* parent”. This is an interesting postulate because, as we will see, the “crunching up” of everything that exists in the cosmos into a small center

(called “singularity”) raises many problems from a scientific point of view. Now, we must bear in mind that the space mentioned in this stanza is not the physical space that we know. HPB describes this “metaphysical” space as follows:

Space is the *one eternal thing* that we can most easily imagine, immovable in its abstraction and uninfluenced by either the presence or absence in it of an objective Universe. It is without dimension, in every sense, and self-existent. . . . neither limitless void, nor conditioned fullness, but both. It was and ever will be. [*SD* 1, p. 35]

Metaphysical space is eternal, absolute and immutable, while the physical space, as described by Albert Einstein, is temporal, relative, and changeable — it can be created or destroyed, expanded or contracted, bent or flattened. HPB also argues that the idea of three-dimensional space is a mistake. As a metaphysical principle, space has no dimensions; what has length, height, and width is physical matter occupying space. However, HPB explained that there are other kinds of matter that have four, five, or more dimensions.

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This idea seemed far-fetched during her time, but today it is supported by theories in quantum physics proposing a cosmos of up to ten spatial dimensions.

It is interesting that this “parent space” is feminine. HPB says that the first Principle we can conceive of has to be regarded, philosophically speaking, as feminine. Space is like the womb within which the cosmos is gestating, the cosmic virgin conceiving a son (the universe) without any external participation. This is because everything that exists is contained within her. Space is also said to be “wrapped in ever-invisible robes”. HPB described this as:

The “Robes” stand for the noumenon [cause or source] of undifferentiated Cosmic Matter. It is not matter as we know it, but the spiritual essence of matter, and is co-eternal and even one with Space in its abstract sense. [*SD* 1, 35]

Metaphysical space is not a mere void but has an abstract substantial quality to it. It is this substantial aspect which makes physical space appear in the way proposed by Einstein, as a *fabric*. From a theosophical point of view, the “fabric-aspect” of physical space is due to what HPB called “ether”, which science is beginning to recognize.

In any case, the idea that space could contain an “essence” of matter was ridiculous for most of the twentieth century, but today is accepted by science (at least in its *physical* expression) in what is called “quantum fluctuation” — a field present in “empty” space from which arise the subatomic particles that give rise to

matter. Continuing with the first verse:

The Eternal Parent (Space), wrapped in her ever invisible robes, had slumbered once again for seven eternities.

The eternal parent “slumbering” means that, during the night of the universe, manifested space is a latent potentiality. The phrase “once again” implies that space had slumbered in the past, then awakened, and was slumbering again for a period of time. Thus, *SD* affirms:

“The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.” This . . . is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, . . . (*SD* 1, 17)

SD puts forward a cyclic model of the universe, in which the cosmos comes into being, develops, and dissolves, only to come into being again after a period of rest. Blavatsky was thus arguably the first person to present to modern Western society the idea that our universe was not a unique creation, but a new iteration in a chain of universes. This idea is beginning to gain support among some scientists.

Universal Mind

The second verse states that during the night of the universe there is no time, a concept which agrees with the current scientific concept that time is not absolute. In its third verse, however, the stanza introduces an element that is beyond the realm of modern science — the universal mind.

Scientists generally think that consciousness is an epiphenomenon, or by-product, of matter. Theosophical teachings

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disagree, postulating that consciousness is not an emergent, but a fundamental feature of the universe. In other words, the possibility of intelligence is in the very fabric of the cosmos.

This idea can solve (at least philosophically) an important problem with the big bang theory. In science, the concept of “entropy” describes the fact that, when left on their own, material forms tend to crumble. The natural tendency of matter is to disintegrate, to fall into disorder and spread out randomly. So, the question arises, if the universe started from a point where there were no structures, what led to the generation of atoms, molecules, gases, stars, planets, and living beings? The building of forms and structures cannot take place unaided. Without intelligence, matter in the cosmos should be spread out or, at best, aggregated in formless blobs, not in delicately balanced and immensely complex structures.

SD postulates that, counteracting the “centrifugal” tendency toward dispersion, there is a “centripetal” power bringing matter together and creating structures. To describe this creative principle, HPB used the term “logos” — a Greek word that means reason, intelligence, pattern, or word. This logos, however, is not a distinct entity, separate from the rest, as in the popular conception of God. The logos is a creative intelligence intrinsic in the universe; a force that generates patterns and structures. Science has not been able to detect this intelligent principle because it is subtler than matter, and even energy, where entropy reigns.

The word “intelligence” is used here in a very broad sense, not limited to the ways in which it manifests in human beings. Nature has its own intelligence: bacteria can perceive the environment and respond accordingly, plants can take formless matter and turn it into complex forms, birds can build intricate nests, and so on. Whenever some kind of entity — a celestial being, human being, or an atom — appears in the cosmos, it “channels” the principle of intelligence that is in the very fabric of the universe. How much intelligence? As much as the complexity of the form allows. An atom combines itself with some atoms, but not others, it participates in certain reactions, but not in others, and so on. We call this “chemistry”, but it is a form of intelligence — very simple, because such is the atom’s structure.

As forms become more complex, the universal mind, or logos, can be expressed in more and more elaborate ways. What we call “human intelligence” is simply the amount of universal mind that can be expressed through the human constitution. In other words we, and everything else, are direct expressions of the divine mind or logos.

We can now look at the third verse in its entirety: “Universal mind was not, for there were no Ah-hi (celestial beings) to contain (hence to manifest) it.” [*SD* 1, 37] During the universal night there is no being to express it, so this intelligence remains latent; but once the cosmos awakens, the first “structures” that develop on the spiritual planes are the celestial beings. They are the most perfect forms for

the manifestation of this cosmic intelligence, so they become the “organs” of the universal mind. In the theosophical view, all the laws of Nature are manifestations of these intelligences.

The Dawn of Manifestation

The third stanza of *SD* describes the awakening of the cosmos, or Manvantara. It opens mentioning “the last vibration of the seventh eternity” of the universal night. Note that even when the cosmos is at rest, there is vibration, energy. *SD* thus describes the existence of one *eternal* principle that has the seeds of matter, energy, and consciousness.

At a time when science thought that atoms were inert, small pieces of matter, with no motion and no parts, HPB stated that they are in constant vibration. She also criticized the scientific idea that forces were immaterial, arguing that they were a form of matter, although of a different kind than the one known by the science of her time. Several decades later, science discovered that matter is a form of energy, and energy is always “carried” by a particle, as described today in quantum physics.

As explored earlier, *SD* goes even further, adding that there is no matter or energy without intelligence. When we see matter, it is a form of energy, and when we see energy, it is a form of intelligence. Perhaps, as science deepens its understanding of the nature of energy, it may come to the same view. In fact, there are already some physicists beginning to consider a theory of panpsychism² based on quantum principles.

The first verse of the third stanza, then, says: “The last vibration of the seventh eternity thrills through infinitude.” (*SD* 1, 62), thus setting in motion the dawn of manifestation. HPB explains:

The “last vibration of the Seventh Eternity” was “foreordained” — by no God in particular, but occurred by virtue of the eternal and changeless Law which causes the great periods of Activity and Rest. (*SD* 1, 62)

According to *SD*, there is no need for a God saying, “Let there be Light.” The last vibration happens when the hour strikes, following an immutable cyclic law. The second verse continues: “The vibration sweeps along, touching with its swift wing (simultaneously) the whole universe, and the germ that dwelleth in darkness . . .” (*SD* 1, 63). We have here a new element — “the germ”. HPB describes it as:

The point in the Mundane Egg, represented by matter in its abstract sense. But the term “Point” must not be understood as applying to any particular point in Space, for a germ exists in the centre of every [metaphysical] atom . . . form[ing] the noumenon of eternal and indestructible matter. (*SD* 1, 57)

The idea of “germ” does not refer to a central point from which everything started, because the germ is in every metaphysical atom that forms the “fabric” of space. *SD* does not support the idea that the universe came from one central point; rather, it manifests throughout the whole surface of pre-existing space — simultaneously.

As postulated by the big bang theory,

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the idea that space, time, matter, and energy were all “created” from an initial singularity (a center of infinite density that contained everything that is today in the universe), many problems arise. It cannot explain (1) why matter is not evenly distributed throughout the universe, as it should be if everything came from a center and expanded at a constant rate; (2) why the universe is isotropic, having almost the same temperature everywhere, covering distances that the heat could not have reached; or (3) the incredible coincidence between the amount of matter in the cosmos and its rate of expansion, which makes the universe flat.

To fix all these flaws, scientists developed a “patch”: the cosmological inflation. This theory postulates that, for some unknown reason, the universe must have expanded extremely rapidly during its first few moments, and then, for equally unknown reasons, decreased its expansion to the current rate. Although this scenario would solve some of the problems with the big bang theory, it is impossible to say how or why this could have happened. Thus some scientists say: “Give me one miracle, and I can explain all the rest.”

One of the fathers of the inflation theory, Prof. Paul Steinhardt, is aware of how problematic this idea is. Lately, in a move that brings him closer to the esoteric view, he abandoned the theory of inflation for a *cyclic* model of the universe. In his words:

This theory is a radical alternative to the standard big bang inflationary scenario, that offers a new approach for resolv-

ing the homogeneity, isotropy, and flatness problems. (*The Cyclic Theory of the Universe* by Paul J. Steinhardt, <physics.princeton.edu/~steinh/vaasrev.pdf>

This alternative model is based on the “M-Theory” of quantum physics (“M” for membrane, also called “brane”). Steinhardt summarizes it as follows:

The observable universe lies on a brane separated by a small gap along an extra dimension from a second brane. The cyclic model proposes that the big bang is a collision between branes that occurs at regular intervals; that each bang creates hot matter and radiation, and triggers an epoch of expansion, cooling and structure formation; that there is an interbrane force responsible for drawing the branes together whose potential energy acts like dark energy when the branes are far apart; and that each cycle ends with the contraction of the extra dimension and a collision between branes — a new big bang — that initiates the next cycle.

In this theory, the universe is endless and space (the “brane”) is eternal, substantial, and constantly vibrating (“quantum fluctuations”). Matter and energy are not created from a center but throughout the whole surface of space, simultaneously, as it collides with the other brane. As can be seen, this model seems to fit quite well with several features presented in *SD*.

Chaos and ether

We can now complete the second verse of the third stanza:

The vibration sweeps along, touching with its swift wing (*simultaneously*) the

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whole universe, and the germ that dwelleth in darkness: the darkness that breathes (*moves*) over the slumbering waters of life. (*SD* 1, p. 63)

HPB explains the last part of the verse as follows:

The Waters of Life, or Chaos — the female principle in symbolism — are the vacuum (to our mental sight) in which lie the latent Spirit and Matter. . . . Vacuum, in the sense of space, but not of empty space, as “Nature abhors a vacuum”. (*SD* 1, p. 64)

HPB maintained that what seems to us empty space is not void. It is the philosophical chaos, that is, unorganized spiritual substance full of energy. In the last few decades, quantum physics has discovered the same as a feature of the physical plane. A theoretical physicist from CERN (European Council for Nuclear Research), Alvaro de Rújula, says:

As it turns out, the vacuum is not empty — there is a difference between the vacuum and nothingness. . . . The vacuum appears to have an energy density, sometimes called “dark energy” or the “cosmological constant”, responsible for the observed accelerated expansion of the universe. . . . From a particle physics viewpoint, it is permeated by a “Higgs Field”. (*Is The Vacuum Empty? The Higgs Field And The Dark Energy*, <sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070510111445.htm>)

This concept shows great similarities to what HPB called “ether”. According to her, ether is a state of matter permeating space, which science has refused to accept — until now. Some leading scientists, such as Robert B. Laughlin, Nobel Laureate in Physics, are beginning to recognize its existence. He said:

The word “ether” has extremely negative connotations in theoretical physics because of its past association with opposition to relativity. This is unfortunate because, stripped of these connotations, it rather nicely captures the way most physicists actually think about the vacuum. . . . Studies with large particle accelerators have now led us to understand that . . . the vacuum of space, confirmed every day by experiment, is a relativistic ether. But we do not call it this because it is taboo. (Laughlin, Robert B. (2005). *A Different Universe: Reinventing Physics from the Bottom Down*. NY, NY: Basic Books. pp. 120–121)

Even recent discoveries such as the gravitational waves can be better understood, not as waves of space itself, but as waves in the substantial aspect of space — the ether. This supersensuous “chaos” — the “waters of life” — is the source from which matter, energy, and consciousness manifest, inaugurating a new cosmic day. How this happens is the topic for a future article. ✧

Endnotes

1. For an exploration about this, see “Science — Modern and Occult, Part 1”, published in *The Theosophist*, Nov. 2012, p. 20.
2. The idea that everything material, however small, has an element of individual consciousness.

Ahimsa: The Solution without Animal Suffering

Animal Rights: A Scientific and Spiritual View — III

MICHIEL HAAS

Introduction

In part I of this series of articles we saw that most scientists agree that all vertebrates, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish are to a certain extent conscious, have feelings and can suffer pain. Spiritually, evidence strongly suggests that animals have a soul, often a group soul, but there are certainly animals that have already been individualised. And there are clear indications for reincarnation of animals, as appears from conversations with these animals.

In part II we learnt that we cannot ignore a single animal species in the ecosystem. If we think that at least some of the insects can be exterminated and therefore use a lot of plant protection products, this will eventually turn against us. Insects are an essential part of biodiversity. In today's intensive livestock farming, animals are used as machines producing animal flesh, milk, and eggs, and are often treated that way. In the light of today's knowledge, this is no longer acceptable.

Our current diet, based on *himsa*, or violence, against the animal kingdom, has negatively influenced people's thinking; it has become more violent than the thinking of vegetarians. Our animal flesh and dairy production are reminiscent of human slavery history. In addition, intensive livestock farming makes a major contribution to global warming. It is inevitable that we have to give animals rights based on their own nature and capabilities. Avoiding any flesh, eggs, and dairy products is the best way to reduce animal suffering associated with intensive livestock farming and its environmental impact on the planet.

Should we all be vegan?

That would be the best choice for the planet and our health. However, it would be an illusion, at least in the short term. Yet it would have a huge impact on the world if we all became vegan. Look at the consequences of choosing to eat animal flesh and dairy products:

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

Animal Rights: A Scientific and Spiritual View — III

◆ 70–75 billion (1 billion = 1,000 million) animals, mainly cattle, pigs, and chickens, are bred, brutally treated, and killed for the flesh and dairy products that people consume every year.

◆ 2.7 trillion (1 trillion = 1,000 billion) fish and other marine animals are killed for human consumption, 40% of which are just caught and thrown away (being the wrong kind or size) and should not be killed at all. Fish also have feelings.

◆ Food production is responsible for more than 25% of global CO₂ emissions, the vast majority of which, up to 80%, is caused by livestock farming.

◆ The consumption of flesh and dairy products accounts for 83% of the global use of agricultural land.

◆ 50 million hectares of forest have been cleared in the last ten years. 80% of this is for industrial agriculture, primarily intended for growing livestock feed, palm oil, and cocoa.

Is a vegan diet healthy?

When people switch to a vegan diet, those around them may worry about whether vegans will get enough protein and other necessary nutrients. The question is whether this is justified. Should it not be the vegans who worry, in the case of flesh-eaters, whether the latter are eating in a healthy enough manner?

The fact is that the vast majority of the studies carried out show that a vegan diet has more fibre, antioxidants, magnesium, potassium, folic acid and vitamins A, C, and E than the standard omnivorous diet.¹

Scientists are generally of the opinion that a vegan diet reduces the risk of prostate, breast, and colon cancer.² This is partly due to not eating flesh or processed foods. In addition, vegans often eat foods that appear to have a protective effect against cancer, such as nuts, seeds, legumes, vegetables, and fruit.

However, there is also a limitation. Vegans can build up a vitamin B12 deficiency. This vitamin is mainly taken from animal products such as flesh, dairy and fish. B12 is important for converting carbohydrates, fats and proteins into energy, and it also helps protect your brain cells. To avoid this deficiency, it is recommended to eat sea vegetables such as several types of algae like kelp, nori, and others, fermented vegetarian foods such as coconut milk yogurt, and other vitamin B12 supplements.

Can we feed the world population without animal protein?

In 2050, the UN expects the Earth to hold 9.7 billion residents. That is three billion more than the 2019 population. These three billion extra mouths will not only have to be fed, but many of the current residents will adjust their eating habits due to their increased prosperity. That means a disproportionately greater flesh and dairy consumption than is currently the case, because flesh and dairy in countries where relatively little animal food is currently eaten (think of India, China, and Brazil) are seen as luxury products, and if one can afford it one will want to eat that too. If development continues

at its current rate — with a growing world population, rising prosperity, and consequently the demand for more food — then we run the risk of much further exceeding the current Earth's capacity.

With all the associated risks — sea levels rising, forests disappearing, biodiversity crumbling, both on land and in water bodies — ecosystems are brought out of balance, putting at risk natural cycles of vital importance for humans. If we do nothing, the environmental impact of food production will increase by another 50 to 90% by 2050, writes a group of renowned international scientists in a recent article in the journal *Nature*. This will exceed the limits of our planet.³ Thus the current consumption of animal flesh and dairy products is a recipe for disaster.

Animal flesh and dairy are not efficient for feeding the world's population. Converting from cattle feed to flesh is largely inefficient. For example, only 3% of vegetable calories are converted into calories in beef, a nutritional loss of 97%. The yield is better for other meats, but still only 20% for chicken, the best-scoring piece of flesh. In addition, due to the high flesh consumption, protein intake in North America, Europe and Australia is 70% higher than is healthy for us.

In short, our current nutrition strategy, with a lot of animal proteins, cannot last. Change is necessary. As Albert Einstein proclaimed: "The World will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything." *Doing nothing also makes*

you responsible for what happens.

If we start growing food for people in the arable land that is now used for growing cattle feed, we can grow food for many more people.

1. Feeding vegetable protein directly to humans is much more efficient, at least with a factor of 1 in 6, because animals on average use 6 kilos of vegetable protein to produce one kilo of animal protein.
2. Far more agricultural land is available for food, as 83% of the current global use of agricultural land is now used for livestock farming, which can then be used directly to grow crops to feed people.

Of course, it is not just about proteins, there is a lot of room to grow all kinds of vegetables and fruit. We will even be able to choose only the richest agricultural lands, and we can make the poorer soils available for planting the 1,200 billion trees needed to reverse a significant part of the climate impact.⁴ An additional advantage of this combination is that many trees absorb CO₂, thus enabling the climate objectives of a maximum of one and a half degrees of warming and, on the other hand, the emission of greenhouse gases by livestock farming completely disappears; thus two issues get resolved at the same time.

Many people are left with the question of whether we can farm without animal manure. That question can also be answered positively. Agriculture based on rock flour and seaweed preparations is possible, and we can completely omit all animal manure.

Is the ideology of carnism correct?

Carnism, as defined by Wikipedia, is the prevailing ideology that conditions people to justify the consumption of animal products, in particular flesh from certain animals. We are therefore conditioned to eat flesh and dairy products because our culture has always done so. Most of us were raised with dairy and flesh and we were taught that it was necessary for our health. At the same time, we have learned that we must treat our pets well, and we do — they are often our friends.

So how can we treat the farm animals brutally, kick them, beat them, imprison them in far-too-small cages in which they can hardly move, fatten them up so that they can hardly walk, remove their young as soon as they are born and kill them even though they are perfectly healthy (young roosters are being chopped or gassed, young bulls are being slaughtered, all as residual products), and much more? This is possible because our ideology allows this; we consider it normal, necessary, and natural.

But if we realize that this is an ideology, just like veganism, a belief system, then we can change it too. Earlier parts of this article have clearly shown that there is no need to eat flesh and dairy products, either for our health (to the contrary, actually) or to have enough nutrition or protein. We can thrive without animal products. So, is the only reason we continue to eat flesh and dairy just that we like it so much? How is that justifiable, if you think about all the animal suffering we cause?

Here is a part of a conversation that

animal interpreter Eddy Mulder had with a cow:

Mulder: Cow, can we talk?

Cow: Yes, what do you want? (*A bit surly, not really benevolent*)

M: I will introduce myself . . .

C: I don't know if I can tell you much, but just ask.

M: What was life like on the farm or in the farming industry?

C: I was a farm cow. We were 60–80 cows in a cowshed, where we all had our permanent place, with hardly any movement. That was very annoying, nothing to do, and usually just standing, which caused pain in our hooves and joints. So, then we used to lie down. But lying down and getting up again was very difficult and painful. In fact, my joints always hurt and that was not pleasant.

M: How was the milking?

C: I didn't like it, but at least we did get some attention from people. This person was usually nice, they'd often pet me if I behaved and stood still neatly. But sometimes my joints hurt so much that I couldn't stand still and then I got hit on my bones and that hurt too.

M: What was it like to become pregnant?

C: Getting pregnant was no fun, but once I had endured it, I was allowed to spend a while in a meadow with other cows. By the time I got my young one, I went back inside. Then I got my own shed where I could move. It was fun, I had something to do, I could take care of it, sniff it and lick it. But never for long, my young one was taken away and I never saw it again. I was put in the cowshed again, another place

in the same shed and moreover, I missed my young. Even greater boredom came back with the joint pains. Not nice at all.

M: What was it like when you were taken to the slaughter?

C: I don't really want to talk about that.

The international panel of climate researchers from the United Nations (IPCC) issued a report in August 2019 in which they wrote, among other things, that a more plant-based diet should be used to curb global climate change. Agricultural use for animals has a much greater impact on the climate compared to agricultural use for plants.⁵ The World Wildlife Fund responds: "Our current food system is the greatest threat to Nature worldwide. By turning to Nature-friendly agriculture, consuming more plant-based foods instead of flesh and dairy, and combating food wastage, we can make a major contribution to solving the global climate crisis."⁶

What are the alternatives for farmers?

If the whole world were to eat vegan, what would happen to farmers who keep animals? Many farmers once started livestock farming out of love for their animals. There are wonderful stories from farmers who started out of idealism and really wanted to give and continue to give the animals the best possible life. Still they have trouble with the livestock industry. They have to make the choice at some point to bring their animals to slaughter. That is difficult, especially if you are locked up in a system that requires you to produce flesh. You can take good care of

your pigs and give them a beautiful life; yet there will come a time when the pig has to go to be slaughtered. More and more farmers have a guilty conscience about this.

The good thing is that a whole movement has started that supports farmers to make the transition from cattle to agricultural farming. The United States, Canada, Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and Israel are countries where movements have started to support farmers in this enormous transition, and with success. It helps them with their conscience and they happily go through life growing vegetables, even without using animal manure, because it is possible.

There are no alternatives to the horrible animal abuse places that we know today are found in many countries — the intensive livestock farming. Only the removal of these animal factories is a solution.

Which alternatives to flesh are out there?

It would be an illusion to assume that suddenly no one eats flesh anymore. After all, there are still people who shoot a lion or an elephant for fun and proudly pose on Facebook. These "creatures" will continue to eat animal flesh at all costs. Unfortunately, the costs will be accordingly high for them.

But for all good-natured people who do care about animal suffering, human health, and global ecology, and who feel responsible for what they do to animals and the world as a whole, there are good alternatives. There are many flesh sub-

stitutes that are based on soy, coconut, corn or other vegetable products, with names like “Beyond Meat”, “Impossible Burger”, a meatless burger that can bleed like a beef, and so on. Real hamburger experts can hardly distinguish between the two, and some opt for the vegan variant — that is how delicious these burgers are. However, some of these imitations have been over-processed and are not so good for human health.

In addition, there are also many alternatives for the people who miss dairy: coconut, soy, almond, oat, and, recently, even banana milk, and so forth. For the cheese lovers among us, who can hardly do without their daily slice, there are now more and more non-dairy alternatives that have a decent to good taste. These are based on coconut fat, potato flour, or nuts and even include specific types such as camembert, blue cheese, and so on.

In a few years, there will be cultured meat on the market, real meat that has been grown from stem cells of the relevant animal that was not killed for it. The same applies to leather products or other products for which, until now, an animal was used and therefore also killed. Developments are moving very fast and the expectations of venture investors in these products are very high. Think about it: the current method of producing flesh and dairy products through an enormous amount of animal suffering, land use, and negative environmental impacts cannot be sustained. If there are alternative products to real flesh, to which most of these objections do not apply, you have a world product.

Alternatives are being developed for animal tests that give much better results than using cultured cells from the test animal.

Times are changing, how long until we get there?

An unmistakable proportion of young people are opting for a vegan lifestyle. There are not many figures, but in 2010 there were 67 million vegans in the world and that number is growing rapidly, going by the interest on Google, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

◆ Search results from Google Trends show a worldwide increase in interest in veganism between 2004 and 2018. Top countries are Israel, Australia, Canada, Austria, and New Zealand.

◆ In the United States, there has been a 600% increase in the number of people who identify themselves as vegan over the last three years. In the United Kingdom this is 350% compared to 10 years ago.

◆ A vegetable-based diet is increasing in popularity in Asia. The Chinese government has published new dietary guidelines that encourage the population of 1.3 billion people to reduce their flesh consumption by 50%.

Scientists from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute concluded in 2011 that an opinion that is supported by 10% of the people in the group can quickly turn into a group opinion, because a point arises where an opinion, way of life or philosophy suddenly becomes “cool”, and everyone wants to belong to this group. A completely different study by

Animal Rights: A Scientific and Spiritual View — III

Dr Ian Pearson, a refined futurologist who was proven right in 85% of his prognostications, showed that it takes about 30 years for an idea that was considered impossible to become reality. This applies to broad social changes that were first dismissed and in which, in the end, almost everyone participated. Thanks to social media, this trend can now be accelerated. So there is hope.

Personal note

Because of my research in writing this series of articles, things have changed for me too. I thought I was doing well as a

vegetarian. But that is far from the truth. Of course, it is nice that in theory no animals have to die for our food, but in practice it is different. Milk is taken from the cow, milk intended for her calves. If the calf is a bull, that is a pity, it is a residual product that is often killed immediately or first beaten as a crate calf and then killed. Chickens lay eggs, but as soon as a rooster emerges from the egg, it becomes a residual product and is destroyed. By eating dairy and cheese, people contribute almost as much to animal suffering as when they eat flesh. I had no choice but to draw my own conclusions, and became a vegan. ✧

Endnotes

1. Schüpbach, R., R. Wegmüller, C. Berguerand, M. Bui, and I. Herter-Aeberli, “Micronutrient status and intake in omnivores, vegetarians and vegans in Switzerland”, *European Journal of Nutrition*, 2017.
2. Li, Fei, Shengli An, Lina Hou, Pengliang Chen, Chengyong Lei, and Wanlong Tan, “Red and processed meat intake and risk of bladder cancer: a meta-analysis”, *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Medicine*, 2014.
3. Dinther, Marc van, “Zô voeden we die 10 miljard monden in 2050 (met behoud van de aarde)!” , *De Volkskrant*, 2019.
4. Fox, Alex, “Adding 1 billion hectares of forest could help check global warming”, <sciencemag.org/news/2019/07/adding-1-billion-hectares-forest-could-help-check-global-warming>.
5. IPCC, “Climate change and land, the Final Government Draft version”, 2019.
6. Heyblom, Olav, “Klimaatrapport VN: voedseltekort dreigt”, AD, 2019, <ad.nl/buitenland/klimaatrapport-vn-voedseltekort-dreigt~aacc809b>.

**ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Varanasi

Theme: "Nurturing the Divine Seed"

31 December 2019 to 5 January 2020

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Monday, 30 December

9.30 am General Council Meeting
2.30 pm General Council Meeting

Tuesday, 31 December

8.50 pm Inauguration ceremony of the Radha Burnier Amphitheatre

9.30 am **OPENING OF THE CONVENTION**

Prayers of the Religions

Invocation

Welcome remarks

Pradeep Gohil, *President, Indian Section*

Presidential Address

Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*

2.30 pm Reception

4.00 pm **BESANT LECTURE**

"Service Above Self"

Kalyan Banerjee, *Director, UPL Limited, Mumbai, India*

7.00 pm Evening programme

Wednesday, 1 January

9.30 am Universal Prayer and Meditation

SHORT LECTURES

"Awakening the Heart-Mind"

John Vorstermans, *President, New Zealand Section*

" . . . those other divine fragments which are struggling side
by side with you . . ."

Pedro Oliveira

Education Coordinator, Australian Section

10.45 am **INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — I**

Inaugural address

Mr Tim Boyd, *international President, TS Adyar*

"State of the Indian Section" address

Pradeep H. Gohil, *President, Indian Section*

Convention Programme

- 2.30 pm “Blueprints for a New World — I”
LEAP Boundary Breakers
Reputed world-travelled children’s choir from Chennai
Artistic Director Srinivas Krishnan
- 4.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“Freedom from the Self”
P. Krishna,
Krishnamurti Foundation India, Rajghat, Varanasi, India
- 7.00 pm Adyar Update
Tim Boyd, *TS Adyar*, and Michiel Haas, *the Netherlands*

Thursday, 2 January

- 9.30 am Devotional Meeting
- 11.00 am CONVERSATION with Prof. P. Krishna
led by Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
“Theosophy and Krishnamurti”
- 2.30 pm SHORT TALKS
“Who is Nurturing Who?”
Shikhar Agnihotri, *Indian Section*
“Nurturing Self and Others”
Barbara Hebert, *President, American Section*
“Continuous Dissatisfaction and the Useless Pursuit of Happiness”
Esteban Langlois, *General Secretary, Argentinian Section*
- 4.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“Mindfulness or a Mind Full of Things”
Ven. Olande Ananda Thera
Buddhist Monk and Patron of the TS in Sri Lanka
- 7.00 pm “Blueprints for a New World — II”
LEAP Boundary Breakers
Reputed world-travelled children’s choir from Chennai
Artistic Director Srinivas Krishnan
Mentored by two-time Oscar award winner A. R. Rahman

Friday, 3 January

- 9.30 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
PANEL — “Nurturing the Divine Seed”
Sabine van Osta (panel moderator)
General Secretary, Belgian Section
Douglas Keene, *Board Member, American Section*
Patrizia Calvi, *Secretary, Italian Section*
Isis de Resende, *President, Inter-American Federation, Brazil*
V. Narayanan, *Treasurer, Indian Section*

Convention Programme

- 11.00 am INDIAN SECTION CONVENTION — II
“Kindle the Spark Within”
- 2.30 pm THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE
“Sowing Seeds of Divinity”
Nancy Secrest, *TOS International Secretary, Adyar*
Susan Bayliss, *Secretary, English Section*
Mahesh S. U., *Indian Section*
- 4.00 pm THEOSOPHY-SCIENCE LECTURE
“Science for Health or Consciousness”
Abhaya Srisrimal Jain (*Industrialist and Social Educationist*)
Chairman, Abusha Investment & Management Services LLP
- 7.00 pm ENTERTAINMENT —Songs from Old Hindi Movies
- Saturday, 4 January**
- 9.30 am Universal Prayer and Meditation
SHORT LECTURES
“Living Intelligently”
Narendra Shah, *GS, East & Central African Section*
“The Sublime Symbology of the Lotus”
Linda Oliveira, *President, Australian Section*
- 11.00 am QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
- 2.30 pm SYMPOSIUM
“Realizing the Divine Within”
Clemice Petter, *Head, Editorial Department, Adyar*
Vinayak Pandya, *Indian Section*
Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu,
Chairperson, European Federation of the TS, France
- 4.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“The Relevance of Our Work”
Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
- 7.00 pm DANCE PERFORMANCE
“Priya Sakha” (“Dear Friend”)
Odissi Dancer Nityananda Das (Differently abled dancer)
- Sunday, 5 January**
- 9.30 am Prayers of the Religions
CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION
Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
- 11.00 am Admission of New Members
- 2.30 pm Youth Forum

Theosophical Work around the World

France and EFTS

The annual National Convention of The TS in France took place on 22 and 23 June 2019 at the headquarters of the Section in Paris. The first morning was dedicated to the annual general members' assembly of the Section. The afternoon symposium was on the theme of the Convention: "From Animal to Human: Evolution of Consciousness". Three members — Brigitte Taquin, Lola Petiot and Krista Umbjarv — covered the theme from different angles. The second day began with a session of questions and answers (Q&A) with the speakers of the symposium. In the afternoon, Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Chairman of the European Federation (EFTS), gave a public lecture on "Intelligence in the Adventure of Consciousness". The lecture was well received by the over 25 participants.

The Councillors of the European Federation of the TS met in Brussels, Belgium, on 27 July 2019 (see photo).

Ukraine

The TS in Ukraine became a Section on 12 August after functioning as a Regional Association since 2013. Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko was elected as the General Secretary. The theosophical work with studies, seminars, visits, and inaugurating the house where HPB was born in Dnepropetrovsk started in 1991 with the help of the EFTS. They have 100 mem-

bers in 8 Lodges and two study groups.

Italy

The first Italian edition of a "Silent Retreat" dedicated to meditation took place from 27 to 29 September, conducted by Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu and translated by Daniele Urlotti. About 20 members coming from Milan, Vicenza, Turin, Mondovì, Aosta, Reggio Emilia, and Feltre participated. The program was dedicated to meditation sessions accompanied by moments of in-depth theosophical study and many Q&A sessions. Silence accompanied all the intermediate moments, including those of meals, which were strictly vegan, with few vegetarian transgressions.

The retreat was held in a peaceful and natural environment. The experience was so inspiring that Ms Diêu was invited to lead another retreat next year.

Puerto Rico

The TS in Puerto Rico received the visit of Mrs Juliana Cesano, member of the TS in America, from 4 to 6 October. She gave a public lecture on "The Mystery of the Heart in the Ageless Wisdom" and a weekend workshop exploring a practical application of "The Path of the Mystic and the Essential Pillars for Spiritual Development". Both had about 30 participants, focusing on how to establish a real relationship with the Divine through teachings of mystics of different traditions.

Theosophical Work around the World



Some of the participants of the French Section's annual Convention in June 2019: Nano (Jeannine) Leguay, General Secretary (GS) of the French Section, sitting in the centre; sitting on her right is Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu (Vice GS), behind Nano is Maxence Ondet (Vice GS), and in front of Nano is Krista (Secretary of the Section), and Treasurer Marc Vernet took the photo



Councillors of the European Federation of the TS at its annual meeting in Brussels, Belgium, on 27 July. *From l. to r., sitting:* Jenny Baker (GS of the TS in England), Sabine Van Osta (Vice-Chairperson of the EFTS & GS of the TS in Belgium), Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu (Chairperson of the EFTS, France), Krista Umbjarv (Secretary of the EFTS, France). *L. to r., standing, 1st row:* Nano (Jeannine) Leguay (GS of the TS in France), Patrizia M. Calvi (member of the EFTS Executive, Italy), Janne Vuononvirta (GS of the TS in Finland), Irena Primc (OS of the TS in Slovenia), Wim Leys (GS of the TS in The Netherlands). *Left to right, standing, 2nd row:* Els Rijneker (member of the EFTS Executive, The Netherlands), Carlos Guerra (GS of the TS in Portugal), Antonio Girardi (GS of the TS in Italy), Janos Szabari (OS of the TS in Hungary)

Theosophical Work around the World



Participants of the meditative retreat conducted by Ms Tr n-Thi-Kim-Di u for the Italian Section of the TS in September. Standing in the far right is the GS of the Section, Antonio Girardi, Ms Di u is standing in the centre (brown kurta); and seating are Patrizia M. Calvi (member of the EFTS Executive) in the far right, and Krista Umbjarv (Secretary of the EFTS, France), 2nd from the left



Participants in a workshop given by Juliana Cesano (back row, centre of the wall hanging) from the TS in America (originally from Argentina) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on the teachings and practices of the mystics of different traditions. On the right of Juliana is Magaly Polanco, Presidential Representative of the TS in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Dr McIvan Rivera, senior assistant of Mrs Polanco, is standing in the first row second from left

Theosophical Work around the World



The UP Federation held its Centenary Conference at Agra Lodge from 11 to 13 October 2019. In the 2nd row, sitting, *fr l. to r.*: Prof. C. A. Shinde, National Lecturer and Librarian at TS Adyar; Mr L. S. Sengar, President of Agra Lodge; U. S. Pandey, President, UP & U. Federation; Mr Tim Boyd, international President; and Mrs Lily Boyd; end of same row, standing: Mr Pradeep Mahapatra, of the Indian Section; 1st row, fourth from right: Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, National Lecturer



Mr Tim Boyd being welcomed at St. John's College of Agra University on 12 Oct 2019, before giving a talk to faculty and students on "Overcoming Fear". The College is widely regarded as one of the oldest, most beautiful and prestigious colleges in India

Theosophical Work around the World



The beautiful Blavatsky Hall of Nairobi Lodge in Kenya, Africa, where their centenary celebrations were held. Congratulatory messages from around the world being read to over one hundred members by Mr Navin Shah, past General Secretary (GS) of the East and Central African Section and current Asst. GS of the Kenya Region, on 8 Sept. 2019



Front row, from r. to l.: Vinai Vohora, Trustee of Nairobi Lodge; Virchand Shah, Chairman of Nile Lodge, Kampala, and Asst. GS of Uganda Region; and Navin Shah

Theosophical Work around the World

India

The Uttar Pradesh (UP) Federation of the Indian Section of the TS organized its Centenary Conference in Agra from 11 to 13 October 2019. During the inaugural session Mr L. S. Senger, President of Agra Lodge, and Mr U. S. Pandey, Federation Secretary, welcomed Mr Tim Boyd, international President and Chief Guest, and Mrs Lily Boyd. A souvenir and book titled “*Divya Gyan*”, containing short articles and other matters on theosophical teachings, were released by Mr Boyd. Also, a Hindi translation of the book *Buddhist Meditation* by the Rev. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche was released by Mrs Boyd.

After greetings were offered by representatives of Federations and Lodges, and those mentioned above, Mr Boyd delivered the inaugural speech. In the afternoon, the annual meeting of the General Body of the Federation was held, during which the Indian Section’s decision to redesignate the UP Federation as “Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Federation” was ratified, and Mr Pandey was reelected as Federation Secretary.

The next day, on the invitation of St John’s College, President Boyd addressed a gathering of students and faculty members regarding “Overcoming Fear”. During the next session on 12 October Mr Pandey delivered a talk on the conference theme, “One Life: One Consciousness”. A public talk on “The Problem of Identity” was delivered by Mr Boyd that evening. In the morning of the last day Prof Shinde delivered a talk on

“A Call to Be Free From Worldliness”. At the closing, President Boyd expressed appreciation for the work being done by the Federation.

East and Central Africa

Members of the Nairobi Lodge, in Kenya, Africa, celebrated the centenary of their Lodge, which fell on 9 September 2018, with various activities organized over the year, ending on 9 September 2019. They began with a seminar on “Towards a Just World” on 15 September 2018, conducted by Ananya Sri Ram Rajan, from USA. Navin B. Shah, past General Secretary (GS) of the East and Central Africa Section of the TS, and the current GS, Narendra M. Shah, presented the 100-year history from the archives of the Lodge in five weekly meetings.

A seminar entitled “Stepping purposefully into the next century” was conducted on 7 September 2019, and the celebrations ended the next day, where Navin Shah highlighted the history of the Lodge in events such as its hosting of the 7th World Congress of the TS in 1982, the formation of the Pan-African Theosophical Federation in 2000, the Centenary Convention of the coming of Theosophy to East Africa in 2005, and the launching of the TOS postage stamp in 2008, among others. Individual heartfelt tributes were also paid to all the 180 past and present Lodge workers by Narendra Shah to an audience of over 100. Finally, a photo exhibition depicting events, activities, and history of the Lodge was held in Blavatsky Hall. ✧

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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