

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

VOL. 142 NO. 5 FEBRUARY 2021

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NOTE: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: <editorialoffice@gmail.com>

Cover: The redesigned garden in front of the international Headquarters building of the Theosophical Society (TS), Adyar, Chennai, India — Photographer: Ms Marja Artamaa, TS international Secretary

This journal is the official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky on 1 Oct. 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

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.

The Golden Hour: A Turning of the Cycle

TIM BOYD

I WOULD like to consider something related to the theme of our International Convention, “Cycles of Awareness”, particularly how cycles affect us and how we can interact with them in a proactive and productive way.

Cycles affect us at every level. They are so omnipresent at the personal level that they often go unexamined. In her introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) discusses Three Fundamental Propositions. Cycles is the second of them. She points to specific cycles such as day and night, life and death, sleeping and waking, the seasons, as being such a common part of our everyday experience that they indicate to us the presence of a fundamental Law of the universe.

Although we are largely unaware of them, there are cycles at other levels within which we participate. There are minute cycles taking place continuously, even within the body. Most of us are not aware that during the course of any day there are more than two trillion new cells formed within the body. This process of cell replication and cell destruction, is ongoing even while we sleep, but it is too small for us to be aware of.

Anything related to the spectrum of

light or the electromagnetic spectrum takes place along a range of cycles, everything from visible light to gamma rays, but some of those are so rapid and so fast we cannot even conceive of the speed at which they function. These things are micro, small, beneath the level of our perception. There are also much grander cycles — macro cycles. Just as we have a year where in 365 days the Earth makes a circuit around its center, the Sun; our solar system has a similar cycle where it circles the center of the Milky Way Galaxy. It takes a little longer than our Earth. In fact it takes 225 to 250 million years to make this cycle of a galactic year!

In our theosophical studies and in the teachings of the Ageless Wisdom, we are made aware of even grander cycles, those of pralaya and manvantara, of or universal sleeping and waking, and activity. It is described as “the Great Breath”, in which universes are drawn in and breathed out. Universes come into being, have their time, which seems eternal in our counting, but then are breathed back in and sleep. This is a grand cycle as well — too large for us to have any meaningful experience or comprehension of it.

In this Earthly life to which we are all

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bound, there are countless other cycles. There is an idea expressed as the bio-geo-chemical cycle. So in the biological, geological, and chemical realms there are multiple cycles involved in the circulating of the atoms that compose the bodies of every living creature.

The basic idea behind this is that the Earth's matter, though seemingly limitless to us, *is* limited. It is a closed system. New matter is not suddenly coming into being. Except for those meteorites that fall upon its surface, new matter is not coming into the Earth. The same matter that was here initially is here now. Every living organism that comes into being, is composed of the recycled atoms that have been present before.

A mathematical calculation was done to answer the question: how many of William Shakespeare's atoms does each one of us have in our bodies? The basic calculation involves figuring out how many atoms of food, air, bodily waste, and remains of the body passed through Shakespeare during his life and then were returned to the general pool of matter following his death. Next the computation was done about the total number of atoms available for recycling at the Earth's surface. Based on this computation, it was determined that each one of us has approximately six billion atoms of William Shakespeare in our bodies.

For many people this might seem like an encouragement to write some additional sonnets, or come up with an additional act in one of his plays, but six billion atoms within our bodies is like nothing. The number of atoms in the body is a 10 fol-

lowed by 27 zeros — incalculable. It makes a grain of sand on a beach look large. So each of us is composed of the same matter that was in the body of Shakespeare, the Buddha, Jesus, and in the bodies of countless saints and scoundrels who have inhabited the planet throughout history. If we were to give it some thought, it should indicate something about the interdependent nature of all life.

So far we have considered cycles in Nature. For us who are drawn to a spiritual path, two questions should come to our mind: "Is it possible for us to rise beyond these natural cycles in which we are enmeshed?" Is freedom a possibility?", so bound do we seem to be in these various cycles of Nature.

At a certain level, it is clear that we are chained to Nature and to all of its various cycles. For any embodied being, such as the human being, Nature is inescapable. It could be said that Nature is brutal in the movement of its cycles. The weak do not survive in Nature, but then again neither do the strong. Ultimately anything or anyone that is born is engaged in a cycle of birth, growth, decline, and of what we describe as death. If we have any doubt about this fact, we can verify it by looking at the greatest among us. The Buddha came and passed through this cycle. Jesus did the same. Whether it is a human being, a tree, a star, or a galaxy, the natural cycle is identical. Every one of us passes through this. These cycles in Nature are all worthy of study and understanding, so that we can interact with that aspect of our being intelligently.

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For spiritual practitioners, there are other cycles. One in particular is supremely important to become aware of: cycles of consciousness, or of awareness. In Eastern spirituality, there is a Sanskrit word that cuts across all of the various traditions typical to India, — *samsāra*. It literally means “wandering”, but it is very descriptive of a cycle in which we are all engaged as beings with consciousness. It describes the repetitive cycle of birth, suffering, and death that is fueled and continued by ignorance, which is not the same as not knowing.

Ignorance refers to the idea that *everything* we perceive as real is incorrect. This cycle is often depicted as a wheel with various stations on it. Much like the cycles in Nature, we are chained to this cycle of *samsāra*, with one very important difference: the reason we are so closely bound to this constant rebirth and the suffering that it entails, is because of unawareness. Awareness permits for the ending of this cycle.

As awareness arises so too does the possibility of freedom. With awareness being so important, the question we have to ask ourselves is: Awareness of what? It is not enough to merely be aware that this cycle exists. That is a beginning, because for many that level of consideration has not even been given to it. The all-important awareness is an awareness of the primacy of consciousness.

Consciousness is not bound to matter. It participates in matter, expresses itself through matter, but is not identical nor is it bound to Nature’s processes. Spiritual

traditions and the Ageless Wisdom which underlies them give guidance in how we address this process — how we first see the cycle within which we are continually engaged, then how to actually find a way to interrupt that cycle. This is the basis of any valid spiritual tradition, all of which points to an important starting place for loosening the bonds of this grip we are in.

Even a casual observation of the way things work, shows us that everybody who comes into this world also leaves it. For many people this is a frightening mystery they would rather not think about. But the first step always is to become aware of impermanence. We are not here forever. Everybody comes and goes. When we become aware of that, not just as a general idea, but that this is something which universally occurs and will also happen to us, that type of thinking can lead us to next steps.

One of the interesting facts of our time is the estimate that approximately one in every eight people has had a near-death experience. Medical advances nowadays have greatly improved the ability to resuscitate people who have heart attacks — one of the more common causes of death. It used to be that if you had a heart attack, that was it! You did not have a *near-death* experience, you had a *death* experience.

The result is that now many people have had the experience of consciousness separating from the body; the body being pronounced dead; and yet they have full awareness. They find that the consciousness, upon being loosened from the body,

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continues to have experiences, many of which they later describe, and the similarities between these reports are quite remarkable. For people who have had this experience, it changes them. On a fundamental level, they become aware of things which previously were not part of their experience: that death is not annihilation, that consciousness exceeds the limitations of the body, and continues apart from it. People I have known have returned from this experience with different priorities in their life.

The *Bhagavadgītā* tells us that at the moment of death each person goes to what was their “ruling passion” in life. Someone who was a materialist is drawn into a fixation on the material realm, which is no longer available to them. For someone who had an idea of a heaven world, they are drawn toward *that*. Whatever has been our ruling passion in life is what we are drawn to, or what we are propelled toward.

When we recognize this, it sets in motion the possibility that we have some choice in the matter of what passion will rule us. Just because the TV is on, because the newspaper is on the table, or somebody is telling an interesting gossip story, does not mean that we have to give over our attention and become absorbed in it. We can choose how and where we place our attention, how and where we position our consciousness.

Part of the purpose of a spiritual tradition is to give guidelines in how to further this prioritizing of the direction of our consciousness. In Mahayana Buddhism,

there is a particularly powerful approach to prioritizing the direction of our life energies. The basic recognition is that we are here for a short time, so how do we best use that time? One is advised to look around and judge for oneself what might be most productive.

In the Mahayana tradition, there is the example of the Buddha, the Enlightened One. In his earlier life, when he was seeking enlightenment he was termed a Bodhisattva, one who has pledged themselves to a vow which is a specific life direction: “I will attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.” This is the priority that is undertaken in an internal vow, intended to shape our behavior going forward.

Although we know that in such a lofty goal it is certain that we will fail again and again, the idea is that we continue to try. If, in fact, it is significant enough to us, then we may stray from it, but the strength of our commitment to the vow will always draw us back. The vow’s focus is that we prepare our consciousness, deepen our awareness, with the aim that it can be of benefit to others.

In *At the Feet of the Master* the young Jiddu Krishnamurti points out a similar approach when he talks about how it is we are to study, on what do we fix our attention with the intention of liberating the mind? Knowledge is infinite. Books are coming out every day. So what do we study? What will be most valuable and useful for this Bodhisattva ideal? Krishnamurti’s statement was that we study first, *that which will most help us to help others.*

Blavatsky, the principal founder of

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the Theosophical Society (TS), late in her life became dissatisfied with the growth and progress of the TS. At the very beginning of this movement she was instrumental in attracting attention to Theosophy, the Ageless Wisdom. Having been born with highly developed psychic abilities, one of the ways she did it was by producing a variety of phenomena of a “supernatural” nature: levitating and materializing objects, producing sounds from tables and walls, clairvoyance, and a remarkable array of phenomena that were witnessed.

Her initial motivation was to present these things in order to *attract* the attention of a “thinking” group of people. It did that. The ranks of the TS swelled with people who were fascinated with phenomena. But only very few of them had any genuine interest in what was behind the production of those phenomena.

What was the bigger picture that these phenomena connected one to? Most people were only interested in the circus aspect. So she became frustrated with the fact that there were so few who were truly looking to change, to impact the world with this fundamental idea of Brotherhood, the Oneness of all life. To find a living expression of that was the focus, and that was the very thing that everybody seemed to miss.

So she described the TS in two ways. First she said that it was a stupendous success in terms of presenting these formerly exotic ideas such as reincarnation, karma, states of consciousness, that the universe is pervaded with intel-

ligence throughout its parts, that there is no empty space, self-responsibility, that we are instrumental in the unfoldment of our consciousness, or in constricting it. The TS was a stupendous success in terms of putting these ideas at the doorsteps of a global audience, whereas before no such consideration was possible.

At the same time she wrote that the TS was also a dead failure. It is a challenge trying to think about how these two ideas can fit together. On the one hand, a stupendous success; on the other hand, a dead failure. Both statements were true for the two different avenues of expression for which the Society was founded. The one avenue of sharing an information and conceptual source was well developed. But in its main function, to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity *that can be expressed in us*, the lives of its individual parts, *that* was where she witnessed a continuing failure. A genuine familial relationship among TS members was difficult to establish.

Toward the end of her life, she determined that she would work with a few in order to root these principles in their consciousness. The focus of the TS was on the many. She formed her “inner group”, a small group of 12 people. She talked to all of them saying that the choice to take part in this effort was not casual, but a profoundly serious commitment.

In order to take part in this inner group, the people that she chose had to take a pledge that had six parts, but the most important one was the very first: to “endeavor to make

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Theosophy a living factor in my life”. This was the basis for the coming together of this group and for what she hoped would be the realization of the purposes of the theosophical movement.

It was not a pledge that was given to the fellow members of this inner group, nor was it offered to the group’s leader. The pledge was not made to an individual; it was not personal in any way. Its closing words were: “so help me, my Higher Self.” It was made to this higher self out of which *all* souls are emanated. She described it as “universal” and “second-less”. The aid, the flowing in of the Higher Self was the factor that would make this pledge real.

The determination of the will to link ourselves with the Higher Self to direct the consciousness sets something in motion. It begins with imagining the possibility, in this case that Theosophy can become an active agency in one’s life. Then one commits to that possibility. In whatever way that we are able, we commit. And this is really where the power comes. The Higher Self does not grant favors. It is not like the traditional approach to prayer that many people engage in, a begging for undeserved favoritism. That is not the way it works. The Higher Self pours its power and guidance into the one whose will becomes *merged* with its own.

This pledge is born out of a recognition that we are here for a short time, that this moment is impermanent, that *all* of the cycles of Nature speak to our inter-involvement. I like the expression of Thich Nhat Hanh, who talks about “inter-being”. Literally, all of the atoms of our

being are continually shared with all others. Anyone who begins to see this has the capacity to imagine a unity that goes beyond the norms of our daily experience. Even a glimpse of that should draw from us a commitment to pursue that way of living.

There is a very special moment during the cycle of each day that is highly prized by artists and photographers. It is called the “golden hour” — that time right before the setting of the sun, or immediately after the its arising, when anything that is bathed in that light seems to have a special and particular glow. To the eye of the artist, it is highly regarded because seemingly ordinary things take on a different quality of being. This is the hour when everything has a radiance, but not merely from the light falling upon it. This golden hour seems to activate something so that the glow is seen as coming from within. Probably all of us have had the experience of seeing the world in these moments. This is a description of something that is revealed in Nature’s daily cycles — the natural cycle of visible light.

A similar event takes place within our cycle of awareness. It happens in a couple of ways. There are experiences of illumination that occur in the lives of all of us. Generally they are momentary, where we find that something arises within us, where the barriers that have been erected over a long time of improper thought, of misunderstanding, of unexamined living, for whatever reason, these barriers fall away, and in that moment this Higher Self can become present. It is no longer obstructed.

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These experiences often happen in mysterious ways, sometimes as a result of the inner work we have been doing, to see and address our self-created barriers. In talking about the pledge, one of the things HPB stressed was that in order for someone to become sincere in their commitment, an understanding of what one is committing to is required. Of course, that understanding grows over time, but she made it clear that if Theosophy, the Ageless Wisdom, is to become an active factor in our lives, we need to have some knowledge of what it is. I think she viewed the process of deepening understanding as action-based. Whether that action be physical or mental, it was rooted in the expression of a state of awareness focused on *compassionate* activity.

In various circles people think in terms of service activity, but we are talking about compassion as expressed in our actions toward others, and in the silent action that takes place within our own minds of how we regard others, our quality of seeing. This golden hour makes itself known and felt by others in every compassionate act that flows from us, in every deepened understanding in which we find a way to share with others, not just intellectual understanding, but of the fabric that we are all a part of, the Oneness at the root of this whole theosophical movement.

Act by act, thought by thought, we are bringing this golden hour into being. The term that Blavatsky used was “a pledge”; it was a formal arrangement that took form within ourselves. Within us is where everything begins, takes place, and ends.

In her model HPB talked about Theosophy. For someone who is involved in the Theosophical Society and this way of thinking, that is a wonderful and powerful avenue of expression. That is the reason why it is of value to *all* of us. But we must commit to something. If it is a friendship, put yourself in it. If it is a marriage, a relationship, a community, a nation, commit yourself to it.

One of the great scientists of the 20th century, also a profound mystic, George Washington Carver, an American botanist renowned for his experiments with plants. He was able to draw out countless previously unimagined products from various forms of plant life. He made a statement that was at the root of his whole method of scientific practice. When asked “how are you able to see these expressions that are unseen to others?” he responded: “Anything that you love enough will reveal its secrets.” The commitment that is rooted in love, in an awareness of our Unity and that we function, live, and depend upon each other, is powerful and at the root of what we call “Theosophy”.

These are a few thoughts to consider concerning this cycle of a dawning awareness that we are trying to hasten. It will do us good, but, more so it will do good for others. We are here to do more than take up space in this world.

I appreciate your attention, as always, and appreciate whatever it is that you find it within your heart and ability to commit yourselves to. It will definitely open up pathways to greater and deeper things. ✧

Sixty Years of Theosophy — II

GABRIEL BURGOS

MY wife, Cecilita, was committed to Theosophy all her life, the same as I am now; and if I was excited earlier about the study in the Bogotá Lodge, I am even more so now. It is so fulfilling for me to be in the Lodge with my soul mates, sharing ideas, discovering things, opening ourselves to the doors of mystery, because every day there are things to be learnt. Many may think: “Well, I already know something about karma, reincarnation, life after death, why do I need to learn anything else?” No! There are things to be discovered every day; it is something marvelous.

The world is so immensely beautiful and wide, not just in its physical, cosmic aspect, which Theosophy studies as well, but in the internal worlds that govern those things; in the world of thought through the books where, for example, we find the enigmas that turn up in the sacred books. To read those books with the theosophical key is extremely illuminating. To read them in an ordinary way, literally, they do not tell us much, and sometimes we get confused and follow the wrong paths; but if that key exists, if we can comprehend and apply it, then we discover how things truly are.

I would like to take the example of a myth found in the Bible. But, what will Christians say if we tell them that there are myths in the Bible? Surely they will reject the idea. They will say: “What do you mean by myths? The Bible tells the truth, it is right, it is written in it.” However there is, among many others, a very important myth in the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis, where we find the myth of paradise on Earth.

There is a couple, Adam and Eve, who have no knowledge. They live in a paradise of little animals, because their reasoning has not been developed. In the myth there is a tree that produces fruits, and those who eat them will be able to distinguish between good and evil. That tree does not exist, it is a myth, a symbol, as also is the tempting serpent which tells them: “Eat of this fruit, and you will become wise, like God.” But they are tempted — although, in their ignorance, they cannot discern between what is good or evil — they eat the fruit, thus committing such a grave sin that they are expelled from paradise.

For the mind that inquires, searches, this appears as an enigma, because they

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say that due to Adam and Eve's sin, which was to eat a fruit, all their children (through generations of thousands and millions of years, that is, including all of us), live in a sinful and confused world. This cannot be. If according to this story they committed some sin — although I believe that eating a fruit is not a sin — how is it possible that millions of beings, descendants of Adam and Eve, who possibly were not even yet conceived in the divine mind, should have to pay for the consequences of that horrible sin committed by that couple? If this was the case, it would be completely unjust. But God is perfect Justice and infinite Wisdom and Love. The world in which we live and develop has a grandiose purpose which leads us to a marvellous goal.

According to some of those religions that call themselves pagan, behind the symbol there are torrents of wisdom. Theosophy, with its light, is the key that unravels the mystery of the symbol, letting us see the wisdom it contains. In this case, Adam and Eve, the humanity of the early days, does not sin. An animal that kills never does it to harm another, for vengeance, or to take advantage. Its nature tells it “you are hungry”, and it kills looking to satisfy its immediate necessity, nothing else.

Those primitive human beings are like animals. But if later they know that there is a need to respect others' lives, and still kill, then they do commit a crime. It is a reasoning process in which those beings start to see things in a different way, begin to realize that they are responsible for their acts. Those beings have woken up. But

“to wake up to their being” means that they have to face life, struggle to decide between what is good and what is evil, and act accordingly. There is a battle, in which we find ourselves, and in which we have to win.

With our theosophical study we begin to learn many important things. One of them is that there are individual priorities. If for some individuals the priority is of a material nature, then they live for what is material during one or more lives, but they will never be full, satisfied, and happy. They have looked for happiness in the external, but that passing happiness escapes them. But if they find that there is something superior, then that becomes the priority. If we live a few or many years — 60, 70, 80 — and our bodies die, we continue to live as souls, which are gleams of the immortal spirit. What is more important, that which lives, ages, gets sick, and dies, or that which is immortal and eternal?

The time will come in our theosophical Lodge studies in which they will say something that, upon hearing it for the first time, could shake us up: “You don't have a soul.” But immediately they will clarify: “You are a soul utilizing bodies, for the development of your spiritual nature.” That changes completely our vision of the object of life.

For Cecilita and me, our Lodge was the priority, and fortunately we have never had a problem with our children or grandchildren in that respect. They have known that first comes these things with their parents and grandparents. The priority is always one's spiritual food that is found

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in the Lodge, rather than a birthday celebration, a walk, or anything else; and they accommodate those occasional circumstances to take place after the priorities of their theosophical parents/grandparents. If, for example, a birthday falls on the same day as a Lodge meeting, the birthday can be celebrated the next day, there is no problem. But they also know that we always respect their tastes and ideas. We never insist on them having to take this or that path, each one needs to follow his or her own path, which is indicated by their inner nature.

We found that working in the Lodge or at the national headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS) in Colombiawas a joy, a pleasure. Once, studying Confucius, I found some of his fundamental thoughts: “If you choose a job you like, you will never have to work.” That is right, because joyful work is not a burden, it is a pleasure.

We saw that there are many opportunities to serve. Undoubtedly there are people in need economically, emotionally, or physically; and if one is a theosophist, he or she must be ready to help. But who can deliver these theosophical ideas to those who need them, as we once did? If we donot know anything about Theosophy, we will not be able to share it. If our ideas are confused, we will only be able to transmit confusion.

We need to study and prepare ourselves to be able to speak about Nature’s Laws, the Law of Karma, of life after death, and so on. We need to study, understand, discern, what is most useful, given that the work of the TS is fundamentally

to share with restless souls theosophical ideas, to awaken souls. I have been engaged in such a joyful work all my life.

Another thing that I learned is that disadvantages can be converted into advantages. For example, currently, and almost from its start, the international headquarters of the TS is in Adyar, Chennai, India. It was founded in the United States of America, in the city of New York, and its work there was in the English language; and in India, English is the language of culture, in addition to being the second official language in the country after Hindi. So the literature is published mainly in English. That would be a disadvantage for those who do not understand English. Those who speak English immediately find that they have it made.

But many times, to have everything already made can be a disadvantage; possibly they will read too fast. But if one has to translate, then all the text has to be read with utmost care for its transcription, in our case into Spanish. Who will do it? That work was being done extraordinarily by Don Walter Ballesteros, who was in charge of the TS in Colombia. But he passed away; he is no longer with us. Then I saw that one of my tasks could be to translate articles, magazines, and even books from the English language. How much it has helped me to do this! Those who learn more are the ones who commit themselves more, and it is a pleasure to do so.

The first book I translated was *Science and Occultism*, published in Adyar in 1980, and authored by Dr I. K. Taimni,

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Professor of Chemistry at the Allahabad University in India, who also studied Sanskrit. He was a leader of the TS and wrote at least 9 theosophical books and 239 articles in 18 theosophical journals. Since then I have continued the translation work, which has served me very well — a disadvantage that became an advantage. Many may ask: “Well, but what can I do to serve in the TS?” Each one, according to their aptitudes, can search for work for him/herself. Many do it and can then help in that sense.

Many years ago, in a Theosophical Lodge in Bogotá, a young woman member said to me: “Brother Gabriel, here we have gotten used to call each other “brothers”, not because this may be an organization of Christian brothers or something like that, but to be conscious of our fraternity, that we are certainly children of the same Divine Father. Why don’t you give a course on Theosophy?” I then answered: “I’m going to do it.” I really found it easy to design it and present it to people.

Then, with Cecilita’s help, we went to work on it. There was no Internet then and I knew very well that if several senses are applied to something, the student can better grasp things. It is not the same when they are simply listening, as when they are also seeing. Therefore we designed graphics on cardboard for the Theosophy course. Designing graphics, synoptic charts, and so forth, also helped us a lot in our own study. Some of those framed cardboards still exist in the national headquarters of the TS in Colombia, located

in Bogotá, and sometimes they are still used for studies. Today, with Internet and PowerPoint, all that is made very easily. But they were not available then.

The course was born, and it started to be taught every year during Easter Week, on Thursday through Saturday mornings, lasting a total of 12 to 14 hours, which now are also taught by other members of the Society which have prepared themselves to do so. Out of that course was born the book published in 2018 titled *Approaching Theosophy*. The book was contemplated for a long time, although, naturally, very summarized, but it intends to raise concerns. I resolved for its words not to be simply informative, but also inspirational, given that touching the heart is more important than merely engaging the mind.

To engage the mind of our listeners, we need to study; if not, what can we share with them? We need to know and, therefore, one has to work in that field. But we cannot simply remain in the field of the mind and of study; we need to come to *live* that Theosophy. What really moves the listener is what we transmit to their heart through our experience. Each one of the postulates, or premises, that are presented to the listeners implies a way of living with a different focus, full of enthusiasm, of optimism, because life is beautiful and the purpose of living is joyful and majestic.

Someone could maybe ask: “How can Theosophy help me?” That is a question that each one has to answer for themselves. If people think that attending a

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Theosophical Lodge is going to prepare them very well to engage in a business enterprise, they will be disappointed. They will not find it there. If they come to the TS believing that they are going to awaken powers, turn into a clairvoyant, see others' thoughts, foretell the future — how wonderful! But, they are knocking on the wrong door. They will not find it there either.

It is true that those powers exist and that they can be awakened, but they need to be awakened at the right time. If those powers are awakened before there is a profound ethical and moral development, there will be the tendency of using them for self-benefit while harming others; so that is not offered by the TS.

What is the TS good for, or why should we search for it? Our ideal was very clear to my wife and me, even before finding the TS: it was peace — to live a life of peace. We resolved that our marriage could not be like many of the common ones. She was very afraid of marriage, because in her family, seeing

her aunts and uncles in their marriage, she could not find any of them who was happy — some in the middle of huge conflicts, and others simply as was customary: “We are used to this, let us continue living like this.” We did not want that.

We wanted peace, and that meant a total change at all levels: physical, emotional, and mental, illuminated by a spiritual life. If there are anxieties, stress, fear of what will happen next, fear of death, and of so many other things that affect people most of the time, they cannot live

in peace. Peace means harmony, to live our ideals together looking toward the same star and respecting others, but each one following their own path.

I have been able to see that peace to some extent here in the TS, but the members are human beings and sometimes there are conflicts within us, but with a difference: we can see that and try to change it. Being members of the TS does not signify that we are perfect. We search the truth, to perfect ourselves, and that is an everyday task, every hour, every minute. That peace cannot come from outside, but is a manifestation of what we carry within.

Who does not want peace? We all do. During elections we are looking for someone who will put an end to wars, to terrorists, to conflicts of every kind, and we vote for the next politician who offers us solutions for everything. They disappoint us, and we place our hopes on another one who is going to establish peace by decree or by force from outside: the dictator, the military man, the democrat, the monarch.

External peace is important, and a peaceful country is marvelous. But true peace, for each one of us human beings, needs to come from the spiritual being who inhabits the deepest realm of every being, and who is essentially peace, wisdom, beauty, virtue, and love. We need to search for that strength and that power in the most intimate recess within us, the only place where we can find them.

That has been a constant in my home — since that couple was young, when they matured and reached old age, and

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even afterward, when my wife left the physical world, as for me she is present all the time. Bodies grow old, but the mind and soul go on being young, and we continue with that idea, which has been reflected in the homes of our children and grandchildren. And I hope it is reflected in my dear fellow students and friends of the Theosophical Society.

I would like to end with an idea of an illustrious member of the TS who was its international President for many years, Mr C. Jinarājādāsa:

There are many, many joys for us all waiting, and one of the greatest joys is to know that we are not just mere ordinary

people, suffering, enduring, but being able to make out of our world something that is — beautiful for ourselves, beautiful for others, and yet set ourselves free. Once we have created any beauty, it remains as part of the Perfect Universe. The greatest joy is to give something, to create something, that we know is glorious, that we know is beautiful. It may seem to vanish into space, but all the same it lives in eternity. So, a sense of peace, of strength, of joy, can come to us all, if where we stand now, we turn inwards awhile and create some little perfect thing. Then our Karma ends. ✧

(The Theosophist, vol. 52, February 1931, “Karma-less-ness”, p. 334)

When we consider the being and substance of that universe in which we are immutably set, we shall discover that neither we ourselves nor any substance doth suffer death. For nothing is in fact diminished in its substance, but all things, wandering through infinite space, undergo change of aspect.

Giordano Bruno
(1548 – February 17, 1600)

Has Theosophy Become a Creed?

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

AT the end of her book *The Key to Theosophy*, published in 1889, Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) issued a warning to the members of the Theosophical Society (TS):

Every such attempt as the Theosophical Society has hitherto ended in failure, because, sooner or later, it has degenerated into a sect, set up hard-and-fast dogmas of its own, and so lost by imperceptible degrees that vitality which living truth alone can impart. You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgment is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of these influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognise it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.¹

Is it possible that for some students Theosophy has become a creed? It would be so easy, as part of the conditioning

alluded to by HPB, to elect some author or authors as one's favourite ones. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines creed as "a system of religious belief; a faith; a set of beliefs or aims which guide someone's actions." How many make their choices of study in theosophical literature according to the self-professed occult status of their favourite author or authors? Such circumstances could, eventually, become influential factors in Lodge or Branch programmes, thus creating the perception that the TS may not be different from a sect: Theosophy as a set of ideas that require acceptance, not necessarily investigation.

In the well-known letter to Annie Besant in 1900, nine years after HPB had passed away, Mahatma KH stated:

The TS and its members are slowly manufacturing a creed. Says a Tibetan proverb: "Credulity breeds credulity and ends in hypocrisy." How few are they who can know anything about us.²

The "creed" mentioned by KH was a tendency to worship the Masters as deities, which they refused, and to put on a pedestal both Blavatsky and her

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teachings, as well as Annie Besant.

In his book *Old Diary Leaves*, in an entry for the year 1892, Col. H. S. Olcott strongly warned against this tendency, eight years *before* Annie Besant had received that historical letter:

It will have been seen from what is written in previous chapters how much my mind was exercised about the evident probability of a new sect springing up around the memory of HPB and her literature. From week to week things seemed to be going from bad to worse: some of my most fanatical colleagues would go about with an air “of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit, as who should say, I am Sir Oracle, and, when I open my lips, let no dog bark!” One would have thought that HPB had laid upon their shoulders the burden of the whole Himalayan Mysteries; and when one ventured to challenge the reasonableness of something which they were quoting, they would answer with a sort of restraint of the breath — “But, you know, she said so” — as if that closed the debate. Of course they meant no harm, and, perhaps, to a certain extent, were really expressing their awe of the departed teacher; but all the same it was a most pernicious tendency, and, if unchecked, was calculated to drag us into a sectarian pitfall.³

He also wrote:

But let no one suppose that this vicious tendency towards hero-worship has been rooted out from our natures, for a new idol is being fashioned in the form of that dear, unselfish, modest woman, Annie Besant.

If the walls around our Society were less resistant, her blind admirers would be already digging out a niche in which to place the idol for worship. Needless to say, one has only to be familiar with Mrs Besant’s speeches and writings to have overwhelming proofs that such an attitude towards her is most distasteful. Many years ago she deliberately sacrificed the world to work for her fellowmen, and from the first moment until now she has begged her hearers to regard the thought, and not the speaker.⁴

Some years after that, Annie Besant, then President of the TS, issued a very clear statement about the question of opinion and belief within the TS:

Before dealing with investigations, let me make clear my own position with regard to all questions of opinion and belief within the Theosophical Society itself. Some of our members echo the statements of one seer or another, and seem to consider that such a statement ought to preclude further discussion. But no one in the TS has any authority to lay down what people shall think, or not think, on any subject. We are not in the position of an orthodox church, which has certain definite articles of faith, which imposes certain definite creeds in which all faithful members are bound to believe. The only point which we must accept is Universal Brotherhood, and even as to that we may differ in our definition of it. Outside that, we are at perfect liberty to form our own opinions on every subject; and the reason of that policy is clear and an exceedingly good

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one. No intellectual opinion is worth the holding unless it is obtained by the individual effort of the person who holds that opinion. It is far healthier to exercise our intelligence, even if we come to a wrong conclusion and form an inaccurate opinion, than simply, like parrots, to echo what other people say, and so put out of all possibility intellectual development.⁵

Her colleague, C. W. Leadbeater, also presented his views on belief regarding theosophical teachings:

Theosophy has a considerable literature, but it has no inspired Scriptures. . . . Our attitude to Theosophy should, I think, be thus characterised: (1) We must not exchange the blind belief in the authority of the Church for an equally blind faith in personal theosophical teachers. (2) We must preserve an open mind and an intelligently receptive attitude. (3) We should accept as working hypotheses the truths which are given to us, and should set to work to prove them for ourselves.⁶

Yet, in spite of these clear and unequivocal warnings one can see that for a number of students of Theosophy the approach to it is creed-like: an almost religious acceptance of the teachings as ideas that come from a divine source, not as principles to be investigated rationally in order to find the truth about them for oneself. This seems to have happened also to some students of Madame Blavatsky's writings. Her occult status as an initiated disciple of the Masters may have obfuscated for them

one of her own most important advices:

On the other hand, the bigoted sectarian, fenced in as he is, with a creed upon every paling of which is written the warning "No Thoroughfare", can neither come out of his enclosure to join the Theosophical Society, nor, if he could, has it room for one whose very religion forbids examination. The very root idea of the Society is free and fearless investigation.⁷

When the nature of Theosophy is seen as being limited to what is contained in books, the tendency to transform it into an ideology will always be there. Yet an ideology is a walled, closed mindset, which is infused with personal faith. It is not difficult to see how it can easily lead to division and isolation. In his book *Modern Theosophy*, Hugh Shearman makes the following statement:

In practice, theosophy, or god-wisdom, has come to have two principal meanings. First, there is its primary meaning, signifying the ultimate wisdom, the ultimate truth which life holds; and then there is a secondary meaning, signifying the body of teachings about man and the universe which has been given forth, in particular, by members of the Theosophical Society, something which is knowledge rather than wisdom.⁸

In referring to Theosophy's essential nature, Madame Blavatsky makes a similar but essential distinction:

If Eastern comparisons may be permitted, Theosophy is the shoreless ocean of universal truth, love, and wisdom,

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reflecting its radiance on the Earth, while the Theosophical Society is only a visible bubble on that reflection. Theosophy is divine nature, visible and invisible, and its Society is human nature trying to ascend to its divine parent. Theosophy, finally, is the fixed eternal sun, and its Society the evanescent comet trying to settle in an orbit to become a planet, ever revolving within the attraction of the sun of truth. It was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities.⁹

In *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB hints at the fact that the source of Theosophy lies in a deep investigation into “the soul of things”, and that the truths arrived at by those ancient seers is not based on authority but on experience:

The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated into the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things there, where an ordinary profane, however learned, would have perceived but the external work of form. But modern science believes not in the “soul of things”, and hence will reject the whole system of ancient cosmogony. It is useless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or several isolated individuals. That it is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity.¹⁰

In its teaching aspect Theosophy can be seen as a description of universal processes unfolding in the human being, in Nature and in the cosmos. Every description involves a point of view. It also involves a language in which such views can be communicated. This was emphasized by one of the Mahatmas when they were trying to convey occult teachings to A. P. Sinnett. In one of their letters they said: “Our terms are untranslatable.”¹¹ But they also had this to say to Mr Sinnett:

You share with all beginners the tendency to draw too absolutely strong inferences from partly caught hints, and to dogmatize thereupon as though the last word had been spoken. You will correct this in due time. You may misunderstand us, are more than likely to do so, for our language must always be more or less that of parable and suggestion, when treading upon forbidden ground; we have our own peculiar modes of expression and what lies behind the fence of words is even more important than what you read. But still — TRY.¹²

In the *Mūla-madhyamaka-kārika*, Nagarjuna points to the ending of all views as *śūnyatā*, emptiness, the ultimate reality:

The victorious ones have said
That emptiness is the relinquishing of
all views.

For whomever emptiness is a view,
That one has accomplished nothing.¹³

I prostrate to Gautama
Who through compassion
Taught the true doctrine,
Which leads to the relinquishing of
all views.¹⁴

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In the so-called “Bowen Notes”, consisting of a record of studies with HPB in London before her passing in 1891, a similar idea was advanced:

Come to the SD [*The Secret Doctrine*] (she says) without any hope of getting the final Truth of existence from it, or with any idea other than seeing how far it may lead *towards* the Truth. See in study a means of exercising and developing the mind never touched by other studies.¹⁵

This mode of thinking (she says) is what the Indians call *Jnāna Yoga*. As one progresses in *Jnāna Yoga* one finds conceptions arising which, though one is conscious of them, one cannot express nor yet formulate into any sort of mental picture. As time goes on, these conceptions will form into mental pictures. This is a time to be on guard and refuse to be deluded with the idea that the new-found and wonderful picture must represent reality. It does not. As one works on, one finds the once admired picture growing dull and unsatisfying, and finally fading out or being thrown away. This is another danger point, because for the moment one is left in a void without any conception to support one, and one may be tempted to revive the cast-off picture for want of a better to cling to. The true student will, however, work on unconcerned, and presently further formless gleams come, which again in time give rise to a larger and more beautiful picture than the last.

But the learner will now know that no picture will ever represent the Truth. This last splendid picture will grow dull and fade like the others. And so the process goes on, until at last the mind and its pictures are transcended and the learner enters and dwells in the world of No-Form, but of which all forms are narrowed reflections.¹⁶

Divine Wisdom, Theosophy, in its own nature is beyond all views. When the study of Theosophy is successful it leads to an unveiled, wordless perception of the essential unity of all life. Such perception is never divisive, exclusivist, condemnatory of others, for it has become one with the Wisdom that is the life of all things:

For, she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets.¹⁷

“She maketh all things new.” Divine Wisdom, when found, is a complete renewal of consciousness, a newness of mind and heart, amounting to being born into a world of undivided unity, harmony and compassion. The TS was formed to help its members to ascend towards it and its future usefulness may depend on their ability to do so. ✧

Endnotes:

1. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, Theosophy Company, Mumbai, 1997, “Conclusion”, pp. 302-3.

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2. C. Jinarājadāsa, *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, Theosophical Publishing House (TPH), Adyar, Chennai, 1973, “Additional Letters”, Letter 46.
3. H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Fourth Series, TPH, Adyar, 1975, p. 438.
4. Olcott, pp. 439-40
5. Annie Besant, “Investigations into the Super-physical”, *Adyar Pamphlet No. 36*, 1913.
6. C. W. Leadbeater, *The Adyar Bulletin*, February 1911.
7. Blavatsky, “What are the Theosophists?”, *The Theosophist*, vol. 1, October 1879.
8. Hugh Shearman, *Modern Theosophy*, TPH, Adyar, 1954, pp. 3-4.
9. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, sec. 4, “The Abstract and the Concrete”, pp. 56-57.
10. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, TPH, Adyar, 1978, vol. 1, pp. 272-3.
11. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, chron. seq., edited by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., TPH, Manila, 1993, letter 46.
12. *The Mahatma Letters*, letter 111.
13. Jay Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way -- Nagarjuna's Mula-madhyamaka-kārika*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, XIII: 8, p. 354.
14. Garfield, XXVII: 30, p. 352.
15. Ianthe H. Hoskins, *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, TPH, London, 1980, p. 64.
16. Hoskins, pp. 66-7.
17. “Wisdom of Solomon” (King James’ Bible), 7:26-27.

Individuals in every age have more or less clearly apprehended the theosophical doctrines and wrought them into the fabric of their lives. These doctrines belong exclusively to no religion, and are confined to no society or time. They are the birthright of every human soul. Such thing as orthodoxy must be shaped out by each individual according to his nature and his needs, and according to his varying experience. This may explain why those who have imagined Theosophy to be a new religion have hunted in vain for its creed and its ritual. Its Creed is Loyalty to Truth, and its Ritual is To Honour Every Truth by Use.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Key to Theosophy

Emerson on “The Over-Soul” and *The Secret Doctrine* — II

CARY GARDNER

ALL individual souls are reflections on a lower plane of the Over-Soul — overbrooding omnipresent spiritual essence. Let us not forget the original meaning of the word “individual” or “in+dividuus” which means “not divisible” or whole. The individual is a sevenfold being with one’s higher nature reflecting the Over-Soul. This metaphysical idea stands behind the Greek notion that man is the microcosm of the macrocosm.

From this point of view we might say the Over-Soul could be associated with the *ātman* in the theosophical scheme and the individual soul, of which it is a reflection, is *buddhi-manas*. This curious idea that we are a self (lower-case letters), within a Self (capital “S”), within a SELF (all caps) is mentioned in both the *Bhagavadgītā* and *The Voice of the Silence*. In the *Gītā*, Krishna says:

He should raise the self by the Self; let him not suffer the Self to be lowered; for Self is the friend of self, and, in like manner, self is its own enemy. Self is the friend of the man who is self-conquered; so self like

a foe hath enmity to him who is not self-conquered. The Self of the man who is self-subdued and free from desire and anger is intent on the Supreme SELF in heat and cold, in pain and pleasure, in honor and ignominy. The man who hath spiritual knowledge and discernment, who standeth upon the pinnacle, and hath subdued the senses, to whom gold and stone are the same, is said to be devoted.

And then in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Saith the Great Law: “In order to become the KNOWER of ALL SELF, thou hast first of Self to be the knower”. To reach the knowledge of that Self, thou hast to give up self to non-self, being to non-being, and then thou canst repose between the wings of the Great Bird. Aye, sweet is rest between the wings of that which is not born, nor dies, but is the AUM throughout eternal ages.

Ralph Waldo Emerson mirrors these ideas in his “The Over-Soul” essay:

Man is a stream whose source is hidden.
Our being is descending into us from we

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know not whence. The most exact calculator has no prescience that somewhat incalculable may not balk the very next moment. I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin for events than the will I call mine.

As with events, so is it with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, I see that I am a pensioner; not a cause, but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water; that I desire and look up, and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come. . . .

And the blindness of the intellect begins, when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins, when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us; in other words, to engage us to obey.

Of this pure nature every man is at some time sensible. Language cannot paint it with his colors. It is too subtle. It is undefinable, unmeasurable, but we know that it pervades and contains us. We know that all spiritual being is in man. A wise old proverb says, “God comes to see us without bell”, that is, as there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so is there no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. The walls are taken away. We lie open on one side to the depths of spiritual nature, to the attributes of God. Justice we see and know, Love, Freedom, Power. These natures no

man ever got above, but they tower over us, and most in the moment when our interests tempt us to wound them.

Every person has a direct and original connection to the Over-Soul. But the degree to which it can shine without impediments on the lowest planes of existence is determined by the level of receptivity in the awakening heart and mind of the individual. In It we live and move and have our being, yet we seem to know it not. In the words of *The Voice of the Silence*:

Alas, alas, that all men should possess Alaya, be one with the Great Soul, and that possessing it, Alaya should so little avail them!

What is blocking the connection? Something is interfering. After all, Alaya is the source of one’s consciousness. It is the life and energy that animates all our various vestures and vehicles. You might say the goal of human evolution is to build a trustworthy bridge between the highest planes of *Being* within so that they might be expressed at lower planes of *Becoming*. To establish and maintain this connection is the real object of the Spiritual Path. A stubborn, confounding, deflecting, and subtle separative sense of self is impeding the light. As Emerson stated:

From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. A man is the façade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking,

planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul, whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his affection, it is love.

The very concept of soul in contemporary culture is a confusing one. In conventional religious circles we get the idea of having a soul. It is considered some sort of appendage which we can lose or gain depending upon our standing with God. In psychological circles the idea of soul is all too often reduced to some primitive collection of instincts or at best a nagging conscience related to emotional states.

Materialistic science sees consciousness as a by-product of the brain and has no use for the idea of soul. In contrast to these perspectives the theosophical idea of soul is woven into the fabric of the idea of consciousness *per se*. In the modern theosophical movement the term “Self” has been introduced in the attempt to resuscitate the ancient notion of soul being something that one *is* and not something one has.

Emerson provides a useful stepping-stone to help us connect to the deeper notions of soul found in the Perennial Philosophy. According to him the soul is related to the idea of the Whole, the All. No part is left out, everything is included. He continues:

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power, in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul.

Only by the vision of that Wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith. Every man’s words, who speaks from that life, must sound vain to those who do not dwell in the same thought on their own part. I dare not speak for it.

My words do not carry their august sense; they fall short and cold. Only itself can inspire whom it will, and behold! their speech shall be lyrical, and sweet, and universal as the rising of the wind. Yet I desire, even by profane words, if I may not use sacred, to indicate the heaven of this deity, and to report what hints I have collected of the transcendent simplicity and energy of the Highest Law.

What the soul represents should not be given strict boundaries because it is a dynamic conception and can stand for various levels of the unmanifest and formless realms of being. Emerson is

helpful in this respect because he communicates the ideas of the *gupta-vidya*, the Perennial Philosophy, or Theosophia, without the aid of Sanskrit or Greek terms that are foreign to many of us. He is like a wise doctor explaining a surgical procedure to a patient using layman’s terms. Some of the expressions Emerson uses in the Over-Soul essay like “the Wise Silence”, “Universal Beauty”, “the Soul of the Whole”, “the Eternal One” are all extremely suggestive and worthy of contemplation. The soul is self-contained, since it is a mirror of the Whole, and therefore to truly know the soul means we must rise up to it. A view of it cannot be attained down in the valley but only at the mountain top. Emerson adds:

The soul circumscribes all things. As I have said, it contradicts all experience. In like manner it abolishes time and space. The influence of the senses has, in most men, overpowered the mind to that degree, that the walls of time and space have come to look real and insurmountable; and to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world, the sign of insanity. Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. The spirit sports with time: “Can crowd eternity into an hour, /Or stretch an hour to eternity.” . . .

The soul looks steadily forward, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her. She has no dates, nor rites, nor persons, nor specialties, nor men. The soul knows only the soul; the web of events is the flowing robe in which she is clothed.

In *The Secret Doctrine* HPB praises

Emerson’s conception of the Over-Soul and equates it with the Sanskrit notion of Alaya, and the Latin term Anima Mundi, “The Soul of the World”. Alaya is that universal essence that pervades everything from the minutest atom to the farthest reaches of the Cosmos. This impersonal essence or esoteric energy is suggested in popular culture in the Star Wars idea of “The Force”, or the ancient idea of Chi brought forward in the recent film *Mulan*. It is everywhere, and nowhere in particular. It can be tapped, it is impersonal, meaning it is allied with the concept of Law itself and cannot be petitioned or cajoled.

These ideas classical in any era were entirely radical in Emerson’s own. Much to Emerson’s surprise these intuitions which he so prized and so painfully cultivated, and which were rejected as heretical from a pulpit on Sunday mornings, were intensely interesting when delivered from a lectern on Wednesday nights. Perhaps Emerson’s buoyant spirit, lyrical expression, and non-threatening manner contributed to the reception.

That does not mean that Emerson did not have his critics. Apparently, it was not uncommon for Emerson to be taken to task by religionists in his own neighborhood. But like Socrates before him, he was adored by the youth of towns that he visited who attended his lectures enthusiastically. They were captivated by the message of unbounded human potential, calls to Self-reliance and the democratic nature of his thought. What made Emerson the philosopher of the American spirit

is the ancient universality which is the birthright of all humankind. It is appropriate that a soul like Emerson might provide these seminal influences on a nation composed of representatives from every continent.

Like Gandhi, and unlike his fellow transcendentalist Thoreau, Emerson was a very difficult man to dislike. His magnanimity and kindness endeared him to many. In 1872 Emerson’s home was almost totally destroyed in a fire. His wife and family escaped just in time to preserve their lives but few of their possessions. His precious library was no more. Being of modest means the family prospects of restoring their home was in doubt.

The city of Concord made a collection (crowd-sourced) for the necessary funds to send the 69-year-old Emerson and his oldest daughter on a several-month-long adventure to Egypt while they secretly rebuilt the home and reconstituted the library. Such was the affection held by the people of his community for “The Bard of Concord”. He said:

We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken. [Notwithstanding] all the selfishness that chills like east winds the world, the whole human family is bathed with an element of love like a fine ether. How many persons we meet in houses, whom we scarcely speak to, whom yet we honor, and who honor us! How many we see in the street, or sit with in church, whom, though silently, we warmly rejoice to be with! Read the language of these wandering eye-beams. The heart knoweth. . . .

I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new. Shall I not call God the Beautiful, who daily showeth himself so to me in his gifts? I chide society, I embrace solitude, and yet I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely, and the noble-minded, as from time to time they pass my gate. Who hears me, who understands me, becomes mine — a possession for all time. Nor is Nature so poor but she gives me this joy several times, and thus we weave social threads of our own, a new web of relations; and, as many thoughts in succession substantiate themselves, we shall by and by stand in a new world of our own creation, and no longer strangers and pilgrims in a traditionary globe.

My friends have come to me unsought. The great God gave them to me. By oldest right, by the divine affinity of virtue with itself, I find them, or rather not I, but the Deity in me and in them derides and cancels the thick walls of individual character, relation, age, sex, circumstance, at which he usually connives, and now makes many one. High thanks I owe you, excellent lovers, who carry out the world for me to new and noble depths, and enlarge the meaning of all my thoughts.

These are new poetry of the first Bard — poetry without stop — hymn, ode, and epic, poetry still flowing, Apollo and the Muses chanting still. Will these, too, separate themselves from me again, or some of them? I know not, but I fear it not; for my relation to them is so pure, that we hold by simple affinity, and the Genius of

Emerson on “The Over-Soul” and *The Secret Doctrine* — II

my life being thus social, the same affinity will exert its energy on whomsoever is as noble as these men and women, wherever I may be.

To see and live life from the vantage point of the Over-Soul is the process of individuation, the sacred process of becoming the universal man. The transition from *kāma-manas* domination to *buddhi-manas* orientation is another way to characterize the challenge, or predicament of the human condition. Emerson would call this “living life wholly from within”, or Self-reliance:

The key to every man is his thought. Sturdy and defying though he look, he has a helm which he obeys, which is the idea after which all his facts are classified. He can only be reformed by showing him a new idea which commands his own. The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on

all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end.

The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force or truth of the individual soul. For it is the inert effort of each thought, having formed itself into a circular wave of circumstance — as, for instance, an empire, rules of an art, a local usage, a religious rite — to heap itself on that ridge, and to solidify and hem in the life.

But if the soul is quick and strong, it bursts over that boundary on all sides, and expands another orbit on the great deep, which also runs up into a high wave, with attempt again to stop and to bind. But the heart refuses to be imprisoned; in its first and narrowest pulses, it already tends outward with a vast force, and to immense and innumerable expansions. . . .

I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. ✧

You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment. Fools stand on their island of opportunities and look toward another land. There is no other land; there is no other life but this.

Henry David Thoreau

Theosophy in the 21st Century

CLEMICE PETTER

BEFORE we start talking about Theosophy in today's world, it may be important that we look back to the 19th century, when the Theosophical Society (TS) was created. What was the world like in those days and in what way has it changed, what were the challenges before humanity then, and what are the challenges that we are facing today?

The TS was created in a world where the West was used to believing that some people could be enslaved by others according to the color of their skin. This belief was very strong and it was almost impossible for a Western person to accept the fact of human brotherhood.

When Blavatsky was traveling in Tibet, foreigners were not allowed in that country. It was unthinkable that a woman would travel the world alone. In those days women were part of the property of their husband and they could not earn money or do anything on their own. It was in this scenario that a woman, Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) traveled the world, met her Teacher, stayed in Tibet for some time, and learned about an ancient tradition of wise men being born one after the other.

This tradition was presented to her by her Teacher. To understand what this

means, we need to keep in mind that a wise man is made wise by his own effort and hard work. It is self-knowledge alone that brings wisdom. So, in a group of serious seekers there is always a warrior ready to take up the place of a tired sentinel. It is said in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* that even the world being as bad as it was in those days, it had always provided a new sentinel to replace a tired one.

The task of the TS has never been an easy one. It has been said in *The Mahatma Letters* that Theosophy, which is another word for "Divine Wisdom", is not wanted by humanity, that it finds no place where to set its foot. It has also been said by the same wise ones that "it is time for Theosophy to enter the arena". This means that the task for a society, such as the one founded by Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott is to make a place for, so to say, where wisdom is welcome and where it can be nourished.

The world has changed tremendously since the first days when the TS was founded in 1875. Technologically we have advanced immensely, but inwardly our ways of thinking and feeling have not changed much. We are still aggressive and competitive, the only difference is that

Mrs Clemice Petter is a TS Adyar international speaker living at Adyar. Talk delivered at an online meeting for the Russian Session 31 October 2020.

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now our capacity to destroy is amplified by technology and we are doing greater harm to the planet than we were capable of in the 19th century. So it seems that today we need more than ever that Theosophy enters the arena, but the question is: “What are the ways that will effectively help us to come upon wisdom?”

Most of us know that Madame Blavatsky said that Theosophy does not belong to any organization and neither did she create it. She even said that the TS does not have any teachings of its own, that it is rather the storehouse of every teaching given by every initiate that ever set foot on planet Earth. With this in mind we shall try to understand the work of a Society that has been gathering as many genuine teachings as possible, to make them available to those who are serious and interested in finding a way out of the misery and confusion in which we live.

Some people in the TS feel that we, the members of the Society, have to preach and tell people what is Theosophy, or wisdom. To me this is a wrong approach because since Theosophy cannot be defined, it cannot be talked about either. What we can and should do is to work on our own understanding about the matter and, of course, share our findings. But whatever findings we may come across, they are never going to be the final ones, simply because in wisdom there is no final stage where a wise person declares himself to have reached the goal. The person who does so would immediately be known as a fool, because the wise one never refers to himself as being wise.

The world is full of people preaching and telling others what is the right thing to do and what is to be avoided. This kind of approach has proven itself to be not only extremely inefficient, but also harmful. It is inefficient because first of all no one can tell another what is right and what is wrong, and when we start to create formulas for life, in fact we are creating dogmas and bigotry, which is just the opposite of wisdom. Right and wrong comes out of clear perception of what *is* at each moment, and what is right at a given moment may not be in the next. So to see clearly and act out of that clarity is what brings right action. Fundamentalism is harmful because there is no clarity or wisdom in crystalized beliefs.

The TS was created to help us understand ourselves, life, and the world created by us. It was not created to become another factory of dogmas. The world really does not need any new rigid ideas, it has enough already, and it is the doctrinaire way of looking at everything that has brought us to the edge of self-destruction. The world is in such a mess because of ignorance, and there is only one kind of ignorance — that of the workings of our own mind, the ignorance of who we are.

We do not know ourselves and we are not interested in finding out. We are interested, out of our ignorance, in creating methods to fix the world that is the result of our ignorance in the first place. So there is no need to be very intelligent to see that the solution to the problem is to stop the problem-maker. It is like a river, if we stop polluting it, it will clean itself.

In the preface of *The Voice of The*

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Silence, Blavatsky said: “For, unless a man perseveres seriously in the pursuit of self-knowledge, he will never lend a willing ear to advice of this [spiritual] nature.” To me this alone is worth a thousand books. This means that the first step, for those who are interested in coming upon wisdom, is self-knowledge. This also shows the direction of the efforts of an organization such as the TS.

To provide a place for serious students, we need to be really interested in knowing ourselves rather than acquiring more and more knowledge to add to the existing one. About the compulsion for more and more knowledge, a great Indian sage, Ramana Maharshi, was asked a question:

Devotee: Does not education make a sage more useful to the world than illiteracy?

Maharshi: Even a learned man must bow before the illiterate sage. Illiteracy is ignorance: education is learned ignorance. Both of them are ignorant of their true aim; whereas a sage is not ignorant because there is no aim for him.

There has never been a time like today, when human beings have more knowledge than ever before and are faced with such danger of self-destruction. It is easy to understand why — without knowing ourselves we are deaf and blind in the inner world. Without self-knowledge we are bound to create further confusion and misery in the world.

What is the world in need of today, more than ever? It is in need of wisdom, it is in need of people who are willing to let go of the world of ignorance and enter the world of wisdom. It is also important

to understand that we cannot have one foot in each world. Again, we are re-minded of what Blavatsky said in *The Voice of the Silence*, that the self of matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet, one of them has to die. That means we cannot have the best of both worlds, which is what most of us are interested in.

The other day I read in *The Real Crisis*, by J. Krishnamurti, that at all times there has been a group of people living a life without greed, ambition, anger, and so on, and the bigger the group the more the society in which they live is protected from moral and spiritual degeneration. This caught my attention because I feel that this is the reason why the first object of the TS is so important. That the Society is meant to be this group of people, so the nucleus of Universal Brotherhood is not to be created in the Society, but the TS itself forms the nucleus of humanity — a group of people willing to live a selfless life of austerity and sacrifice.

Sacrifice here means to give up the worldly life of acquisition and selfishness. Austerity is another word that is easily misunderstood: it means to live a life without waste, without giving importance to that which has no real meaning, to put everything in its right place, with balance in each area of life, and this has to be understood and found out by each one. It is not something to be imposed by rules on anybody.

It seems that the TS has a colossal work ahead; it is not easier now than when it was founded in the 19th century. To provide a place where wisdom is allowed to flower and be nourished has never been

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an easy task and is still hard, because it requires great commitment and intelligence. The only way to teach is by example. If we are to demonstrate to the world that there is another way to live, then we have to show it by living it and not by preaching alone. We have to be the example that we are talking about.

This is not difficult to understand. If we have such a wonderful way of life that we feel is capable of changing the whole world, we should be the first ones to be living in this way that we praise so much. If we are talking about it but not interested in living it, who will believe it is really a good way of life? If we discover the best type of food, is it not natural that we eat it ourselves instead of only offering it to others while we continue eating what we say is harmful?

If we talk about peace in the world and at the same time we are aggressive, competitive and ambitious people, what value does that have? To have the right to talk about peace in the world we need to be peaceful ourselves, otherwise it is hypocrisy — which again the world is full of, and does not need a new group of people to feed it to humanity.

We live in a time that is facing a crisis without precedent in human history. We have developed technology to such an extent that we have lost control over it and there is a real danger of such tremendous power being misused and threatening the survival of the whole human race. The problems created by technology cannot be handled by the same kind of mind that created them, which is the mechanical mind.

Computers can do almost everything

humans are doing. This should be an eye-opener, because if a computer, which is mechanical, can replace my work, this means that I am being mechanical, that there is no creativity, no vitality in what I am doing. This also means that our minds are primitive and that we need to come out of this way of life.

The human mind has potentials that the machine does not have, but these are latent, potentials, and need to be developed. Our way of life, our education, is directed to develop the mechanical mind, the mind that measures, that compares one thing with another, and comes to a conclusion. This is exactly what the computer is doing, the difference being that the computer is much more efficient than the human mind in measuring.

The reason for it is that the human mind has other complexities that interfere with the measurement, and this is the good news. Our mind is capable of insight, which the computer is not. The computer has defined ways of measuring and does not understand anything that is out of that line of evaluation. The human mind has the potential to come out of the mechanical way of thinking, which has been proven to be efficient, but not intelligent, therefore dangerous. So the human mind has the potential for intelligence in its real meaning.

There is Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is mechanical but, as the name already indicates, it is artificial, and not real. It is like the breeze produced by a fan. Even though it gives us relief from the hot summer days, it cannot be compared with the real breeze that comes in when we open the window. So we mimic

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a breeze to help us when the real one is not available. In the same way, AI cannot replace real intelligence, which is latent in every human being, and to awaken intelligence we need self-knowledge.

Intelligence is another word for wisdom. For intelligence to come into being we need to let go of the mechanical way of life. And this is what Theosophy is all about, to live a life in which intelligence is allowed to flower. Reading books does not make anyone intelligent, this we all know. Reading books gives us knowledge, information; but it is the way we *use* that information, that knowledge, that makes a difference. Again, this is not difficult to understand, because we have seen people who go to the same university, study the same books with the same teachers, yet some are good in what they do, and some are not.

To master anything we need to understand that particular subject. For example, if we want to look at the sky and see the stars and planets, we make use of a good, precise telescope. We know that the quality and precision of the instrument is essential for an accurate observation. We do not argue about this fact, but when it comes to our own mind we neglect it, and think that it is not important at all, that a blurred, distorted mind can see the same as a clear, precise one. And this is not true.

The only instrument through which we see the world is our own mind, and if the mind is distorted by prejudices, dogmas, and bigotry, whatever we see will be contaminated by these elements and the end result will be cloudy and inaccurate.

So the first thing to do, the first step, is to work on the instrument before we can venture into giving opinions. But this is too much work, and we are too arrogant to admit that we do not have clarity. And so we go on creating more and more confusion and disaster for us and for everyone in this unfortunate planet.

The beginning of self-knowledge has to do with mastering the ways and workings of our own mind. It is also the way to wisdom, because once we understand our mind we understand the whole of humanity and, out of this understanding, clarity is born. It is also out of clarity that love and compassion are born. Humanity has come to a point where we have no choice, either we go inward and take up this endless journey of self-knowledge, or we face very difficult times.

It is our responsibility to clear our own mind of all distortion and degeneration created by beliefs and prejudice; nobody on Earth or in heaven can do this for us. We have to work hard and sacrifice that which is creating misery in the world. In fact, we should give it up gladly, but instead we call it sacrifice, and this is because we do not see the suffering that a selfish way of life creates.

Self-knowledge is hard, it requires endurance and patience, and it is not a playground for those who are seeking entertainment. For those who are interested in entertainment, there are many ways to find it, created by the human mind, there is a whole industry focused on entertaining. There is no point in looking for it in spiritual places. ✧

Jiddu Krishnamurti

(11 May 1895 – 17 February 1986)

ENEIDA CARBONELL

JIDDU Krishnamurti is considered by our contemporaries as a sage, and by Dr Annie Besant, his adoptive mother, as a World Teacher. It is well known that precisely one of the central themes that he has taught has been meditation, with regard to the preparation of humanity to be truly able to practice meditation, as well as where the same can lead us. Since a young age Krishnamurti understood the great importance that meditation represents for us in order to place human beings in the favorable position of giving the inevitable impulse toward the spiritual progress and advancement that they need to realize.

This is corroborated in the supplementary notes that Mahatma Koot Hoomi (KH) wrote to A. P. Sinnett in his letter¹, received on 9 July 1882. There it is explained that the descending and ascending life cycles, or Rounds, that the individual, spiritual essence of human beings that reincarnates (Monads) need to traverse in response to the impulse of life proceeding from the One beginning, is lost in the concept of the serpent biting its own tail (eternal cyclic renewal). This

is the one and only principle that is not involved in an illusory world (Maya).

KH asks himself: “Who will help in the forthcoming gigantic struggle?” And he answers: “Happy the one who helps a helping hand.” Noting his words, we can say: “Happy Krishnamurti, who helps so insistently the work ahead of us, summarized as the battle of the spiritual Ego with the inferior physical and mental vehicles.”

In connection with this evolutionary impulse, Krishnamurti wrote, at the young age of 14, the very well-known invocation that his Masters inspired him with, when he was writing his little book *At the Feet of the Master*: “From the unreal lead me to the Real. From darkness lead me to Light. From death lead me to Immortality.”²

Based on his very valuable talks numerous books and videos have been published, many of which are offered freely on the internet and YouTube. Among many of his famous phrases are the need to be in a state of “choiceless awareness” and “paying full attention”. With the simple act of paying attention

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and being perceptive, Krishnamurti makes us reflect on the very exclusive properties of these actions, which can cause human beings to seriously transform themselves and attain their freedom.

The act of listening with full attention totally erases old memories, habits, and all the accumulated tradition. It is like completely rejuvenating and sensitizing the thinking activity. It is the path that helps the elimination of conditionings, mental modifications, and latent karmic tendencies (samskāras) accumulated during endless ages. The difficulty always exists that our brain may function according to old habits, like a phonograph playing a record again and again; while the sound of that record, of that habit, continues, we are not capable to listen to anything new.

The brain has been conditioned to think in a certain way, to respond according to our culture, tradition, and education, and when that same brain tries to listen to something new, it is not able to do it. There is the greatest difficulty, but they who listen with real seriousness and so completely so as to be able to discover by themselves, surely in that instant will flower a way of living that will not depend on any circumstance, that will always be free, new, fresh, and vital.

Krishnamurti has led the attentive listener to transcend the barriers of their personality and, of course, their strongest faculty in that personality, the concrete mind, to something completely different, or “negation”, in order to come to something “positive”, or to “reality”. This makes

it possible to understand the fragmentation of the personality that we know as the terrible feeling of separateness, as opposed to the universal fraternity that he presents as the unitary movement, which exalts due to the intrinsic beauty of this limitless freedom. At this moment, meditation extends its limits more and more broadly toward “contemplation”, the phase previous to the state of self-realization, or samadhi.

Further, Krishnamurti tells us that to be able to adopt a different way of life is not achieved for others, but for oneself, because “the other” is oneself; there are no “we” and “them”, only “ourselves”. If one can really see this, not in a verbal way or intellectually, but with our own heart, then one will see that there can be a total action whose results are completely different, in a way that there may emerge a new social structure, not through the destruction of an establishment and the creation of another.

Here there is a need to examine very deeply what is “freedom”. The serious mind is that which really lives, enjoys life, not the one that is simply looking for entertainment, some result, or a particular gratification.

Freedom implies the complete cessation of all internal authority. Out of that quality of the mind rises an external freedom, something that is entirely different from the reaction of opposing or resisting. What he is saying is in reality very simple, and because of that same simplicity, it escapes us. The mind, the brain, is conditioned by authority, by imi-

Jiddu Krishnamurti

tation, and conformity, this is a fact.

The mind that is really free has no internal authority of any kind; it knows what it means to love and meditate. Once one understands this freedom, one also understands what discipline is. This may sound contradictory, because we generally think that freedom means to be free of all discipline. What is the quality of the mind that is highly disciplined?

Freedom cannot exist without discipline, which does not mean that first we need to be disciplined and then we will have freedom. Freedom and discipline go together, they are not two separate things. Discipline does not mean repression and control, neither is it to adjust to the boss or to an ideology, it is a sign of a mind that sees what *is*, and learns what *is*. Such a mind has to be extraordinarily alert, sensitive.

When we honestly face our own

thoughts and the limited field that they offer us, we see that all confusion, whether internal or external, comes from those thoughts, and inevitably they lead us to suffering. But if we know how to face suffering, not avoiding it, then this act is capable of bringing together the dispersed energy that exists in our terrible fragmentation, and is capable of filling us with compassion.

This is why, for me, Krishnamurti has a very special role, because his teachings have contributed to disseminate the Ageless Wisdom more profusely among our contemporaries, and with his apparently simple language he has been able to transmit an essential knowledge to multitudes. With the example of his life he has stamped the keynote of compassion, and always to “give” in the aura of our Earth. My gratitude to him and to all who have followed his example. ✧

Endnotes

1. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, 1st ed., Letter no. 14.
2. J. Krishnamurti (Alcyone), *At the Feet of the Master*. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar Centenary Edition, Reprinted 1986.

We are not saying that pleasure must be suppressed or given full freedom, but see what is implied in pleasure, the nature of it, its content, have an insight into it, understand it, go into it, be aware of its movement. Then you will find what enjoyment and joy are.

J. Krishnamurti
Public Talk 2 in Madras (Chennai), 8 December 1974

Theosophical Work around the World

145th International Convention

In the June meeting of the General Council of the Theosophical Society (TS), Adyar, we decided that due to the global pandemic, we would be required to hold our yearly International Convention completely online for the first time. From that moment on, our planning began. Since 2014 we had been live-streaming the event, but nothing approaching the scope and complexity of this year's project had ever been attempted.

The "Core Committee" for this project consisted of myself, Barbara Hebert, TS in America President; Chally Romero, TS in the Philippines General Secretary; Krista Umbjary, European Theosophical Federation Secretary; and Marja Artamaa, TS International Secretary, as Committee head. I have served on many committees during my time in the TS, but this one was special. While ideas were plentiful, every member of the committee took on the actual work required to make it happen.

This year's Convention was an unqualified success. It had the highest participation of any in TS history. We had 2713 members from 73 countries registering for the event. Many of those individual registrants also shared the Convention link with others, some hosting viewings in homes and Lodges. So, the number of participants is much higher than those who registered.

Early in our planning we decided not

to have a strict registration fee. There was a suggested donation, but no one would be excluded for not paying. In going over the numbers from the Treasury, it appears that the majority of those attending did donate — around 75%. For a Convention of this type, the donations more than covered the costs incurred. One of the features of past, physical conventions has been that expenses far exceeded any income generated by registration fees.

Two significant additions to this year's event were the Youth Forums and the translation into numerous languages, which were well received by participants. In past years the Convention was an all-English affair. This year while almost all programs were conducted in English, they were translated into 9 other languages (5 European, and 4 Indian). The planning and coordination involved in this one aspect of the event was enormous. More than 35 members around the world volunteered substantial time and effort to accomplish this work.

One of the unexpected results of this translation effort was that in all past Conventions the vast majority of attendees were members living in India. This year there were more registrants from Brazil than any other country and, when you include Portugal, the number of Portuguese language participants was even greater. During the course of the Convention we identified what worked

Theosophical Work around the World



International President Tim Boyd inaugurating the 145th International Convention. He also inaugurated the Indian Section Convention and delivered a public lecture on “The Golden Hour: A Turning of the Cycle”



Students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School chanting a Buddhist prayer during the Convention opening



Convention Team - *upper row*: Marja Artamaa (Adyar), international Secretary; Tim Boyd; Krista Umbjarv (France); *lower row*: Barbara Hebert (USA), Chally Romero (Philippines)

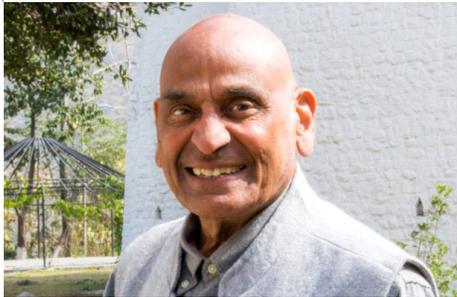
Theosophical Work around the World



Pradeep Gohil, National President of the TS in India, leading the Section's Convention sessions



Leni Robredo, Vice-President of the Philippine Republic, giving the Besant Lecture



Ravi Ravindra, Emeritus Prof. (Canada), delivering the Theosophy-Science Lecture



Elena Dovalsantos, International Lecturer (USA), on "Mastering the Cyclic Nature of Existence"



Shikhar Agnihotri (Adyar), International Lecturer, on "The Flame of Awareness"



Linda Oliveira, National President of the Australian Section, lecturing on "The Power of Renewal"



Videos on Theosophical Centres in Brazil; Argentina; Krotona, USA; Wheaton/USA; & ITC, the Netherlands



Videos of the TOS (Theosophical Order of Service) in the Americas; Asia; and Europe & Africa (in photo)

Theosophical Work around the World



Interviews on “Awareness” with Antonio Girardi, National President of the Italian Section, interviewed by Marie Harkness, Ireland



Narendra Shah, General Secretary of the East & Central African Section, interviewed by Sabine van Osta, Belgium



Angels Torra-Burón, General Secretary of the TS in Spain, interviewed by Carlos Guerra, Portugal



Symposium talk given by Jenny Baker, National President of the English Section



Symposium talk given by Patrick Kafunga (Zambia)



European Q&A session moderated by Patrizia Calvi, Italian Section (*top, 2nd from l.*); with Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu, Chairperson of the European Federation; Janne Vuononvirta, General Secretary of the Finnish Section (*top r.*); Carlos Guerra, General Secretary of the TS in Portugal; & Sabine van Osta, General Secretary of the TS in Belgium



Panel in Spanish moderated by Esteban Langlois, General Secretary of the Argentinian Section; with Erika Chavez (Argentina); Juliana Cesano (USA); and Ulisses Riedel de Resende (Brazil)

Theosophical Work around the World



Q&A Session moderated by Renee Sell (New Zealand); with Tim Boyd; Barbara Hebert, National President of the American Section; and Pedro Oliveira, Education coordinator (Australia)



Youth Speak — Voices of Tomorrow with: Benjamin Upton (New Zealand);



Celeste Sasuman (The Philippines);



and Brandon Goh (Singapore)



Video of the Golden Link College, the Philippines



Song: “Pure Imagination”, LEAP, Boundary Breakers, India



Youth Forums were organized by young members on three evenings of the Convention



Three Meditation sessions guided by: Ven. Olande Ananda, Sri Lanka;



John Cianciosi, USA;



and Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu, France

Theosophical Work around the World

well and what needed some refinement. More than 100 members volunteered to make this event possible. In every case there was the feeling of being a part of a global team, a living and working expression of Theosophy in action.

There are many people who can be thanked for the success of the 145th International Convention, but special thanks are due to Ms Artamaa. In addition to arranging for a Presidential Election, two Executive Committee meetings, a General Council meeting, a School of the Wisdom session, and the other ceaseless demands of her office, she shepherded this project from its infancy to realization, kept the

Committee on track, and headed the digital control room in Adyar throughout the days of the event. Also, special thanks to Krista Umbjary, who orchestrated the technical aspects of the translations and was the point person for the translators around the world. And lastly, the small core team that worked at Adyar at the digital control center for the Convention: Shikhar Agnihotri, Catalina Isaza-Cantor, Vighnesh Ramachandran, and Ms Artamaa.

In the future we will once again be able to have physical conventions, but they will not be the same. Our lessons from this year will be applied to everything that comes next. ✧

If the earth be not an immovable body in the centre of a finite Universe, it follows — according to Bruno's philosophy — that the Universe has neither centre or limits; thus the Infinite is already realized in the visible creation, in the immensity of space. Hence, in short, the undetermined totality of beings constituted an unlimited unity, produced and sustained by the primitive unity of life universal, the cause of causes. That is to say, this unity of life is the basis of humanity, and the immanence of God is the foundation for the solidarity of man.

Annie Besant
Giordano Bruno — An Apostle of Theosophy

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Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 'Olcott Bungalow', The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (TS),
 Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, 'Arundale House', TS, and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan, 'Chit Sabha', TS, at the
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