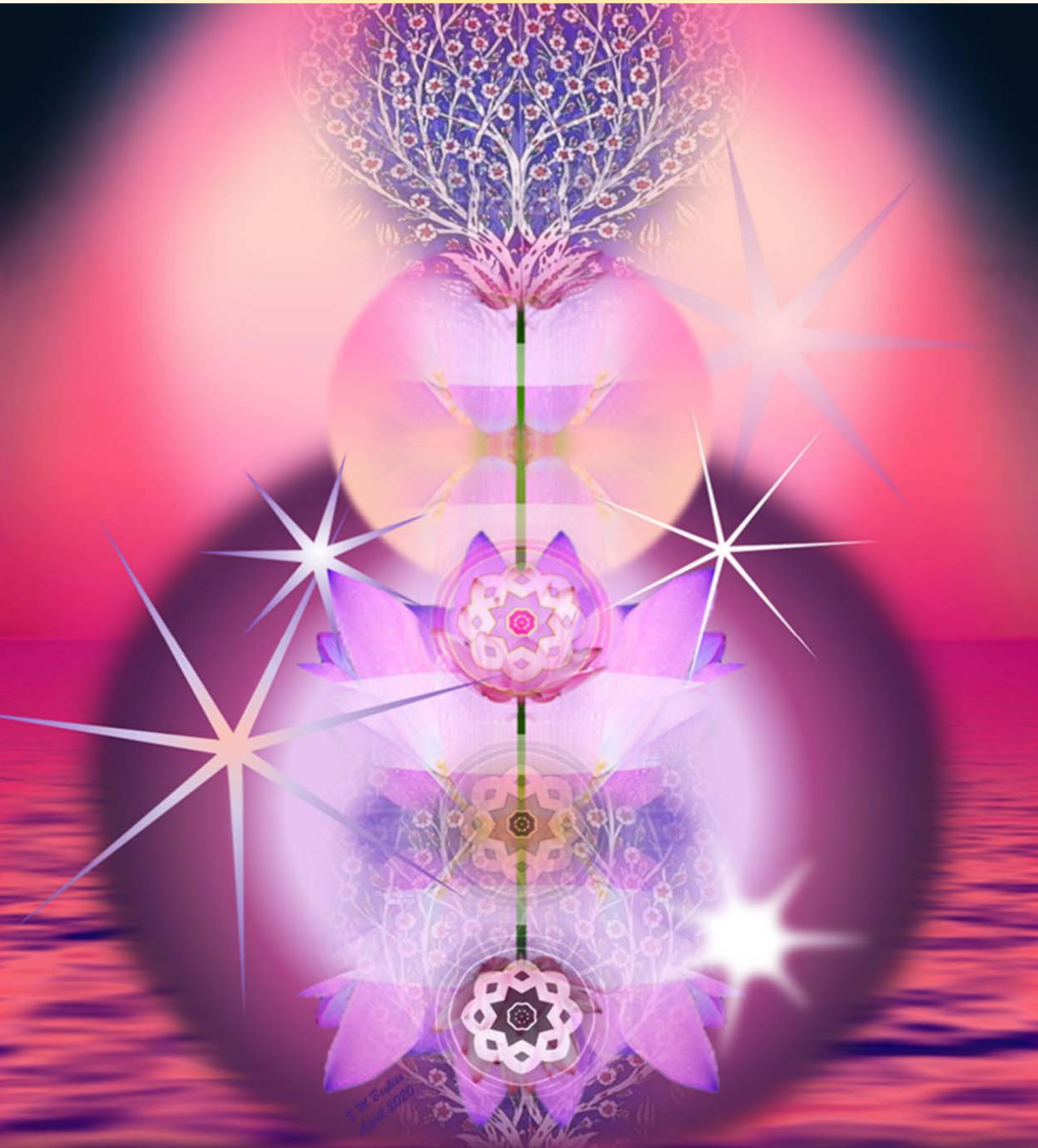


ESOTERICA®

Autumn 2020

Insight into the Ageless Wisdom

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Editorial

With warm greetings to all our readers in the UK and around the world and hoping this finds you in good health and cheerfulness. In this issue, Esoterica has expanded to provide more articles for your study and enjoyment, and I hope you will find some uplifting items of interest in these pages. In 2021 there will be three extended issues, so even more to relish.

Here in Britain we have turned a page in the year, passing from a warm and beautiful summer - never guaranteed in the UK, into the wet windiness of early autumn. For many of you spring will be dawning and for some extreme heat or cold is never far away. Our environment is ever-changing and seldom the same in one part of the world to another, but in 2020 we have become even more acutely aware of our shared world and our shared humanity. Here there is an old saying: 'a trouble shared is a trouble halved'. Well our 'troubles' have certainly and increasingly been very liberally communicated and can no longer be hidden or compartmentalised, so if not halved then brought to our attention for the greater good of our shared future on this planet.

Certainly, it is very heartening to see the care and cooperation we offer each other (as individuals or as communities or countries), which is also now more visible, however tenuous it may have seemed at times, and this helps to increase our awareness of the unbreakable bond that links us together. Importantly it strengthens our journey towards greater compassion and empathy and a less cruel humankind. The world faces many more changes and adjustments and in the long-term few are likely to be any easier than those which have been faced this year, so these are lessons from which we need to learn well.

May love and light brighten your world in 2021.

Susan Bayliss
Editor

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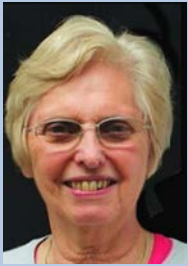
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www.pexels.com/photo/beach-clouds-dawn-daylight.

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From the National President



It is several months since the last issue of Esoterica and nobody could have predicted how much the world would shift during that time. People's lives changed almost overnight as we entered a strange surreal period of restrictions designed to combat the spread of Coronavirus. A pandemic was declared and to date? People all over the world have died. It is generally agreed that the world will never be quite the same again. For something so small to cause havoc throughout the globe is, to me remarkable.

Just what is a virus? It is a microscopic infectious agent that cannot thrive outside of a living cell. It is said that the rhinovirus, the cause of the common cold, is so tiny that 500, million can fit on a pinhead. Once it has invaded a host the virus will multiply and spread to other cells.

Viral pandemics have been around for centuries, but this one and the procedures put in place to try to stem its advance, have made us change the way we live. Since March we have all become very familiar with the words, lockdown, social distancing, self-isolation, shielding; and with working from home. As our social lives ceased, we had time to reflect on ourselves and to perhaps re-evaluate our lives. This valuable exercise is one positive thing to have come out of the pandemic.

Reflection brings back memories, some pleasant and others not. Very often it is not the happier occasions that we recall clearly, but the unhappier times and the things we regret that are more focused in our minds. We start to question ourselves: What if...? If only.... Why? Looking back there will be times we realize we could have acted differently, but as much as we may regret past deeds, we cannot change them.

We can however consider that all life's events occur for a purpose and that nothing happens randomly. These events are our Karma and we learn from them. In 'The Key to Theosophy', H. P. Blavatsky describes Karma as:

"... the Ultimate Law of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, Karma is that unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer".

Jenny Baker
National President
October 2020





The Spiritual Ascent

Gary Kidgell

Theosophy describes the journey of spirit through matter as the 'way of the monad'*. The objective of the monad's lengthy evolutionary sojourn is to acquire *spiritual staying power*. This relates to our ability to radiate and express the qualities of the monad amidst the constraints of the planes of consciousness below it of which the densest, and most challenging, is the physical.

This entails a process of involution, referred to by the Hindus as the *pravritti marga*, meaning 'path of desire'. Desire serves as a means of enabling the monad's instrument — the Soul or higher Self, to engage fully with matter, prior to reaching a 'saturation point'.

The personality, as the mechanism of the Soul, then experiences 'divine unrest' as the transient affairs of the physical world no longer satisfy nor sustain one, due to the appetite of the higher Self for garnering physical experience having been sated. The *nivritti marga*, meaning 'path of renunciation', then beckons as one is driven towards undertaking the journey back to source of one's being.

At this juncture of the long evolutionary journey of the Soul our desire nature, which has hitherto served a healthy and necessary purpose towards engaging spirit with matter, must now be transmuted into spiritual aspiration as our personality must be reconstructed as a worthy repository of spiritual energy. In the classic discourse of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, (an avatar for the Supreme Being Vishnu) on the symbolic battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna is informed of the necessity of overcoming desire:

Where there is desire, there is the world.
Be firm in non-attachment.
Be free of desire.
Be happy.

Bondage and desire are the same.
Destroy desire and be free.
Only by detaching from the world
does one joyfully realize Self.

Bhagavad Gita, 10:3-4

When we embark upon the process of spiritual transformation we must realise that the 'journey is the goal.' H.P.Blavatsky (H.P.B.) informs us:

'Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself'[§]

We do not commence our evolutionary return as the 'finished article'. It is the experiences that we undergo in traversing the spiritual path which lead to expansions in consciousness and in our level of being. The Soul functions as a 'potter' seeking to mould the clay of its personality into a suitable instrument which may then be effectively 'fired' upon the Burning Ground of initiation. H.P.B. states:

'Perfection, to be fully such, must be born out of imperfection, the incorruptible must grow out of the corruptible, having the latter as its vehicle and basis and contrast'.[¥]

This transformative process was symbolised by the *magnum opus* of the mediaeval alchemists who sought to transmute the base metal of the transient personality into the incorruptible gold of the higher Self. The alchemical motto *solve et coagula* encapsulates the requirements of this process. 'Solve' relates to the breaking down or dissolution of the lower components of our psyche whilst 'coagula' relates to their reconstitution in a more purified form. When we tread the path, we must effect an 'inventory' of our various attitudes; predispositions; desires; attachments; and complexes. Any psychic contents which serve as impediments to our

* See page 34.

§ *The Voice of the Silence*, Part I. H.P.B. London, Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889.

¥ *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P.B. Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, India, 1979, Vol II p95.

spiritual growth must be effectively 'dissolved' prior to our personality being re-assembled at a higher point of consciousness. On this basis, we may be infused by the energies of the Soul.



Theosophy symbolises our journey back to source as a mountainous ascent — the 'mountain of initiation'. When we embark upon the precipitous ascent of the symbolic cliff-face we compact the lessons and experiences of many lives into a short few. Towards such ends we must be prepared to plumb the depths of our psyche as a prerequisite towards enjoying the magnificent vistas which open up to us in the form of vast expansions in our consciousness which enhance our capacity to carry and express the divine life force. As the symbolism implies, this is a most challenging and very arduous process.

The analytical psychologist Carl Jung recounts the dream of a patient and theologian who:

'saw on a mountain a kind of Castle of the Grail. He went along a road that seemed to lead straight to the foot of the mountain and up it. But as he drew nearer he discovered to his great disappointment that a chasm separated him from the mountain, a deep, darksome gorge with underworldly water rushing along the bottom. A steep path led downwards and toilsomely climbed up again on the other side. But the prospect looked uninviting, and the dreamer awoke'.[‡]

Jung demonstrates that archetypes or 'divine ideas'* are represented within the human psyche as symbols. The symbolism of the theologian's

dream is most apposite in portraying the challenges and the rewards of the spiritual path.

In the Grail legends the sacred vessel is described in various ways as a cup, dish or stone possessing miraculous powers of healing, bliss and divine grace. The Grail is commonly held in the custody of the Fisher King or Maimed King who resides within his castle. The King has been wounded in the thighs (in this context a euphemism for the genitals), by what is referred to as the 'Dolorous Stroke'. This prevents the King from participating in sovereign union with his land whereby it becomes a 'wasteland' bereft of water and vegetation. This symbolises the challenges and the constraints that physical incarnation places upon our spiritual expression. The monad is effectively 'wounded' and 'handicapped' in terms of its true and full expression when it is imprisoned within the realms of matter.

Only the questing knight displaying the necessary purity, courage, honour and virtue may attain the Grail by overcoming the various challenges which confront him upon his quest for the sacred vessel. Immediately, we can perceive similarities between the Grail and the Soul or higher Self, a receptacle capable of receiving the divine energies of the monad which, at the third initiation, are increasingly poured into the sacred vessel. The successful Grail knight then effects the healing of the Maimed King. This is a symbolic illustration of the monad's acquisition of spiritual staying power as the benighted landscape of the wasteland is redeemed.

In a manner akin to the knights questing for the Grail, we embark upon the spiritual path, entering the realms of the unconscious where we undergo many tests and trials in pursuit of initiation. Upon attaining initiation, the Soul and personality function as one and we effectively become the Grail with our aura being infused by spiritual qualities.

The necessary passage through the murky and foreboding water found within the theologian's

[‡] *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, C. G. Jung. Routledge, Hove, 2014, p19.

* *The archetypes popularised by Jung, in their pure form, emanate from the monad and are expressed on the planes of Atma, Buddhi and Manas. These 'divine ideas' relate to the intent of the 'greater beings' within which we reside — the Planetary Logos and the Solar Logos.*

dream, and the subsequent mountainous ascent, is related to our 'descent' into the unconscious. The Ancient Greeks referred to this as Hades — the underworld. Both the chthonic realms and the spiritual realms of the human psyche are located within the unconscious. The resident lower astro-mental components include our various fears; complexes; repressed feelings of shame and guilt; the Freudian Id; the Jungian Shadow and, of course, the Dweller on the Threshold.

If we are to succeed in accessing and expressing the energies of the planes of consciousness of the Soul — Atma, Buddhi and Manas — we must successfully eliminate these lower components of our psyche through a process of transmutation. The Ancient Greeks and Romans created images of the underworld deity Hades/Pluto holding an overflowing cornucopia as a means of symbolising the spiritual riches located within these realms. Only the heroes of Greek myth were able to emerge from Hades intact. H.P.B. states that to speak of:

'anyone as having descended into Hades was equivalent in antiquity to calling him a full Initiate'.⁴

One who emerges successfully from the symbolic descent into Hades becomes a member of an illustrious group who have completed this journey. H.P.B. cites a series of comparative examples here including Jesus; Attis; Dionysus; Enoch; Heracles; Ishtar; Krishna; Orpheus; and Persephone. On this basis, we may perceive that the underworld descent and the mountainous ascent are inextricably interwoven.

The successful underworld descent and return, where we are then privy to the fruits of the cornucopia of Hades, entails the overcoming of the Dweller on the Threshold. The Dweller may be described as the sum-total of our personality expression created over our many lives. Included here is the aggregation of our fears; subdued passions; and repressed and undesirable aspects of our character. When seeking to scale the symbolic mountain of initiation we must confront and deal with the Dweller which blocks the threshold of initiation into higher states of consciousness. It is only upon attaining the third

initiation that the Dweller ceases to exist and is replaced by the Angel of the Presence, or Solar Angel, which guards the portal of initiation.

If we are to embark upon the symbolic underworld descent and access the spiritual treasures located within the cornucopia of Hades there are certain fundamental requirements in terms of us obtaining a valid 'passport' which shall enable us to safely negotiate our passage. H.P.B. emphasises the factor of purity as an imperative towards treading the path. She states:

Before that path is entered, thou must destroy thy lunar body [the body of desire], cleanse thy mind-body and make clean thy heart. Eternal life's pure waters, clear and crystal, with the monsoon tempest's muddy torrents cannot mingle.⁵

La Queste del Saint Graal (The Quest for the Holy Grail), formed part of *The Vulgate Cycle*, a series of five prose volumes which describe the life of King Arthur and the quest for the Grail in magnificent detail. It was this work which created the virgin knight Galahad — a symbol of spiritual purity, heroism, honour and virtue of an exalted degree.

In one of his adventures within the symbolic Forest Adventurous — the mythic landscape of the unconscious — Galahad approaches the Castle of the Maidens. The resident maidens, symbolising the Christian Virtues, are imprisoned and guarded by the seven Knights of Darkness who represent the seven Deadly Sins. Galahad must defeat the knights and redeem the world by setting free the maidens. Galahad fights and finally manages to defeat the seven Knights of Darkness. The Seven Deadly Sins of lust; gluttony, greed; sloth; wrath; envy and pride are vanquished. A monk gives Galahad the key to the Castle of the Maidens thus enabling the expression of the Seven Virtues: prudence; temperance; justice; courage; faith, hope and charity.

Similarly, when we tread the path, we must engage in a process of self-analysis recognising our faults and limitations whilst seeking to transmute our vices into virtues. Through the application of our will we then express the 'hero archetype' to effect transformation.

⁴ *Collected Writings XI*, H.P.B., p91. Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁵ *The Voice of the Silence*, part I, H.P.B. London, Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889.

The moral code of conduct described by Christianity outlines certain fundamental requirements towards treading the spiritual path. Such stipulations are reflected in all religious and esoteric practices including in Patanjali's 'Eight Limbs of Yoga' where we find the *yamas* (virtues) and the *niyamas* (vices that we must eliminate).

The *yamas* describe the requirements of developing harmlessness and compassion for all living things; truthfulness; non-stealing (including that which is not freely given to us such as the time and efforts of others); sense-control (which entails the disciplining of the imagination so that it does not invoke our desire nature); and neutralizing the desire to acquire or hoard wealth and to be free of attachments. Impermanence and change are our only constants as we ascend the symbolic cliff-face.

The *niyamas* relate to purity of the body, the emotions and the mind whereby we seek to eliminate passion, anger, lust, greed, delusion and pride); contentment; the disciplined use of our energy towards connecting with the immortal aspect of our being; self-study, whereby we engage in a process of self-analysis recognising our faults and limitations whilst seeking to transmute our vices into virtues; celebration of the spiritual i.e. recognising the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient force which is guiding and directing our lives and the entire evolutionary process.

Theosophy emphasises three fundamental requirements towards treading the path — *Study, Meditation and Service*. Our study of the Occult Classics and our regular acts of meditation serve to draw us closer to the Soul whilst conferring greater capacity upon us towards expressing its intent. The factor of service should, nay must, be at the very centre of our endeavours. H.P.B. informs us:

Nature gives up her innermost secrets and imparts true wisdom only to him who seeks truth for its own sake, and who craves for knowledge in order to confer benefits on others, not on his own unimportant personality.[‡]

The challenges and rites of passage that confront the questing Grail knights mirror those that we

encounter when we seek to obtain elevations in consciousness and the enhanced capacity to express our innate spiritual qualities. The trials and tribulations of the mediaeval heroes represent archetypal events or stages in the process of spiritual transformation where aspects of our psyche must be transformed and where echoes of our past must be negotiated if we are to unite with and express the intent of the immortal aspect of our being. Importantly, these offer us the opportunity to learn and to grow for the benefit of not only ourselves but for that of humanity and the universal evolutionary intent whereby, via the Soul or higher Self, we become instruments of the One Life.

We should always be mindful that the tests and trials of the spiritual path, as symbolised by the questing Grail knights and indeed all of the mythical heroes of our world, appear in our lives under different guises. These may be mirrored in our home and family life; at our workplace; in our careers; in financial demands placed upon us; as well as in our efforts towards performing acts of spiritual service. It is important to be aware that if we sidestep a challenging archetypal scenario in our lives that it is most likely to reappear again under a different guise. Fear is anathema to the spiritual aspirant. Challenges represent opportunities which offer us the opportunity to express the 'hero archetype' whilst simultaneously providing us with invaluable learning experience.

When we tread the spiritual path, it is important for us to be mindful that our efforts are never in vain. Whilst the Soul tests our worthiness as its instrument of expression and simultaneously offloads our accumulation of karma at a more rapid rate, we should remain aware that our efforts towards spiritual development and expression are never lost. We are effectively making deposits into the 'cosmic bank' of the permanent atoms of the Soul — the determinants of our 'spiritual DNA' found at the levels of Atma, Buddhi and Manas. Our endeavours towards expressing the qualities of the Soul are stored there for later use, both in our current life and in our subsequent incarnations.

In our efforts in treading the path we seek to align our consciousness to the intent of the Soul —

[‡] 'Lucifer', Theosophical Publishing Society, London, September 1890.

an aspect of the planetary consciousness — the *Planetary Logos*. Essentially, this is the process of yoga whereby, via the Soul, we effectively ‘yoke’ our consciousness to the ‘greater being’ with which we are one. When we effect spiritual transformation there is a transfer of energy between the lower chakras and their higher counterparts as we persist in our spiritual disciplines paralleled by the energies of the Soul being increasingly drawn into our aura through the practice of spiritual disciplines. We then contribute to the evolution of the planetary and solar beings (of which we are a part), who are undergoing the self-same process at a considerably higher level of the evolutionary scale. The process of yoga is taking place throughout our universe at human, planetary, solar levels and beyond.

By persisting upon our spiritual quest, constantly endeavouring to access and express the archetypal qualities symbolised by the questing Grail knight, we shall ultimately attain the higher initiations and function with ever-increasing spiritual potency as agents of the evolutionary plan. As theosophical writings emphasise, the treading of the spiritual path is an extremely arduous and most challenging process. When we undertake the daunting

symbolic underworld descent, concomitant with our symbolic mountainous ascent, the following words of H.P.B. are of immeasurable value:

*‘There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, yet a road, and it leads to the very heart of the Universe: I can tell you how to find those who will show you the secret gateway that opens inward only, and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore. There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onwards, there is a reward past all telling - the power to bless and save humanity; or those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come’.*⁸

Gary Kidgell has been a serious student of Ancient Wisdom for thirty years and is a long-standing member of the Theosophical Society. For the last fifteen years Gary has lectured extensively throughout the UK and Europe on various esoteric subjects and has served as National Secretary for the Theosophical Society in Scotland. He wrote and presented the video ‘The Inner journey’, from his book of the same name, which has been distributed internationally, and he is a professional astrologer specialising in esoteric astrology.

⁸ Collected Writings XIII, H.P.B., p219. Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House.



Image above: ‘A Refuge from Reality’, William Blamire Young, circa 1925. Public domain image, courtesy Wikimedia commons. Adapted, montage.

Gift Advert Image p10: Quoddy Narrows at dawn, Dolewhite 2010. Public domain image, courtesy of the photographer.

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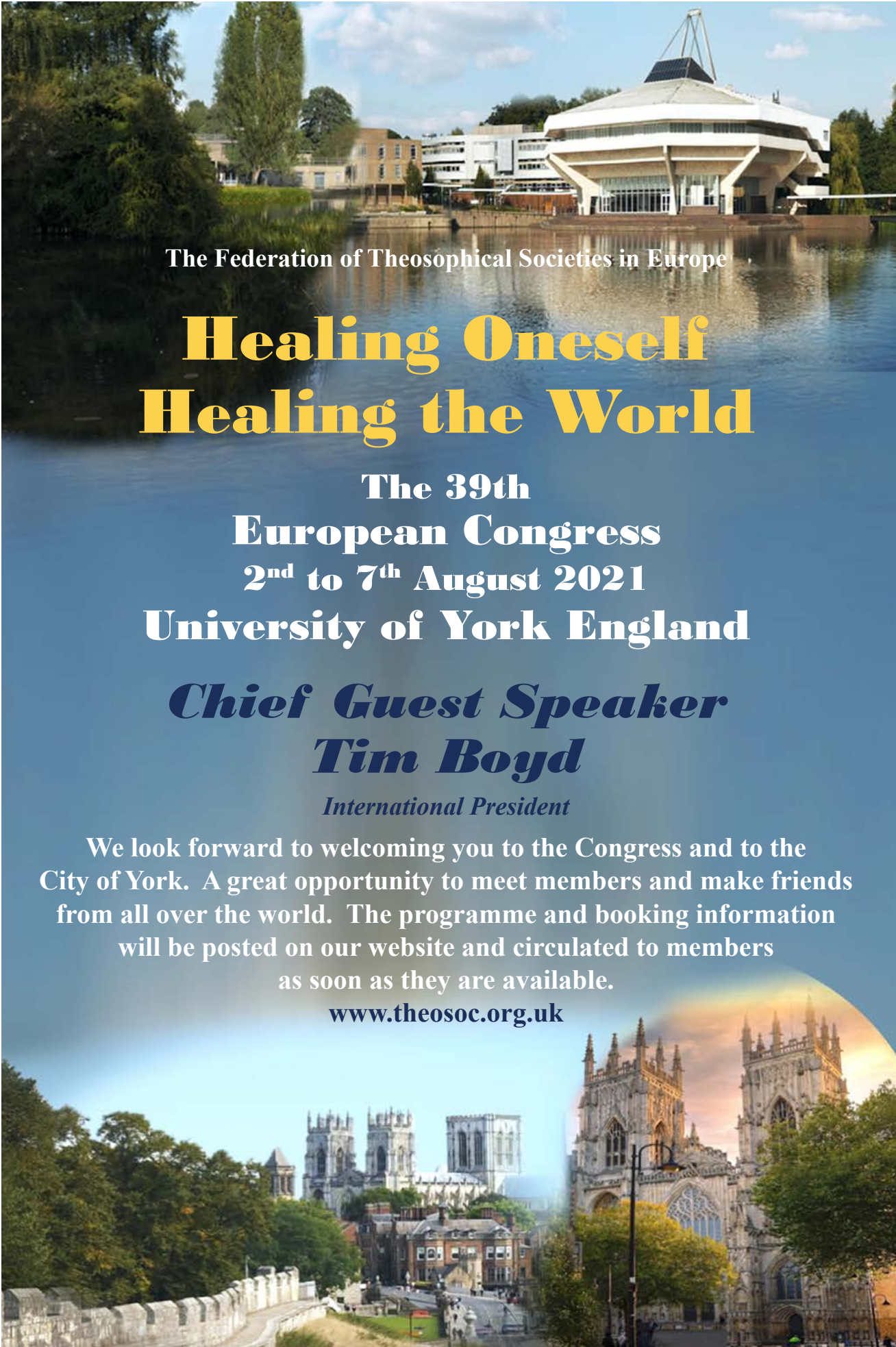
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The background of the poster is a composite image. The top half shows a modern, white, multi-tiered building with a distinctive roof structure, situated on the edge of a calm lake. The building's reflection is clearly visible in the water. The bottom half of the poster features a view of a historic city, likely York, with a prominent Gothic cathedral (York Minster) and a stone city wall in the foreground. A rainbow is visible in the sky above the cathedral.

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The Crown of Asphodels

Helen Johnston Bouchier

*It was said unto me:
“Write this, that those who look for the
Dawning of the Soul may read and understand.”*

THE FIRST BLOOM

The Dawn of the Soul of Life

The whole nature of humanity lies like a landscape, grey and colourless and silent, until the little chill wind arises which is the herald of the dawn; under that little breeze, springing up in the darkness, the soul of the humanity stirs in its sleep, as the trees and the flowers and the grass blades stir and shiver in the dawn breath.

The stir and the shiver in the soul are the first feelings of vague discontent with life; of disillusion and disappointment; of undefined fear of the future, when there comes a momentary realisation that after life follows death. These feelings come to everyone sooner or later. They may come in the form of a fulfilled desire, which, being fulfilled, does not reach unto its true ideal; in the form of a love, ardently desired, that proves unsatisfying when it is obtained; or they may come in the sudden realisation that youth is passing, that at the end of the longest road of life the gate of death stands open into the unknown Beyond. But, however it comes, it is the chill precursor of the dawn.

It does not last, it passes in a breath, and as it passes there comes the wonderful pale lightening over all the land before the first sunrays are visible.

The whole aspect of the landscape changes; the peaceful, slumbering silence passes into a watchful unrest; the shadows deepen and darken; what light there is, is ash-grey and cold and dreary. The warm security, the pleasant hush of the darkness are gone; the light and warmth and colour of the sun will come; but in that short moment before the dawn there is emptiness and

nothingness, an absence of any hope or promise. And so it is in the soul before the dawn of the soul-life has flooded in with the eternal sunshine. The easy, pleasant slumber in the satisfaction of the material life has passed into an uneasy expectation, a fearful questioning, a shrinking from the void that slumber had filled.

And then, in a moment, the first sunrays dart from the edge of the horizon – the dawn is here. The awakened soul waits in a trance of expectation till the full flood of light has flowed all over it, making a new heaven and a new earth. All the shadows, all the grey dreariness have fled away from the sun-bathed world. All the beauty and the colour and the brightness undreamed of in the slumbering darkness stand revealed in that pure light of the dawn.

The dawn of the soul-life comes not in the same way to every soul, or at the same time. To many it comes only in the moment of passing from this life to the other. To a few it comes while they are still alive upon this earth. For some that moment before the dawn, that moment of chill emptiness, lasts from the awakening until the end of this life. For those to whom the dawn arises while they are still on earth, it is day of ever after. Clouds may come up hiding the sun, rain may darken the heavens, but still it is day. And one who has seen the dawn knows that surely behind the clouds, above the rain, the sun is still shining.

To all of you who shiver, still in the little cold wind before the dawn, I say: take heart, the shadows will pass, the emptiness will be filled; be sure of that. As certainly as the sun rises upon the earth, so certainly shall the dawn of the soul-life glorify every soul in the time that is appointed for it.

Image facing page: This delicate floral carving is from a marble frieze at the entrance to the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal; Taj Mahal, Agra, India. *SNE*, 2020.

There is here a great miracle, but it is simple and natural, as are all the great miracles of nature: the daily rising of the sun upon the earth; the germinating of innumerable seeds whose life-principle is hidden from us; the eternal miracles of birth and death so simple, so natural in their orderly procession, that humanity ceases to notice or wonder at them. The dawn of the soul life is as these, following in the natural order of things without shock or suddenness, coming as the inevitable fulfilment of all that has preceded it.

Watch for the dawn with open windows and be assured that it will come. It is only to those who sleep in dark places, heavily curtained with desires and passions and contentments of the material life, that the divine light cannot penetrate; and to those living in dark cellars, who make to themselves lights of their own artificial and selfish imaginings, and so forget to look for the glory of the dawn and miss the splendour of the sunrise. With the dawn of life in the soul comes also the dawn of knowledge, even as with the rising of the material sun comes heat as well as light, both of which are needed for the growth of all things that flourish upon the earth.

The dawn of knowledge is very near at hand, a brighter dawn than there has been for many centuries; but if all the dwellers of the earth will hide themselves in dark places, if shivering in the first cold breath that heralds the dawn, they will return to sleep in the warmth of their illusions, then the precious moment will be lost, and must be waited for again through many generations.

THE SECOND BLOOM

The Awakening of the Heart

The heart can only be awakened by a great love. No passing fancy, no wandering passion wakes the sleeping heart, sleeping since its last incarnation. Only the hand of love laid upon it in supremest benediction can rouse it from this slumber. The awakening may be sudden and vivid, startling it into full consciousness in one breath or it may be slow and gradual, only half-conscious in its beginnings. But when once it has awakened and risen up in full consciousness, it becomes aware of all the other hearts that are incarnated around it, whether they be sleeping or waking; and, more or less clearly according to the nature of the individual, it understands them.

All cruelty and harshness that can hurt other hearts is seen and understood by the heart awakened looking on. None of the joyous or laughing or indifferent masks behind which wounded hearts would hide their pain can deceive the clear eyes looking on in eternal sympathy and understanding.

Until the heart is awakened we are unconsciousness of all the other hearts around us, as one walking on an unknown path may be unaware of the flowers growing round about them, and as unheedingly trample them down and brush them aside.

The sleeping heart is conscious only of itself in all the world. It is able to feel, but only for itself. Its own joys and sorrows move it, but without understanding. The joys and the sorrows of others cannot touch it because it is unaware of their existence.

Out of the knowledge and insight of the awakened heart grows a great power of forgiveness. No error, no misconception, no crime of those whose hearts are still sleeping is too great to be forgiven by those able to see that they are sleeping. No wrong committed by others whose hearts are awakened can be harshly judged by the one who is able to understand the secret springs from which action flows.

Everyone forgives themselves for their own transgressions and mistakes, finding reasons and excuses for their actions, however much they may seem worthy of condemnation in the eyes of the rest of the world. And, even as they forgive themselves, so fully does the one of the awakened heart forgive them, for they realize that all hearts are, in truth, one; that the great heart of the world is one; and that all the hearts of humanity that seem to be distinct and individual are but reflections of the great heart, images reflected separately in the separate little pools of each individuality. The seeming difference between these is but the wavering and flickering of this image reflected in pools that are rippled and ruffled by the winds of the world, or shadowed over by passing clouds, or broken up by the falling raindrops; or, it may be pools so shallow that every little stone and shell of the petty cares and desires of life show through the image, breaking and deforming its perfection.



Only here and there is there a pool deep enough and still enough to reflect truly the perfect image; as a smooth still tarn hidden away among the hills, reflects unbroken the image of the sun shining down upon it.

There is only one sun, but every lake and river, every sea and every little pool upon the shore, every wave and every ripple, carries its innumerable reflections.

As unforgiveness and vindictiveness become impossible to the awakened heart, so also do “envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness”. Shall the right-hand envy the left hand because it wears a costly ring? Shall one part of a body hate another part? Shall one part enjoy ease and comfort while another is suffering pain? All these things are impossible to the physical human being, and they become equally impossible to the spiritual person when once their awakened heart has understood that all humanity is one; that the whole must suffer for any sin, and with any pain of every part; that the whole must rejoice with whatsoever joy or honour comes to any part of it.

Kindness, charity, and pity are the inevitable outcome of the awakening. And with it comes

also what indeed seems a paradox, a complete indifference to the blame or praise of a person, to their ingratitude and their misunderstanding.

The awakening of the heart, however gradual it may be, comes always as a surprise and a revelation. And when it does come, it shows that the time of forced reincarnation on this plane is very near its end, and the time approaching when the individual, having learnt many things and having reached unto the Temple at the end of the Path, is able to decide for themselves when and where they will reincarnate, and under what circumstances their return to this plane will most benefit all those others who are a part of them.

Sorrow and loneliness and separation come no more into the life of the one whose heart is awakened. All the joy, the companionship, the kinship of life are theirs since they have joined themselves to the whole and ceased to be a separate part.

Though the awakening of the heart comes only by a supreme love, love does not always bring the awakening. There are many forms of love in the world that are none the less love because they differ from each other in nature, in amount, and in constancy. And wherever love is found it is always doing its work of breaking down the barriers of separate personality; it is always teaching its own lesson, that no one is sufficient unto themselves. There are forms of love that are selfish, jealous, and exacting, that are incapable of awakening the heart to the larger community, and yet they are not wasted; they teach the selfish soul to admit at least one other within the narrow limit of its personality, and where one has passed the barrier there is an entrance always open that will someday widen and widen until the whole barrier is pushed aside. There are some souls who, having once opened their doors to one love, when that love is lost, would fain close the door for ever after, but they cannot. It may be no other personal human love will pass through it in that incarnation, but crowds of tiny sympathies and gentle thoughts, pities for others and comprehension of them, will slip in through the door which once was opened by a human hand, and which thenceforth can never be closed again.



There are many things on the earth that are little understood by those who dwell thereon, but there is none so little understood as Love, and the mission of Love.

When Love comes and knocks at the closed door behind which the separate soul bars itself, it comes not to enter in and dwell there, imprisoned in the gloom and the narrowness – it comes to lead the dweller forth, out into the open earth, under the open sky. But the dweller, opening the door and seeing the fair beauty of the one who knocked, would have them enter and would close the door behind them, that they may not depart again; and when Love would take them by the hand and lead them away, they will not come – they cling to Love, praying them to stay; and because they will not come, Love must go forth alone, leaving them desolate.

Believe and understand this, O disciple. Love is not a companion come to dwell with you in your narrow house of personal separateness; it is a messenger come to lead you from that narrow prison out into the wide, free places of the earth, and if you will not be led by it, then will it go and leave you, as a messenger who may not tarry.

Here and there in this world are born children who from their very babyhood are unselfish and unable to realize their own claims and rights. These are they in whom the heart has been awakened. Whatever trials of further initiation they may go through in this incarnation, they are never lonely or unhappy, for they are never without love, not always love received it may be, but always love given.

The great object of the earth life is the awakening of the heart. Until this happens no further step can be taken. With the heart un-awakened, we stumble about on the rocky Path, like those on a mountain-side, who grope about, now in one direction, now in another, but get no nearer to the summit up to which the Path leads.

Through incarnation after incarnation the lessons learnt from pain or sorrow or disappointment are forgotten; experiences that should serve as guides are wasted; the progress made in one life is not continued in the next, for all progress, all knowledge, is but superficial and for the moment; until the heart is able to take part in it.

The heart alone remembers and stores up its knowledge; the awakened heart alone can look back along its past incarnations and understand their teaching. While the heart sleeps we move through life like a phantom, a shadow without consciousness of what we do, as well as without consciousness of the other phantoms around us. Nothing that is learnt or achieved becomes a part of us to be carried through to future lives, because only through the awakened heart can the living communicate with that divine part of ourselves which goes on through all the successive incarnations.

The heart that sleeps communicates nothing of the lessons learnt or the experience gained in a life to that divine part which is the eternal self, so that when the physical person dies, their learning, experiences, and acquired wisdom dies with them, and for the true self the incarnation has been wasted, for nothing remains to carry on into the future. It is for this reason that our eternal selves come back again and again to the earth on the same level, and begin again the same laborious struggle against ignorance and illusions, and fall again into the same mistakes and the same disappointments, having learnt nothing in the past because nothing has been transmitted for remembrance.

There are many who go about amongst you on the earth whose hearts are awakened, but no one recognizes them. They are little thought of by anyone, because they think little of themselves; the world passes them by, and when another

speaks of one of them it is only to say: "There goes one who is mad, or a fanatic". And no one listens to them or cares to learn what is the difference between them and others. Those who are in sorrow and those who suffer know them; they sometime seem to be their prey, but they are not; the one of the awakened heart knows them, sees into their hearts and understands.

In every rank and calling such women and men are to be found, and their atmosphere makes life possible on this stifling earth, where the dust of strife and conflict rises ever thick and choking round its dwellers.

THE THIRD BLOOM

The Opening of The Sense Of Sympathy Which Makes The Soul, So Far Solitary And Possessive, A Part Of The Whole

As the opening of the bud that has lain folded within its calyx, so is the opening of the sense of sympathy in the soul. When the flower is open it looks up straight at the sun, at the heavens above it, and the earth around it, and knows itself a part of the whole; no longer jealously hidden and folded away as a thing solitary and complete in itself; but bathed in the light that is the life of the world, that is shared by all, and animating all things that live, makes of them all one great kinship. The soul has always lived in that life of the world, but only when the bud is opened does it know that all other created things, in the world about it, dwell also in that light and take their life from it.

Nothing lives in separation and solitude outside that light, although the folded bud within its unopened sheath may seem to itself to be living in a world apart, where it is alone. The solitariness of the soul is as if one with their eyes bandaged should come into the midst of a great silent company, and seeing none of them should fancy themselves alone without companions, when it is only their own want of vision that creates that illusion of separateness and solitude. When the bandage is removed, then are they aware of those who surround them.

So it is when the bandage of self-absorption is removed from the eyes of the soul and they can



use that sense of sight which we call sympathy. Looking around, they see the souls of others; see whether they are joyful or sad, and become aware of others needs and desires. It is plain also which of them have their own eyes bandaged, and which of them can look back openly, returning their glance. When those whose eyes are bandaged strike them or trample upon them, as is sometimes their way, they forgive them without anger, knowing that they have not even seen whom they have hurt. And when those souls with the eyes uncovered hold out their hands in fellowship, they can see them and take them and grasp them in response.

There are some awakenings of the soul that come suddenly, but this awakening of the sense of sympathy, of the sense of sight, comes more often by slow degrees. A little corner of the bandage is lifted, and they see, it may be, some unhappy one crouched at their feet wounded and bleeding, and they say to themselves: "I am then not alone here".

Some there are who, seeing this, pull down the bandage again over their eyes, desiring not to see; but those who try to lift the bandage further, that they may see better to keep that wounded one at their feet, will become aware of some of the other



souls in the great crowd which surround them. At first it will be only the few who are nearest to them, but in time their sight will be clear enough to see and understand every soul that approaches them.

The full development of the sense of sympathy, of the sight of the soul, is not reached in one incarnation; it grows and increases in every succeeding life. There are souls born into the world with a wonderful clear insight into the hearts of others even from their childhood, and these are never ready to condemn any wrongdoer, never swift to return enmity for enmity, injury for injury. They are ready to forgive and to find excuses for any wrongs that are inflicted on them. They are powerful to draw to themselves the confidence of other souls; they are skilled to touch in callous souls the one spot that is still soft and human, to draw out of the hardened hearts all there is of goodness and kindness hidden within them.

They have begun to learn the great lesson that no human soul has an independent separate existence, but that all are parts of one great whole. With the growth of sympathy the lesson becomes clearer and clearer, when it is thoroughly grasped; when, after being felt, it is thoroughly comprehended, then the third bloom of the crown of asphodels has opened, the sheath has fallen from the heart of the flower, and left it open to the sun.

THE FOURTH BLOOM

The Unfolding Of The Spirit Into The Ethereal Spaces

GROWTH is, in its very nature a thing imperceptible. Watch a bud that is unfolding; while you watch it, you see no change. If you stood all day before it you could not say: "At such and such a moment the change came, the bud unfolded". You have seen no change take place while you watched, and yet the bud that was green at sunrise is streaked with red at noon and open at sunset.

The child that is born to you, you watch day by day. Every day, perhaps nearly every hour, you see it; from one day to another may note no growth, no change, and yet, steadily, the baby grows into the child, the child develops into an adult, and you who have watched day by day have not been able to see every part of the growth.

Such a growth as this, imperceptible but sure, is the unfolding of the spirit into the ethereal spaces. It is not a thing that comes suddenly; it is not at the moment of death that the spirit springs into the ethereal spaces, as some have thought and taught. The spirit has been long unfolding into the ethereal spaces, and when it is fully unfolded the sheath drops from it faded and done with, the material body falls from it, leaving it fully open in the sunshine towards which it has been growing, imperceptibly to itself and to all around it, for many days.

The unfolding is a mystery not easily understood even by the disciples, but some of the signs of it are these; when you begin to crave for discipleship, when your thoughts turn to the things of the spirit and are less drawn and satisfied by those things which belong to the material world, then is the unfolding beginning. When you begin to be aware that there are other people in the world besides yourself, whose joy you may strengthen or whose sorrow you may comfort, when the happiness of another seems to you of greater importance than your own, when you can willingly give love unrequited - when all these things happen to you in greater or less measure, then you may know that your spirit is beginning to unfold into the ethereal spaces.

Image: Asphodelus albus. A type of lily that it is said to mean 'remembered beyond the tomb'. Kurt Stueber 2004. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

There will come to you in short glimpses the perception of a wonderful gladness which no material circumstances seem to warrant; now and again you will have moments of exquisite peace which will help you to realize what these ethereal spaces are like into which your spirit is unfolding, and in which, unhampered by the body, it shall presently dwell entirely. By those short moments of perfect joy and peace, gladness and holiness, you shall know that your spirit has begun to unfold into the ethereal spaces.

These words are written for the disciple only. The road for everyone, it is true, is the same, but those who sit down by the wayside, who linger to weave themselves chaplets of the flowers of pleasure that grow along the road, cannot expect to win to the gates with those who press steadily forward.

There is no question of worthiness or unworthiness, of rewards or penalties in this matter; it is the simple law of cause and effect. There is a goal to be reached, but no one is driven along the road to it; those who hurry over the distance arrive there first, those who linger by the way arrive later, those who do not travel the road at all never arrive. In things material it is accepted as a simple law of cause and effect that if you do not attempt to go to a place, you never reach that place, unless indeed you are taken there by force; but in things of the spirit there is no taking by force. Each soul chooses and decides its own path; goes forward, falls back, or remains stationary as it will, and for as long as it will; but it is entirely by its own action, and only by its own action, that it can reach any goal.

It is by its own growth from within that the spirit unfolds into the ethereal spaces. If the spirit does not unfold, what happens? Nothing happens. It remains as it is. The bud does not unfold, but the summer does not stand still for that. By and by it is winter (the end of this *kalpa*)*; the closed bud cannot open then when the time of flowers is over - it remains still closed, it has done nothing to fulfil its own life, and it is nothing. In the winter the sap withdraws from the branches into the root, which is the heart of things; when the spring comes it rises again through all the branches, forming new buds of leaf and flower, but it does

not flow into the buds of last year. Watch the rose in your garden, and see this and understand, and take the lesson to your heart.

Only by the similes of Nature can these mysteries be shadowed, and for those who cannot understand and interpret the ways of Nature there is no other way of penetrating the mysteries that belong to the world of the spirit, and to the ethereal spaces which are the natural sphere of the spirit. The beginning of the spirit's unfolding into the ethereal spaces is not at the moment of death; that moment is in reality its completion. As it unfolds it becomes gradually more and more detached from the material plane, until it lets go its last slight hold upon it, and that is the moment of death.

These words are for the disciple. There are no words by which this mystery can be so set forth that it shall be understood by those who are entirely ignorant of all occult teaching.

THE FIFTH BLOOM

The Final Flower is the Divine Part, When That Blooms, They Form the Crown of Man

BUT the blooming is not here. No material body hampers the spirit that blooms out into the Divine. The crown of asphodels cannot be completed upon earth. No spirit, however often it has incarnated, wears the crown upon this planet. Therefore, O disciple, you must wait until the lesson of the incarnations is perfect before you can go into that garden where blooms the Divine flower, and with it complete your crown of humanity.

The Crown of Asphodels was written down by Helen Johnston Bouchier and published by The Theosophical Publishing Society in 1904. Helen was born in Somerset in 1852, and like Anna Kingsford before her, she qualified in Paris as a medical doctor. She was a Suffragette and member of the Women's Freedom League. An anti-vivisectionist, Helen was also a founding member and President of the Pioneer Anti-Vivisection Society. Vivisection, she believed, led to a passion for experimentation which was not always halted when experimentation involved the human being if it was a woman. Helen Bouchier died in 1918 in Kensington, London, and just before she died, she wrote to a friend "I expect to be soon on the ethereal plane".

* A *Kalpa* is an eon or period of time between the creation and dissolution/recreation of a world or universe.

The Theosophical Society in England

The Theosophical Society is a worldwide community whose primary object is the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction, based on the realisation that all life is One. Founded in 1875, the Society draws together those of goodwill whatever their religious affiliation (if any), social status, gender or ethnicity. The Society promotes such understanding through the study and practical application of the Ageless Wisdom of Theosophy.

To join Us
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REINCARNATION

My name is Désirée Ickerodt and I am an independent filmmaker. The focus of my projects is to explore the deeper meaning to life. Currently I working on a film about reincarnation and I would like to interview people who have experienced one or more of the following:

Having memories from past lives (incl. through past-life regression)

Recognising people/places they know from previous lifetimes

Déjà vu

Finding evidence for reincarnation in photos, paintings or official documents etc.

I am also interested in speaking to professionals who have indirect experiences, such as hospice nurses, past-life regression therapists, psychics and spiritual teachers, etc.

Interviews can take place face-to-face or using the online video conferencing platform Zoom. Interviews typically take about 1-2 hours. My previous short film was about death and dying, called What Happens When We Die?

Please feel free to check out my other films at: <https://vimeo.com/user41392164>.

I look forward to hearing from you and for your participation.

Désirée Ickerodt

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A Parable of Jellaeddin

Rumi

At the Beloved's door a timid knock was heard;
And a voice came from within, sweeter than morning bird,
Softer than silver drops that from plashing fountains fall,
"Who is there?" — And the stillness stirred

For a moment and that was all.
And the lover who stood without, eager and full of fear,
Answered the silver Voice, — "It is I, who am waiting here;
Open then, my Beloved, open thy door to me!"
But he heard the response ring clear
"This house will not hold Me and Thee!"

And the door remained fast shut, and the lover went away
Far into the desert's depths, to wait and fast and pray:
To dwell in the tents of Sorrow and drink of the cup of Grief:
And Solitude taught him each day,
And Silence brought him relief.

And after a year he returned, and knocked at the close-shut door,
And he heard the Beloved's Voice as it answered him once more,
"Who is there?" And soft as the dew, or the velvety roseleaf's fall,
And low as when angels adore,
He said — "Tis Thyself that doth call!"

And his heart stood still with fear, and his eager eyes were dim; —
Then through the silent night rang the sound of a marriage hymn;
And the bolts and bars flew back, and the door was open wide,
And fair on the threshold's rim
Stood his Beloved, his Bride!



The Kingdom Within

Eric McGough

There is no such thing as chance! Nothing anywhere or at any time has happened by happenstance. All seemingly random events are simply parts of a pattern too great for us to perceive. Everything that lives or has lived or ever will live has or will come into being as part of the great prototypal expression of the divine thought held in the Universal Mind. Therefore, ALL is ordered and working towards the fulfilment of that ultimate purpose.

This must, and does, include you and me! Our lives, however great or insignificant, are not only a part of the ultimate purpose but are an essential part of it. What we do affects everything else. What we say affects everything else. What we think affects everything else. What we are is a vital part of what everything else is.

This is so because everything is connected, and nothing is outside of the whole. I have often heard the question - "can we, as individuals, affect the world or even the universe?" When we truly understand the nature of existence, we will see that there is no way that we cannot affect the world, albeit in a very limited way for the most part. Whatever we do we are affecting the world, and there is no way that we can avoid so doing. The drop of water returning to the sea after its long journey through sky, rain, land, utility, and river adds its uniqueness, born of its diverse experiences, to the collective body of the ocean. So we too add our unique contribution to the collective humanity and the world in general with our thought, feelings, and actions.

It is wise indeed to think long and hard on this. If our lives are to be of some value (even only to us) we need to see ourselves as we truly are. It is so easy, almost mandatory in today's 'grab-and-go' society, to spend our lives in the pursuit of personal pleasure. But in what way does that kind of life bring the divine plan nearer to its completion? In what way does that attitude bring us nearer to our highest potential? What is our true part in the spiritual purpose that is

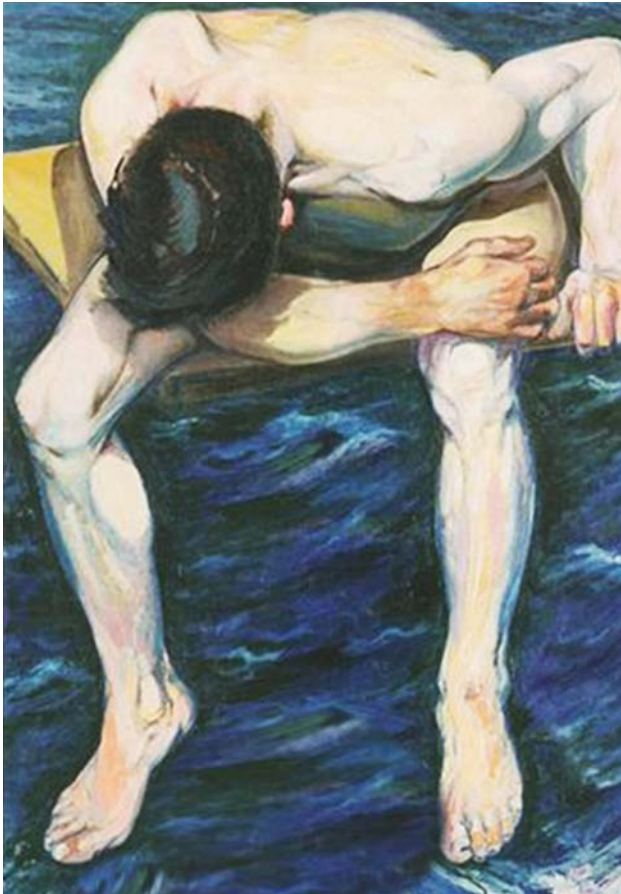
constantly creating and re-creating life in all its myriad forms?

Taking the oneness of life as a basic premise, the meaning of our lives must be accessible both from the world around us and the world within. Thus, there are two broad approaches to living a spiritually orientated life. These are the mystic and the occult; the inner and the outer.

The mystic seeks to become one with the spiritual unity of all life, seeking to rise above the material mind so that all sense of separateness disappears. In this state, where consciousness is centred in higher mind – abstract mind, all ideas of the little self are circumvented and the appraisal of things as separate within the lower or logical mind fall away leaving the higher self to be at one with others or with life in general. Such a state is regarded as the mystical union of spiritual oneness. The ultimate goal of this path is Nirvana or ascension to the eternal bliss of non-being. The mystic seeks to pass beyond the world of beings and things, of pleasure and pain, of hope and disappointment, and the wheel of necessity. But this is not an instantly attained condition, although, it can be glimpsed in moments of meditation or stillness, it is attained by the process of self-development over many lifetimes.

Mysticism is not exclusively an Eastern thing; it is to be found in all cultures throughout the world. Many Christians take their worship and prayer to mystical heights, and this is also true of most if not all deeply religious aspirations of whatever denomination.

On the other hand, the occultist seeks not to dissolve the outer world, as would the mystic, but rather to resolve it. Occultism is the means by which we seek to understand the world, to reach concord with all things, and to see the purpose in the diversity. The ultimate goal of this path is service through the realisation of universal brotherhood and the co-operation of



all souls with the divine plan. Occultism is not a form of magic; it is the science or study of those things that remain hidden from ordinary sight (occulted). Material sciences (all forms) are the same thing without the spiritual goal. Ordinary science seeks to understand the world so that it can manipulate it. Occult science seeks to understand the world so that it can assist in its unfolding. A truly enlightened understanding of the nature of the world through the study and practice of occultism will also take many lifetimes to achieve.

But there is another way, a middle way, one that seeks to combine both the occult and the mystical paths into one complimentary journey. This is a way to live the paradox of the inner and outer worlds, the world of inner vision and the world of outer knowledge, the way of stillness and the way of movement. It is the path of wisdom, and it is followed by those who seek to live by the Wisdom Teachings or Theosophy.

Sincere students of Theosophy do not seek knowledge for its own sake, nor do they scorn it in favour of visions, both are equally valid. Each

significant step is a discovery of inner vision accompanied by the understanding of what that new awareness represents and how it can be used in the greater good. Not for the self but for the better means to serve the many.

It is said of the Buddha that he turned back from the portal of Nirvana, that he refused his attainment of the highest spiritual union for the sake of those that he would have left behind- you and me, humanity, his sisters and brothers. Such was his compassion and such his wisdom that he would not claim the ultimate bliss for himself- knowing as he did that all of us are struggling toward the same spiritual goal.

This is the path of the true Theosophist, the path of renunciation. This is the teaching that underlies Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and all the great religions and philosophies of the world. Look deeply into the esoteric side of any of these (not the outer form) and you will find the call to serve, the call to work for the good of the whole regardless of the cost to your desires. But we cannot truly serve the world if we do not understand it, or ourselves. Without spiritual wisdom, we stumble from one disaster to the next.

Both the path of knowledge and that of vision must lead to wisdom. There is very little progress in experiencing something and not understanding it. Equally, to discover the knowledge of a thing without the experience of union with it is empty and transient. In the end, both must combine for to us reach true spiritual enlightenment. This is the 'middle way' of the Buddha, the path that threads its way between the yearning and the need to experience of the mystic and the curiosity and the need to know of the occultist. It is the one true path leading to the Kingdom Within, wherein all things are equal and true.

By this shall we see visions and know truth, and by the union of experience and knowing Wisdom is born.

Eric McGough is a Trustee for the Theosophical Society in England and a former National President. He is a lecturer, teacher and author, and has developed various courses for theosophical students including courses on spiritual self-development and the Foundation and Higher Diplomas in Theosophy.

Image: 'Man on a Diving Board', painting by Aksel Waldemar Johannessen, 1912. Public domain image.

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Diploma in Theosophy

TESTIMONIAL

I wanted to say how useful I have found the Diploma.

Whilst I have been studying and reading theosophical literature for about 50 years now, and it has always been a guiding light for me, I found the Diploma a very valuable discipline in drawing the threads together, and emphasising the key concepts of Unity of all things; involution/evolution, periodicity and karma as a universal law. This has, I believe, led to a deeper understanding of theosophy. I have even managed to get a handle on chains and rounds!

So thank you for putting the course together and promoting it. I and I am sure, very many students of theosophy are indebted to you. RB



Who Is The Teacher?

Joy Mills

In *The Golden Stairs*, the beautiful and concise statement given to her students by H. P. Blavatsky, two of the steps contain reference to the Teacher:

... a loyal sense of duty to the Teacher, a willing obedience to the behests of Truth, once we have placed our confidence in and believe that Teacher to be in possession of it...

For the sincere student who is endeavouring to guide his life by the precepts given by H.P.B., the question inevitably arises: Who is the teacher? It is a question particularly relevant in these days when the so-called guru-industry produces a new “model” almost every year. Before one can feel a loyal sense of duty towards another and certainly before one can obey, willingly, the behests of Truth which come from another, one needs to have some assurance that the other is the possessor of Truth.

Among the basic concepts presented to the student of the theosophical philosophy is the idea that there exists and has existed at all times throughout human history a hierarchy of adepts. Many who read the history of the Theosophical Society recognize that those who were responsible for its establishment in the world attributed its ideals and the message it was meant to convey to certain spiritual Teachers or Mahatmas, Masters of the Wisdom. Consequently, the theosophical student repeating the steps of *The Golden Stairs*, may automatically identify the Teacher with one or another of the Mahatmas spoken of by H. P. Blavatsky. But such unthinking identification does not necessarily answer our question. Even if one accepts that the reference in *The Golden Stairs* is to H.P.B.’s own Teacher, how can we come into contact with that Teacher (or our own Master) in such a way as to have absolute confidence that He is in possession of some truth which we are to obey?

The entire matter is further complicated by a

factor which is emphasized again and again not only in theosophical literature but in all literature dealing with genuine occultism. That factor is the need for every student to engage in independent thought, to come to their own realizations, to develop a self-reliance instead of following blindly the dictates of another. So the question becomes an extremely subtle one. How can we be loyal to a Teacher we do not know and at the same time accept the need to think out things for ourselves? To whom are we loyal, and in what does loyalty or willing obedience consist?

QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

We may be loyal to a good friend, willing to defend that friend under all circumstances, because we believe that person to be basically honest, morally and ethically upright. We value the judgment of such a friend and often accept their advice. We say that we know our friend and can trust them implicitly. But we do not know the Teacher and, because we do not know such a person for ourselves, often tend to accept without much thought whatever others say has come from that Teacher. This inevitably leads us to a consideration of what constitutes authority for us. We all accept various authorities for different aspects of our existence and, in many cases, we submit willingly and unthinkingly. For example, if we are in a strange city and need directions, we assume that a person in a police uniform will give us correct directions. If we consult a doctor, we assume we will receive a correct diagnosis, so that even were we to ask for a second opinion regarding the diagnosis, we seek out another doctor. We invest different individuals with authority because of what we believe to be their qualifications in particular professional areas, often accepting what we are told by such individuals without any question.

In matters that have to do with our own spiritual growth, however, we must exercise a certain care and understand precisely what it is we are doing when we accept some authority or other.

Image: ‘Woman With a Spray of Flowers, Safavid Iran, 1575 AD, housed in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, Washington, USA. Public domain image.

There are those, as we well know, who will accept only the words of H. P. Blavatsky as authority, while for others the statements made by Annie Besant or C. Jinarājadāsa or G. de Purucker or W. Q. Judge, constitute the ultimate authority in occult matters. In such cases, there comes about an unquestioning acceptance of everything that individual has said or written. One tends to quote such people almost constantly, arguing not from one's own independent judgment and knowledge but from the presumed authority one has unthinkingly accepted. If we are in an occult or esoteric school, we may come to feel a certain security in simply following whatever the head of that school has told us to do. However, in such a case we have failed to recognize the principal hallmark of the genuine schools of occultism: that the Teacher never absolves the disciple from responsibility for their own decisions. In all authentic occult traditions, whatever pledge is taken is a vow to one's own Higher Self. In the Buddhist tradition, for example, it is said that there is no one to whom an aspirant can take the Bodhisattva vow. Such a pledge can only be taken to oneself! We must invoke only the authority of that Self, knowing that the breaking of a pledge so solemnly taken severs one not from some external authority or Teacher but from the Higher Self, the center of one's own being.

So the question resolves itself into one concerning how we may come into contact with that Higher Self, that Self which is invoked as surety to whatever pledge we may take to follow the spiritual path. If this is the final authority, the true Teacher, then we need guidelines for coming into touch with that Higher Self. Occult schools have always been in existence for providing such criteria in the world, but the hints given are often difficult to discern and nearly always paradoxical in nature. For they require both a willing obedience to the dictates of Truth and the development of a self-reliant spirit in the quest so that one neither accepts nor rejects without careful consideration and reference to one's own interior perception. While it takes a certain courage for the sincere student to become the independent thinker, there is no substitute for that bravery of the spirit which is willing to examine every idea which is presented. Unless we are able to accept responsibility for our thoughts, our decisions, our beliefs, we are not likely to become genuine *knowers* of Truth.

QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

What, then, are the criteria to be followed? Perhaps the first and simplest, although often difficult in its demands upon us, is that we must start where we are. That means we have to learn to accept our present condition and operate within the orbit of whatever it is we know or do not know. One may be able to fool others into thinking one knows more than is the case but one can never fool oneself! Acceptance of our "unknowing" does not mean the adoption of an open-mouthed gullibility. It is, rather, an honest admission that, while we may not know much, we can only increase our knowledge or understanding by being certain of what it is we *do* know. Inevitably, at this initial stage, we may turn to others outside us who appear to be in a position to teach us. We may turn to books which we intuitively feel carry an aura of authenticity about them, not so much because they contain what we may assume to be final truths but because they seem to point us in the direction in which Truth may lie.

However, in turning to any outside authority, we must know what we are doing and be willing to assume responsibility for our choice and acceptance of that outside Teacher. In other words, if something goes wrong (as well it may) and we find ourselves in deep water, we have to be willing to admit that we made the choice that led us into the morass of our difficulties. How much easier it is, on such occasions, to blame the Teacher! We would like to say, "But the Teacher told me to do that," or "I was only following what the book said." But who chose the Teacher? Who selected the book? Of course, it may also be true that we heard only half of what the Teacher said, or read only part of the book! The point is simply that if we quote someone else whom we consider to be more knowledgeable than we are ourselves, we should do so out of our own deep conviction that what has been said has in it the ring of truth. We do not use our "authorities" to silence the "authorities" of others, but we begin to trust the inner quiet authority of our own perception, humbly aware that we may not yet perceive the fullness of Truth. As we proceed, through study and meditation, testing out ideas by considering them in the light of our own intuitive understanding as well as in the arena of daily existence, we will naturally gain more confidence, more assurance, and with that confidence, new knowledge is born.



Paradoxical as it may seem, knowing increases only by knowing.

QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

We may examine the question from another point of view in our effort to arrive at an understanding of who is the Teacher. One of the difficulties confronting the earnest student of Theosophy, especially when reading the early literature of the Society, revolves around the question of who wrote what. This may seem a strange statement, but even a cursory examination of the facts surrounding the production of such

works as *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (to take only two examples of often-quoted texts) highlights the problem. Consider the matter for a moment: the name of H. P. Blavatsky appears as the author of *The Secret Doctrine*, but who was H.P.B.? There was, first of all, a woman who had certain peculiar characteristics and personality traits—an incarnation that confounded the experts, we might say. Then there was a highly advanced occultist who served consciously as a mediator between those she considered her Adept Teachers and the world about her. Further, if we are to accept the testimony of those about her, she relinquished on occasion her vehicles to her Teachers for their direct use. Without pursuing a detailed study of the mystery of who was H.P.B., we are directly confronted with the question as to which aspect of this multiple complex using the name of H. P. Blavatsky wrote which sentences or statements in *The Secret Doctrine*. Can we, by our own thinking, by our own intuitive perception, by our own understanding, consider each statement in those volumes *on its own merits*? Even more puzzling may be the question of who wrote and who were the real authors of the famous letters, attributed to two Adept Teachers and even bearing their signatures, addressed to A. P. Sinnett, A. O. Hume, and others. Statements within the letters themselves indicate that in many instances these were transcribed by chelas, but chelas, we are told, are at several different levels of occult achievement. Other statements in the letters suggest that several means were used in their composition, including “precipitation.” In some cases, the letters were written *in propria persona* by the Teacher whose name was duly signed at the end of the communication. It is not our intention here to examine this question in detail, but rather to point out the simple fact that whatever may be the source for any of the teachings to which we may turn for instruction and inspiration, we are not absolved from the necessity for independent thinking if we are to discover Truth for ourselves.

Consider again the question of the authorship of *The Mahatma Letters*. Some, it is said, were the product of chelas who were later termed “failures.” Does this invalidate the contents of

those letters? We may well ask what it is to be a failure, for in one sense the failure is simply the individual who has attempted more than can be achieved. But all honor to the one who attempts the heights even if there is a failure to reach them! The occult tradition would indicate that the failures of one cycle may be the Dhyan Chohans of the next. Surely in the spiritual life it is better to have set our vision beyond our reach than to have rested content within the smaller orbits of our views. So, whether the letters were penned by the Teachers themselves or communicated through chelas, there still remains something in them that inspires the mind and stirs the heart. We sense an inherent validity in the teaching that points to the existence of a Teacher. The question of authorship becomes secondary when we are concerned, not with using the letters to invoke an external authority, but as a challenge to live the life and discover our own pathway to Truth. When seen in that light, the teaching which points to the presence of a Teacher points beyond to the Master within—our own Higher Self.

Recognizing, then, the Teacher in the teachings outside ourselves, we turn within to test the teaching by our obedience to the commands of Truth. Loyal to the inner vision, we find the horizons of our knowing forever expanding, discovering that what appeared to be a Teacher without is actually the true Teacher within, for there is but one Teacher—the supreme Atman in which abides all Truth. It is to that Teacher we pledge our duty as it is to that Truth we give our willing assent. Lead the life and you will come to the wisdom has ever been the dictum of all genuine schools of occultism. Perhaps a clue has been given us in a simple statement found in *The Mahatma Letters*. It matters little who wrote the words—Master or chela—for they carry the authentic ring of truth: “I can come nearer to you, but you must draw me by a purified heart and a gradually developing will. Like the needle the adept follows his attractions.” [Mahatma Letter #47, Chronological edition.] Whether the “I” of that statement is an external Mahatma or the Higher Self of each genuine aspirant, the Atman-Teacher abiding in the heart, is less important than the simple requirements for coming to the Truth. These have been the requirements given



in all ages for the one who would know who is the Teacher: a pure heart, a heart aflame with love and compassion, and a will that is born of a steadiness of purpose and a faithfulness to duty, the will that is never daunted by either failure or success, serene amid all circumstances, carrying us ultimately to the realization of the Supreme Truth, where teaching, Teacher and taught are one.

Joy Mills served as President of the Theosophical Society in America from 1965 to 1974, and as international Vice President for the International Theosophical Society, 1974 to 1980. She was awarded the Subba Row Medal for her contributions to Theosophical literature in 2011. Living up to her name, Joy was a very warm and much appreciated international lecturer who died in 2015. ‘Who Is The Teacher’ was first published in ‘The Theosophist’, June 1978.



In Remembrance

Members who passed to the
higher light in 2020:

Ian Allen - May
Frank Ryder - August
Donald Atkinson – September
Ken Rees – October
Mike Hill - October

*Celebrations will be included
the spring issue of Esoterica.*



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Spiritual Soul

Higher Triad

Buddhi Manas.

Higher Mind
Vehicle of the Spiritual Soul
Intelligence

Kama Manas.

Lower Mind
Personality

Kama Rupa.

Emotional or Desire Body

Linga Sarira.

Model Body
Upon which the Physical is Built

Rupa or
Sthula-Sarira.

Physical body
Vehicle of all other Principles
During Life

Lower Quaternary

Prana - Life Principle or Vitality

The Sevenfold Planes of Nature

Words in Theosophy

Susan Bayliss

(Part One)

New and seasoned students alike, will from time to time come across terminology which in one place seems to refer to one thing and in another appears to mean something else. Much depends on our level of understanding, though generally speaking in esoteric literature there is variable use of phrases and labels which might at times be bewildering. So, this series of articles is for newer students and readers who are acquainted with basic Theosophy and will explore some of the words and expressions encountered in Theosophical literature and in general conversation between students. We will also consider this in the light of what H. P. Blavatsky (H.P.B.) tells us.*

On the opposite page is a basic diagram showing the labels which H.P.B. uses to describe the seven principles of life and our different vehicles, such as the physical body etc. She uses some Sanskrit terms too, there being no equivalent in the English language. And whilst Sanskrit words are not always used in Theosophy, they serve a very important purpose for students seeking to get to the root of the Teachings, because of the precise meaning they convey. Though rest assured, you do not need to learn Sanskrit to understand them!

Our comprehension might be hampered by the differing words used in popular and historical philosophies and religions to describe the inner unseen worlds. Yet within those traditions there are perfectly legitimate terms to describe the teachings, and an understanding of the principles of Theosophy is invaluable in deciphering what those texts actually mean, irrespective of the terminology used and the origins of the philosophy. So, it pays to refer to key sources of information on different areas of Theosophy and to seek clarification, so that we are aware of what might be inaccurate or misleading information.

The seemingly inter-changeable words we might hear in theosophical conversations can also be ambiguous and to be clear in our own minds, constant study of reliable sources, questioning and discussion with fellow students is necessary. Learning about the Ancient Wisdom is neither simple nor easy because the eternal doctrines of Theosophy cover any number of complex subjects from the human constitution, reincarnation and after death states, to the principles of world evolution and cosmic unfoldment. Students generally start with whatever burning questions have arisen in their lives. The TSE's Foundation Diploma covers the basic principles of Theosophy and is designed to provide a sound footing for students, to assist their future progress through personal study, service to humanity and inner spiritual development.

One useful thing to know when reading theosophical literature, is why some words have capital letters. Capitalisation is used to signify a higher spiritual element of the subject under discussion, for example:

Theosophy:	The esoteric doctrines of Theosophy, the principle teachings.
theosophy:	General literature broadly about Theosophy but not necessarily about the doctrines themselves.
Self:	The Spiritual Soul or Ego.
self:	The personality or psyche.
Ego:	The Individuality or Spiritual Soul - the Watcher or observer at the level of higher mind.
ego:	The personal self.

* *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky, 1889, Theosophical Publishing House London Ltd; and *The Secret Doctrine*, available from the online TSE Bookshop: <https://shop.theosophicalsociety.org.uk/>

That or They: A spiritual aspect of the subject, such as the Absolute (ultimate creative intelligence) or the Mahatmas or the great White Lodge of spiritually evolved Higher Beings – the Wise Ones.

that or they: Normal English usage.

The One: The One Life, the Absolute, the All.

one: Normal English usage.

Some words and phrases might be unclear for other reasons too, and ‘etheric’ and ‘astral’ will probably spring to the mind of longer-term members as two which may be confused.

In the ‘Key to Theosophy’ and ‘The Secret Doctrine’, H.P.B. refers to the ‘Linga Sarira’ or ‘model body’ as the ‘Astral’. By ‘model body’ she means the inert vehicle or consolidating essence on which the physical is built as it emerges into the ordinary world where it can be experienced, seen, and felt and touched. It is this ‘model body’ which precedes the outward formation of physical matter on the earth plane. She describes ‘Kama Rupa’ as the desire-body inseparable from animal existence: “*where lies the line of demarcation which separates the mortal man from the immortal entity*”.[¶] This is the vehicle of Prana (the vital principle or life-energy).

Today, many students use the term ‘Astral Body’ to refer to the desire body: ‘Kama Rupa’. This is because later in the life of the Society, the word ‘etheric body’ came to stand for the modal body or ‘Linga Sarira’ and ‘astral body’ for the desire body or ‘Kama Rupa’. Hence confusion can arise between inconsistent norms and the Teachings. There are differing views on this change of usage, and a few theosophical writers endeavoured to shed light on this issue, but the variation in meaning and use of these particular labels appears to have somewhat slipped off the radar, hence its inclusion here. It is helpful to understand

this piece of history and to concentrate on the meanings of the core Teachings, most especially when reading modern esoteric books and those from different eras.[‡]

Monad is another word that is not always well-understood. Monad comes from the Greek μονάς (monas) meaning ‘unit’ or ‘one’, sometimes also called the ‘divine spark’, being comprised of the two highest principles of Atma and Buddhi. It is “*the spark of consciousness that pervades the Spiritual Ego*” “*the light of the One radiated through Buddhi, its vehicle and direct emanation*”. “*Atma in reality is not a unit, but the one universal principle of which it is a ray. Buddhi is its vehicle and “Therefore, in reality it is Buddhi which is the Monad, the one unit”*”.[‡]

It is also useful to examine what is meant by ‘Higher Self’, a term that is in H.P.B.’s writings and is used by other authors too. Commonly, the term ‘Higher Self’ is applied when what is actually being referred to is the ‘Spiritual Soul’: Atma-Buddhi in conjunction with higher manas. This is a point of note for serious students. H.P.B. is very clear that the monad is a truly ‘*indivisible thing*’ indistinguishable from the ONE. And in speaking of the Adepts, she says: “*It is only at the last and supreme initiation, however, that they learn it when placed face to face with the ‘bright image’*.”[¶]

The ‘Higher Self’ is a conscious-experience only reached in a state of Samadhi or Nirvana and can have no association with any sense of a personal-self or ‘I’ for it is One with the Absolute and utterly beyond our personal affairs and mental machinations: “*Atman is the universal All and becomes the HIGHER SELF... only in conjunction with Buddhi its vehicle which links IT to the individuality (or divine man)*” * “*The student must not confuse the Spiritual Ego [Higher Mind – Buddhi-Manas] with the HIGHER SELF, which is Atma the God within us, and inseparable from the Universal Spirit*”.[‡] “*It is only in union and in conjunction with Self-consciousness that Buddhi becomes the Higher Self and the divine, discriminating Soul*.”[¶]

[¶] ‘The Key to Theosophy’, p 91 table.

[‡] Amongst others, H.P.B. provides a helpful explanation of the terms used by Plato and Pythagoras - in the Key and in the SD.

* ‘The Secret Doctrine Commentaries’, p 566. (Michael Gomes (transcriber).

¶ ‘The Secret Doctrine, Adyar Edition, I, pp 570 to 573.

¶ ‘The Key to Theosophy’, p 131 note.

‡ ‘The Key to Theosophy’, p 121.

¶ SD, II, p 231 note.

Our Septenary Nature

The Key to Theosophy

	Sanskrit	English	Explanation
G.	Atma	Pure Spirit	One with the Absolute, as its radiation.
F.	Buddhi	The Spiritual Soul	The vehicle of pure universal spirit (Monad). The reincarnating Ego.
E.	Manas	Mind/Intelligence	A dual principle, which light, or radiation links the Soul, for the lifetime, to the mortal man.
D.	Kama Rupa	The desire body seat of animal desires and passions	This is the centre of the animal man (the personality or ordinary ego), the line of demarcation which separates the mortal man from the immortal Ego.
C.	Linga Sarira	Model Body	The Double or phantom body (the inert vehicle on which the physical body is moulded).
B.	Prana	Prana	Necessary only to a, c, and d, and the functions of the lower Manas, which embrace all those limited to the (physical) brain.
A.	Rupa or Sthula Sarira	Physical Body	The vehicle of all the other "principles" during life.

As H.B.P. explains, there are two aspects to manas: higher and lower mind. The higher attracted to the spiritual and the lower to the material: *"one more active than the other.... the thinking conscious Ego gravitating towards the spiritual Soul (Buddhi) and its instinctual principle attracted to Kama, the seat of animal passions and desires".... "The Spiritual thinking Ego, [is] the permanent principle or that which is the seat of Manas". "It is the Ego which reincarnates, the individual and not personal 'I', the vehicle, in short, of the Âtma-Buddhic Monad".*[§]

"The 'Higher Self' is ATMA and of course is 'non-materializable'.... It can never be 'objective' under any circumstances, even to the highest spiritual perception. For Atman or the Higher Self is really Brahma, the ABSOLUTE, and indistinguishable from it. In hours of Samadhi, the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE essence, which is Atman, and therefore being one with the whole, there can be nothing objective for it. Now some of our Theosophists have got into the habit of using the words 'Self' and 'Ego' as synonymous of associating the term 'Self' with only man's higher individual or even personal 'Self' or 'Ego', whereas this term ought never to be applied except 'to the One universal Self'. Hence the confusion."[§]

No matter how conscientious we endeavour to be

in our explanations, no words can ever be perfect in describing the finer aspects of Theosophy, so our intuition is very important. For what is most helpful in trying to absorb what we are reading or listening to, is tuning-in to the intent of the author or speaker who is reaching out to us. When we inwardly focus on what they are trying to impart, we may find some comprehension of their meaning from the inner planes - whether we are conscious of that happening or not. Vibrations, thoughts, and intentions are conveyed at a psycho-emotional level beyond the physical and from higher mind. Higher mind is where consciousness is above our ordinary state of being and is linked with the Buddhic plane where the essence of things may be perceived. When the mind is in the foothills of Buddhi-Manas, the ebb and flow of the lower mind and waves of emotion, are displaced by stillness and quiet perception of inner meaning. The practice of meditation assists in this process.

There are many subtleties which takes serious study of the Teachings to assimilate. Part Two will examine some further aspects of Theosophy.

Susan Bayliss is a life-long student of Theosophy and the esoteric traditions, a lecturer and tutor. Currently she is National Secretary and a Trustee for the TS in England, having previously served in many similar roles. Susan is also Editor and graphic designer for Esoterica.

[§] 'The Key to Theosophy', pp 91-96, 101-107, 120-121, 129 and 175.

[§] 'The Key to Theosophy', p 174.

Theosophy and Science Do They Conflict?

Antti Savinainen

The relationship between Theosophy and science is intriguing yet paradoxical. On the one hand, many key Theosophical teachings are metaphysical, which means that they cannot be scientifically tested. On the other hand, both H.P. Blavatsky and the Mahatma Letters discuss the science of their time. After all, the Second Object of the Theosophical Society is *“to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science.”* Master Koot Hoomi even stated that *“modern science is our best ally”* (Chin and Barker, 168). My aim in this article is to determine to what extent some statements in early Theosophy stand up to scientific scrutiny. I will also briefly address two scientific lines of study that support Theosophical teachings.

To begin, let's look at some key features of modern science. Science is not a collection of facts; it is a method and a process that are extremely effective in answering certain types of questions. Scientific theories and statements should be validated by evidence. There are different levels of certainty in science: we know some things almost for certain (though not with 100 percent certainty; this is possible only in logic and mathematics). For instance, the law of electromagnetic induction is virtually certain, since it has been tested and retested for well over a hundred years, and much of our current technology has been built on it. On the other hand, many exotic new ideas at the frontier of physics are not certain at all. Replication and the test of time will decide which ideas will survive. Scientific theories are formulated using methodological naturalism: hence scientific explanations cannot appeal to influences from invisible worlds (eloquently described in Theosophical literature), spirits, gods, or any other metaphysical principles. It is clear that methodological naturalism has served science extremely well.

HPB and Science in the Nineteenth Century

Let's first discuss the concept of the atom. At the end of the nineteenth century, some physicists

considered the existence of atoms as speculative, since no direct evidence was available (although the kinetic theory of gases employed the idea of atoms very successfully). HPB had interesting things to say about atoms in The Secret Doctrine. She proposed that *“the atom is divisible, and must consist of particles, or of sub-atoms.”* This statement is consistent with modern physics. However, she continues: *“But infinite divisibility of atoms resolves matter into simple centres of force, i.e., precludes the possibility of conceiving matter as an objective substance”* (Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, 1:519).

The modern view regards electrons and quarks, along with particles mediating the interactions within the atom, as elementary particles. This is not to say that quarks could not possibly consist of even smaller particles, but this infinite divisibility might be impossible to verify experimentally. The idea of the atom as a force centre is more interesting from the modern point of view: particle physicists consider particles to be excitations of fields, seeing physical fields rather than particles as fundamental aspects of reality. Yet HPB made a grave mistake in claiming that *“the atom belongs wholly to the domain of metaphysics . . . it can never be brought to the test of retort or balance”* (Blavatsky, Secret Doctrine, 1:513). Individual atoms can be manipulated with modern technology, and by using laser cooling and ion traps, ionized atoms can be seen even with the naked eye.

Nineteenth-century physics had no doubt about the wave nature of light: the empirical evidence was unequivocal. This led physicists to discard Newton's corpuscular theory of light. HPB offered another perspective from the occult point of view: *“True, the corpuscular theory of old is rejected, and the undulatory [wave] theory has taken its place. But the question is, whether the latter is so firmly established as not to be liable to be dethroned as was its predecessor? ... Light, in one sense, is certainly as material as electricity itself is.”* (Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, 1:579–80).

These views are largely in line with the modern view of the wave-particle duality of light. It seems that HPB's conception of light is validated by modern physics, at least to some extent. One might be tempted to proclaim that she was ahead of her time in her treatment of atoms and light.

HPB could, and did, meaningfully discuss and criticize nineteenth-century science in her writings. Nonetheless, it is crucial to take all of HPB's statements on science into account. Some of her discussions reveal that she didn't fully understand the theory of classical mechanics (for instance, see her take on the rotational motion of planets and the tails of comets: Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 1:539, 542–43).

Overall, although her discussion of science was quite insightful in her time, it has not stood the test of time. As one Finnish professor of cosmology has written, the scientific ideas in *The Secret Doctrine* have been shown to be “*erroneous, irrelevant, or complete misunderstandings*” (Enqvist, 243).

Science in the Mahatma Letters

To turn to the Mahatma Letters, Master K.H. wrote that there are other solar systems with planets beyond our own. Although there was no empirical evidence for exoplanets in the nineteenth century, about 4000 of them have been detected as of March 30, 2019. Master KH makes a peculiar prediction concerning the exoplanets: “*Science will hear sounds from certain planets before she sees them. This is a prophecy*” (Chin and Barker, 325.).

It is impossible for sound to propagate in interstellar space. On the other hand, there is another way to interpret the prophecy: perhaps KH was referring to radio waves, which were the means of detecting the first accepted observation of an exoplanet in 1992. Other statements were not correct: for example, KH's views on gravitational potential energy and conservation of energy reveal a lack of understanding of classical physics (Chin and Barker, 166–68).

Here are two more examples of incorrect statements about science. On additional planets: “*Not all of the Intra-mercurial Planets, . . . are yet discovered, though they are strongly suspected. We know that such exist and where they exist*” (Chin and Barker, 325). On meteors: “*We all know,*

that the heat that the earth receives by radiation from the sun is at the utmost one third if not less of the amount received by her directly from the meteors.” (Chin and Barker, 319). It is quite clear that the Mahatma Letters contain erroneous statements on science.

Tension between Spiritual Teachings and Science

One could safely say that it is not wise to read the Bible as a textbook of science. I would recommend the same approach for other spiritual sources as well. The fact that there are incorrect statements about science in Theosophical and other spiritual sources does not surprise me, even though I think very highly of these as spiritual teachings in general. It is not plausible to assume that spiritual teachers would have infallible expertise in every possible scientific question. This interpretation is supported in Master KH's own writing: “*You may be, and most assuredly are our superiors in every branch of physical knowledge; in spiritual sciences we were, are and always will be your - Masters.*” (Chin and Barker, 34).

Where Science and Theosophy Agree

Some areas of scientific inquiry do support spiritual teachings and challenge the naturalistic framework. One such area is near-death experience (NDE), which has been studied for over forty years. There is now reliable evidence about the process of dying as experienced by people who have lost all vital signs. The best evidence comes from prospective and longitudinal studies, such as the study published in *The Lancet* by van Lommel et al. (2001). Perhaps the most striking similarity between the NDE studies and Theosophy is in life reviews. Here are short excerpts about this subject from Master KH and the Finnish Theosophist Pekka Ervast (1875–1934):

At the last moment, the whole life is reflected in our memory and emerges from all the forgotten nooks and corners picture after picture, one event after the other. The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse, and memory restores faithfully every impression entrusted to it during the period of the brain's activity. (Chin and Barker, 326).

He does not live in his reminiscences as he did while being physically alive. He just watches the

great play and judges it objectively, calling each thing—depending on its own quality—as good or bad, crime or merit, and so on. He remains in a great light, so to speak . . . In fact, the viewer is the personalized higher self. In death the solemn experience of memories is not due to the ordinary physical personality; instead, it is due to the higher self. (Marjanen et al., 40).

Both of these descriptions match very well with the findings of NDE research.

The second area of scientific inquiry that is relevant here, is research on children who report past life memories. The late Professor Ian Stevenson started this research in the 1960s, and his work continues at the University of Virginia, whose Division of Perceptual Studies has a database of about 2500 cases in which children have provided information on their (alleged) past lives.

Typically children talk about their past lives when they are aged two to five. In some cases, researchers have verified many statements made by the children before their present and past-life families have been in contact. On the one hand, no ‘perfect’ case has been found, which leaves some space for doubt. On the other hand, some cases are very convincing.

Finally, it may be worth noting that the time between incarnations in the investigated cases is usually only a few years or less, whereas according to Theosophical teachings it is typically ten centuries or more. From the Theosophical

point of view, this discrepancy suggests that these children’s reincarnations are an exception: these individuals have not gone through the lengthy process of various afterlife states.

Conclusions

It is exciting that the scientific research on NDEs and children’s past life accounts coincide very well with teachings of the perennial wisdom. These lines of study provide a challenge to the materialistic paradigm of science: if consciousness is a mere product of the brain, there should be no conscious experiences during the time the brain is not functioning, and any notion of reincarnation is totally impossible. Yet cases like those described above do happen. The essence of science, like Theosophy, is seeking for truth. This means that if the data suggest that the naturalistic worldview is too narrow, it should be broadened in the spirit of ‘follow the data wherever it leads’. In this sense, science can indeed be “*our best ally*.”

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The Science of Spirituality

Ianthe Hoskins

Blavatsky Lecture - Part One



Without entering into historical particulars, which are amply recorded elsewhere, it may be safely stated that certain currents of thought which are noticeable in the world of today trace their origin or their wide development to the Theosophical movement. The similarities between the great religions of the world have become common knowledge among educated people; the doctrine of reincarnation is an accepted theme in Western literature; the problem of survival has passed from the field of popular superstition to that of academic research; symbolism, astrology, telepathy, spiritual healing; all have their serious students and a significant body of literature; and the Western reader may now have direct access to oriental thought through the commentaries and translations of many sacred and philosophical texts. Furthermore, individual Theosophists have made notable contributions to progress in the varied fields of religion, science, art, literature, education, politics, and human welfare. Indeed, Theosophical thought has been productive of such diverse expressions that one may easily lose sight of the principles which they attempt to embody. While, therefore, we may gain profit and inspiration from the review of the past, it is of the first importance that we should continually look beyond the superficial and transitory to the essential elements of the Theosophical system.

In this fascinating labyrinth, in which each of the many paths promises to lead to the heart of the mystery of life, it is scarcely to be wondered if bewilderment should supervene and the clue be lost. Yet, of the many teachings which have been restated to the world through the modern Theosophical movement, there is one which, when the distorting fascination of other truths has been outlived, emerges to due prominence as the one essential truth of Theosophy. It is at once the foundation of every doctrine, the key to every problem, the justification and the goal

Image: Ksitigarbha: translated as “Earth Treasury” or “Earth Womb”. Known for his vow to take responsibility for the instruction of all beings in the six worlds between the death of Gautama Buddha and the rise of Maitreya, as well as his vow not to achieve Buddhahood until all hells are emptied. Unknown artist in China or Japan, 15th century.

of every search for Truth. Without it, all other teachings become mere playthings of the mind, meaningless and incoherent fragments of a pattern that has lost its recurrent theme. With it, every fact becomes illumined and significant, and the chaos of isolated items of knowledge becomes a pattern of ordered loveliness. It is the doctrine of the Oneness of Life.

Wherever the student may turn in his search for a clue to the meaning of existence, the principle of unity emerges with an insistence which is sufficient indication of its essential nature. It pervades the scriptures of the great religions; it is the central theme of mysticism; and increasingly its presence is revealed in the discoveries of science. Unity is declared to be in the beginning, for it is an axiomatic attribute of the Absolute, "One, without a second". Unity is traced as the cohesive force beneath the infinite multiplicity of forms in manifestation, and unity is looked to as the end in which all diversity will be resolved.

Although no reminder may be necessary of the grand phrases which have proclaimed the Unity to men from very ancient times, their repetition may attune our minds to the contemplation of the mystery of the One Life. In the magnificent stanzas which are the basis of *The Secret Doctrine*, the fact is stated with forceful simplicity: "*Alone, the One Form of Existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in Dreamless Sleep: and Life pulsed unconscious in Universal Space...*"¹ In the sacred literature of India, so dominant is the theme of the Oneness of the Self that passage after passage could be chosen to reiterate the truth: "*Unseen He sees, unheard He hears, unthought of He thinks, unknown He knows. None other than He is the Seer, none other than He is the Hearer, none other than He is the Thinker, none other than He is the Knower. He is the Self, the Inner Ruler, Immortal. That which is other perishes.*"² The Buddha likewise taught: "*As all things originate from one essence, so they are developing according to one law and they are destined to one aim which is Nirvana.*"³ And in

the treasury of the Hebrew Scriptures the same truth is uttered: "*Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.*"⁴

In these and countless other passages from the religious teachings of the past, humanity has been taught that life is one, that the Self is the same in all, that wherever we may turn:

*"God present is at once in every place,
Yet God in every place is ever one..."*⁵

If the modern exposition of Theosophy is a faithful restatement of ancient tradition, it must proclaim the unity of life as its central and abiding message. So, we find *The Secret Doctrine* summarizing its teaching in these words: "*Esoteric Philosophy teaches that everything lives and is conscious, but not that all life and consciousness are similar to those of human or even animal beings. Life we look upon as the One Form of Existence, manifesting in what is called Matter; or what, incorrectly separating them, we name Spirit, Soul and Matter in man. Matter is the Vehicle for the manifestation of Soul on this plane of existence, and Soul is the Vehicle on a higher plane for the manifestation of Spirit, and these three are a Trinity synthesized by Life, which pervades them all ...*"⁶

Confronted so insistently with the affirmation of the unity of the Self, the student of Theosophy may find himself insensibly persuaded into giving lip-service to the doctrine of Oneness, and echoing the declaration of the Ancient Wisdom in the phrase: "The Self is One: I am THAT". But for how many is this acquiescence in the creed of the One more than a mechanical nodding of the head in deference to the superior wisdom of an accepted authority? Is it, indeed, for many of us, any more real in conscious experience than

¹ *The Secret Doctrine*. Adyar Edition, I, p.18.

² *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad*, III, vii, 23

³ Paul Carus: *The Gospel of Buddha*, p. 142.

⁴ *Psalms*, cxxxix, 7–10.

⁵ Robert Southwell: *Of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar*.

⁶ *S.D.*, I, p. 120.

the fact of the revolution of the earth round the sun or the fact that solid objects are, as scientists have assured us, nothing but insubstantial radiation? Unlike Galileo, who outwardly recanted from his belief in terrestrial motion while inwardly affirming that “yet it moves”, we repeat with our lips the statements made by scientists but inwardly remain convinced that our chairs are solid and stationary. As laymen, we accept the facts of science without knowledge or experience, on the authority of the experts, and in consequence our belief in them is largely sterile and lacking in conviction. In a similar way, it must be admitted that the majority of us do not normally enjoy any awareness of the fact of unity, and that while we may repeat with our lips that the Self is One, a mental reservation reasserts the fact of difference and separateness.

Indeed, except for rare moments of intense devotion or love, during which a temporary loss of personal identity may be experienced in the consciousness of at-one-ment with God or another human being or with the world of nature, most of us go through life without any realization of the Oneness of the Self. If it were otherwise, if we were constantly aware of our identity with one another, the first Object of the Theosophical Society could never have been formulated. For the brotherhood of man is implicit in the doctrine of the One Life, and awareness of the unity would carry with it the active recognition of brotherhood as an actual and not merely a theoretical fact. Is there not a disturbing truth in the contention that talk about brotherhood indicates an absence of the true consciousness of brotherhood? “A person that is really brotherly, affectionate”, we are told, “does not talk about brotherhood”; you do not talk about brotherhood to your sister, your brother, or to your wife or husband; there is a natural affection.”⁷ It would appear that the need to affirm the unity of the Self is evidence that the unity of the Self is less a fact of experience than an act of faith.

Yet here and there, both among the voices of the past and among the men and women of our own time, one may distinguish a note of

confident assertion so simple and direct that it cannot be other than the statement of personal experience. Among the many who more or less blindly believe are the few who most surely know. But such is the nature of that knowledge that of these few, rarely has one attempted to convey their experience to others through the limiting and distorting instrument of words, for the task appears “as hopeless as to try to empty the ocean into a thimble”. Enough has been written, however, to convince the seeker that finding is as possible now as in the past, and that the conscious perception of oneness may yet transform our uncertain belief into the certainty of knowledge. The literature of mysticism provides abundant evidence of this possibility. But it is fitting that we should remind ourselves also of those who, in the modern Theosophical movement, have repeated the teaching of the Ancient Wisdom not because of its authority but because they knew it to be true, because they had perceived at least in part the oneness of the Self.

The record of personal experience can never be more than suggestive to those who have not shared it. But because it is suggestive, such a record can be of value to the student and the seeker, for it indicates more effectively than impersonal exposition the nature of the goal towards which they are striving. An example that comes readily to mind is the attempt made by Dr. George Arundale* to describe some aspects of nirvanic consciousness as he had experienced it. In his book, *‘Nirvana’*, he tells how, although he had brooded much upon unity, he still had only a vague idea of it without any clear perception. Then he narrates how, gazing one day on an orange grove that lay in the valley beneath him, he had his first glimpse of the fundamental unities. *“All of a sudden”, he writes, “I found myself peculiarly, wonderfully, identified with the orange trees, with their very life and being. I was at my window, yet was I also in the orange grove - indeed, I was the orange grove. It was almost as if my consciousness flickered between George Arundale as George Arundale and George Arundale as the orange grove. I was two entities, yet one.”*⁸ A similar experience is described by

⁷ J. Krishnamurti: *Verbatim Reports of Talks*. Auckland, New Zealand, 1934.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. xi.

* Dr. George S. Arundale, International President 1934 to 1945.



Krishnamurti in *The 'Kingdom of Happiness'*, where he tells of a temporary identification of himself with the growing grass. "I felt myself," he says, "to be that grass which had not yet divided into separate blades. Then I could feel the grass pushing through from under the earth, the sap rising in it, and the blades separating, and I was myself each blade."⁹

Two questions immediately present themselves to the mind for answer. In the first place, why is it that, since unity is declared to be a fact, awareness of unity appears to be the exception rather than the rule? Secondly, how is it possible for an individual to join the thin but steady ranks of those who, by virtue of their experience, stand witness to the fact that unity may be realized? In other words, why do we not know unity and how may we come to know it?

It is possible to look for the answer to the first of these questions both at the cosmic and at the personal level. Taking the former approach, the student will find their attention directed to what may be called, in the human idiom, the beginning of things. It is here, in the mystery of manifestation, that the principle of separateness must be sought. We will learn of the emergence of that principle of separateness from latency into activity when the One that is without a second willed: "May I be many, may I be born".¹⁰ At the same time, we will be warned against the facile assumption of a duality which is an

appearance but not a fundamental reality. For the many which arise in the One, by the will of the One, are not other than the One. "*As from a blazing fire go forth by thousands sparks of its own nature, so from the Imperishable manifold existences are born forth, and thereinto verily return.*"¹¹ The student must grasp the fact that the universe is an explication of oneness, if we are not to beg the whole question of separateness by supposing an original duality where there is none. "*You cannot speak of a Universe as being made,*" writes Dr. Besant, "*as though it had not ever been, for all is in that which changes not. All opposites find therein their reconciliation, their mutual destruction; all opposites there merge into each other, for THAT is all, and there is none other.*"¹²

It is within this unity of the All that the multiplicity arises, and although from the point of view of the parts the condition of separateness is real enough, it is non-existent from the point of view of the whole. The many pictures which have been used in illustration of this paradox of unity in multiplicity have become familiar: thoughts in the mind, waves in the sea, sparks in the fire, and so on. Yet although the whole never ceases to be a unity in spite of its manifold parts, it suffers in the parts the experience of separateness. It is for this reason that the act by which a universe arises is traditionally described as an act of sacrifice on the part of the Logos of the universe, an act "*consisting in the assumption of the limitations of matter by the Immaterial, in the veiling of the Unconditioned in conditions, in the binding of the Free within bonds.*"¹³

At this remote level it may perhaps seem that the problem is one mainly of academic interest. But it ceases to appear so when we turn from the consideration of cosmic principles to the familiar ground of conscious experience. For it is here, in the human personality, that the problem of separateness is experienced with acute and painful intimacy. Although we hear it declared

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁰ *Rig Veda*, I, cxiv, 26.

¹¹ *Mundaka Upanishad*, I, ii, 3.

¹² *The Wisdom of the Upanishads*, p. 18.

¹³ A Besant: *The Laws of the Higher Life*, p. 47.



with authoritative assurance that separateness is an illusion, to our present state of consciousness it is no illusion but the most convincing reality of daily experience, and one which denial seems powerless to destroy.

We can admit, theoretically, that the content of our consciousness may have no objective reality, but it remains true that *"the illusions of a madman are as real to him as ours are to us."*¹⁴ The mind may be deluded in its interpretation of the messages conveyed by the senses, but while the delusion lasts, the man is their prisoner. The dual function of the senses seems only to increase the dilemma. They are the gateway between the individual and the world, admitting experience and knowledge to his consciousness; yet their selective capacity suppresses more than it reveals and leaves him with no means of knowing either the nature or the extent of his constant deprivation. Through their agency he becomes caught in the snare of the not-Self, and remains deaf and blind to the presence of the Self:

*O my beloved, heir to Mine estate!
Come to Me swiftly, though the hour be late!
Those My five envoys, whom I sent to seek,
Have lured thee from Me, and alone I wait.*¹⁵

It seems, then, that if separateness is the great heresy, we must confess ourselves helpless if unwilling heretics. The reason for our blindness has been explained in terms of an identification

of the life, which is one, with the individual forms, which are many. It is the consequence of the movement of consciousness, as it were, from the center to the circumference. The ocean that breaks its surface into countless waves remains one ocean, yet each wave enjoys an individual identity whose illusory nature derives a semblance of reality from time and form. In a similar way, the Self manifests in an infinite number of separate personalities. Their separation, as personalities, is real, but as the Self, it is an illusion. For the sense of separateness experienced in the personality arises from the identification of the Self with the temporary forms with which it is associated in the threefold world of human experience. *"Whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in,"* says 'The Secret Doctrine', *"both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities. But as we rise in the scale of development, we perceive that in the stages through which we have passed, we mistook shadows for realities, and that the upward progress of the Ego is a series of progressive awakenings, each advance bringing with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached 'reality'; but only when we shall have reached absolute Consciousness, and blended our own with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Mâyâ."*¹⁶

Until that final consummation is attained, we repeat at each level of consciousness the mistake of identification with a form, and so reassert the fact of difference and separation. Consequently, we bind ourselves to the pain created by that falsehood. *"Those who see differences pass from death to death."*¹⁷ Our terror is twofold: we suffer first on account of our failure to know ourselves, and we suffer still further by seeking the security of permanence in forms outside himself which are by their nature changing and transitory. The one error results in a growing sense of dissatisfaction with our present condition and a yearning after a wider life than we yet know; the other results in the bitter pain of oft-repeated loss. Then in

¹⁴ S.D., I, p. 335.

¹⁵ J Rhoades: *Out of the Silence*.

¹⁶ S.D., I, p. 113.

¹⁷ Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, IV, iv, 23.

the agony of frustration we cry out against the limitation that keeps us from the realization of the Self:

*Vain the dream! I cannot mingle
with the all-sustaining soul:
I am prisoned in my senses;
I am pinioned by my pride;
I am severed by my selfhood from
the world-life of the Whole;
And my world is near and narrow,
and God's world is waste and wide.*¹⁸

As we begin to understand the cause of this condition, the student will enquire into its purpose. We will ask why it is that the one of whom it is said "Thou art THAT" must undergo "the martyrdom of self-conscious existence."¹⁹ Briefly, that purpose may be described as the raising of consciousness through self-consciousness to Self-consciousness. The cycle of experience is thus summarized in H.P.B.'s *'The Secret Doctrine'*: "The Ego starts with Divine Consciousness; no past, no future, no separation. It is long before realizing that it is itself. Only after many births does it begin to discern by this collectivity of experience, that it is individual. At the end of its cycle of reincarnation it is still the same Divine Consciousness, but it has now become individualized Selfconsciousness."²⁰

The experience of separateness is an essential preliminary to the realization of unity. Where there is absolute unity, there is no sense of "other" and therefore no sense of "I"; consequently, there can be no awareness of unity. The spark of self-consciousness can be struck only between the steel of Self and the flint of not-Self, hence the necessity of duality, the opposition of two poles, as a preliminary to the awakening of self-consciousness. Both Freud and Jung have perceived that self-consciousness arises out of an initial state of non-differentiation between subject and object. The former expresses the view that "a relation to objects, and thus consciousness in

the subject, develop from a state of unconscious oneness, or identity,"²¹ while Jung points out that "the chief characteristic of the primordial, unconscious state of the psyche is that it is not differentiated from the object - a condition that is distinctive of children and primitive peoples."²² "As the individual "becomes conscious of himself only in society and from knowing others like himself",²³ so consciousness acquires meaning only in so far as it is differentiated from its field. But the condition of separation is no more than a means to an end, and once the end has been achieved, the means must be discarded, or it will be found a burden and a hindrance in the way of further development. "The purpose of life," says Krishnamurti, "is to lose the separate self which started as an individual spark and when you have done that, then the Truth is established within you and you become part of the Truth, and you are yourself the Truth."²⁴ So, from his momentary identification with the growing grass, he returned to the normal consciousness of himself with the realization of this fact: "I do not want anything more in my life than to have the capacity to lose the sense of the separate self. Because then I am able to forget the "I" and identify myself with the rest of the world — with every kingdom, vegetable, animal, and human; I am then nearer the Truth, nearer that perfection."²⁵

Difficult as it is to grasp the paradox of individuality in unity, it is clearly a mistake to suppose that the result of the great work of evolution is the merging of the drop with the ocean in such a way that the identity so laboriously gained is destroyed. That the final end of evolution is not annihilation *'The Secret Doctrine'* has firmly asserted. "In Paranirvana... the Past, Present, and even Future Humanities, like all things, will be one and the same. Everything will have re-entered the Great Breath. In other words, everything will be 'merged in Brahman,' or the Divine Unity. Is this annihilation, as some think?... To see in Nirvana annihilation, amounts to saying of a man plunged in a sound dreamless sleep - one that leaves no

¹⁸ E. G. A. Holmes: *Nirvana*.

¹⁹ *S.D.*, I, p. 311.

²⁰ *S.D.*, V, p. 552.

²¹ W. M. Kranefeldt: *Secret Ways of the Mind*, p. 77.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²³ J. Smuts: *Holism and Evolution*, p. 234.

²⁴ *By What Authority?*

²⁵ *The Kingdom of Happiness*, p. 20.



*impression on the physical memory and brain, because the sleeper's Higher Self is then in its original state of Absolute Consciousness during these hours - that he, too, is annihilated.... re-absorption is by no means such a "dreamless sleep," but on the contrary, absolute existence, an unconditioned unity, or a state, to describe which human language is absolutely and hopelessly inadequate."*²⁶

An explanation of the nature of the changes which consciousness must undergo has been attempted with a happy simplicity by Carrington in his *Essays on Consciousness*. "However the process of individualization came about," he writes, "it seems clear to me that it must have involved a concomitant isolation or limitation or circumscription, and, although I may be not quite clear in my mind just how it all happened, I can have no doubt whatever that I am now highly individual and highly circumscribed. Broadly speaking, my own view is that the second half of evolution, so to speak, consists in retaining the individuality and getting rid of the circumscription... If we conceive this process carried to the limit, we conclude that the final state will be one in which the consciousness of each is co-extensive with the Universal Consciousness, yet preserves the sense of individuality acquired in the first part of the total process."²⁷

²⁶ S.D., I, p.265-266.

²⁷ W. H. Carrington: Three Essays on Consciousness.

When some slight understanding of both the cause and the purpose of his condition has been gained, the student may turn his attention to the question of method. By what means, he may ask, does the process of Self-realization accomplish itself? The general principle which underlies the process has been described as a constant identification of life with form, accompanied by a constant repudiation of the form by the life. By identification with the particular forms with which it is associated, the consciousness in man participates in the heresy of separateness; by repudiation of them, he reasserts his own nature, furthering by that act the development of the sense of I-ness which is the basis of self-consciousness. The nature of this development will be readily seen when the state of consciousness in the earlier kingdoms is contrasted with that of the human kingdom. In man, the awareness which is consciousness is related to a subject, and consequently involves a sense of 'I' or self-consciousness. It is here, in the sense of 'I', that lies the distinction between the human and pre-human states. The difference between the consciousness of man and of animals is that while there is a Self in the animal, the animal is not conscious of the Self. Awareness in the pre-human stages is not related to a subject and is not therefore self-awareness.

Part Two will appear in the next issue of Esoterica.

Ianthe Hoskins was President of the Theosophical Society in England from 1972 to 1978 and from 1989 to 1992. She is very well-remembered for her cogent and clear expositions of the fundamental principles of Theosophy, ably condensing for the newer student, some of the most complex aspects in Madame Blavatsky's principle work 'The Secret Doctrine', amongst others. Ianthe was a teacher by profession and an esteemed international Theosophical speaker. She delivered this Blavatsky Lecture "The Science of Spirituality" in Besant Hall, London, on 28 May 1950. A stalwart worker for the TSE, Ianthe is fondly remembered for her joyful wit and unrequited enthusiasm. Born in 1912, she died in 2001.



Theosophy and The Golden Age of Hollywood

Moon Laramie

The 1920s and 1930s saw the beginning of what has been termed 'the golden age of Hollywood'. Companies like MGM, Universal and Paramount were the dominant forces in the all-powerful studio system. During these two decades, the public flocked to the picture palaces, eager to see their screen idols in the latest lavish productions. Hollywood 'heartthrobs' and 'sirens' such as Roman Novarro, Mary Pickford, Lionel Barrymore and Greta Garbo became household names. It can be hard to imagine Theosophy having a place among the glamour of what quickly became known as 'Tinseltown'. But California was notable for its openness and nonconformity and there were many people keen to explore spiritual paths other than those offered by orthodox religion. The actress Mae West, for example, was drawn to the metaphysical and the exploration of latent human powers. She would regularly seek advice on her next film career options using what she called 'interdimensional communications'. Other seekers after metaphysical truths included Tallulah Bankhead, Rudolph Valentino and Jean Harlow.

Born in Maryland, Albert Powell Warrington was a dedicated Theosophist who later became President of the Theosophical Society in America between 1912 and 1920. In 1906, Warrington presented Annie Besant with his plans for a Theosophical community and centre of study. Within six years, Warrington began work developing a site at Beachwood Canyon in the hills above north Hollywood. The new development, named Krotona, was nestled in ten acres of tranquil countryside.

Wealthy and successful Theosophists were eager to be close to this new spiritual hub. Christine Stevenson, heir to the Pittsburgh Paint Company fortune, and Grace Shaw Duff, a well-known socialite and founder of the Hollywood Bowl, were among those who chose to settle in or near Krotona. The spiritual richness of life at the new Theosophical colony inspired Stevenson to dramatise Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* in 1918. Staged at Krotona itself, each night's performance played to a packed auditorium of 1,500 visitors and included contemporary dance routines devised by the influential American choreographer Ruth St. Denis. Krotona became a place where Theosophical architecture flourished and people sought to express their commitment to Theosophy by creating homes conducive to a Theosophical life. The acclaimed opera singer Marie Russak, who later

served as Vice-President of the Theosophical Society in America, had a keen interest in architecture. Russak designed houses for numerous Krotona Theosophists, among them Hollywood's leading clown and funny man Charlie Chaplin. Many commentators have noted that *The Wizard of Oz* can be read as a Theosophical allegory. Unsurprisingly, its author Frank L. Baum was also drawn to life at Krotona and the colony soon became a heady mix of wealthy and powerful residents, including the architect Rudolph Schindler and the heiress to Hawaii's Kekaha Sugar Company fortune, Anne Sinclair Knudsen. As Hollywood and Los Angeles grew, their frenetic energy began to impinge on the tranquil life of the Theosophists at Krotona. In 1926, they relocated northwest to nearby Ojai, California where the community continues to thrive as the Krotona Institute of Theosophy.

But the Theosophical spirit endured in the hills above north Hollywood. Marie Russak remained nearby and continued to provide spiritual guidance for members of the film community, among them Mary Astor and John Barrymore. In the early 1930s, a young and ambitious Spanish-American poet, Mercedes de Acosta moved to Los Angeles to become a screenwriter. She had found spiritual awakening at a very young age. By the time she was twenty-seven years old, she had read both *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. She described *The Secret Doctrine* as an indispensable tool for anybody who was a seeker after truth. She was deeply drawn to the principles of Theosophy and immediately began to apply those principles to her own life. De Acosta practised meditation and yoga and began to develop her abilities in astral projection. She befriended the notable Theosophist Eleanor S. Cooley, who founded several lodges in New York and Ohio, and the poet Kahlil Gibran, who introduced her to *The Bhagavad Gita*, *The Mahabharata* and *The Upanishads*. She also became a close friend of Jiddu Krishnamurti and believed he represented the 'real California', a California open to spiritual endeavour and development. What he embodied, de Acosta felt, was the direct opposite of the fake and ostentatious Hollywood lifestyle. And there were many working in the movie industry who shared the same view.

When De Acosta first met the Swedish actress Greta Garbo at the home of fellow screenwriter, Salka Viertel in the summer of 1931, she knew instantly that they had met before. As she took Garbo's hand in hers, a

Image: Greta Garbo, adapted from an original studio photo for the film *Ninotchka*, 1939.

sixth sense told her they had known each other in many previous incarnations. Like de Acosta, Garbo had a strong belief in reincarnation and the existence of an absolute superlunary consciousness. Garbo did not feel that organised religion was able to provide the answers to her spiritual questions and she was unable to accept the Church's literal interpretation of the Bible. She believed there was a hidden truth known to students of ancient mystery traditions which revealed the secrets of the cosmos.

Garbo and de Acosta soon became friends and then lovers. They would often spend time together in Garbo's favourite place - the wild, open spaces of nature. During an all-night vigil on a mountain peak in California's Casa del Mare, Mercedes initiated Garbo into the ideas of esotericism and Theosophy. It was at that moment that Greta Garbo's Theosophical quest truly began. In the autumn of 1939, Garbo and Salka Viertel attended a Hollywood picnic party at the home of the British writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley. The guest list included many notable intellectuals, amongst them, the philosopher Bertrand Russell and the author Christopher Isherwood. The famously reclusive Garbo made a point of going to this party because she knew Krishnamurti would be there. She had been eager to meet him for many years and wanted to learn all she could from the former head of the Order of the Star in the East.

Given that so many in the film industry felt connected to Theosophy, it was almost inevitable that Theosophy would find its way onto the movie screen. During the 1920s and 1930s, a number of films carried metaphysical and Theosophical themes. Jean Cocteau's surrealist film, *The Blood of a Poet*, explored astral planes and the eternal nature of all life. Warner Brothers went even further than Cocteau, explicitly exploring the occult in a mainstream motion picture. In *When Were You Born*, Anna Mae Wong played the lead character, a mystic, who uses divination to help the police with a murder investigation. In the film, each suspect displays the characteristics relating to the different planetary signs of his or her birth chart. Strikingly, the film was written by the mystic Manly P. Hall, best known for his 1928 text *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*. Hall even appears at the beginning of the film to explain its themes, informing the viewer of the powerful influence of the planets on every individual. For her part, Garbo brought to life the character of Anna Christie, in the film of the same title, who speaks of after death states and reincarnation. Anna describes being lost in a fog for what seems like forever, ultimately emerging with no memory of what happened before, a state of inertia between one life and the next.

Theosophy's influence continued to be felt in

Hollywood well into the 20th Century. Elvis Presley, star of *Jailhouse Rock* and *Blue Hawaii*, was an ardent Theosophist, regularly referring to his own copy of the *Secret Doctrine* for spiritual guidance. Presley's counterpart as all-American icon, Marilyn Monroe, privately cultivated an intensely spiritual life. This ran contrary to the image she often portrayed on screen, but Monroe was an intelligent and curious individual keen to develop herself. Ultimately, she converted to Judaism on her marriage to the playwright Arthur Miller. But before that time, she explored the Buddhist tradition and Theosophy, giving generous donations to support the work of The Theosophical Society in New York. In the 1970s and 1980s, the American actress Shirley MacLaine, star of Billy Wilder's *'The Apartment'* and *'Irma La Douce'*, revealed her long interest in Theosophy and reincarnation. She believed that in previous existences she was the peasant-girl mistress of French king Charlemagne and before that lived on the lost continent of Atlantis. These revelations prompted the Italian-French actor Yves Montand to comment wryly, 'Shirley MacLaine, who does she think she isn't?' MacLaine went on to write two best-selling books on the subjects of spirituality and metaphysics, *'Dancing In The Light'* and *'Out On A Limb'*. The latter was made into a successful TV movie starring MacLaine and Charles Dance.

Even in the 21st Century, Theosophical ideas still fascinate Hollywood. In 2016's *Doctor Strange*, Tilda Swinton portrays the Master who initiates Dr. Strange, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, revealing to him ancient mystical texts, unseen universes and the astral plane. It seems, in the film world both then and now, the Theosophical spirit is alive and well.

Moon Laramie is a member of the Theosophical Society in England. He is the author of *'Blavatsky Unveiled Volume 1'*, the first publication presenting the works of H. P. Blavatsky in modern English. His other books include *'Theosophy and the Search for Happiness'*. He is also the editor of the *'Modern Theosophy'* series and has written articles for *Watkins*, *The Best You* and *Kindred Spirit* magazines. This article is based on his book *'Spirit of Garbo'*.



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THEOSOPHY

"Theosophy is the shoreless ocean of universal truth, love and wisdom, reflecting its radiance on the earth, while the Theosophical Society is only a visible bubble on that reflection. Theosophy is divine nature, visible and invisible, and its Society human nature trying to ascend to its divine parent. Theosophy, finally, is the fixed eternal sun, and it's Society the evanescent comet trying to settle in an orbit to become a planet, ever revolving within the attraction of the sun of truth. It was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend toward it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities."

The Key to Theosophy, H. P. Blavatsky 1889.

THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS

The first proposition is that there is one underlying, unconditioned, indivisible Truth, variously called "the Absolute", "the Unknown Root", "the One Reality", etc. It is causeless and timeless, and therefore unknowable and non-describable: "It is 'Be-ness' rather than Being". However, transient states of matter and consciousness are manifested in IT, in an unfolding gradation from the subtlest to the densest, the final of which is physical plane. According to this view, manifest existence is a "change of condition" and therefore neither the result of creation nor a random event. Everything in the universe is informed by the potentialities present in the "Unknown Root," and manifest with different degrees of Life (or energy), Consciousness, and Matter.

The second proposition is "the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow". Accordingly, manifest existence is an eternally re-occurring event on a "boundless plane": "the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing," each one "standing in the relation of an effect as regards its predecessor, and being a cause as regards its successor", doing so over vast but finite periods of time.

The third proposition related to the above is "The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul... and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul—a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation (or 'Necessity') in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term." The individual souls are seen as units of consciousness (Monads) that are intrinsic parts of a universal oversoul, just as different sparks are parts of a fire. These Monads undergo a process of evolution where consciousness unfolds and matter develops. This evolution is not random, but informed by intelligence and with a purpose. Evolution follows distinct paths in accord with certain immutable laws, aspects of which are perceivable on the physical level. One such law is the law of periodicity and cyclicity; another is the law of karma or cause and effect.

SUMMARY

1. There is One absolute, eternal principle.
2. Creation is cyclic at all levels.
3. One Life, and all expressions of it must pass through all cycles according to Law.

The Secret Doctrine - The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. H. P. Blavatsky 1888.



To Aspirants for Chelaship

William Quan Judge

From 'The Path Number' No 4. July 1888.

Sincere interest in Theosophic truth is often followed by sincere aspiration for the Theosophic life, and the question continually recurs: what are the conditions and the steps to chelaship*; to whom should application be made; and how is the aspirant to know that it has been granted?

As to the conditions and the discipline of chelaship, not a little has been disclosed in *The Theosophist*, *Esoteric Buddhism*, and other works upon Theosophy; and some of the qualifications, difficulties, and dangers have been very explicitly set forth by Madame Blavatsky in her article upon «Theosophical Mahatmas» in 'The Path', December 1886[†]. To everyone cherishing even a vague desire for closer relations to the system of development through which Masters are produced, the thoughtful study of this article is earnestly commended. It will clear the ground of several misconceptions, deepen the sense of the seriousness of such an effort, and excite a healthy self-distrust which is better before than after the gate has been passed.

It is entirely possible, however, that the searching of desire and strength incited by that article may only convince more strongly of sincerity, and that not a few readers may emerge from it with a richer purpose and a deeper resolve. Even where there is not a distinct intention to reach chelaship, there may be an eager yearning for greater nearness to the Masters, for some definite assurance of guidance and of help. In either of these cases the question at once arises before the aspirant: who is to receive the application, and how is its acceptance to be signified?

The very natural, indeed the instinctive, step of such an aspirant is to write to an officer of the Theosophical Society. None the less this is a mistake. For the Theosophical Society is an *exoteric* body, the Lodge of Masters is

wholly *esoteric*. The former is a voluntary group of inquirers and philanthropists, with avowed aims, a printed Constitution, and published officers, and, moreover, expressly disavowing any power, as a Society, to communicate with Masters. The latter is an Occult Lodge, of whose whereabouts, members, processes, functions, nothing is known. It follows, therefore, that there is no person, no place, no address, to which an aspirant may appeal.

Let it be supposed, however, that such an inquiry is proffered to a person advanced in Occult study, versed in its methods and tests and qualifications. Assuredly their reply would be directly to this effect: If you were now fitted to be an accepted chela, you would of yourself know how, where, and to whom to apply. For the becoming a chela *in reality* consists in the evolution or development of certain spiritual principles latent in every individual, and in great measure unknown to your present consciousness. Until these principles are to some degree consciously evolved by you, you are not in practical possession of the means of acquiring the first rudiments of that knowledge which now seems to you so desirable. Whether it is desired by your mind or by your heart is still another important question, not to be solved by anyone who has not yet the clue to [the] Self.

It is true that these qualities can be developed (or forced) by the aid of an Adept. And most applicants for chelaship are actuated by a desire to receive instructions directly from the Masters. They do not ask themselves what they have done to merit a privilege so rare. Nor do they consider that, all Adepts being servants of the Law of Karma, it must follow that, did the applicant now merit their visible aid, they would already possess it and could not be in search of it. The indications of the fulfilment of the Law are, in fact, the partial unfolding of those faculties above referred to.

* Chelaship. A Chela is a sincere student or aspirant, who has been accepted by a Teacher, Adept or a Master of the Wisdom for the purpose of spiritual guidance and training.

† Available in Blavatsky Collected Writings, volume 7.



You must, then, reach a point other than that where you now stand, before you can even ask to be taken as a chela on probation. All candidates enter the unseen Lodge in this manner, and it is governed by Laws containing within themselves their own fulfilment and not requiring any officers whatever. Nor must you imagine that such a probationer is one who works under constant and known direction of either an Adept or another chela. On the contrary, the aspirant is tried and tested for at least 7 years, and perhaps many more, before the point is reached when they are either accepted (and prepared for the first of a series of initiations often covering several incarnations), or rejected. And this rejection is not by any body of persons just as they incline, but is the natural

rejection by Nature. The probationer may or may not hear from the Teacher during this preliminary period; more often they do not hear. One may be finally rejected and not know it, just as some have been on probation and have not known it until they suddenly found themselves accepted. Such individuals are those self-developed persons who have reached that point in the natural order after many incarnations, where their expanded faculties have entitled them to an entrance into the Hall of Learning or the spiritual Lodge beyond. And all I say applies equally to men and to women.

When any one is regularly accepted as a chela on probation, the first and only order one receives (for the present) is to work unselfishly for humanity - sometimes aiding and aided by some older chela - *while striving to get rid of the strength of the personal idea*. The ways of doing this are left to one's own intuition entirely, in as much as the object is to develop that *intuition* and to bring one to *self-knowledge*. It is having these powers in some degree that leads to one's acceptance as a probationer, so that it is more than probable that you have them not yet, save as latent possibilities. In order to have in your turn any title to help, you must work for others, but that must not be your motive for working. One who does not feel irresistibly impelled to serve human race, whether you yourself fail or not, is bound fast by the personality and cannot progress until it has been learned that *the human race is yourself* and not that body which you now occupy. The ground of this necessity for a pure motive was stated in '*Lucifer*'[§] to be that: "*unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can be equally used by the selfish and revengeful as by the unselfish and all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart.*"[±]

It may be stated, however, that even those natural forces cannot be discovered by anyone who has not obtained the power of getting rid of the personality in some degree. That an

[§] '*Lucifer*' was a magazine produced by H.P.B. in the early years of the Society.

[±] From '*Practical Occultism*', available in Blavatsky Collected Writings, volume 9.

emotional desire to help others does not imply this freedom from personality, may be seen by the fact that if you were now perfected in unselfishness in the *real* sense, you would have a conscious existence separate from that of the body and would be able to quit the body at will: in other words, to be free from all sense of self is to be an Adept, for the limitations of lower self [the personality] inhibit progress.

Hear also the words of the Master, taken from Sinnett's *'The Occult World'*: *"Perhaps you will better appreciate our meaning when told that in our view the highest aspirations for the welfare of humanity become tainted with selfishness if, in the mind of the philanthropist, there lurks the shadow of a desire for self-benefit or a tendency to do injustice, even when these exist unconsciously to themselves."*

While setting forth these facts, as well as the dangers and difficulties - both those set ones appointed by the laws of the Esoteric Lodge and the more innumerable ones adjudged by Karma and hastened by the efforts of the neophyte, it should also be stated that the Masters desire to deter no one from entering the path. They are well aware, however, from the repeated trials and records of centuries, and from their knowledge of our human difficulties, how few are the persons who have any clue to their own real nature, which is the foe they attempt to conquer the moment they become pupils of the occult. Hence, They, endeavour, so far as Karma permits, to hold unfit individuals back from rash ventures the results of which would recoil upon their unbalanced lives and drive them to despair. The powers of evil, inadequately defied by the ignorant person, revenge themselves upon them as well as upon their friends, and not upon those who are above their reach. Although these powers are not hideous objective shapes coming in tangible ways, they are none the less real and dangerous. Their descent in such instances cannot be prevented; *it is Karma*.

To lose all sense of self, then, implies the loss of all that ordinary people most value in themselves. It therefore behoves you to seriously consider these points:

1st. What is your motive in desiring to be a chela?

You think that motive is well known to you, whereas it is hidden deep within you, and by that hidden motive you will be judged. It has flared up from unseen regions upon those sure of themselves, has belched out in some lurid thought or deed of which they esteemed themselves incapable, and has overthrown their life or reason. Therefore, test yourself ere Karma tests you.

2nd. What the place and duties of a true neophyte are.

When you have seriously considered both for 21 days, you may, if your desire remains firm, take a certain course open to you. It is this. Although you do not now know where you can offer yourself to the Masters themselves as a chela on probation, yet, in forming that desire in your heart and in re-affirming it (if you do) after due consideration of these points, you have then to some extent called upon the Law, and it is within your power to constitute yourself a disciple, so far as it lies within you, through the purity of your motive and effort *if both are sufficiently sustained*. No one can fix a period when this effort will bear fruit, and, if your patience and faith are not strong enough to bear you through an *unlimited* (so far as you know) period of unselfish work for humanity, you had better resign your present fancy, for it is then no more than that. But if otherwise, you are to work for the spiritual enlightenment of Humanity in and through the Theosophical Society (which much needs such labourers), and in all other modes and planes as you best can, remember the words of the Masters: *'They who do what they can and all that they can, and all that they know how to do, does enough for us'*. This task includes that of divesting yourself of all personality through interior effort, because that work, if done in the right spirit, is even more important to the human race than any outward work we can do. Living as you now are, on the outward plane chiefly, your work is due there and is to be done there until your growth shall fit you to pass away from it altogether.

In following this course you work towards a fixed point under observation, — as is, indeed, the whole Theosophic body, which is now, *as a body*, a chela of Masters, but specialized from other members in the sense that your definite aim and trust are understood and taken into

consideration by the unseen Founders and the Law. The Theosophical Society then stands to you, for the time being, as any older chela might who was appointed for you to aid and to work under. *You are not*, understand, a chela on probation, since no one without authority can confer or announce such a privilege. But if you succeed in lifting yourself and others spiritually, it will be known, *no matter what the external silence may seem to be*, and you will receive your full dues from Those who are honest debtors and ministers of the Just and Perfect Law. You must be ready to work, to wait, and to aspire in *silence*, just as all do who have fixed their eyes on this goal. Remember that your truest adviser is to be found, and constantly sought, *within yourself*. Only by experience can you learn to know its voice from that of natural instinct or mere logic, and strengthen this power, by virtue of which the Masters have become what They are.

Your choice or rejection of this course is the first test of yourself. Others will follow, whether you are aware of them or not, for the first and only right of the neophyte is - *to be tried*. Hence silence and sorrow follow your acceptance instead of the offer of prompt aid for which you look. Yet even that shall not be wanting; those trials and reverses will come only from the Law to which you have appealed.

William Quan Judge was an Irish-American mystic, esotericist and occultist, and one of the Founders of the Theosophical Society. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, in April 1851. A vigorous, imaginative, and idealistic young



man, he travelled to the USA with his parents as a child and became a naturalized citizen aged 21, later qualifying as a lawyer specializing in commercial law. Of Blavatsky he said: “it was teacher and pupil, elder brother and younger, both bent on the one single end, but she with the power and knowledge that belong but to lions and sages”. When Olcott and Blavatsky left the United States for India, Judge stayed behind to manage the Society’s work there, all the while working as a lawyer. In 1885, after his return to America from India, he set about revitalizing the Theosophical Movement in the United States and in 1886 he established ‘The Path’, an independent Theosophical magazine. He died in March 1896.

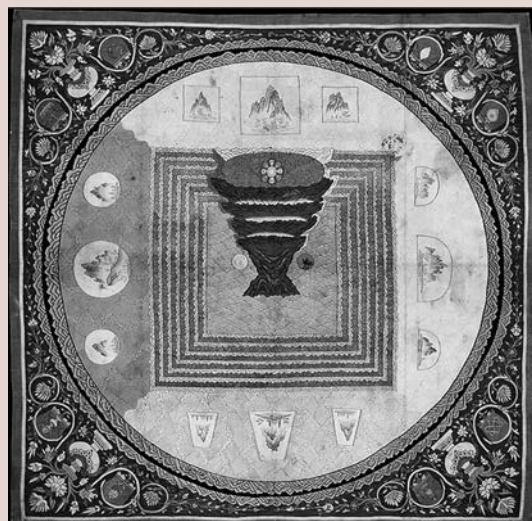


Image: Chinese K'o-ssu, mandala depicting Mount Meru. Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).
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The Theosophical Society in England



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