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Cover: The statues of H. P. Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Henry S. Olcott (1832–1907), the main founders of the Theosophical Society, in the Main Hall of the TS Adyar, Chennai, India. Blavatsky's statue has a Latin inscription by Olcott meaning "HPB, Testimony of our friendship." Photo taken by Marja Artamaa, International Secretary of the TS for many years, and former General Secretary of the Finnish Section of the TS.

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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.

The Gateway of Joy

TIM BOYD

ONE of the foundational ideas within the Theosophical Society (TS) is that "There is no religion higher than Truth". It is an idea that points us in a certain direction — beyond the forms that try to engage us and determine our path, it points toward Truth itself. The difficulties that we then encounter result from the fact that we are ill-prepared to embrace an all-encompassing truth. We have to find our way toward it, using the tools that are at hand to us, the main instrument being the laboratory of our own consciousness, with all of its powers and all of its limitations. In every spiritual tradition there is a strong emphasis on cultivating the tools of consciousness. Generally the term that is used for this process is "practice". Practice refers to the variety of ways where, beginning with our personality, we refine habits of mind and emotion in order for them to cease being obstacles and become aids to deeper, hidden aspects of our being.

We are familiar with the threefold description of a holistic practice as study, meditation, and service. Study tends to be the initial focus for most of us. Along with the recognition of the need for some form of practice comes the clear awareness that we lack a necessary level of knowledge. Basically, in our initial stages, while we may have a sense of the general direction we need to go, we need more specifics. At some level of awareness, we know that Truth cannot be grasped by the mind or its intellect, but early in our unfoldment, concepts, ideas, and information about inner things serves a purpose. It quickens the mind and helps us uncover a different way of experiencing this tool. Like a fisherman, we cast a net of thought into the sea in what we think is the direction of Truth, hoping to have caught something when we draw it out of the water. And we do, but because it is the Ocean itself we are searching for, ultimately the intellect must be abandoned as the primary aid in this process. No system of thought is up to the task.

I have seen videos of tiger hunts in which a large ring of people encircle the area in the forest where the tiger resides. All of them have pans or drums that they beat, making a loud noise. Slowly they all walk toward the center of the circle, driving the, as yet, unseen tiger toward the place where it will be caught. This is not so different from our studied approach to Truth. We believe ourselves to have surrounded it with our knowledge, and that our thought and study have

closed off any avenue of escape, permitting us to capture the wild and illusive beast of truth. It may work with tigers, but Truth is a different animal.

Meditation is different in that it involves stripping away the thoughts and concepts that delight our minds, but obscure our vision. This takes place at ever deepening levels. Anyone who has spent sufficient time experimenting with meditation can recognize that what began as "meditation" for them has changed over time. The same should be true for study. There is a hierarchical progression that can take place within us.

Many people begin their meditation practice by sitting in the postures that others have prescribed — legs crossed, eyes closed, breath flowing unforced, hands folded or in specific *mudras* — and find it relaxing to the body. With the body's relaxation the mind may seem less turbulent. Engaged in properly, continuing experimentation gradually leads to new levels of quiet, and an unanticipated new quality of thought. Outwardly one is sitting and breathing in the same way as before, but it is not the same.

As the various ways we practice become more and more refined, our access to deepening levels of inner experience changes. Genuine spiritual guides and teachers attempt to point us in this direction. As novices, or people whose inner eye is freshly opening we have no idea where this path may lead, but the guides and teachers do. As much as we try to get them to explain, or communicate to us in the ways we prefer, always they try to move us to a level of actual experience, beyond the ideas, words, and superficial experiences we crave.

Although clairvoyance should *not* be seen as an indication of spiritual growth, in the right hands it can be useful, like a drill or a screwdriver for a carpenter. C. W. Leadbeater was not born clairvoyant. He became interested in the theosophical movement because of spiritualism, which in his time was a movement of great popular interest. His deep involvement in the TS began in England and continued when he came to Adyar with H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) to work in the fledgling society. While living at Adyar, in the River Bungalow adjacent to the TS headquarters building, over a 42-day period he made a profound breakthrough that led to the clairvoyance that characterized the rest of his life. The way he tells it, his master assisted him during this period to tip the scale and move into a different level of vision.

Annie Besant is famous for many things, her social activism, oratory, and writing, her deep knowledge of spiritual matters, but also for her clairvoyance. Her contributions to *Thought Forms* and *Occult Chemistry* are still influencing artists and thought leaders today. But at the time of her meeting HPB this level of vision was completely inactive in her. In a letter HPB wrote to W. Q. Judge she says about Annie Besant that she is "not psychic nor spiritual in the least — all intellect . . .". But she goes on to say: ". . . and yet she hears the Master's voice when alone, sees his Light, and recognizes his

Voice". Her deep devotion and courage, combined with her refined intellect paved the way for her rapid unfoldment.

The example of these two prominent figures in TS history is not merely related to clairvoyance. It points out how certain developed aspects of consciousness when combined with other processes and qualities can lead to new horizons of vision and experience. Although it may seem strange, let us take the example of rice. Rice is the staple food for more than half the world's population. But when it is harvested rice is inedible. The human digestive system cannot break it down to provide usable nutrition. In fact, eating it will make you sick. Combine the rice with water, with heat, and with the proper amount of time, and it becomes the sustaining food for the world's population. A transformation takes place, but it requires a specific process. Whether it is rice or human consciousness the process begins with the readiness of the substance to be transformed. If it is not yet ripe, nothing of value emerges.

In many of the world's spiritual traditions these processes are highly codified and ritualized. In Tibetan Buddhism all of the four major schools incorporate Tantra, Vajrayana, as a core approach to hastening the enlightenment process. An essential framework for the teachings is Lamrim, or Stages of the Path, which is intended to address practitioners at their specific stage of development. It begins with a focus on purification. The view is more comprehensive than mere physical or bodily purity, but is directed to the trinity of "body, speech, and mind". The four Tantras are hierarchical, beginning with Purification or Action (*kriya*), and progressing through Method or Performance (*charya*), to Union (*yoga*), and finally to the Highest Yoga Tantra (*anuttarayoga*). The stages move from external to ever increasing internal practice and awareness.

Tibetan Buddhist cosmology encompasses a number of "Buddha Families", groupings of interrelated enlightened beings. Unlike the other tantras in which the practitioner is introduced to the deity and its related practices, in the practice of the Highest Tantra the practitioner actually "arises" *as* the enlightened being. Of course, in its initial stages it is an act of imagination, in which one envisions oneself as possessing all of the enlightened being's power, compassionate energies, limitless capacity to heal and to bless. Much like HPB's "Diagram of Meditation" where "the normal state of our consciousness must be molded by" meditative attention to lofty conditions in consciousness — the "Acquisitions" — that lead to the stable awareness that "I am all space and time", this Highest Tantra arrives at the same mountain peak of awareness along a different path.

One of the essential understandings of many spiritual traditions is based on the simple observation that all beings want happiness. Everyone wants it and behaves in those ways that are calculated to achieve it. Even though, unknowingly, our attempts at happiness often result in an increase in misery and distress, it is

not because we are not trying. The challenge is that happiness is not sustainable — for a reason. It is a condition that results from something else. One way of putting it is that, happiness is a symptom of the cessation of desire. Because our desires are unceasing and changeable, happiness is momentary. We have a desire for ice cream, a new car, a date with someone we like, and so on; we get it; with the cessation of the pressure of that desire an underlying happiness is revealed. We are no longer pushed to run after the next thing. It is like waves on a wind-blown lake becoming still — until the next wind blows. These moments of Desirelessness point toward a deeper, self-initiated experience, beyond will power, control, and suppression.

There is something which exceeds happiness — something which many equate with it, but which is qualitatively different — Joy. Although happiness sometimes accompanies joy, sometimes it doesn't. Recently I attended the memorial service of a friend who passed away unexpectedly. She was one of those "bright light" kind of people, whose activity, commitment, humor, love of beauty, and way of living brought a sense of lightness when you were around her. During the service commemorating her life, I was overcome by an overwhelming sense of joy for the connection with the life she had lived and the energy she brought into the world. But there was no happiness. In fact, there was an intense sadness for the connection that was now severed. Certainly, the Ageless Wisdom assures that no bond is lost, and that it all remains at deeper levels, but at the personal level there is a sense of finality. We won't be sitting down for dinner, laughing, talking. So, joy, but no happiness. The two share similarities, but are not the same.

The example often given about the nature of joy is of a man lost in the desert, dying of thirst. In the distance he sees an oasis with trees and pure flowing water. It is a mirage, but in spite of the vision's unreality, in spite of the fact that he has yet to drink even one drop of water, the state of being he experiences is joy. Joy is not extreme happiness and is unaffected by the presence or absence of desire. It is a state of being that is independent of external factors, continuously available to those who can "see" it. It is a gateway to the soul's vision and qualities. To the unobstructed view of the soul, joy pervades everything.

Any experience of joy is soul-evoking. In Hindu spirituality the highest joy, Ananda, is liberating. It removes one from the constant preoccupation with self and bondage to its demands for satisfaction. It merges one with the universal consciousness — Sat-Chit-Ananda, Reality-Consciousness-Joy. Even less dramatic encounters with joy change things. The delight that opens us to the experience of wholeness, of unconfined, expansive consciousness alters the way we see the world. The experience of joy is spiritual in the sense that it links us with a "greater whole" and opens us to the soul's participation in our lives. Because it is rooted in wholeness it has a globalizing effect

on our way of seeing. It moves one from the personal approach of "May I attain enlightenment" to the universal, "May I attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings".

J. Krishnamurti refused to speak in hierarchical terms. He spoke from the mountaintop of unitive vision and would not dilute it with a graded approach. For him there was a "pathless" Truth, and then there was our "beastly little mind" that barred access to that Truth. In his many conversations with scientists and representatives of spiritual/religious traditions he pointed out the dangers of becoming trapped in tradition; the limitations of adherence to ritual, technique, method, "isms", and "how to . . ." approaches to truth. Practice, as normally conceived, was not something he advocated, not because it was ineffective, but because of its capacity to distract from what he saw as the real need of clearly seeing the workings of the conditioned mind. Although his life of teaching affected many people around the world, toward the end he stated that no one fully got what he was trying to share.

Spiritual practice, like any activity operating through a conditioned mind, is often derailed by a too-strict adherence to ancient traditions that, with the passage of time, have incrementally added ceremonial, ritual, and beliefs that mask its essentials. Though intended to uncover ever deepening levels of consciousness and inner experience, one's practice is subject to many factors. The paradox is that practice does not guarantee the depths of spiritual experience, it guarantees the possibility. Much like a seed or an egg, without the complete combination of a number of factors, every seed does not come to life and bear fruit, every little bird does not emerge from the shell. With an egg, if the humidity is too low or too high in the final days before hatching, if the temperature is too low or high, if ventilation is inadequate, if the chick inside the egg is not properly positioned, if it becomes exhausted or too weak to peck its way through the shell, it perishes. Some have said that the rare experience of enlightenment is an accident, but practice makes us more accident prone.

Enlightenment could be described as the pinnacle of human experience, and even though many point themselves in the direction, few, in any generation, achieve it. Short of the loftiest experience of enlightenment, practice brings about unfoldment of the poise, equanimity, self-discipline, perseverance, quiet, and a host of other qualities that move us ever closer to deep experience. One of the practices associated with joy derives from the Sanskrit or Pali word for joy as a "sublime, immeasurable state" — Muditā — which means "Sympathetic or Vicarious Joy". As a practice it involves attuning to joy through recognizing it in others and celebrating it. We acknowledge the good, the successes, the happiness, the kindness, generosity, illumination of friends, family, and others, and rejoice in it. It is a self-training in a refined sensitivity that could be described as a deepening approach to

gratitude, involving not only recognition and appreciation, but the stimulation in ourselves of a corresponding joy. It also empowers us to form a potent, radiant wish that all people, all beings, may have that same joy, and sets a virtuous cycle in motion.

We are familiar with the process. Although the practice of Sympathetic Joy is opposite in nature and outcome, the method is the same as that employed in gossip. Gossip involves a self-training in seeing and identifying the shortcomings of others. In this opposite practice the failings and inadequacies of those around us are noted, examined, magnified, and celebrated with others in ritualized sessions of gossip that invite others to add more ingredients to the stew cooking in this cauldron of mental misuse. With practice one's sensitivity to the inadequacies and failings of others becomes so acute and imbedded that it is almost instinctual, which is to say that it operates beneath the level of awareness and conscious control. What we give our attention to, we become. And what is it that gossip contributes to the world? Certainly it spawns distrust; also isolation and separation; a low and extremely temporary form of happiness requiring a constant refueling with new, or newly exaggerated inputs.

It is exactly the same process and equally successful when focused on joy. The critical difference, of course, is the shaping effect on ourselves and our environment. Joy is attractive, magnetic, really. It draws those with a joyful nature to us, and moves us into the orbit of those whose depth of joy exceeds our own. It is transformative in the sense that those who live in its atmosphere are changed in deep and lasting ways. It is clarifying and wholistic; empowering; it opens us to hear, see, and participate in the hidden patterns of life, to effortlessly join in its flow, its dance.

The great scientist, scholar, and priest, Teilhard de Chardin, made the statement: "Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God." I think he was right. ✧

The untouched soul,
Greater than all the worlds (because the worlds
By it subsist); smaller than subtleties
Of things minutest; last of ultimets;
Sits in the hollow heart of all that lives!
Whoso hath laid aside desire and fear,
His senses mastered, and his spirit still,
Sees in the quiet light of verity
Eternal, safe, majestical — HIS SOUL!

THE SECRET OF DEATH
(fr. *The Katha Upanishad*)

Joy: Letting Who We Are Manifest

LINDA OLIVEIRA

HUMANS have so much in common, despite our differences. We are experiencing collectively significant historical moments and substantial changes at the material level in the world of the current century, for better or worse. On the one hand, we find unpredictability, ethical poverty, conflict, mistrust and division. On the other hand, the heroic efforts of numerous people to help mitigate problems in so many areas are laudable, serving also as a reminder of humanity's inner Divinity.

At the individual level, some people cope with life challenges better than others. Yet one of the most extraordinary things about humankind is that, despite some marked external differences, we are all in fact remarkably similar, not just biologically, but in a more profound sense. We are each pulled in different degrees by the two poles of Spirit and Matter, which manifest in numerous expressions of goodness, on the one hand, but also in numerous expressions of unwholesomeness and immorality on the other.

Amid material pressures, as well as the vicissitudes of daily living, many people are simply not happy. We can consider happiness as having two main modes of expression:

1. Temporary happiness, often associated with gratification of desire
2. Deep and abiding joy (which some also refer to as happiness)

Unlike the material, which is passing, joy is an infusion from the deeper dimensions of consciousness. It is there, but much of the time it may not be apparent.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu asserted that joy is much bigger than happiness. While happiness is often seen as being dependent on external circumstances, joy is not.[1] This is an important distinction. We speak of "fleeting happiness" — a state of gladness or delight — which can be with us for some time, but which also inevitably disappears when the immediate impetus for that happiness has passed. This is likely to be quite familiar. Joy, on the other hand, is of a different order. Consider also that there is a gradual transition from happiness to joy.

Happiness and Desires

Happiness possesses a temporary nature and is therefore a signature of the personal self, our lower and more earthbound principles. An account was given

Mrs Linda Oliveira is President, Krotona Institute of Theosophy. She was Vice-President of the Theosophical Society (TS) Adyar, National President of the TS in Australia, and for many years was editor of their magazine, *Theosophy in Australia*.

of a woman who had an unexpected windfall. While appreciating travel and doing the things she had always desired to do, after all this excitement, life returned to normal. Her telling comment was that overall, she did not think she was much happier than before.[2]

One psychiatrist, Howard C. Cutler, MD, has mentioned that happiness is determined more by one's state of mind than by external events. This resonates with theosophical teachings which point to the need for the mind to transform away from the mundane, towards the Divine. For example, if we cannot get what we want, then it is very common to feel unhappy to a greater or lesser degree. On the other hand, supposing we obtain what we want, then what occurs? We are happy for a while. However, this state has a "use by" date. After a time, it becomes stale. This can be thought of as the "happiness dilemma". Presented with options in many situations, we may tend to opt repeatedly for unsatisfactory choices which have a transitory effect. The fact is that happiness may visit us for a short while, but we get used to whatever has made us happy — that is, we become adapted and familiarised to it — and then it is gone, because the experience does not remain fresh. This reflects the ordinary, everyday functioning of the mind.

Therefore, it stands to reason that our self-absorbed wishes and goals effectively become a barrier to deeper joy which arises — even briefly — during moments when the personal self is forgotten.

Temporary happiness is intimately related to the desire nature. Self-centred desires tend to become central to everyday life and the physical world. So, it is necessary to consider them. Dr Hugh Shearman described all desires as "expressions of an urge to achieve a greater intensity of experience". In other words, we desire that which we feel will enable us in some way to feel more intensely alive. He also commented: "Desires divide everything in the universe into two great classes, the desirable and the undesirable."[3] Where there is division there cannot be lasting joy, for there is no unified harmony. Our feelings of contentment tend to be influenced by our inclination to compare our current situation with the past, or to weigh ourselves up against others. These types of comparisons may be very desire-laden, producing envy and unhappiness.

However, the Wisdom teachings indicate that gradually our objects of desire change, and we begin to enter the field of ennobled desires — those which are more unselfish and idealistic. Initially there is the impulse to help our family or those who are closest to us. The process of elevation of desire expands further, gradually, in various ways. It is destined to become more universalised, culminating in that deep-rooted longing for the uplift of humanity and all of life which is identified with spiritually exceptional individuals.

Simplification

It is common to experience a growing unsatisfactoriness (which the Buddhists call *dukkha*) as we realise the eventual

futility of an endless effort to possess and to achieve. Therefore, a natural progression is to simplify one's life, and not just materially. Dr Shearman also pointed to the significance of emotional and intellectual simplification.[4]

This period of simplification materially, emotionally, and intellectually is a time of great soul-searching, deep questioning, the concern to find out what is truly worthwhile in life. We may be familiar with physical simplification, but the inevitability of simplifying ourselves intellectually can be noted here. It requires discipline, so that the mind is not crowded with too much extraneous information — a definite challenge in today's complicated world. What begins to emerge is a new intensity of life which does not arise through the pursuit or satisfaction of any personal desire. One finds a more focussed existence with a wonderful peace, certainty, refreshment, and with more moments of unbidden joy.

Dr Shearman also wrote of fulfilment, in contrast to desire. "The first glimpse of an entirely new kind of fulfilment", he asserted, "is only a beginning". There is a long journey before an individual is wholly given over to this new fulfilment. Sometimes the wonder involved in this is likened to becoming as a little child. He commented:

> It is as if the innocence of our childhood is a flame of fire upon which great quantities of fuel have to be heaped, so that for a while it would seem that the fire has become lost and there is nothing but smoke. But a time comes when more and more of the fuel is consumed, and a flame emerges again, a beautiful flame of an entirely new kind, with a blend of purity and richness which it could never have had if that fuel had not been heaped upon it and slowly consumed.[5]

We can infer that his contrast between desire and fulfilment is another way of considering the distinction between transient happiness on the one hand, and deep joy on the other.

The Possibility of Joy

And here is a subtler consideration. If we decide that joy is a goal for us, then it becomes one of many objectives created by the mind. But the problem with this is that the mind fluctuates most of the time. Therefore, whatever is held onto in that state can change as soon as the mind changes. We reach a state that we regard as joy, but then the mind wants something else. So, what we perceived was in fact only temporary happiness. We may want many things for ourselves. The trouble is that selfishness, in all its forms, tends to blunt that sensitivity which is essential for experiencing even momentary joy.

So, rather than setting joy as a goal, it is beneficial instead to cultivate good habits. This is because the emergence of joyfulness can be understood as a "by-product" of right living and a deeper perspective on life. If we take our mind off this as the aim and focus on the process of living well, then we are simply cultivating the "soil", so to speak, out of which joy may emerge — and grow. Certain habits which can open out this

possibility include discernment between the permanent and the impermanent, between what is important and what is not, and actively fostering a way of being which reflects a real interest in, and understanding of, the life around us. Then joy may come upon us unexpectedly. But for those who are more closed, less sensitive, and not truly interested in the life around them, these moments are likely to be more elusive.

We know that the mind can become hardened to the world. It is writ large on so many peoples' faces. Joy is experienced by one in whom hardness is not present, for the experience requires a receptive and delicate state of being at a particular moment. It is clear, therefore, that its genesis is deeper than the ordinary mind.

J. Krishnamurti on Joy

J. Krishnamurti, remarked:

> We have very little joy in seeing the sunset, or the full moon, or a beautiful person, or a lovely tree, or a bird in flight, or a dance. . . . We look at it, we are superficially amused or excited by it, we have a sensation that we call joy. But enjoyment is something far deeper. . . .
>
> [It] requires an extraordinary refinement of the mind, but not the refinement of the self that gathers more and more to itself. Such a self . . . can never understand this state of joy in which the enjoyer is not. One has to understand this extraordinary thing: otherwise, life becomes very small, petty, superficial — being born, learning a few things, suffering, bearing children, having responsibilities, earning money, having a little intellectual amusement and then to die.[6]

So, he asserted that joy is not just sensation, but requires a highly refined mind — and this is not the mind that wants to accumulate more and more to itself. In order to understand the state of real joy in which the enjoyer is not, the sense of self needs to disappear. So it becomes clear why it is not such a common experience for humanity.

In the rush of life, with its emphasis on things such as competition, power-seeking and novelty, we are likely to forget our real nature. On the other hand, contentment — which does not mean dullness — creates openings for the inner nature to express itself.

Underscoring the virtue of not gathering accumulations to oneself, and being satisfied with things as they are, is a comment by Mrs Annie Besant. Her book, *The Doctrine of the Heart*, is a wonderful companion for the dedicated spiritual aspirant. It includes the following words:

> Spiritual life and love are not exhausted by being spent. Expenditure only adds to the store and makes it richer and intenser. Try and be as happy and contented as you can, because in joy is the real spiritual life, and sorrow is but the result of our ignorance and absence of clear vision.[7]

Laying the Groundwork

It is one thing to acknowledge the virtue of refining the mind, clearing it. It is almost impossible to do this directly and swiftly. Those who have achieved a quickening of consciousness quite rapidly

in one life have had, no doubt, lifetimes of preparation in the past. For the vast majority, though, continued patient preparation is required. The Lord Buddha was described by the Mahatmas as a "sixth rounder" — an extremely rare soul who sacrificed Nirvanic bliss and rose to great heights ahead of the bulk of humanity in order to help on the life wave. He was exceptional, though.

Evelyn Underhill identified five basic stages in spiritual development: Awakening, Purification, Illumination, the Dark Night of the Soul, and Union with God.[8]

How does one clear out those channels within which have essentially become impervious to this possibility of union with Divinity? In a very practical vein Professor Robert Ellwood, who was a long-time TS member and a distinguished scholar, wrote:

> The direction is clear: when you set foot on the spiritual path to deep joy, you must give up all that is untrue to yourself and all that harms others, all that caters to the self-centred appetites and passions, and all forms of excess, while taking on a simple lifestyle, an even-tempered frame of mind, and emphasising higher things.[9]

For example, carrying out practices such as those mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali can lay the groundwork for the experience of deep joy. Meditational practices are part of this system. Meditation can be joyous; so, too, can prayer. Meditation brings the mind to a still point. Robert Ellwood described it as "the royal road to spiritually-based deep joy". Most of our mental activity is essentially reactive. The meditative process helps to stop the activity of the so-called "monkey mind" by bringing the attention to rest on some object. Even-tually there will be a cessation of active thought. He observed that to meditate effectively, and to approach deep joy, you have to gear the mind down to a much lower ratio than that to which it is ordinarily accustomed. Or perhaps we could put it in this way: that the mental processes need to slow down to a longer wavelength. For those with a devotional temperament, worship may deepen from praying for ourselves and others, to that of deeper adoration of the Divine, which evokes a blissful state.

In a profounder sense, we *are* in union with life. In his words:

> All the divinity, all the love, all the deep joy in the universe are already in us and all around us. All we need to do is awaken to them, prepare for them, clean out the channels through which they can flow into consciousness.[10]

A Conducive Life

For joy to manifest, it is necessary to live a lifestyle which is congruent with our spiritual aspirations. Therefore, ethical consistency is to be aimed at between all our interactions, in our treatment of other kingdoms of Nature, across the whole range of activities — from the more mundane to the more spiritual. Home surroundings can be made harmonious and calming. A balanced life without excesses will help considerably, too.

When we nurture consistently our relationship with all of life, when we immerse ourselves in the indwelling life which nourishes the numerous forms of life around us, then a genuine experience of joy may occur, unbidden. It may take place during meditation, or even amid daily life itself, when we approach our many experiences and interactions from depth.

Joy can arise on a perfectly still morning; from the sound of ocean waves rhythmically breaking; from a deliberate, gentle rhythm during the day instead of a frantic pace; from an original thought; the apprehension of beauty in its numerous forms, particularly in Nature, art and music; from the simple act of giving selflessly out of which a feeling of real joy may unexpectedly emerge, seemingly out of nowhere. Or it may arise on reading a few lines of profound wisdom in a book, rather than a whole set of ideas which stimulate the mind, but not the heart as well. Then again, joy can arise through finding the quietest parts of ourselves and expanding them into waking consciousness.

The microbiologist, Darryl Reanney, wrote: "Happiness is too weak and anaemic a word to capture the *rapture* that pure consciousness knows and is. To see into the nature of this bliss, at our present level of evolution and in the midst of our present human limitation, is virtually impossible."[11] While seeing into that profound level of bliss may not be possible, the experience of joy in deepening degrees can be within our reach. Reanney continued: "The essence of the human quest is to break free of time, to reconnect to the eternal in all of us, in that space where the past and the future interleave, the reality laboratory of our own minds."[12] He firmly believed that what is missing in our lives is a sense of the Sacred.

According to Vedanta, we are fundamentally Brahman — *sat* (existence, truth or being), *chit* (consciousness) and *Ānanda* (bliss). Therefore bliss, the deepest form of joy, is an aspect of our underlying nature.

Some Final Thoughts — Practical Considerations

Drawing together the above considerations in a practical vein, various significant elements can help lay the foundation from which the possibility of joy may arise unexpectedly — and from which it may gradually flourish in deepening degrees:

- taking a real interest in the life around us, which is conducive to greater selflessness
- nurturing our relationship with other people, and with all of life
- focussing on living well, instead of setting joy as a goal
- becoming more contented, rather than being dominated by desires
- resetting priorities in relation to our personal lifestyle
- simplification materially, emotionally, and intellectually
- immersing ourselves in the natural world whenever possible
- adopting a regular spiritual practice which helps to open the inner channels

for the Divine nature to make itself felt

• the practice of meditation or prayer, which connect us more deeply with life and make the mind more refined.

Do we want to settle for moments of fleeting happiness, or is there a sufficiently strong longing for something deeper and more enduring? The answer to this question could determine the course of a lifetime. ✧

Endnotes

1. This comment appeared in *The Book of Joy*, H. H. The Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams, Hutchinson, London, 2016, p. 3.

2. This story was recounted in *The Art of Happiness*, H. H. The Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, Riverhead Books, 1998, Chapter 2.

3. *Desire and Fulfilment*, Dr Hugh Shearman, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 1956, pp. 16-17.

4. Shearman, Op. cit., p. 18.

5. Ibid., p. 81.

6. This is part of the entry for 2 July in *The Book of Life, Daily Meditations with Krishnamurti*, J. Krishnamurti, HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

7. *The Doctrine of the Heart*, Annie Besant, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, p. 27.

8. *Finding Deep Joy*, Robert Ellwood, Quest, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, 2001, p. 69.

9. Ibid., p. 76.

10. Ibid., p. 86.

11. *The Death of Forever*, Darryl Reanney, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, p. 248.

12. Ibid., p. 249.

You cannot truly be students of the Divine Wisdom,
save as you are active in the service of the Divine Life.
Where trouble is, where suffering is, where ignorance is,
where quarrel is, where injustice is, where tyranny is,
where oppression is, where cruelty is —
***there* must we find the earnest members of Our Society.**

Daily Meditations, —
Extracts from Letters of the Masters of the Wisdom
Compiled by Katherine A. Beechey

Being, Consciousness, and the Future in an AI-Driven World

SANGEETHA MENON

I WILL share a few ideas that have captivated me about being, consciousness, and the future in an AI-driven world. I wouldn't consider these as abstract philosophical musings detached from life, but inquiries into how our understanding of ourselves and our technologies is reshaping what it means to be human.

Let me begin with the question of being. In many cultural, technological, and economic spheres today, being is no longer approached as a foundational condition of existence. Rather, it is tacitly reinterpreted in functional terms. To *be* increasingly is to *perform*; to *exist* is to *produce outcomes*; to *matter* is to be *efficient*, *measurable*, and *optimisable*. This transformation rarely presents itself as an explicit philosophical claim. Instead, it operates silently, shaping institutional practices, evaluative frameworks, and even personal self-understanding.

The consequences of this shift are visible at every stage of life. Children are assessed at ever earlier ages not just to facilitate learning but to establish trajectories of performance and comparison. Adults are evaluated primarily through productivity and measurable outputs. Institutions are judged by rankings, metrics, and demonstrable impact. The problem is not assessment or accountability as such, but the ontological assumption that underwrites them: being itself is made conditional upon function. Value becomes inseparable from performance, and existence appears to require continual justification through output.

Importantly, this worldview did not originate with artificial intelligence; rather, AI emerges within an already established functionalist ontology. It inherits this ontology, reflects it with remarkable clarity, and amplifies it with unprecedented efficiency. AI systems are designed to optimise functions, maximise accuracy, increase speed, and enhance predictability. They do not interrogate the values embedded within these objectives; they simply operationalise them. In doing so, AI reveals a conception of intelligence detached from interiority, lived presence, or subjective experience: intelligence becomes a transferable cap-

Dr Sangeetha Menon, Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. Theosophy-Science Lecture delivered at the TS International Convention, Adyar, 2 January 2026.

acity, no longer necessarily anchored in a being.

Intelligence and Consciousness: A Critical Distinction

When intelligence is defined almost exclusively in terms of computational efficiency, accuracy, and problem-solving, it becomes possible to imagine intelligence without a subject. Yet philosophical and spiritual traditions, including those that have inspired theosophical and Indian metaphysical thought, make a clear distinction between intelligence and consciousness. Artificial intelligence processes information, recognises patterns, generates responses, and predicts future states based on past data. These capacities remain firmly situated within a third-person explanatory domain.

Consciousness does not belong to this domain. Consciousness is not information processing, nor is it computation, however sophisticated. Consciousness is what illumines experience. It is the difference between representing pain and feeling pain, between analysing grief and living loss, between generating language and understanding meaning as meaningful. These differences cannot be bridged by increasing computational power or expanding datasets; they stem from a categorical distinction between third-person description and first-person presence.

Popular narratives about machine consciousness and artificial minds often rest on an unexamined assumption that intelligence and consciousness are equivalent. This assumption does not withstand scrutiny. AI can simulate cognitive processes with increasing sophistication, but consciousness unfolds in the first person. AI excels at representation; consciousness discloses. When these domains are conflated, consciousness is reduced to a function, experience is converted into data, and presence is mistaken for simulation. The result is not merely a misunderstanding of machines but a diminished understanding of ourselves.

The Depth of Emotions: Feeling as Knowing

As soon as we turn to the question of feelings and emotions, we enter one of the most intimate and philosophically challenging domains of consciousness. Emotions are not distant phenomena we observe from the outside; they are lived from within. They colour experience, orient attention, and shape the way the world appears to us. We do not merely *have* emotions, rather, we are emotionally situated beings.

From a biological perspective, emotions are often explained through neural circuits, hormonal responses, and evolutionary functions. Such explanations are valuable, yet they do not exhaust what emotions are. An emotion is not merely physiological arousal; it is an experience with meaning. Fear is fear *of something.* Joy is joy *in something.* Grief is grief *for someone or something lost.* Emotions are intentional; they are always about the world as it matters to us.

This intentionality raises a philosophical question: How does meaning enter emotion? The same physiological arousal can be interpreted differently

depending on context, memory, and self-understanding. Emotions are shaped by experience and the self's orientation toward the world. Feeling is not a pre-cognitive residue; it is a mode of knowing. Emotions disclose the world in particular ways. Anxiety reveals vulnerability, love reveals value, compassion reveals another's suffering as significant. Without emotions, the world would not just be less colourful, but it would be less meaningful.

Emotions, therefore, cannot be treated as secondary or disruptive elements of rational life. Even the most abstract reasoning is guided by affective investments: curiosity, concern, interest, commitment. What we call pure reason is never emotionally neutral; it is always motivated by felt concerns. At the same time, emotions are not always transparent. They can be confusing, overwhelming, or contradictory. We may feel without fully understanding our feelings. This raises another question: Who is the subject of emotion?

When an emotion arises, there is a sense of "mineness": this anger is my anger; this sorrow is my sorrow. Yet emotions often feel as though they come upon us rather than being chosen. They arise before reflection and exceed deliberate control. Emotions are deeply personal, yet not fully voluntary. They reveal the layered nature of the self: there is the reflective self that can examine emotions, and there is the pre-reflective self that lives them.

Intense emotional states, such as grief, make this layered selfhood particularly visible. Grief reorganises time, memory, and identity; the world appears altered; familiar meanings collapse. Yet even in grief there is a witnessing awareness that endures. Emotions arise and pass, but the capacity to feel remains. This capacity is not itself an emotion, but, is the ground in which emotions occur. Emotions are movements within consciousness, not disturbances of it. Acknowledging and understanding emotions can be transformative; suppressing them often becomes destructive. Reflective engagement situates feeling within a wider horizon of understanding, allowing us to relate to emotion without being overwhelmed.

Brain and Self: A Dynamic Relationship

To understand how emotions and consciousness relate to the brain, we must reframe the relationship between brain and self. The brain is not an isolated biological organ functioning independently of experience. It is shaped continuously by learning, memory, emotion, intention, and personal history. In this sense, it is a *self-challenged* brain, and its neural pathways are modified by what the individual lives through, reflects upon, and values.

Conversely, the self is not an abstract entity floating free of embodiment. It is expressed through neural structures, bodily sensations, emotional responses, and behavioural patterns. It is a *brain-challenged* self, constrained and enabled by biological conditions while not reducible to them. This mutual challenge becomes

especially evident in the context of neuroflexibility (or neuroplasticity). The brain is not rigid or fixed; it reorganises itself throughout the lifespan. Learning, trauma, effort, reflection, and emotional engagement leave their mark on neural architecture. The discovery of neuroflexibility forces a re-evaluation of classical causal models: if neural structures change in response to experience, then experience cannot be merely epiphenomenal. There is a reciprocal influence between brain and experience.

This raises a philosophical question: How does the self make sense of neural change and create corresponding changes in identity, meaning, and orientation toward life? Neural change alone does not explain why certain experiences are interpreted as meaningful, transformative, or healing. Here, agency becomes crucial. Agency is often described narrowly as intention followed by action, but such descriptions capture only a fragment of human agency. Agency involves authorship, responsibility, imagination, and the capacity to engage as a whole person.

Objectivist accounts of agency face an inherent limitation. At any given moment, it is impossible to observe the observation itself. There is always a subjective remainder that resists complete objectification. Agency cannot be fully localised in discrete neural events. Instead, it is better understood as a field through which experiences pass. It integrates neural processes, bodily engagement, emotional resonance, and reflective awareness. This field-like nature of agency allows for adaptability, creativity, and moral responsibility.

The not-so-rigid brain thus reveals a philosophical irony. Neuroscience often seeks stable correlates, but lived experience reveals fluidity, transformation, and narrative continuity. The brain adapts in response to meanings that cannot themselves be reduced to biological processes alone. The self is neither a fixed essence nor a fleeting illusion; it is dynamic, layered, and capable of transformation. Its continuity is not guaranteed by neural stability alone but by narrative coherence and reflective engagement.

Core Self, Meaning, and Well-Being

Beyond the cognitive and social layers of selfhood lies what we can call the core self. This is not a metaphysical abstraction but an experiential depth that becomes especially evident during moments of crisis, illness, healing, or transformation, as exemplified by several philosophical traditions such as Vedanta. Distinguishing between pleasure and well-being is crucial here. Pleasure depends on external objects, situations, and sensory gratification, while well-being arises from meaning and purpose. Meaning is not generated by neural efficiency or functional success alone; it is accessed through reflective engagement with deeper layers of selfhood.

Values such as compassion, responsibility, truthfulness, and a commitment to the common good point toward dimensions of consciousness that resist reduction. These values are not easily traceable to neural correlates without losing

their normative and experiential significance. The core self plays a vital role in meaning-making. Through this deeper layer, individuals cope with psychosomatic challenges, reinterpret suffering, and orient themselves toward healing and transformation. Reflection, meditation, and inward attentiveness are practices that cultivate this depth. They reveal that well-being is less about hedonic pleasure and more about eudaimonic flourishing, and living in accord with virtue, authenticity, and excellence.

Artificial systems may replicate certain cognitive functions, but they do not possess a core self. They do not experience suffering, hope, or moral conflict; they do not engage in meaning-making. The challenge is not whether machines can become conscious but whether humans will increasingly understand themselves in mechanistic terms. When human agency and meaning are reduced to computational metaphors, ethical responsibility and wellbeing are impoverished. The brain remains indispensable, but it is not exhaustive; the self is dynamic, but not illusory; consciousness is not produced, but it is the enabling condition of experience.

Consciousness and Human Flourishing: Toward a Relational Understanding

Reductionist accounts that attempt to explain consciousness entirely in terms of neural activity face serious conceptual challenges. Mapping neural correlates may be necessary to understand brain functioning, but it is not sufficient to explain consciousness. To reduce the knower to the known erases the standpoint from which knowing arises. Neuroscience can describe how sensory inputs are processed and decisions initiated, but it cannot explain what is the subjective experience that emerges from these processes. The agent who experiences remains elusive, not because it does not exist, but because it does not belong to the same ontological category as neural events.

Consciousness cannot be treated as a mere output of neural computation. It is the ground through which experience, agency, and value become possible. This insight has important implications for how we think about the future, particularly in technologically mediated contexts. When intelligence is equated solely with performance, efficiency, or problem-solving capacity, the deeper dimensions of consciousness are sidelined.

An inquiry into consciousness is unavoidably reflexive. The one who asks is also what is being questioned. Consciousness cannot be fully captured as an object because it is the condition that makes objectivity possible. This does not undermine scientific inquiry; it simply reminds us that consciousness requires a different kind of attentiveness, one that includes reflection alongside explanation. Experience is always lived, accompanied by a persistent sense of "I am". This sense is prereflective and continuous, yet layered and dynamic. Without some continuity of self, experiences would not cohere; meaning would dissolve; responsibility, agency, and care would lose their grounding.

Moments of vulnerability often reveal this most clearly. Illness, loss, uncertainty, and crisis strip away roles and performances through which identity is ordinarily sustained. What remains is not emptiness but a deeper experiential ground, which is the core from which resilience, healing, and transformation become possible. Being, in this sense, is experiential rather than abstract. It is disclosed through attentiveness, reflection, and the capacity to remain present even when familiar structures fall away. Such moments reveal the importance of integrating biological insight with philosophical depth and experiential awareness. Without attention to being, knowledge risks becoming detached from life; with such attention, science, philosophy, and technology can remain oriented toward human flourishing rather than mere control.

Conclusion

Let me emphasise that the challenges posed by artificial intelligence today make clear a confusion that already pervades contemporary self-understanding: being has been narrowed to function, and intelligence has been equated with consciousness. AI did not create these confusions; it simply mirrors and amplifies them. A genuine understanding of consciousness must distinguish between representation and revelation, between third-person modelling and first-person presence. Consciousness cannot be reduced to neural processes, for it is the condition through which experience, meaning, and agency arise.

Emotions, often marginalized as disturbances, are in fact integral movements within consciousness that reveal what matters. The brain and self exist in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship, evident in neuroflexibility and narrative transformation. Beyond our cognitive and social identities lies a core self, accessible through reflection and oriented toward meaning and eudaimonic well-being. To engage with technology wisely, we must resist the reduction of the human to function and remain attentive to the depth of being.

As we navigate an AI-driven world, the key is not to make machines more human-like but to become more attuned to our fundamental nature. Hope, love, compassion, and an inclusive vision of the future are not computational outputs but expressions of our core being. Our task is to integrate scientific insight with philosophical reflection, keeping the richness of consciousness at the centre of our collective journey. By doing so, we can ensure that technological progress serves human flourishing rather than displacing it, and that our exploration of the mind remains anchored in the enduring mystery of being. ✧

The greatest achievement of humanity is not its works of art, science, or technology, but the recognition of its own dysfunction.

Eckhart Tolle

Adyar Chronicles: The Living Heart of the Theosophical Society — II

GEETHA JAIKUMAR

New Library Annexe

Shortly after this, Col. Olcott added a new wing to the Headquarters Building in 1885, to house his beloved Library that he movingly referred to as "the child of my brain; the hope of my heart". This new wing housing the Library was inaugurated on 1 January 1886, marked by religious invocations from various faiths — Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam — each seeking blessings on the new institution, the like of which had never been seen in India before. Shortly thereafter, Col. Olcott, who understood the urgency of procuring and preserving forgotten books and palm-leaf manuscripts, sent pundits from house to house and village to village in search of these literary treasures. He realized that hidden within these palm leaves was the distilled wisdom of ancient Indian civilisation.

The new Library Annexe initially had a plain outer wall. But later, the addition of the row of elephant heads came from an inspired collaboration with the students of the Madras Art School, who provided the design while the execution was carried out under Col. Olcott's watchful eye.

Even the colour of the Headquarters tells a story of Olcott's affectionate care. Leadbeater records how, during his travels, the Colonel discovered a warm terracotta shade that harmonised perfectly with the deep greens of tropical foliage. He brought a tile back to Adyar and reproduced that exact hue for his beloved Headquarters.

Years later, Marie Russak Hotchener, who was Olcott's secretary, and later Dr Besant's secretary, wishing to delight Dr Besant on her return from a tour, had the building repainted in bright blue, white, and yellow. The effect was bold and cheerful — if a little flamboyant. Yet the Headquarters itself appeared to have a will of its own. The new colours soon began to flake away, and Olcott's terracotta stubbornly re-emerged beneath, refusing to be forgotten. After several valiant attempts to subdue it, the Society gracefully surrendered. The old colour was restored, as if the building itself had gently, but firmly, insisted on remaining true to the vision of its first guardian.

It had long been Colonel Olcott's dream to establish a "Pantheon of Religions" at Adyar and he brought this vision to life

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by placing four large statues in niches in the Headquarters Hall, representing Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, Sri Krishna, and Zoroaster.

Later, during his tenure as Vice-President, C. Jinarājadāsa expanded upon Olcott's original idea and in 1925, installed the symbols of eighteen different faiths — including the square and compasses of Freemasonry, acknowledged not as a religion but as the world's oldest brotherhood.

Visits by the Masters

What lends this building its singular sanctity is the numerous visits of the Masters during the periods when HPB and Col. Olcott lived there — and in the years that followed. These sacred visitations were not merely personal experiences, but were observed and affirmed by others as well. Leadbeater recounts several instances, when he personally saw the Masters in the headquarters building, in the book, *Adyar: the Home of the Theosophical Society*. He says that in 1885, he was sitting in front of the President's door on the roof with Mr T. Subba Row, when he saw the Master KH, in the act of stepping over the balustrade at the southern edge of the roof; he advanced with rapid steps straight to where they were sitting, greeted each of them, sat down with them and talked for about twenty minutes.

Leadbeater also describes the first time he saw the Master Morya. He and Damodar were despondently sitting on the floor, with their backs against a sofa, outside Madame Blavatsky's bedroom, believing her to be on the point of death. Suddenly, a firm military tread sounded on the roof, and a tall figure entered. Leadbeater recognised him at once. Without a word, Master M. passed them with a radiant smile and went into HPB's room. After a few moments He departed as swiftly as He had come. Almost at once, HPB called for her clothes, declaring she would rise — and she did. The next morning, the doctor who came expecting to sign her death certificate found her calmly eating breakfast!

There were many other instances as well, that took place during the time of Dr Besant, some recorded, some not. All this makes this building a very sacred one.

The Colonel's Last Days

A poignant and deeply moving account of Col. Olcott's final days in the headquarters building is described by his secretary, Marie Russak, who looked after him during this time. Knowing his end was near he said farewell and blessed all those who had served him. And he was anxious to make peace with everyone. Afraid he might die without asking forgiveness of any people who felt he had injured them, he dictated to her several letters. There were also two or three people in Adyar who were not quite happy about certain of his official actions. He sent for them, talked over matters, generously assumed the blame for making them unhappy, and asked for their forgiveness.

A letter dated 7 January 1907, written by him to Annie Besant and read aloud to her as he lay dying, is preserved in the Adyar Archives. It reads:

> I desire that so long as there are sufficient funds to make it possible, you, and the

succeeding Presidents residing at Adyar, will see that the place is well cared for, and properly kept up, as the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society. Do this in memory of dear HPB and myself.

On 3 February 1907, four Masters paid one last visit to Col. Olcott, informing him that his work was complete, and thanking him for his steadfast loyalty and service to their cause. Overwhelmed with joy, he rose from his bed, prostrated himself, and kissed their feet. Embracing Annie Besant and Leadbeater, he blessed them and implored them to carry forward the work he was laying down.

At 7:27 a.m. on the morning of 17 February 1907, Col. Olcott breathed his last. Later that afternoon, his body draped with his national flag and the Buddhist flag that he helped to design, was carried on a bier to the Headquarters Hall, and from there to the banks of the Adyar River where he was cremated and his body given back to the elements.

Early the next morning, the ashes were collected. One half was placed in a casket to be immersed in the sacred waters of the Ganges near Benaras. The other half, as per the Colonel's own request, was consigned to the sea — the Bay of Bengal. One year later, on White Lotus Day, a memorial was inaugurated by Dr Besant at the place of cremation.

The beautiful main hall of the Headquarters Building also holds profound significance for the members of the Society. When Madame Blavatsky passed away on 8 May 1891, Col. Olcott had brought some of her ashes to Adyar. In 1899 he buried it in the hall placing her statue over it. And when Col. Olcott passed on, Dr Besant installed his statue next to that of his beloved friend, with his hand resting on her shoulder, just as he had often done in his life.

Dr Annie Besant's Presidency

Dr Besant assumed the presidency in 1907 and devoted herself wholly to the sacred charge entrusted to her by the Masters: to shape Adyar into a true spiritual centre — outwardly in form and inwardly in spirit.

From a modest estate of just twenty-seven acres, she rapidly expanded Adyar to over 260 acres, acquiring Blavatsky Gardens, Olcott Gardens, and adjoining lands. These purchases, funded entirely through voluntary contributions from members and from her own personal earnings, laid the physical foundations for a far vaster vision. Under her stewardship, Adyar was transformed from a small administrative headquarters into a living campus consecrated to study, service, and spiritual preparation.

Gradually, Adyar became a magnet for seekers from across the world, who came to live, learn, and dedicate themselves to service. New structures arose — Leadbeater Chambers, the Administration Building, the Bhojanasala, and the old and new Quadrangles — alongside essential amenities such as electricity, water supply, a dairy, a bakery, and a power house, remarkable innovations for their time.

Despite her immense responsibilities, Dr Besant remained intimately involved in the life of the estate. Each morning,

from five to six, she walked through the grounds, combining exercise with an informal hour of counsel and guidance. Residents, workers, and students would gather around her, seeking advice or comfort, trailing behind her in what C. W. Leadbeater affectionately described as "the comet and its tail".

Discovering J. Krishnamurti

In 1909, Leadbeater returned to Adyar, and around the same time J. Narayaniah arrived with his sons, including the young J. Krishnamurti. The following year, while the boys were living on the estate, Leadbeater observed Krishnamurti playing on the Adyar beach with his brother Nitya and was struck by the extraordinary purity and radiance of the boy's aura. Soon, both brothers were taken under the care of Dr Besant and the Theosophical Society.

During their years at Adyar, they were educated by Annie Besant and Leadbeater. Florence Ada Fuller, an Australian artist who had come to Adyar in 1908, is believed to have taught Krishnamurti photography — a skill he delighted in, producing a series of exquisite black-and-white photographs later published in *Adyar: The Home of the Theosophical Society*.

Krishnamurti loved cycling — covering nearly ten miles a day — and learned swimming under Leadbeater's guidance. Mornings often began with a walk to the sea for a swim, followed by quiet moments observing nature spirits at play on the island behind the Headquarters. The brothers also learned tennis on a court specially built for them on the estate. In 1911, they were sent to England to continue their education.

A Centre of Consecrated Service

Under Dr Besant, Adyar also became a powerhouse of consecrated service. Inspired by her fiery eloquence and personal sacrifice, numerous initiatives took shape in education, social reform, and national life, extending Adyar's influence far beyond its boundaries.

Among the most remarkable was the Order of the Brothers of Service, founded on 7 April 1917, just months before Dr Besant was interned by the British government for her role in India's freedom struggle. This was a noble experiment in selfless living, drawing men and women of the highest intellectual and moral calibre, who freely pledged renunciation, obedience, and service under her guidance. Though based at Adyar, the Order functioned independently of the Theosophical Society and became a vital force supporting educational institutions, women's movements, the Order of the Star in the East, and Dr Besant's wider public work — sustained largely by donations and her own personal resources. Among its members were George Arundale, James and Margaret Cousins, C. Jinarājadāsa and his wife Dorothy, and many other distinguished figures.

Dr Besant also laid the groundwork for Adyar as a living symbol of interfaith harmony. Under her vision arose the Hindu Temple, Buddhist Shrine, Zoroastrian Temple, Liberal Catholic Church, and the Mosque. She also laid the foundation stone for a Jewish Temple, though it was never completed, likely due to lack of funds. A Sikh Temple was later added during the presidency of John Coats.

When Dr Besant passed away in 1933, she was cremated at Suryashrama, the sacred site she herself had consecrated as a temple for the Brothers of Service. Today, her memorial — the Garden of Remembrance, at the meeting place of river and sea — stands as a silent testament to a life poured out in service, and to Adyar transformed into a spiritual home worthy of the Masters themselves. The following year, a portion of C. W. Leadbeater's ashes, brought from Sydney, were also laid to rest beside hers.

Adyar: The Cradle of Transformative Movements

Looking back on the venerable history of the Theosophical Society, one is struck by the extraordinary range of initiatives that arose from Adyar — movements that shaped religion, education, culture, and even national destiny. It was truly a cradle of transformation:

- Interfaith harmony was embedded in the Society from the beginning, symbolised by the inaugural ceremony of the Adyar Library, where priests of many faiths sat together to offer blessings.
- The upliftment of the marginalised began with the Olcott schools and expanded into numerous social initiatives.
- The roots of the Indian National Congress can be traced to Adyar.
- The Home Rule movement for India's freedom was launched here by Dr Besant.
- National education was envisioned on the estate by Dr Besant and Rabindranath Tagore.
- A cultural renaissance flowered through Kalakshetra, originally located on the campus.
- Many youth and service movements, including Indian scouting, took shape here.

All these streams flowed from a single principle: Universal Brotherhood in action.

Adyar through Time: Presidents and Service

Each President who followed Dr Besant shaped Adyar according to the needs of the time:

- George Arundale strengthened its inner and outer foundations.
- C. Jinarājadāsa enhanced its beauty and symbolism.
- N. Sri Ram deepened its contemplative spirit.
- John Coats reinforced its global coherence.
- Radha Burnier restored its ethical and spiritual clarity.
- And today, Tim Boyd has been renewing its relevance for the modern world.

Through them all, Adyar has remained not merely a place, but a sacred trust.

Guardian of the Adyar Estate — the Great Banyan Tree

For centuries it stood unnoticed, until the purchase of Blavatsky Gardens by Dr Annie Besant in 1908. When the dense undergrowth around the Blavatsky Bungalow was cleared, the majestic tree emerged from long obscurity, revealing itself at last. Believed to be over five hundred years old, the Great Banyan is remarkable not only for its age or immense spread, but for its role as a silent witness to moments of deep significance — both in the life of the Theosophical

Society and in the wider currents of national history. It is this quiet guardianship of memory that has rendered it truly iconic.

Among the many events that unfolded beneath its vast canopy, there are two moments of particular profundity.

In 1925, during the Golden Jubilee celebrations, J. Krishnamurti was addressing a small gathering of members of the Order of the Star in the East. As his talk drew to a close, a sudden and palpable transformation came over him. His voice altered; his manner changed; and he shifted from speaking in the third person to the first, uttering words that deeply stirred all who were present:

> I come to those who want sympathy, who want happiness;
> Who are longing to be released;
> Who are longing to find happiness in all things;
> I come to reform, and not to tear down;
> Not to destroy, but to build.

The effect was profound. The audience was visibly moved, and Dr Besant declared that these words had come from the World Teacher himself.

A decade later, another moment of rare significance unfolded beneath the same tree during the Diamond Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society in 1935. On that occasion, Geoffrey Hodson sat beneath it and, through clairvoyant perception, described the tree and its presiding Deva. An extract is reproduced below:

> There is something venerable about this Tree-Being, a quality that evokes deep respect — reverence, indeed — when one recognizes that it is the Divine life, the Divine consciousness, so beautifully manifest in the Great Banyan Tree.

He went on to speak of an atmosphere of still, brooding peace, almost of timelessness, beneath its branches — of standing in the presence of a consciousness wholly unconcerned with time, a life fulfilling itself naturally, beautifully, and without haste.

In conclusion, it could be said that:

Adyar is not sacred because
of its past alone.
It is sacred because something still
moves through it — a quiet current, an
unbroken thread of blessing.

It is a bridge between the visible and
the unseen, a chalice through which
grace is poured into the world, a
living heart that has never
ceased to beat.

To care for Adyar — to guard it, to
deepen its inward life, and to embody
its ideals wherever destiny places us —
this remains our shared
and solemn responsibility.

May we keep this heart vibrant
and awake. May we prove ourselves
worthy of the trust laid upon us.
And may Adyar continue to serve,
silently and powerfully,
as the ever-living Heart
of the Theosophical Society.

(*Concluded*)

The Philosophical Identity of J. Krishnamurti — II

SHREYA

KRISHNAMURTI sharply condemns education as being a process of conformity. He greatly emphasises building individuals' capacities for self-understanding and have freedom in every sense, entailing order and discipline. As it can be analysed, his teachings on education do not determine any rigid procedure, per se. These specific guidelines fulfil his vision of "right education". However, there is an attempt to display the ultimate meaning of education broadly, that is, understanding the "total human being" and not just the "professional human beings" and living one's life apart from existing professionally. So by laying this ultimate aim of education, does it make it a part of a normative activity?

To this, it can be argued that the streams through which the right education's essence is achieved are not prescribed in his teachings, so by far, he does not consider it as being a normative act. Moving forward, his teachings on education reflect his analysis and critical evaluation of the existing beliefs of being an "educated" individual and existing practices of the "system of frustration". So now it could be inferred here that his work displaying speculative activity is warranted and justified by involving his analytical work/activity throughout his discourse of understanding the right education.

So, to conclude, it can be justified that K's teachings involve speculative/metaphysical activity based or grounded on analytical activity, therefore fulfilling the criterion.

Domains of Inquiry

Apart from many criteria identified and understood, one is the domain in which these philosophical activities are pursued if the individual has raised questions and passed comments about the specific area(s). K's work is so broad and beyond that different parts of it can be classified in different ways, which will be attempted in the following discourse.

As discussed earlier, in the section; "Depth of Inquiry", K's teachings, pursuing the topics related to the existence and interconnectedness of all life, that is, going beyond dualities of mind and body, self and other, individual and universe and the nature of the ultimate reality which is not merely the sum of its parts but a holistic interconnected whole, fit well under the

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metaphysical domain of philosophy. More precisely, inferring his teachings involves firm inquiries about the nature of existence, discovering the purpose of life, and understanding the deeper essence of being, reflecting his ontological work. However, does his "whole" include proofs beyond empiricism? This question leads us to the other domain that can be identified.

Under analytical philosophy, empiricism relies on sense experience as the only source of knowledge; rationalists believe reason or thought alone gives knowledge (Sardesai, 1996), which is also the basis of Phillips' position. However, K has a different say and has criticised methods, systems, and techniques to arrive at knowledge. Such paths to know only suggest that the thought process or, as he says, the movement of thoughts, imitation or repetition, is merely the movement from known to known.

K emphasises a different source to reach knowledge, which is beyond empiricism. Thus, he describes knowledge as an undivided whole, an ongoing process and an inseparable part of our overall reality. So, all knowledge that is received from sense experiences, reason or testimony is incapable of uncovering truth or reality and, ultimately, knowledge. He states something of "greater value" is required for deep insight into the whole activity of knowledge. This whole knowledge signifies the absence of cause, the absence of the ability to define a term, the absence of symbols, the absence of reason or even thought. Thus, it also showcases the inadequacy of language in addressing such parts of the whole knowledge.

This discourse about finding the true meaning and whole knowledge by K engages with the domain of epistemology, which studies the nature, the sources or the limits of knowledge, mainly resonating with continental philosophers, though, not entirely. To counter, how do his teachings reflect his analytical perspective then? K also emphasises the importance of direct experiences — without any conditioning or preconceived beliefs — for gathering a true understanding of reality and logical reasoning and critical analysis, aligning it with empiricism.

Further, his work presents enough emphasis on the ethical domain. Ethics, in his explanations, is not just restricted to right/wrong or subjective/objective; it goes beyond these dualisms. How? Let me try to bring forth his teachings. As K stresses, one can find an ethical way of living by understanding oneself and bringing inward awareness by examining one's thoughts, actions, emotions, and conditioning. His emphasis on a non-authoritarian approach to ethics elicits personal responsibility and inner discernment in individuals.

But by saying so, isn't his position for ethical understanding inclined towards a subjective understanding of ethics based on one's perspectives and experiences, and will it not be problematic in the social setting? For say, a majority of criminals, apart from psychopaths and perpetrators of impulsive, non-premeditated crimes, have committed a crime based on their own sense of ethics. Then why do the laws of a country punish them? Aren't they ethically right in their subjective reality?

Well, to counter this, self-understanding and consciousness are foremost.

Suppose an individual has examined themselves inwardly, has freed themselves from social, cultural and psychological conditioning and has understood the interconnectedness of all. In that case, they tend to foster a more ethical way of living that approaches universal ethics and morals, which makes it feasible for social settings and helps establish universal ethics. For example, a molester is punished for being unethical and of very weak morals because of his poor understanding of self and lack of governance of his actions, emotions and psychological conditionings, due to which he has lost his responsibility as a man.

Lastly, it touches upon the domain of spirituality on which a major part of K's work is based. The teachings and writings of K presenting his rejection of "extrinsic or extraneous" legitimation of the ethical or the spiritual (in terms of divine revelation, sacred texts, logically derived codes of conduct, etc.) is even more radical than that of Levinas and Buber (Mouzelis, 2010). K emphasises the importance of going beyond religious traditions and organised belief systems, thus freeing from the knowns. His teachings have avoided any reference to God, to whether or not there is life after death, as well as to all other eschatological questions. In this sense, he can be regarded as a postmodernist or anti-foundationalist in the domain of spirituality.

K believed that self-understanding is the foundation of spirituality, emphasising the need to understand the intricacies of one's mind, including its conditioning, fears, desires, and conflicts. Through self-awareness and self-inquiry, individuals can liberate themselves from the constraints of the ego and experience a profound sense of spiritual freedom. He further advocates for mindfulness and being fully present in the present moment, as true spirituality is found in the present, unburdened by the past or the future. Through his advocacy, cultivating mindfulness and awareness in daily life, individuals can experience a deep connection with the universe and a sense of spiritual fulfilment. K's urges to explore what *is* rather than *ought to be*, his exploration dispenses with verbal/conceptual exchanges.

However, the question arises of whether spirituality is even a domain to be considered at all. First, spirituality can be considered an intersection of philosophy and religion, so it is not considered a distinct domain in "academic" philosophy. However, there is a branch of philosophy of religion which states, "Philosophy of religion is the philosophical examination of the themes and concepts involved in religious traditions as well as the broader philosophical task of reflecting on matters of religious significance including the nature of religion itself, alternative concepts of God, or ultimate reality." (Stanford, 2023). For K, he disassociates his work from any organisation, be it any religious entity, caste, community, gender or nation. As stated above, he did not offer themes or concepts involving any religious tradition or broader philosophical tasks.

Second, yet K showcases his belief in concepts like soul, mindfulness, consciousness, and transcendence. He was part of the Theosophical Society. Theosophy is the truth that forms the basis of all faiths. His teachings strengthened the need to transcend beyond the unseen world of occultism in the investigation of the hidden side of Man. (Raveendran, 2024). His beliefs in such concepts can be best understood when connected with the philosophical concept developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein — the language game. Wittgenstein argued that a word or even a sentence has meaning only due to the "rule" of the "game" being played. In *Philosophical Investigations*, he states that words get meaning from their use in language games and have no intrinsic value. As a result, a word's meaning is determined by its usage in the language (Agetue, 2022). So, when engaging in discourse and using concepts like soul, mindfulness, consciousness, and transcendence, K does not have intrinsic value or meaning. Still, the meaning of the discourse helps to add value to them while using these words and sentences. That is why one finds it difficult to associate this aspect of his teachings with any particular domain of philosophy. We cannot view his use of specific terminologies in isolation and decipher whether or not his work lies in any domain but in the whole context or usage of a language. So, speaking of language and using specific terminologies connected by family resemblance is part of an activity that gives language its meaning.

Therefore, his talks taken verbatim should not be confused with the works of any religious tradition. K used words that conveyed the essence of his insights. One's language and life context influence the choice of words and concepts. So, to conclude, his teachings on this aspect belong to a domain that is not considered a domain in "academic" philosophy, that is, spirituality, thus making K fall out of this criterion, as per the analyses.

Traditions in Philosophising

It is difficult, if not impossible, to define philosophy singularly across different perspectives of inquiry. Historically, different philosophical schools were developed in response to some perceived failure of religion to provide answers to fundamental questions (Mark, 2020). Socrates was an ancient Greek philosopher whose way of life, character and thought had a profound influence on classical antiquities and Western philosophy (Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Socrates"). He never wrote anything. Still, he was committed to living simply and to interrogating the everyday views and popular opinions of those in his home city of Athens. He was the inspiration for Plato, the thinker widely held to be the founder of the Western philosophical tradition. Plato, in turn, served as the teacher of Aristotle, thus establishing the famous triad of ancient philosophers: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2024)

Two prominent traditions exist in philosophy: analytical and continental philosophy. The former approaches phil-

osophical issues with a loose set of approaches that emphasise the study of language and logical analysis of concepts (Encyclopaedia Britannica, "analytic philosophy"). From a purely analytical view, K may not fulfil the criterion of being a "technical" philosopher.

However, the major critique of such positionality is that the criteria laid are restricted to specific domains, such as the empirical position, which ultimately does not cater to continental or Eastern philosophers whatsoever. The article might only be able to warrant individuals as "philosophers" who have the same rationale to offer, that is, based on analytical rationale. Raymond Martin highlights his misgivings that it was "difficult for me to understand what K was saying and its relevance to my work as a philosopher." K's thought doesn't align with academic philosophy, specifically the analytical tradition (Krishnamurti, 1999).

On the other hand, continental philosophy stands sharply in contrast with analytical tradition and emerged as a response to a set of loosely related approaches that seem to have its prevalence in England, later the United States, and other English-speaking countries, known as analytic philosophy. It describes that knowledge, experience, and reality are understood by philosophical reflection and investigation rather than solely empirical inquiry. It debunks analytical methods, emphasising their inadequacy in fully understanding any phenomena. The tradition focuses on human agency, which brings variability in possible experiences through aspects like time and space, context, language, and culture. It includes German idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, French feminism, psychoanalytic theory, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and branches of Freudian, Hegelian, and Western Marxist views.

Can one say that calling someone a philosopher is a matter of position or lens through which the world is perceived and understood, and individuals might not reach a common agreement with each other's perception so that none can be disregarded on this basis? K's teachings partially resonate with phenomenologists and existentialists under continental philosophy. He focuses on the detailed examination of one's consciousness with direct experience, self-inquiry and self-understanding for a subjective understanding of a phenomenon. He also emphasises the existence of individuals as free and responsible agents for creating purpose and meaning in their own lives, aligning with existentialists, though he would deny any labelling.

Finally, it could be inferred that K's work is an amalgamation of various concepts, beliefs, theories, and thus his all-around insights, which makes his teachings relevant to a lot of domains under philosophy.

Conclusion

All the above-identified criteria and the discourse relating to the stated criteria imply that every criterion made or countered is not mutually exclusive. However, the intensity of this mutual inclusion is

amplified when the analysis tends to lie balanced in the broad spectrum of analytical and continental perspectives. So now, to know whether Jiddu Krishnamurti is a philosopher. For himself, he is not a philosopher, a spiritual guru or a religious teacher; as for that, he believes in the understanding of self. It is the "self" that teaches the individual all the facets and meaning of life, which is truly summarised in the following quote of his: "Nobody can teach you about yourself except yourself. You have to be the guru and the disciple yourself and learn from yourself. What you learn from another is not truth."

He teaches us the way or the process of becoming our own teacher and philosopher of life. Many thinkers like Phillips (2010) might argue that K does not fit the traditional mould of a philosopher, particularly because his approach differs from the criteria set by Phillip, stemming from the analytical tradition. His work is what philosophy talks about and fulfils a few criteria (certainly not all) of doing philosophy as per the above criteria analysis. His work offers profound philosophical insights. Unlike the analytical tradition, which focuses on logical analysis and language, K's philosophy is more experiential and introspective, challenging individuals to observe their minds and behaviours directly, thus affirming his role as a "non-philosophic" philosopher. On such a basis, his view on education resonates well with the ideals of the Theosophical Society aiming for the flourishing of women and men of goodwill in humankind.

(*Concluded*)

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Theosophical Work around the World

Argentina, 150th Anniversary

The Theosophical Center (TC) in San Rafael, Argentina, after 46 years of organizing Summer and Winter Schools, and other international theosophical activities, experienced a special event from 14 to 17 Nov. 2025: hosting a Congress commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Theosophical Society (TS) Foundation for theosophists from across the American continent. The theme was **"Opening Furrows in the Future of Humanity"**.

This meeting was organized by the Inter-American Theosophical Federation (IATF), the TS in Argentina, and the TC in San Rafael. 85 participants from ten countries: Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, and Argentina gathered in what we call "our Theosophical home".

The Congress constituted a beautiful opportunity to live fraternally, guided by thoughts of gratitude to the Founders, to all those who gave the best of their lives, to many "unknown theosophists", and to all those who committed themselves and today still do to "opening furrows in the future of humanity".

The Congress was opened by the President of the IATF, Fred Fernández (TS member in Puerto Rico and the TS in America, Leandro Cesano, President of the TS in Argentina, and Ernesto García, Director of the TC in San Rafael.

The International President, Tim Boyd, addressed the participants and explained the signicance of the foundation of the TS and its three stages:

> The initial phase, with H. P. Blavatsky and H. S. Olcott and their influence; then Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, with their revolutionary contribution, clairvoyant abilities, and so on; and finally, C. Jinarājadāsa, N. Sri Ram, and Radha Burnier, with their focus on the human psyche and its evolution. Now it is up to us to decide how we move forward.

Next, Fred Fernández spoke on "Why the Theosophical Society", and in the afternoon, Octavio Marchesini (Brazil) shared ideas on "Building the Humanity of Tomorrow". Both left us with abundant material for reflection. Teresa Ayala (Mexico) spoke on Saturday morning about "The TS, a Path That Leads to the Heart of the Universe", and referred to Nirvana as the selfless search for the best means that lead human beings on the right path.

Then, Enrique Reig (Mexico), in his speech, took us to the teachings and thoughts presented by the founder in *HPB Speaks*, and ended by urging us to feel gratitude towards her every time we feel comforted, knowing where we come from, where we are going, and how we are constituted; and gratitude also for her sacrifice and generosity.

"The Collaboration of the Federations for the Dissemination of Theosophy" was discussed by former General Secretary of Argentina, Jorge Cesano, former President of the IATF, Isis Resende (Brazil), and Vice President of IATF, Magaly Polanco (Dominican Republic). They debated the work and importance of the Federations in different continents and countries, a task that continues to be active and fruitful.

Before the end of the afternoon, we felt encouraged in the theosophical work after knowing what had been achieved: to light a new theosophical flame. Magaly Polanco handed in the Branch Charter for Guatemala to Carlos Taks, a TS member from that country. The name of the Branch is "Ija'tz", or "seeds", and refers to its strength and potential. The unanimous hope was that these seeds would germinate and grow for the benefit of their surroundings and for the world. Before concluding this second day, we gathered after dinner to watch the film 'One Fire: 150 Years of Theosophy'. We were all able to appreciate the history of the TS, its contribution to world thought, and the work to be continued.

On Sunday morning, Mario Lanza A. (Puerto Rico) spoke on "What is the Contribution of the TS to Humanity?" Then, a panel consisting of Rafael Arévalo (El Salvador), M. Luisa Cabrera (Bolivia) and Leonor Maldonado (Mexico) discussed the topic "The Power of Thought and Freedom of Thought". Both activities generated numerous ideas and comments.

On Sunday afternoon, three young TS members presented different perspectives on "Challenges for a New Generation in the Work of the TS: the Commitment, 150 Years Later". The Panel was composed of Erika Chavez (Argentina), Carlos Taks (Guatemala) and Gabriel Villalobos (Chile). They considered the idea of the future with its corresponding personal responsibilities, commitments. and parallel spiritual impulses. On Sunday evening, a video by Esteban Langlois (Argentina) was presented. He spoke about "The Role of AI in Theosophical Studies and Spiritual Development".

That morning, the group meditation was by Magaly Polanco, she emphasised the Unity of Existence as the basis, the the root of a living brotherhood. Our thoughts focused on unveiling a plaque and planting a tree, a Liquidámbar. The group headed towards the place where the plaque, constructed for the occasion, was located. It was uncovered, and we could see the symbol of the TS: "1875–2025: The Indivisible Totality of Existence". The Liquidámbar, representing the TS, was planted near the plaque. A few moments of silence and a common feeling of deep joy was shared.

On the last morning of the Congress, Mauro Cesano (Argentina) spoke about "The TS and the Human Being". He stated that, as members of the TS and cells of that great 150-year-old organism, we can help it continue to fulfil its fundamental objective: the dissemination of Theosophy. Its vitality will depend on the energy that each one of us can contribute to that direction. The Congress was closed by Fred Fernández and Magaly Polanco. ✧

Endnote: Congress photographer was Luis G. Cruz, member of the TS in Argentina.

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