



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: "Moon Mandala N° 28" is influenced by sacred geometry, orbital patterns, fractals, and the spiral sequence appearing in snail shells and galaxies. The moon is an enduring Buddhist symbol of truth and enlightenment. Visual artist: David Orr, <david-orr.com>

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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.

Our Work

TIM BOYD

MANY years ago in the United States I participated in one of the very large ceremonies that the Dalai Lama does, the Kalachakra. Around 10,000 people attended. When he would perform this ceremony in Asia more than 100,000 people gathered. In talking to some of the monks who were involved, they said that although everybody would receive something of value, the entire ceremony was intended for that one person who would fully get it, for whom this moment was the moment of awakening. From the Dalai Lama's perspective, this was the whole point of the ceremony.

In Chicago, where I have lived for many years, there is a tree called the cottonwood tree. It is so called because its seeds look like fluffy pieces of cotton. The tree grows quite tall and in spring-time these huge trees become a bit of a nuisance to people, because they produce so many of these cottony seeds that the ground almost looks like it was covered with snow. They will produce millions of seeds for one tree to grow.

Nature's abundance is remarkable — millions of seeds for just one tree to actually take root, grow, and become a shelter for other forms of life. In many ways it is analogous to what we try to do in our work in the Theosophical Society.

For me it has been a growing awareness during this pandemic period, that our work is not dependent on something material. It is not dependent on the lecture hall, or physical bodies.

I have come to realize that in meetings with groups, each of us is in a different space of mind. Sometimes when we come together we are focused, sometimes we are not. Even in online meetings, with 100 thumbnail pictures of faces, it is possible to notice one person that is fully invested in the moment, and speak to that person. If it carries to others, it is wonderful, but that one is hearing what is said.

Any sacred space has been made so by a dedicated, constant use, and by attention over many years. But the sanctifying agency is not material. We are working with consciousness. It is present everywhere, and the fact that it is experienced through the Internet does not diminish its universality or its power.

We frame the work we do in terms of the expansion and unfoldment of consciousness, or the purification of consciousness. These are valid terms, but only in relation to us as individuals. It is a personalized way of looking at it. Consciousness does not enlarge or cleanse itself of taint. Regardless of our unfoldment, consciousness remains universal and ever-

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present. What we think of as the process of unfoldment is becoming aware of our own limitations, which constrict our access to the fullness of consciousness.

The introduction of what we regard as Theosophy took place by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) working at the direction of her Masters. She was very clear that much of what she communicated was beyond her grasp. It was given to her to pass on to future generations. This was the work she did at the direction of her Masters. However, during the course of her entire life, only on rare occasions, that she treasured, was she actually ever physically in their presence. Out of her work in a realm not limited by physicality came the work that we attempt to do here together.

For two intense years we have been in various stages of pandemic-induced isolation from one another. After such a period it is good to examine ourselves, and ask ourselves if and how we have changed. The turmoil and crises of the past two years have been an opportunity. Given such an opportunity, what has come out of it? What is different within us? Perhaps more importantly, what, if anything, has shifted in our relationship to the Ageless Wisdom, to Theosophy?

One of the things HPB has said was: "To the mentally lazy, Theosophy will always remain a riddle." It is always beyond our reach; we should not fool ourselves that we can fully express the Ageless Wisdom. For us to work within this theosophical setting requires some activation of our thought and thinking.

Always it comes back to the mind as both the gateway and obstacle to a more universal experience of consciousness. It has a certain function within the divine mind with which we are connected, but we experience it through the more limited sphere of our own mentality. So how do we care for, protect, and utilize the mind?

From the theosophical point of view the function of the mind in the human context is to connect highest spirit and lowest matter. It is the link or bridge between those two poles, without which we cannot be fully human. As a human being, escape from the material is an impossibility. To be fully the Spirit is not really the goal, but rather to link the two is the function of the mind.

When we come to teachings, such as those of the Ageless Wisdom, that attempt to activate this mind link, how do we treat or try to understand it? In Buddhism there are practical examples that can be very helpful. One of the examples they use relates specifically to those who feel drawn to the Ageless Wisdom. They say there are three conditions of mind that we need to avoid. They give the example of Three Vessels, or Pots.

The first is the pot that is already full. We approach the Ageless Wisdom for the life-giving waters of truth, but if our mind is full of our own ideas, filled with concepts about teachings we have come to regard as truth, then there is no room within this container that is our mind. They say we need to see what we are full of. In most cases we are full of our-

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selves. There is no room for much else, because our focus is on our needs, wants, and ideas, which generally we regard as prized possessions. Empty it, and we become available to the Wisdom.

The second condition we need to avoid is the pot that is not clean. A mind stained with all sorts of misguided thoughts and cravings will only pollute even the purest water. Water poured into a container that is full of grease, debris, and filth is not going to be useful.

The third one is the pot that leaks. In that case we can pour a river into it, but it will not hold anything. This speaks to the value of becoming attentive, present, and aware. Truth is not confined to teachings. It is inherent, and so continuously available, in everything. Inattention blinds us to its omnipresence.

The pot, the mind itself, is not the goal. Our own experience will bear out that in the moments when we find our minds uncluttered, not distorted, fully present, only in those moments is there the possibility for illumination — for something else to shine on the surface of this clean, unbroken, undisturbed surface that is our mind. In those moments we talk

about special sorts of experience. In the language of the Ageless Wisdom, the illumined mind (*manas taijasi*), becomes our actual experience.

We can fill our minds with facts and information. We need structures of knowledge. But we also need to be able to release them when they have served their purpose. That is our most difficult challenge. It is said that the person who is proud of their great intellect is like the prisoner who is proud of his large prison cell.

This is a little bit of a description about the conditions for our work. Each of us needs to examine for ourselves and really *see* what we can see. This is because the process seems to be as simple as actually seeing clearly. And at such moments as that is our experience, *then* we can talk about the truth, Theosophy, and wisdom.

There is an expression from a Christian mystic: “God [or Wisdom] never has and never will give itself to a will that is alien to its own. Where he finds his will, he gives himself.” Where wisdom finds an unobstructed pathway it becomes active, *expressed*, known. It is our experience of truth. ✧

I believe that any human activity which stems from basic gentleness and the nonviolent nature of human beings has the guarantee to be of benefit and service.

The 14th Dalai Lama

The Beauty of Virtue

N. SRI RAM

THERE are certain words in the English language — and in other languages too — the meaning of which is only partially known because it has to be discovered through one’s own life and action. *Wisdom* is such a word. We may have a certain concept of what it means but that concept, even if it is not vague and faulty, is likely to be partial in its truth. We may not know its true quality, beauty, and action.

Virtue is another such word. Sometimes we use the singular form to cover everything of that nature; sometimes we speak of “the virtues” in the plural, distinguishing one from another. The virtues so divided have been classified in different ways.

For instance, in ancient Greek thought, *justice*, *temperance*, *courage*, and *prudence* were regarded as the cardinal virtues. These words, being translations from the original Greek, may not convey the sense in which they were understood at that time. But using the words to mean what they ordinarily do at present, it does not seem clear why these particular virtues were regarded as fundamental, others be-

ing presumably additional or subsidiary.

However excellent and indispensable they can be in certain of their aspects, they are virtues that belong to the realms of reason where one has to start from the right premises. Any intelligent person can see that prudence, for instance, is needed to safeguard their interests, and temperance or moderation to insure their own well-being. Along with courage and justice, these would be acceptable to most people as conforming to their worldly wisdom. But self-interest and virtue in its superior aspects may not go together.

When the influence of Christianity spread in Europe, other virtues of a predominantly unworldly character, such as humility, charity, love, and faith assumed importance. They were looked upon as nearest to the heart of God or the Divine Nature.

In the Mahayana school of thought in Northern Buddhism, the way of virtue was not separate from either wisdom or altruistic action. It was conceived of as being marked by seven portals, each of which called for a certain type of development

N. Sri Ram (15 Dec. 1889 – 8 Apr. 1973) was the 5th international President of the TS, Adyar, Chennai, India (1953–73). Reprinted from *The American Theosophist*, vol. 56, Oct. 1968, including this note: This article has been edited from the original to allow for gender-neutral language and minor stylistic changes.

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representing an aspect of human perfection, and having its roots in an uncorrupt and incorruptible nature present deep down in every human being. The key to the first portal, as explained in the book, *The Voice of the Silence* by H. P. Blavatsky, is *Dāna*, a Sanskrit word, translated by her as “charity and love immortal.” Literally, the word means *giving*, but it is a giving with one’s heart unreservedly, as well as with one’s hands. Unless the journey is undertaken out of a pure motive of altruism — the longing to devote oneself to the task of bringing happiness and enlightenment to every human being and the good of every living creature — it cannot be undertaken at all. One’s heart and mind have first to be attuned to the heart and mind of all living beings.

The second portal calls for *Śīla* — all the portals have Sanskrit or Pali names — usually understood as clean living and rightness in all aspects of one’s life and conduct. HPB translates it as “harmony in word and act”, as it is the harmony within oneself, inseparable from right living, which is manifested as harmony in word and act.

The third portal signifies *Kshānti*, which she describes as “patience sweet, that naught can ruffle”. The ordinary dictionary meaning of the word *patience* includes forbearance and forgiveness.

The next two virtues are *Vairāgya*, or dispassion, and *Virya*, or energy. HPB translates *Vairāgya* as “indifference to pleasure and pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived,” and *Virya* as

“dauntless energy that fights its way to supernal truth”. It is not the kind of energy that belongs to things of matter, but the energy of life or spirit that arises out of a pure unconditioned state and therefore can manifest the utmost ardor or passion and yet remain detached, not involved in the things amidst which it moves.

The last two portals designated *Dhyāna*, meaning contemplation, or the meditative state, and *Prajñā*, perfect comprehension, are really conditions of being in which the qualities of any or all the virtues can be present.

When we use the word *virtue*, what is our concept of it? Ordinarily we think of a formula, principle, or precept to which we have to conform. In doing so, there is always a gap between that ideal and the actual, and this becomes a cause of internal conflict. The ideal may be truthfulness, not merely in words, but also in conduct and thought. If we fail to achieve it, unless we love truth for its own sake — without a self that seeks success, a sense of achievement and a good opinion of itself — there is sure to be dissatisfaction with ourselves, and this might even be transferred to the ideal itself. Such dissatisfaction might lead to a questioning of the ideal or even a revolt against it. We may notice this kind of a reaction in the case of a person who wants to give up something to which they are addicted but find it difficult to do so. It might even seem to such a person after a time that it is good to indulge their weakness up to a point; it relieves tension,

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conduces to good relations, and so forth.

Virtue can be regarded in another light, not as conformity to a rule or principle placed before us, which we accept for one reason or another, but as a spontaneous and free expression of a pure basic nature or being that exists in every human being, a nature that is uncorrupt and, in fact, incorruptible. When that nature comes into action, the way in which it acts is in itself the way of virtue. It is this truth that Lao Tsu, the great Chinese philosopher, sets forth in his famous classic, but it requires a clear insight to see this as a fact. The question, therefore, is: Do we see the existence of such a nature in ourselves as a possibility? If this possibility exists — whether we refer to virtue in general or to specific virtues — then, they are all ways or forms of action assumed by the energy that springs from that pure nature which is ever unconditioned, unmodified by any extraneous influence.

In the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha, the very first step is “right insight”, not belief, as the Pali word is so often wrongly translated. It is insight into oneself — the way a person is affected by external things, including their actions and reactions — which sets a person on the path of wisdom. Then there can be right thought, right speech, right action, and so forth, which are the other steps. One has to be able to see what is right and what is not right in every form of their own action, including thought and speech.

When virtue is thus understood, as a

wholly free and spontaneous expression of a nature that exists in everyone, at least potentially, there is no self-will involved in it. Self-will comes in only when one’s action has to be directed according to a certain concept or image; and this will arises from one’s own conditioning and inclinations. It is not free will in the real sense, as it can become a form of egoistic self-assertion and willfulness. It is not the will innate in life’s free movements. The energy that springs out of any form of conditioning is mechanical in its action, a resultant of induced forces. It is not the energy of the spiritual nature, which is ever original, unconditioned, acts totally and not partially, freely or spontaneously and, because it does not act according to a set pattern, also intelligently.

Virtue in action — without action there is no virtue — errs neither by excess nor by defect. That is why its path has been spoken of as “the golden mean”. That nature which is uncorrupt knows by instinct what is right in action and thought, and therefore acts accordingly, as a master artist knows how to form a curve of beauty and forms it with a sure instinct. He knows exactly where the line must be placed, through what points that line must pass. There is in the pure unconditioned nature such an instinct, which shows itself in the manner of its action as well as the quality of results achieved. The manner is as important and can be even more important than the concrete perceptible result. For manner conveys feeling; it radiates a quality; it is like the inflection of the voice in producing music, which

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has to be faultless all the way through.

The energy of the unconditioned nature acts freely and, in doing so, creates a pattern or form, which is always a kind of harmony. There can be innumerable such forms. It does not act according to a set pattern — there will be no freedom in such action — but its free action assumes such a form, because the form expresses the quality of harmony that is innate in that nature, which ever acts as a whole, never losing its unity. All such forms arising from the same base, that is, from that unified nature, must also be in harmony with one another, just as all laws of Nature agree with one another. In other words, there can be a synthesis of all virtues which is virtue in a general or comprehensive sense, representing the total harmony of that nature as a whole.

The form that comes into existence changes from moment to moment because the action, which creates the form, arises from a basis of sensitivity and life. There can be such spontaneous action because, when the ground is clear, when there is a quality of purity or innocence in that soil, the Divine seed that is present everywhere in Nature — it is really a concentration of energies — flowers of its own accord. What is divine is beautiful, and its energies always act in concert and create a form of beauty. A well-known ancient Indian hymn speaks of “the One Seed” which flowers into many different forms. It is so virile, so full of potentiality that the energies burst into action of their own accord when the way is open for them to do so. All virtues arising from the

same pure soil of an uncorrupt nature constitute in their totality a form of perfection. It is this truth which is conveyed in the legend of the Christ being born out of Virgin Mary, the Christ being the personification of divine grace and beauty as well as wisdom, and Mary typifying that immaculate nature out of which that perfection arises spontaneously.

When there is an instinct of beauty, all that one does following that instinct will be beautiful. In the same way there can be an instinct of virtue or rightness, and when it comes into action all that one does, thinks, and feels will be right and beautiful.

When the harmony that is innate and latent in the unconditioned or spiritual nature is manifested in a form of beauty, we may call it the beauty of the soul, and it is more beautiful than any exoteric beauty. It has been said that all arts aspire toward music. They are an approximation to the form assumed by perfect music. All works of painting, sculpture, and architecture have to be creations in a medium less plastic than sound, and music excels because in it there is change and movement from one moment to the next. The nature that we are discussing also changes from moment to moment and it is subtler than anything that can be conceived by our minds. It is such a nature of sensitivity and harmony — free from every element that can impede or distort its action, lending itself to the subtlest modifications and inflections — that constitutes the true individuality or soul of man. All the beauty that we see

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around us, in things external to us, are but fragments reflecting the beauty that is within. That inner beauty, as it comes into manifestation, translates itself into life and action, ever-changing but always presenting an aspect of that harmony which is its basis.

A fundamental distinction in virtues would be between those which may be called basic or spiritual, expressing the essential nature of the soul, the quality present in it — such virtues as humility, innocence, purity, and love — and others which follow as corollaries or secondary effects and commend themselves to reason as necessary and practical. Examples of the latter would be freedom from laziness, perseverance, discretion, and so on. By themselves these are insufficient.

Perseverance is good and necessary, but one may persevere in being wrong-headed. One may not be lazy but energetic, but they may be doing more harm than good by their energy. There has to be a realization of what laziness implies and does to oneself and others. When there is that realization, one will cease to be lazy, entrenched, static, and dull.

When an artist creates a beautiful form, it always expresses a certain quality which seems to pervade that form; it evokes in the beholder a feeling which has that same quality. Every beautiful form of behavior expresses a quality found in the nature of the soul. But a form copied from a model cannot have the beauty or grace possessed by a form that comes into existence out of an inner realization or feeling, as an immediate

creation. The nature of the soul has a timeless beauty, which is not of this Earth. All virtues are manifestations of that beauty. In their totality they constitute the form, we might say, the flower of the soul.

That beauty manifests itself when one is truly selfless. It is not easy to extirpate the self. For even when it is not present as an active entity thrusting its presence, it can pervade one's nature subconsciously and operate in an indirect manner. But when all that the word "self" connotes — ambition, aggrandizement, lust, deception, and so forth — disappears, then like a clear sky the nature of the soul comes into the picture with its beautiful qualities.

If even one of these qualities is realized in perfection, all the others will follow. For they all arise from one and the same state of being, which is ever undivided, and each involves the others. It is possible to say that humility is the mother of all virtues, or that love, in its most beautiful sense, is the fundamental virtue, or that there has to be a quality of innocence or purity in oneself as a primary basis. But it is not necessary to cultivate these — in fact they cannot be cultivated at all — one after the other; one can realize that state of being in which all these and other virtues are simultaneously present.

Because it is a question of realizing for oneself, virtue is something which in its true quality cannot be taught. One can learn by observation or from the words of another the ways or forms in which a

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particular virtue manifests itself. But mere form, though it may be suggestive to an intuitive person, cannot create the spirit or feeling of which it is an expression. Virtue is not like knowledge of the ordinary sort, which can be conveyed by words. It is in the same class as taste, as a feeling for beauty, and other innate graces that cannot be taught. They have to be learned by other means. When there is love in the real sense, creating a sympathetic accord or a state of communion between oneself and another, say between a mother and her child, what is in the mother's heart *can* be conveyed to the child.

We do not know what love really means. We know only the love that is based on attachment and possession. When a person falls in love, especially if it is love at first sight, the object of love seems divinely beautiful. This con-

dition unfortunately passes, because it gets mixed up with other feelings. But it indicates the real nature of love; it is the light from within that reveals the beauty that is hidden in things.

All action of the spiritual nature has the charm and freshness of spontaneity. Virtue has this charm. It is like an ever-fresh flower. Not only is the action of the spiritual nature wholly voluntary; it is also unreserved. It gives itself completely. The beauty of virtue is in such giving.

There is a nature deep within us which comes into the picture only when the ground is cleared for it. That nature remains the same and it is timeless. But it is capable of infinite variety in action. Every mode and form of its action is a form of beauty; as it appears in one's conduct, it is also a form of virtue.

✧

**All the powers of the universe are already ours.
It is we who have put our hands before our eyes
and cry that it is dark.**

Swami Vivekananda

**I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all;
but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.**

Martin Luther

**Love is like a butterfly.
If we chase after it, it will fly away. But if we are patient,
and wait long enough, it will land in our hand.**

Unknown

Becoming Aware Is Discovering Love

TRÂN-THI-KIM-DIÊU

OUR entire life is for learning. What is learning? It is learning to be aware. It starts from an early age up to the end of this life — and starts again after rebirth. The field of knowledge extends from inside to outside. It is not different from the field of consciousness. So, to know is to be conscious, to be aware. An ape is conscious but only of its limited surroundings. It is little conscious of itself, while humans can be conscious of both the outside and the inside. They can learn to expand their own awareness inside the field of consciousness. This capacity is another step by humans towards the cycles of learning and knowledge.

Observation of the present situation shows that the knowledge of the outside implies this kind of awareness about the objective world. Say, you see a tree, which is in its physical world, actual, objective, because you can see it like I can see it. If I am not sufficiently aware, I may bump into the tree. Similarly, when I drive, awareness of the outer world is indispensable.

Now, looking inside, at the level of human consciousness, I cannot be aware

of what happens in yours, like you cannot be aware of what happens in mine. It is subjective because it is relevant only to individuals. You may be aware of what happens inside your mind, as I may be aware of what happens in mine. Each one of us, to some extent, can be self-aware. Self-awareness implies that when I am doing something, I know that the action is taking place; I am aware. Likewise, when I am thinking of something or of somebody, I know that the thinking process is ongoing, and where it is focused, and so on. Simply put, I am aware.

So, even though the content of your consciousness and that of mine may differ, the fundamental fabric of both is the same. If it had not been so, no communication would have been possible. Consciousness is the unified field which allows individuals to communicate, to learn, and to share. Since action starts in the mind, any action in the physical objective world has its origin rooted in consciousness.

Therefore, the best discipline for right action is awareness. To learn to become aware, then, is to learn to be righteous, for awareness covers the total field of

Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Chairman of the European Theosophical Federation, lectures internationally and is former General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in France. Adyar Convention Lecture, December '20.

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knowledge, including mind, feelings, and senses.

Observation of oneself can throw a new light on what one is doing (in physical action, speech, and thinking) and can give the feeling whether it is right or not. It is not a matter of morality, but an act of getting in tune to what is most profound in oneself. In fact, each individual consciousness is an integral part of the One Consciousness, the unified field. Each one's past tendencies and present mind framework would circumscribe the limit and extent of one's consciousness. Apart from these two factors which make us differ in the patterns of the mind, each of us is identical to all the others, fundamentally speaking, on the ultimate level of consciousness.

A question then arises: how is it that one cannot recognize the fact of being of the same fabric? Understanding the teachings, together with acute observation, shows that the perception of separation between the "me" and others comes from negligence or lack of genuine attention. Indeed, when I pretend to be aware, of what am I aware? Most of the time, attention is unknowingly focused on me. The attention has been so far kept "in ignorance", so much so that consciousness inside me is absorbed only in myself. Self-absorption testifies for selfishness.

The others are around, visible to me, and yet I see them just like items of the landscape. The fact that they are sentient beings is totally missed in my view. This happens when people see a cow and its calf, they see them as meat and not like

sentient beings, caring for each other, as well as being capable of suffering from pain and despair when driven to the slaughterhouse. The fact is that inattention breeds insensitivity.

This leads to the notion of "otherness". The other is unknown to the fragment of consciousness which I have identified as "I". Each of the numerous fragmented "selves" lives in ignorance of the "other", whatever this "other" may be — humans, animals or plants, or the entire planet. For these fragmented "I"s, meaning most of humanity, the other does not count. Finally, no one from the "others" would count really, because each one only matters for oneself. This is a concern crying out poignantly for change: "What to do?"

"Can awareness be learned?" is the next question. Learning awareness then is an integral part of the new cycle of knowledge. While knowledge of the objective world has at present surpassed any level so far developed, knowledge of the subjective world stays almost at the same level as it was millennia ago. Never has the human mind mastered its use in the objective world as it does now. Probes, satellites, all kinds of space exploring devices are at work to widen the knowledge of the objective world. But today, a crucial question arises with the matter of artificial intelligence.

Using the performance of artificial intelligence, humans have increased their capacities tremendously. Trying to merge the psychological data on cognitive development with the technical computer performance, humans can create in a

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robot a low level of reactions indicating some sensitivity. But the question is: is it genuine sensitivity or just a formatted scheme of answers fitting a set of inputs? So, the actual question is: “Can robots be taught to be humanly and rightly sensitive?” meaning “Can robots be taught ethics?”

The global situation is a severe competition between human and artificial intelligence. With the high-speed development of algorithms, humans are going to be overwhelmed soon by artificial intelligence. Its speed and flux of calculations surpasses tremendously the capacities of the human mind. Algorithms are more capable than humans to solve specific problems, provided they are given the ad hoc inputs and a clear definition of objectives. This function, though impressive, is just mechanical. Due to absence of emotions, there cannot be in the process any disturbance by emotional “interference”; therefore, artificial intelligence would not make mistakes like humans. The only mistakes possible would come from a biased input.

This is their strength, and their weakness. While they surpass the humans’ mind in specific tasks, their “sensitivity”, if any, comes from a formatted program. At this point, one can feel that the name “artificial intelligence” is somehow inappropriate. Indeed, “intelligence” includes capacities of both mind and emotions. Since computers, robots, do not, and cannot have genuine emotions, or even genuine, autonomous thinking, one can logically presume that genuine ethics cannot be “taught”. The

fact is that teaching is not formatting.

One may ask then: What is awareness and what is self-awareness? True awareness must embrace in its field the objective world, humans, and all other sentient beings. To recognize sentient beings as able to care and capable of suffering, the observer must be aware that they are part of this global community of sentient beings. Yet, empathy is not this corporate solidarity that exists only for a specific chosen collectivity. It must extend beyond one’s circle of relationships.

Rare are the animals which apply empathy in a general way to their fellow animals, though some can be caring for their own and even other species. The apes can be affectionate to their progenies. What then about the robots? Apes can have limited self-awareness; therefore, they have genuine sensitivity. Robots can have a wide range of awareness of the objective world, and yet, due to want of genuine sensitivity, self-awareness is for them out of their scope.

Coming back to humans, they are more or less aware, due to negligence or want of attention, more or less self-aware, being so absorbed in themselves. Getting out of the cave of selfishness asks for some co-operation: they must look out to see that another life is ready for them if such is their wish. Wishing here means willing. Not being completely altruistic, they can begin to care, to some extent, for others, not necessarily within their own family or those related to them in some way.

Applying self-awareness is to begin

Becoming Aware Is Discovering Love

to realize righteousness, and along with this, to discover other dimensions of life. First, the contempt for other kingdoms ceases; a general respect for all sentient beings envelops one's perception, one's feeling, resulting in an undeniable observation, which is: Everyone (you and I) wants to be alive, then why do we impose the slaughtering of animals to feed us? Integrity in the whole process of intelligent reasoning leads necessarily to the realization that taking a sentient life to feed oneself is ugly. The sense of factual reality must not be obscured by theoretical speculation.

In the process, something new dawns in the consciousness. Indeed, when the

Epilogue

Theosophical teachings hint that the vibrations of our world, according to the cycle of Time, indicate, if not lead, the evolutionary process. So, there is a time for every cycle. There has been a time for knowledge of the objective world, next, a time for being aware inwardly of oneself. Then comes a time to discover other dimensions of consciousness. Overlapping each other, the beginning of a new cycle cannot be clearly perceptible, like the twilight at dawn and dusk.

From semiconsciousness, the human mind evolved to full consciousness. Then it grew into self-consciousness, to eventually become awakened into awareness

care for other sentient beings corroborates awareness, as a natural movement of life, then awareness feeds care. Something new grows in one's consciousness. A feeling of tenderness overwhelms the content of the mind. The mind, so to say, "yields" to the heart, and suddenly, love is there — without expectation and hope.

This step is one of spiritual growth. It can be felt like an inner spring pouring out waves of tenderness and benevolence. Self-absorption, as well as other forms of selfishness, can be progressively washed away. People call it compassion. It whispers that love must be used intelligently and must not be kept as a mere subject for discourse. ✧

and self-awareness. Becoming more aware, the mind, by its inclusiveness, accedes to a cycle of knowledge of a subtler order. This marks the dawning of intuition, real intelligence, or love, as it is consistently hinted in the evolutionary plan through the universal cycles of consciousness. This cycle strikes the end of the mission of the mind.

From a particular "circumscribed" condition of consciousness, the human mind now starts flowing towards higher dimensions. From its condition of limited "space", it begins now to explore inner boundless "space". And through this exploration, it may realize its real nature, rooted in infinity.

Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.

Rachel Carson

There Is Always Reincarnation

TIM WYATT

MOST cultures down the long and twisted corridors of history have believed in some form of rebirth or re-embodiment. The current widespread denial of reincarnation in the West is only a temporary rejection of the sanctity of this timeless truth. A combination of harshly materialistic and cynical science and the fake news about death peddled by the three Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have attached anathema status to this essential slice of the Ageless Wisdom teachings.

Despite this large-scale denial, there has been a steady and sometimes dramatic rise in the number of people in Europe, and North America especially, who actually do believe in reincarnation. The most recent surveys put this figure at between a quarter and a third of those questioned and this is hugely significant. Half a century ago that proportion was miniscule.

Rebirth, reincarnation, metempsychosis and similar concepts have, of course, been deeply embedded in the Eastern mindset for millennia thanks to Hinduism and Buddhism. Perhaps Covid-19 along with all the other crises and conflicts facing the world may bizarrely act as a catalyst in

transforming many people's notions of many things, death included.

Although reincarnation will never fully erase that fear of death which haunts so many people, it at least provides a plausible notion for the continuum of existence and the vital notion that life and consciousness can exist without a physical body. If we accept this crucial idea that we die and are reborn on a regular basis, it gives us a much greater perspective on existence in general. After all, this is one life out of many. And although it is important, it is by definition only a temporary situation.

I am not suggesting that mass death or a global lockdown caused by microscopic, spiked invaders will suddenly convince all the sceptics, cynics, or materialists that there is a world beyond the physical and that life persists after death. But for those looking for more meaningful answers to the more profound questions of life, it may act as a powerful stimulant for new thinking.

So, if you or I do expire from this virus — or indeed any other cause — you can be certain of two things. One: that your death was not ultimately down to corona

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virus, cancer, or chemical weapons. It was almost certainly due to your karma, that unerring law of cause and effect which shapes our present lives because of our thoughts, words, deeds, and emotions in this and previous lives. Two: you will be back on Earth eventually in another place, at another time and with a different body and personality from the one you think you own in this life. But you will still be the same core soul-spirit, although hopefully a little more improved, modified, and evolved than you were in your current life.

This virus is not just infecting and killing people. It is fundamentally reshaping our behaviour and consciousness in a major and unprecedented way. It may change the world more comprehensively than all the weasel words and sheep-speak of politicians, decision-makers, and other influencers of the modern era.

Paradoxically, as well as a harbinger of doom and death, it is also acting as a purging agent of change and a deep fumigant of human stupidity and avarice. It represents both an opportunity to change and a stark warning that we can no longer behave the way we do. This virus has been such an emotional laxative that it has even temporarily eclipsed climate change hysteria. And here is another great irony — it has actually achieved many of the aims espoused by those green warriors of Extinction Rebellion by shutting down travel locally and internationally and drastically reducing movement. Cities are suddenly less polluted, the roads

less crowded, and much carbon-emitting activity suspended.

This pandemic may also provide a means and a mechanism for introducing people to the idea that they are not just humans who happen to have spirits but spirits who happen to be undergoing a human experience. It may entice people to think about bigger issues such as death and beyond, and even persuade them that there is more to life than work, leisure, food, sex, debt, and consumption.

History shows us that wars, crises, and conflicts tend to suddenly sharpen people's spiritual aspirations. When the usual certainties have evaporated and our previous bloated sense of entitlement is trashed, we are more likely to discover, explore and even embrace our inner being.

After the American Civil War of the 1860s, there was a sudden upsurge in interest in the fate of the dead coinciding with the rise of spiritualism as hundreds of thousands of wives, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts wondered what had happened to their loved ones. A similar situation arose after the carnage of the First World War, and the Spanish Flu pandemic which followed claiming a further twenty million lives.

Under normal circumstances death is a distasteful topic for most people, a disagreeable subject for dinner party conversation and something to be ignored and avoided as much as possible. But at crunch times like this the subject of human mortality is so ubiquitous that it can no longer be ignored. It has to be confronted because it is ever present

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and very real. Death is now *the* talking point and it is not a moment too soon.

A century and a half ago Helena Blavatsky, that aptly named godmother of the New Age, made a clarion call for humanity to particularly study and enshrine the “law of laws” — karma, which decides and thus conditions the form and quality of reincarnation in each case. Interest in this concept has slowly spread to places across the globe where such notions were previously alien. But these ideas have not spread with the same rapidity as the virus. The virus may indeed act as an accelerant.

As well as the truths about death, corona virus may also introduce more people to another key cornerstone of the Ageless Wisdom teachings: the law of cycles. Everything from an electron to a cluster of galaxies has an identical life cycle: birth, growth, maturity, decline, death, and rebirth. Too many people have been ig-norant of this obvious truth for far too long and by doing so they have left themselves in a spiritual wasteland and existential cul-de-sac. We ignore cycles at our peril.

As well as being viral, this pandemic is also part of a greater cycle, a convulsive

rerun of what happened a century ago with Spanish Flu. There have been many points in the past where (for no doubt esoteric reasons beyond our grasp) the population has suddenly been reduced — by famine, plague, pestilence, war, and natural disaster. What is different about this scenario is that this is not a localised disaster but a truly international one whose grim realities seep into every pore of the planet.

As much as the modern unenlightened mind may shrink from the idea, this is part of the Earth’s natural rhythm and from time to time dramatic rebalancing is required to ensure equilibrium. Few have any clear understanding of this and so we can only speculate on what occult truths lie behind this pandemic. But we can be certain that it is happening as part of a greater plan and this is the point in the cycle for it to take place.

Covid-19 may be one of the harshest teachers we have ever encountered — but perhaps it may prove to be one of the most effective. When it finally recedes and we face the aftermath perhaps there will be a more sophisticated understanding of death, rebirth, karma, and the crucial importance of cycles. ✧

**In Nature we never see anything isolated,
but everything in connection with something else
which is before it, beside it, under it, and over it.**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A World in Distress: The Remedies as Seen by the Theosophist

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

THE members of the Theosophical Society have no particular common faith or creed, except our assertion of belief in a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. Our sense of Brotherhood impels us to feel a unity with all that lives, and most particularly with all humankind. Therefore to be a Theosophist means to be acutely conscious of any kind of distress in the world, and to be reformers ever striving to know in what way we can diminish the world's misery. Our prime duty as Theosophists is to go out into the world to abolish or minimize suffering wherever we find it, and in order to do our work efficiently we have a great body of thought called Theosophy to guide us.

This body of thought comes from the past, but it is being continually added to, age by age. None of us in the Society is committed to all that Theosophy proclaims; we select from its great ideas whatever teachings and ideals inspire us to live as Theosophists. Each will select according to their temperament, and each will therefore act in life according to the

manner in which they feel they can be most serviceable. . . .

You are all aware from what you have read in newspapers and heard in lectures what the economists of the world say with regard to the distress everywhere today. They will tell you that it is due to this, that, or the other cause, and all the time they are propounding remedies. It is striking that they are not all united in their remedies. Some suggest changing the banking system, others the abolition of tariffs, and so on. But as I visualize the causes from a standpoint which shows them clear to me, the root of all our troubles is due to the subtle change which has taken place in the world regarding what is worth seeking in life.

Surely there can be no dispute finally as to what is worth seeking — what is the right, the beautiful, and the good. But of late, largely due to the effect of modern science, there has come about a change concerning what is worth seeking. Science has released the forces of Nature, and has given us myriads of new things as the result of the perfection of machinery.

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The advance of scientific and mechanical achievement during the last fifty years has given to us numbers of objects which our grandparents never dreamed were necessary for our daily life. We say today that the standard of living has become higher. That is true, but also as the result of these manifold improvements introduced by science and machinery, the struggle for life has become intensified as never before.

New needs have been created for us of which we are conscious, which were unknown to past generations. We feel that we cannot be happy unless we have this or the other possession, and year by year more and more objects must cater to our physical comforts. Such is our life today that the whole gospel of modern business is to create more needs for us, and to make us believe that these needs are conducive to our happiness. We are no longer happy with the few needs which our grandparents thought were sufficient. All the nations are reorganizing themselves economically, and that reorganization fundamentally is to sell more to others, and to purchase as little as possible from them. That is the great economic cry today: Let us organize our country in order to be a seller of many things, but put up tariffs walls so that we may be a buyer of as few things as possible.

But as the principal nations have aimed at selling to each other while restricting their purchases from each other, what is the result? A plethora of more goods than the world needs. . . . Therefore all the solutions presented today by the eco-

nomists amount to this: We must create more money for all, so that they may buy more goods. I do not think that is the real solution, and I shall explain why.

The great trend away from the old ideals of life, which I have mentioned, has largely been due, I said, to the growth of modern science. In the great past days of religion, men were taught that this our life of 70 or 80 years was only an ante-chamber to a larger life, and that all objects of this world and the activities in it had their value only in so far as they released the powers of the Soul. The gospel of every religion is that man is only a passer-by travelling through this world into an eternal world. But all that is changed today; more and more people are trying to live in this world as if it and its enjoyments were the only reality.

Therefore anything which intensifies the sense of reality of this world appeals to them. Naturally, all economists take for granted that men know of or care for only one life. They say that we must alter the banking system, abolish or alter tariffs, that the present exploitation of the workers must cease, that men's hunger for land must not be thwarted by the few who hold it, that the military must be reduced. They propound a hundred and one suggestions, but all their suggestions come to this: There must be more money for all!

But the real solution is this: There must be more Soul for all. It is because we have forgotten the great idea that life is fundamentally Soul, and have put instead of Soul the conveniences summed up in the word "money", that today there is a

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World in Distress. It is by capturing once again the spiritual sense which has fled, that the true remedy begins.

What is worthwhile in life? It is upon that the whole problem hinges. In modern days what is the gospel which we are teaching in our educational system? It is that, if you can save money, can invest, and so produce more goods through investment, you will be secure against distress in old age. The whole economic system whispers its message: "Take care of your future in *this* world, provide for your old age, save and invest!"

And yet there is another and the truer gospel which was proclaimed in ancient days and is well expressed for us in a Chinese saying: "If you have two loaves, sell one and buy a lily". There we have the great spiritual principle of transmuting Life. But that is not the principle today. The principle today is to save and to invest; but what an English poet says sarcastically when commenting upon our modern system is true: "I love a bank for violets. I loathe a bank for savings."

The sense of life, of growth, of self-expression, does not come from a multitude of possessions, but only from possessing the *right* things. When King Janaka saw Mithila, his capital, consumed by fire, he said: "Nothing that is mine is burning." For he had as his eternal possession the Oneness of Life which he had discovered. It is not more money for all that we need for the prosperity of the world, but more good taste for all. It is on such a spiritual principle that the world's reorganization must proceed.

What are the true riches that life has for us? Suppose instead of hoping and planning for a larger income, we plan to have more eyes with which to see, more ears with which to hear. Think of a man striving to train himself to know more flowers, to see more delicate shades in sunsets, to hear more overtones in the roar of the surf. It is these things that are Life, and any true system of education should teach us to select from experience the things that are permanent, and which the wearing away of the body will not take from among our eternal possessions. To discover the permanent from the fleeting, that is the reason why we are born.

But that reason is no longer suggested to us by the religions, at least with any intensity to produce conviction. That is why in many ways we have to learn life all over again. For the greatness of life for an individual comes from the few things that we select. As we lessen the number of our needs, the more intrinsic beauty we find in them. To select from life: that is the true task of education. True wealth is always from selecting, and from transmuting the coarser to the finer, the fleeting to the permanent.

For example, in my room I have a wall full of books, but if I would be exiled to a desert island, I should select a volume of the Upanishads, the Bible, the *Sutta Nipāta*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Hardy's poems, and the two Oxford books of English and Spanish verse. Why so few? Because I have discovered my world of literature, and what I read in these reflects my own inner discovery.

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It is for this inner discovery of our true wealth and possessions that we are here in the world, but unfortunately that is no longer being taught us clearly today. But religion must come to our aid once again. I do not mean creeds, formulae and rituals. I mean that sense which religion should give of a fine taste towards all life's experiences, whereby we know the lovely from the meretricious, the eternal from the passing. *Back to the Soul* — that is the remedy!

But to teach ourselves to get back to the Soul, how shall we find the method? Not by laws. No laws of an administration, no laws proclaimed by any king or legislator, will teach us where is the way to discover more Soul. That can only be done by the souls themselves. When there are a few in the world who have the true characteristics of the Soul, they are like little miniature suns shining on all sides to others what is the greatness of the Soul.

The solution in each country is for a small number, a thousand at most perhaps, to set about discovering the Soul, and to take their stand on Soul and not on possessions. These few will be marked men in the beginning, scoffed at and ridiculed. But they will be understood after a while, and the great doctrine will be preached by their mode of living that man comes here to discover what is the essential nature of Soul in *everything* — in each stone, in each shrub, in every human being who lives and suffers.

If only the religions of the world today would combine to preach this doctrine: that man is eternal, that his life here is

only to discover something of the beauty of the life Yonder, that this [worldly] life is only the antechamber to it, that this life which is fleeting, with its miseries and sorrows, has only one value — that we may discover the Perfect, the Eternal, the Beautiful, and the Happy!

If only religion were to teach it, if only all the religions would combine today to teach mankind once more that Soul is the greatest thing in life, then the economic machinery of the world which is out of gear would come back into its right adjustment. To lessen the struggle for all — that is the crying need.

If each individual lessened the struggle for himself by selecting, by seeking not the transitory but the eternal world, then slowly, his example would be copied by thousands, and instead of “speeding up” life we should slacken life until there would be leisure to discover the Soul in the beautiful little things of life, until we see only One Thing — the Essential Thing in eternity.

To go wherever in the world we may, and see and read the One in everything, *that* is Life. When a man finds that One in all existence, he finds all things. Is not the whole ocean mirrored in a dewdrop? Is not the whole beauty of the world in a tiny wild flower? Have we not the Divinity of Christ and Śri Krishna in a child's face?

These are the truths which the world today needs for humanity, and it is only in so far as we understand that in finding the Soul of things we find the All, we shall, to my judgment, discover the remedy for the World in Distress today. ✧

Ethics in the Third Object of the TS: Spiritual Alchemy

MIRIAM MARTÍNEZ

ON one occasion, Oscar Wilde, author of the fictional novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, said: “When the gods wish to punish us, they answer our prayers”, and he may well have been right. Sometimes illusions, desires, and fantasies overcome us, always rushing to fulfilment no matter the cost. This is entirely natural in the hedonistic world we live in; it is the continuous vicious cycle: desire, obtaining the object of desire, desire again. The problem can arise when we are unconscious of the following:

1. Why do we desire these things?
2. What will happen when we have obtained the object of our desires?
3. Will it help human beings to conduct a harmonious life, free from suffering and the burdens of life?
4. Will it contribute to the alleviation or elimination of world problems?

If the answer to these questions relies upon human pride and selfishness, indeed, the object of our desire may be a punishment that we have unconsciously imposed on ourselves.

Answering the previous questions requires deep investigation and slow meditation, and it is of particular importance when we decide to comprehend the Third Object of the Theosophical Society (TS): *To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in humankind.*

The search for these answers takes profound honesty with oneself, without prejudice, because to know the hidden spiritual realities of the world is the right and duty of the student of Divine Wisdom. Not for the sake of knowledge, which being empty decays over time, but for the potentiality that this knowledge, guided by the Light of Buddhi — the ray of Love, Wisdom, Compassion, Service — can bring to the world.

The word “latent powers” can be the perfect breeding ground for synonyms such as superpowers, psychism, or altered states of consciousness, and for all kinds of practices that lead to experiencing these realities. However, the meaning of the Third Object of the TS goes far beyond experiencing these phenomena.

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The latent powers in the human being are nothing more and nothing else than natural capacities inherent in “the unexplained laws of Nature”. Therein, we are all called upon to develop them when the time is proper to do so. Nevertheless, there are very delicate aspects that must arise from the Soul’s Truth, and, in these, the ordinary temporal consciousness of the human being is not to intervene simply because it cannot comprehend what is beyond its scope.

“There is no religion higher than Truth”, says the motto of the TS. Truth is born from the Freedom of the Higher Self to express his capabilities, challenges, and characteristics. We all have these potentialities within us.

Although we may not know, our Higher Self *does* know why, what for, and when. It is therefore essential to know these hidden laws and internal processes so that when that moment arrives, we live it naturally. It is like the flower blooming; the flower does not think of it, it simply blooms.

We are all called upon to bloom if we accept the rays of the spiritual Sun, the Universal Law. No one lacks the knowledge and the necessary guidelines to face the trials before their very eyes. The task is to discover where those guidelines lie and, in this process, the latent capacities may appear.

This process should develop naturally, with the required psychological and mental maturity. Unfortunately, it is well known that people who naturally show these capacities and sensitivities often

must deal with incomprehension, leading them frequently to numbness or subversion, which can cause painful disorders and mental illnesses with possible terrible endings.

For this reason, clear purpose and guidance are implicit in The Third Object, and this is service. It is through service to our fellows and to the Universal Law that the true and most crucial capacity arises; the one which allows us to enter into a higher level of consciousness, into a broader capacity to understand the Universal Laws enabling us to function as their faithful vehicle of expression, or in other words, a vehicle of Love.

Nevertheless, the path of the occultist, of the seeker of Divine Wisdom and its laws, is fraught with dangers of all kinds and conditions. So H. P. Blavatsky points out to us in *The Voice of the Silence*:¹

Three Halls, O weary pilgrim, lead to the end of toils. Three Halls, O conqueror of Māra, will bring thee through three states into the fourth, and thence into the seven worlds, the worlds of Rest Eternal.

If thou wouldst learn their names, then hearken, and remember.

The name of the first Hall is Ignorance — *avidyā*.

It is the Hall in which thou saw’st the light, in which thou livest and shalt die.

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.

The name of the third Hall is Wisdom,

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beyond which stretch the shoreless waters of *akshara*, the indestructible Fount of Omniscience.

H. P. Blavatsky also tells us¹ that one must watch ceaselessly, night and day, because Māra, Illusion, is the great deceiver, the temptation personified by the vices of men, or “that which kills the soul”.

The Law of Karma is a Universal Law, and it is the decisions we make and the actions we take that will lead us to one side or the other of the road. At the intersection, one can go to the right, the path of the Buddhas or sages, but one can also go to the left, the path of the *dugpas*, or black magicians. When the path has been so long, it can be easier than one might think to get confused about the way to go. Māra, the Illusion, is after all, the great deceiver.

Clara M. Codd points out in *Theosophy as the Masters See It*:²

Chelaship is no child’s play. It is tremendous and stern reality, not to be lightly invoked or entered upon, even in the region only as yet of intense desire for it. The disciple as he grows in capacity and power becomes increasingly, the object of insidious attack; but, at the same time, he has the power of his Master behind him, [who continually protects and observes him]. . .

Sigh not for chelaship; pursue not that, the dangers and hardships of which are unknown to you. Chelaship unveils the inner man and draws forth the dormant virtue as well as the dormant vice. Latent

vice begets active sins and is often followed by insanity. . . . Be pure, virtuous, and lead a holy life and you will be protected. But remember, he who is not as pure as a young child better leave chelaship alone.

The questions to be asked, quoting from the preamble of *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti,³ are: How to distinguish the unreal from the Real, how to move from darkness to Light, how to conduct ourselves from death to Immortality? Both Krishnamurti in this small work, and Blavatsky in excerpts of the beautiful poem “There is a Road”⁴ indicate this to us:

There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer.

There is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through.

There is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount.

For those who win onwards, there is reward past all telling — the power to bless and save humanity.

For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.

Even if the aspirants fail and get trapped in the quicksand of passions and fears, if goodness is to be found in the heart, the aspirants may return to the father’s side, having repaired the consequences of their actions. The Law is loving, the Law is fair, the Law gives each one what is needed to learn.

Annie Besant explains in *The Path of Discipleship*:⁵

Let us now see how it was proposed by

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the great Teachers that man by experience should learn to choose of his own free will the ideal which was placed before him, and from which he turned aside; how the great Teachers endeavoured to build up from the imperfect humanity towards the perfected ideal manifested in the beginning for the guidance of the race, and unrealized in evolution, by the weakness and the childishness of men.

In order that, in the course of ages, this might be achieved, what is called Karma-Yoga was taught to the people — Yoga, or union, by action. That is the form of Yoga, which is fitted for the men of the world, beset with life's activities; it is by these very activities, by the training afforded by them, that the first steps towards union must be taken. And so, you find laid down for the training of men this Karma-Yoga.

The human being is always given the ability to choose whom he will serve at each moment: the Immortal Self that dwells beyond eternities, or the fading personality that will eventually wither away. An exemplification of this can be found in the Temptations of Jesus:⁶

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said: "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered: "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city

and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God", he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you", he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him: "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

God represents the Universal Law. When spiritual hunger lurks and we are confused, and the way is not so clearly distinguished, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." The food is the Truth that springs from our Soul. It represents the First Vestibule, transcending ignorance.

When we feel ourselves falling before the precipice: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test", for it is before the path of probation, The Second Vestibule, when the qualities of the Seven Rays are manifested in the Soul of Man.

Moreover, when we are promised a world full of beautiful illusions — beautiful, yes, but illusions after all — "Away from

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me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” It represents the transcendence of faults and sins: the Third Vestibule, *akshara*.

It is then when the words described in Archive XIII of the Masters’ Record⁷ make sense:

What part, O Pilgrim on the Way, play you within this scheme? How will you enter into peace? How stand before your Lord?

I play my part with stern resolve, with earnest aspiration; I look above, I help below; I dream not, nor I rest; I toil; I serve; I reap; I pray; I am the Cross; I am the Way; I tread upon the work I do; I mount upon my slain self; I kill desire, and I strive, forgetting all reward. I forego peace; I forfeit rest, and in the stress of pain I lose myself and find Myself

and enter into peace.

These, in short, are the foundations upon which the Ethics of the Theosophical Society’s Third Object rests: humility, commitment, service, and spiritual transformation. It is through karma-yoga (union through action), also called spiritual alchemy, that we can be worthy seekers of Truth, for, in truth, what could be more wonderful, more enriching, more liberating than to be able to develop the Love that drives us every day to become better people and better citizens? It is the power of Love and not the love for power.

In this subtle nuance resides the key for all of it.



Endnotes

1. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, Verbat. Ed., 2015.
2. Clara M. Codd, *Theosophy as the Masters See It: As Outlined in the “Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom”*, Theosophical Publishing House, 1953.
3. J. Krishnamurti, *At the Feet of the Master*, Chicago: The Rajput Press, 1911.
4. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. 13, “There is a road . . .”, p. 219.
5. Annie Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1899.
6. *Matthew* 4:1–11.
7. Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, Lucifer Publishing Co., 1922.

**Love means to learn to look at yourself
The way one looks at distant things
For you are only one thing among many.
And whoever sees that way heals his heart,
Without knowing it, from various ills.
A bird and a tree say to him: Friend.**

Czeslaw Milosz from “Love”
in *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*

Becoming Aware of Suffering — And How to Deal with It

JANNE VUONONVIRTA

THE Buddha taught about two arrows of suffering. The first one is pain — adverse life events and difficult times that all people are forced to face in daily life. No one can escape pain. It is an inevitable part of existence. We are all vulnerable to the miseries of life. The first arrow is something that happens to us, something that comes from outside. Even if we did everything right, we could not avoid it entirely. Bad things just happen.

The second arrow is something that happens inside us. It is the reaction to hardships, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, feelings, bodily sensations, and actions. We shoot that arrow ourselves. This is where we have some power, perhaps not much, but some. It might not be easy, but we can influence how we react, how we perceive things, how we think, and how we act.

Let us look at the second arrow in more detail. Cognitive behavior therapy emphasizes that the interpretation one makes of events has a strong effect on how one reacts. Imagine the following example.

We are walking on the street and see a friend of ours on the other side of the road. We try to greet him, but he does not greet us back. He does not seem to notice us. How would we react?

The thoughts that come to our mind give direction to the succeeding emotions and other reactions. If we think, “I guess he is avoiding me; maybe he does not like me anymore; maybe I have offended him somehow”, we would probably feel sad, disappointed, and alone. On the other hand, if we think, “He might be busy; he just did not see me”, it would be easy to let go and just continue the day.

Following this kind of event, *some people who have a tendency for depression might continue thinking*, “I am so stupid and uninteresting. Nobody likes me”, and thus make themselves feel even worse. These thoughts can keep rolling on in one’s head and by the time one gets back home one is feeling very anxious, ashamed, and lonely. One might scream at the wife and children and binge watch TV and drink beer all evening, or act in

Janne Vuononvirta is General Secretary of the TS in Finland. Talk given at the 145th International Convention in Adyar, Chennai, India, in December 2020.

Becoming Aware of Suffering — And How to Deal with It

some other unconstructive way, such as withdrawing from social connections or doing excessive work or recreation, ignoring everything else in life.

The thoughts that come up in the challenging situations of daily life are automatic. Usually, we do not even realize what is happening in our head. During the day, thousands of thoughts can run through our mind. When we are not aware of this process, in the evening we just feel bad and do not know the reason. The automatic thoughts derive from the belief system, from one's personal philosophy of life that one has learnt throughout life, usually unconsciously.

The belief system activates when something reminds us of the history we have lived, of the wounds we have had, of the wounds that have not yet healed. When we investigate the belief system, we can find rudimentary thoughts and emotions that express how we think about ourselves, about others, and about the world around us. These core beliefs are usually something like "I'm worthless", "I don't deserve love", "I'm a bad person". It seems that in the core of one's personal philosophy of life lies a deep sense of separateness, a strong, "I don't belong" thought.

However, we can become aware of this and start changing our conditioning that we have been building up since early childhood, and even before that. We can stop reacting and start recreating ourselves and our lives. There are four steps, which we can take to weaken the power of the second arrow.

The first step is to become aware

that this is a moment of suffering. In the West, the ethos is that suffering is an anomaly of life. Bad things are not supposed to happen, at least not to "me". Western people have a tendency to look away when there is suffering — whether it is our own or someone else's. However, suffering does not go away when we bury our head in the sand. It remains until we decide to do something about it.

We need to stop and look at the situation, look at the reactions, thoughts, feelings, emotions, bodily sensations, and action tendencies, and try to see everything as purely as we can and just hold everything in open awareness. At this point, we do not try to change anything, not the situation, not the inner reactions. Just let everything be as it is. The first step is to see what is really happening. We do not judge or criticize our life or our reactions, just note them. We recognize that this is a moment of suffering.

The second step is to accept that suffering is a part of life. Bad things happen. It means to accept not only the hardship but our own reactions to the difficulties, too. We are human beings. We were born with this "fight, flight, or freeze" response. Whatever we think, feel, or experience, it is alright. We do not need to be ashamed of our reactions. They are the voice of our past. Accepting means that we stop tilting at windmills. It means that we stop trying to put life, or ourself, into a predetermined form of how we would like everything to be. Instead, we connect with reality. Accepting takes a lot of courage, but only then, a real change is possible.

The third step is to remember the unity of humanity. When something bad happens, we may think that we are the only ones having difficult times. If we think along these lines, we feel alone, separated from others. In this case, we are forgetting the reality that everyone faces difficulties. No one likes suffering. No one likes stress. Everyone wants to be happy. All this is part of being human. We can remind ourselves that we, too, belong to the network of life. We are part of this great body that is humanity. When we open our heart to this fact — and it is a fact — we may feel elevated. The pain is not gone, but it is lighter to bear when we are not alone. We have a connection with others, with the whole of humanity. We belong.

The fourth step is our commitment

to do whatever we can to improve the situation. It also means to refrain from making things worse. It is common that when hardships enter one's life, one starts to criticize or blame oneself or others. This kind of talking with oneself can be discouraging, and it diminishes the energy that we need to improve the situation. We do not need to wallow in self-pity. Life is already difficult enough. Instead, we can be kind to ourselves, as we are kind to others.

To conclude, pain and hardship are unavoidable parts of life. However, understanding how the mind can make it worse, becoming aware of the conditioning of the mind, and changing the way we relate to situations can make the miseries of life easier to bear. With awareness, we can start building a happier future. ✧

What seems to be happening at the moment is never the full story of what is really going on. For the honey bee, it is the honey that is important. But the bee is at the same time Nature's vehicle for carrying out cross-pollination of the flowers.

Interconnectedness is a fundamental principle of Nature. Nothing is isolated. Each event connects with others. Things are constantly unfolding on different levels. It is for us to perceive the warp and woof of the Oneness of All as best we can and learn to follow our own threads through the tapestry of life with authenticity and resolve.

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Wherever You Go, There You Are

At the Hour of Death

RODOLFO GARBALOSA

Epilogue . . .

Suppose a modern Lazarus, with a hearing aid and dentures, were to rise up and talk to us over a public-address system or on a talk show. What would he say? His advice might go like this.

“When your heart stops and the hour of death comes, you will not break up and disintegrate like ice in the rapids of a river. Instead, it will be like diving into a new kind of reality. You will feel well and be happy in a very special way — ‘the peace which passeth all understanding’. The weariness, pain, and sadness, all will be left with the sheets on the hospital bed.

“You will ‘light up from within’, and then you will see someone warm and caring waiting to receive you. If your own close relatives are suitable for the task — and you for them — one will ‘pop in’ as lifelike and loving as when you last saw him. But there will be a strange air of serenity around him. If the situation calls for professional help, a religious figure will come in brilliant light.

“Whoever they are, the visitors will ‘turn you on’. Something mild but powerful will envelop you. It will feel like the best moments of your life — when on a

mountaintop, in a church or temple — and much more. You might have to grope for words — sacred, light, love. No, none will really do, but you will feel it in the core of your being.

“Wherever you look, your perspective on everything will be changed. The feverish resuscitation efforts of the doctors and nurses to save your life will seem totally out of place, as though they were working on someone else’s body. The heartrending anguish of weeping relatives will appear to be childish and beside the point. Your own grand concerns — the unfulfilled dreams of the future, duties to loved ones, work, everything you ever looked forward to — will become small and unimportant, fading like dried flowers. With a sudden wave of joy, you will be ready to go.

“If you are a Hindu, you will most likely experience the same things, but you may be received by a Yamdoot [horrible messenger of death] rather than by the ‘professional’ himself. But don’t despair; you will be brought to the man in the white robe, and he is always a benign ruler with an aura of sacredness around him.

Mr Rodolfo Garbalosa became a member of the TS at a young age in Cuba and transferred his membership to the TS in America when he moved to the US. He recently passed on, shortly after writing this article.

At the Hour of Death

“You may be reminded of your earthly travels — the arrival terminal of an international airport where you have to pass through customs. Actually, the terminal might look more like a wonderful garden with beautiful gates and temples, and the desks might look more like a throne. Don’t worry about that.

“All your ideas are inadequate approximations, something like the dry leaves of yesteryear in your earthly garden. Soon you will see more clearly, for now it is still ‘through the glass darkly’, but ‘then your eyes will be opened’. You will learn more than you did in any school. It will taste good, look

beautiful. You will feel at peace and fulfilled until the next —”

Hands will go up in the audience. “What are the next stages of afterlife?” The modern Lazarus will hesitate before the broadcasting system. “What comes next? Well, that cannot be made clear to you now. Each one of you has a personal passport that will allow you to experience it eventually, but the knowledge is not yet declassified for this state of existence.”

Lazarus and a thousand others have spoken. In our judgment, it would be prudent to pay attention to the central message whispered by them at the hour of death. ✧

**The Buddha died, the great Tathagato.
Even as a man ’mongst men, fulfilling all:
And how a thousand thousand lakhs since then
Have trod the Path which leads wither he went
Unto NIRVANA, where the Silence lives.**

**AH! BLESSED LORD! OH, HIGH DELIVERER!
FORGIVE THIS FEEBLE SCRIPT, WHICH DOTH THEE WRONG,
MEASURING WITH LITTLE WIT THY LOFTY LOVE.
AH! LOVER! BROTHER! GUIDE! LAMP OF THE LAW!
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY NAME AND THEE!**

**I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY LAW OF GOOD!
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY ORDER! OM!
THE DEW IS ON THE LOTUS! — RISE, GREAT SUN!
AND LIFT MY LEAF AND MIX ME WITH THE WAVE.
OM MANI PADME HUM, THE SUNRISE COMES!
THE DEWDROP SLIPS INTO THE SHINING SEA!**

Sir Edwin Arnold
The Light of Asia

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Selections from the “Sermon on the Mount”

- 5 Blessed are the meek [humble]: for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called
the children of God.
- 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in
heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
- 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.
- 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but
on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
- 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your
good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
- 17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets:
I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
- 20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed
the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall
in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [vain], shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,
Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife,
let him give her a writing of divorcement:

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time,
Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto
the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven;
for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem;
for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not
make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever
is more than these cometh of evil.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

- 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.
- 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
- 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
- 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
- 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
- 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
- 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?
- 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The Holy Bible, Matt., 5
King James Version

“The Lord’s Prayer”

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matt., 6:9–13

Theosophical Work around the World

The President's visit and new classrooms for ATA

Mrs Sonal Murali, Director of the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA), reports that students were getting ready all week ahead of a special visit on 4 March 2022 at the campus. They were energized about their upcoming meeting with the international President of the Theosophical Society, Mr Tim Boyd, and his wife Lily.

Upon their arrival the couple was first greeted by the students of Grade 2. The program began with a student saying a prayer. The interactive session continued with stories, presentations of Nature journaling, other projects, and craftwork. The children had a list of questions for Tim and Lily, and they were all answered with equal enthusiasm. The discussions covered a wide range, such as the countries he had visited, the Chicago museum, the oldest dinosaur, and the children's favourite cupcakes. The children had also prepared hand-crafted gifts that were close to their heart for the couple, and showcased the projects they had undertaken through the pandemic. They applied their freshly honed skills of using tie-dye techniques to dye fabric with natural colours. They dyed a t-shirt for Tim and a scarf for Lily using the golden harvest of the soil — "turmeric". They also presented a 2022 calendar made by them based on local birds, using zen-tangle art, or miniature abstract patterns.

Grades 3 and 4 students came next. One of them told a story of the drum that conveyed how if you do good, good comes back to you. Here, too, Mr Boyd was engaged in a lengthy discussion with the students. The highlight was a couple of riddles that the students asked him, and he, too, reciprocated with a riddle. The children were happy to showcase their eco-friendly arts and crafts, such as block printing with natural ink, and wind chimes made out of coconut shells.

ATA has yet more good news to report. On the eastern side of the school three new classrooms and a gazebo will soon be constructed in an environmentally friendly fashion. The project is planned on a single level to merge with landscapes; the spaces are arranged so as to create an open central area aiming to respect and highlight the existing trees.

Foundation stones were laid for the project on 16 March 2022, a day considered auspicious according to the Hindu calendar, and two days before the colorful spring festival of Holi, which marks growth and prosperity in Nature. The foundation stones were laid by intl Treasurer, Ms Nancy Secrest; intl Secretary, Ms Marja Artamaa; General Manager, Mr K. Jaikumar; Mrs Geetha Jaikumar; Director Murali; teachers; and students.

Amidst the chirping of birds and the gentle breeze, "Saraswati Vandana" was chanted by an ATA parent, invoking the

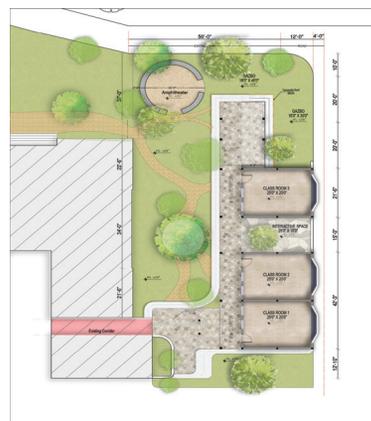
Theosophical Work around the World



On 4 March 2022 Tim Boyd, international President of the TS, and wife Lily, visited the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA) students of grades 2, 3 & 4. They fielded questions, shared experiences, and took in class displays of arts and crafts



A visualization and aerial view of the layout of 3 new classrooms to come up on the ATA campus





4 new members of Sofia Lodge in Puerto Rico, w/ the President of the Lodge (*far left*) and the Presidential Representative for the TS in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Mrs Magaly Polanco (*far right*)



Presentation of diplomas for the 4 new Puerto Rican members in a Zoom mtg. with the digital presence of 5 new members from Guatemala held on Foundation Day, on 17 Nov. 2021



A group of TS members from two Lodges in Puerto Rico celebrate Foundation Day and welcome 9 new members, in Puerto Rico as well as those in Guatemala by Zoom, to the Theosophical Society



3 of the 5 new members from Guatemala received actual diplomas from the President of Sofia Lodge in Puerto Rico (*far right*) at their reunion hall for holding group studies in their country

Theosophical Work around the World

goddess of wisdom to bless the undertaking. ATA friends, teachers, and students gathered around the holy fire, humbly wishing for a brighter tomorrow for the future of this world — “our children”. Happiness, cheer, and positivity were in abundance.

The Caribbean Basin

Mrs Magaly Gracia de Polanco, Presidential Representative for the Theosophical Society in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, reports that until not long ago, there were no official members of the TS in Guatemala, but now they already have five.

She narrates: “As a result of the pandemic, we were forced to explore new avenues and ways to stay connected and keep busy serving and studying. That led us to Zoom. While participating in a program on meditation presented by Mr Fernando de Torrijos from the US, I found out that some of the participants were from Guatemala. So I approached them and offered them a one-year introductory course in Theosophy, which they gladly accepted. Afterward, one of them requested to become a TS member and we accepted her here in Puerto Rico. A few months later four other sympathizers from Guatemala

wanted to join the Theosophical Society.

“I asked our International President, Tim Boyd, for his approval to proceed, as I also wanted to take care of these new members, for which he had no objection. On Foundation Day, 17.11.2021, four Puerto Ricans received their membership diplomas together and simultaneously with others from Guatemala, which we did through Zoom. One of our members from Puerto Rico volunteered to travel and responsibly deliver the diplomas to our new members in Guatemala. To our surprise, they had already gotten a place to meet and study!”

Recent Appointments

Mrs Juana Leonor Maldonado Ruíz became the new General Secretary of the Mexican Section on 1 January 2022, succeeding Mr Enrique Sanchez Arrieta.

Mr Fidel Carrazana Macias became the new National President of the Cuban Section on 16 January 2022, succeeding Mr Carlos Vicente Fernández Pérez.

Mrs Cecilia Calderón was appointed Presidential Representative in Costa Rica, in place of Mrs Ligia Beatriz Montiel Longhi, for the purpose of conducting the business and administration of the TS in that country, effective from 15 March 2022.



All of God's creatures have divine knowledge within, even the tiniest ant, and we're all trying to get in step and march to the Divine Music.

Martin Buber
Tales of the Hasidim

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