

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

# Personalizing the Wisdom: The Relevance of Applied Theosophy

TIM BOYD

WHEN the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875, much that we have come to take for granted as teachings of the Ageless Wisdom were utterly unknown in the Western world. The language to describe the inner life and the hidden side of Nature was ill-formed in the West. They had to develop a consistent means of expression in order to plant the seeds of these ideas for the benefit of future generations. We are that future generation, the ones who, simply by virtue of being born into the world today, have ready exposure to the ideas of karma, reincarnation, and the various levels of the inner life. With the passing of time the task of rooting these ideas in human consciousness has been done. The priority of our time has changed. Our need is to understand how we can apply and internalize the teachings.

Wisdom is impersonal. Although it permeates all, it exceeds the level of the personality. In the Bible there is an expression: “God is no respecter of persons.” The personal aspect makes absolutely no difference to the wisdom. In much the same way, Theosophy, the Ageless Wisdom, is unchanged and unchanging regardless of whether there are theosophists or not. It is one of the

many paradoxes of the spiritual life.

On the one hand there is wisdom, which is utterly impersonal, and on the other hand there is the human being, the person, with all of our limitations and strengths. When we find that the truths expressed in the Ageless Wisdom tradition have value, then we embark on what many describe as the spiritual path. We commit to an effort to understand and draw closer to these truths, to internalize and make them active in a manner specific to our personal lives.

We all have a personality with its own particular features and idiosyncrasies. Our bodies, senses, emotions, minds, and thoughts are differently calibrated according to who we are. Some of us are more emotionally active, others are more intellectually inclined, and some are more physical. From the Ageless Wisdom perspective, one way the personality has been described is “the soul’s toolbox”. It is a set of tools the soul can utilize to make itself felt in the world. The idea of “Personalizing the Wisdom” comes down to this: How can this wisdom become something that is active within our lives?

Recently I had the thought that it would be a valuable exercise for me to put in writing, in the most concise form possible,

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what is my understanding of living this life. No extra words, as simple as I could make it. What is the meaning and direction of this process of living, and how does it relate to principles of the Ageless Wisdom? Albert Einstein said: “We must make everything as simple as possible, but no simpler.” We have to refine and express our comprehension of wisdom, but there is a limit. We need to be careful about oversimplification.

The Buddha, after his experience of enlightenment, spent the next 50 years of his life attempting to teach a path to end suffering and experience self-transformation. Over the course of his life he presented profound teachings in many ways. Toward the end of his life he simplified his teachings to just three things: (1) do no harm, (2) do good, (3) purify your mind. Each one of them connects to a vast body of profound teachings. For our benefit, the Buddha, as all great teachers, made things “as simple as possible, but no simpler”.

Although H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) could express herself in very expansive language, she was not immune to simplification. In her introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*, she refined her presentation to three points that were of the highest importance in her view: (1) the Absolute, (2) the cycles that govern human life and are active in Nature, and (3) the obligatory pilgrimage of incarnation in which we are all engaged. In order to expand on those three things, the next thousand pages of *The Secret Doctrine* were written.

There is a quote from the Mahatma

Letters that expresses what I would like to share with you: “Theosophy must be made practical and has therefore to be disencumbered of useless discussion.” It goes on to say that “It has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life thoroughly impregnated with its spirit . . . of mutual tolerance, charity, and love.” The manner in which we approach our life, society, friends, and community, has to find an all-embracing expression that is not merely situational. This is the task before us. To the degree that we expose ourselves to this Ageless Wisdom, with time we find that our view of the world and ourselves changes. Self-transformation is a fundamental goal of this work.

We have to keep in mind that whatever we see as true or real is partial, conditioned by our inherent limitations. It is the highest that we are capable of at the moment, but there is always a deeper possibility. It is best seen as our most recent highest understanding, but always there is that what lies beyond our field of vision.

In my effort to simplify my understanding of the Ageless Wisdom, I came up with some aphorisms of my own:

- (1) Only a few things truly matter.
- (2) It is a marathon, not a sprint.
- (3) The world and I are complex, but it is all really simple.
- (4) We can choose.
- (5) We will know.
- (6) There is only one.
- (7) No words.

Obviously, these need some expansion:

- (1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the

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great American transcendentalists said: “Society everywhere is in conspiracy against . . . every one of its members. . . . The virtue in most request is conformity. . . . Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.” So the safeguarding of the integrity of the mind is most important. Of the few things that truly matter, this is one of them.

There are numerous practices we are encouraged to utilize in order to protect the mind. One such tool is “mantra”. The literal meaning of this word is “that which protects the mind”. This is worth some exploration. What is it about mantra that is protective of the mind? With a confused, deranged, or poorly functioning mind, our spiritual path and our path through daily life will be clouded. By focusing the mind’s energies on sound and elevated meaning in a powerful way, mantra protects the mind from itself — from its conditioned and uncontrolled habitual functioning.

In the little book *At the Feet of the Master*, J. Krishnamurti makes a statement about study. In the theosophical tradition we talk about a three-pronged approach to the spiritual life: study, meditation, and service. He says: “Study first that which will most help you to help others.” So what is it that matters in terms of our study? Within the Ageless Wisdom tradition, the information, knowledge, and facts that are possible to obtain is limitless. How do we determine what will be most valuable? No matter how long we live, we have a very short time. So we experiment to determine that

which will most help others. That is one of the few things that really matters.

In many spiritual disciplines great emphasis is placed on using the short span of a lifetime well. Because there are so many avenues into which we can pour our time and energy, we have to develop a sense of what is most important — a sense of priorities. I have a number of friends who have had near-death experiences (NDEs). Although the experiences may be slightly different, what is true in *every* case is that having left this world of embodied existence, even for a brief while, and returned, each one returns with a different sense of priorities — of what is actually important. These are things we have to examine for ourselves. Look, see, and determine, based on our living and inner experience, what are those “few things that truly matter”. That is my first aphorism.

(2) “It’s a marathon, not a sprint.” Even from the perspective of a single life, it is a *long* journey from infancy to old age. There is an occult expression by Ibn Arabi: “God [Consciousness] sleeps in the rock, dreams in the plant, stirs in the animal, and awakens in the human.” This is the arc of the unfoldment of consciousness from the mineral realm to the human, and of course there is an endless hierarchy of consciousness far beyond humanity. From the Ageless Wisdom perspective this one life is like a pearl on a string of many such lives. The thread of continuous consciousness connecting them is termed the *sutrātma* in Sanskrit. The possibility for unfoldment of

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consciousness is not something isolated to this moment; it takes place as a result of actions and thoughts we bring to every moment over a long series of lives — “a marathon, not a sprint”.

(3) “The world and I are complex, but it is all really simple.” If we have had any exposure to the teachings of Theosophy, we come away with a sense that there is a great deal of complexity involved in these teachings. Just for starters, we speak of seven planes through which consciousness expresses. Add to that the thought that there are seven sub-planes for each of those seven planes.

This describes a multidimensional universe and us as multidimensional beings that live, grow, and exist within it. With all of these different currents as part of our makeup, complexity is the nature of things. But it is all really simple in this sense: All of these streams and activity are an expression of one consciousness — a universal consciousness present throughout and expressing through its infinite forms. The interblending of numerous levels and forms of consciousness as the activity of one thing is not foreign to us, if we give it a little bit of thought. To take the analogy of our own body, within it there are countless processes going on simultaneously — the electrical processes with the nerves and the brain, the chemical, and the biological processes. There are trillions of cells that compose the human body, each one composed of an individual life with its own needs and form of expression. Yet they all come together to form this one thing that I call

“me”, “I”. “This world and I are complex, but it is all really simple” when we dig down into it.

(4) The fourth aphorism says: “We can choose”. So often we feel as if we are at the mercy of random forces of life. To a certain extent, of course we are. If we are standing outside and it starts to rain we do not change the rain. Gravity is a law whether we like it, understand it, or not. If we step off from a bridge, we are going down. Those things we cannot control. What we *can* control is our mind, our response. I know people who, if it is raining outside on a given day, become unhappy, depressed, complain about the weather. “I can’t live my life today because it is cold, because it is raining”; this is common.

There is an advice toward the end of the little book *The Idyll of the White Lotus* by Mabel Collins, which says: “Each person is their own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to their self; the decreer of their life, their reward, their punishment.” It describes an inner capacity always available when we are aware that we can choose. At the time I am writing this we are living in the midst of a global pandemic that has instilled fear, great uncertainty, even depression globally. This is the condition: there is a virus which poses a certain degree of threat, and has affected economies, populations, and societies around the world. But does that mean that we have to succumb to being fearful? It does not. No matter how we live our life, a basic fact is that at some point it ends. So we live our

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life with intelligence. We make choices that address our highest possibilities, recognizing that even “our highest” will elevate as time goes on. Focusing on the few things that matter, we cultivate our mind, and the capacity of our heart for a deepening level of compassion. Pandemic or not, we can focus on these things. “We can choose”, and those choices have consequences.

(5) “We will know.” At the stage that we are in now, there are certain things that we do know; it is very little, but even during the course of one lifetime we are very aware that the scope of what we know and grow to understand has expanded enormously from the time that we were little children. The Bible says: “When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became an adult, I put away childish things.” (1 Corinthians 13:11) Evolution, in the spiritual sense, is what becomes one’s focus. Evolution literally means “unfoldment”.

For example, if I had someone’s photo and folded it many times, in the process of evolution/unfoldment I unfold one corner of it. From that unfolding I see an ear. For a time the scope of my understanding of the reality of the person is only one ear. As more of the photo unfolds, we see more and more of the reality. Ultimately, we see it all. So “we will know” at some future point, if we persevere. Even if we do not persevere, this awareness will ultimately open as we are swept along with the evolving wave of humanity. Part of the choice that we make in exposing

ourselves to Theosophy is to try to be in the forefront of this unfoldment, not just so that we can feel good about ourselves and have a good life and be happy, but because in this process of forced unfoldment, we are able to transmit something to humanity as a whole that is much needed in this world.

(6) “There is only one.” In the three Objects of the TS, this object is the first: “To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color”, or any of the separative elements that divide us. “Brotherhood” is another expression for oneness, unity, interdependence, and interconnection. These are words we use in our attempt to describe a fact of the universe.

The deepest problem that humanity faces, from the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom, HPB described as: “The heresy of separateness” — our deeply rooted conviction that each of us is fundamentally separate from everyone else and from all other things. Even though our deepest experiences of love and compassion demonstrate the underlying possibility of union, a separative view of life seems to be confirmed in our daily experience. The value of the previous aphorisms is that, together, they move us toward the experience of Oneness.

(7) Finally: “No words.” The *Tao-te-Ching* says: “The Tao (Way, Truth) that can be spoken, is not the eternal Tao.” There are no words to describe what occurs within us when we actually experience these deep truths that we now study. ✧

# Theosophy and the Theosophical Society

RADHA BURNIER

THEOSOPHY is not *a* religion, it is religion per se, the Wisdom-Religion at the heart of all religions, found when all the encrustations, misinterpretations and superstitions are put away; true religion and philosophy must offer the solution of every problem; the Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity. These statements are known to all students of theosophical literature and serious members of the TS. But their implication for the work of the Society, especially for the role of the Society in the future, is not understood by the majority of members.

Obviously the name “Theosophical Society” was neither vainly nor unintentionally chosen. It defines the connection between the body of people who compose the Society and that transcendental knowledge which is the Wisdom-Religion, and the self-abnegating way of life which opens the soul to the Eternal, and prepares it to be a compassionate and wise server of the ailing world.

The lack of such understanding results in a tendency to regard the Society as an

ordinary association of men and women, on the whole well intentioned and idealistic, but nothing more. Complaints are voiced at times about how hard it is to attract new people to the TS because many other “occult” and “esoteric” groups have borrowed information from our Society and present it in a distorted and even sensational shape to capture attention.

Such is very much the case in regard to the concept of Masters of the Wisdom and the Occult Hierarchy of Perfected Beings. However, there is no justification for being disheartened. A renewal of energy and a further era of splendid work lie ahead for the TS, provided members do not stagnate at the level of ideas and information. This is the moment for the TS to irradiate receptive minds with an invigorating, universal, religious spirit, and live up to the lofty implications of the name given to the Society.

The first object of the TS is philanthropy, and the true Theosophist is a philanthropist — “not for himself but for the world he lives”. This, and philosophy, the right comprehension of life and its mysteries, give the “necessary basis” and show the right path.

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**Mrs Radha Burnier** (15 November 1923 – 31 October 2013) was the 7th international President of the Theosophical Society (1980–2013). From *The World Around Us* and *The Theosophist*, Nov. 2000.

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This advice from the Mahatma KH is followed by his comment that the absolute need is for the doctrine of the heart, not the doctrine of the eye. This alone can help to rescue the world from its moral and spiritual sufferings.

Much is implied in the Objects of the Society: the self-abnegation which is the basis of a truly religious consciousness; a dynamic, altruistic spirit dedicated to discovering the right solution to the moral and spiritual sufferings of humanity; and commitment to making the needed sacrifices to penetrate the mystery of life, particularly the nature of the self. The Objects of the TS are at present superficially practised because members are rarely aware that they are connected with the leavening of the human mind through a religious orientation, and even religious fervour — in the widest sense of the word “religious”.

Materialism is rampant today, though somewhat different from the materialism of HPB's time, for it is not backed by the advancing tide of scientific thinking. However, the success of technology — which pampers instincts of pleasure-seeking, acquisition and self-centredness — hypnotizes people into believing that the unrealities to which they cling are real and worth possessing. By filling markets with tempting goods and using efficient techniques to brainwash millions of people into buying more and more, technology intensifies greed. Consumerism not only damages the environment, but it also aggravates the violence and selfishness of the “animal man”.

Many examples could be given of how the rapid outer changes brought about by human ingenuity are conditioning human beings entirely to forget their own divine possibilities, and making them go round and round like morons in circles of enjoyment, ambition, and illusion. Materialism as well as dogmatic religion, which suppresses enquiry and intelligent understanding, are depriving humankind of contact with its soul — that is, with its higher nature. “When the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”

What the world desperately needs is religion in the true sense — Theosophy — which is lived, which is a recollection and a deep awareness of life being an indivisible whole. All our studies and activities must lead to a unity “which is so universal and all-embracing that no man, as no speck — from gods and mortals down to animals, the blade of grass and atom — can be outside of its light”.

To become the cornerstone of the religions of the world, the TS must infuse such a spirit into the human breast, which means that the members themselves must be inspired to live Theosophy, not merely to study and profess it. At the external level, every person must express himself or herself in individual ways, appropriate to the creative energy flowing from within. The forms which express religious feelings such as reverence, aspiration, and self-surrender are bound to vary. But the forms become unimportant and cease to divide people when it is realized that true religion exists only on the plane of consciousness and that a pure, un-

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selfish heart and an open, unconditioned mind are its foundation.

Consciousness has gradually blossomed during the long evolutionary process, initially with the development of the senses, then of the emotions and mind, and further of the remarkable intellectual powers human beings display at the present stage. But, functioning as it does without the light of *buddhi*, intellect is blind, groping unsuccessfully for solutions to such problems as war, poverty and immorality. It is unable to see that the spiritual direction is the only one which will free humanity from repeatedly committing grave blunders. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* mentions, the mind branches out in many directions that contradict each other and hence it creates confusion and suffering. But *buddhi* is decisive, because it is clarity of consciousness, a perception which is holistic and based on the unitary nature of existence.

The future welfare of humanity lies in directing energy to awaken *buddhi*, sometimes called intuition. Intuition is not a hunch; it cannot be alive so long as the personal self, which is the product of the separative mind, is active and dominant. The personal self must die and yield place to a new consciousness, if there is to be true progress. The “Golden Stairs” leading to the Temple of Wisdom indicate briefly the way to the unveiled spiritual perception which will illumine the hitherto lopsided intellect and transform its aims and activities. These guidelines are essential for understanding how theosophists must work and act, and should not be neglected. Every phrase must be

investigated thoroughly as to its meaning and put into practice. We might take as an example the first phrase only, which appears to be so simple as to need no explanation or effort. But is it really? The full meaning of purity in thought, word, and deed may, in fact, dawn on a person only after years of attentive living, and of full awareness that we are continually influencing the world — benefiting or harming it — by the purity or impurity of the vibrations going forth from every part of us.

A clean life is characterized by absolute integrity and an unchangeable attitude of harmlessness towards all living beings, and not requiring for oneself more than what is essential for simple living. It also implies a sense of equality and respect for everything that belongs to Nature, and a readiness to serve. Clean living in the few could stimulate many into living rightly; this depends on the level of sincerity and devotion in those who practise it. Although TS members are relatively few in number, if there is real earnestness in them, the world will be helped to change.

An open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect — every one of these steps should be pondered, their manifold implications grasped and lived daily. This work must not be half-hearted or occasionally remembered and taken up. It must be central in members’ lives. With patience and perseverance, we must prepare for the dawning of the light of *buddhi* in ourselves and in humanity. The Theosophical Society is uniquely endowed to assist progress in this direction. ✧

# The Link, the Nucleus, and the New World

JOHN ALGEO

LET us consider the three terms of my title in a general way: the link, the nucleus, and the new world.

First, **links**. Links are what this article is about. But they should also be what all human activity is about. The cosmic process, Theosophy tells us, consists of three interconnected systems of material substance, intellectual consciousness, and spiritual awareness. The history of each of those systems has two phases: involution and evolution. During the first, or involutory, phase we become materially ever denser, intellectually ever more restricted, and spiritually ever more fragmented. But then, in each system, a turning point is reached — the kind of turning point called a “eucatastrophe” by the philologist J. R. R. Tolkien (who authored the currently popular epic fantasy *The Lord of the Rings*). A “eucatastrophe” is etymologically a “good turning around” (from Greek *eu-* = “good”, *-cata-* = “around”, and *-strophe* = “turning”).

After that cosmic good turning around, material substance becomes more rarefied, intellectual consciousness more expanded,

and spiritual awareness more unified.

Our spiritual awareness becomes more unified by the process of Yoga. And the Sanskrit word “yoga” has the same origin as the English word “yoke”, being that which links together a pair of oxen as a team. To become spiritually unified, we must form links. To link together is to forward the spiritual evolution of the world. So the European Federation, by strengthening the links between its member Sections and Fellows, and between itself and the rest of the theosophical world, is participating in and aiding the evolutionary progress of the world.

Next, **the nucleus**. The primary Object of the Theosophical Society (TS) is to form a nucleus within the universal human family. Nuclei are not big things. A nucleus is very small, but it is very important. The TS is, has always been, and was intended from the first to be a relatively small group. But, as H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) [co-founder of the TS] herself noted towards the end of her life in *The Key to Theosophy*, the Society has had an influence out of all

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Dr John Algeo (12 Nov. 1930 – 13 Oct. 2019) was President of the TS in America (1993 – 2002) and international Vice-President of the TS (2002 – 08). From *The Theosophist*, November 2003.

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proportion to its size. We can see that influence in art, music, literature, education, human and animal welfare, statesmanship, and much else.

But if we are to believe the Mahachohan [(Sk.) The head of the trans-Himalayan mystics] our little nucleus has yet a greater role to play upon the stage of the world. For He was reported as saying that “the Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religion of humanity”. The “religion” of which He was speaking is not, I think, religion in the sense of a church or temple, of scriptures or priests. It is instead, I suspect, religion in the sense of “dharma” (a word translated as “religion” in the motto of the Theosophical Society). That is, the TS was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation of humanity’s dharma. And that dharma is what future humanity will regard as of ultimate value and as essential to our nature.

To serve as the cornerstone or foundation of such dharma is a great calling indeed, and when we sometimes grow discouraged at our slow progress and the limited success of our efforts, we should remember that nuclei are small things — but ones that, at an appropriate time, can have profound effects. By linking ourselves together, we are forming the nucleus of the TS. And by forming that nucleus, we are assisting in the transformation of humanity into what is its essential, core nature — its dharma.

Third, **the new world**. The Master KH wrote to Mr Sinnett in Mahatma Letter 18, chron. ed.:

And we will go on in that periodical work of ours; we will not allow ourselves to be baffled in our philanthropic attempts until that day when the foundations of a new continent of thought are so firmly built that no amount of opposition . . . will be found to prevail.

There are many indications today that the world is on the verge of a major new shift comparable to the rising of a new continent. Such major shifts do not happen by chance. They occur according to a plan, and they are the result of “periodical work”, of “philanthropic attempts” by the Great Souls of this world to prevail over the opposition of ignorance. The founding of the Theosophical Society was part of that “periodical work”, and the Society therefore has a contribution to make in helping to build the foundations of that “new continent of thought” so firmly that ignorant opposition will never prevail.

Theosophical tradition tells us that humanity is even now evolving towards a sixth great stage in our global development. In that coming sixth stage, the dominance of our outer and sensory oriented mind will be replaced by guidance from an inner and intuitive consciousness which sees links between all things. It is a spiritual awareness that goes beneath the surface of things to the core nucleus of their reality; it is a transformed mind that dwells in a new world, a new continent of thought, where ignorance is forever dispelled by the light of direct knowledge. To bring humanity to

## The Link, the Nucleus, and the New World

this, its sixth stage, is the work of the Great Souls of our kind. And the TS was formed to assist in their work.

Fellows of the Theosophical Society are called to link themselves together, to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, and to assist in laying the cornerstone, in building the firm foundations of a new continent of thought — a new world. That is the essence of the message brought to us by Blavatsky. Let her speak about this matter in her own words (references are to *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* 9:241–8; 11:161–9; 13:171–5 [Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL, 1974, 1973, 1982]).

HPB tells us that linkage must begin within ourselves, then extend to those in the world around us, and from there open to the higher worlds. But first, each of us must begin by forming the links within ourselves. We have a personal responsibility to start the process of linkage. HPB wrote (9:242):

The multiplication of local centres should be a foremost consideration in our minds, and each of us should strive to be a centre of work in ourselves. When our inner development has reached a certain point, we will naturally draw those with whom we are in contact under the same influence; a nucleus will be formed, round which other people will gather, forming a centre from which information

and spiritual influence radiate, and toward which higher influences are directed.

That is a very interesting and important statement. In it, HPB tells us what we should do and how we should do it. So let us examine in some detail each part of the statement.

She begins with what we should do: “The multiplication of local centres should be a foremost consideration in our minds.” Several things in that statement are noteworthy. First, an increase in the number of local centres is a high priority. That priority is a natural corollary of the first Object of the Theosophical Society, which is to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity. How can we form the nucleus envisioned by the first Object unless we have contact with one another? And such contact requires the existence of local centres, where we can interact with our Fellow Theosophists.

Local centres are not necessarily at their beginning organized groups, with officers, programmes, meeting quarters, bylaws, and so on. Such organization can be a good thing and, at a certain stage of development, is necessary. But the local centre is, above all, people who come together and who, in coming together, forge links with one another that will contribute to the formation of the Society’s nucleus. Today, that coming together might be via the Internet. If a local or an electronic centre is rightly formed, it will quite naturally grow into an organized structure. ✧

# Alchemy of the Heart: The Sufi Path to Enlightenment — I

WAYNE GATFIELD

SUFISM is the inner mystical tradition connected to Islam and is said to predate the religion itself — having incorporated elements of Neoplatonism and other systems of thought. There is more than one origin of the word suggested — one is derived from the word *suf*, which means “wool” and refers to the woollen garments worn by some practitioners, and another is from the word *safa*, which means purity.

The Sufis believe strongly in a direct connection with God or the Divine. It is very similar to the Bhakti movement in India, as the guiding force in both is love of the highest and purest kind. Also, like Bhakti, this love for the Divine is often symbolised by earthly lovers like Krishna and Radha in the Hindu Religion and Majnun and Layla in the Sufi. Sufi poets like Rumi and Hafiz often speak not just of the joys of love, but also its pains. They state that these pains are essential to understand the true nature of that Love. It is really saying that on the spiritual journey we will have to go through many difficult experiences to blossom forth as spiritual beings. Like Zen, little is said of reincarnation or karma, but in Zen in particular

it is hinted quite a lot — the reason it was not mentioned more is probably because the Zen teachers wanted to emphasize living the life here and now, and not being held back by concepts. Also I believe that in Japan and China, when these teachings were at their height, reincarnation and karma were just taken for granted and so did not need to be taught.

Perhaps it was similar in the early days of Sufism. H. P. Blavatsky’s *Theosophical Glossary* has an entry on the subject of Sufism giving yet another derivation of the word:

**Suffism** (*Gr.*). From the root of *Sophia*, “Wisdom”. A mystical sect in Persia something like the Vedantins; though very strong in numbers, none but very intelligent men join it. They claim, and justly, the possession of the esoteric philosophy and doctrine of *true* Mohammedanism. Suffi (or Sofi) doctrine is a good deal in touch with Theosophy, inasmuch as it preaches one universal creed, and outward respect and tolerance for every popular *exoteric* faith. It is also in touch with Masonry. The Suffis have four degrees

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## Alchemy of the Heart: The Sufi Path to Enlightenment — I

and four stages of initiation: 1st, probationary, with a strict outward observance of Mussulman rites, the hidden meaning of each ceremony and dogma being explained to the candidate; 2nd, metaphysical training; 3rd, the “Wisdom” degree, when the candidate is initiated into the innermost nature of things; and 4th, final Truth, when the Adept attains divine powers, and complete union with the One Universal Deity in *ecstasy*, or *Samādhī*.

The Sufis then believe that the path is a submission to the will of God, or the Divine — to allow the Divinity in us to become our guide. That in essence is the whole of it but there are many methods developed to facilitate this process.

*The Rose Garden of Secrets* is a collection of poems written in the 14th century by Sheikh Mahmoud Shabestari, born in the town of Shabestar near Tabriz in 1288 CE (687 AH), where he received his education. It is considered to be one of the greatest classical Persian works of the Islamic mystical tradition, known in the West as Sufism.

The book was written about 1311 CE in response to 17 queries concerning Sufi metaphysics posed to “the Sufi literati of Tabriz”. In English the book’s title is variously given as “Garden of Secrets”, “The Garden of Mystery”, “The Mystic Rose Garden”, or “The Secret Rose Garden”. The last is the one I am using for this article, based on the book which was first published in 1920, with an excellent preface by Florence Lederer and later an introduction by David Fideler.

I will talk on the Secret Garden — but here I am just going to include a section from Florence Lederer’s translation concerning Sufi Symbology:

In Sufi poetry certain phrases are used to denote Spiritual truths; for example:

EMBRACES and KISSES are raptures of love. SLEEP is contemplation, PERFUME the wish for Divine favour.

IDOLATERS mean men of the pure faith. WINE, which was forbidden by Mohammed to his followers, was used as a word-symbol by the Sufis to denote spiritual knowledge, and the WINE-SELLER means the spiritual guide.

A TAVERN is a place where the wine of Divine love inebriates the pilgrim.

INTOXICATION means religious ecstasy, MIRTH, the joy in the love of the Deity.

BEAUTY means the glory of the Beloved. CURLS and TRESSES mean plurality, veiling the face of Unity from its lovers.

The CHEEK means Divine essence of names and qualities.

The DOWN is the world of pure spirits, which is nearest to Divinity.

The MOLE on the cheek is the point of indivisible Unity.

The TORCH is the light kindled in the heart by the Beloved.

The Sufis realized that it is impossible to describe that which is even beyond pure spirit.

Plotinus, the Neoplatonist, has told us:

We must not be surprised that that which excites the keenest of longings is without any form, even spiritual form, since the

## Alchemy of the Heart: The Sufi Path to Enlightenment — I

soul itself, when inflamed with love for it, puts off all the form which it had, even that which belongs to the spiritual world.

It is impossible to put into words an experience beyond words, so we can only use pointers and our intuition. Those who rely totally on their intellect will never understand works like the *Secret Rose Garden*, as it is only beyond words and concepts that the Truth can be experienced.

The book is a series of poems revealing Truths that can be seen to coincide with theosophical teaching such as:

You are plurality transformed into Unity,  
And Unity passing into plurality;  
This mystery is understood when man  
Leaves the part and merges in the Whole.

Or:

The past has flown away,  
The coming month and year do not exist;  
Ours only is the present's tiny point.

Time is but a fancied dot ever moving on  
Which you have called a flowing river-  
stream.

I am alone in a wide desert,  
Listening to the echo of strange noises.

You are asleep, and your vision is a dream,  
All you are seeing is a mirage.

When you wake up on the morn of the  
last day

You will know all this to be Fancy's  
illusion;

When you have ceased to see double,  
Earth and Heaven will become  
transformed;

When the real sun unveils his face to you,

The moon, the stars, and Venus will  
disappear;

If a ray shines on the hard rock  
Like wool of many colours, it drops to  
pieces.

The world is an imaginary figure,  
A diffused shadow of the Infinite;  
One breath created the worlds of command  
And all living things.

The imagination produces phenomenal  
objects  
Which have no real existence,  
So this world has no substantial reality,  
But exists as a shadowy pageant or a play.

All is pervaded by Absolute Being  
In its utter perfection.

There are many numbers, but only One is  
counted.

This can be recognized by students as  
pure Theosophy.

Another one of the leading texts on the Sufi path is the "Conference of the Birds" by Farid Ud-din Attar in the 12th century CE, which was written as a poem. It concerns symbolically the perilous journey of a number of birds to find the mysterious Simurgh, who is portrayed as a kind of God-like figure.

A hint on reincarnation is given when Attar, in his invocation, says that to know oneself may take a hundred lives, but to know the Divine something more is needed. It is like Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gitā*, saying in the final chapter that he is now going to reveal the highest secret that cannot be gotten by study or meditation but, only by devotion to the highest.

The birds assemble for the journey and the Hoopoe emerges as their leader, as she says she has intimate knowledge of spiritual matters. One by one the birds find excuses not to go on the journey: — the Nightingale says that he loves the rose too much to leave it, but the Hoopoe tells him that such love is transient and he must find a deeper more permanent love. The Partridge says that his love of precious stones precludes him from the journey, but the Hoopoe says that they are just coloured stones and he must seek the true treasure. The Parrot longs for immortality but the Hoopoe says that even the longing for immortality is a barrier to true understanding. The Hoopoe reprimands the Sparrow for taking pride in humility and recommends struggling bravely with oneself.

The Sparrow states that the different birds are just shadows of the Simurgh. If they succeed, they will not be God; but they will be immersed in God, or the Divine. If they look into their hearts, they will see the divine image. All appearances are just the shadow of the Simurgh. Those loving truly do not think about their own lives and sacrifice their desires. Those grounded in love renounce faith and religion as well as unbelief. One must hear with the ear of the mind and the heart.

The Hoopoe goes on to speak to a total of 22 birds who all have excuses as to why they should not go on this journey but the Hoopoe says:

So long as we do not die to ourselves,  
and so long as we identify with someone  
or something,  
we shall never be free.

The spiritual way is not for those wrapped up in exterior life.

The Hoopoe also uses various Sufi tales to illustrate his points. So the birds are convinced in the end and have to pass through seven valleys to reach their goal.

The first of these is the valley of the quest, where the birds have to endure many hardships. The second is the valley of love, where they discover that love has nothing to do with reason. The third — the valley of understanding — teaches them that material knowledge is fleeting, but true understanding is eternal. In the fourth, the valley of independence and detachment, one has no desire to possess nor any wish to discover. To cross this difficult valley one must be roused from apathy to renounce inner and outer attachments so that one can become self-sufficient. The fifth is the valley of unity, in which they learn that though they may see many beings, in reality there is only one. As long as you are separate, good and evil will arise; but when you lose yourself in the divine essence, they will be transcended by love. When unity is achieved, one forgets all and forgets oneself in the sixth valley of astonishment and bewilderment.

The Hoopoe declares that the last valley, of deprivation and death, is almost impossible to describe. In the immensity of the divine ocean the pattern of the present world and the future world dissolves. As you realize that the individual self does not really exist, the drop becomes part of the great ocean forever in peace. In other words, one reaches nirvana. In Theosophy we learn that there is a choice to go into

nirvana or renounce it to help humanity — whether there is a similar choice in the esoteric side of Sufism I do not know, but probably there may be an equivalent.

Thousands of birds set out on the journey but only 30 reach the end. These birds discover that they *are* the Simurgh and merge with the Divine. They discover that Simurgh means 30 birds, as it was all meant to be from the beginning.

It is interesting that the number seven is used, as in Islam there are said to be seven heavens. Of course, the number comes up in many traditions and also in Theosophy as the seven principles in man — seven rounds, seven races, seven sub-races, and so on — so it is interesting how it permeates the teachings of most religions, but that is another story.

So the conference of the birds is symbolic of the spiritual path we all must tread; it also looks into the many excuses we make to prevent us from treading it. We are too much attached to the transitory world to realize that it is all just a passing dream, we set ourselves up in this world as if we are going to be here forever, when in fact we are only here for a few short decades.

Conversely, we are caught in the illusion that life ends when we dispense with the physical body. But there is that part of us that does not change — the real Individual. It is the dimension of our being that is aware of change, but itself does not change; that sees, although the body ages, that within we never change or die, and never will.

It is essential for us to realize that we

are spiritual beings and try to take that stance in our lives. How we do this very much depends on what kind of person we are. Some need a more clinical and scientific approach to the path, others follow the tranquil way of the Buddha, but others prefer a more passionate way, and that is provided by Sufism. It is a supremely mystical path, although some schools of Sufism do teach a complex cosmology. There is the famous poem of Rumi which most of you will have heard:

I died from minerality and became  
vegetable;  
And from vegetativeness I died and  
became animal.  
I died from animality and became man.  
Then why fear disappearance through  
death?  
Next time I shall die  
Bringing forth wings and feathers like  
angels;  
After that, soaring higher than angels —  
What you cannot imagine,  
I shall be that.

This of course echoes the teachings of Theosophy and other genuine spiritual traditions: we evolve through the various kingdoms — through the human stage and on to higher realms — the realm of angels, or Dhyan Chohans. It is also interesting to note in this translation that he goes even higher still and says we will go on to become something we cannot imagine, and Rumi calls it “That”, which is a word used in Vedantism to indicate the Absolute — “All this is That”.

*(To be continued)*

# The “Earth Astronomer” and Other Works — I

JOHN O’ROURKE

We each have an identity  
And feel we’ve known it always;  
We navigate space and time,  
Moving up the queue,  
While a subterranean river  
Flowing, in countless fragments  
Reflects unseen light.<sup>1</sup>

“River”, John O’Rourke

When I joined the Theosophical Society (TS) in 2004, aged 46, I had been interested in esotericism for a long time, having read my first book on the subject at the age of 14, including writings by Eliphas Levi, who I like a great deal. Levi had been a Catholic priest. For about twenty years I lost faith in that religion. For a few years leading up to 2000 I had been very close to joining the priesthood and had a strong interest in many Christian teachers, including the deeply spiritual Meister Eckhart.

During the last year or so I have been drawn once again to Catholicism, as well as my liking for Levi. Not surprisingly, I have a very different interpretation of the religion that is orthodox. I am not

alone. The famous contemporary Catholic priest Richard Rohr has pointed out that instead of following Christ’s teachings we worship him — a form of idolatry.<sup>2</sup>

Spiritually focused artistic activity is a legitimate form of meditation, contemplation, and enlightenment. This praxis leads to the guidance of an inner Higher Power. Prayer and meditation are incorporated into my day-to-day work. At any given stage of my creations there are wide ranges of possibilities in the imagination, which seem to appear and crystallize of their own accord. So, what to do next?

Trying to think everything through is a mistake. It is a common source of the creative block. A guide of sorts is required. Intuition finds its way long before the work’s philosophical cohesiveness becomes fully apparent. It is far better to work through the creative problem-solving process and, in doing so, trust intuition. It is a strange thing, but once the artwork has been resolved it amounts to a meaningful reflection of inner truths explored. It sounds like a cliché, but it amounts to a process of being led.

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There is always a strong urge leading me into an artwork. While the initial idea and drive are important, the specific details of every piece are revealed in slow motion. So often it feels like “Okay, I see. This is what is meant to happen”. I am the person making the art and numerous decisions. But the materials and processes used speak in their own way, suggesting the next right decision.

The gradual nature of this unfoldment is key. Art that is made quickly, fast art, is usually limited. It rarely holds my attention for long. There are exceptions, but generally it is true. There is not enough time for the formalist language of a painting or sculpture to evolve and mature. The slowness that I favour gels with something written by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), co-founder of the TS in 1875:

Before any of our modern teachers thought of evolution, the ancients taught us, through Hermes, that nothing can be abrupt in Nature: that she never proceeds by jumps and starts, that everything in her works is slow harmony, and that there is nothing sudden — not even violent death.<sup>3</sup>

When I create things from imagination I am, in effect, uncovering them. In such a state of consciousness, forms slowly reveal themselves, including their spatial and incorporeal interrelationship with the cosmos, which is a conscious, evolving organism. I use geometrical forms a great deal. They attune me. Somehow, they enable the processes I speak of. It is in keeping with one of my favourite passages in *Isis Unveiled*:

“God *geometrizes*”, said Plato. “The laws of Nature are the thoughts of God”, exclaimed Oersted 2,000 years later. “His thoughts are immutable”, repeated the solitary student of Hermetic lore, “therefore it is in the perfect harmony and equilibrium of all things that we must seek the truth”.<sup>4</sup>

The artworks I am going to discuss revolve around research into alchemy and Hermeticism. Each work of art is a physical outcome of inner vision and the acknowledgement of an incomprehensible God — that Power which can be known inwardly and experientially but never comprehended. It is unhelpful, therefore, to overexplain artworks that are intentionally streamlined in their execution, prompting viewers to fill in the gaps.

If a work of art is to be inclusive, encouraging personal appreciation within certain parameters, then didactic signs are really a death blow to the work’s effectiveness in prompting an individual’s intuition. Even so, where culturally established symbols are used, they must be thoughtfully embedded and respectful of all valid traditions, including religions.

Knowing that historically many alchemists were Egyptian and Christian priests, Moslems, and so on, Titus Burckhardt wrote “that there can be no ‘freethinking’ alchemy hostile to the Church, for the first prerequisite of every spiritual art is that it should recognize everything that the human condition, in its preeminence and precariousness, needs by way of means of salvation”. He goes on to explain that pre-Christian alchemy in no way disproves his argument because it has always

been “an organic part of a comprehensive tradition, which in some manner embraced all aspects of human existence”.<sup>5</sup> The spiritual nature of alchemy is hidden behind a veil of seemingly impenetrable symbols, the meanings of which regularly change from one context to the next. These symbols, however, also begin to change us as we interrelate with them in a meaningful way. They become a portal to the language of the unconscious.

Because the “Earth Astronomer” (discussed later) is a highly crafted and complex sculpture, its construction has been interrupted by the creation of less demanding sculptures, drawings, and paintings, which have helped to keep the vision alive. “Thoth” (Image 1) is a small bronze sculpture, and it is being cast in a limited edition of 30. The original master work is made from various materials including wood, thick card and string and an outer layer of modelled wax. In Egyptian culture Thoth was closely identified with the moon and its cycles, which had a direct correspondence with the Nile’s levels — flooding, drying up, and so on. On one hand he is a psychopomp, acting as a judge and leading souls of the dead to the gods.<sup>6</sup>

There are any number of artistic interpretations of Thoth, most of which are closely based on Egyptian sculptures and paintings. Thoth, with the quill-like beak of an Ibis, is a striking figure. He is a god of writing, wisdom, and magic. The legendary figure of Hermes Trismegistus, the thrice great, is a vital key

in comprehending the basis of Hermeticism. He is closely identified with Thoth, that is, the Egyptian god was later to be fused, or identified, with the Greek Hermes. The *Corpus Hermeticum* and *Emerald Tablet*, which contain the essence of spiritual alchemy, are attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. HPB covered the latter, very much shorter text, in full in *Isis Unveiled*. Speaking of the often quoted “What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is similar to that which is below, to accomplish the wonders of one thing”, she states that the one thing is “the universal, magical agent, the astral light, which in the correlations of its forces furnishes the *alkahest*, the philosopher’s stone, and the elixir of life.”<sup>7</sup>



**Image 1:** “Thoth”, bronze, 11 cm high with 1.5 cm high oak base, 2020

One of HPB’s forerunners, Eliphas Levi, also made constant reference to the astral light, for example:

Nothing perishes in Nature; whatsoever has lived goes on living, always under new forms; but even the anterior forms are not destroyed, since they remain in our memory. . . . The very traces which we believe to be effaced from our memory are not in reality blotted out . . . But after what manner do we see them? As we have already said, it is the astral light, which transmits them to our brain . . .<sup>8</sup>

I also read a 1999 translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*<sup>9</sup> and that beautifully rich philosophy was instrumental in my creation of “Thoth”, which is a small compact sculpture. With all of this in mind, it is difficult to make art without being derivative. Part of my approach in avoiding this is to try, temporarily, to set aside many of the cultural trappings of the past and reimagine my idea as something authentic emanating from a personalised interpretation. Therefore, losing many of the traditional iconographic forms was important. In that sense, my “Thoth” is a sculpture that is somewhat removed from the original Egyptian setting. In addition to Egyptian art and culture, I love Romanesque Christian architecture, painting, and sculpture. Often the figures have large heads, narrow shoulders, and small bodies. There is a beautiful visual consistency in that era. As a result, many sculptures and paintings are almost primitive and in some ways eccentric or occasionally mildly comical.

“Thoth” is about the size of some of the

larger pieces in the “Lewis Chessmen”, which are also Romanesque. He is also odd in appearance, as are the Chessmen. I often think of ancient Alexandria with its two libraries. It was a melting pot of so many cultures and religious practices. Being an artist is like that. I have thousands of books, including a great many which are esoteric, religious or art historical. When I paint a form or create a sculpture the work seems to act as a magnet, attracting the core-essence of that broad range of research. It is not good to be too prescriptive. Allowing the process to evolve in an organic way is better. Thoth’s relation to Hermes Trimegistus and the *Corpus Hermeticum* was a key factor in its development.

Earlier this year, when I began the sculpture that would become “Anubis” (Image 2), my intention was to create a semi-tectonic work with a human torso and head. As the lower architectural island-like forms developed, they reminded me of Arnold Böcklin’s 1880 painting, “The Isle of the Dead”, while the minimal planar forms put me in mind of Egyptian architecture. Even before I had made those connections, I could not get the image of a wolf out of my mind and did not know why. Eventually Anubis, god of the Dead, seemed the obvious way forward. From that point I worked over the half-formed human head that I had made and reformed it into that of an Egyptian Wolf. Archaeologists used to think of the dog-headed Anubis as a jackal, but research has revealed the Egyptian Jackal is actually part of the wolf family.



**Image 2:** Studio picture of “Anubis”, sculptor’s wax — for eventual bronze casting, 30 cm high, 2021

The development of a wolf-like head reminded me of a dream recounted by Jung, where he was in a gloomy and primeval forest. Out of the underbrush a massive and fierce wolf appeared. He was frozen to the spot, but then became aware that “the Wild Huntsman had commanded it to carry away a human soul”. When he awoke in the morning, still shaken by the dream, he received news of his mother’s passing.<sup>10</sup> I also had a very powerful dream/vision of a wolf in my late teens. I became aware of a hot panting breath on my face. When I opened my eyes in the dark bedroom a huge dark wolf was staring me in the face with terrifying eyes. I felt his full weight on my thighs and chest through his paws. I couldn’t cry out or breathe

through sheer terror. It was an omen of evil. I am 64 now and still remember it so well. I was in a downward hopeless spiral of alcoholism, which ended shortly after my 29th birthday, when I got sober — and have remained so through 12-step recovery.

I read *Zanoni*, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, about twelve years ago. One aspect of *Zanoni* I found very interesting was his malign phantom, “Dweller on the Threshold”, variously described as reptilian in its movement, female in form, and human in face, though veiled, and only the appalling gaze visible.<sup>11</sup> It is a being which has been interpreted in many ways, varying from Doctor Strange (I have many of the 1970s issues) to other more psychological/spiritual interpretations, for example, Van Morrison’s song of the same name.

My view is to recognize the dweller as the overblown sense of self, fear, and attachment to ego, which must be overcome, the finite self which keeps a person isolated, known as “the heresy of separateness”. I did not want the dweller to be an illustration of the book’s description. I needed something with a weird charm, implied stubbornness, clever and deceptive: “Wouldst thou be wise? Mine is the wisdom of the countless ages. Kiss me, my mortal lover”.<sup>12</sup> The goat depicted in the painting is known to be a very nimble creature. It ascends great heights and his presence in this symbolical heavenly realm is in keeping with that. For many people the goat has satanic connotations, but that was not my reason for choosing it.

## The “Earth Astronomer” and Other Works — I



**Image 3:** “Dweller on the Threshold”, acrylic, inc. gold, on birch ply panel, H: 42 cm, W: 29.7 cm, 2021

In 2018, at the request of Northumberland Estates, I was asked to come up with ideas for a design for a sculpture in an area in north Tyneside, which, among other things, has a history of mining. The design I created (Image 4) depicts a sculptural form in which a miner is fused with a pit head form, which is seen to be the lifeblood of the community. That community is represented by the semi-circle of houses surrounding it. I was not paid for this. It is my design, but it was worth doing in case they commissioned it. They did not do so, but I felt very strongly about the idea and paid for its copyright. Fast forward to today: I am very fortunate to have Mike Gilfillan (urban developer, architect, professional in the use of AutoCAD and principal of

Ground Studios) making moves to have the sculpture built in Bedlington, overlooking the river Blyth, with its rich history of mining and ironworks. Obviously, I am very keen to see this happen, although there are no guarantees at this early stage.



**Image 4:** One of my initial designs for a “The Norththumbrian Miner”, acrylic on birch ply panel, H: 59.4 cm, W: 84.1 cm, 2018

It is very important to stress that this design entitled “The Norththumbrian Miner” is primarily a project with its focus on mining heritage rather than esotericism. It is to be constructed using Corten Steel. However, it is necessary to include it here because it inspired another work, which does have esoteric philosophy embedded into it (literally within its hidden interconnected interiors and their alchemical imagery) and that is my “Earth Astronomer”, which is currently in progress. Meanwhile I also continue developing the design for “The Norththumbrian Miner”, which has been modified quite a lot since the initial design, but retains the overall format. It is intended to be 12 metres and 27 centimetres high.

*(To be continued)*

## The “Earth Astronomer” and Other Works — I

### Endnotes

1. John O'Rourke, “River”, poem, 2021.
2. Richard Rohr, <cac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Justice\_Lesson-2\_Bias-from-the-Bottom.pdf> (Centre for Action and Contemplation 2003).
3. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), *Isis Unveiled*, vol. 1, Theosophical University Press, 1972 edition, p. 257.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 506–507.
5. Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, 1960, published by Fons Vitae, new edition 1997, pp. 20–22.
6. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historic Introduction*, 2008, Oxford University Press, pp. 16–17.
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12. *Ibid.*, page 226.

## THE 146TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2021 ONLINE

Theme: Living in the Now: Challenges of the Inner Life

The 146th International Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS) will be a four-day online event, from 27 to 30 December 2021. TS members and sympathizers are welcome to register for the program sessions. Registration to be made online through the convention website <tsconvention.com>

Marja Artamaa,  
International Secretary

# The Self and Reincarnation in the Light of Theosophy — III

ERICA GEORGIADIS

## The *Dharma* of the “Eye” and of the “Heart”

We will now focus on the question, what breaks the cycle of rebirth? We will do so by discussing *The Voice of the Silence* (*VS*), and assessing the path to the end of mental formations and dependent origination, a sort of reversal path to the twelve *nidānas*, or causes of existence, a chain of causation. Additionally, we will examine the notions of *Pratyeka Buddha* and the *Bodhisattva*, linked to the *dharma* of the “eye” and of the “heart”. In the *VS*, *dharma* is an important notion, and we will discuss its meaning. Finally, we will close by delving into the *pāramitās* and the nature of the self.

According to H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), the *VS* is a mystic manual for the awakening of spiritual consciousness, that we may link to the notion of awakening of higher *siddhis*.<sup>1</sup> In the theosophical system, there is no essential difference between a mystic, a theosophist-esotericist, and an occultist.<sup>2</sup> The higher

*siddhis* emphasized in the *VS* are related to a state deprived of mental formations, providing the mind with a noetic quality or a condition of profound insight encompassing the truth. Such a state is transient, triggering a profound change in the life of the person who experiences it.<sup>3</sup> This may be considered as a mystical experience triggered by high-*siddhis* such as the reminiscences of the divine realms of the soul.

The *VS* is structured in three fragments focusing on ignorance, learning, and wisdom, or enlightenment. The mystical journey involves the passage through three halls or stages, leading to the fourth one. All four phases are states of awareness: (a) the waking state (*jāgrat*); (b) the dreaming state (*svapna*); (c) the deep-sleeping state (*sushupti*); and (d) pure awareness (*turiya*).

## The First Hall — Ignorance (*Avidyā*)

The first hall is ignorance, *avidyā*, mental processes derived from sense-

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perception resulting in a lack of pure awareness. It guides the mystic, offering advice such as to beware of the dangers of awakening psychic faculties; and points out the need to reach a state of mind deprived of mental formations and the sense of selfhood.

*Avidyā* is related to the *nidāna* known as *vedanā*: sensorial perception. It can be considered, mental processes dependent and derived from the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Also, ideas derived from such perceptions, that is, what is pleasant and what is unpleasant, likes and dislikes, and so on. HPB says that we shall live and die in *avidyā*.<sup>4</sup> In other words, mental formations derived from sensorial perception is the nature of the lower self.

The method to cross the first hall, to overcome *avidyā*, is *dhāranā*, a state of deep *concentration* of the mind, in which we become indifferent to sensorial perceptions, mental formations and the sense of personhood. According to HPB, it is possible to enter this state of deep concentration when the mystic seeks the “*rājā* of the senses, the thought-producer, he who awakes illusion.”<sup>5</sup>

### The Second Hall — Learning

The second hall is learning, also called probationary learning, because the mystic needs to acquire *viveka*, the ability to discern between the real and the unreal. About it, HPB says: “The name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it, thy Soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower, a serpent coiled.” This

level of learning is linked to the psychic world, when the mystic, unable to discern the real from the unreal, may be trapped in this elusive world. HPB says that this stage is referred by Eliphas Levi as the “astral serpent”, meaning that any experience in this level of awareness, in the astral regions, brings with it great illusions.

The method to cross the second hall is *silence*, described in the *VS* as the process of merging “into one sense thy senses”. In other words, it is within silence, when the sensorial perceptions are suspended, that it is possible to connect with what HPB calls “the thought-producer”. This connection results in indifference to the illusions of the psychic world.

### The Third Hall — Wisdom

In the hall of wisdom the mystic needs to overcome the elusive world of psychic experiences to enter “the shoreless waters of AKSHARA”, described as an all-embracing state of awareness, or a state of union between the observer and the observed — divine omniscience. The method to reach this state is by establishing a connection with the higher self:

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.<sup>6</sup>

### The Self and Reincarnation in the Light of Theosophy — III

AKSHARA, or the state of pure awareness, is the experience of unity. This is an experience which seems to be independent from sensorial perceptions, at least according to HPB's teachings. How we can experience something independent from sensorial perceptions is a crucial question we have no time to address here. It is essential to emphasize that in the *VS* there is a quite enigmatic statement implying that one must know the "self", and the only way to know it is through the non-self. In other words, we could infer that HPB implies that the only reality is the non-self and the only way to know the self is by way of negation.

Additionally, to cross the three halls into the fourth, *turiya*, the *VS* suggests the mystic needs to:

Kill out desire; but if thou killest it take heed lest from the dead it should again arise.

Kill love of life, but if thou slayest *tanhā* ("the will to live", the fear of death and love for life, that force, or energy, which causes the rebirths), let this not be for thirst of life eternal, but to replace the fleeting by the everlasting. . . .

Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost.<sup>7</sup>

In this stage, the *VS* explains how the mystic can reach a state of pure awareness, deprived of the sense of a personal self. Firstly, develop *viveka*, discernment, the ability to discern between the real and unreal. Secondly, the mystic should seek the union with the soul, the higher ego. Thirdly, the mystic should keep

away from *avidyā*, ignorance derived from sensorial perceptions and the notion of a personal self. The way to keep a distance from *avidyā* is by practising meditation during which one seeks the "*rājā* of the senses, the thought-producer". In reaching liberation, that state of pure awareness, *turiya*, the mystic, according to HPB, has the option of following two different paths. The two paths are called that of "head-learning" and that of "Soul-wisdom", the *dharma* of the eye and the *dharma* of the heart:

O Teacher, what shall I do to reach to Wisdom? . . .

Search for the Paths. But, O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. Learn above all to separate head-learning from Soul-Wisdom, the "Eye" from the "Heart" doctrine. . . .

Seek O Beginner, to blend thy mind and Soul.

Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. . . . Look inward: thou art Buddha.

Shun praise, O devotee. Praise leads to self-delusion. Thy body is not self, thy SELF is in itself without a body, and either praise or blame affects it not.<sup>8</sup>

"*Dharma*" is a very complex term to define, but it may be interpreted as conduct, virtues, right way of living, the path of righteousness, also the notion of duty. In the *VS*, it is used to refer to a way of life

leading to enlightenment. The *VS* points out the existence of two *dharmas*: of the eye and of the heart. The first is followed by the so-called *Pratyeka Buddhas*, who attain enlightenment opting to reincarnate no more. The second is followed by the *Bodhisattvas*, or the Buddhas of compassion, who after attaining liberation from the cycle of reincarnation, opt to reincarnate to help all beings. Renunciation of liberation is, within the theosophical system, considered as the *dharma* we should aspire for:

The Paths are two; the great Perfections three; six are the Virtues that transform the body into the Tree of Knowledge. (The “tree of knowledge” is a title given by the followers of the *Bodhidharma* (Wisdom religion) to those who have attained the height of mystic knowledge — adepts. Nagarjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika School, was called the “Dragon Tree”, the dragon standing as a symbol of Wisdom and Knowledge. The tree is honoured because it is under the Bodhi (wisdom) Tree that Buddha received his birth and enlightenment, preached his first sermon, and died.) . . .

Thou hast the knowledge now concerning the two Ways. Thy time will come for choice, O thou of eager Soul, when thou hast reached the end and passed the seven Portals.<sup>9</sup>

Besides, the *VS* outlines the *pāramitās*, or perfections, six and ten in number, supposed to lead the mystic to enlightenment. The *pāramitās* are poetically

called by HPB the “golden keys to the seven portals”. The disciple has to fight through the seven portals “held by . . . passions incarnate”, and the keys are the following:

1. *Dāna*, the key of charity and love immortal, compassion, generosity.
2. *Śīla*, right way of life, rightful living, “the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action”.
3. *Kshānti*, patience, endurance.
4. *Virāga*, “indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived”.
5. *Vīrya*, vigour, effort, “energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH”.
6. *Dhyāna*, concentration, “ceaseless contemplation”.
7. *Prajñā*, wisdom, “the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a Bodhisattva”.

The three halls — ignorance, knowledge, and wisdom — coupled with the *pāramitās* can be considered as guidelines to the reversal of the causal chain of dependent origination, *nidānas*, leading to the end of rebirth. However, the reversal of the causal chain is also linked to two *dharmas*, the one of final liberation and the other implying the renouncing of liberation to reincarnate once more out of compassion to all beings.

All things considered, in the *VS* the *pāramitās* of perfection are considered to be able to neutralize dependent origination and mental formations (the *nidānas*). When mental formations are

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neutralised the cycle of rebirth is broken, freedom is achieved by way of pure awareness, part of which is the realization of the illusory nature of the self. The

mystic enters a passive state of mind, during which sense perception is paralyzed, and as Krishnamurti said, “in total silence the mind comes upon the Eternal”. ✧

#### Endnotes

1. H.P. Blavatsky (HPB), *The Voice of the Silence*, p.xi. See <[theosociety.org/pasadena/voice/VoiceoftheSilence\\_eBook.pdf](http://theosociety.org/pasadena/voice/VoiceoftheSilence_eBook.pdf)>.

2. C. W. Ibid., *Blavatsky Collected Writings* (BCW), vol. XI, “What Shall We Do For Our Fellow-Men?”, p. 464.

3. Jane Shaw, 2017, “Varieties of mystical experience in William James and other moderns”, *History of European Ideas*, 43:3, p. 226–240.

4. HPB, *The Voice of the Silence*, online edition <<http://www.katinkahesselink.net/thevoice.htm>>.

5. Ibid.

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**When there is conflict there is a waste of energy. Conflict being: I must control fear, I must run away from it, I must go to somebody to tell me how to get rid of fear. All those are factors of wasting energy. If you don't waste energy, and that only takes place when the observer is the observed, then you have immense energy to transform what is. The very observation is the energy that transforms that which is.**

J. Krishnamurti  
Public Talk 3 in Ojai, California, 10 April 1976

# Gandhi: Perfectibility and Moral Learning — II

JAMES TEPFER

THERE are various classes of critics just as there are various classes of admirers. In the best sense, admiration and criticism are not mutually exclusive categories. Some of Gandhi's most loyal supporters disagreed with him the most vehemently on non-violence as a creed, for example, Nehru. Likewise, some of his most formidable opponents and harshest political critics acknowledged his sterling character and his unshakable moral integrity, such as General Smuts, head of the South African apartheid government. In certain respects, Gandhi (like the Dalai Lama), appreciated critics of his views, policies, and personal idiosyncrasies more so than he did moon-eyed followers. What Gandhi wished most of all, however, was not followers or detractors but individuals with an inspiration of their own to improve the lot of those in society most in need of justice and bread.

Unfortunately, it is true that some who choose to defend Gandhi in today's "level-down world" either refuse to admit he had faults or limitations (thus putting him on the pedestal of sainthood to be admired but not emulated) or they retreat to the

time-worn defense that Gandhi was, after all, "only human".

But, in what sense can one say that Gandhi was "only human"? The latter, after all, is usually an unconscious genuflection before the antiquated altar of "original sin" or before the modern Darwinian podium of "survival of the fittest". Neither gives credence to Christ's spiritual imperative: "Be ye therefore perfect." Gandhi was human not because he had faults. We all do. He was human precisely because he took Jesus' imperative to seek perfection seriously — despite his faults and limitations. Gandhi — who daily scanned his attitudes, feelings, and actions with great care — never ceased from pursuing the ideals of truth and non-violence simply because he or others committed errors in judgment or engaged in imperfect non-violent action. Gandhi was human because he strove to progressively overcome limitations and, as a consequence, make further steps toward realizing his self-chosen, humane ideals.

What is important to understand is that Gandhi believed fervently in the potential for continuous moral and spiritual growth

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in the saint as well as in the sinner. Self-improvement and self-redemption are possible for all. He believed unabashedly in the potential of each and every person on Earth to exemplify (to some degree) truth and love in their own lives. He believed unreservedly in the fact that virtues count far more than vices, that self-reform and social reform are always possible despite injustices and collective perversity, and that persistent effort in the right direction is to be treasured as much as hard-won social reforms.

When we consider the whole known character of Gandhi, it is clear that his virtues of truthfulness, compassion, intelligence, responsible leadership, and commitment to humane ideals were so real and so deep that to ignore them due to moral idiosyncrasies is unjust and ignorant. Furthermore, we cannot honestly assess the social significance of any perceived “flaw” of such a magnanimous soul without being willing to expand and contract our “lens of appraisal” in order to view the moral terrain from different altitudes of distance and nearness.

Generally speaking, when we mulishly refuse to examine underlining attitudes and circumstance of social and political pioneers, we are implicitly declaring that we refuse to learn from anyone tainted with any degree of moral fault or “sin”. Such captivity to one-dimensional images of perfection evinces an unwillingness to examine the particulars of any specific individual or moral situation. It is a form of narrow-hearted judgmentalism which precludes the possibility of growth and a

refusal to expand the lens of perception to embrace the whole man. We err on both sides; we neither look at morally relevant particulars nor do we step back and see a moral limitation within the compass of the individual’s larger, accepted character.

In a sense, the harsh verdicts now passed by the few on Gandhi’s personal idiosyncrasies and supposed limited racial attitudes point to the fact that during our own emotionally and socially conflicted times, we have lost our ability to justly appraise great men and women. We no longer know how to put into perspective the simple fact that beauty has blemishes, saints have weaknesses, popes are quite fallible, and sages must work within limits. We increasingly wish truth, perfection, and social reform to be effortless or easily won through violent protest and moral outcries.

We would find it a wonder to learn that the highly disciplined, cultured artists of ancient China deliberately placed a flaw in their priceless works in order to avoid pride, ward off jealousy, and leave the future open to even higher levels of excellence. Indeed, ancient philosophers understood that the presence of personal limitations and the inevitability of errors in action are simply intrinsic to the moral and spiritual logic of growth toward a worthy ideal. In this sense, our focus, like Gandhi’s, should be on efforts toward self-improvement and social uplift, and not on the gravity pull of the lesser elements in human nature and society.

In closing, we might wish to look at Gandhi’s life through a reverse “perspective

## Gandhi: Perfectibility and Moral Learning — II

lens” — one that reveals the degree of intellectual and moral credibility among his most acerbic critics. We often say that we should defer to the experts on important matters, that is, to those who study and come to know a subject inside out. They are, in some sense, masters of their disciplines. When it comes to important questions and vital issues, knowledge is needed and not just anyone’s opinions will do — no matter how sincere. Knowledge and earned experience are necessary for credibility with oneself as well as with those one appraises.

There are, relatively speaking, few experts of Gandhi’s thought and life. The handful of academics who take the time to immerse themselves in studying the ninety plus volumes of Gandhi’s writings are humble enough to sense his moral greatness, the subtlety of his thought, and the original ways in which he responded to the moral and political complexities of human relationships. They sense something about him “as a whole” and do not claim to be able to catalogue him easily.

His most caustic critics, however, ignorant as they often are of Gandhi’s extensive correspondence with people across the globe and with the details of his exceedingly robust and disciplined life, see him “through a glass darkly”. They see him only through a two-chambered heart and ignorantly presume to pass judgment on him. They rarely express cogent reasons or compelling evidence for assaulting his character. Nor do they take the time to imaginatively understand the spirit of his various “experiments in living”. They

succumb to “binary morality” (either you are an unblemished saint or a sinner, a faultless hero or no hero at all). To such armchair pundits, there can be no degrees of rightness, goodness or excellence to admire or from which to learn.

Like the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, one senses that those vitriolic critics most willing to magnify Gandhi’s perceived faults or possible mistakes in judgment, are, themselves, failed or impatient idealists who do not know the secret of self-regeneration and so turn their bitterness outward — most especially on those harbingers of a better world who raise the banner of becoming to new heights. And, sad to say, such disillusioned cynics miss the “many-splendored thing” because they do not attempt to see Promethean pioneers holistically. They lack the empathic imagination and the intellectual versatility needed to understand the truly great. As a result, they miss life lessons that could prove invaluable and could, unexpectedly, renew their faith in themselves and in humanity as a whole.

In light of the above, it is not difficult to understand that there are times when an ad hominem argument is completely appropriate — when the rhetorical rules of argument may be legitimately suspended. Such is the case with the harsh, unreasoning critics of Gandhi who wish to diminish his stature in the eyes of present and future generations. As is universally acknowledged, he was a master in the “science of service” to the voiceless and the mistreated in society. If this is so, then we might

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rightly ask the following, telling questions to the few hyper fault-finders of Gandhi's life:

Who among you are experts in the "science of service"? Who among you are experts in the art of personal, direct service to the poor and the desperate? Who among you has ever personally spent time in a village, sharing credibly in the trials and tribulations of the poor and uneducated? Which of you have voluntarily and fearlessly entered areas of deadly plague in order to assist doctors and nurses in treating an incurable disease? Who among you have formed ambulance corps to retrieve wounded and dying soldiers on *both sides* (Boers and native Africans) of the conflict while under fire? Which of you has ever invited lepers into your homes and treated them with loving care?

Who among you has ever founded a mini-community in which all took sacred vows to serve truth and non-violence and, as a result, admitted untouchables as social equals despite the protest of close friends and even associates? Which of you has ever gone to jail — not for a fortnight with the assurance of being released — but for years on end in the service of your country? Which of you has ever publicly admitted to having made "Himalayan mistakes" of judgment and immediately gone about setting them right — regardless of personal consequences? Which of you can honestly say that you would be willing to fast unto death for the sake of rectifying millennia of inhumane treatment to the most desperate of the

disenfranchised in your communities, for example, the untouchables?

One of the unacknowledged implications of those who attempt to darken Gandhi's image is that they cannot account for the unqualified respect of his closest associates (and even opponents). The vast majority of national heroes and heroines in South Africa and India who worked extensively with him admired him greatly. They may have often differed with him about particular policies and proposed campaign strategies, but were awed by the high degree of his integrity, courage, personal purity, and compassionate service to the poor, mistreated, and disenfranchised. Thus, to indict Gandhi is to implicitly indict a whole pantheon of fearless, self-sacrificing individuals who willingly followed his example and guidance on matters of great social and political importance. Such a collective moral arraignment would be patently ridiculous.

Those who choose to judge any great person's beliefs or actions — to the extreme point of condemnation — should be certain that they have at least minimal credibility credentials and are not simply taking advantage of the pseudo-democratic view that everyone (including academics) is entitled to voice an opinion on anyone, regardless of the opinion's rationale, its potential to illuminate our understanding, or its potential to positively encourage future generations to strive for a noble aim.

Only those individuals who are wholeheartedly committed to the august "science of service" are genuinely qualified to

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appraise authentic heroes and heroines of the Promethean spirit. If so, then what do proven heroes and heroines such as Martin Luther King, Jr, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Malala Yousufzai say about Gandhi? The latter four all have their “science of service” doctorates and they unanimously affirm Gandhi’s ever-fresh inspiration and his moral greatness — even while recognizing that there is much yet to be learned by future generations about applying the laws of Truth and Love to life’s persistent, yet ever-changing, problems.

In the widest sense then, what we often fail to appreciate is that the personal flaws or limitations of yesteryear’s heroes and heroines are part of what makes them especially admirable. Despite persistent weaknesses, most had the courage to live for a vision and a destiny that was greater than their personal selves. They enfolded their egos into the expansive ocean of the common good and of distant human

betterment. In this respect, the very taint on their once all-white robes seems to catch our attention only because so much of their essential character still remains white and unsoiled.

In the final analysis, the deeper question here is one that goes beyond Gandhi: Will we, of the rigid “politically correct” mentality, become moral learners and exercise the divine faculty of moral discretion, or will we continue our current, downhill slide into becoming fearful fault-finders of courageous idealists and thereby solidify our unenviable status as perverse “non-learners”? In other words, will we find the strength of character to live up to “judge not, lest you be judged” or will we continue to sit smugly “in the seat of scorners”? If the latter, then we will not prove worthy of our imperfect but still noble and visionary predecessors — Gandhi included.

“Revere the heroes who are full of goodness and light.” (Pythagoras) ✧

**When every hope is gone, “when helpers fail and comforts flee”, I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal.**

Mahatma Gandhi

# Theosophical Work around the World

## The European School of Theosophy — The *Lucifer* Collection Project

Mr Tim Wyatt, long-term member of the Theosophical Society in England, has sent us the following report regarding the *Lucifer* Collection Project:

September 1887 proved to be something of a pivot point for the theosophical movement with a key literary development which sent ripples down the decades. While completing work on her monumental and enduring esoteric work, *The Secret Doctrine*, the co-founder of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), soon after her move from Adyar, India, to England, launched a new monthly journal designed to disseminate hitherto concealed esoteric ideas to a wider world.

She took the controversial (and inexplicable to some) decision to call her new magazine *Lucifer*, a name then, as now, imbued with deeply Satanic, if not diabolic, connotations. But Blavatsky thought otherwise. As she passionately explained in the editorial of the launch edition, this was an entirely fallacious, if not wholly distorted, interpretation of this discredited angelic figure. Far from being devil-like, *Lucifer* was no malign force but the light-bringer tasked with disseminating truth to an ignorant humanity and illuminating “the hidden things of darkness”. She emphasized that *Lucifer*’s chief mission was “to fight prejudice, hypocrisy, and shams in every nation, in every class of

society, as in every department of life”.

Initially Blavatsky shared the editorship of the journal with Mabel Collins, with whom she was living in London at the time. It was a partnership which did not endure. Soon afterwards their friendship became terminally fractured.

However, *Lucifer* had an instant impact on the intelligentsia and literati of the time and had an immediate influence on many prominent contemporary thinkers. To describe the magazine as groundbreaking would be a gross understatement. It was radical, if not revolutionary, and predictably it caused outrage among conservative religionists who saw it as little more than undisguised and strident anti-Christian propaganda, if not an act of unparalleled sacrilege. As always, Blavatsky was completely unrepentant.

The monthly journal appeared under the aegis of the HPB Press. It continued after Blavatsky’s death in May 1891, by which time Annie Besant had become co-editor. Subsequently G. R. S. Mead shared the editorship with Besant. In September 1897— almost exactly a decade after its first publication — it changed its title to *The Theosophical Review*.

During its ten years of publication, it encompassed a panoramic spectrum of esoteric subject matter and occult wisdom almost wholly unknown in Western circles at the time. In ten years, 120 issues featuring 2,800 articles appeared. Original

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copies of the journal are now extremely rare. And yet its influence persists.

Given its enormous and enduring impact, it continues to provide a rich vein of material for those within and outside the theosophical movement. However, it is often challenging to identify particular topics from the mass of material available.

In order to make it more accessible to esotericists, researchers, academics, and others, the European School of Theosophy's EuST Press has undertaken the gigantic task of re-publishing the entire contents of *Lucifer*, reformatting it by subject areas rather than reissuing it in its original form. Those more deeply involved in this challenging project are Erica Georgiades, chief-editor; Juliet Bates, co-editor; Ifigeneia Kastamoniti; Joma Sipe; and George Georgiades.

This new incarnation of the journal has been reformatted in two distinct strands — the HPB and post-HPB years. The former consists of 25 volumes including Poetry, Aphorisms, and Proverbs, Dreams, Visions and Tales of Wonder, and Esoteric and Exoteric Christ and Church. A further 20-plus volumes cover the editions issued after HPB's death. The entire new set extending to a monumental 20,000 pages of text will all be available by 2022.

The new reorganized format has been designed specifically to make it easier to identify specific topics and make some of the less well-known material more readily available. Few publications before or since have featured such a diverse spec-

trum of esoteric material from alchemy to zoology and almost everything in between.

One thing which clearly emerges is the outstanding energy and spirit of inquiry displayed by first-generation theosophists. These early pioneers were as enthusiastic about analyzing the minutiae of mainstream religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity as they were about the spiritual practices of the lesser-known and the sometimes obscure traditions of Asia, Africa, South America, and Arabia. Descriptions of Sufism sit alongside accounts of Mayan traditions, ancient Greek philosophy, Rosicrucianism, and Zoroastrianism.

Contributors to *Lucifer* read like a comprehensive Who's Who of late 19th century occultism. Alongside material from Blavatsky, Besant, and Meade are insightful articles from W. Wynn Westcott, Franz Hartman, Gerald Massey, Anna Kingsford, A. P. Sinnett, Mathers MacGregor, and Archibald Keightley, along with many others. Scattered throughout the volumes are many penetrative comparisons of how late Victorian science complemented or conflicted with the key principles of esoteric philosophy.

This major project has not only resurrected groundbreaking and influential material of the past, but also will no doubt prove to be an invaluable legacy for those now and in the future wishing to look beyond the veil which Blavatsky finally lifted during her decades of brave exploration.

The volumes are available from Amazon. For further information, visit [lucifer-collection.com](http://lucifer-collection.com). ✧

## INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

Date	Section	General Secretary, etc.	Address	Magazine	Email address
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