

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

The Paradox of Self-Transformation

TIM BOYD

IN Tibetan Buddhist practice there are numerous ceremonies held specifically for a long life. From our personal perspective living a long life has many good features. From the spiritual point of view the emphasis on long life goes beyond mere personal preference. Because the scope of Wisdom is infinite and our moment of incarnation is so brief, in order for us to actually cultivate the experience of wisdom, we ask to be blessed with long life, presence of mind, and health.

The Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society says that its mission, and by extension that of its individual members, is to cultivate three specific things: (1) A deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom; (2) the unity of all life; and (3) spiritual self-transformation. Let us talk about the third one.

In the absence of some shift in the center of our awareness, a meaningful association with wisdom is difficult to impossible. Our normal approach tends to be self-centered. The things that we want for ourselves, who we believe ourselves to be, seem to be very fixed and static. Obviously, it is always in flux, but we feel much more comfortable with the seemingly solid identities we embrace. So self-transformation necessarily involves

a conflict between this cherished sense of self and “reality”.

Generally, when we consider what it means to transform, we think in terms of change, but we also think in terms of a process that leads to that change. Spiritual self-transformation is not just shifting personal habits, but we like to have the security and stability of a clearly delineated process. So in all of the spiritual traditions of which I am aware, the process is depicted as steps along the path to enlightenment, illumination, or self-transformation.

Pick your tradition and there are specific steps that are enumerated. Yoga has its Eight Limbs. Tibetan Buddhism speaks about the graded path to enlightenment, the Lam Rim. Catholic Christianity has The Stations of the Cross. In a theosophical approach the practice we emphasize is study, meditation, and service. These are processes that we engage in with the assumption that they ultimately lead to self-transformation; that if we properly approach our study and our meditation, if we exert ourselves in compassionate conscious activity for others, at the end of that process the experience of illumination awaits us. Maybe it works that way; or maybe it does not.

The Paradox of Self-Transformation

This process of self-transformation does have its steps, but self-transformation itself is something very different. There is not a certain number of correct books, or of hours in meditation that results in the experience of transformation. In and of itself, transformation occurs as a very specific event. It is perhaps related to our study; perhaps not. Perhaps it is something related to a state of accumulated holiness or purity, and then again perhaps it is not.

We can say that there are people who had the experience of illumination or self-transformation. People such as Ramana Maharshi, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, and others led spiritual lives. They did the practice, the study, and it resulted in an experience that they then tried to teach. They spent a lifetime teaching, and everyone around them spent a lifetime listening. Very few actually had an experience of what these Teachers described.

There are people with no particular signs of holiness who also had the experience of self-transformation. Edgar Mitchell, who was an astronaut in the American space program, is one of the ones who walked on the Moon. He was a trained engineer and had no particular spiritual background or training. When he was coming back to Earth in the spaceship, he was looking out the window and seeing the planet beneath him. It was blue and perfect; he could not distinguish any lines between countries. In that moment he had the experience he described as “cosmic consciousness”. It changed him forever. When he got back to Earth, he

spent the rest of his life using the tools of his scientific temperament and training to broaden an understanding of the effects of consciousness in the world.

There is a song that is one of the most, if not *the* most, widely known songs in the English language, called “Amazing Grace”. It is beautiful and talks about an experience of illumination that occurred to its author. His name was John Newton and lived in the 18th to 19th centuries. It starts: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, / That saved a wretch like me. / I once was lost, but now am found, / Was blind, but now, I see.” There are other verses, but it describes the moment when an experience of illumination descended upon him.

At the time he wrote the song he was a preacher, a minister in the Church of England, but the man he was when this enlightenment occurred was a very different one. They say that “every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future”. This man was a saintly preacher when he wrote the song, but the song is about an experience he had when he was actively engaged in the slave trade.

Newton was buying and selling African people and shipping them across the Atlantic Ocean for use in the Americas. It was while fully engaged in this clearly unholy activity that this “Amazing Grace” descended upon him. It was not the result of any conscious spiritual process. It was an event that had its roots in something unseen to us. Self-transformation has a process that we engage in, but the actual experience is something utterly different.

The Paradox of Self-Transformation

Obviously, the two have some relationship, but we make a mistake if we pretend to understand it.

When the Buddha had his enlightenment he returned and gave his first sermon to the five people who had been with him when he was seeking through ascetic practices. As he spoke, one of them, hearing the very first words that He said, experienced enlightenment. The person who was with him the longest, his beloved disciple and attendant, Ananda, was with him for forty-five years. He saw people come, meet the Buddha briefly, and have the experience of enlightenment; others came and studied with him, listened to his teachings for years, then had the experience of enlightenment, but Ananda never had it. He was with the Buddha every day for all those years, doing the practice and the study.

After the Buddha died his disciples were trying to put together all the teachings he had given during his life. Because Ananda had heard all of them, he was going to be the main person to recite the various teachings, yet he was reciting them without any enlightenment of his own. But immediately before sharing his memories of the Buddha's teachings, Ananda finally had his experience of enlightenment.

The people who have had the experience, recognize the event of self-transformation as the pinnacle of human potential, and declare that this liberation of the universal consciousness from the limitations of personality is the goal of the human stage. Those who have had

this experience, or even lesser degrees of it, spend a lifetime helping others to cultivate that same awareness. Every one of them says that it is impossible to describe. Processes can be taught, learned, and practiced, but the experience is unspeakable.

Within each of us a divine seed is said to be planted — an embryonic life encased in a shell. The encasing agency nourishes and protects the life, but also confines and limits its expression. Just like a seed is planted in soil, the soil in which the divine seed is planted is the human personality. Accordingly, the process we describe as the spiritual life can be equated to the process that is undergone by a gardener.

Once we become aware of this life-giving potency within us, and we have some awareness of its potential for expression and life, then we start to learn about what we can do to make it grow. That is what a gardener does. He studies, observes, watches, and then adjusts the conditions to suit the needs of the seed. With us, we call it study, meditation, and service. These are the things that dissolve the encasement that hides the life. We dissolve the firm, fixed identities that we have cultivated and cling to, and with that dissolution the opportunity arises for the life to grow beyond the encasing shell.

The gardener knows how to create conditions, but knows nothing about the life itself. He cannot explain it or control it. All he can do is create conditions, and if they are right, then from his lesser knowledge, a greater life can make itself known.

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J. Krishnamurti, in speaking about the self-transformative experience, uses Biblical language, saying: “It comes upon you like a thief in the night.” This is a beautiful way of expressing it. It goes beyond any explanation that could be given. When we think about a thief in the night, what comes to mind? We are asleep in our bed; it is dark; it is quiet, and without our knowing it someone comes into our home with the sole purpose of taking from us all that we hold valuable or dear to us.

What are the things most valuable to us? Of course, material possessions, but also our name, reputation, position, all of the different identities that have

come to be so sacred to us. Like a thief in the night, the importance of these things is stripped away. And from that divine theft, something else is revealed — a presence, a power, a vision long obscured.

There is the expression that: “Self-transformation is an accident, but spiritual practice makes us accident-prone.” We do not control the event, when, or if it occurs, but when we commit to a practice it makes it much more likely that we are in the vicinity where this activity takes place. The sun does not shine on us unless we come outside.

These are just a few thoughts that we can extend as our capacity permits. ✧

Our life is frittered away by detail . . . Simplify, simplify. . . . I do believe in simplicity. It is astonishing as well as sad, how many trivial affairs even the wisest thinks he must attend to in a day; how singular an affair he thinks he must omit. When the mathematician would solve a difficult problem, he first frees the equation of all incumbrances, and reduces it to its simplest terms. So simplify the problem of life, distinguish the necessary and the real. Probe the earth to see where your main roots run.

Henry David Thoreau

Dharma

ANNIE BESANT

AS we study the Universe, we find that its varieties differ in their age. This is a thought which bears upon our problem. This world was not brought into its present condition by one creative word. Slowly and gradually and by prolonged meditation did Brahma make the world. One after another living forms came forth. One after another the seeds of life were sown. If you look at any Universe at any point of time, you will find that the variety of that Universe has Time for its chief factor.

The age of the developing germ will mark the stage at which that germ has arrived. In a Universe, at one and the same time, there are germs of various ages and stages of development. There are germs younger than minerals, making what are called elemental kingdoms. The developing germs called the mineral kingdom are older than these. Germs evolving as the vegetable world are older than those of the mineral, that is, they have a longer stretch of evolution behind them; the animals are germs with a yet longer past, and the germs we call humanity have the longest past of all.

Each great class has this diversity as to its beginning in time. So also the sepa-

rated individual life in one man — not the essential life, but the individual and separated life — is different from that of another, and we differ in the age of our individual existences as we differ in the age of our bodies. The life is one — one life in all; but it is infolded at different stages of time, as regards the starting point of the seed that there is growing. You should grasp that idea clearly.

When a Universe comes to its ending, there will be present in it entities at every stage of growth. I have already said that world is linked to world, and Universe linked to Universe. Some units at the beginning will be at an early stage of evolution; some will be ready to expand before long into the consciousness of God.

In that Universe, when its life-period is over, there will be all the differences of growth dependent upon differences in time. There is one life in all, but the stage of unfoldment of a particular life depends upon the time through which it has been separately evolving. There you grasp the very root of our problem — one life, undying, eternal, infinite as to its source and goal; but that life manifesting itself in different grades of evolution and at

Dr Annie Besant was the second international President of the TS from 1907 until her passing in 1933. Extract from a lecture delivered at the 8th Annual Convention, Indian Section, TS, Varanasi in 1898.

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different stages of unfoldment, different amounts of its inherent power showing forth according to the age of the separated life. Those are the two thoughts to grasp, and then you can take the other portion of the definition of Dharma.

Dharma may now be defined as the “inner nature of a thing at any given stage of evolution, and the law of the next stage of its unfolding” — the nature at the point it has reached in unfolding, and then the law which brings about its next stage of unfolding. The nature itself marks out the point in evolution it has reached; then comes what it must do in order to evolve further along its road. Take those two thoughts together, and then you will understand why perfection must be reached by following one’s own Dharma.

My Dharma is the stage of evolution which my nature has reached in unfolding the seed of divine life which is myself, *plus* the law of life according to which the next stage is to be performed by me. It belongs to this separated self. I must know the stage of my growth, and I must know the law which will enable me to grow further; then I know my Dharma, and by following that Dharma I am going towards perfection.

It is clear then, realizing what this means, why each of us should study this present condition and this next stage. If we do not know the present stage, we must be ignorant of the next stage which we should aim at, and we may be going against our Dharma and thus delaying our evolution. Or, knowing both, we may work with our Dharma and quicken our evolution.

Here comes a great pitfall. We see that a thing is good, noble and great, and we long to accomplish in ourselves that thing. Is it for us the next stage of evolution? Is it the thing which the law of our unfolding life demands, in order that that life may unfold harmoniously? Our immediate aim is not that which is best in itself, but that which is best for us in our present stage, and carries us one step onward.

Take a child. There is no doubt that if you take a woman-child, she has before her a future nobler, higher, and more beautiful than the present when she is playing with her dolls; she will be a mother with a baby in her arms instead of a doll; for that is the ideal of perfect womanhood — the mother with the child. But while that is the ideal of a perfect woman, to grasp at that ideal before the time is ripe will do harm and not good.

Everything must come in its proper time and place. If that mother is to be developed to the perfection of womanhood, and is to be mother of a family, healthy, strong, able to bear the pressure of the great life-stream, then there must be the period when that child must play with her dolls, must learn lessons, must develop the body. But if, thinking that motherhood is higher and nobler than play, that it should be grasped before its time, and a child be born from a child, the baby suffers, the mother suffers, the nation suffers; and this because the season has not been regarded, the law of unfolding life is violated. All sorts of suffering arise from grasping the fruit before the fruit is ripe.

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I take that example because it is a striking one. It will help you to see why our own Dharma is better for us than the well-executed Dharma of another that is not in the line of our unfolding life. That lofty post may be for us in the future, but the time must come, the fruit must ripen. Pluck it before it is ripe, and your teeth are set on edge. Let it remain on the tree, obeying the law of time and sequential evolution, and the soul will grow according to the power of an endless life.

That then gives us another key to the problem — function is in relation to power. Function grasped before power is developed is mischievous in the extreme to the organism. So we learn the lessons of patience and of waiting on the Good Law. You might judge the progress of a man by his willingness to work with Nature and to submit to the law. That is why Dharma is spoken of as law, and sometimes as duty; for both these ideas grow out of the root-thought that it is the inner nature at a given stage of evolution and the law of the next stage of its development. This explains why morality is relative, why duty must differ for every soul, according to the stage of its evolution.

When we come to apply this to questions of right and wrong, we shall find that we can solve some of the subtlest problems of morality by dealing with them on this principle. In a conditioned universe, absolute right and wrong are not to be found, but only relative rights and wrongs. The absolute is in Iśhvara

alone, where it will for ever be found.

Differences are thus necessary for our conditioned consciousness. We think by differences, we feel by differences, and we know by differences. It is only by differences that we know that we are living and thinking men. Unity makes on consciousness no impression. Differences and diversities — those are the things which make the growth of consciousness possible. The unconditioned consciousness is beyond our thinking. We can only think within the limits of the separated and the conditioned.

We can now see how differences in Nature come to be, how the time factor comes in, and how, though all have the same nature and will reach the same goal, yet there are differences in the stages of manifestation, and therefore in the laws appropriate for every stage. That is what we need to grasp tonight, before we deal with the complex problem, how this inner nature develops. Truly difficult is the subject, yet the mysteries of the path of action may be cleared for us as we grasp the underlying law, as we recognise the principle of the unfolding life.

May He, who gave Dharma to India as her keynote, illuminate with his unfolding and immortal life, with his light effulgent and unchangeable, these dark minds of ours that dimly try to grasp his law; for only as his blessing falls upon the suppliant seeker, will his law be understood by the mind, will his law be engraven in the heart. ✧

The Real Crisis — II

J. KRISHNAMURTI



So, what is the meaning of all this existence? You may not want to look at it, you may want to avoid it. . . . You give about twenty or thirty years to acquiring knowledge of physics, linguistics, biology, sociology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and so on. You give years and years to it, and you don't give one day or even one hour to find out for yourself what you are and why you are living like this.

IIT Bombay, 7 February 1984; "Why are You being Educated?"

Now, what is the modern world? The modern world is made up of technique and efficiency in mass organizations. There is an extraordinary advancement in technology and a maldistribution of mass needs; the means of production are in the hands of a few. There are conflicting nationalities, constantly recurring wars because of sovereign governments. That is the modern world, is it not? There is technical advancement without an equally vital psychological advancement, and so there is a state of unbalance; there are extraordinary scientific achievements, and at the same time human misery, empty hearts, and empty minds. . . . So, that is the modern world, which is yourself. The world is not different from you. Your world, which is yourself, is a world of cultivated intellect and empty heart.

New Delhi, 14 November 1948;

The Collected Works, Vol. V

J. Krishnamurti (11.5.1895–17.2.1986) was a philosopher, speaker, and writer who had a major impact on 20th-century thought. From his talks and writings (1934 to 1985), KFI, 2020.

The Real Crisis — II

Are we wasting our lives? By that word, “wasting”, we mean dissipating our energy in various ways, dissipating it in specialized professions. Are we wasting our whole existence, our life? If you are rich, you may say, “Yes, I have accumulated a lot of money, it has been a great pleasure.” Or if you have a certain talent, that talent is a danger to a religious life. Talent is a gift, a faculty, an aptitude in a particular direction, which is specialization. Specialization is a fragmentary process. So you must ask yourself whether you are wasting your life. You may be rich, you may have all kinds of faculties, you may be a specialist, a great scientist or a businessman, but at the end of your life has all that been a waste?

Bombay, 10 February 1985;
“That Benediction Is Where You Are”

All over the world, human beings are degenerating to a greater or lesser extent. When pleasure, personal or collective, becomes the dominant interest in life — the pleasure of sex, the pleasure of asserting one’s own will, the pleasure of excitement, the pleasure of self-interest, the pleasure of power and status, the insistent demand to have one’s own pleasure fulfilled — there is degeneration. When human relationships become casual, based on pleasure, there is degeneration. When responsibility has totally lost its meaning, when there is no care for another or for the earth and the things of the sea, this disregard of heaven and earth is another form of degeneration. When there is hypocrisy in high places, when there is dishonesty in commerce, when lies are part of everyday speech, when there is the tyranny of the few, when only things predominate, there is the betrayal of all life. Then killing becomes the only language of life. When love is taken as pleasure, then human beings have cut themselves off from beauty and the sacredness of life. . . .

The greater the pleasure, the greater is the strengthening of the “me”. When there is pursuit of pleasure, human beings are exploiting each other. When pleasure becomes dominant in our lives, relationship is exploited for this purpose, and so there is no actual relationship with another. Then relationship becomes merchandise. The urge for fulfillment is based on pleasure, and when that pleasure is denied or has not found means of expression, then there is anger, cynicism, hatred or bitterness. This incessant pursuit of pleasure is actually insanity.

*The Whole Movement of Life is Learning:
Letters to Schools, Ch 28.*

(To be continued)

Consciousness and the Higher Spiritual Path

WILLIAM WILSON QUINN

EVERYTHING in the Universe,” wrote H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), “throughout all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS: that is, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception.”¹ The wayfarer who treads the higher spiritual path should not only accept this premise as true, but should further understand the active operational aspects of *human* consciousness “on its own plane” as the means to achieve initiation, ultimately followed by illumination and release from the cycle of death and rebirth. The greater the expansion of the wayfarer’s individual consciousness, the closer he or she comes to the *reintegration* of that individual consciousness with what HPB referred to as “cosmic consciousness”.

Septenary Nature of Individual Consciousness

Just as universal or cosmic consciousness emerging from the absolute has its septenary division, so does relative or individual consciousness. All formal manifestation that emerges from a state

of latency, or *pralaya*, into a life-cycle, or *manvantara*, has this septenary design. This is an ancient principle, and one which is repeatedly affirmed throughout the writings of HPB. One salient example of her repeated affirmations is a concise article in an 1883 issue of *The Theosophist* devoted to and titled “The Septenary Principle in Esotericism”. The views HPB expressed on this subject were echoed by the adept Koot Hoomi (KH), who wrote that “As man is a sevenfold being so is the universe the septenary microcosm being to the septenary macrocosm but as the drop of rainwater is to the cloud from whence it dropped and whither in the course of time it will return.”²

While it may be simplistic to state that the relation of the septenary divisions between universal and individual consciousness is akin to the relation between the abstract and the concrete, these terms nonetheless indicate a corresponding similarity regarding this relationship. More specifically, HPB wrote that “The three upper are the three higher planes

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of consciousness, . . . the lower ones represent the four lower planes — the lowest being our plane, or the visible Universe. These seven *planes* correspond to the seven *states* of consciousness in man.”³ Again we encounter the principle to “correspond” in her exposition. The sevenfold nature of human consciousness is, in principle, a septenary subset of relative or individual consciousness, and that, in turn, is a septenary subset of universal or cosmic consciousness.

There is thus an unbroken line, a nexus, that runs through all levels of manifestation as a septenary pattern. From macro- to meso- to micro-, and return, one constant and recurring theme is this “septenariness”. But the correspondences are just those, and should not be understood as exact, fractal replicas or facsimiles of one another on these various levels. While a septenary pattern is constant, there is variation in the nature and qualities of the plane or state at issue.

It is important to note here that HPB carefully distinguished between the corresponding *planes* of individual consciousness and *states* of human consciousness in her statement above. She emphasized these two words with italics. Following this same choice of words, HPB refers in a diagram of consciousness in *The Secret Doctrine* to “. . . the four lower planes of Cosmic Consciousness, the three higher planes being inaccessible to human intellect as developed at present. The seven states of human consciousness pertain to quite another question.”⁴

Human Consciousness and Brain / Mind

In esoteric philosophy, the human being and human consciousness are evolutionary spiritual “works in progress”. In our investigation of consciousness we must maintain a mindfulness that our brains and our minds are currently somewhere in the middle of their ultimate cyclic development as that pertains to “rounds” and “root races” of extraordinary duration. Thus, what we say about them here applies only to our present stage. According to HPB human consciousness currently consists of “. . . our seven states of consciousness — namely: (1) waking; (2) waking-dreaming; (3) natural sleeping; (4) induced, or trance, sleep; (5) psychic; (6) super-psychic; and (7) purely spiritual — [that] corresponds with one of the seven cosmic planes. . .”⁵

Among perspectives that separate the esotericist and the secular humanist, for example, is whether the brain or the consciousness is *a priori*. For the esotericist, the conclusion is simple: *first* there is Spirit (Brahman/*ātmā*), then intelligence or mind (*mahat/manas*), then consciousness (*prajñā*), and then the physical brain. Secular humanists, and others, hold that just the reverse is the proper order: that mind and consciousness — excluding altogether the Spirit — are essentially epiphenomena of the brain, which is first. The esoteric perspective was articulated by KH when he wrote that:

We do not bow our heads in the dust before the mystery of mind — for we *have solved*

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it ages ago. Rejecting with contempt the theistic theory we reject as much the automaton theory, teaching that states of consciousness are produced by the marshalling of the molecules of the brain. . . .⁶

HPB was similarly adamant in scorning the “high priests” of science, as she described them, of the 19th century for seeking simply to “. . . resolve consciousness into a secretion from the grey matter of the brain. . . .”⁷ The true simplicity of this Spirit (*ātmā*) vs mind (*manas*) debate about priority was captured by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his repeated criticism of the materialist view contained in René Descartes’s axiom “*Cogito ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am). Coomaraswamy called this axiom a “*non sequitur*”, or illogical, and sought to correct it by rearranging the words as “*Sum ergo cogito*” (I am, therefore I think), with the emphasis being on the first “I” as the spiritual *ātmā*, reflecting the ancient maxim “I Am That” (Sanskrit, *so’ham*).

Different parts of the human brain are responsible for different functions, and HPB made special mention of the pineal gland, which produces a serotonin-derived hormone called melatonin. She asserts that “The special organ of consciousness is of course the brain, and is located in the aura of the pineal gland in the living man.”⁸ And speaking esoterically, not anatomically, she adds that at least during the incarnate existence of the person, the pineal “. . . gland is in truth the very seat of the highest and divinest consciousness in man, his omniscient, spiritual and all-embracing mind.”⁹

That being the case, then the other process, that is, ordinary rational thought, which normally occurs in the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex, performs functions like language, reasoning, and practical cognition. This separation of the primary operations of human consciousness linked to two different locations of the physical brain strongly suggests a corresponding bifurcation inherent in a core doctrine of the seven principles of the human being, of which the three highest are the 7th or *ātmā* (Spirit), the 6th or *buddhi* (intuition), and the 5th or *manas* (mind) in their Sanskrit names. This core doctrine pertains to a bifurcation in the last of these three principles, *manas*, into (i) ordinary or rational cognition, known as the *manasrupa* (formal, or lower mind) and (ii) abstract or spiritual thought, known as the *manasarupa* (formless, or higher mind), these two aspects of *manas* being separated by a subtle divide known in Sanskrit as the *antahkarana*.

These dual operations of the brain function — pineal gland/ frontal lobe, and *manasrupa/manasarupa* — are further reflected in a dual operation of human consciousness or, as HPB phrases it, a “double consciousness”. As to the ordinary and rational waking consciousness, HPB explains that “. . . the ‘brain-self’ is real while it lasts, and weaves its Karma as a responsible entity. Esoterically explained, it is the consciousness inhering in that lower portion of the Manas [*rupa*] which is correlated with the physical brain.”¹⁰ She refers to this lower type of human consciousness as “sentient

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consciousness”, and contrasts it to the “spiritual consciousness”. The sentient consciousness is derived from the “lower manasic light”, or *manasarupa*, which dies with the body at death. The spiritual consciousness is derived from the *manas* “illuminated by the light of Buddhi”, or *manasarupa*, which survives the death of the body. As HPB further explained,

There is a spiritual consciousness, the Manasic mind illumined by the light of Buddhi, that which subjectively perceives abstractions; and the sentient consciousness (the lower Manasic light), inseparable from our physical brain and senses. This latter consciousness is held in subjection by the brain and physical senses, and, being in its turn equally dependent on them, must of course fade out and finally die with the disappearance of the brain and physical senses.¹¹

Death of the human being marks the end of the person’s “sentient consciousness”, since the brain — including its pineal gland — dies with the physical body. This is the departure of the phenomenally based consciousness of the mortal *manasarupa* from the noumenally based consciousness of the surviving *manasarupa*, bound to the *buddhi* and its immortal *ātmā*. That which remains of the person is solely the “spiritual consciousness” — of the *ātmā-buddhi-manasarupa* — after death.

This is because “. . . the ideas about the infinite and the absolute are not, nor can they be, within *our* brain capacities. They can be faithfully mirrored only by our Spiritual consciousness. . .”¹² More-

over, such spiritual ideas and concepts within whose spheres we might find the attribute of *self-consciousness* (*ahamkāra*) would similarly be mirrored by our spiritual consciousness. “For, in the act of self-analysis,” HPB wrote, “the *Mind* becomes in its turn an object to the spiritual consciousness. It is the overshadowing of the Mind by *Buddhi* which results in the ultimate *realization of existence* — that is, self-consciousness in its purest form.”¹³

Meditation and Samādhi

For millennia various schools of yoga and differing spiritual practices have existed as part of the *philosophia perennis*, or *theosophia*, that reveal multiple methods and techniques to attain enlightenment, or liberation. Together with esoteric schools and traditions within the world’s major religions, these collectively provide diverse spiritual paths which, at their highest levels, merge into a uniform initiatic path. What is central to virtually all these schools and traditions is some form of contemplative meditation, usually as a daily practice of gradual control or mastery of the mind through focused concentration by application of the will. Meditation is universally the *key* to advancement upon the higher spiritual path, and to the expansion of consciousness.

Culturally infused meditative practices of the East, such as *zazen* of the Mahāyāna Zen Buddhist schools (including those of Japan, China, Korea, and Vietnam), or *vipassanā* of the Theravāda

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Buddhist forest traditions, or *lojong* of the Vajrayāna Buddhists, or classical *rāja yoga* of traditional Hinduism have, in our time, become global. Occasionally these practices are conflated with sitting while reciting *mantras*, or *japa*, as in Hinduism, or with the practice of *dhiker* among Islamic Sufis, or even with the practice of constant recitation in Christian hesychasm. These recitative practices are then sometimes conflated with prayer, which is not meditation. While it may be true that the Eastern meditative practices can be valuable portals of entry to meditation for those in the West, taking a purely sacred science and non-denominational approach to the subject of meditation in terms of the seven principles of human beings, particularly as to the *ātmā* (7th), *buddhi* (6th), and *manasarupa* (5th), provides more clarity.

Without trying to do so, HPB virtually defined the goal of meditation in sacred science terms by her quote above in stating that “It is the overshadowing of the Mind by *Buddhi* which results in the ultimate *realization of existence*. . .”. To expand this statement as applied to meditation, we can respectfully add that it is the intentional objective of overshadowing the *manas*, or 5th principle, of the practitioner by the *buddhi*, or 6th principle, that eventually leads, through daily and sustained practice, to deep and prolonged meditative states, that is, to the ultimate realization of existence. This practice involves the gentle stilling of all (lower) mental activity followed by a sustained concentrated focus

upon a single point of (higher) spiritual significance which, stated alternatively, amounts to a sublimation of “sentient consciousness” in favor of “spiritual consciousness”, to use HPB’s terms.

Among the initiates and adepts of KH’s order, meditation is acknowledged as an ancient and indispensable practice for spiritual development and progress upon the higher spiritual path. As KH noted, “Fasting, meditation, chastity of thought, word, and deed; silence for certain periods of time to enable Nature herself to speak to him who comes to her for information . . .”, will allow spiritual aspirants to achieve “illumination”.¹⁴

And, turning to Buddhism, this same adept quoted the Theravadin *Mahāvagga* of the *Khandhaka*: “‘When the real nature of things becomes clear to the meditating Bhikshu, then all his doubts fade away since he has learned what is that nature and what its cause.’” KH then added to this a comment of his own: “Meditation here means the superhuman (not supernatural) qualities, or arhatship in its highest of spiritual powers.”¹⁵

It should not be surprising that, in relation to other world religions, Buddhism is so often consulted in inquiries about meditation or, for that matter, about consciousness. It is fair to say, to explain this tendency, that no other religion approximates the scope or level of discourse about meditation as is found in Buddhist scriptures. This fact may now introduce the Buddhist *jhāna* states of meditation or, more accurately, of consciousness, since they are nothing less

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than the manifestation of the vertical axis of consciousness which ascends hierarchically from lowest to highest. Appearing and repeated in a number of the early *suttas* of the Pāli canon, the higher *jhāna* states are the meditative planes reached by advanced practitioners of meditation which effectively describe expansions of awareness, or of consciousness. Among those *suttas* most often quoted is the *Samyutta Nikāya* (45.8), verses 8–10, which reads as follows:

And what, monks, is right concentration? Here, monks, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a monk enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without thought and examination, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he dwells equanimous and, mindful and clearly comprehending, he experiences happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third *jhāna* of which the noble ones declare, “He is equanimous, mindful, one who dwells happily.” With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and dejection, he enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness and equanimity.¹⁶

This text is an explication of one fea-

ture of the “eightfold path” in Buddhism, being “right concentration” or in some translations “right meditation”, which is found in the last, or fourth, of the “Four Noble Truths” of the Buddha. What should be understood is that no bright or clear lines exist between these *jhāna* states that the practitioner encounters in meditation. Rather, they should be understood as truth of the existence of higher and more subtle levels of one’s inner journey as the wayfarer progresses in meditation and, for that matter, on the higher spiritual path.

The pinnacle of meditation, and spiritual development, generally, can be conceived by the Sanskrit word *samādhi*, whose detailed treatment is found in the *Yoga-Sutras of Patañjali*. This state of elevated consciousness is not easy to describe, surpassing as it does the conceptions of the rational mind and the vocabulary that the mind uses. But we attempt to do so nonetheless by using the words of HPB above, with a slight modification. She refers to the overshadowing of the *manas*, or 5th principle, of the practitioner by the *buddhi*, or 6th principle, and when this occurs through sustained discipline and will by the practitioner, *both* these principles, the 5th and 6th, are effectively illumined by the divine emanations of the 7th principle, the *ātmā*.

When the mind is focused and at last in alignment with the *buddhi*, then can the mind be illuminated or enlightened by the immortal *ātmā*. This is the state of *samādhi*. At the same time, it is an

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illumination of the human consciousness. Stated alternatively by KH:

It is, when correctly interpreted, in one sense “the *divine Self* perceived or seen by *Self*”, the *ātmā*, or 7th principle, ridded of its *mayavic* distinction from its Universal Source — which becomes the object of perception for, and by the *individuality* centered in *buddhi*, the 6th principle, something that happens only in the highest state of *samādhi*.¹⁷

And this statement by KH is affirmed by HPB when she wrote of Plotinus’s definition of “real ecstasy” as “the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, becoming one and identified with the infinite”, and adding that “It is, indeed, identical with that state which is known in India as *samādhi*.”¹⁸

Reintegration of Consciousness

We now end this discussion as we began it — by quoting from the writings of HPB:

“Individual consciousness emanates from and returns into Absolute consciousness, which is eternal MOTION.”¹⁹ The effect of reaching the *samādhi* state is crossing the bridge that connects and thus allows a return into — reintegration to — universal or cosmic consciousness from individual consciousness. It is full circle, where the head of ouroboros meets its tail in the endless cycle of eternal motion. But for the individual human being who has attained or achieved this highest level, which allows this permanent reintegration of individual consciousness, there remains a choice. This choice is whether to release

that individual consciousness back into the cosmic consciousness as the “dew-drop slips into the shining sea” *per* Edwin Arnold, or to *defer* this reintegration and continue incarnate as a conscious light-bringer on behalf of humanity. This latter is the path of the *bodhisattva*, where the high initiate learns to transfer his or her individual consciousness “unbroken” from death to rebirth. As HPB explains, “Those alone, whom we call adepts, who know how to direct their mental vision and to transfer their consciousness — physical and psychic both — to other planes of being, are able to speak with authority on such subjects.”²⁰

Thus is one’s individual — and illumined — consciousness put to practical use for the benefit of humanity, in order to assist in the sacred mission of the order of adepts, which mission is none other than the spiritual enlightenment of humanity as a whole. In this endeavor the new *bodhisattva*, likely an initiate in that order, learns in time to “become exempt from the curse of UNCONSCIOUS transmigration.”²¹ Once this ability is mastered, the initiate then has “complete or true immortality, which means an unlimited *sentient* existence, [that] can have no breaks and stoppages, no arrest of *Self*-consciousness.”²²

In the same context, HPB writes that “Immortality is but one’s unbroken consciousness . . .”²³ This individual *unbroken* consciousness, where not released and thus not reintegrated into the cosmic consciousness, is wholly present in a person who compassionately sacrifices

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this reintegration and the eternal bliss that accompanies it. For so serving first the needs of humanity, of such a person it can be said, “Immortal then is he, in the *panaeonic*²⁴ immortality whose

distinct consciousness and perception of *Self under whatever form* undergoes no disjunction at any time, not for one second, during the period of his *Egoship*.”²⁵ ✧

Endnotes

1. Blavatsky, H.P., *The Secret Doctrine*: The Theosophy Company, 1947, p. 272.
2. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, arranged by V.H. Chin, Jr., Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House (TPH), 1993, p. 182.
3. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 199.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
5. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vols. I – XIV. Adyar: TPH, Vol. XII (1889–1890), p. 532.
6. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 273.
7. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 296.
8. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. XII (1890–91), p. 289.
9. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 121.
10. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. VIII (1887), p. 340.
11. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 178–79.
12. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. XI (1889), p. 451.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII (1887), p. 96.
14. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 73.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 275–76.
16. Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *In the Buddha’s Words*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005, p. 240.
17. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 376. 18. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 10.
18. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 10.
19. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. XII (1889–1890), p. 133.
20. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 166–7.
21. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 75.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
23. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 108.
24. Beginning with a manvantara and ending with a pralaya.
25. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 211.

The Return of Consciousness — II

ELTON A. HALL

IN the second half of the 20th century consciousness returned in significant ways. Novelist and believer in a perennial philosophy, Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) published *The Doors of Perception* in 1954, anticipating the interest in alternate states of consciousness that arose in the 1960s in the United States. Huxley recounted his experiments with mescaline, and then there was Timothy Leary (1920–1996), who experimented with LSD in and out of the lab.

While these efforts were eventually suppressed under United States law, they heralded a renewed interest in the nature of consciousness and its relation to reality. Philosophers and many scientists have found three possibilities: dualism, in which consciousness and matter are distinct substances; materialism, in which consciousness is a by-product of the organization of matter; and pan-psychism, in which the substance of existence has both physical and mental properties. All three general views have many variations.

In the 1990s David Chalmers (b. 1966) proposed a form of dualism to explain consciousness. The root idea goes back to the scientist, mathematician and philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650)

who held that reality consisted of two substances, *res extensa* (extended stuff, matter) and *res cogitans* (thinking stuff, mind). The two were utterly unlike one another, and Descartes could never satisfactorily explain how they are connected, as in, for instance, a human being. He was attempting to save soul or mind from the creeping materialism of his day. The failure to show how the two are connected and thus can affect one another led to a general rejection of his view. Chalmers has resurrected a sophisticated version of this position.

Chalmers points to three problems with consciousness. The “easy” problem is the correlation of brain states with mental states, complex enough in itself, but a problem which has seen great advances in the last fifty years. The “hard” problem is how mind and matter are connected, the problem that dogged Descartes. There is also the “combination problem” which arises if one thinks of consciousness as somehow a property of matter. If atoms have some mental, psychic or conscious property, how does an aggregate of atoms give rise to the unified consciousness we experience? That is, how do trillions of atoms that form the human

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body collectively exhibit consciousness and self-consciousness? These problems are in the forefront of consciousness philosophy today.

Many materialists argue that consciousness is actually an illusion. Conscious states are only brain states, electrochemical configurations and activities of the brain, and absolutely nothing more. Paul (b. 1942) and Patricia Churchland (b. 1943) are philosophers deeply studied in neuroscience who hold this view. Since I find it difficult to understand how a self-conscious being can use its consciousness to discover that there is no consciousness, I will not pursue this avenue. Consciousness is so rooted in the nature of the universe that thinking of it as a kind of effluvia cast off by the brain is not appealing.

The view that consciousness somehow arises from the organization of non-conscious matter, perhaps as smoke arises from fire, is difficult to substantiate, because the idea of emergence now popular in biology and evolution studies is not explained in materialist detail.¹ Just *how* does consciousness emerge from non-conscious stuff is the problem. Put another way, how does subjective experience arise from objective stuff? Science has no answer, or even an idea of what an answer might look like. We have no convincing model that we can test.

Dualism, of course, has the problem Descartes had, though in modern form. Again we cannot explain how two different fundamental substances interact. Just saying that they do will not work.

Again, we currently have no viable model.

This leaves the panpsychist view, and I am included in this pantheism, given the close relation of the two. Philip Goff, already mentioned, takes the panpsychist view. This approach has a long history, going back at least to the universal mind of Anaxagoras (b. about 500 BC), hinted at by Plato (424–348 BC) and featured by the neo-Platonists, notably Plotinus (204–270), Iamblichus (245–325) and Proclus (412–485), among others. And the German Idealists, notably Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling (1775–1854), pursued a panpsychist approach in different ways. Though Leibniz (1646–1716) believed in a creator God, he held that God created monads, each of which reflected the whole universe from its own point of view and each of which had a mental or psychic component, from mineral to the human being.² And Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) held that God or Nature was the sole reality, only two aspects of which, mind and body, are known to the human being.

Panpsychism, then, is hardly new. And it often occurred among those who were both philosophers and scientists. The same is true now. The great explorers of quantum theory, already mentioned, along with others of equal stature, were open to panpsychist views. This is shown in their writings where they reflect on the meaning of their joint discoveries. The scientists of today who take panpsychism seriously are not suddenly departing from the past; they are continuing a tradition that is as long-standing as science itself, even though

suppressed in the late nineteenth and most of the 20th century. In fact, the border between science and philosophy has always been porous, and it is even more open today.

Among contemporary thinkers, we see philosopher Thomas Nagel (b. 1937) arguing that Darwinian evolutionary theory is fine as far as it goes but is inadequate to explain consciousness and will only be correct when it embraces some form of panpsychism.³ Even more recently, Paul Levy has made a remarkable attempt to bring science and consciousness together in his book *The Quantum Revelation*.⁴ He provides a deep analysis of quantum theory and the fact that the observer cannot be left out of the experimental (observational) situation.

For him, Schrödinger's wave equation expresses potential and observation (that is, consciousness) makes it actual. Consciousness, then, is fundamental to reality, which does not exist except as potential, until observed. Our consciousness creates the reality in which we live. But in one sense, this is obvious, since we are separate from one another. We both observe a rainbow, but given our spatial separation, no matter how small, we see "different" rainbows, since rainbows are only the interaction of reflected light from water drops and the eye and mind.

Yet Levy goes beyond that trivial statement by pointing to quantum entanglement of particles. Two particles, once entangled, can be separated by cosmic distances, and yet when one is

observed, we can know the other's spin state instantly. If the spin of one particle is up, the other will be down, and so on for the various observations we might make. Yet, since nothing can travel faster than the speed of light, the observed particle cannot inform the other of how it was observed in time for the other particle to adjust accordingly. Put simply, two entangled particles act as one "entity" no matter how far apart they might be. But, Levy points out, the whole universe is entangled since the early inflation of the Big Bang, and while entanglements can be broken, they are everywhere. Particles are fields, like whirlpools in a moving river, seemingly stable, but the water of the river is constantly moving through them. The whirlpools are ever different in substance but the structure looks the same to us because of our perspective, which is gross compared to the particles themselves. We cannot even say that two observations of an electron, for example, are observations of the same electron. What is in fact ever-changing appears to us to remain the same. Levy applies this understanding to all objects.

If we were standing with a friend looking out over a lake from the shore, we would not notice the differences in our perspectives because they are so slight on the macroscale. And we do not notice quantum effects on our scale, since trillions upon trillions of atoms are involved in our view. Further, consciousness is entangled, so our consciousness and our perceptions are not just ours. When the mechanical typewriter was invented

in the 19th century, it took a long time for secretaries to become accomplished typists. After a number of people managed to learn typing, rather suddenly others could master typing much more quickly. It is as if those who first learned made a path that others could follow more easily. This phenomenon has been seen in other cases of learning and discovery and even among some animals.⁵

For Levy, consciousness is the fundamental feature of all existence. In this sense, he says we dream up the universe. It is not as if there is something to be observed before observation: there are only potentials, possibilities of observation. As we observe, we turn potentials into actualities. And so for him panpsychism is not just the way things are: consciousness is the very root of what is. Again, such an idea is hardly new. One finds it in some form in many traditions, including Hindu and Buddhist philosophies, as well as in the Western world. What is radical, Levy argues, is that the most up-to-date science, quantum physics, supports such a view as the only plausible one.

My own understanding of the world is a little different. From ancient times, the world of typical experience has often been considered an illusion, a dream. In the Middle Ages, philosophers and theologians turned this idea on its head, arguing that reality came in degrees, of which the material world was the lowest. The soul inhabited a higher degree of reality, and its powers of thought and intuition could reach even higher, toward the ultimately Real, which they called God.

Whether one thinks in terms of ascending degrees of reality or descending degrees of illusion, the idea is the same. This God is of course not a being, but the root of all existence. And what is missing from much philosophical discourse is this concept of levels of consciousness, each level attuned to, or dreaming, a level of reality, all of which are illusory compared to their ultimate source, sometimes called God, sometimes the Absolute, the One (Parmenides, 5th century BC), or just ‘Tat’ (the Hindu Sanskrit demonstrative pronoun ‘that’).

Outside transcendent experiences as found in meditation, mystic states, or other numinous experiences, we are typically unaware of levels of consciousness. Thomas Nagel, already referred to, published the now famous article “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”⁶ He argued that we cannot possibly know what it is like to be a bat. If we try, we imagine ourselves as humans in bat form. There is no way we can imagine navigating through the air and finding dinner in the form of insects by echolocation, sending out high-pitched sounds and determining the location, speed and direction of travel of an insect by the reflected sound returning to finely-tuned bat ears. Yet bats are conscious.

We have no way of experiencing that consciousness, for the bat world is quite different from ours. As we move down the chain of conscious beings, knowing the consciousness of a fish, a plant, and so on is utterly impossible. For this reason, I tend to use the word ‘mind’ rather than consciousness, only because the word is

more open-textured than we may take the word consciousness to be. Panpsychism is the view that mind pervades all existence, down to the mineral, even atomic and sub-atomic level, and the version espoused by Levy has all mind or consciousness interconnected. Together we realize a universe.

If this idea sounds familiar, though the language is different, it is because it is a core teaching of Helena Blavatsky, the cofounder of the modern Theosophical movement. She was born here (thank you, Dnipro and Ukraine!) and she insisted that all existence, all manifestation visible and invisible, is One Life, one unified existence, differentiated by levels of consciousness. One of her teachers said that he did not mind being called a materialist, but not a materialist in the sense that physical stuff is all there is. From the Source, all that unfolds is material, including mind and consciousness, in level upon level of differentiation. And, of course, quantum theory has dematerialized matter into quarks and fields, perhaps just the vibrations postulated by string theory. For quantum science, there is no matter in the traditional sense.

Just as ordinary human self-aware consciousness is only one level, we cannot claim to experientially know lower levels of consciousness. Theosophy disturbs many people because it holds that there are beings whose levels of consciousness are far above the ordinary human level, including creative beings that in some sense help evolution as well as beings in human form that are enlightened in various degrees.⁷

But once we realize that we cannot

know what it is like to be a bat, so we cannot know what it is like to be such beings. Of course, we can use analogies to sense something of bat consciousness, even of plant consciousness, though the farther away from our own ordinary consciousness, the less we can sense them. And so with “higher” beings. We can learn something of them since the One Life is all there is, but we cannot presume to know what their mind or consciousness is like. Hence those traditions that accept levels of consciousness advocate techniques for both sensing what such levels are and for self-consciously moving toward those levels.

Deepest thought about such matters and meditation are the most common practices these traditions teach. And these practices cannot be successful if one does not live them out with integrity and compassion, since the mental and the physical, thought and behavior, are one in the light of the One Life. But it all begins with giving consciousness, including one’s own consciousness, the right place in the scheme of things, which is the One Life.

That is the first step in transforming one’s own consciousness into something more than it presently seems to be. In this view, proper preparation of consciousness allows for the infusion of higher levels of consciousness into the lower structures of consciousness we typically experience.⁸

At least as practiced in the Western world, science, one might say, has not shown such possibilities to be real. But science, beyond the neurosciences which

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correlate brain activity with aspects of consciousness, has hardly attempted to do so. It took years of development in theory and billions of dollars to discover the Higgs boson at the Large Hadron Collider. What if we spent as much effort in theory development and in money on the exploration of consciousness? Who knows the result?

Doing so would also revolutionize current conceptions of what science is. Whatever we think, the gap between so-called subjective experience and so-called objective reality is narrowing, thanks to quantum science, in which the observer cannot be separated from what is observed. We have a long way to go, but the future looks promising. ✧

Endnotes

1. Emergence is the view that as matter organizes itself a new level of being arises, such as living forms from lifeless chemical interactions. What emerge are new laws and states of being. So far, this view remains something of a vague label, since we cannot explain either how or why emergence occurs.
2. For Leibniz, God is all these points of view simultaneously. Any object, including a human being, is a vast collection of monads “controlled” by a ruling monad, such as the human mind.
3. Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly Wrong*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.
4. Paul Levy, *The Quantum Revelation: A Radical Synthesis of Science and Spirituality*, SelectBooks, New York, 2018.
5. Biologist Rupert Sheldrake developed the idea of morphogenetic resonance to explain such phenomena, the view that previous structures (including structures of consciousness, such as those developed by the first typists) affect subsequent similar structures (such as the consciousness of later typists) across time, space and minds. His view is, of course, largely rejected, yet has inspired other thinkers.
6. Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” *Philosophical Review*, vol 83, No. 4 (October, 1974), pp. 435–450.
7. These levels of increasing enlightenment are closely tied to universality of consciousness, that is, to extension of consciousness beyond the separate ego into increasingly inclusive experiential awareness of the One Life and of oneself as part of it.
8. The problem of emergence, mentioned before, might be solved by a view such as this. Rather than thinking of consciousness “emerging” from an organization of matter, one might think of consciousness manifesting in the appropriate organization. It would have its own principles which were always present but latent rather than miraculously emerging from such organization. (See footnote 6.)

Annie Besant and the World Teacher

CLEMICE PETTER

TO talk about Annie Besant is not an easy task; she was a unique person with rare qualities. Most of her accomplishments have been mentioned in many places, but it seems that the most important thing has somehow been neglected, or at least it has not been given the place it deserves in her life when people talk about her.

Her latest biography, *Annie Besant — Struggles and Quest* (2017), by Muriel Pecastaing-Boissiere, mentions this great effort only in passing. Even those in the Theosophical Society (TS) who have great reverence for her teachings have forgotten her devotion and longing for the coming of the World Teacher. Annie was the person who started the search for a suitable body to fulfill the prophecy made by Madame Blavatsky, who told her in person that every 2,000 years a World Teacher comes to give new instructions for the progress of humanity.

As soon as Annie became President of the TS she and her colleague C. W. Leadbeater, who is said to have been trained to acquire psychic powers to identify a suitable body with a clear, clean aura, started to talk openly about the coming of a messiah. She devoted her



*Annie Besant with J. Krishnamurti in 1926
(From the TS Adyar Archives)*

entire life as President to talking about the World Teacher. In every speech she mentioned it and asked people to help the Society to fulfil its task, which is to support the work of the World Teacher.

Annie fought many battles to protect the vehicle of the imminent coming and make sure that the TS would do its job. Many devoted members of the Society did not understand her position and were openly against it. This was the case of the TS in Germany, when Rudolf Steiner, its

Mrs Clemice Petter is a TS Adyar international speaker living at Adyar.

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General Secretary, rebelled against the whole idea of a new World Teacher, just left the Society, and with him almost the whole Section. Annie faced with courage and bravery those critics who made fun of her protégée without ever losing faith in the great work she was rendering to humanity. She was the one who made it possible for J. Krishnamurti to have enough freedom to pursue and fulfil the role as the World Teacher, prophesized by Madame Blavatsky herself, as mentioned above.

Later, when Annie was no more and Krishnamurti was asked to say a few words in her honor, he simply said: "Amma never told me what to do or not to do, by saying this I have paid her the greatest honor." In these few words lies an ocean of beauty. She faced tremendous difficulties during all her years as President of the TS, and many of them came from the fact that she was openly talking about the coming of the World Teacher; yet, she did not make her difficulties into a burden for Krishnamurti.

She waited and waited for years without end for that coming, the tragedy of it is that when it finally happened, Annie was too tired from a life of battles against injustices and the body was giving up. But still she did not let Krishnamurti down, when she realized that those who were ardently waiting for him could not let go of their own conclusion and simply listen. She even said that her worst fear had come true. To this statement, those who were just waiting for a small signal to justify their clinging to the old, therefore

being closed to the new, the unknown; those took this statement and said that she was disappointed with Krishnamurti.

The fact is that Annie realized that, in her absence, those who had sworn faithfulness would not be ready to keep their word, and Krishnamurti was going to be left to his own faith. Foreseeing this, she asked a few of her close Indian friends to help and take care of him until the end. It was this group of friends who helped and stood faithfully with her until her last breath. Among them was N. Sri Ram, who later on became the TS President. It was during his term that the Society started to shift direction. It is interesting to see how in the TS history repeats itself again and again. Maybe it is time for change.

Some time ago I read in Mary Zimbalist's memoirs that, now and again, when Krishnamurti was talking to a gathering, one could see in him a very young and unnaturally beautiful face, even when he was already in his 70s or 80s, and he used to talk about "the face", as he referred to it, saying that when he first met Amma [Annie] as a boy in a railway station, she saw "the face".

Krishnamurti also said that it takes thousands of years to develop "the face". This may explain why Annie never gave up on him as the perfect one for the fulfilment of HPB's prophecy. She knew what she saw. Thank God for her true Indian friends who even though they did not see what she saw, were loyal and stood by her side come good, come ill. This quality is a rare one, as we normally stand by those who see as we do, and at the slightest

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disagreement we immediately change our position, from that of a supporter to a critic. Maybe there is time for change.

There is another one of Annie's qualities that is worth mentioning. She was President of the TS during its pinnacle. It had almost fifty thousand members all over the world, and she was seen as a truly spiritual leader by the majority of them. With all this, she was humble enough to recognize that Krishnamurti was "the Teacher", and she expressed it on innumerable occasions, not only in words but in acts; she would sit on the ground in front of him during public talks.

There was a chair reserved for her to sit side by side with him, given her status as the President. That chair would always be there, but she would walk straight past it and not pay attention to Krishnamurti's appeals to her to please sit on the chair. She would sit on the ground at his feet and say: "You are my teacher, I want to learn from you." This is the most beautiful thing that I have ever heard.

It is so easy to lose oneself in vanity and arrogance, but Annie recognized that a position does not mean anything, what really means something, if we are able to feel it in our heart, is this devotional love that is not afraid of public judgment or ridicule. I would say that she knew what is important in life, the art of discernment, the art of living.

Annie was one of these rare characters who had the courage to stand for what she felt was right and to recognize when she made a mistake. There are many examples of this. To mention one,

we can refer to the founding of schools all over India, and, in 1898, even the Central Hindu College. After fifteen years of hard work and dedication, she handed the College over to become the nucleus of the Banaras Hindu University in 1913, when she saw that it was for the World Teacher to set the tune of the new way for education in order to bring about a new civilization, a new kind of people. With the same passion that she worked to set up the College, with that same passion she let it all go.

There is no doubt that she was passionate and intense, and it was these qualities that Krishnamurti would ask from his listeners. Later in his life he said that "if Amma was not too old she would have understood, she would have got it." Maybe this quality of not being attached to the fruit of one's work is the most important quality that has been taught to humanity since the *Gītā* by Lord Krishna, but somehow we never listen.

Apparently Annie did listen to Lord Krishna and was not attached to the fruit of the work performed. There is also a known story that at the beginning when Krishnamurti started to deliver the teachings and Annie realized that the members of the TS were not ready to listen, she wanted to go with him and leave the Society, but Krishnamurti told her to stay, as she was the President. Even in this case she listened, and she stayed although her health declined day by day.

The love between Annie and Krishnamurti never changed since the beginning, when she adopted him as her son until her

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last days when the boy had turned into a man, with the same endurance to face hardship as his Amma. It has been said again and again in every scripture that Love is the quality needed to tread the spiritual path, but, again, apparently we are incapable of listening. When we say listening, we are not talking about the mechanical act performed by the ear. We are talking about the ability to listen with our whole being, with all our senses, to listen without the listener, without the censor, or judge. In *The Key to Theosophy* Madame Blavatsky says:

Besides a large and accessible literature ready to men's hands, the next impulse will find a numerous and united body of people ready to welcome the new torch-bearer of Truth. He will find the minds of men prepared for his message, a language ready for him in which to clothe the new truths he brings, an organization awaiting his arrival, which will remove the merely mechanical, material obstacles and difficulties from his path. Think how much one, to whom such an opportunity is given, could accomplish If the Theosophical Society survives and lives true to its mission, to its original impulse through the next hundred years — tell me, I say, if I go too far in asserting that Earth will be a heaven in the twenty-first century in comparison with what it is now!

Reading the above quote it is easy to understand the nature of the work of the TS. It shows that the coming of new teachings was awaited and, of course, it would be something new, not taught by the

founders. Another aspect that can be seen in this quote is that Madame Blavatsky talks with enthusiasm about the coming of new teachings and of the role of the TS in preparing the way by removing obstacles and ease the way for the new Teacher.

Knowing that the TS was founded to support the growth of the human in us, it is important to keep in mind that growth means continuous development and not crystallized doctrine, unable to embrace the new, the unknown. With this in mind Annie tried her best to keep the TS faithful to its purpose. She never claimed that the teachings given up to her days were the final ones; on the contrary, she warned her audience that the teachings that were about to be taught may be completely different and that it may not be easy to understand them but, even if not understood, they should not be dismissed. She asked the members of the TS just to listen.

Annie was with Madame Blavatsky about two years before the passing of the latter. It is not surprising that Annie felt it was the Society's mission to pave the way for the World Teacher. Somehow those who are faithful to Truth are misunderstood by most people, and to carry out their work they face a great deal of troubles; this is the sadness of it all. It has also been said that members of the Society should, at least, be able to link dots, to put two and two together. We hope there is still time, and that such members are still around.

In *The Secret Doctrine* we read:

As stated in Book I, the humanities developed coordinately, and on parallel lines

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with the four Elements, every new Race being physiologically adapted to meet the additional element. Our Fifth Race is rapidly approaching the Fifth Element — call it interstellar ether, if you will — which has more to do, however, with psychology than with physics.

The above quote is another clue that Madame Blavatsky left us: the nature of the next additional element has more to do with psychology than with physics. We hope that there is no need to explain that as the Fifth Race is approaching this element, humanity will be looking to understand and fulfill this criterion. This seems to explain a great deal.

It was in the 18th century that humanity started to show interest in psychology, it was also that same century that saw the birth of psychoanalyses. Psychology has changed through the centuries and today many things that were believed when we first heard of it, are no longer applied by modern psychologists. This seems to be the way for a healthy body to develop, to change.

Krishnamurti's teachings are purely psychological, as he explains it to a questioner in Mark Lee's *World Teacher – Life*

and Teachings of J. Krishnamurti:

Q: Why is your teaching so purely psychological? There is no cosmology, no theology, no ethics, no aesthetics, no sociology, no political science, not even hygiene. Why do you concentrate only on the mind and its workings?

K: For a very simple reason, sir. If the thinker can understand himself, then the whole problem is solved. Then he is creation, he is reality; and then what he does will not be antisocial. Virtue is not an end in itself; virtue brings freedom, and there can be freedom only when the thinker, which is the mind, ceases. That is why one has to understand the process of the mind, the "I", the bundle of desires that create the "I".

When Annie was on her death bed Krishnamurti came to see her and she was worried about the state of affairs, so she asked him: "Son, how are you going to manage if you leave the Society? We did not prepare you to earn a livelihood." To which Krishnamurti replied: "Amma, do not worry, if there is Truth in what I say, I will float over the waters of life; if there is no Truth in what I say, let me sink."

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:8-13

The Strength That is Born of Unity

JOHN ALGEO

A vast similitude interlocks all.
All spheres grown, ungrown, small, large,
 suns, moons and planets.
All distances of place however wide.
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be
 ever so different or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral
 processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colours, barbarisms,
 civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist
 on this globe or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present,
 future,
This vast similitude spans them and
 always has spanned
And shall forever span them and
 compactly hold and enclose them.

Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*)

IN the four years between 1888, when *The Secret Doctrine* was published, and 1891, when she died, H.P. Blavatsky sent a message each year to the convention of the Theosophical Society (TS) in America.* Three of the messages were letters she wrote, read to the conventions by William Q. Judge or Annie Besant. One (in 1890) was delivered by Bertram Keightley on behalf of HPB, who at the time was too sick to write.

The three messages (of 1888–91) from

HPB's own pen are quite remarkable. Although now a hundred or more years old and directed to members of the TS in one nation, much of what they say is timeless and universal. Indeed, what Blavatsky writes in these messages is an expression of her mature teaching — her legacy to us and to all humanity.

Three Waves of Theosophy

HPB's public work can be divided into three waves, which partly overlap one another in time, but as a whole are chronologically successive and quite different from one another in tone and direction. Her early public work was much involved with psychic phenomena, with spiritualism, the rationale behind which she sought to explain, and with marvellous-seeming *siddhis*, wonder-working powers, that she possessed. In this work she was seeking, in the present-day wording of our Objects, to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

In retrospect, much of the phenomena now seems trivial and hardly a worthy precursor of the great message she had to deliver. She herself seems finally to have regretted the psychic display because of the notoriety that came from it. And indeed, materializing a teacup or

Dr John Algeo (11 Dec. 1930–13 Oct. 2019) was President of the TS in America (1993–2002) and international Vice-President of the TS (2002–08).

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controlling spooks is not obviously a fit prelude to a message of primeval wisdom and human unity. However, the phenomena served a purpose at the time. In the first place, her wonder-working attracted attention, and without an audience, no message could be delivered. HPB used the phenomena to get people to be aware of her. But more important, the phenomena also demonstrated to the closed minds of orthodox religion and science that there is a world of experience of which they were ignorant. A single materialized teacup was testimony that there is more in heaven and Earth than is dreamt of in our philosophy.

The second major wave in Blavatsky's public work is her teaching of the esoteric truths behind the world's religions, philosophies, and sciences. Much of her published writing was to that end. But most of it — the individual articles and the first big book, *Isis Unveiled* — were fragmentary and unfocused expositions of the teachings. The apogee of the doctrinal wave was *The Secret Doctrine* and, to some extent, *The Key to Theosophy*.

This wave was an expression of the second Object of the TS: To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science, and to show that a single primeval Wisdom Tradition underlies humanity's greatest intellectual achievements. When we talk about Theosophy today, this is often the wave we identify it with — the doctrines of karma, reincarnation, rounds and races, planes and bodies, chakras, thought forms, the occult hierarchy, and so on. But such teaching was perhaps mainly a way of consolidating

and concentrating attention in preparation for the really important work ahead.

The third and final wave in her public work was Blavatsky's enduring message to humanity. It was the great announcement of our oneness with each other and our unity with the source of all Being. It was a call to act in a manner appropriate to the realization of our oneness. It was a challenge to become fully human.

The third wave was the purest expression of the reason for the Theosophical Society's existence. It was the "original programme" of the Society. It lies behind the first of our Objects: To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. Blavatsky performed phenomena to attract the attention of a careless world, and she set forth the Teachings to induce her hearers to pay sustained attention. But the purpose of the attention was to bring them and us to the realization of who we are and what we should be doing.

This third wave is expressed notably in parts of the Key, in *The Voice of the Silence*, in statements like "The Golden Stairs", and in Blavatsky's messages to the American conventions. It is accordingly to such works that we should turn to find what Blavatsky most wished us to discover.

In her messages to America, probably the least well-known of the writings of the third wave, HPB sounds three themes that recur like the motifs of a musical composition, with each theme dominant in one of the letters. Those themes are:

1. Individual freedom, absence of dogmatism, and rationality in mind and behaviour (1888);

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2. The foundation of ethical behaviour on a concern for the welfare of others and on a recognition of the interdependence of all life — which she calls Altruism (1889);

3. The transmutation of personal concerns and egotism in theosophical work into a cooperative spirit that puts the theosophical message and the vehicle of that message — the Society itself — first in the concerns of its members (1891).

Freedom and Reason

Concerning the first of these themes, Blavatsky wrote that the Society should be:

an organization which, while promoting feelings of fraternal sympathy, social unity, and solidarity, will leave ample room for individual freedom and exertion in the common cause — that of helping mankind. (4)

She denied that anyone should be looked upon as an anointed teacher, even herself:

We are all fellow students, more or less advanced; but no one belonging to the Theosophical Society ought to count himself as more than, at best, a pupil-teacher — one who has no right to dogmatize. (4)

We are not to follow what someone else tells us, but to discover truth for ourselves, using our own perceptions:

. . . pure Theosophy — the philosophy of the rational explanation of things and not the tenets is of the most vital importance in the Society, inasmuch as it alone can furnish the beacon-light needed to guide humanity on its true path. (5)

“Pure Theosophy” is not the tenets — those teachings we find in the books, and most of us have to accept as much on

faith as Christians do their Bible or Moslems their Qur’an. On the contrary, “pure Theosophy” is “the philosophy of the rational explanation of things”. Theosophy is knowing such truth as can be known because it is reasonable. So Theosophy is not a fixed body of doctrine, delivered once for all time to the saints and inviolably recorded in books. “According as people are prepared to receive it, so will new Theosophical teaching be given”, she assures us. (5)

So too, although there is much psychic sensitivity around, it is not the aim of the Society to develop it: “The Society was not founded as a nursery for forcing a supply of Occultists — as a factory for the manufacture of Adepts.”(5) Blavatsky herself produced phenomena and gave out teachings — but neither of those is what the Society is for. It has a different purpose:

Theosophy seeks to develop the human nature . . . for the essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man . . . Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, goodwill to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to oneself, are its chief features. (6)

That list of five qualities is not merely a pious catalogue of general virtues. It is an insightful analysis into what is needed to develop human nature to its full, to harmonize the divine with the human in us. It rises from action through attitude to altruism and returns back again.

Kindness, the first feature, may seem like a weak thing, a simple matter of courtesy, but it is more than that. Kind earlier meant “natural”, being related to the word *kin*. Kindness is kinship in

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action. It is the behavior we owe to our brothers and sisters.

The action of kindness must be based upon an attitude — the absence of ill feeling against others and of egoistical selfishness. Ill feeling is directed outward rejecting others; selfishness is directed inward, preferring ourselves. Both are attitudes that must be overcome if we are to develop our natures and harmonize the divine with the human.

The only way to transform our attitude is through altruism. Altruism is the term Blavatsky generally uses for what is also called *agape* or, here, *charity*. Charity and altruism are not just going about doing good to those in need. They are rather recognizing the essential Oneness of all life and behaving in a manner that follows from such recognition. To do good works is commendable — but it alone is not enough, and it is not what the Society was founded for:

Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the condition of mankind. We are the friends of all those who fight against drunkenness, against cruelty to animals, against injustice to women, against corruption in society or in government, although we do not meddle in politics. We are the friends of those who exercise practical charity, who seek to lift a little of the tremendous weight of misery that is crushing down the poor. But in our quality of Theosophists, we cannot engage in any one of these great works in particular. As individuals we may do so, but as Theosophists we have a larger, more important,

and much more difficult work to do . . .

The function of Theosophists is to open men's hearts and understandings to charity, justice, and generosity, attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom . . . and when people have learnt to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice, and generosity will be done spontaneously by all. (7–8)

When charity — the recognition of the oneness of all life — is achieved, everything else follows. Charity transforms our attitude. With it, instead of ill feeling and selfishness, we will have an attitude of goodwill to all beings. With it, kindness is not merely an act of family courtesy, but instead is an expression of a perfect justice to others as to oneself. For being kind does not mean indiscriminately allowing others to do whatever they want. Indulgence is not kind. True kindness is acting lovingly but also justly toward our brothers and sisters, and also toward ourselves.

Altruism and Brotherhood

The essence of Theosophy is neither psychic nor intellectual, but ethical. HPB says that “the Ethics of Theosophy are even more necessary to mankind than the scientific aspects of the psychic facts of nature and man”. (16) Human beings can lead a full, satisfying, productive, and beneficial life without ever seeing an aura or knowing anything about the Fourth Round. But they cannot do so without living ethically. And ethical behaviour has to be based on altruism:

ALTRUISM . . . is the keynote of Theosophy

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and the cure for all ills; this it is which the real Founders of the Theosophical Society promote as its first Object — *UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD*. (18)

The concept of altruism is a great paradox. We wish to be better persons, but to devote our attention to improving ourselves leads to a focus on ourselves — to selfishness, although it may masquerade as spirituality. To forget ourselves in working for others leads to our own benefit as a by-product. He who would save his Soul, said Christ, must lose it. And Krishna told Arjuna that he should work without concern for the effect of the work on himself. When we are concerned about what we get out of an action, we get nothing we want. When we cease to be so concerned, everything comes to us. So HPB tells us that work for Theosophy “forms the entrance to the inner life”. (20)

At the end of her 1889 letter, Blavatsky quotes a remarkable passage from a letter of one of the real Founders of the Society:

Let not the fruit of good Karma be your motive; for your Karma, good or bad, being one and the common property of all mankind, nothing good or bad can happen to you that is not shared by many others . . . would you be partakers of Divine Wisdom or true Theosophists? Then do as the gods when incarnated do. Feel yourselves the vehicles of the whole humanity, mankind as part of yourselves, and act accordingly. (22)

As we are not separate, but one with one another, we share one another's karma. Humanity has a common karma,

to which we all contribute and which we all bear. We are more than brothers and sisters. We are one another. Each of us is the vehicle of the whole of humanity.

Be Theosophists, Work For Theosophy!

The Theosophical Society was founded to spread recognition of our unity and common karma. That this recognition should spread over the world is of paramount importance. War, exploitation. Injustice all the evils of social life are the product of a failure to recognize the truth of our unity and our common karma. To help the Society in spreading such recognition is therefore the obligation of every Theosophist.

Anything that threatened the health and unity of the Society was therefore of grave concern to HPB, especially in 1891, the last year of her life as she looked ahead to the future of the Society after her death. It must still be of grave concern to us. There is a natural tendency inherited from our involuntarily past that leads us to promote ourselves, to seek to bend others to our will, because we are sure that we know what is best for everyone. That tendency leads to division and disruption in any human group, including the Theosophical Society. And so HPB was concerned about it:

Self-watchfulness is never more necessary than when a personal wish to lead, and wounded vanity, dress themselves in the peacock's feathers of devotion and altruistic work . . . If every Fellow in the Society were content to be an impersonal force for good, careless of praise or blame so long as he

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subverted the purposes of the Brotherhood, the progress made would astonish the World and place the Ark of the TS out of danger. Take for your motto in conduct during the coming year, “Peace with All who love Truth in sincerity,” and the Convention of 1892 will bear eloquent witness to the strength that is born of unity. (34–35)

When we are united within ourselves individually, among our fellow members of the Theosophical Society, and with all other beings on our planet, we will know the strength that is born of unity and the peace that comes from Truth.

The “stability of the Society” (39) was HPB’s fondest wish. For no other organization upon the planet was founded to do explicitly what the Theosophical Society was to do. The organization of the Society, as such, has never been of great moment, but its purpose of bringing the message of unity to humanity is so important that the Society as vehicle of that purpose acquires reflected importance:

After all every wish and thought I can utter are summed up in this one sentence, the never dormant wish of my heart. “Be Theosophists, work for Theosophy!” Theosophy first, and Theosophy last; for its practical realization alone can save the Western World from that selsh and unbrotherly feeling that now divides race from race, one nation from the other, from that hatred of class and social strifes, that

are the curse and disgrace of so-called-Christian peoples. (38)

In the twentieth century we have seen that selfishness, unbrotherliness, division, hatred, and strife are not the exclusive property of the Christian West. They are the common karma of all humanity, so HPB’s words can be read with benefit by all. HPB closed her last letter to an American convention with other words that are also applicable to Theosophists all over the world: “In your hands, Brothers, is placed in trust the welfare of the coming century.”(38) She was writing a hundred years ago to those who have long since followed her to devachanic rest. But what she wrote is applicable to us today. In our hands now is placed in trust the welfare of a new coming century:

... if any of you have learned aught from my teachings, or have gained by my help a glimpse of the True Light, I ask you in return, to strengthen the cause by the triumph of which, that True Light, made still brighter and more glorious through your individual and collective efforts, will lighten the world. (38)

Can we do less than that? Out of gratitude for what we have received, must we not also pass on the light? She asked us to do this, not in her own name, but as she signed herself in her last letter to the Americans,

From their Servant to the last, H. P. Blavatsky. ✧

Note: * These messages have been printed as *H. P. Blavatsky to the American Conventions 1888-1891* (Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1979), with an interesting historical essay by Kirby van Mater. All parenthetical page numbers are to this edition.

An Irish Tribute to John Algeo

THE Irish members were deeply sorry when they learned of Dr John Algeo's passing one year ago. We were aware that John had served many years as Vice-President and thereafter President of the Theosophical Society (TS) in America for nine years, that he was an expert in the English language, and had also served as international Vice-President of the TS when Radha Burnier was international President .

He and his wife Adele visited Ireland in the summer of 2005, when the Organizing Secretary hosted them both. In his capacity as international Vice-President, he gave an uplifting and inspiring talk on "The Seven Rays" to members hailing from the North and South of Ireland in Belfast. His address was followed by the event over which he presided, when Northern and Southern Lodges came together under one umbrella and henceforward were known as the TS in Ireland. We all felt this was a very special, magical, and most memorable occasion.

Before returning to America, John and Adele travelled by train to Limerick Lodge, Southern Ireland, where he was requested to give a talk on the famous Irish poet William Butler Yeats, who also had links with the TS in Dublin.



Nov. 12, 1930 to Oct. 13, 2019

Following his visit to Ireland, John very kindly let me have all the necessary study materials which are still serving the members here since autumn 2005. We are greatly indebted to him for sharing his wisdom with us and for his generosity of spirit.

May dear John, a Theosophical giant, be surrounded by great Angels of Light and the love & protection of The Masters of the Wisdom whom he has so faithfully served, as he wings his way more deeply into the Light.

MARIE HARKNESS
Organizing Secretary
Theosophical Society in Ireland

Education is not the filling of a pail, but rather the lighting of a fire.

William Butler Yeats

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