

The
Advantages
of
Theosophy

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The Advantages of Theosophy

Our members are often asked by those to whom they speak on the subject: "What is this Theosophy which you recommend to us? What shall we gain by studying it?" Perhaps an attempt to tabulate some of its principal advantages may therefore be useful. There are many—so many that it is impossible in a brief article to do more than indicate a few of the most important of them.

1. It gives the student a wider outlook on life. The vista of the ordinary man is necessarily sadly limited—limited by race, by sex, by religious opinions, or by the social caste to which he belongs. Theosophy teaches that no man can rightly fill his place in the world unless he transcends these limitations—unless he learns to understand all in order that he may sympathize with all. We gain from it a rational comprehension of life, which was before to many of us a mere unsolved problem—a riddle without an answer. From Theosophy we know why we are here, what we are expected to do, and how we are to set to work to do it. We see that, however little life may seem worth living for the sake of any pleasures or profits belonging exclusively to this world, it is very emphatically worth living when regarded as a school to prepare us for the indescribable glories and the infinite possibilities of higher worlds.

2. It teaches universal brotherhood. The Theosophist knows that we are all part of one evolution and all literally the children of one Father, so he sees that the universal brotherhood of man is no mere poetical conception, but a definite fact—not a dream of something which is to be, but a condition which actually exists, although as yet but few recognize it fully. Thus he learns to regard everything from a broad impersonal point of view. He realizes that the true interests of all are in fact identical, and that no man can ever make real gain for himself at the cost of loss or suffering to someone else. This is not an article of religious belief, but a scientific fact proved to him by his study. Theosophy thus teaches us not only how to evolve ourselves but also how to help others to evolve—how by thought and action

to make ourselves more useful, first to those whom we love, and then gradually to others also. Theosophy lifts us to an altogether higher platform in this respect, so that we begin to regard everything not only as it affects our infinitesimal selves, but from the higher standpoint of its influence upon humanity as a whole.

3. The attitude of the Theosophist towards others is therefore changed. He recognizes this brotherhood not merely as a hope cherished by despairing men, but as a definite fact following in scientific series from all other facts; he sees it as an absolute certainty. Therefore his attitude towards all those around him is ever one of helpfulness, ever of deepest sympathy, for he sees that nothing which clashes with their higher interests can be the right thing for him to do, or can be good for him in any way. Therefore he becomes filled with the widest possible tolerance, because his philosophy shows him that it matters little what a man believes, so long as he is a good man and true. Charitable also he must be, because his wider knowledge enables him to make allowances for many things which the ordinary man does not understand. His standard as to right and wrong is always higher than that of the less instructed man, yet he is far gentler than the latter in his feeling towards the sinner, because he comprehends more of human nature.

4. He goes further than tolerance, charity, sympathy; he feels positive love towards mankind, and that leads him to adopt a position of watchfulness. Not that he is perpetually thrusting his opinions upon other people; on the contrary, he observes that to do this is one of the commonest mistakes made by the uninstructed. He knows that argument is a foolish waste of energy, and therefore he declines to argue. If anyone desires from him explanation, or advice, he is glad to give it, yet he has no sort of wish to convert anyone else to his own way of thinking.

5. Theosophy is pre-eminently a doctrine of common sense. It puts before us, so far as we can know them, the facts about God and man and the relations between them; and then it instructs us to take these facts into account, and to act in relation to them with

ordinary reason and common sense. All that it asks from any man is to study the laws of evolution and to regulate his life according to them.

6. It supplies men with a criterion by which all their actions and thoughts may be tried; and that criterion is: "Does it help evolution or does it hinder it?" If a thought or feeling arises within a man, he sees at once by this test whether it is one which he ought to encourage. If it may hinder or cause harm to any being in its progress, then it is evil and to be avoided. The same reason holds good if he is called upon to decide with regard to anything outside himself. If from that point of view it is a good thing, then he can conscientiously support it; if not, it is not for him, even though it may have on its side all the weight of public opinion and immemorial tradition.

7. It diminishes sorrows and suffering. Men often feel that their troubles come to them unjustly. Theosophy saves its students from this mistake, for it makes it absolutely clear to them that no undeserved suffering can ever come to any man. Whatever difficulty we may encounter is simply of the nature of a debt that we have incurred; as it has to be paid, the sooner it is cleared off the better. Nor is that all; for every such trouble is opportunity for development. If we bear it patiently and bravely, not allowing it to crush us, but meeting it and making the best of it, we thereby evolve within ourselves the valuable qualities of courage, perseverance, determination; and so out of the result of our sins of long ago we bring good instead of evil. The troubles and sorrows which come to us are often seen out of proportion because they are so near to us; but theosophical teaching brings all these things into due perspective. It enables us to rise above these clouds, to look down and see things as they are, and not merely as they appear when looked at from below by our limited vision. We learn to sink altogether the lower personality, with its mass of delusions and prejudices and its inability to see anything truly. We learn to rise to an impersonal and unselfish standpoint, where to do right for right's sake seems the only rule of life, and to help our fellow-men the greatest of our joys.

8. Theosophy teaches perennial cheerfulness, undaunted courage under difficulties, and ready sympathy and helpfulness; and the Theosophist should be distinguishable from the rest of the world by these characteristics. In spite of his cheerfulness, he will take life seriously, for he realizes that there is much for each to do in the world, and no time to waste. He sees the necessity of gaining perfect control of himself, because only in that way can he be thoroughly fitted to help others when the opportunity comes to him. He ranges himself ever on the side of the higher rather than the lower thoughts, the nobler rather than the baser. His toleration is perfect, because he knows that is fundamentally the true view—the evil in everything being necessarily the impermanent part, because in the end only the good can endure.

Thus he looks ever for the good in everything, that he may endeavor to strengthen it. He watches for the working of the great law of evolution in order that he may range himself on its side, and contribute to its energy his tiny stream of force.

9. Theosophy teaches the marvelous power of thought. It teaches that thoughts are things, and that it is easily possible to do great harm or great good by their means. It shows that no man liveth to himself, for his every thought acts upon others as well. The vibrations which he sends out from his mind and from his nature are reproducing themselves in the minds and the natures of other men, so that he is the source either of mental and emotional health or ill to all with whom he comes into contact. It teaches also that this power of thought may be employed consciously for good—that a man may set currents in motion to carry mental health and comfort to many a suffering friend, and in that way a whole new world of usefulness may open before him.

For this every man has his opportunities, for every connection is an opportunity. Everyone with whom we are brought into contact is a soul who may be helped. There are often cases in which help by word or deed is impossible for us; but there can never be a case in which friendly and helpful thought cannot be poured forth, and none who understand the

power of thought will doubt as to its result, even though it may not be immediately visible.

10. For the Theosophist there should be an utter absence of worry, because there is nothing left about which to worry for he knows that all must be well. His higher science makes him an optimist, for he knows that evil must be temporary, because it is opposed to the resistless stream of evolution, but that whatever is good must necessarily persist because it has omnipotence behind it. None will be more active than he in laboring for the triumph of good and the removal of evil; yet he is absolutely free from the feeling of helplessness or hopelessness which so often oppresses those who are striving to help their fellow-men.

11. The lives of many people are full of fear and anxiety; and most serious of all for many is the fear of death. For the Theosophist the whole of this feeling is entirely swept away. Understanding what death is, he knows that there is no need to fear it or to mourn over it, whether it comes to himself or to those whom he loves.

He no longer weeps for those who have gone before, because they are still present with him, and he knows that to give way to selfish grief would be to cause sadness and depression to them. His knowledge for them will be a potent factor in their evolution, and if he will but think rightly and reasonably about them, he may render them the greatest assistance in their upward progress. Death is simply a promotion from the physical life to one which is wholly superior. The Theosophist sees clearly that the world is one, and that the same divine laws rule the whole of it, whether it is visible or invisible to physical sight. Doubt as to his future is for him impossible; for just as by looking back on the savage he realizes what he was in the past, so looking to the greatest and wisest of mankind he realizes what he shall be in the future. He sees an unbroken chain of development, a ladder of perfection rising steadily before him, yet with human beings upon every step of it, so that he knows that those steps are possible for him to climb.

The Theosophist has a clearness and certainty in his anticipation of the future which is a welcome relief from the vagueness and indecision of ordinary thought on these subjects. He cannot have any fear about his salvation, for he knows that there is nothing from which man needs to be saved except his own ignorance. No vague eternal hope is his, but utter certainty, born of his knowledge of the eternal law. He cannot fear the future, because he knows the future; so his only anxiety is to make himself worthy to bear his part in the mighty work of evolution.

12. It is a life of joy which opens before us. As the man evolves, his sympathy and compassion increase, so that he becomes more and more sensitive to the sin and sorrow and suffering of the world. Yet at the same time he sees more and more clearly the cause of that suffering and understands more and more fully that all things are working together for the final good of all. And so there comes to him not only the deep content and absolute security which is born of the certainty that all is well, but also the definite and radiant joy derived from the contemplation of the magnificent Divine Plan, and the steady unflinching success with which that mighty scheme moves to its appointed end. He learns that God means us to be happy, and that it is definitely our duty to be so in order that we may spread around us vibrations of happiness upon others, for that is one of the methods by which we may lighten the sorrow of the world.

In this way, by striving always to help, and never to hinder, he becomes in his small sphere of influence one of the beneficent powers of Nature. He forgets himself utterly and lives for the sake of others, realizing himself as part of that scheme; he also realizes the God within him, and learns to become ever a truer expression of Him, and thus fulfilling God's Will he is not only blest himself but becomes a blessing to all. In however lowly a manner, at however unthinkable a distance, he is yet a fellow-worker together with God; and that is the highest honor and the greatest privilege that can ever fall to the lot of man.