

# ESOTERICA

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By this time of year, we have become accustomed to cooler days and early nights, trees have turned to yellow, gold, red and bronze; coloured leaves and polished branches shimmering against bright blue skies, grey clouds or misty horizons. On crisp days we enjoy vibrant colours, woody scents and woodland textures underfoot. Autumn has arrived and is gradually turning into winter. There is a natural rhythm to the year and as the days grow shorter, we increasingly withdraw into our homes to enjoy the warmth and light which brings comfort and shelter from the brisk winds and increasing chill.

Esoterically it is a time for withdrawal too. Reflecting on our experiences during the outgoing year and preparing ourselves for the work to be done on our inner journey in the coming year. We also celebrate various festivals and feast days at this time. Many celebrate harvest festival and All Souls' Day. At Halloween, children have pumpkin lanterns and visit their neighbours, 'trick or treating', wary of unseen ghosts and ghouls. Bonfire night is associated with sparklers, fireworks and laser lights; tasty warming foods, sweet pastries, toffee apples and hot drinks. The season of illuminations begins in time for Diwali, the Festival of Lights, and continues through Hanukkah, the Winter Solstice, Christmas, and into the New Year.

There are many celebrations towards the last quarter of the year which involve colourful festivals. We join with millions across the world experiencing dark nights punctuated with candles, colourful light shows, music, fires, feasts and togetherness. They commemorate new beginnings, the triumph of good over evil, light above darkness, knowledge over ignorance, remembrance, self-reflection, enlightenment, freedom, self-sacrifice and compassion. Each sparkle of light echoes the spiritual light within every human being and the interconnectedness of all life: "Fire is the most perfect and unadulterated reflection, in Heaven as on Earth, of the One Flame"<sup>‡</sup>.

This "World of Truth" can be described as: "A bright star dropped from the heart of Eternity; the beacon of hope on whose Seven Rays hang the Seven Worlds of Being". Truly so, since those are the Seven Lights whose reflections are the human immortal Monads – the Atman, or the irradiating Spirit of every creature of the human family. First this septenary Light, then the "Divine World" – countless Lights lit at the primeval Light – the Buddhis, or formless divine Souls, of the last Arupa (formless world); the "Sum Total", in the mysterious language of the old Stanza.

The Master asks the pupil: *Lift thy head, O Lanoo; dost thou see one, or countless Lights above thee, burning in the dark midnight sky?* I sense one flame, O Gurudeva, I see countless undetached sparks shining in it. *Thou sayest well. And now look around and into thyself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in anywise from the light that shines in thy 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 'Thy Soul and My Soul'<sup>‡</sup>.

The intelligent soul, or cosmic consciousness, directs and guides that energy: "procure a sixpenny lamp, keep it only supplied with oil, and you will be able to light at its flame the lamps, candles, and fires of the whole globe without diminishing its flame"<sup>‡</sup>. Let us light the lamp of love, peace and goodwill for 2016.

Wishing you a happy festive season and a joyful new year.

Susan Bayliss  
**Editor**

‡H. P. Blavatsky "The Secret Doctrine". *Lanoo*: pupil or chela. *Gurudeva*: spiritual teacher or instructor.

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# THE BEGUINE SISTERS

## WAYNE GATFIELD

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The Beguines were women who voluntarily adopted a life of chastity, prayer and meditation without joining any kind of religious order. Some lived a solitary lifestyle and others lived in communities called Beguinages. There was no formal contract drawn up and members could leave if they felt they needed to, but most remained dedicated to the cause. The origins were with a man named Lambert de Begue in the 12th century AD who founded the male version, the Beghards, in Belgium. This inspired some women of the time to found the Beguine sisterhood which very soon spread over the whole of Europe, especially in the Netherlands.

The communities gave women a wider range of opportunities. Besides their spiritual pursuits there was spinning, various handicrafts and administering to the sick and poor. It was inevitable, unfortunately, that the Orthodox Church would look upon such feminine freedom of action unfavourably. Early in the 14th century many of the women were burned as heretics after the movement was condemned at the Council of Vienne in 1311.

However, during the life of the Beguine sisterhood, much beautiful poetry and writing was produced as a result of their devotion to the Spiritual quest. One of the chief members was Hadewijch of Antwerp or Brabant. The Duchy of Brabant was an area straddling the Netherlands and Belgium. None of these countries existed at the time of her life which was mid- 13th century. In fact very little is known of her actual life, only her writings remain as a testament. These consist of a "Book of Visions", poems, letters and other miscellaneous writings.

In her love poetry she imitated the minnesingers, who were German troubadours from the 12th -14th centuries AD. These were the singers of songs to their lady and they spoke of courtly love. Their words were more sensually based but she, and other Beguines, used their methods for Spiritual ends. Much of her poetry was heavily influenced by orthodox Christian thought of the time, but she often touched on concepts that were obviously Theosophical. Unfortunately there is some doubt as to the authenticity of some of her writings and it is impossible to tell at times which belonged to her and which were added later in her name.

This has been the fate of many writers from all traditions throughout the ages, but many of the poems attributed to her show a remarkable insight as in this one:

You who want knowledge,  
Seek the Oneness within.  
There you will find  
The clear mirror  
Already waiting.

This could easily have been written by a Sufi, Buddhist or Hindu and many of her poems have a similar leaning.

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Image p4: Fountain statue, Como Park, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Author Mulad assumed (based on copyright claims). Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

The madness of love is a blessed fate;  
And if we understood this we would seek no other:  
It brings into unity what was divided,  
And this is the truth: Bitterness it makes sweet,  
It makes the stranger a neighbour,  
And what was lowly it raises on high.

This is more evidence of the identical nature of the experiences of the mystics of various traditions. It must have been difficult for Hadewijch to accurately express her understanding as she did not have the luxury of the awareness of other ways of thought as we do. Language was much more limited than it is now and so she had to make use of the tools that she had at the time. It is interesting too that she often refers to love in a feminine sense as in this poem:

In the beginning love satisfies us.  
When love first spoke to me of love,  
How I laughed at her in return!  
But then she made me like the hazel trees,  
Which blossom early in the season of darkness,  
And bear fruit slowly.

In this she speaks of the trials of love which will come to all Spiritual aspirants when they will be tested, and the talisman in these times is "patience sweet that nought can ruffle" as the "Voice of the Silence" tells us. In modern times I suspect most of these women would be dedicated to the Goddess principle.

Like many of the devotional mystics, such as Mirabai in India and Rumi in ancient Persia, there is much talk of the suffering of love being essential to its ultimate understanding. There is the fire of love and the pain of separation that must be endured for the soul to be refined. It is similar to St John of the Cross's "Dark Night of the Soul". No genuine mystical awakening can come about without some resistance from the lower nature which dislikes change and slipping out of its comfort zone. Stepping from one's conventional way of life into a more expansive one requires shedding a few skins, or to emerge like a butterfly from its confining chrysalis.

The fact that the Beguine sisters knew the danger of their actions and were prepared to die for them is mirrored in the modern world by women in the Middle East who are courting death by championing the rights of girls to have a decent education. Perhaps the goal is not as lofty as that of the Beguines, but the passion is there and the belief that good will triumph.

Another major figure in the movement was Beatrice of Nazareth. She didn't hail from Nazareth of course, but also from the Brabant. She was born in 1200 and came from a wealthy merchant family. She had a Latin education with the Beguines at Zoutleeuw in Belgium. Although she studied with them for a while she eventually followed a more orthodox route and took vows as

a Cistercian, eventually becoming prioress of the convent of Our Lady of Nazareth in Lier, Belgium. She also spent some time at the monastery of La Ramee where she met up with Ida of Nevellese, who was a mystic, and Beatrice herself had some mystical experiences there, which shaped her future writings. In 1236 AD she wrote a work entitled "The Seven Ways of Divine Love". In this work Beatrice describes in very poetic and beautiful language the various stages through which we must pass to merge into LOVE in its truest sense. Concerning Love she writes:

"It happens sometimes that a sweet and joyful love is awakened in the heart and swells like a great wave through the soul, by itself without any effort at all on our part. She is so powerfully moved by love, so passionately drawn up into love, so strongly taken by love, so tenderly embraced and utterly mastered by love, that she surrenders herself entirely to its power. In this embrace the soul experiences directly the radiance of the Divine, a wonderful bliss, pure freedom, ecstatic sweetness, complete overpowering by love; a waterfall of ineffable delight.

She feels that all her senses are sacred and she is so totally engulfed by love and so deeply immersed in love that she is one with love, and will never cease to be love. For the beauty of love has clothed her, the power of love has submerged her, the holiness of love has consumed her, the greatness of love has so sublimely drawn her into herself that she will always love and do nothing but acts of love".

Like Hadewijch, she also writes of the suffering that such a journey may bring, but urges the aspirant to hold on to Love through every trial if one is to be triumphant. It is useful to look up the "Seven Ways of Divine Love", either in book form or online, as a short article can never do it justice and more detailed accounts of her interesting life are available. Beatrice passed from this world in 1268.

The final person in this trio is Mechthild of Magdeburg. She was born in 1220 of a noble family where she learned the graces of courtly love but in her late teens she left home to join the Beguines in Magdeburg, Germany. She stayed with them for the next 40 years until in old age she joined the Cistercian convent at Helfta, where her sister Mechthild of Hackenburg was mistress of the novices. It is thought that it was persecution that drove her to make that decision. Her main work was poetically titled "The Flowing Light of the Godhead". One can see the common mystical element in this quote.

I cannot dance O Lord, unless Thou lead me.

If Thou wilt that I leap joyfully

Then must Thou Thyself first dance and sing!

Then will I leap for love

From love to knowledge,

From knowledge to fruition,

From fruition to beyond all human sense

There will I remain

And circle evermore.

The book is much more rooted in traditional Christian ideas than some of the other writings mentioned in this article, but still the deeper mystical element shines through at times. The number seven crops up a few times too, as in this quote:

“The eyes that are to see me thus  
Must be graced by seven things; otherwise,  
They can never experience it.  
These are: Slow to borrow, quick to pay back,  
To hold back nothing for yourself,  
To be kind in the face of hatred,  
To be loving in the face of cruelty,  
To be pure as to guilt  
And ready for all one might receive.”

It seems that even these Christian orientated women had some intuition of the importance of the number seven, as of other deep Spiritual truths. The “Flowing Light of the Godhead” itself is divided into seven books. The Theosophical definition of meditation is the ‘inexpressible yearning of the inner man to go out towards the infinite’ and certainly these women had these yearnings, even if, due to the times they lived in, they interpreted them as a union with a personal God. In moments of Divine ecstasy they almost certainly went beyond all these concepts, but on returning to their normal consciousness they translated their experiences into the vernacular of the times they lived in.

It is interesting to look into the lives of women like the Beguines, as it shows that throughout history women have striven to prove their Spiritual equality with men despite persecution and that they were willing even to be put to death for their beliefs. There were also many female mystics outside of the Beguinages who took a similar stance.


Many of them eventually followed a more conventional religious route, some left to become wives and mothers, but a few went on to the very end. As their writings show, it was LOVE that inspired them and a strong desire to merge with the very source of that LOVE and I am sure some of them succeeded. In future articles I propose to look into the lives of some other prominent female mystics in other traditions.

*Wayne is President of the Bolton Lodge of the Theosophical Society, Vice President of the North West Federation and Editor of the N.W. Federation Journal. He is a poet, philosopher and a deep Theosophical student and speaker.*

Recommended reading: “Visions and Longings; Medieval Women Mystics” by Monica Furlong. “Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women” edited by Jane Hirshfield.

Image p9: Fair Ground (crop), Tony Hisgett. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.





I cannot dance O Lord,  
Unless Thou lead me.  
If Thou wilt that I leap joyfully  
Then must Thou Thyself  
First dance and sing!

Then will I leap for love  
From love to knowledge,  
From knowledge to fruition,  
From fruition to beyond all human sense

There will I remain  
And circle evermore.

Hadewijch of Antwerp

# DOES THE PERSONALITY SURVIVE?

L. W. Rogers

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A writer whose views on the aspects of Theosophy occasionally appeared in *The American Theosophist* in the 1940s and 50s gives answers to some questions. The following are excerpts from his letter:

It is a curious circumstance that, so many years after H.P.B.'s death, many still cling to ideas she fought so hard to eradicate. She fought the prevalent theories of Spiritualism and tried to show that there was no real survival of the personality after death and that what really survived was an impersonal ego... and that when communication of some sort was apparent it was only with the fragmentary shell of the departed and not with his real self.

Yet in spite of all that we still cling in most part to the romantic notion that at death we step out of our bodies and emerge on the other side clothed in the same personality as in life, but bodiless... Surely no well-informed Theosophist holds that a human being is at any point of its journey through the physical, astral and mental planes bodiless! To be conscious on those three planes we must - and do - have bodies composed of physical, astral, and mental matter. When we leave our physical body, whether in death or merely in sleep, we are in our astral body. Likewise when we lose our astral body we are immediately functioning in the mental body on the mental plane.

When a person passes from the astral to the mental world, "remains" are left behind as was the case when leaving the physical life. The astral remains consist of the slowly diminishing matter of the astral body, plus such fragments of mental matter as may adhere to the astral corpse or shell. As the astral remains disintegrate the released mental matter rises by attraction to the mental plane where it naturally belongs. Thus there is a period of time between the departure of the person from the astral plane and the final disintegration of the shell.

During that time, if there is an attempt to communicate, as at a mediumistic séance, connection may be made with the "shade" instead of with the departed friend. The departed would be functioning on the mental plane quite beyond the reach of any medium while the astral shell - animated by a little mental matter that had been a part of the person - could masquerade on the astral plane and give a plausible imitation of that person, so far as replying to personal questions is concerned. That interlude between the arrival of the person in the mental world, and the final fading out of his remains in the astral world, is what Madame Blavatsky must have had in mind when warning against such communications.

The personality does perish but only in the same way that childhood perishes. Boyhood perishes because it develops into manhood. What does not perish is the individuality. It is the same way in childhood and adulthood. In both the astral life and the mental life there is full memory of the friends and events of all the lower levels. As we pass upward from the material life the consciousness widens. Any given plane contains everything in the plane below it. When in the astral life we retain the memory of all the experiences of the physical life. In the mental life we have full memory of all our experiences in both the astral and physical lives.

This physical life that we are now living is the most limited state of consciousness we shall ever have. Here we know very little of what we really are. Most of us know only the daily experiences that occur between awakening in the morning and falling asleep when we go to bed in the evening. But between falling asleep at night and awakening next morning we have had other experiences. Only the body sleeps, the consciousness never. To most of us the night hours are a blank period or are filled with dreams. As a rule, those fragmentary and chaotic “dreams” are merely the result of the automatic activity of the physical brain and its etheric counterpart and are of no importance whatever. Rarely - very rarely - the “dream” is a memory of what you have been doing while the body slept; for you, the ego, the soul, the true self - you are always conscious either in the physical body or out of it. So we know only about two thirds of the experiences which befall us during this incarnation.

It has sometimes been said that the night time of the body is the daytime of the soul. The physical life is not a complete record of the incarnation. The physical record is made up of what we are saying and doing about two thirds of the time. Only when we break through into the astral consciousness while still living in the physical body, or when it sleeps and we are temporarily free from its limitations, do we have the full record. Only when the incarnation comes to an end and death thereby destroys its limitation of consciousness do we comprehend how very partial life in a material body is.

In discussing any theosophical subject we should remember that the philosophy of occultism is very new to the Western world and that its nomenclature is by no means well settled. In the time of Madame Blavatsky it was still more immature. If you compare the earliest writing of Annie Besant with her later work, you can see how true that is. Occult terminology is not yet well settled. Just what do we mean when we speak of the personality? By that word some obviously mean all that relates to the physical body, and no more. Others may say that it covers both physical and astral life.

Still others would say that the personality includes all human experiences below the causal level - that is, all experiences obtained through the physical, astral, and mental bodies. What did Madame Blavatsky mean by personality? Obviously the writer of the letter quoted above takes it that she drew the line at the physical level. But why should it be there when our

personal relations with other people extend to both the astral and mental planes? On the astral plane the average person knows both their friends and their foes and often plots to get revenge for the wrongs done on the material plane. As for the mental plane do we need any stronger evidence than the fact that there the average human being fills their little world with images of those they loved most in the physical world and spends a long period in happy association with them?

It will be recalled that there are various issues other than the one we are here discussing in which statements made by Madame Blavatsky seem to contradict the ascertained facts. Her fluent English notwithstanding, it was not her native tongue. Add to that the statement of Subba Rao

that such a book as *Light on the Path* has seven layers of meaning, and it is not difficult to see how apparent contradictions may arise. Even now, more than a half-century later, writers on occult subjects are not in agreement on the meaning of the term personality... The great teacher was often right when others thought her wrong because she had in mind a deeper occult view than they were able to grasp.

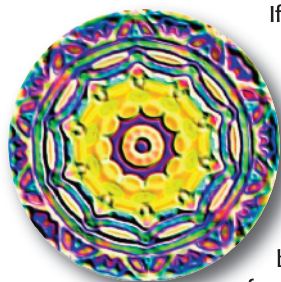
Whatever is the true definition of personality, there is nothing obscure about the theosophical teaching on the evolutionary journey of the individualized consciousness – a process of mental and moral growth through innumerable reincarnations in which memory is continually being submerged and lost on lower planes but only to be regained on the higher. Aside from all definitions and differences of opinion, what each of us is deeply concerned to know is whether those we now know and love will be with us in an eternal future from which we can look back with unbroken vision to the times and scenes of this very moment and recognize ourselves as what we now are.

Yes. A study of Theosophy logically leads you precisely to that conclusion. Call it by what name you will, your present consciousness - with all you have learned since birth, with all you are to learn as you pass through the astral plane - you will carry with you into the mental plane, or heaven world. As the scenes of childhood are remembered in maturity so the events and the people of today will be recalled on the higher planes. Consciousness adds but does not subtract. What we fully know now we shall know forever.



Images p10: *Mandel\_zoom\_15\_one\_island* (adapted); p12: *Saphiri the Cat* by Zenera. Courtesy Wikipedia Commons.





If you have never attended any theosophical events, you may be curious to know what goes on or wonder what everyone gets up to. So here are some thoughts sent in by readers from around the country and from the Director of Summer School, Jenny Baker.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

Adorned in comfortable attire, with a heavy rucksack on my back, I boarded the train at Durham Railway Station, setting off on a direct route for New Street Station in Birmingham. I travelled alone but knew instinctively that I would meet people along the way and at the Hillscourt Conference Centre where the 2015 Summer School was held. I met up with Martin in Birmingham and we travelled together to Rednall, from where we shared a taxi to Hillscourt. The buildings and grounds were picturesque and I was quickly directed to my room for the week by very friendly staff.

After settling in my room I ventured out to see who else was there. I made my way up to the Conference Hall where I was met by Veda on her jewellery stall and Maureen and Cynthia adding finishing touches to the many goods for sale for the Theosophical Order of Service. I purchased several items and then entered my name on the daily schedule sheets for the study groups and workshops across the week.

Following dinner at 6pm that evening, which provided an excellent opportunity to see who was there, was a welcome evening for everyone at 7:30pm. The following morning I began the week of Yoga with Jenny, we began quite gently building up throughout the week. Breakfast was at 8 am, an excellent choice of cereals and vegetarian food. There was a meditation session at 9:30 am just prior to the morning lecture the first of which was given by Gary Kidgell, 'Soul Personality and the Rainbow Bridge' a talk that drew on Theosophical writings, mythological symbolism and Transpersonal Psychology. The week was very well organised and daily notices followed each morning lecture. We were told exactly where we needed to be for the study groups to follow.

Each day we were spoilt for choice, the hardest thing to do was to make a choice from the wealth of spiritual teachings by the group leaders. The idea was to stick with the chosen topic for half the week then change for the second half. The studies were chosen to compliment the title of the school's endeavour, 'The relevance of Theosophy: Spirituality in Daily Living'. Susan Bayliss took a group on 'Dragons and Serpents: Signposts to Esoteric Wisdom' and Ted Capstick, 'The Essential Tools of Practical Theosophy for Today'. Each day there were workshops such as Chi Kung, led by Mike Hall and Reflexology for Health and Well Being, led by Dana Eaton. There were morning and afternoon snack breaks, tea and biscuits, where people gathered socially, getting to know one another and discussed what they had just heard or done. Meal times were a delight, good food, attentive service and another opportunity to talk things over with lecturers, colleagues and friends.

There was an afternoon lecture each day where Theosophical issues such as magic and science and practical Theosophy were highlighted. Tim Boyd the International President gave the renowned 'Blavatsky Lecture' on Sunday: 'Theosophy in Daily Life'. He gave a talk on 'The Habit



of Dying' (practising 'dying' while still alive) on Wednesday and the following day summed up the theme of the School by talking on 'The Future of the Theosophical Society', which included a guided tour around the grounds of the International Headquarters at Adyar and future plans for repair and expansion. The key point that he made that day was that there is only one Theosophical Society, regardless of where our branch is or in which country we live, we are One.

The entertainment provided each night, with Damon at the hub, added to the highly successful week. Barry mobilised the book shop and provided a wealth of spiritual books for sale, Pam promoted Brotherhood through the Peace Mala, Linda provided DVD's for sale from some of the European School speakers and Colyn provided snap-shots of the week. All in all, it was a fantastic week and many thanks to all those who made it happen.

*Jim Blakey (Durham)*

This was my wife's and my first attendance of the Summer School, although I have been an unattached member of T.S England over many years – my "Mother Lodge" being in Nakuru, Kenya, where my father was the founder member just before I was born. Theosophy is the real "Religion" we have known. I felt that the Venue, Hillscourt, in the leafy South Birmingham, near Lickey Hills was an excellent choice, as it was reasonably central for all the delegates to get to, with good transport links and easy access.

Hillscourt House was built in 1897, it was originally the home of a wealthy Victorian businessman, before becoming a preparatory school. In 1971 it was purchased by the National Association of School Masters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) who continue to own and manage Hillscourt. It certainly had excellent Conferencing facility and accommodation with the bonus of excellent catering and the staff looked after us very well.

This year's Summer School's opening day was on 31st July 2015 and according to the Hindu calendar, and as my brother Ramesh pointed out at one of the meditation session, it was "Guru Purnima" day. (Guru: Teacher; Purnima: Full Moon in Sanskrit). A day when the shishya pays homage to his Guru for the guidance given to him (In the context of yoga and the spiritual path a shishya is someone who approaches a guru or a teacher with an open mind and heart, ready and willing to learn). So what a wonderful day for us to start the Summer School! The theme being "The Relevance of Theosophy – Spirituality in Daily Living".

To me the Summer School, reminded of my childhood days when my brother and I used to accompany my parents, to what was in East Africa, called "The Convention" (equivalent to our Summer School) – except that we have modern transport & communication tools compared to East Africa in the 1960's! This year at the Summer School we were very fortunate that we had our International President – Tim Boyd (accompanied by his wife and daughter) in residence with us. One certainly felt, in Tim's company, that there was certainly a tremendous Aura about him. The greatness of the man, was that he was so informal and easy of address with a great sense of humour too.

My wife and I felt that the Programme was well laid out, enough to fill the day but not to be too exhausting. The day started at 7:00 a.m. with Jenny's Yoga session, although my wife and I used the opportunity to explore and walk in the Lickey Hills and be with the wonderful world of nature surrounding the venue. There were nine lectures by individual speakers on various Theosophical related subjects – all of which the speakers had researched in depth and had gained a good understanding of their individual subjects and were able to deliver them with a great passion. To

me though the highlight was the three Lectures delivered by our International President Mr Tim Boyd i.e. "Theosophy in Daily Life" – The Blavatsky Lecture ; "The Habit of Dying" – The Public Lecture and "The Future of Theosophy" – all of which were delivered off-the-cuff and with great deal of passion & simplicity and all with such profound messages.

Each morning there were four study groups to choose from and similarly four workshops to choose from in the afternoon. All the workshops and study classes were also very interesting, giving the participants a choice, to choose one which particularly draws their interest or increase their knowledge and understanding – although given the choice it was a difficult decision to make, as all the workshops & study groups I found of immense interest. The Speakers, Workshop and Study Group Leaders' enthusiasm was very infectious and meal times and tea breaks became "talking workshops" not only to discuss the lectures, workshops and study groups that the others had attended, but also a time to make new friendships and renew old ones.

It certainly reminded me of my childhood days of the East African Theosophical Conventions – the Love, Warmth and Friendship of one & all – friends and "strangers" – giving it a sense that we are One Global Family. Certainly such an event does not take place so successfully without a lot of hard work and I like to take the opportunity to thank one and all who were involved in the organisation of this very useful and successful Summer School.

*Bharat N Khetani (Wisbech)*

This year the School was held from July 31st to August 6th at Hillscourt, the conference Centre of the NASUWT, at Rednall near Birmingham. This was the first time we had used this venue with its excellent conference facilities and accommodation and it was liked by a majority of the people attending. The staff were very friendly and helpful and the vegetarian food plentiful. The School, which is open to all, attracts people from all over the world. This year we had delegates from Wales, Scotland, Brazil and New Zealand.

The title of the School was "The Relevance of Theosophy: Spirituality in Daily Living" and the talks included "Soul, Personality and the Rainbow Bridge", "Living in the Presence of the Soul", Being a Theosophist in Principle", "Embracing the Dragon of Wisdom" and " Living the Mystical Heart of Theosophy". We also held eight three day Study Courses with titles such as "The Essential Tools of Practical Theosophy", "Theosophy for Beginners ", " The Secret Doctrine" and " Meditation".

Of course the big attraction for many of us was the presence of the International President Tim Boyd and his wife, Lily and their daughter Angelique. Tim gave three talks, the first was the Blavatsky Lecture entitled "Theosophy in Daily Life". Later Tim gave a Public lecture called "The Habit of Dying" and he finished the week with talk on the future of the Theosophical Society in which he showed some slides of the Adyar Estate. The Blavatsky Lecture was recorded and should be available soon as a booklet. All the lectures were recorded and videoed and are available from Headquarters.\*

The School is not all study and head-learning. In the afternoons participants had free time to do their own thing or to take part in healing, reflexology or Chi Kung sessions. There were also two sessions on how to give a public talk. The mornings started with yoga and the evenings were for relaxing with audio-visual presentations. On one evening there was a quiz which everyone enjoyed including our President who was on the winning team. The evenings ended with a longer meditation. Half way through the week there was an outing to nearby attractive Winterbourne

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\* For details and to order please email: [damon@theosoc.org.uk](mailto:damon@theosoc.org.uk)

House and Gardens. When not listening to talks, studying or attending workshops delegates could rummage through the numerous books for sale. The Theosophical Order of Service and The Round Table had stalls with many and varied items for sale. Including the raffle the TOS raised over £800.

The School was attended by one hundred and twenty people, both residential and day delegates and had something for everyone whether new to Theosophy or of many years' experience. The mood was convivial and uplifting as is usually the case when like-minded spiritual seekers gather together. We certainly enjoyed the company of Tim and his family and hope that he will come again to our Summer School. I must thank all who helped to make the School a success; the speakers; the study and workshop leaders and many others too. My special thanks are to my support team; Maureen, Colin and Damon.

We have provisionally reserved Hillscourt for our Summer School from 5th to 12th August 2017. Please see page 25 for further information on the 2016 Summer School at Bristol.

*Jenny Baker Director of Summer School*

## EUROPEAN SCHOOL

I have been fortunate enough to attend yet another European School of Theosophy. This year it was held in October at the Woodbrooke Quaker House in Birmingham. This was a wonderful setting surrounded by glorious trees which glinted in the autumn sunshine. We were in Cadbury Land, living where the owner once stayed.

The theme this year was 'The Great Sacrifice'. Our lectures and discussions were mainly by Pablo and Michelle Sender. Each lecture dealt with the subject in depth relating to Theosophical texts. This is quite an intense week but rich in Theosophy and food for the soul. Pablo and Michelle gave a thorough insight into this theme of sacrifice with practical application of it.

I found this yet another uplifting, enriching, thought provoking time of fellowship with other Theosophists (usually from around Europe) who have studied Theosophical literature in depth. The group are warm and friendly – like a big family. Lunch and tea breaks were opportunities to converse with like-minded people. This is a yearly event which I now do not miss. I know next year's event is to be in Salzburg, Austria.

*Christine Gear (Edinburgh)*

European School High Seas Recommended. 'The Great Sacrifice', took those who attended into the complex oceanic studies around the heart of the teachings of Theosophy - the giving up of self for Self. Various maps, and even some "here be monsters" were thoroughly examined. As with all theosophical studies, what seems to be preparation is actually an experiential voyage into ever deeper waters. Indeed each speaker spoke from the buoyed centre of their experience as Theosophers, learning the ropes, practicing being anchored in the resounding verbum of Self as exemplified through the scintillating depths of the teachings. So if you are kept all jagrata by vexed questions like... Is no monad an island? And mulling it over in the wee hours coming up with... Maybe, one of those mysterious elusive islands of myth that merge and emerge, included and occluded by turn... or perhaps like the Polynesians we paddle well in unison and draw the distant shores to our very selves fixed position... maybe, just maybe the European School is for you to consult the charts and learn theosophical navigation. Everyone gets a dunking (baptism), weather

eyes are peeled; especially for storms brewing and white whales, some of which were spotted spouting indignation in the distance from lack of pursuit! Dare to join the crew? In keeping with the theme of Great Sacrifice all Jonah's not excluded!

*David Maddrell (Isle of Man)*

It was wonderful to have Pablo and Michelle Sender give us lectures and to lead the study sessions. They were an inspiration and have given me much to reflect on the subject of the Great Sacrifice. I certainly felt that I had been nourished both by their teaching and by the responses and reflections that came from the other students. The two lectures by David Nieuwejaers shown on DVD went some way to making up for the fact that he could not be with us, and they were both very inspiring and were a good choice to fit in with the programme.

The Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre is an excellent venue with magnificent grounds and ensuite rooms which are furnished to a good standard; the food is delicious and offers a suitable variety of options and tastes; there are a very good selection of beverages too. A large and spacious garden lounge which opens out from the dining area afforded us the opportunity to converse and enjoy each other's company in between the lectures and study sessions etc. I would definitely be willing to return there again with the European School, and would find it difficult to imagine a more suitable venue in the UK to hold such an event.

It was a privilege to have attended the European School 2015.

*Terri King (Redhill)*

Every year the European School of Theosophy is a highlight in the autumnal season, when the leaves change their colour, the harvest is brought in, a time of reflection and gratefulness of what we were given spiritually and physically. The beautiful surroundings of the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre reflected this atmosphere beautifully. Thanks again to everybody involved in the organization and presentations of the European School, all your effort is very much appreciated!

*Petra Meyer (London)*

Editor's Note. In the last issue Julian Websdale (Bolton) wrote the review of Scott Olsen's talk '*Alchemy – The Great Work of Spiritual Transformation*', apologies that Julian's name was omitted.



## ADVANCE NOTICE

**TRANS PENNINE WEEKEND 2016**

### **“THE ASPIRANTS CHALLENGE AND THE SOULS PURPOSE”**

**22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> April at Whalley Abbey  
Near Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 9SS**

### **GUEST SPEAKER – TED CAPSTICK**

Throughout the weekend, other well-known speakers will also be giving presentations. For further information and programme, please email: [mla.gold@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mla.gold@yahoo.co.uk) or telephone 01282 422278. In the New Year full details will be available at: <http://nwffederation.org.uk> To avoid disappointment please let our Registrar, Sandra Kelly, have your Registration Form as early as possible because on site accommodation is limited and priority will have to be given to those who are able to share a room.





# MYSTERY OF THE HUMAN AURA

Petra Meyer



The famous Indian Poet Rabindranath Tagore once said: *"I have listened and I have looked with open eyes; I have poured my soul into the world, seeking the **unknown within the known**, and I sing out loud in amazement"*.

In the "Key to Theosophy" H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) tells us, that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by the Masters, of whom she has spoken, to help with the spiritual progress of Humanity. That an outpouring of spirituality would take place, and that someone or **more persons** will appear in the world as their agents, that a greater or less amount of occult knowledge will be given out, and I am quite positive, that some of the modern scientists fit this bill. Albert Einstein said already at the beginning of the 20th Century, when

he formulated his general theory of relativity, that space and time are intertwined, that **matter is inseparable from an ever present quantum energy field**, underlying all appearances, which he expressed with his famous words: *"We may therefore regard matter as being constituted by the **regions of space**, in which the **energy field is extremely intense**. There is no place in this kind of physics for the **field** and matter, for the field is the **only reality**"*

**What does this have to do with the human Aura? What can Theosophy and science tell us about it, and what is even more interesting – do they complement each other?** So let's start from the beginning: The Secret Doctrine (SD I, p.62) tells us, that the expansion of the universal matrix (*Mulaprakriti in Sanskrit and Svabhavat in Buddhism*) does not refer to an expansion from a small centre, but it is the development of **limitless subjectivity into limitless objectivity**; a shadow of the immaterial substance present in eternity, thrown into the lap of Maya or Illusion. **It is not an increase in size, but a change of condition.** This was symbolized by an **egg or a sphere, containing in itself the potency of the Universe** (SD I p. 64). In Hindu Philosophy it is called Hiranyagarbha or Brahma, formed by the "causeless cause"; it is spirit and life, without quality or quantity or form, but rather the **Space occupied in that Ocean of Spirit** by the result of effects impressed thereon (Mahatma Letter XIII p. 74).

This **radiant force field** is the underlying **essence**, containing everything in its potentiality. Every physical phenomena from sub-atomic particle to complete and complicated systems, like planets or a human being, is an emanation of this underlying electro-magnetic energy field. Its radiation around animate and inanimate objects was called throughout recorded human history **AURA**. The Auric Envelop has **seven layers** (CW XII p. 532), just as cosmic space and our physical epidermis. It is a within on different planes of subjectivity, merging gradually into objectivity.

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Image p18: Pink and White Lotus (adapted), 14th century China, Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), Hanging scroll; mineral pigments on silk, Kimbell Art Museum. Image p19: 'Matter and Consciousness' by Mienyi Yi. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Image p19: 'Matter and Consciousness' by Mienyi Yi, Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.



When the season of reproduction arrives, the sub-astral “extrudes” a miniature of itself from the egg of the surrounding Aura. This germ grows and feeds on the Aura until it becomes fully developed, then it gradually separates from its parent, carrying with it **its own sphere** or Aura (SD II p. 117). This auric egg (or the underlying energy field) is **really the true manifested Man** says HPB, because it is the manifestation of all the **vital life forces** (CW XII p. 652), the astral form itself

is the nucleus of this sphere (SD II p. 117), an ethereal agglomerate of life atoms in the auric egg (CW XII p. 649), **in combination with Manas (or mind) and Buddhi** (CW XIII p 649), and is the origin of the feeling of sympathy and antipathy (CW XIII p. 364).



Every human being is surrounded by its own emotional and passional as well as psycho-vital atmosphere... a portion of the **lower layers** of the auric egg (CW XII p. 651). Every human passion, every thought and quality is indicated in the Aura by corresponding colours. CW XII p. 652: “When the **ray-point** of the spiritual monad reaches its own intermediate sphere, **it descends no further into matter, only** its psycho-magnetic ray, having stronger affinities for the material world, descends still further, awakening into activity the **life atoms** on each of the planes between that of the re- embodying ego and the astral-physical matter of our earth...”.



Each part of the composite human constitution **remains** on its own plane, but extrudes its **excess of life** from itself into the next lower one, until finally the physical plane is reached, wherein **only the tip of the ray**, collecting unto itself life-atoms of this plane, builds or forms the physical germinal cell... the process is an **exact analogy** of what occurs in the building of a planetary chain. SD I p. 538: “the vital force is **not enclosed** in man, but radiates within and around him like a luminous sphere or Aura, and it may be made to **act at a distance**”. CW XII p. 532: “It is the aura, which according to our mental and physical state of purity or impurity **either opens for us vistas** into other worlds, **or shuts us out** altogether from anything but the three-dimensional world of matter”.

CW XII p. 647: “This is how **important** the role of the auric egg is in the human constitution; it is the field of all

*different ranges of consciousness of the embodied man, and it is likewise the ethereal and astral and even spiritual **substance** or auric envelop, out of which every **one of the vehicles** of the human entity is formed”.*

**How close has modern science come to the ancient occult teachings about the human Aura and the compound constitution of Man?**

Dr. Valerie Hunt, a Professor of physiological sciences at the University of Los Angeles, who died two years ago at the age of 97, was challenged by graduate students to study consciousness in the 1970s, even ancient literature, and that the true function of a University was to expand the frontiers of knowledge, designing a new direction. This became the starting point of a serious investigation into the mind, consciousness and the human Aura – which is today called the **bio-electro-magnetic energy field**.

How does this energy field around us come about, and what is it made of? Energy is an important factor in the function of our bodies. All objects, animate or inanimate, are composed of atoms, where the electrons spin around the nucleus, releasing the raw energy of positive or negative **ions**, they are atoms which have either lost or gained an electron, making them either positive or negatively charged.

The **positively** charged ions stay in the vicinity of other atoms, searching for a negative ion to become a new atom. The **negatively** charged ones on the other hand migrate to the surface of the physical body, where they hang around the positively charged surface. This is an energy field surrounding all physical bodies. It is broader and more dynamic from living structures, and this field around a person has been called throughout history the human Aura, radiating light frequencies, which can sometimes be seen by others in higher states of consciousness.

The first equipment that was used in Valerie Hunt's laboratory to measure the energies of a human body was a **telemetry instrument** especially built for them by a NASA engineer, who had already developed a telemetry system for astronauts, used to send their vital physiological recordings of muscle and heart activities from the moon to earth during the first manned space trip. The signals are broadcasted by FM radio frequencies from a battery-operated radio transmitter and amplifier attached to the person's belt.

It was already known, that stimulated brain, heart and muscle cells create electrical energy which can be recorded. But using the telemetry instrument even the auric field of a person appeared. It is smaller in amplitude, but higher in frequencies, which could later be associated with **mind phenomena and human consciousness** as well, when more sophisticated computer software was developed – a **Biofield Monitor**. This Monitor showed, that the energy-field of each individual is unique, changing with emotions and consciousness. As HPB already stated, it selectively transacts with other outside fields of information, altering raw stimuli to meet its own needs. Every information must pass through this energy field before reaching the nervous system.

It is a quantum **concept of vibrations**, their frequencies can be visualized by different colours, and it has its own integrity. Also the scientists, like HPB, came to the conclusion, **that the mind is an energy- field phenomenon, having its seat in the Aura**. Before brain waves were activated, the field already responded, although the person experienced no conscious sensation. Experiments with test persons in a **sound sterile** room showed, that people felt strange sensory aberrations and lost all sense of time. Their consciousness altered so rapidly, that they were not able to operate instruments.

When the **electrical aspect** of the room was withdrawn, the auric fields became randomly disorganized, scattered and incoherent; energy was jumping between people and their chakras (or energy centres), their bodies responded as though they were being threatened. When **magnetism** was decreased, gross in-coordination occurred, where people could not balance their bodies any more.



Other experiments showed, that **reflexes from material reality**, like body or personal states, are recorded in and recovered from the **brain**. Other impressions such as experienced knowing, higher information, transcendental ideas, insight about ultimate sources of reality and creativity in its purest form are properties of the **higher mind**, outside the domain of **material** reality, yet interacting with them in an open system, because Valerie Hunt and her team were able to measure them.

The mind can explore far **beyond** the closed circuit of the brain, and the brain may not even be aware of it. Grounded in a state of material reality, the energy field ranges from about 350-600 cycles per second; an altered state of consciousness exhibits a range of up to 200.000 cycles per second, **containing information** of previous lifetimes, which can be experienced. **HPB says, that experiences from past incarnations are the memory of the heart, and the capacity to impress it on the brain, so that it can become part of its consciousness, is the "opening of the Third Eye"** (CW XII p. 696).

To close with the words of one of the Masters Instruction No. III p. 596-598 CW XII: *"Observe that the first of the steps of gold which mount towards the Temple of Truth is – A CLEAN LIFE. This means **purity of body**, and a still **greater purity of mind, heart and spirit** ... how many violate one or more of these conditions, and yet expect to be freely taught the highest Wisdom and Sciences, the Wisdom of the Gods ... Though if such a person with any of the above faults declared should fill the world with his charities, and make his name known throughout the nation, he would make no advancement in the practical occult sciences, but be continually slipping backward. The six and ten transcendental virtues, the Paramitas, are not for full grown yogis and priests alone, but for all those who would enter the Path".*

*Petra joined the Theosophical Society in 1991 and has been member of Blavatsky Lodge, London, since 1992.*

References: H. P. Blavatsky: The Secret Doctrine, I & II'; Collected Writings XII & XII. Mahatma Letters I. Valerie Hunt "Science of Human Vibrations of Consciousness", Glossary, and "Uncork your Consciousness".









# DIVINE WISDOM

## SUMMER SCHOOL

**SATURDAY 6<sup>th</sup> TO SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2016**  
**Wills Hall, Parrys Lane, University of Bristol, BS9 1AE**

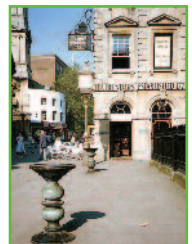
**CHIEF GUEST SPEAKER:**  
**TRAN-THI-KIM-DIEU**

I am pleased to tell you that for next year's Summer School we will be returning to Wills Hall at The University of Bristol. This has always been a popular venue as it offers both en-suite and standard accommodation, a spacious conference hall, pleasant grounds as well as excellent vegetarian meals served in a refectory reminiscent of that seen in Harry Potter films.

The School runs from August 6th to 13th and has the theme 'Divine Wisdom'. The guest speaker is Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu an international speaker for the Theosophical Society and currently the Chairman of the European Federation of Theosophists. She will be giving the prestigious Blavatsky Lecture on the Sunday afternoon as well as a public lecture later in the week. Other speakers and study leaders include Bhupendra Vora, Gary Kidgell, Ted Capstick, Colin Price, Janet Hoult, Tony Maddock, Cynthia Trasi, Barry Thompson, Noeline Hart, Michael van Buren, Ron Wallwork, Teresa Keast, Wayne Gatfield and Elizabeth Crofts.

The cost for the whole week for en-suite accommodation is £490 before the end of May and £520 after that date. The cost for standard accommodation is £440 before the end of May and £470 after that date. **The full programme will be on the website in the New Year along with full sized versions of both the Residential and Day Delegate Application forms. In the meantime a Residential Application Form is on the next page.** Alternatively you can apply for application forms from the Summer School Registrar, Mr Colin Price, 50, Gloucester Place, London. W1U 8EA.

Jenny Baker  
*Director of Summer School*  
*Foundation for Theosophical Studies*



Clifton Suspension Bridge. Wills Hall Quadrangle. 'The Nail's' Bristol. Images courtesy Wikipedia.

Images on p24: Top line: centre left, Tim Boyd (International President of the Theosophical Society) with Jenny Baker (President of the Theosophical Society in England and Chairman of the Foundation for Theosophical Studies); on the right Tim with his wife Lily. Group photos are of the students, lecturers, study and workshop leaders, organisers and workers. Centre left is a morning hatha yoga session led by Jenny and at the bottom, members of the Theosophical Order of Service at their AGM. Photos by Colyn Boyce and Ann Moon.



# THE FOUNDATION FOR THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES SUMMER SCHOOL - DIVINE WISDOM

**Saturday 6th August to Saturday 13th August 2016**  
**Wills Hall, Parrys Lane, University of Bristol, BS9 1AE.**

## **RESIDENTIAL APPLICATION FORM** **EARLY BOOKING IS ADVISED**

**SINGLE EN-SUITE AND STANDARD ROOMS ARE AVAILABLE**

**All Meals Are Vegetarian**

<b>NAME/S</b>		
<b>ADDRESS</b>		<b>Postcode</b>
<b>Telephone:</b>	<b>Mobile:</b>	<b>Email:</b>

<b>A. I/we wish to book for the whole week: Please tick</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>B. I/we require: Please tick</b>	<b>a single room:</b>	<b>a double room:</b>	
<b>C. I/we wish to enrol for part of the week (eg Sunday lunch to Tuesday breakfast).</b>			
<b>Period required is From:</b>		<b>To:</b>	

**The whole week cost for an Ensuite Room is £490 before 31st May and £520 after 31st May.**  
**The whole week cost for a Standard Room is £440 before 31st May and £470 after 31st May.**  
**Please telephone Colin Price on 07960 450316 for a quotation for part-time bookings**

<b>D. Special Requirements</b> (e.g. adjacent rooms/ground floor):	
<b>E. Dietary Requirements</b> (e.g. Vegan, Gluten Free):	
<b>F. PAYMENT</b> I/we enclose a cheque/postal order for a grand total of:	<b>£</b>
<p><b>Please send this form with your cheque/postal order made payable to: "THE FOUNDATION FOR THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES", to Colin Price, Summer School Registrar, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA.</b></p> <p>Also send an A5 self-addressed, stamped envelope for the full programme, joining instructions and travel details, which will be sent to you nearer the time. If you require a receipt include an additional small stamped addressed envelope with your application.</p> <p>If you wish to pay electronically our bank details are: HSBC, sort code; 40-08-44. Acc. No. 81086227.</p> <p>Please remember to put your initial and surname as the reference when making your payment.</p> <p><i>(Any refund for cancellations is dependent on notice given and our contract with the University)</i></p>	
<b>G. A coach leaves HQ on 6th August at 10.30am. Please indicate ONE box if you wish to travel on the coach.</b>	
<b>Return journey of: £40</b>	<b>Single journey of: £25</b>

**BURSARIES:** Some bursaries are available, in confidence please contact: The Bursar, the Foundation for Theosophical Studies 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA for an application form. Or email [bursar@theosophy.org.uk](mailto:bursar@theosophy.org.uk)  
Please apply early as late applications may not be accepted.

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# HARRY POTTER'S QUEST IN THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

## John Algeo

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Harry Potter began his education at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the first of seven projected novels: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. In that first novel, Harry was on a quest to find the Philosopher's Stone, which turns base metal into gold and produces an elixir of immortality. But his real quest in that novel, as in the succeeding books of the series, is for self-knowledge. In the second book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry continues his education and his quest for self-knowledge during his second year at Hogwarts.

In his second year, Harry learns, among other things, about the three marks of existence that the Buddha taught, namely (1) that life involves suffering, (2) that we have no enduring separate self, and (3) that everything is constantly changing or transforming. Indeed, transformation is the key theme of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

Harry has returned to Hogwarts School after the summer vacation only to discover that something is very much amiss. Daubed on a wall of the school are the words 'THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE'. The 'heir' is a descendant of Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founding Wizards of Hogwarts, the only one who believed that none but pure-blooded Wizards should be admitted as students. To ensure the eventual implementation of his belief, he created a secret chamber deep underground, a chamber that only his true heir, a descendant who shared his belief, could open. And in that secret chamber was concealed a secret monster - a Basilisk, which is a serpent whose look either kills or petrifies.

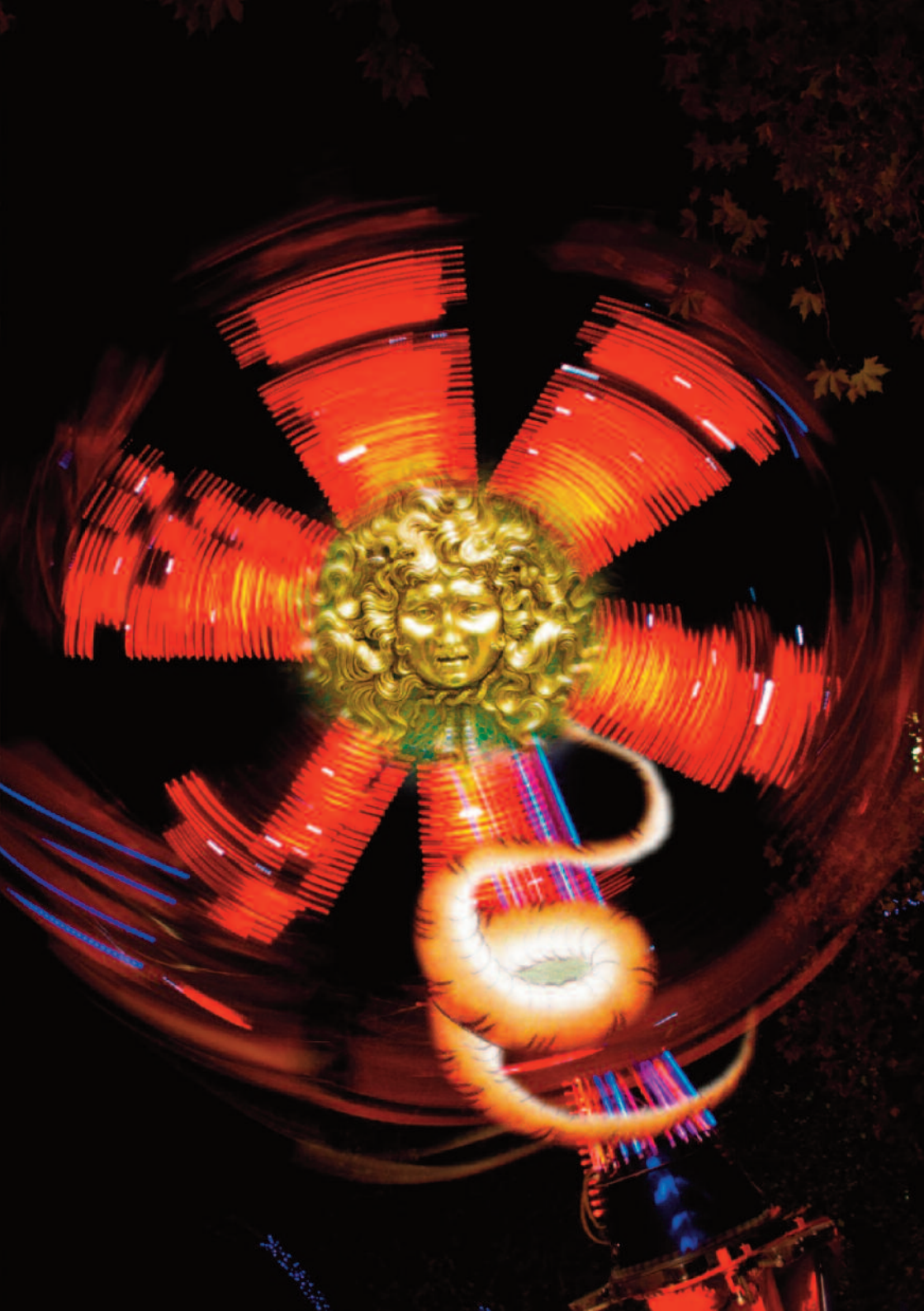
### Harry's Second Quest

Harry's quest in the second book is to identify Salazar Slytherin's heir, to find the Chamber of Secrets, and to kill the killer Basilisk. All three of these - the heir, the Chamber, and the Basilisk - have symbolic meaning. Slytherin's heir is Carl Jung's Shadow archetype or Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Dweller on the Threshold. He is that aspect of ourselves, of our own past, that we must overcome when we enter the Path. The deep underground Chamber of Secrets is that part of our psyche housing our repressed urges, the *skandhas* that drag us down and backward. And the Basilisk, which kills and petrifies, is a negative energy opposing the upward thrust of life and evolution, or it is the separate and separative mind, the great slayer of the Real (as *The Voice of the Silence* calls it).

Everything represented by those three - the heir, the chamber, and the Basilisk - must be transformed if we are to continue on the Path of Self-discovery, the Path of Evolution. To transform those three and progress, Harry Potter learns about the Buddha's three marks of existence.

### The Buddha's Three Marks of Existence

The first of those marks is that life involves pain or frustration. Harry experiences frustration throughout the novel, beginning with his misery during his summer vacation at the house of his Muggle relatives, where he was mistreated and isolated in every way - not even receiving letters from his school friends, because the house-elf Dobby was intercepting his mail (for what he thought was Harry's own good). From that point onward, the novel is a catalog of Harry's other frustrations and pains. Dobby's further efforts to protect Harry get him in trouble with his relatives, with the Wizard government, with the school authorities, and finally cause him to be battered by a rogue Bludger during a Quidditch game and to have the bones of his arm shattered. Harry has to suffer the unwelcome attention and unwanted patronage of Gilderoy Lockhart, a pseudo wizard. He is battered





by the Whomping Willow tree when the car he and Ron are driving rams into it. He misses the delights of a Halloween party at Hogwarts and has to endure instead the tedium of a Deathday party for the ghost of Nearly Headless Nick. He is the victim of foul play and dirty tricks at a dueling club meeting. He has to endure the suspicion and dislike of most of his fellow students at Hogwarts, who believe he is the Heir of Slytherin. He is captured by Aragog, a giant spider, who wants to feed Harry to his brood of spider children. He has to battle the Basilisk without looking at it, because its look is death. And he has to overcome Tom Riddle, the deadly spirit of Voldemort as a boy. Those are only some of the frustrations and pains that Harry learns are inevitable in life because they are essential elements in the plot of life.

The second of the Buddha's marks of existence is the fact that there is no stable 'I' inside us. Harry learns about this mark particularly in his dealings with Tom Marvolo Riddle, who is the Heir of Slytherin and who was a student at Hogwarts fifty years earlier but grew up to be Lord Voldemort, the embodiment of evil forces. Harry has something of Voldemort or Tom Riddle in him. That theme continues in future novels, for in the fourth book of the series, something of Harry is absorbed by Voldemort, allowing the evil Wizard to achieve embodiment again. And when Harry first came to Hogwarts, the Sorting Hat (which assigns new students to their houses) wanted to put Harry into Slytherin House - which was the house of Tom Riddle or Voldemort. Harry does not know who or what he is.

At the center of his being, where the sense of 'I' should reside, there is a question mark. Harry is on a quest for self-discovery, and what he must discover is that there is no separate self to discover. There is only One Self in all of us, whether we are Harry Potter or the riddling Voldemort.

The third of the Buddha's marks of existence is that everything is ever changing - the theme of this novel, which is that all things transform. The novel has many examples of transformation, from the trivial to the momentous.

### **Transformation - Theme of This Novel**

1. At the beginning of Harry's second year at school, he and his friend Ron miss the train to Hogwarts, and so travel there instead in a Muggle car, a Ford Anglia, that has been enchanted by Ron's father so that it can fly. The car has been transformed by magic. Thus Harry's new school year begins with the aid of a transformation.

2. Dobby is a house-elf in the service of the cruel and wicked Lucius Malfoy. House-elves are perpetually indentured servants, whose only reason for existing is to serve their masters. They wear pillowcases for clothing and can be freed only if the master gives them an article of proper clothing. Dobby is devoted to Harry because the infant Harry's defeat of the wicked Wizard Voldemort made life better for all innocent creatures in the world. Dobby therefore wants to protect Harry from harm and nearly kills him in the process, but finally Harry manages to free Dobby by tricking the house-elf's master into tossing away an old sock, which Dobby catches, thereby being transformed from a slave into a free elf.

3. Before the identity of the Heir of Slytherin becomes known, Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione form a plan to test their theory that the heir is Draco Malfoy, the son of Lucius (Dobby's cruel master). The plan, devised by the clever Hermione, is to concoct a Polyjuice Potion, which will transform whoever drinks it into the appearance of a different person. Harry and Ron are to transform into two of Draco's henchmen, Crabbe and Goyle, and thereby discover whether Draco is Slytherin's heir. They do so transform and discover that Draco is not the Heir of Slytherin. Poor Hermione,

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Incorporated images p28: Power Surge 2 (adapted), Tony Hisgett; Vincenzo gemito, medusa, 1911 (adapted), Sailko.  
Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

however, makes a mistake and transforms into a mixed shape of a human girl and a cat and has to be untransformed in the school's infirmary.

4. The letters of the name 'Tom Marvolo Riddle', the true Heir of Slytherin are reordered into an anagram: 'I am Lord Voldemort'. Thus the two names are transformations of each other. And more significantly, the school boy Tom Riddle transforms into the archevil Wizard Voldemort.

5. The Basilisk, which is hidden in the Chamber of Secrets, is a symbol of negative transformation because it kills or petrifies its victim; that is, the evil serpent transforms its victim into a lifeless state. The Basilisk is thus an appropriate agent of Voldemort, whose French name (vol de mort) means 'flight of death'. The Basilisk, however, is contrasted with another fabulous creature of opposite symbolism - the Phoenix.

6. Harry in his battle against the Basilisk is assisted by a Phoenix, which is a symbol of positive transformation. The Phoenix is a bird that lives a very long time, but when the end of its life approaches, the Phoenix does not die. Instead, the bird bursts into flames, which consume its body. From the ashes arises a new baby Phoenix - the old bird reborn. The Phoenix is thus a symbol of death and resurrection, of regeneration, or of transformation into a new life.

7. The climactic transformation in the book, however, is one that actually occurred long before its story began, indeed even before the first book, but which we learn about only near the end of the second novel. When Harry is in the Chamber of Secrets, the specter of Tom Riddle speaks with him and comments: 'there are strange likenesses between us, Harry Potter.... Both half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths [Wizards who can talk with serpents] to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even look something alike'. The similarities between Tom Riddle and Harry Potter are due to an early exchange between Voldemort (Tom Riddle grown up) and the infant Harry. When Voldemort tried to kill Harry as a baby, he failed because of the shield of love with which Harry's mother had surrounded her son. Instead, Voldemort's magic curse was reflected back on him, destroying his body and limiting his powers. In the process, some of Voldemort's powers passed over into Harry's infant body. Those powers, in being transferred from Voldemort to Harry, caused Harry to become in some sense a transformation of Voldemort, good transformed out of evil.

'Tom Riddle' is appropriate as Voldemort's real name. For he, as well as his name, is a riddle-like evil itself. Some evil appears to be consciously and deliberately so, but how that can be is a riddle - the riddle of evil. This riddle has obsessed human beings from ancient times. It is the subject of the biblical Book of Job, of John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, of C. S. Lewis's book *The Problem of Pain*. The riddle, briefly, is how evil can exist in a world created by a good God or according to a divine Plan. The riddle of evil seems to be a major theme of the whole Harry Potter series. In addition, the name 'Tom' is short for 'Thomas', and the name 'Thomas' means 'a twin'. Tom Riddle or Voldemort and Harry Potter are twins, as Tom's comment about their likeness suggests. They are twins as transformations of each other, the one evil and the other good. In that, they are parallel to the Basilisk and the Phoenix, another pair of twins, also representing the transformations of death and life, involution and evolution.

All the transformations in the novel are, however, only little examples of the greatest transformation of all. The greatest transformation is that of the One Self, which transforms itself into the multitudinous creation - into Harry, Voldemort, you, me, and everything. But it does not stop there. For the multitudinous creation - Harry, Voldemort, you, me, and everything - is in the process of transforming itself back into the One Self. And that is the ultimate Secret in the Chamber of our hearts.

*Dr John Algeo is a former International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society and Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia, USA.*



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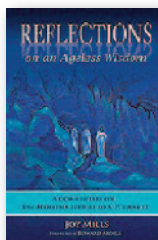
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## BOOK REVIEWS



### Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom by Joy Mills



"Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom" is the most comprehensive, thoughtful discussion of the Mahatma Letters since they were first published in 1923. The famed Mahatma Letters, a series of responses to A.P. Sinnett's queries, continue to amaze and bewilder readers with their enigmatic, supernatural ambience.

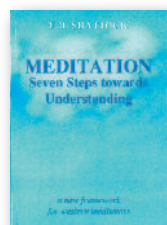
In 1875 Madame Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society at the request of her occult teachers, whom she referred to as the "Mahatmas", an ancient Sanskrit term meaning "Great Souls". Blavatsky was clear to point out that the

Mahatmas, also referred to as Masters and Adepts, were fully mortal men who through painstaking training and service, had evolved their highest spiritual faculties. These teachers, whom Blavatsky claimed were among the Universal Brotherhood devoted to the spiritual evolution of humanity, were also the source of her remarkable and vastly extensive occult education. Blavatsky's own psychic and paranormal feats astonished onlookers of her day, but it was the tremendous wisdom, compassion, and blunt honesty of her Mahatmas that invoked such ardent curiosity in Mr. Sinnett. The words of these mysterious Mahatmas continue to draw and inspire seekers on the quest for spiritual truth into this present day.

Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom comes to us from one of Theosophy's most respected and beloved veterans, Joy Mills. Joy brilliantly sheds new and profound insight into these 140 plus letters that first astounded Western society over a century ago. This is an invaluable addition to any esoteric researcher's library; a remarkable gift of inspiration for Theosophists, philosophical seekers, and researchers far and wide. *Quest Books. £35.*

### Meditation – Seven Steps towards Understanding by

E. H. Shattock

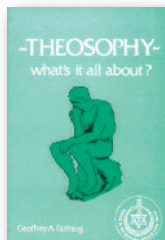


Each step of the journey towards higher awareness is laid out and its purpose explained; Preparation, The Personality, The Thinker and Beyond, The One Life, Love, Service.

*Theosophical Publishing House, London. £10.00.*

Image: incorporated cat (adapted), Trizek. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

## Theosophy – What's it all about? By Geoffrey Farthing



Just what is Theosophy? We might know someone who thinks that they can answer this question accurately and objectively or perhaps we can look up a brief and, hopefully, unbiased definition in a dictionary or encyclopaedia, but how can we be certain of the answer? What is theosophy about? The author tells us that it is about the universe, its nature and origins; it is about mankind and his relationship to the Whole; it is about law that operates throughout nature, about evolution & individual responsibility. This simple little work aims to introduce the reader to some ideas to enlarge their outlook on life, and begin to answer the question: 'Theosophy: What's It All About?'

*Theosophical Publishing House, London. £5.*

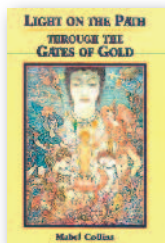
## The Search Within by Christmas Humphreys



Manuals of meditation have flooded the market, some good, others less so. This simple text, written by the founder of the Buddhist Society gives a one year course in spiritual and moral thinking, without the gimmicks and 'instant success' claims of other volumes.

*Theosophical Publishing House, London. £6.*

## Light on the Path and Through the Gates of Gold by Mabel Collins



These are two inspirational tracts for daily living, written under inspiration by an early member of the movement. *Light on the Path* is subtitled 'A treatise written for the personal use of those who are ignorant of the eastern wisdom, and those who desire to enter within its influence' and contains an appendix on Karma, whilst *Through the Gates of Gold* deals with entrance to that realm of the soul unknowable through sense-perception, and indicates some of the steps necessary to reach their threshold: *"Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears. Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness. Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters it must have lost the power to wound..."*.

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# THEOSOPHICAL TALKS AND WORKSHOPS AROUND THE UK

*Please Note: the opinion of speakers or group leaders, and any views expressed at these meetings do not necessarily represent the views of the Foundation for Theosophical Studies or The Theosophical Society.*

## LEEDS

### ARCHETYPES AND THE INNER JOURNEY

Gary Kidgell

10<sup>th</sup> January, 2:30 pm

In this presentation, Gary will outline the path of spiritual transformation in the light of the wisdom teachings. Relating this to Jung's concept of Individuation and his theories on archetypes and how these are represented within the human psyche as symbols.

### THE SCIENCE OF MANTRAS, SACRED SOUND AND UNLOCKING THE DNA CODE

Susan Leybourne

6<sup>th</sup> March, 2:30 pm

Leeds Theosophical Society, 12 Queen Square LS2 8AJ. [info@ts-leeds.org.uk](mailto:info@ts-leeds.org.uk) [www.ts-leeds.org.uk](http://www.ts-leeds.org.uk)

## DURHAM

THEOSOPHICAL STUDY AND DISCUSSION. Saturdays - 2-4 pm, monthly.

Durham Centre for Theosophical Studies. Shakespeare Hall, North Rd, Durham DH1 4SQ.

Enquiries: on 0191 386 0492 [durhamcentr4ts@btinternet.com](mailto:durhamcentr4ts@btinternet.com) [www.theosophicalsocietydurhamcentre.com](http://www.theosophicalsocietydurhamcentre.com)

## NORTHAMPTON

### GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

For meetings please see [www.meetup.com/Northampton-Theosophy-Group](http://www.meetup.com/Northampton-Theosophy-Group)

Northampton Theosophical Society. Quaker Meeting House, Wellington Street, Northampton NN1 3AS

Enquiries: 07791 082161 [northeos@hotmail.com](mailto:northeos@hotmail.com)

## MANCHESTER

O LANOO – THE SECRET DOCTRINE UNVEILED - Study and Group Discussion.

Led by Mark Crowshaw. Regular meetings - please ring for dates.

Manchester Theosophical Society. The Quaker Meeting House. Mount St, Manchester M2 5NS. Enquiries:

01942 608368 or 07899 896887. [www.nwfederation.org.uk](http://www.nwfederation.org.uk)

## NOTTINGHAM

HP Blavatsky's THE SECRET DOCTRINE – Study and Discussion.

Monthly Every Fourth Saturday at 11 am.

Nottingham Theosophical Society, Theosophical Hall, 73 Maid Marion Way, Nottingham, NG1 6AJ.

Enquiries: 0116 2785856 (evenings) [finianh2@gmail.com](mailto:finianh2@gmail.com) [www.theancientwisdom.co.uk](http://www.theancientwisdom.co.uk)

## SIDMOUTH

THEOSOPHICAL Study and Discussion, 2.30 pm, monthly.

Sidmouth Theosophical Society. Enquiries: 07774 268235 or 07739 469662.

<http://sidmouthtslodge.jimdo.com>

## SOUTHPORT

### NEW ENQUIRERS GROUP – Study and Discussion.

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Southport Theosophical Society. Enquiries: 01704 574505 noeline@live.co.uk <http://nwffederation.org.uk>

## SWANSEA

### SECRET DOCTRINE – Study and Discussion on Eric Mc Gough's Course 'All About Angels'.

**Wednesday afternoons 1 – 3 pm, fortnightly**

Swansea Theosophical Society. 122 Clydach Road, Morriston, Swansea SA6 6QB, South Wales.

Enquiries: 01792 774225 pam@peacemala.org.uk [www.theosophywales.com](http://www.theosophywales.com)

## WINCHESTER

### STUDY COURSE ON THEOSOPHY, Saturdays 2.00 - 4.00 pm, monthly.

Winchester Theosophical Society Study meetings held Quaker Meeting House, 16 Colebrook Street, Winchester SO23 9LH. Enquiries: 01962 772 361 or 01962 882668 or [angi\\_ovenden@hotmail.com](mailto:angi_ovenden@hotmail.com)

## THEOSOPHICAL EVENTS IN LONDON

**Theosophical Society 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA**

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**Headquarters programme will resume in the New Year.**

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**The Society warmly welcomes anyone who is in sympathy with its Three Objects:**

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Membership of the Society is £40 a year (£20 concessions). For application forms please contact Colyn Boyce: [office@theosoc.org.uk](mailto:office@theosoc.org.uk), 020 7563 9817, or write to: The Theosophical Society, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA.

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The Foundation runs an annual Theosophical Summer School with talks, lectures, meditation, and many experiential workshops and discussion groups.

The School and other theosophical events provide a beautiful oasis for meeting fellow spiritual travellers, as well as being a great opportunity for learning more about the essential truths of life.

Throughout the Foundation's programme of activities you will find not only information for the mind but also inspiration for the heart.

For further information on self-discovery, meditation, unity of all people, national speakers, articles, study, history, media and links go to:

**[www.theosophy.org.uk](http://www.theosophy.org.uk)**