



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mr Tim Boyd*

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mr Tim Boyd

Vice-President: Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy

Secretary: Ms Marja Artamaa

Treasurer: Mr K. Narasimha Rao

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA

Vice-President: ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org

Secretary: secy.hq@ts-adyar.org

Treasurer: treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org

Adyar Library and Research Centre: alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org

Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com & tphindia@adyarbooks.com

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com, Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

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.

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TIM BOYD

RECENTLY I was in California for a programme to engage in a public conversation with Michael Murphy, a brilliant man who has led a remarkable life. Although he is an author of a number of books which have been influential in the field of contemporary spirituality, he is probably best known for his role in founding the Esalen Institute. Esalen was started in 1962 and has been a force in the Western world in developing the teachers and the conversation about human potential and peak states of human experience — what the TS might describe as the 'powers latent in man'. Most of today's prominent teachers in the field of contemporary spirituality have made their way through Esalen's doors at one time or another.

It was a two-hour conversation that could have gone on much longer. One of the fascinating features for me was that although the evening was sold out, it was not an audience that had more than a passing familiarity with Theosophy or the Theosophical Society. As is necessarily the case for anyone exploring contemporary approaches to spirituality, many of them had come across the TS or its literature, but for a variety of reasons it was not enough. Some of them in their

study of Theosophy found themselves turned off by the difficult Victorian English that was common in our early literature. Some others who had studied a little more ran into difficulties correctly understanding the challenging ideas around races and rounds. A couple of people had problems with some of the early Theosophical teachings which addressed the concept of root races and with the way these ideas were later distorted in the development of some racist doctrines in Nazi Germany.

During the question-and-answer part of the evening a gentleman asked me a couple of probing questions. He was a man who clearly had delved into a study of the TS's history and at least some of the teachings. His introduction to the first question called attention to a number of prominent people who had left the TS to pursue other approaches to the Ageless Wisdom. He pointed to Rudolf Steiner, who left the TS taking with him most of the German section of the TS to form the Anthroposophical Society. He brought up the separations of J. Krishnamurti after disbanding the Order of the Star, of William Quan Judge, and others. After outlining some of the history of these highly regarded people the question he

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asked was, 'For an organization that promotes unity, truth, and brotherhood, how could you explain so many "schisms"?' From the manner in which the question was framed it was clear that it was not merely about TS history, but about the credibility of the TS in advancing some of its high ideals. I got the impression that my questioner had already made up his mind about it.

As someone who frequently finds himself speaking to groups of people, one of the things I have encountered over the years is that during question-and-answer sessions often people ask 'leading questions' — those that walk you through a person's beliefs or knowledge, eventually leading you to the answer that confirms those beliefs. These are always wonderful opportunities to 'step outside of the box' and look at things from a different point of view.

On one occasion during the Buddha's life a woman approached him with such a question. Her only child had just died. In her grief she carried the dead child to her neighbours asking them to give her some medicine to revive him. The neighbours pitied her seeing that the child was clearly gone. They felt that she had lost her senses. At length she found a man who told her, 'I cannot give you any medicine for this child, but I know a physician who can', and he sent her to see the Buddha. In her desperation she came to him with one question in mind, 'Can you give me a medicine that will bring my child back to life?' It was a simple, straightforward question that

demanded an equally straightforward answer — either it was 'yes', or it was 'no'.

The Buddha responded that he would make her such a medicine, if she could bring him the one necessary ingredient, a handful of mustard seeds — the most common seasoning in Indian cooking at the time. In her joy the woman jumped up to procure it. He then told her that the only condition was that the mustard seed had to come from a household where no one had lost a child, husband, wife, parent, or friend. She went from house to house in the village. By the end of the day it became clear that no such household existed. She buried her son and returned to the Buddha with a changed level of inquiry. In place of the request to give a medicine to alter the cycle of birth and death, she now asked to know about the nature of life, death, and impermanence.

In responding to my questioner that evening a strong image came to mind. It was that of a great river at the point where it meets the sea — like the Nile, Ganges, or Mississippi River deltas. Seen from high above such deltas resemble a tree, with a number of branches flowing through the sediment the river has carried along in its journey to merge with the sea. Where smaller rivers and streams flow into the main river they are called tributaries; where they branch out at the entrance to the sea or ocean they are called distributaries.

Each of the individuals involved in the various schisms were, like HPB, subject

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to the influence of their personalities. Many of them were also sincere and intuitive people who had been affected by some profound insight resulting from their exposure to the wisdom tradition. Through their lives and vision countless people have been exposed to some of the nuances of the One Tradition that Theosophy embodies.

The Theosophical Society came into being as the most recent expression of the Ageless Wisdom tradition. Much like a river, it brought life-giving waters to a contemporary context that had become arid from the materialistic tendencies of scientism and the superstitious urgings of the religions of the day. Both the wisdom of Theosophy and the vehicle for its expression in the world, the TS, came into being through the agency of H. P. Blavatsky.

There is no organization that can fully contain the wisdom of the ages. There is no form that remains static. There is no individual's mind that responds in the exact manner as another's.

HPB once commented that 'the world is man living in his personal nature'. The

teachings of Theosophy were intended for that world. They have been presented in full knowledge that they would not, could not, be fully comprehended, or faithfully followed; that its meaning would necessarily be distorted, but that its reintroduction to the current of world thought was the greatest hope for an alternative to the 'degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism' that characterized its time.

In my conversation with Michael Murphy, and the interaction with those gathered, it became clear that in 2015, 140 years after the founding of the TS, its profound teachings are not yet understood or fully appreciated, but its influence is growing stronger. Though dimly understood by many, its ideas, like a river, are slowly but surely moving humanity towards a deeper experience of truth. The societal influence the TS exerts is largely because of the way it has been interpreted and expressed by the many prominent people who have been exposed to its teachings. To my optimistic eyes the process is slow; the results are imperfect, but the end is certain. ✧

**I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.**

I've known rivers: Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

From a poem by Langston Hughes

Altruism and Theosophy

CHITTARANJAN SATAPATHY

WHEN we think of altruism, two other related terms come to our mind. These are: charity and philanthropy. Very often we think that these terms are interchangeable and they mean the same thing. However, there is a subtle difference between these expressions.

Of these three words, charity and philanthropy are older expressions; altruism is a relatively new word. It was originally coined in the 19th century by the French philosopher Auguste Comte as an antonym of egoism. He derived the French word 'altruisme' from the Italian word 'altrui' which in turn was derived from Latin 'alteri' meaning 'other people' or 'somebody else'. The word is used by sociologists, psychologists, evolutionary biologists, neurobiologists, anthropologists, ethologists and also by religious and spiritual leaders. Altruism or selflessness is the opposite of egoism and selfishness. It concerns the principle or practice of the welfare of others.

William Scot Green defines altruism as 'intentional action ultimately for the welfare of others that entails at least the possibility of either no benefit or a loss to the actor'. Though the word 'altruism'

is of fairly recent origin, the concept of altruism is a traditional virtue in many cultures, and forms the core of many religious traditions.

Philanthropy on the other hand means 'love of humanity' in the sense of caring for, nourishing, developing, and enhancing 'what it is to be human'. A modern definition of philanthropy is 'private initiatives for public good focusing on quality of life'. Philanthropy is contrasted with business which is concerned with 'private initiatives for private good, focusing on material prosperity', and government on the other hand which 'is concerned with public initiatives for public good, focusing on law and order'.

Charity is again an old concept which is distinct from philanthropy though, there may be instances of overlap. Charity relieves the pains of social problems whereas philanthropy attempts to solve the root causes of those problems. The usual example cited is the difference between giving a hungry man a fish and teaching him how to fish — 'give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'.

Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy is international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Public talk delivered at the East Zone Conference, Bhubaneswar, Indian Section, 14 February 2015.

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There is also a difference between philanthropy and altruism. Once a philanthropist, who along with her husband, had donated tens of millions of dollars, was interviewed. She said very candidly, there was no such thing as altruism in philanthropy. An average philanthropist is worldly. He knows that people are starving, some have no access to healthcare and medicines, and there is deprivation and illiteracy. Yet the philanthropist does not voluntarily part with his money, not until he is asked, or inspired to do so. It is very often the case that a philanthropist requires recognition in some form, publicity, admiration of people and a sense of satisfaction. This is because philanthropy is not altruism — altruism involves renunciation of the self and exclusive concern for the welfare of others.

By pointing out the distinction between charity, philanthropy, and altruism, one is not trying to belittle the importance or usefulness of charity and philanthropy. Charity as a practice of being benevolent, giving and sharing is extolled in all religions and traditions. Charity as a virtue is an important Christian theological concept of unlimited love and kindness. Its Pali and Sanskrit equivalent, *dāna*, is the virtue of giving, generosity, and benevolence in most Indian traditions including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. In Buddhism it is considered to be the first of the *pāramitās*. The Hebrew concept of *tzedakah* is commonly used to signify charity. The Islamic concept of *zakah* signifies mandatory charity, and the concept of *sadaqah*

signifies voluntary charity. Charity is both useful and necessary to relieve the pain and suffering of people at large.

Same is the case with philanthropy, which attempts to solve similar problems by addressing the root causes of the problems. All problems in society which degrade human life and generate inhuman conditions cannot be solved by governments and public institutions. Philanthropists play a major role in bridging the gap. More and more businessmen, industrialists, and rich people are nowadays coming forward to undertake and finance philanthropic work. This is a very welcome development even though much of the philanthropic work may be for social recognition, publicity, and so on.

The attempt here to understand the difference between charity and philanthropy on the one hand and altruism on the other is in the context of spirituality, with which Theosophy is concerned. As is well known, Theosophy is not a religion but it comprises Divine Wisdom which different teachers and prophets have taught to different nations and peoples in different parts of the world in different languages as the essential core concepts of different religions throughout the ages. Theosophy is translated as divine wisdom or *brahmavidya*. It is also known as ‘ancient wisdom’ which existed all along. The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, and the theosophical leaders who founded it, do not obviously have a copyright or patent over theosophy nor do they make any such claim.

Altruism is a relatively modern

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expression, but it forms a core concept in theosophy. Perhaps this is the right time to point out the difference between a person who lives a theosophic way of life and another who has merely become a member of the Theosophical Society (TS). One can easily become a member of the TS if one agrees with the three objects of the Society, particularly the first object which deals with Universal Brotherhood, and pays a nominal fee every year. The TS grants utmost freedom to its members and it admits members from all religions or no religion. It imposes no doctrine or opinion on any member. It has been emphasized time and again that merely becoming a member of the TS is not adequate to become a theosophist. To become a theosophist, studying Theosophy is not good enough either. One must put theosophical principles into practice and live Theosophy. One of the most important principles of Theosophy is altruism. Living altruistically is living for others and not for oneself. The theosophic life is a life of self-sacrifice and service.

Madame Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, wrote a book towards the end of her life titled *The Key to Theosophy*. In it she uses the words altruism and altruist quite a few times. She says in one place that the foremost rule is the renunciation of one's personality, that is, a member has to become a thorough altruist, never to think of himself, and to forget his own vanity and pride, but only think of the good of his fellow-creatures. He has to live a life of

abstinence in everything, self-denial, and strict morality, doing his duty by all men. While saying so she recognizes that only a few real theosophists exist within the TS. She also recognizes that there are even people outside the TS who are better theosophists. She points out the case of Father Damien, who spent all his life looking after leprosy patients and finally died of leprosy. According to her he was a living exemplar of theosophical heroism and Buddha and Christ-like mercy and self-sacrifice.

Madame Blavatsky was always very forthright and she says that no man has a right to say that he can do nothing for others, on any pretext whatsoever. She further says that the TS has no rules to force anyone to become a practical theosophist; however no man who has no altruism in him will ever become a true theosophist.

One hundred and twenty years later, while giving a public lecture at the international Convention of the TS in 2009, our past President, Mrs Radha Burnier, said:

Altruism should be the characteristic quality of every declared Theosophist. Many of us declare ourselves to be Theosophists, but we are only members of the Theosophical Society, not real Theosophists. The Theosophist is one who is different because he is characterized by this quality of Altruism. Each one of us can examine, from time to time, whether we qualify to be a Theosophist, or whether we are merely members of the Theosophical Society.

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Madame Blavatsky and Radhaji knew well what they were talking about, for they lived perfectly altruistic lives for the benefit of others with great sacrifice to themselves. It rings true when you hear Radhaji saying:

We have to pursue our slow way through many incarnations, until we realize the beauty and the grandeur of being altruistic. The world may regard various people as altruistic when they do a little bit of good, but the person who is truly altruistic, lives not for himself but for the sake of others, including birds, animals, insects, and the earth itself.

Radhaji took the concept of altruism and the related concept of universal brotherhood to a different level by including in their fold not only our fellow men and women but also animals, plants, and the environment.

There are protagonists of the view opposed to altruism. A book by Ayn Rand titled *The Virtue of Selfishness* is an example. In it, she argues to validate egoism as a rational code of ethics, and tries to prove that altruism is destructive. Such a controversial title of the book and the equally controversial viewpoint canvassed in it, no doubt made the author very well known, but in the end not many would buy her argument.

There is overwhelming evidence from religious and other traditions to support the case for altruistic living. Altruism is central to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Many biblical authors draw a strong connection between love of others and love

of God. James Henry Leigh Hunt's poem has not only made the story of Abou Ben Adhem immortal, but also the concept that love of fellowmen ranks higher than love of God.

In Islam, altruism is reinforced in the concept of 'al-eethaar' which is the notion of preferring others to oneself. Prophet Muhammad extols the virtue of Ansar Muslims of Medina who shared their homes, clothing, and food with the Muhajirs of Mecca, overlooking their own needs. In modern day Islam, altruism is known as 'al-ghayriyah', 'ghayr' meaning the other. Islamic tradition has many wonderful stories of altruism. There is this story of a family putting the child to sleep and turning off the lights and pretending to eat while offering the only meal available to a hungry person. There is another story of a wounded soldier dying of thirst, refusing to drink water offered to him and requesting other wounded soldiers lying around him be offered water first.

The fundamental principles of Jainism revolve around the concept of altruism, not only for humans but for all sentient beings. Jainism has an uncompromising reverence for all life. The first Tirthankara Rishabh, introduced the concept of altruism for all living beings.

Altruism figures prominently in Buddhism. It emphasizes love and compassion, wishing that all beings be happy and all beings be free from suffering. In the view of the Dalai Lama, Buddhism as a religion is kindness towards others. The Jataka stories describing the past lives of

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the Buddha and the stories from his last life are replete with his altruistic deeds. The Bodhisattva vow which goes something like: 'I will not enter Nirvana until everyone else has become enlightened', is perhaps the highest example of altruism. Jowo Atisha, the founder of the Kadampa school in Tibetan Buddhism was instructed by a woman beggar, 'One must give up selfishness and self-serving thoughts, and be more concerned about others by placing oneself in others' position.'

Patrul Rinpoche met a widow with her three children while he was on his way to Sershul on foot to hold a Dharma festival. They too were going to the Dharma festival. Rinpoche felt sorry for the orphans and their widowed mother, and he carried the second child on his back and travelled with them. Rinpoche would piggyback the child to beg for meals and share with them all. People thought they were a family of beggars. The woman did not know he was Patrul Rinpoche until after they arrived at the destination.

In Judaism, altruism is considered the desired goal of creation. It is believed that everything that happens is to raise humanity to the level of altruism, love for one another. Altruism is also an essential component of the Sikh religion. The Sikh gurus sacrificed their lives to protect weak and defenceless people against atrocities. Bhai Kanhaiya was found giving water to both friends and foes among the wounded soldiers in a war. This revived some of the enemy soldiers who started fighting again. When the matter was brought before Guru

Gobind Singh, Bhai Kanhaiya explained that he was giving water to the wounded because he saw the face of the Guru in all of them. The Guru approved, 'You were practising what you were taught in the house of the Guru. You should also give them ointment to heal their wounds.'

Hinduism gives great importance to altruism. The saint poet Tulsidas writes in *Ram Charit Mānas*:

*para hita sarisa dharma nahi bhāi,
para pidā sama nahi adhamāi*

There is no dharma equal to being helpful to others. There can be no greater evil than to give pain to others (Rama speaking to Bharat in 'Uttarakhand', 7.41)

The saint poet Narasi Mehta says much the same thing when he sings:

वैष्णव जन तो तेने कहिये जे पीड
परायी जाणे रे।
पर दुःखे रउपका करे तो ये मन
अभिमान न आणे रे॥

Vaishnava people (devotees of Lord Vishnu) are those who,
Feel the pain of others,
Help those who are in misery,
But never let ego or conceit enter their mind.

The spiritual man is he who understands the pain of others and helps others in misery without even a shade of pride. In *Panchatantra* (5.3.37) and in *Hitopadeśa* (1.3.71) we are told:

*ayam nijah paroveti ganānā
laghuchetasām,
udāra charitānām tu vasudhaiva
kutumbakam.*

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This is mine, that is somebody else's,
is the thought of narrow-minded people;
For the wise, this whole world is a family.

The original in *Mahopanishad* (6.71-72) is a slight variant:

*ayam bandhurayam neti ganānā
laghuchetasām,
udāra charitānām tu vasudhaiva
kutumbakam.*

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, in verse 5.2.3, states that the three characteristics of a good, developed person are self-restraint (*damah*), compassion or love for all sentient life (*dayā*), and charity

तदेतत्त्रयं शिक्षेद् दमं दानं दयामिति
(*dāna*). Learn three cardinal virtues — self-restraint, charity and compassion for all life.

In the *Bhagavadgitā*, Lord Krishna declares that restraining senses and regarding everything equally, those who are engaged in the welfare of all beings, they come unto me:

*Sanniyamya indriya-grāmam, sarvatra
sama-buddhayaḥ
te prāpnuvanti mām eva, sarva-bhūta-hite
ratāḥ*

In the *Viveka Chudamani*, verse 37, Shankaracharya describes the qualities of the noblest beings who are forever acting for the benefit of mankind and helping others to cross the ocean of *samsāra*:

*śāntā mahānto nivasanti santo,
vasantavat lokahitam charantah;
tirnāh svayam bhima bhavārnavam janān,
ahetuna anyān api tārayantah.*

There are good souls, calm and magnanimous,
who do good to others as does the spring,
and who, having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death,
help others also to cross the same, without any motive whatsoever.

The Hindu scriptures, without exception extol the virtue of altruism. It is variously referred to as *lokahita*, *sarva bhuta hita*, *para hita*, *para upakāra*. Some of the examples are:

1. अष्टादशपुराणानां सारं व्यासेन कीर्तितम् ।
परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् ॥

In all the 18 *purāna-s* Vyāsa Maharshi has told only two gospels:
Doing favour to others is *punya* and troubling others is *pāpa* (sin).

2. परोपकाराय फलन्ति वृक्षाः परोपकाराय वहन्ति नद्यः ।
परोपकाराय दुहन्ति गावः परोपकारार्थमिदं शरीरम् ॥

Trees give fruits to assist others,
Rivers flow to help others;
Cows produce milk to feed others,
In the same way, our body
should also be used for helping others.

3. Finally, we have the famous *sanyāsa sukta* from the *Mahānārāyana Upanishad* (Krishna Yajur Veda):

*Na karmanā na prajayā dhanena,
tyāgenaike amṛtatvam ānaśuh;
parena nākam nihitam guhāyām,
vibhrājate yadyatayo viśanti.*

Immortality is not obtained through action or begetting offspring or wealth,

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but only through sacrifice, renunciation and altruism.

One thus finds that altruism is a key concept in all the major religions of the world. It should therefore be no surprise that the concept of altruism is central to Theosophy, which is the fountainhead of all religions. In *Practical Occultism*, Madame Blavatsky says:

Let them know at once and remember always that true Occultism, or Theosophy, is the 'Great Renunciation of SELF', unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. It is ALTRUISM. . .

She further says in the same book:

And yet, he who would profit by the wisdom of the universal mind, has to reach it through *the whole of Humanity* without distinction of race, complexion, religion, or social status. It is *altruism*, not *egoism* even in its most legal and noble conception, that can lead the unit to merge its little Self in the Universal Selves.

She says in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Let your Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.
Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before you have wiped it from the sufferer's eye.
But let each burning tear drop on your heart and there remain;
nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.'
(Fragment I, 59-61)

In *The Secret Doctrine* she says:

. . . the only palliative to the evils of life is union and harmony — a Brotherhood *IN ACTU*, and altruism not simply in name.

B. P. Wadia, who has written fine expositions on Madame Blavatsky's books has this to say:

The Secret Doctrine drives home this stupendous lesson. The *Stanzas of Dzyan* and the golden precepts of *The Voice of the Silence* belong to the same series of Occult Instructions, and if they emphasize one teaching more than any other it is the dangers of a life of knowledge and devotion, of wisdom and purity which is at the same time devoid of *positive and active altruism*. Without hesitation it can be asserted that the teachings contained in *The Secret Doctrine* will not be thoroughly understood by one who is not actively altruistic. It will remain a sealed book in spite of higher understanding and intuitive perceptions, unless these two are made use of on the plane of action. What distinguishes a Theosophist from a student of Theosophy is this altruism. In *The Key to Theosophy* it is said, 'Theosophist is, who Theosophy does,' — not thinks, not studies, not feels, but *does*.

Writing a century ago, when the word had not acquired today's mixed connotations, H. P. Blavatsky defined occultism as 'altruism pure and simple' — the divine wisdom or hidden theosophy within all religions. Occultism is founded on the principle that Divinity is concealed — transcendent yet immanent — within every living being. As a spiritual discipline occultism is the renunciation of

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selfishness; it is the 'still small path' which leads to wisdom, to the right discrimination between good and evil, and the practice of altruism.

Writing in *Lucifer*, Madame Blavatsky says:

He who does not practice altruism; he who is not prepared to share his last morsel with a weaker or poorer than himself; he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, whenever and wherever he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, whether a brother Theosophist or not, and does not undertake his defence as he would undertake his own — is no Theosophist. (*Lucifer*, Vol. I, p. 169.)

When Master KH, one of the inner founders of the TS, said that the first object of the TS is philanthropy, he clarified that his reference to philanthropy was meant in the broadest sense and that the true Theosophist is a philanthropist — not for himself, but for the world he lives. Adopting the modern connotation, we can say a true Theosophist has to be an altruist, living for the world and not for himself.

Dr Annie Besant takes the concept of altruism to a great height when she says in *The Laws of the Higher Life*:

The spiritual man must lead a higher life than the life of altruism. He must lead the life of self-identification with all that lives and moves. There is no 'other' in this world; we all are one. Each is a separate form, but one Spirit moves and lives in all.

By altruism we break the illusion of 'Your Soul and My Soul'. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 120.)

'Lift your head, oh Lanoo; do you see one, or countless lights above you, burning in the dark midnight sky?' †

'I sense one Flame, oh Gurudeva, I see countless undetached sparks shining in it.'

'You said well. And now look around and into yourself. That light which burns inside you, do you feel it different in any way from the light that shines in your Brother-men?'

'It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, 'Your Soul and My Soul.'

Whichever tradition, religion, or culture one may come from, one is left with no doubt that the only way forward is to lead an altruistic life, to live for others and not for selfish ends. ✧

References

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2. 'The Altruism of Buddhism' by Khenpo Sodargye Rinpoche, Lecture given at the Shandong University on 11 November 2011.
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Mainstreaming Theosophy

VICENTE R. HAO CHIN, JR.

THE Theosophical Society (TS) has been around for 139 years. However, its growth as an organization has been relatively stagnant for more than half a century. Its membership has been declining since 1928, when it reached a peak of 45,000, down to about 26,000 today. Since 1928, world population has increased 3.5 times. Every year, 80,000,000 people are born. If the message of theosophy reaches only 100,000 new people per year, it will take 800 years before reaching the number of new people born in one year alone. To meet the population increase of just 2 years, it will take 1,600 years. At this rate the TS will become more and more irrelevant to the changes happening in the world.

One hundred thirty years ago, the Mahachohan, the teacher of the Adepts, exhorted the leaders of the infant TS:

For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to preach and popularize a knowledge of theosophy.

(*ML* Appendix II)

Have we achieved such popularization? I am afraid we have not. The word ‘Theosophy’ remains an unfamiliar word or concept to a large majority of the world population.

Have the theosophical doctrines reacted practically on society’s moral code and influenced the conduct of men and women of the world? Again, we have to answer generally in the negative. It is my impression that a very large percentage of our lodges are oriented towards internal activities rather than seeking to actively help solve the problems of human society.

It is incumbent upon us to renew our efforts to achieve this vision of the Mahachohan — to make Theosophy and the TS a part of the mainstream of society.

To go mainstream means that an idea or practice has become part of the prevailing current in public thought, in other words, most people would somehow be familiar with it or know something about it. It can be a concept like Zen, or meditation, or reincarnation, or karma.

How can we successfully enter the mainstream? I would like to share what

Mr Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr. is the President of Golden Link College, a theosophical institution in the Philippines. Talk delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, 30 December 2014.

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I consider to be three foundations in the effort to go mainstream:

1. We need to decide what we would like to be known for.

When people hear of Theosophy, what comes to their mind? Is it an Eastern cult? An abstruse philosophy? A psychic group? An educational organization?

Ninety-nine percent of those who have heard of Theosophy will only know us by one or two word associations. For example, it can be 'esoteric', 'cult', 'clairvoyance', 'Blavatsky', 'brotherhood', 'intellectual', 'Hindu', and so on. Those few words will determine whether they will become interested and inquire further about Theosophy or not. If the associated word is negative or irrelevant to them, then people will not pursue it further.

It is important that we deliberately determine the keywords for which Theosophy should be known, and then popularize them. Will they be 'oneness', 'brotherhood', 'character-building', 'meditation', 'a spiritual way of life', and so forth? If we do not do so according to the way that it should be done, then public opinion will create negative impressions or associations, even if they are inaccurate. Wrong impressions will greatly harm the effectiveness of the TS.

2. We need to popularize applied Theosophy and establish theosophical practices on a wide scale.

In *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, a Master wrote:

Theosophy should not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics, epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical, and it has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless digressions . . . Theosophy can find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life, thoroughly impregnated with its spirit. . . . Its followers have to set the example of a firmly outlined and as firmly applied morality before they get the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of a like ethic Unity and singleness of purpose in other associations and individuals.

(LMW II, Letter 82)

To make Theosophy relevant, therefore, we must convert theosophical knowledge into enduring practices and institutions that can permeate individual life, family life, schools, politics, society, media, culture, and so on.

Let us take one example of applied Theosophy, which is theosophical education. It has always been a puzzle to me why the TS is not deeply involved in theosophical education. All the theosophical pioneers, whether Blavatsky, Olcott, or Besant have strongly advocated the founding of theosophical schools. Yet it is one of the most neglected areas of applied Theosophy.

We must keep in mind the enormous influence that schools can have in moulding young minds. If we but glance at the Catholic schools, we will see one of the important secrets of the influence

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of the Roman Catholic Church. There are numerous Catholic orders that run schools, such as the Jesuits, the La Salette brothers, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and so forth. Let us take the Jesuits. Out of about 20,000 Jesuits, there are only 2,400 involved in education; but they run 2,129 schools worldwide, with 1.7 million students. Many of their graduates become leaders of their countries. There are 1,693 La Salle Brothers involved in education, and they have 1,049 schools with almost one million students. The Catholic Church itself has more than 200,000 schools all over the world, enrolling 52,000,000 students. That is more than the combined population of Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway and Finland. You can imagine the influence of the Catholic Church in countries where it has schools.

Why isn't the Theosophical Society intensively involved in education? Why can't it have at least 100 schools by the end of the century? We have the underlying philosophy, the methodology, the lands, and so many educators among our ranks.

We can look at many other examples of how applied practice and institutions can help mould the public mind. Zen became popular because of the example set by monks in Japan who practised it for inner equanimity. Because they started it by their example, there are now more than 3 million Zen practitioners in Japan and millions more outside of Japan.

The organization called PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) was

only started in 1980 by two persons. But because of its applied advocacy, it has done more to make people aware of animal rights and vegetarianism than any other organization. It is the most influential animal rights organization in the world today with an annual budget of \$34 million. The annual budget of the international TS is only 1% of this organization which focuses mainly on animal welfare. With the deep and noble goals of the TS, why can't we have a budget a hundred times what we have now? Sometimes, we worry that there is not enough money to start these. I think the reality is that we do not have enough worthwhile theosophical projects able to draw the funding institutions that are looking for good projects.

It is essential that we as the Theosophical Society should be involved in actual practices and institutions that will help the daily life of individuals. We must demonstrate the usefulness of theosophical principles in solving the problems of living and of society.

For Theosophy to become part of the mainstream, we need to become relevant to the daily life of the individual, otherwise the theosophical message will be drowned out by the billions of bits of information that are broadcast every day.

The range of possible theosophical practices and institutions is almost limitless. It can be as simple as a centre for stress management, or it can go deeper into meditation, yoga, or well-being. It can be on marital harmony, parenting,

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education, the establishment of schools, vegetarianism, health and fitness, animal welfare, ecology, organic agriculture, energy conservation, compassionate entrepreneurship, leadership, politics, youth development, social development, and so on and on. It is best that different theosophical groups with similar advocacies and projects should coordinate with each other in order to develop synergy, otherwise there will be a tendency for individual projects to fade out and die a natural death.

If the TS itself does not pioneer the application of its tenets and principles, then it will remain an intellectual philosophy that will have little relevance to the problems of the world.

3. The third foundation is the need to train qualified advocates of theosophy and applied theosophy.

These advocates are those who will competently face the general public and explain Theosophy and its usefulness. The availability of *qualified* advocates is absolutely essential because if we do not have these people, then, even if we become popular, such popularity will backfire and we will become notorious because those who speak on behalf of the Theosophical Society may not really be proper representatives of the ageless philosophy.

For this reason, it is essential for the international TS and the most active Sections in the world to undertake a concerted and integrated program of training theosophical workers in three areas:

- a. Theosophical knowledge — the theosophical advocates must know well the ageless wisdom, supplemented by modern insights in psychology, science and other fields
- b. Theosophical practice — the advocates must have explored the principles in their lives and in society
- c. Communication skills — the advocates must possess a minimum level of communication ability: spoken or written, plus prudence.

This effort to develop a growing corps of advocates must be done on an international scale because many sections do not have the trainers or experience in conducting such training. The international headquarters and the strong sections must help the less active theosophical groups.

But we must not forget that such a training should not limit itself to theoretical topics, but must include the applied side of theosophical knowledge. Ideas alone cannot change the world. It is the application of these ideas that will change the world.

Summary

These then are the three important foundations of mainstreaming theosophy in the future.

1. Identify Theosophy with two or three key ideas for which it will be known, and disseminate such an association;
2. Establish enduring practices and

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institutions that will make theosophical wisdom relevant to the lives of people and society as a whole; and

3. Intensively train a large core of theosophical advocates who will become the ambassadors of the wisdom to the world.

These programs, especially the second and third, may take 30 to 50 years before we can see their real fruit. But they are the solid foundations upon which we can build the popularization of Theosophy and make it a cornerstone of future civilizations.

There will be many difficulties and obstacles in attaining such visions. But we must remember that such visions were not

just conceived by ordinary mortals. The theosophical ship was launched by several Masters of the Wisdom and its agenda is no less than the transformation of entire masses of peoples and societies.

Are we failing the inner founders of the Theosophical Society by being too timid about difficult programs? We need to take risks. When the idea is right, there is no failure, just temporary setbacks.

I would like to invite all of you to think about this and see what we can do no matter how humble is the beginning. Let us join hands and demonstrate to the world that this thing called Theosophy holds the key to the long-term solutions of the problems of the world. And, brothers and sisters, let us start today. ✧

It seems to me that the function of education is to bring about a release of energy in the pursuit of goodness, truth, or God, which in turn makes the individual a true human being and therefore the right kind of citizen. But mere discipline, without full comprehension of all this, has no meaning, it is a most destructive thing. Unless each one of you is so educated that, when you leave school and go out into the world, you are full of vitality and intelligence, full of abounding energy to find out what is true, you will merely be absorbed by society; you will be smothered, destroyed, miserably unhappy for the rest of your life. As a river creates the banks which hold it, so the energy which seeks truth creates its own discipline without any form of imposition; and as the river finds the sea, so that energy finds its own freedom.

J. Krishnamurti

On Relationship, Part II — Practical Matters

RAPHAEL LANGERHORST

In Part I of this article, we were looking at our divinity, locked into our lower principles into which we are incarnated. We have seen how our consciousness becomes slave to the body and senses, and the need to realize ourselves as divine beings to end this slavery.

This is not accomplished by glorifying our personality, composed of our physical, astral, and lower mental aspects, as many would like to think. Rather, we need to relinquish our misidentification with these lower principles, thus establishing ourselves naturally in our divinity¹, and relating our personality, as an immaculate garment deprived of its illusive self, to the universal divine essence².

God or Animal

Now, as human beings, we can choose — and it is the most fundamental choice we have to make: do we want to be *god* or *animal*?

We cannot escape this our only choice — being alive, we necessarily act in this world. Our actions are directed either by

our slavery, the illusive, separated self, in its restless, eager, but ultimately vain attempt at self-assurance; or by the serene awareness of the same universal life in all manifestation.

There is nothing fanciful about this, it is everyday fact, which we are able to see if we can but keep silent for a moment and really look — who are we? We do not know! Yet, we act with such determination, thinking we need this and that, disappointed by what we cannot obtain, and restless with fear about what we think is ours — also in terms of relationships, as with everything else.

The human being manifests itself at all levels, from pure universal divinity down to the densest physical matter, and back to spiritual consciousness. It is up to us how our principles relate to each other, if they are related at all. Are we just an animal endowed with mind? Or are we aware of our inner pure essence?

Sexuality, Slavery and Polarities

Sigmund Freud, the father of modern

Mr Raphael Langerhorst is a young Theosophist, active in the TS in Austria. He is an electronics and IT engineer with musical talents.

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psychoanalysis, considered the sexual energy, which he termed 'libido', as the root cause of all our ambitions.³

I have always considered this approach limited and one-sided, but, there is something to it. Since human beings are compounds of the divine and the terrestrial, there are naturally two distinct driving forces at play.⁴ Of these two, the outgoing terrestrial force can, in a broad sense, be considered to be very closely related to sexual energy.

Yet, what is the fundamental quality upon which this energy is based? Being of a terrestrial character, it is naturally based on matter and separation as the basic quality due to the objectivity of matter⁵. This brings us to an interesting aspect of sexuality: it is based on separation, there is no unity in it. So, sexuality, by itself, is a means to strengthen separation, drawing us more deeply into materiality, thereby weakening our relation to the divine and sense of unity. This in turn weakens our own will (our relation to Atma⁶), thereby increasing our slavery to our lower terrestrial principles, and then drawing us further into the bondage and dependence of sexuality. All of this forms a vicious circle that makes us less responsive to our inner divine nature.

The above is important to note, because our self-consciousness is a result of our inherent divinity. Weakening our relation to the divine drives us to unconsciousness. Then our mind becomes narrow, our concepts selfish, and we lose our capacity of genuine love — being the awareness of the unity

of all life, and as such a necessity for wisdom. This is probably the reason why both I. K. Taimni in his excellent commentary on the Yoga Sutras, *The Science of Yoga*⁷, and HPB in her *Practical Occultism*⁸ clearly state that sexuality, as commonly known,⁹ is an obstacle to realizing our divinity.

Being aware of these implications gives us an important key to many of our social problems. People who are content within the limits of their personalities, with no higher aspirations towards their divine nature, do not see any conflict in sexuality, because this is, as Freud correctly identified, the root source of all their ambitions. The struggle only starts when we are not content in our isolation from the divine. Then, as mentioned earlier, we have to work our way out of the bondage of the terrestrial, our slavery to our physical, astral, and mental bodies, which will try to keep us captive with their illusive power — lust, wrath, and greed.

Often we compromise and consider sexuality as a means for love, mistaking both these opposites even as synonyms, or considering sexuality as a way to reach our divinity. All this only shows our limited understanding and all the more the tightness of our bondage, of which we cannot let go. But it is not easy. If we deny our sexuality while still being slaves to our bodies, we create yet¹⁰ another conflict¹¹. The proper way to overcome this is to develop discernment, patience, knowledge, and self-responsibility, if not love, the ultimate remedy.

Centre and Circumference

In a most fundamental way, manifestation is driven by two forces: centrifugal and centripetal, meaning the outwards- (towards matter) and inwards- (towards pure divinity) directed forces. The libido of Freud is an expression of this outwards-directed force, which we have so far called 'terrestrial'.

This centrifugal force, or libido in its terrestrial form in particular, is of great importance in the early stages of our human evolution, in order to build our individuality.¹² In the absence of proper awareness of the divine, we even require this lower energy to drive our ambition, otherwise we would just become idle and lazy.¹³ This ambition invariably leads to experience, which is the material out of which our sense of individuality can develop.

But all experience out of ambition leads to suffering sooner or later because it is bondage and imprisonment of our divinity. When we begin to see this fundamental truth, we hopefully begin to seek our true home. Then it is of utmost importance to get out of this slavery.

It is interesting to note that, especially in Western culture, the media is using this tendency of bondage and slavery by appealing to our libido, blinding our discernment, and making us social, economical, and psychological slaves. However, the solution is not to fight against the media (or any other worldly power for that matter), but to work out our own freedom. Sigmund Freud also writes about sublimation of our libido,

which is fundamental to social and cultural values. However, without the link to the divine, this sublimation can only reach a very limited, and still very personal, and, as such, selfish level.

On the path of relating to our divinity we do not have to fight against our libido — a useless attempt, as it is fundamental to our capacity to act¹⁴ — but to purify our personality, allowing our higher principles to reflect into our lower ones. The more this integration is accomplished, the more we can bring our lower principles into harmony and — most importantly — make these principles subservient to our higher nature, which naturally takes away the illusive and narrow self-identification of our bodies¹⁵ and establishes our awareness of life at large.¹⁶ Thus, our libido, as our capacity to act in this world, can be directed from our inner awareness.

Only then can our lower principles be really used purposefully, out of inner freedom and serenity, without dependence and slavery.

Fundamental Forces in Nature and Humanity

Let us summarize what we have just learned about sexuality and libido, as this is a very crucial subject in our life, not just regarding relationships.

In manifestation we can identify two most fundamental tendencies, or forces: the centrifugal (outgoing, terrestrial) and centripetal (inward-going, spiritual) forces, thus establishing the most fundamental polarity of

On Relationship, Part II — Practical Matters

forces in manifestation. The centrifugal force is a necessity for life to involve into matter, thus leading to separation and the establishment of apparently separated entities. Thus, in us human beings, this force manifests as our fundamental tendency to maintain our sense of I-ness, that is, to separate our identity from others. Libido in its broad sense of ambition, is one aspect of this fundamental tendency and forms the basis of our capacity to act and perform in this world. Sexuality is one of the most prominent expressions of this libido, thus we see how sexuality relates to strengthening our apparent separation and upholds our artificial self-identification with our bodies as one of the aspects of the centrifugal force.

This illusive self-identification requires constant affirmation and approval, simply because it is not our real self (what is real does not depend on external approval). So our actions are directed towards seeking our selves in the world of the senses, to which we cling and which call for excitement to draw our awareness to our bodies. Seeking thus is a vain attempt, as our bodies are a temporary manifestation. Thereby every attempt at finding our own essence in these fleeting bodies must result in failure, which translates into suffering because of this illusive self-identification and transitory nature of our lower bodies, being subject to permanent change.

By identifying with our bodies we make ourselves (our consciousness) subservient to them, resulting in slavery

to these lower principles, which then dictate our desires, abuse our intellectual capacity, and drive our actions (in this order).

Then what about the centripetal force, which is directed inwards? This force becomes increasingly important during evolution, when, after full manifestation in the external objectivity during involution, we begin to turn inwards and seek our way back to our divine source. It is this force that brings home the experience of our journey and re-establishes our relation to the divine.

But it is not a blind, externally imposed force, as the centrifugal force seems to be during involution. Rather, the centripetal force is a result of our own efforts and maturity; it is directly related to our capacity for inner awareness of the fundamental one Life, our actual and real centre. As such, the centripetal force is the self-conscious force, directing our life through our own freedom and self-awareness, instead of being a slave to our bodies. Our ever-vain attempts at self-affirmation in our lower principles will come to an end by this inner awareness, restlessness is put aside, and anxiety fades away as our bodies¹⁷ become subservient to our real Self.

This condition of actual self-awareness is the ultimate basis for love to manifest as a result of our relation to the divine, consciously recognizing the same universal essence in all living beings.

Prana and Chakras

There is a very interesting note

in C. W. Leadbeater's *The Chakras*. Accordingly, prana enters our body through one of the chakras as a uniform energy. There it is broken up into seven distinct qualities which are then distributed to all the chakras, each quality corresponding to the specific chakra. One of these qualities, which CWL identifies as the orange-red part, usually moves down to the chakra at the base of the spine and to our generative organs, one of the functions being to feed our lust and sensuality, among other things.

This obviously relates to the uncontrolled slavery which sexuality imposes on us and that has already been discussed at length. Yet, by exercising our will persistently, by consciously resisting our lower nature in this particular respect, it is possible to redirect this flow of prana to our brain. The effect of doing so is that this quality of prana is refined and transformed into higher qualities, in particular, increasing our intellectual faculty and our capacity for unselfish love. Thus strengthening our spiritual nature, we become potent in our higher aspects.

After this transmutation has been accomplished, we are no longer subject to uncontrolled sensuality and our higher qualities can more easily reflect into our purified personality. Meditation with the motive of purification, like the one already mentioned in J. J. van der Leeuw's *Gods in Exile*¹⁸, can greatly assist in this process.

Once the transmutation has been accomplished, we become aware of much more freedom, and in retrospect

can identify and see the actual slavery that we have subjected ourselves to. Specifically, we can also notice this slavery in others, which continues to be a good reminder of the need to free ourselves in order to be able to live with right determination and purpose.

This, again, is just one aspect of the general problem of misidentification with our bodies, which we have to work out in general and in other, often more subtle, aspects, especially as concerns all our sensuality, of which sexuality is just one aspect. For example, this physiological change must also be accompanied by purification of our emotions (astral body) and mind (mental body) in order to positively relate to our divinity with higher aspirations — otherwise we will end in inner conflict.¹⁹

Thus we see that the transmutation is really required at all levels and can never work out by bodily austerity alone, while our mental imagination, as slave to our desires, is still driving us to insanity.

Higher Purpose

The above naturally leads to the question of a higher purpose in relationships. Realizing that sexuality in itself (ironically driving towards separation) is thus a source of conflict we can readily observe the question, 'what is the purpose of our relationships?', naturally arises. This is particularly so in Western culture which has spread all over the world already in this respect. In this culture sexuality has risen to the status of a religion to be worshipped. Living in this culture,

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we do not question our dogmatic religion.

In some cultures, yet untouched by this modern dogma, relationships are much more practically oriented, being recognized as the social nucleus to sustain human life. Yet even that very apparent purpose has become quite neglected in the modern world because of our slavery to sensuality — which means we desire sensuality without responsibility; is this not a strange concept? It can only be the result of our total ignorance of who we are, as already indicated in Part I of this article. Given this cultural development, our theosophical background, and the seemingly outdated practical purpose of relationships, again: What purpose can we find in relationships now? Our ultimate need is our relationship to the divine.

Since every human being is inherently divine, all our relationships are an opportunity to find that same divinity reflected in all, including ourselves, and to relate to that universal divine essence. This forms the basis for mutual beneficial cooperation through our relationships, and cooperation it should be, for a higher purpose, based on love as a result of inner awareness of the same divine essence in all.

Immaculate Children

Children grow up emulating their parents. It is eventually what parents do, physically, emotionally, and mentally, which will reflect on their children. What parents try to tell their children is, in

this context, least important and least followed. This is why in our modern day and age it has become so extremely difficult to educate children — simply because what they are told (by their parents) is quite unrelated to their parents' actual behaviour. It is the behaviour that is adopted by children, and this puts a lot of responsibility on parents. Difficulties with children are a very natural result of conflicts that parents have among themselves. It is thus not particularly surprising that we live in a world of apparent perennial conflict.

How can the above be applied to a family situation?

As mentioned in Part I of this article, while growing up we lose our inherent connection to the divine, being drawn to the external world of the senses. If this situation can be transmuted so that children are able to grow up in a social environment where the link to the divine is unbroken or has been reestablished, we can empower them — those who are mature enough to do so — to grow into that awareness of unity in diversity, love out of love, wisdom out of serenity, freedom out of pure divinity, and to naturally become what all of us truly are: gods in human form.

Only children born into such freedom and growing up to their own divinity will be able to establish a truly theosophical society of universal brotherhood. Let us take this outlook seriously, purifying our self to the extent of our capabilities, allowing a yet purer generation to establish both inner and outer freedom. ✧

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Endnotes

1. Our higher principles: Atma-Buddhi-Manas.
2. The divine is universally one, of which our higher principles are an individualized expression.
3. <<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libido>>.
4. Involution (centrifugal, outgoing, towards matter and separation) and Evolution (centripetal, ingoing, towards inherent universal divinity).
5. Material objectivity necessitates separation.
6. Universal divine will.
7. I. K. Taimni, *The Science of Yoga*, Sutras II.30 and II.38.
8. H. P. Blavatsky, *Practical Occultism*.
9. Our Western concept of sexuality as gratification of our lust and sensuality.
10. The initial conflict being caused by our slavery to sexuality that shuts out higher aspirations and wisdom – our higher self.
11. Between mind and body.
12. Due to the separating nature of this force.
13. Tamas being predominant in our nature at an early stage of our evolution.
14. A strong personality is the basis on which to build our self-conscious divinity — but only as an immaculate garment, never by glorifying and worshipping our personality as such.
15. Physical, astral, and mental — our personality.
16. Through the reflection of our Buddhi principle -on our personality.
17. Physical, astral, mental — our personality.
18. See specifically the last chapter for this type of meditation.
19. Van der Leeuw also writes about the effects of our uncontrolled imaginative power in *Gods in Exile*.

References

- H. P. Blavatsky, *Practical Occultism*
C. W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras*
J. J. van der Leeuw, *Gods in Exile*
I. K. Taimni, *The Science of Yoga*

The name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy Soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled.

If thou would'st cross the second safely, stop not the fragrance of its stupefying blossoms to inhale. If freed thou would'st be from the Karmic chains, seek not for thy Guru in those Mayavic regions.

The WISE ONES tarry not in pleasure-grounds of senses.

The WISE ONES heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Voice of the Silence, Fragment I

Unity in Diversity

PAVEL MALAKHOV

PEOPLE are different and yet all the differences in them are united by the idea of ‘a human being’. Theosophists, being ordinary people, belong to different systems of beliefs, are divided into different groups, follow different gurus, live in different countries, speak different languages, yet they are united in their aspiration towards theosophy.

H. P. Blavatsky emphasized this feature of the theosophical movement many times. For example, in *The Key to Theosophy* we read:

While from the very nature of their position as Theosophists the members of the TS are agreed on the principles of Theosophy, or they would not belong to the Society at all, it does not thereby follow that they agree on every other subject. As a society they can only act together in matters which are common to all — that is, in Theosophy itself; as individuals, each is left perfectly free to follow his or her particular line of political thought and action, so long as this does not conflict with Theosophical principles or hurt the Theosophical Society.¹

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky has also urged us to overcome all contradictions

in outlook and to widen our way of thinking by letting other people express the truth with their own words, symbols and images. She highlighted that the world in its great diversity nevertheless is based on finding the balance or harmony between contradictions. It is penetrated by the idea of unity, where every phenomenon has its own place in the whole system.

Let us consider several contradictions in order to examine the question of unity and diversity in detail. We will do it from the point of view of the theosophist who is able to see many dilemmas but wants sincerely to implement his ideal in life.

Aspiration to the ideal and tolerance of imperfections

Theosophical teaching is the teaching of high ethics. Ethics so high as to be virtually unattainable for most of us. Let us recall the description of the true theosophists, which H. P. Blavatsky gave in response to the question of whether those who are engaged in esoteric study of theosophy can be recognized as such:

Not necessarily, until they have proven themselves to be such. They have entered

Mr Pavel Malakhov is Presidential Representative of the TS in Russia. This article is based on a talk addressed to the all-Russian theosophical conference in Kemerovo in February 2014.

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the inner group and pledged themselves to carry out, as strictly as they can, the rules of the occult body. This is a difficult undertaking, as the foremost rule of all is the entire renunciation of one's personality i. e., a pledged member has to become a thorough altruist, never to think of himself, and to forget his own vanity and pride in the thought of the good of his fellow-creatures, besides that of his fellow-brothers in the esoteric circle. He has to live, if the esoteric instructions shall profit him, a life of abstinence in everything, of self-denial and strict morality, doing his duty by all men.²

But such a strong requirement should not oppress us. On the contrary it shows the way to become better, it serves as a beacon which guides us on our spiritual journey, and the fact that we have not reached our ideal yet should give us the strength to practise tolerance of other people.

If we have created an ideal in our imagination which we want to reach, and if we have realized the value of tolerance, we thereby have stepped on a path of spiritual self-improvement. There are many realizations of such a path, and in fact the number is equal to the numbers stepping on it, because Nature does not repeat itself. As there are no two identical grains of sand in boundless dunes of deserts, so there are no two identical ways of personal evolution. But all these ways lead to the universal divine source, where every entity originates before becoming human and where each will return,

having passed a stage of evolution.

What is the spiritual path of self-development? Is it not the improvement of our inner nature in order to be able to perceive the highest ideas and vibrations? Because of the spiritual evolution of consciousness a human being perceives more subtle laws of the highest levels of the Universe, more subtle types of matter, more abstract ideas, reaching eventually the Plane of the Uniform Element and merging the individual mind or Manas with Uniform Mind, or Mahat.

Our will gives the strength for improvement and tolerance expands our consciousness, first by admitting the opinions of others, and later by including such opinions in our own outlook. In fact such assimilation is possible only on the path, to Universal Oneness. Disputes, quarrels, and rejections misguide us, making our journey longer.

Free will vs authority

Independent opinion is a consequence of free will. The need to recognize an authority follows the comprehension of the endless evolutionary process, and as a result of it the existence of persons wiser and more skilled who began their way long before us.

As we reach some knowledge, we may show a haughty and condescending manner towards someone who, in our opinion, does not possess it. We accept the existence of people, who surpass us in evolutionary development, we adopt karma and transformation laws, but in spite of these, egotism sometimes does

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not allow us to consider the possibility that the person we believe to be at a lower level may actually be more spiritually advanced. This may be because the person is younger, or has not had an opportunity to express himself, or he is modest. But it may very well be just too difficult for us to admit in other people qualities we ourselves have not yet achieved.

It may seem that when we acknowledge the other person's opinion we are disregarding our own or betraying it. In such a case we show our ignorance, i.e., our self-centredness, which allows us to believe that we are more competent than others. Such egotism acts as a brake to our development, blocks it, and prevents the widening of our consciousness.

However, the one who has chosen a spiritual path must possess the ability to learn new things.

We often wait for our guru to speak directly to us, confirming his status every time, otherwise we will challenge his knowledge and spiritual experience. We often forget that direct guidance is a very high-level training for the student who is free of flaws. The process of acquiring spiritual knowledge goes on every day as we become involved in various situations, communicating with people different from ourselves. The possibility of knowledge gained, and progressing in it is given to us every moment of our lives. Each person we meet is a valuable source of something new or unknown. Not only individuals but all events, all natural phenomena can teach us.

We need to learn to recognize and accept such worldly teachers before we are ready to encounter our spiritual teacher or guru. To do that we must develop patience, transform this trait into tolerance, and then tolerance into sympathy, into compassion, and finally that signals true Brotherhood.

Equality of a brotherhood and hierarchic subordination

Those who possess a theosophical outlook (regardless of how they label themselves) are invariably inspired by the idea of global unity and an all-human brotherhood.

Brotherhood is a three-dimensional concept. It does not support superiority of one person to another in rights or in opportunities or in any other parameters except in potentiality. Despite the fact that each human being is unique, the brotherhood joins together people of the same level of intelligence (the horizontal relationship or basis) and people of different intellectual capacities and backgrounds (the vertical relationship). Those who have achieved higher levels in the evolutionary process help the less evolved brothers and sisters raise their level of consciousness. The latter, in return, give to the former an opportunity to strengthen their spiritual traits through practice of compassion, beneficence, and sacrifice. In addition to the horizontal and vertical bases of brotherhood, we may add the third dimension of it — its depth. The depth indicates the reliability of the relationship — a relationship of quality.

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Thus we see that the concepts of equality and of hierarchy fit easily into the concept of brotherhood. In reference to hierarchical subordination the question may arise as to whether a given person or organization is a link in a hierarchical chain. It is a natural question for the seeker, but there is a question that is more necessary, more vital, and that is 'Can I consider myself such a link? Am I worthy?'

To answer this question we must recognize that a link in a chain is not the top of it. A link is in a medium position between other links of the chain, with many other links before and after it. What is required at this point is to admit that the next element in a hierarchical chain is superior, and that it defines our next step.

We often strive for the highest ideal, considering everything beneath it as unworthy of our attention, but our human feet must walk the human path. People beside us can help us take these small human steps in sequence. Before we begin to communicate with our heavenly teacher we must recognize the earthly ones in the people all around us. That recognition may become a demonstration of brotherhood in our daily life.

An independent theosophist and the Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society is an attempt to realize the idea of Universal Brotherhood in the world of forms, restrictions, various divisions, and classifications. That is what Helena Petrovna

Blavatsky says about it in *The Key to Theosophy*:

The Society can be regarded as the embodiment of Theosophy only in its abstract motives; it can never presume to call itself its concrete vehicle so long as human imperfections and weaknesses are all represented in its body . . . Theosophy is divine nature, visible and invisible, and its Society human nature trying to ascent to its divine parent. . . . It was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities.

. . . It is simply the storehouse of all the truths uttered by the great seers, initiates, and prophets of historic and even pre-historic ages; at least, as many as it can get. Therefore, it is merely the channel through which more or less of truth, found in the accumulated utterances of humanity's great teachers, is poured out into the world.⁴

The vital impulse of every social structure is given to it by its founders. The TS was founded by chelas of Mahatmas under their protection, giving it a sufficient margin of safety and stability as long as the members follow the ideas the high inspirers gave them.

To those who do not want to become members for some reasons, we can say that membership is not an end in itself, but is a practical attempt to make a contribution to the formation of the Universal Brotherhood. Some of those

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who are not willing to become TS members think that they can create an organization without the flaws they find in the TS. But any society is formed by people, and people are imperfect. It would be great if these people could show an example of brotherhood with long and productive group work. But the problem is that the hidden reason of such unwillingness to become a member of any society is the unwillingness to unite with others. It is much simpler for a person to remain alone, because in collaboration with others conflicts inevitably arise. To overcome them, great internal work must be done, which may be very difficult and unpleasant.

Should we condemn theosophists unwilling to become members? No, we really should not.

Should we urge anybody to join our Society? I do not think so.

I want to draw attention to the fact that on our way to Universal Brotherhood it is necessary to learn how to unite, accept each other, forgive, and help. It is necessary to acquire many useful positive traits which are developed by practice. Theoretical studies of such traits does not instill them in us.

It is a good practice for every theosophist (with or without TS diplomas) to find common interests with others and to unite with them in it. Theosophy includes a wide field of activity, covering the whole of life. It can be part of any profession, at any time, in any nation, at any age. It can serve as a core of any initiative.

As TS members we welcome everybody who decides to join us. But to be honest, we must inform those wishing to join us that the requirements demanded of them will be those we demand of ourselves: to correspond to the theosophical ideals as closely as possible, to be active, to be positive, and, above all, to make every effort to be tolerant to the flaws of others. Considering these, even the most modest contribution is important.

H. P. Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, stated:

. . . As each — the great ones as well as small — have trodden the royal road to knowledge, we listen to all, and take both small and great into our fellowship. For no honest searcher comes back empty-handed, and even he who has enjoyed the least share of popular favour can lay at least his mite upon the one altar of Truth.⁵

Conclusion

One could say that the basement of the Universe is composed of centripetal and centrifugal forces. Such forces govern the cohesion and the separation of the elements. In human relationships they appear as sympathy or antipathy, friendliness or hostility; as rejection or tolerance relative to knowledge. They incline us to hold to our opinions while at the same time looking for like-minded persons. The world is multifarious due to the interaction of these two forces. Each creature in it is unique, nevertheless the law of universal unity applies, stating that although visibly varied, we are essentially one.

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Our aspiration to study the variety is a recognition of the material world, the world of appearances, of differentiation: our aspiration to study unity is an acknowledgement of the spiritual world, the invisible world, the world of causes.

Theosophy in its integral outlook includes both approaches, but there was a reason why TS founders, giving to the world the most profound knowledge about humanity and its place in the Universe, put Universal Brotherhood as

the first goal, emphasizing unification. The current global situation clearly calls for such emphasis.

There are a lot of people in this world and relatively few of them call themselves theosophists, but even that small number is multicoloured. One need not be a seer to know that the quantity of tints will increase in the future. Let us make a rainbow out of this diversity, harmoniously connecting the personal uniqueness of each one of us. ✧

Endnotes

1. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, section XII
2. ———, *The Key to Theosophy*, section II
3. ———, *The Key to Theosophy*, section IV
4. ———, What are The Theosophists?

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us, 'Universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

Albert Einstein

The Necessity for Reincarnation

ANONYMOUS

TO most persons not already Theosophists, no doctrine appears more singular than that of Reincarnation, i.e., that each man is repeatedly born into earth-life; for the usual belief is that we are here but once, and once for all determine our future. And yet it is abundantly clear that one life, even if prolonged, is no more adequate to gain knowledge, acquire experience, solidify principle, and form character, than would one day in infancy be adequate to fit for the duties of mature manhood. Any man can make this even clearer by estimating, on the one hand, the probable future which Nature contemplates for humanity, and, on the other, his present preparation for it. That future includes evidently two things — an elevation of the individual to god-like excellence, and his gradual apprehension of the Universe of Truth. His present preparation, therefore, consists of a very imperfect knowledge of a very small department of one form of existence, and that mainly gained through the partial use of misleading senses; of a suspicion, rather than a belief, that the sphere of super-sensuous truth may exceed the sensuous as the great universe does this

earth; of a partially-developed set of moral and spiritual faculties, none acute and none unhampered, but all dwarfed by non-use, poisoned by prejudice, and perverted by ignorance; the whole nature, moreover, being limited in its interests and affected in its endeavour by the ever-present needs of a physical body which, much more than the soul, is felt to be the real 'I'. Is such a being, narrow, biased, carnal, sickly, fitted to enter at death on a limitless career of spiritual acquisition?

Now, there are only three ways in which this obvious unfitness may be overcome — a transforming power in death, a post-mortem and wholly spiritual discipline, a series of re-incarnations. There is evidently nothing in the mere separation of soul from body to confer wisdom, ennoble character, or cancel dispositions acquired through fleshliness. If any such power resided in death, all souls, upon being disembodied, would be precisely alike — a palpable absurdity. Nor could a post-mortem discipline meet the requirement, and this for nine reasons: (a) the soul's knowledge of human life would always remain insignificant; (b) of the various faculties only to be developed

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during incarnation, some would still be dormant at death, and therefore never evolve; (c) the unsatisfying nature of material life would not have been fully demonstrated; (d) there would have been no deliberate conquest of the flesh by the spirit; (e) the meaning of Universal Brotherhood would have been imperfectly seen; (f) desire for a career on earth under different conditions would persistently check disciplinary progress; (g) exact justice could hardly be secured; (h) the discipline itself would be insufficiently varied and copious; (i) there would be no advance in the successive races on earth.

There remains, then, the last alternative, a series of re-incarnations — in other words, that the enduring principle of man, endowed during each interval between two earth-lives with the results achieved in the former of them, shall return for further experience and effort. If the nine need unmet by a merely spiritual discipline after death are met by re-incarnation, there is a surely strong presumption of its actuality.

Now, (a) *Only through reincarnation can knowledge of human life be made exhaustive.* A perfected man must have experienced every type of earthly relation and duty, every phase of desire, affection, and passion, every form of temptation, and every variety of conflict. No one life can possibly furnish the material for more than a minute section of such experience.

(b) *Reincarnations give occasion for the development of all those faculties which can only be developed during incarnation.* Apart from any questions raised by Occult

doctrine, we can readily see that some of the richest soul-acquirements come only through contact with human relations and through suffering from ills. Of these, sympathy, toleration, patience, energy, fortitude, foresight, gratitude, pity, beneficence, and altruism are examples.

(c) *Only through re-incarnations is the unsatisfying nature of material life fully demonstrated.* One incarnation proves merely the futility of its own conditions to secure happiness. To force home the truth that all are equally so, all must be tried. In time the soul sees that a spiritual being cannot be nourished on inferior food, and that any joy short of union with the Divine must be illusionary.

(d) *The subordination of the Lower to the Higher nature is made possible by many earth lives.* Not a few are needed to convince that the body is but a case, and not a constituent, of the real Ego; others, that it and its passions must be controlled by that Ego. Until the spirit has full sway over the flesh, the man is unfit for a purely spiritual existence. We have known no one to achieve such a victory during this life, and are therefore sure that other lives need to supplement it.

(e) *The meaning of Universal Brotherhood becomes apparent only as the veil of self and selfish interest thins,* and this it does only through that slow emancipation from conventional beliefs, personal errors, and contracted views which a series of reincarnations effect. A deep sense of human solidarity presupposes a fusion of the one on the whole — a process extending over many lives.

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(f) *Desire for other forms of earthly experience can only be extinguished by undergoing them.* It is obvious that any one of us, if not translated to the unseen world, would feel regret that he had not tasted existence in some other situation or surroundings. He would wish to have known what it was to possess rank or wealth or beauty, or to live in a different race or climate, or to see more of the world and society. No spiritual ascent could progress while earthly longings were dragging back the soul, and so it frees itself from them by successively securing and dropping them. When the round of such knowledge has been traversed, regret for ignorance has died out.

(g) *Reincarnations give scope for exact justice to every man.* True awards must be given largely on the plane whereon they have been incurred, else their nature is changed, their effects are impaired, and their collateral bearings lost. Physical outrage has to be checked by the infliction physical pain, and not merely by the arousing of internal regret. Honest lives find appropriate consequence in visible honour. But one career is too short for the precise balancing of accounts, and many are needed that every good or evil done is each may be requited on the earth where it took place.

(h) *Reincarnations secure variety and copiousness to the discipline we all require.* Very much of this discipline comes through the senses, through the conditions of physical life, and through psycho-physiological processes — all of which would be absent from a post-

mortem state. Considered as training or as penal infliction for wrong done, a repeated return to earth is needful for fulness of discipline.

(I) *Reincarnations ensure a continuous advance in the successive races of men.* If each new-born child was a new soul-creation, there would be, except through heredity, no general human advance. But if such child is the flower of many incarnations, he expresses an achieved past as well as a possible future. The tide of life thus rises to greater heights, each wave mounting higher upon the shore. The grand evolution of richer types exacts profusion of earth-existences for its success.

These points illustrate the universal maxim that 'Nature does nothing by leaps'. She does not, in this case, introduce into a region of spirit and spiritual life a being who has known little else than matter and material life, with small comprehension even of that. To do so would be analogous to transferring suddenly a ploughboy into a company of metaphysicians. The pursuit of any topic implies some preliminary acquaintance with its nature, aims, and mental requirements; and the more elevated the topic the more copious the preparation for it. It is inevitable that a being who has before him an eternity of progress through zones of knowledge and spiritual experience ever nearing the central Sun, should be fitted for it through long acquisition of the faculties which alone can deal with it. Their delicacy, their vigour, their penetrativeness, their unlikeness to those called for on the material

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plane, show the contrast of the earth-life to the spirit-life. And they show, too, the inconceivability of a sudden transition from one to the other, of a policy unknown in any other department of Nature's workings, of a break in the law of uplifting through Evolution. A man, before he can become a 'god', must first become a perfect man; and he can become a perfect man neither in seventy years of life on earth, nor in any number of years of life from which human conditions are absent.

The production of a pure, rich, ethereal nature through a long course of spiritualizing influence during material surroundings is illustrated in agriculture by the cotton plant. When the time arrives that it can bear, the various vitalities of sun and air and ground and stalk culminate in a bud which bursts apart and liberates the ball within. That white, fleecy, delicate mass is the outcome of years of adhesion to the soil. But the sunlight and the rain from heaven have transformed heavy particles into the light fabric of the boll. And so man, long rooted in the clay, is bathed with influences from above, which, as they gradually pervade and elevate him, transmute every grosser element to its spiritual equivalent, purge and purify and ennoble him, and when the evolutionary process is complete, remove the last envelope from the perfected soul, and

leave it free to pass for ever from its union with the material.

It is abundantly true that 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Re-birth and re-life must go on till their purposes are accomplished. If, indeed, we were mere victims of an evolutionary law, helpless atoms on whom the machinery of Nature pitilessly played, the prospect of a succession of incarnations, no one of which gave satisfaction, might drive to mad despair. But Theosophy thrusts on us no such cheerless exposition. It shows that re-incarnations are the law for man because they are the condition of his progress, which is also a law, but tells him that he may mould them and better them and lessen them. He cannot rid himself of the machinery, but neither should he wish to. Endowed with the power to guide it for the best, prompted with the motive to use that power, he may harmonize both his aspirations and his efforts with the system that expresses the infinite wisdom of the Supreme, and through the journey from the temporal to the eternal tread the way with steady feet, braced with the consciousness that he is one of an innumerable multitude, and with the certainty that he and they alike, if they so will it, may attain finally to that sphere where birth and death are but memories of the past. ✧

Reincarnation contains a most comforting explanation of reality by means of which Indian thought surmounts difficulties which baffle the thinkers of Europe.

Albert Schweitzer

Theosophical Work around the World

Australia

The Australian Section held its 2015 Annual Convention in January on the theme 'Science, Society and Soul Wisdom'. The key speakers were Drs Victor Gostin and Olga Gostin, both long-time members of the Society. Victor is a retired Associate Professor in Geology and Geophysics from Adelaide University. He is the national convenor of the Australian Theosophy-Science Group and editor of the Theosophy-Science newsletter. Olga, who is an anthropologist, is adjunct senior lecturer at the University of South Australia. Two excellent highlights of the wide range of presentations during the Convention week were a public talk by Victor Gostin on an important subject, 'Human Impacts on Planet Earth: the Anthropocene Period', as well as a talk by Olga Gostin on 'Menticulture: a Key to Understanding Aboriginal Spirituality'.

The Section launched a new website in March. Not only does the site have a completely new appearance but it also includes a number of innovations such as a search function, a slideshow on the home page, a clickable calendar and an excellent gallery of photos of paintings by an Australian member, the late Rona Scott, which were inspired by the Stanzas of Dzyan in *The Secret Doctrine*. Links have been maintained to the website's

comprehensive resource areas, which are used by researchers around the world, such as the very useful Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals, and two search indexes for a very large number of Theosophical periodicals.

The national magazine, *Theosophy in Australia*, also has an attractive new look as from this year. It is smaller in size than before but will continue to include a considerable amount, and variety, of material.

India

The Indian Section held a seminar on education in the light of Theosophy at its headquarters in Varanasi on 14–15 March 2015. Prof. Sushila Singh coordinated the seminar and presented a working paper. The speakers included national lecturers Prof. R. C. Tampi and Mr P. K. Jayaswal, as well as professors and students from the Benares Hindu University, the Indian Institute of Technology, and other respected educational institutions in the area. The topics included 'Value-Based Education', 'Present-day Challenges in Education', and 'Modern Education in the Gandhian Perspective'. The international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, spoke on 'Educating the Poor' and highlighted the pioneering contributions of Col H. S. Olcott and the Olcott

Theosophical Work around the World



Students speaking at the Indian Section Conference on Education in Varanasi in March 2015



A view from the Himalayan Centre of the Indian Section at Bhowali

Theosophical Work around the World



International President Mr Tim Boyd with Mr Michael Murphy,
Founder of Esalen Institute in California



The President speaking for a TS Group in the
San Francisco Bay Area in early March 2015

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Education Society. Mrs Manju Sundaram gave a well-received talk on 'Music and Life'. The seminar was followed by a three-day Study Camp conducted by Prof. Tampi on *The Human Journey: Quest for Self-Transformation* by Ms Joy Mills on 17-19 March 2015.

The Indian Section has developed a Himalayan Centre at Bhowali, suitable for study, meditation, and retreat. It can accommodate about thirty-five members in modern rooms with en suite bathrooms and running hot water. The newly commissioned 'Dr Radha Burnier Hall' can accommodate 100 delegates for holding conferences and study classes. The centre has excellent catering facilities and cars can be arranged to take delegates from the New Delhi airport, 300 kms away. Himalayan towns like Nainital, Ranikhet, and Almora can be visited from the centre, as well as nearby lakes. The centre is available for individual stay and for

theosophical federations and sections.

USA

In the beginning of March the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, travelled to the San Francisco Bay area in California. While there, he participated in activities hosted by three groups. The first was a public conversation with Mr Michael Murphy, author and founder of the world-famous Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. The event was promoted as 'An Evening with Michael Murphy and Tim Boyd'. It was a subscription event hosted by ITPI (Integral Transformation Practice International) that attracted more than seventy people for the two-hour conversation. While in the area, Mr Boyd also spoke at public events for the Theosophical Society in San Francisco (a conversation on 'The Present Need') and for the group in Oakland, a nearby city, (a talk on 'Forgotten Truths'). ✧

The trees indeed have hearts. With a certain affection the sun seems to send its farewell ray far and level over the copses to them, and they silently receive it with gratitude, like a group of settlers with their children. The pines impress me as human. A slight vaporous cloud floats high over them, while in the west the sun goes down apace behind glowing pines, and golden clouds like mountains skirt the horizon.

Henry David Thoreau
Journal, 20 December 1851

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

Date	Section	General Secretary, etc.	Address	Magazine	Email address
1947	Africa, East and Central	... Mr Ebrony Peteli	... PO Box 40844, Mufulira, Zambia	... <i>The Theosophical Light</i>	ebrony.peteli@gmail.com
1909	Africa, South	... Mr Jack Hartmann	... 9 Ronean, 38 Princesses Ave., Windsor E. 2194	... <i>The South African Theosophist</i>	hartmann.jack.c@gmail.com
1956	Africa, West	... Mr John Osmond Boakye	... PO Box 720, Accra, Ghana	... <i>The West African Theosophist</i>	tswafrika@gmail.com
1929	America, Central *	... Mrs Ligia Gutiérrez S.	... Rept. Los Arcos # 43, Ent. Princ. 1 c. Sur 2 c. Abajo, 1 c. Sur, Distrito 2, Managua, Nicaragua		ligusimpson@hotmail.com
1920	Argentina	... Mr Jorge Garcia	... Santiago 257 — 2000, Rosario	... <i>Teosofía en Argentina</i>	stargentina@sociedad-teosofica.com.ar
1990	Asia, East and Southeast †	... Mr Chong Sanne	... 540 Sims Avenue, No. 03-04 Sims Avenue Centre, Singapore 387 603	... <i>Newsletter</i>	sanne@theosophyasia.net
1895	Australia	... Mrs Linda Oliveira	... Level 2, 162 Goulburn St., Surry Hills, NSW 2010	... <i>Theosophy in Australia</i>	tshq@austheos.org.au
1912	Austria *	... Mr Albert Schichl	... Oberbaumgarten 25, 4204 Haibach im Mühlkreis	... <i>Theosophie Adyar</i>	theosophie.austria@aon.at
2013	Bangladesh †	... Mr B. L. Bhattacharya	... B/4-3, Iswarchandra Nibas, 68/1, Bagmari Road, Kolkata 700 054		blbtos_2005@yahoo.com
1911	Belgium	... Mrs Sabine Van Osta	... Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels, Belgium	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	sabine_van_osta@hotmail.com
1965	Bolivia †	... Mrs Guillermina Rios de Sandoval	... Pasaje Jauregui No. 2255, La Paz		guillieriosandoval@yahoo.com
1920	Brazil	... Mr Marcos L. B. de Resende	... SGAS Quadra 603, N. 20, CEP 70200-630 Brasilia (DF)	... <i>Sophia</i>	marcos.resende@riedel.com.br
1924	Canada *	... Mr Medardo Martinez Cruz	... 3162 Rue de la Bastille Boisbriand QC., J7H 1K7	... <i>The Light Bearer</i>	martinez6@sympatico.ca
1920	Chile *	... Mr Cesar Ortega Ortiz	... Casilla 11 Stucursal Paseo Estacion, Estacion Central, Santiago	... <i>Revista Teosofica Chilena</i>	sociedadteosoficachile2010@gmail.com
1937	Colombia †	... Mrs Nelly Medina de Galvis	... Carr 22, # 45B-38 (Cons. 404), Barrio Palermo, Bogotá	... <i>Selección Teosofica</i>	nmedinaga@yahoo.es
1997	Costa Rica †	... Ms Maria Orlich	... Apartado 8-6710-1000, San José		orlichsm@yahoo.com
2007	Croatia ▲	... Mrs Nada Tepeš	... Krajiška ulica 24, 10000 Zagreb	... <i>Teozofija</i>	z.zemlja@gmail.com
1905	Cuba	... Ms Barbara A. Fariñas Piña	... Apartado de Correos 6365, La Habana 10600		teocuba.sociedad@gmail.com
1987	Dominican Rep. †	... Mrs Magaly Polanco	... Calle Santa Agueda 1652 Les Chalet Col San Juan Puerto Rico Apartado 23 00926		polancomagaly@yahoo.com
1888	England	... Mr Colin Price	... 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA		president@theosoc.org.uk
1907	Finland	... Ms Marja Artamaa	... Teosofinen Seura, Vironkatu 7 C 2, Fin 00170, Helsinki	... <i>Teosofi</i>	teosofinen.seura@netti.fi
1899	France	... Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu	... 4 Square Rapp, 75007 Paris	... <i>Le Lotus Bleu</i>	trankimdiou@sfr.fr
1902	Germany	... Mrs Manuela Kaulich	... Hauptstr. 39, 93138 Lappersdorf	... <i>Adyar</i>	theosophie-adyar@gmx.de
1928	Greece	... Mr Antonis Papandreou	... 25 Voukourestiou St., 106 71-Athens	... <i>Ilisos</i>	info@theosophicalsociety.gr
1907	Hungary †	... Mr Thomas Martinovich	... Hunyadi Janos ut 17. II. 8, H-1011 Budapest	... <i>Teozofia</i>	tshutau7@hu.inter.net
1921	Iceland	... Mr Halldor Haraldsson	... PO Box 1257 Ingólfsstraeti 22, 121 Reykjavik	... <i>Gangleri</i>	iceland.ts@gmail.com
1891	India	... Mr S. Sundaram	... The Theosophical Society, Varanasi 221 010	... <i>The Indian Theosophist</i>	theosophyvns@gmail.com
1912	Indonesia	... Mr Herry Ispoernomo	... Jalan Anggrek Nelimurni A-104, Jakarta 11410, Timur	... <i>Theosofi</i>	theosofi.indonesia@gmail.com

1919	Ireland *	...	Mrs Marie Harkness	...	97 Mountsandel Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, UK BT52 ITA	...	marieharkness@yahoo.co.uk
1954	Israel ▲	...	Mr Abraham Oron	...	PO Box 9114, Ramat-Gan, Israel 5219002	... <i>Or</i>	ornet@theosophia.co.il
1902	Italy	...	Mr Antonio Girardi	...	Viale Quintino Sella, 83/E, 36100 Vicenza	... <i>Rivista Italiana di Teosofia</i>	sti@teosofica.org
1997	Ivory Coast *	...	Mr Pierre-Magloire Kouahoh	...	Yopougon, 23 Rue Princesse B. P. 3924, Abidjan 23	... <i>Sophia</i>	pm_kouahoh@hotmail.com
1919	Mexico	...	Mr Enrique Sanchez	...	Ignacio Mariscal 126, Col. Tabacalera Mexicana, Mexico, D.F. 06030	...	sede@sociedadteosofica.mx info@sociedadteosofica.mx
1897	Netherlands, The	...	Ms Els Rijneker	...	Tolsraat 154, 1074 VM Amsterdam	... <i>Theosofia</i>	info@theosofie.nl
1896	New Zealand	...	Mr John Vorstermans	...	18, Belvedere Street, Epsom, Auckland 1022	... <i>TheoSophia</i>	np@theosophy.org.nz
1913	Norway *	...	Dr Saleh Noshie	...	N-6873-Marifjora	...	saleh.noshie@bedriftshelse1.no
1935	Orlando ▲	...	Mr Carl Metzger	...	1606 New York Ave. Orlando, Florida, 32803-1838, USA	...	Theosophical SocietyCF@gmail.com
1948	Pakistan †	Jamshed Memorial Hall, M. A. Jinnah Road, opp. Radio Pakistan, Karachi	... <i>The Karachi Theosophist</i>	bhagwanbharvani@hotmail.com
1924	Peru †	...	Mr Julio Pomar Calderón	...	Av Republica de Portugal 152, Breña, Lima 5	... <i>Búsqueda</i>	sede-central@sociedadteosoficaenperu.pe
1933	Philippines, The	...	Mr Rosel Doval-Santos	...	Corner P. Florentino and Iba Streets, Quezon City, Manila	... <i>The Philippine Theosophist</i>	philtheos@gmail.com
1921	Portugal	...	Mr Carlos Guerra	...	Sociedade Teosófica de Portugal, Rua José Estevão, 10 B, 1150-202 Lisboa	... <i>Osiris</i>	carlos.a.g.guerra@gmail.com
1925	Puerto Rico †	...	Mrs Magaly Polanco	...	Apartado 36-1766 Correo General. San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936-1766.	... <i>Heraldo Teosófico</i>	polancomagaly@yahoo.com
2012	Qatar ▲	...	Mr Dom Escobido	...	Teyseer security services Doha, Qatar	...	qatarblavatskyldodge@yahoo.com
2013	Russia †	...	Mr Pavel Malakhov	...	Molodyozhny pr., 10-221, 650070, Kemerovo, Russia	...	pr@ts-russia.org
1910	Scotland *	...	Mr Stuart Trotter	...	28 Great King Street, Edinburgh, EH3 6QH	... <i>Circles</i>	albion.trotter@gmail.com
1992	Slovenia *	...	Mrs Breda Zagar	...	Kunaverjeva 1 SLO-1000 Ljubljana	... <i>Teozofska Misel</i>	zagarbreda@gmail.com
1921	Spain	...	Mrs Angels Torra Buron	...	Av. Vall d'or, 85-87 08197 - Valldoreix(Spain)	... <i>Sophia</i>	presidencia@sociedadteosofica.es
1926	Sri Lanka †	...	Mr M. B. Dassanayake	...	2-C/60, Maththegoda Housing Scheme, Maththegoda	... <i>The Sri Lanka Theosophist</i>	mbdassa@gmail.com
1895	Sweden	...	Mrs Ing-Britt Wiklund	...	Kalle Posts väg 48, S-702 29 Örebro, Sweden	... <i>Tidlös Visdom</i>	ing-britt@wiklund-orebro.se
1910	Switzerland †	...	Mrs Eliane Gaillard	...	17 Chemin de la Côte, CH -1282 Dardagny, Genève	... <i>The Lotus</i>	egaillard@bluewin.ch
1997	Togo *	...	Mr Kouma Dakey	...	S.O., A.R.T.T., BP76, Adeta	...	
2013	Ukraine *	...	Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko	...	Office 3, 7-A Zhylianska St., Kiev 01033	... <i>Svitoch</i>	org@theosophy.in.ua
1886	USA	...	Mr Tim Boyd	...	PO Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60187-0270	... <i>The Quest</i>	admin@theosophical.org
1925	Uruguay *	...	Mr Ramon Garcia	...	Javier Barrios Amorin 1085, Casilla de Correos 1553, Montevideo	...	st.uruguay@gmail.com
1922	Wales *	...	Mrs Julie Cunningham	...	Bryn Adda, Brynsiencyn, Llanfairpwll, Anglesey, LL61 6NX UK	...	theosophywales@yahoo.co.uk

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The Council of the European Federation of National Societies: *Chairman:* Miss Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, 67 Rue des Pommiers, F-45000 Orleans, France. Email: trankimdieu@msn.com
 Inter-American Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mrs Isis M. B. Resende, SGAS 603 conj. E s/n. Brasilia-DF, CEP 70200-630 – Brazil. Email: imbresende@gmail.com
 Indo-Pacific Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mr John Vorstermans, 60B Riro Street, Point Chevalier, Auckland 1022, New Zealand. Email: john@theosophy.org.nz
 Pan-African Theosophical Federation: *Chairman:* Mr Jack Hartmann, 9 Ronean, 38 Princess Avenue, Windsor E 2194, South Africa. Email: hartmann.jack.c@gmail.com

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