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INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

Contributors: Rupert Sheldrake | Helena Petrovna Blavatsky | Jim Belderis
Chris Dixon | Kevin Tingay | Eric McGough

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50 Gloucester Place
London
W1U 8EA

Tel: 020 7563 9817
Email: office@theosoc.org.uk
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From the Editor's desk

Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Esoterica*. Within these covers, you will find a mix of articles ranging from the early years of the Theosophical Society to more recent offerings. I hope that you will find them interesting, informative, and inspiring.

As Theosophists, we are often asked what theosophists do to contribute to the needs of society. The implication usually is that despite our first object of brotherhood, without distinction of race, gender and so on we appear to be bookworms only interested in head learning. We use big words and discuss metaphysical philosophy. There is some truth in this view because we do engage in philosophical study much of the time. Early theosophists were labelled 'Lovers of Truth' because philosophy is a compound word from the Greek – *Philo*, 'loving' and *Sophia*, 'wisdom'. Therefore – lovers of wisdom. But however much we love wisdom we also love our brothers and sisters. And so, Theosophists the world over are engaged in altruistic work of many kinds. Kevin Tingay's article *Women's Suffrage in the UK and the Theosophical Movement* gives a perfect example of theosophists putting themselves on the line in the cause of equality. This, of course, is just one example of the charitable work regularly undertaken by theosophists. Yes, we read books and by doing so we equip ourselves with higher knowledge which helps us to help others more effectively.

Rupert Sheldrake is well known by many of us and is a regular contributor to theosophical thought using a wide variety of media to spread his advanced thinking. Never one to shrink from pushing the limits of orthodox science, he goes beyond the accepted view of the human mind in this article *The Extended Mind*.

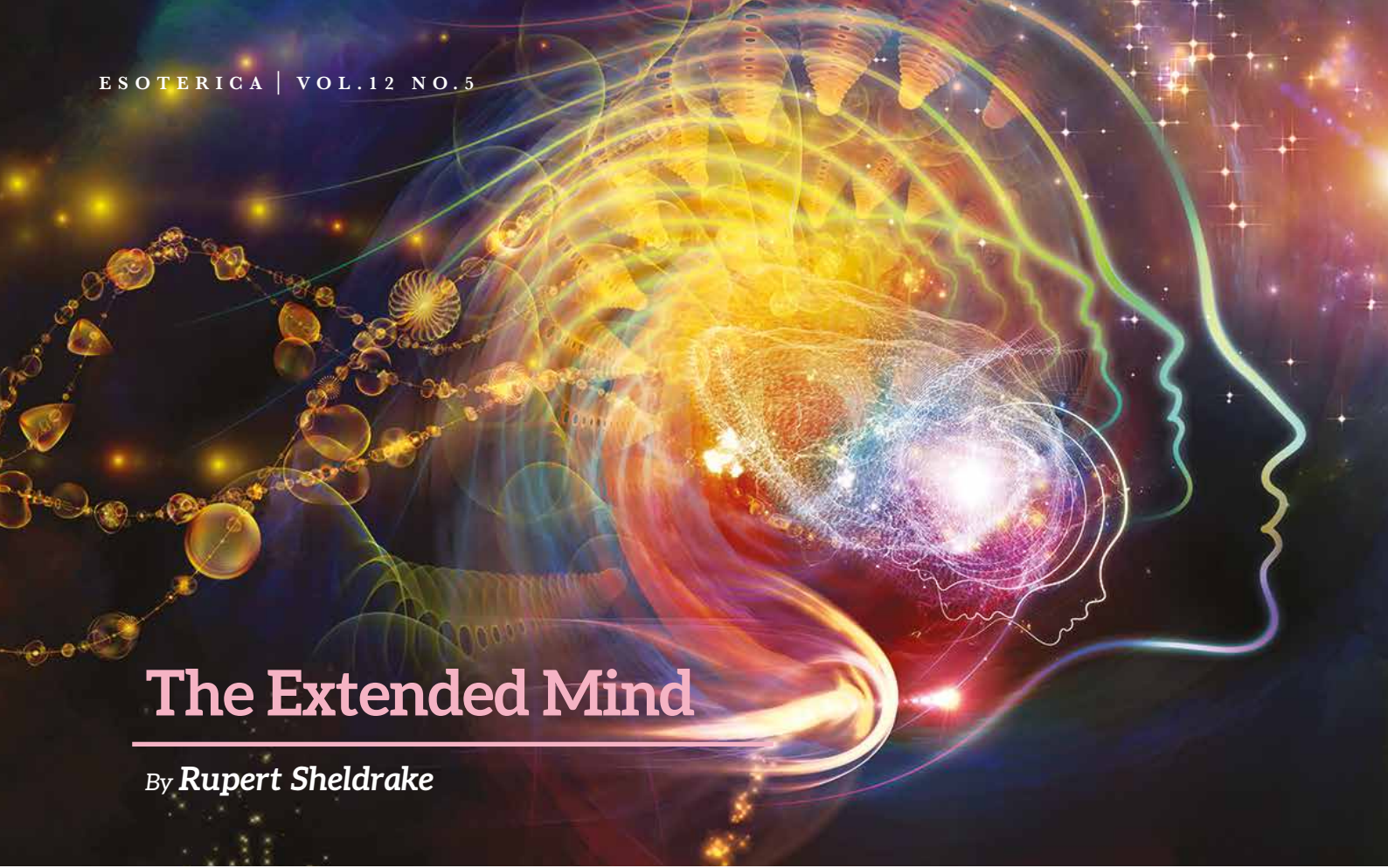
Looking back to the birth of the Theosophical Society in 1875, we see that two of the Masters of Wisdom, Koot Hoomi and the Master Morya (usually referred to as K. H. and M.) were instrumental in encouraging and aiding in the setting up of the Society. These masters made available a hitherto unpublished mass of esoteric teachings via their appointed messenger H. P. Blavatsky. We know these teachings as Theosophy. The article, *Masters of the Wisdom*, offers interesting insights into these enigmatic and controversial figures. The Author gives us a glimpse into the Masters, their work, and their character. The article also explores the controversy generated by the revelation of the existence of masters to an often sceptic public. Later, the advent of the New Age brought about some extremely dubious claims of contact with masters along with the corrupting of the original theosophical teachings.

There is no doubt about it; Discrimination is needed now more than ever. Question, question, question. ✨



Suffragette
(women's rights
movement)
Emmeline
Pankhurst being
arrested after
protesting near
Buckingham
Palace. London,
England, 1907-
1914.

Julie Cunningham Editor



The Extended Mind

By *Rupert Sheldrake*

The idea that the mind is more extensive than the brain is not new – it is in the ancient philosophies of Greece and India, and in Buddhist traditions.

The conventional scientific view is that the mind is the brain. Mental activity is only activity in the physical brain. In other words, it is all inside the head. This is what many of my scientific colleagues take for granted (at least when they are at work!). It is also the view on which billions of dollars are spent

every year in medical and brain research, and it is what is taught in schools and universities. It is the mainstream assumption of our culture. However, *it is just an assumption*. It is a theory that hasn't been properly tested because it has not been questioned. We can actually test this theory and refute this assumption by means of fairly simple experiments.

As soon as we accept the theory that the mind is more extensive than the brain, a whole range of unexplained phenomena

begin to make sense. These include the sense of being stared at, telepathy, and a whole range of even more mysterious phenomena like premonitions. All of these things are normal: normal in the sense that they are common, many have experienced them, they actually happen, and they are part of nature. Yet they are all considered taboo from the point of view of conventional institutionalised science because they do not fit in with the materialistic view of the mind being inside the head.

Most scientists prefer not to discuss these phenomena and consider their existence impossible. In fact, some skeptics get extremely angry at the mere mention of things like telepathy, and there are organised groups of skeptics who serve as vigilantes, policing the frontiers of science and trying to suppress discussion and research on these topics.

As I am one of their primary targets, it has caused me to reflect on why people get so angry about this. I think it is because these phenomena are anomalies that threaten the prevailing material worldview. Many people accept the material worldview and have made it something of a religion. Evangelical materialists are terrified that if any of these theories are accepted, science and reason will crumble into dust and that civilisation will be overrun by what Freud called "*the black mud of superstition*." These things are so frightful to some that they feel these theories must be kept at bay at all cost.

Rather than dogmatically denying them outright, testing these phenomena openly-mindedly would be in the true spirit of

scientific inquiry. All science is based on critically examining evidence to see if there could be alternative explanations. This is how organised science works.

To get a sense of the extended mind, we can use the nature of *vision* as an example. Vision is absolutely fundamental to the experience of humans and most animals. The usual view of vision is that light travels through the electromagnetic field after reflecting off an object and enters your eyes, inverted images appear on your retina, changes occur in the cone cells, electrical impulses go through the optic nerve, and then complex electrical and chemical patterns of activity occur in the brain. All this has been studied using neurophysiological methods. But then something very mysterious happens that science cannot explain: you become conscious of what you are seeing.

Consciousness itself is the biggest mystery of science. There is nothing about consciousness in physics, chemistry, or biology textbooks. Yet it is the basis of all our experience in science itself. The fact that you have become conscious of your experience is still a mystery.

An even greater mystery is that the experience you have happening before you is meant to be happening inside your brain, but you don't experience it as being inside your brain. You experience the image you see before you as being in front of you! I propose that the image you have of an object is



Victor Freitas



Karl Fredrickson

located right in front of you. It is not inside your brain. Vision involves a two-way process: inward movement of light and an outward projection of images. So everything you see around you is where it seems to be.

This two-way vision is much more in accordance with our experience. It is what Hindus, Buddhists, sages, and Tibetan Masters believe and also what children, usually under the age of ten, believe.

The idea that all thoughts exist solely in the brain started as an eccentric philosophical theory in the seventeenth century and has now become a predominant theory throughout the Western world. It has never been the dominant theory in other cultures.

If our minds do reach out to touch what we are looking at, this has rather amazing implications. It means we can affect what we look at just by looking at it, and the way we look at it may affect it also. This also means our minds can reach out over enormous distances. For example, if we are looking at an enormous mountain quite a distance away, our minds reach out that distance. If we look at a star, many light years away, our minds literally reach out over astronomical distances into the universe.

There is a huge amount that we don't understand about the mind, but I do think we can tackle each phenomenon scientifically with relative ease. Some people ask me why I waste my time trying to prove things that

everyone knows exist. In a sense this is true. All of us have experienced these things and know they exist. On the other hand, we have an official system of knowledge in institutional science that has been denying these things for a very long time because of the materialistic paradigm. I think as we move beyond the materialistic belief to the belief of the extended mind, we will simply expand the scope of science. This won't involve abandoning science and reason, but it will be good news for science and reason because people will no longer have to go on irrationally denying phenomena that do not fit into their worldview. I think this will be quite liberating even for materialists.

It will make a big difference when these ideas are accepted by institutionalised science for both our understanding of the mind and the implications this understanding will have in fields like alternative medicine (the impact of intentionality on healing), psychology (the impact we have on other people and they on us), and our relationship to the animal kingdom. ✨

With kind permission of Network News magazine.



Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist, author of more than ninety scientific papers, nine books, and co-author of six books. His most recent work is *Ways To Go Beyond*. Many of his essays can be read on his website: www.sheldrake.org



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Masters of the Wisdom



Who are these Masters we have been referring to so often? An accurate understanding in this regard seems crucial to an accurate understanding of Theosophy and the Theosophical Movement.

“Our MASTERS ... are simply holy mortals, nevertheless, however, higher than any in this world, morally, intellectually and spiritually,” says HPB in one of her articles. *“However holy and advanced in the science of the Mysteries – they are still men, members of a Brotherhood, who are the first in it to show themselves subservient to its time-honoured laws and rules.”*¹

In the chapter titled *The Theosophical Mahatmas in The Key to Theosophy*, she advises the enquirer: *“If you listen to what people say, you will never have a true conception of them. In the first place, they are living men, born as we are born, and doomed to die like every other mortal. ... Some Adepts do exceed, by a good deal, what you would call the ordinary age; yet there is nothing miraculous in it, and very few of them care to live very long. ... We call them “Masters” because they are our teachers, and because from them we have derived all the Theosophical truths, however inadequately some of us may have expressed, and others understood them. They are men of great learning, whom we term Initiates and still greater holiness of life. They are not ascetics in the ordinary sense, though they certainly remain apart from the turmoil and strife of*

Left: An image of Master Morya.

your Western world. ... the philosophy preached by the "Masters" is one of the grandest and most beneficent philosophies once it is properly understood. ... Great are the desecrations to which the names of two of the Masters [i.e. Morya and Koot Hoomi] have been subjected. There is hardly a medium who has not claimed to have seen them. Every bogus swindling Society, for commercial purposes, now claims to be guided and directed by "Masters," often supposed to be far higher than ours! Many and heavy are the sins of those who advanced these claims, prompted either by desire for lucre, vanity, or irresponsible mediumship. Many persons have been plundered of their money by such societies, which offer to sell the secrets of power, knowledge, and spiritual truth for worthless gold. Worst of all, the sacred names of Occultism and the holy keepers thereof have been dragged in this filthy mire, polluted by being associated with sordid motives and immoral practices, while thousands of men have been held back from the path of truth and light through the discredit and evil report which such shams, swindles, and frauds have brought upon the whole subject. I say again, every earnest Theosophist regrets today, from the bottom of his heart, that these sacred names and things have ever been mentioned before the public, and fervently wishes that they had been kept secret within a small circle of trusted and devoted friends." ²

The names applied in Theosophy to the Masters are understood to be mystic names rather than their actual birth names or family names. "The personage known to the public under the pseudonym of "Koot Hoomi,"

is called by a totally different name among his acquaintance. ... The real names of Master Adepts and Occult Schools are never, under any circumstances, revealed to the profane; and the names of the personages who have been talked about in connection with modern Theosophy, are in the possession only of the two chief founders of the Theosophical Society." ³ Next to nothing in the way of personal details or information is divulged about them by HPB, nor is there any clear reason why it should be. It is said to be a very difficult thing to come in direct contact with the Masters and that they have little interest in initiating communication with even the vast majority of Theosophists. For one thing, it is not necessary.

They have made it abundantly clear in their own words that no Theosophist has any right to special contact or communications unless they have earned the right through persistent unselfish work for the great

Theosophical Cause, which is their Cause of Universal Brotherhood, which far transcends any particular theosophical society or organisation. There is an old saying that "When the disciple is ready, the Master will appear." But even then, one still shouldn't count on it or expect it but should simply do what has to be done to alleviate the suffering, on all levels, of one's fellow beings.



An image of Koot Hoomi.

Much misunderstanding seems to exist in regard to the nature, aims, and character of the Masters. They were first referred to amongst Theosophists as “*The Brothers*” and later came also to be known as the Masters, Masters of Wisdom, Adepts, and Mahatmas. The latter is an ancient Sanskrit term which literally means “*Great Soul*.”

They are misunderstood by many people today due largely to their misrepresentation by later Theosophists after the time of HPB and by those persons within the New Age Movement who purport to be in contact with the same Masters and portray them as some sort of disembodied angelic or god-like beings living in other realms and liberally dispensing sentimental commonplaces and inane quasi-Christian ideas, replete with all the latest New Age jargon and buzzwords, whilst flatly denying and contradicting all the teachings given out through HPB and in their own Letters. If these so-called “*Ascended Masters*” have any existence at all outside of the imagination and hallucinations of their

self-proclaimed channellers and worshippers, it is safe to say that they are most certainly not the same individuals as the Masters connected with HPB and the Theosophical Movement.

The Masters of Theosophy are said to be living in physical bodies right here on Earth, for this is where they are needed and they have certain important work to do on the physical plane. They tend to dwell in purposeful seclusion and isolation from the impure and truly toxic psychic atmosphere and magnetism of the modern world.

The Masters most often spoken of are the Master Morya and the Master Koot Hoomi, belonging to a hidden Esoteric Brotherhood with its main base in the Trans-Himalayan region, the Chief of whom being referred to as the Maha Chohan, the Master of the Masters. It is often called the “*Trans-Himalayan Brotherhood*” but this is only a geographical designation rather than the actual name of the Brotherhood, which is the most important of numerous such Brotherhoods of Adepts around the world which are linked together, forming one Great Brotherhood of Initiates.

HPB spoke plainly about the Masters in a letter to Franz Hartmann of April 1886: “*As to ... that portion of your letter where you speak of the “army” of the deluded – and the “imaginary” Mahatmas of Olcott – you are absolutely and sadly right. Have I not seen the thing for nearly eight years? Have I not struggled and fought against Olcott’s ardent and gushing imagination, and tried to stop him every day of my life? Was he not told by me ... that if he did not see the Masters in their true light, and did not cease speaking and enflaming*



people's imaginations, that he would be held responsible for all the evil the Society might come to? ...

"Ah, if by some psychological process you could be made to see the whole truth! ... I was sent to America on purpose and sent to the Eddys. There I found Olcott in love with spirits, as he became in love with the Masters later on. I was ordered to let him know that spiritual phenomena without the philosophy of Occultism were dangerous and misleading. I proved to him that all that mediums could do through spirits others could do at will without any spirits at all. ... Well, I told him the whole truth. I said to him that I had known Adepts, ... That, whether they were called Rosicrucians, Kabbalists, or Yogis, Adepts were everywhere. Adepts – silent, secret, retiring, and who would never divulge themselves entirely to anyone, unless one did as I did – passed seven and ten years' probation and given proofs of absolute devotion, and that he, or she, would keep silent even before a prospect and a threat of death. I fulfilled the requirements and am what I am; and this no Hodgson, no Coulombs, ... can take away from me. ...

"When we arrived [i.e. in India], and Master coming to Bombay bodily, paid a visit to us ... Olcott became crazy. He was like Balaam's she-ass when she saw the angel! Then came ... other fanatics, who began calling them "Mahatmas"; and, little by little, the Adepts were transformed into Gods on earth. They began to be appealed to and made puja to, and were becoming every day more legendary and miraculous. ... Well, between this idea of the Mahatmas and Olcott's rhapsodies, what could I do? I saw with terror and anger the false



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott.

track they were all pursuing. The "Masters," as all thought, must be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. ... The Masters knew all; why did they not help the devotee? If a mistake or a flapdoodle was committed in the Society – "How could the Masters allow you or Olcott to do so?" we were asked in amazement. The idea that the Masters were mortal men, limited even in their great powers, never crossed anyone's mind." ⁴

It is fairly well known today that there are a few Yogis and ascetics in India who have puzzled and confounded scientists with their possession of unusual faculties of perception and abilities to control certain forces of Nature. Some of these cases have been reported worldwide in the news. Is it too unreasonable then to suppose that there may be Yogis, both of Indian and other nationalities, who possess and can

demonstrate even more advanced powers and knowledge than this? Such are the Masters spoken of in Theosophy, whose non-existence would imply a break in the chain of evolution, an illogical gap in the natural order of things. But “*if they were to come out openly and be heard of everywhere, they would be worshipped as gods by some and hunted as devils by others,*”⁵ neither of these probable outcomes being desirable for them.

It is through “*self-induced and self-devised efforts*” over the course of many lifetimes that these souls have become Great Souls. They could never have become Masters of esoteric wisdom and knowledge had they not first mastered themselves, by entirely subjugating and renouncing their personal and passionate nature, in order to live solely to be of the utmost possible help and service to humanity.

Through perfection in altruism and purity running parallel with perfection in knowledge, they have pushed themselves ahead – albeit with many struggles and difficulties along the way, as is to be expected – of the average evolutionary rate of the human race and now stand as representative of what the rest of mankind will be like only thousands of years from now. The motive in doing so is always one of the greatest love and compassion for others.

Some of them have already reached the point of being able to enter into Nirvana, if they so wish, meaning literal reabsorption of their soul after death into the Absolute, the One Infinite Divine Essence, resulting in eternal bliss and separation forever from all manifested existence, from all the sufferings

and sorrows of this Earth. But as this would mean the loss of all possibility to help in any way what they call “*the great orphan Humanity*”, they have chosen to renounce Nirvana for the sake of their fellow men. This is known in Mahayana Buddhism as the Bodhisattva ideal and is unfailingly recommended in Theosophy as the right aim and motive for any spiritual aspirant to adopt, anything else being selfishness.

Abilities and powers of these Masters are such as involved in an advanced way the faculties of clairvoyance, clairaudience, psychic perception, telepathy, the ability to bring about unusual phenomena such as producing sounds, sights, and materialisation of objects without there being any discernible physical cause, and an extensive usage and application of the astral body, including perfection in such sciences as those now popularly referred to as astral travel and astral projection.

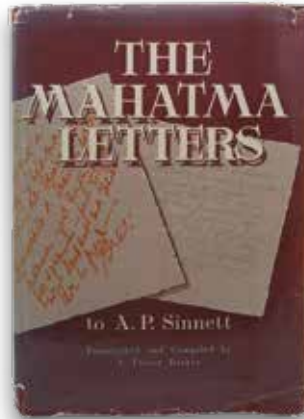
HPB herself exhibited similar powers, abilities, and knowledge on numerous occasions throughout her life, prompting some, especially amongst her closest colleagues who had been witness to her daily life and activities for some years, to privately conclude that she was inwardly a Master in her own right.

Around thirty different people in various different parts of the world reported and described having seen or met some of these Masters during HPB's lifetime. In a few of these instances, the Master or Masters were present in their physical body but for the majority, they were in their astral body and appearing at a distance from wherever they

may have been physically at that moment in time. Even some of the enemies of the Theosophical Movement admitted the existence of the Masters, especially as some of their visitations had occurred in front of whole groups of people, who had afterwards all testified in writing, under their own signatures and on their word of honour, to having witnessed the same thing. Sometimes the Masters were seen near HPB or in her presence and other times in entirely different countries or continents from where she was.

In early 1879, HPB and Olcott arrived in India, having relocated the headquarters of the Theosophical Society there from New York. Judge and a few others remained behind in the USA to carry on the work there, although public interest was very minimal in those early years.

From 1880 to 1884, the Masters K.H. and M. maintained a written correspondence with A.P. Sinnett, a prominent upper-class Englishman then living in India who had joined the Society and expressed the wish to help present and promulgate the Masters' teachings. Their hundreds of letters to him were donated after his death to the oriental department of the British Museum in London and are now housed in the British Library, where anyone can see them by prior appointment. These letters, also published after his death in the book *The Mahatma Letters*, provided the basis and inspiration for



An mid-20th century edition of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*.

Sinnett's own books *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, which had the effect of drawing worldwide interest to Theosophy and the Movement.

The very idea of the existence of such Masters was considered fantastical and ridiculous by many people of the time, just as it is today. When it was discovered that numerous people were claiming to have received letters and written communications from these Masters, the conclusion of

the sceptically inclined was that HPB herself must have been engaged in forging hundreds of letters to people around the world to trick them into thinking they were in correspondence with those Beings.

HPB consented to allow the suspiciously minded SPR, or Society for Psychical Research, to investigate the matter for themselves, by analysing all the evidence available and interviewing anyone willing who claimed to have either seen, met, or received letters from the Masters. Richard Hodgson's report, published by the SPR in 1885, accused HPB of forgery and fraud, despite furnishing no actual proof or evidence of this.

Anyone interested in this matter may like to read Prof. Vernon Harrison's 1986 and 1997 reports and critique on such accusations. Harrison, a trained expert in forgery and counterfeit himself, showed that the Hodgson Report was by no means "the model of impartial investigation so



Richard Hodgson (1855-1905), psychical researcher.

often claimed for it over the past century. *It is flawed and untrustworthy, and Hodgson's observations and conclusions need to be taken with a considerable part of salt. The case of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky needs re-examination in this light. She deserves no less.*" Prof. Harrison's report and findings were so conclusive that the SPR was forced to publish and acknowledge them in their own journal. Today all except the uninformed and the bigoted cannot but agree with Harrison's remarks that the Hodgson Report was "riddled with slanted statements and downright falsity."⁶

HPB, knowing perfectly well that she was no fraud, wanted to take the SPR to court. Olcott, president of the Theosophical Society, would not agree to let her do so, fearing that it would result in even further scandal and public commotion which would damage and be detrimental to the Society's aims, influence, and public reputation. HPB, caring more for truth and justice than public image and reputation, was dejected and disheartened by what she perceived as a lack of support and lack of confidence on the part of Olcott and others and left India for Europe, never to return.

She herself received very few *Mahatma Letters* in comparison with others, as she was understood to be in regular telepathic contact and communication with the Adepts and thus had little need for written letters. She asserted that it would not be too long before scientists would acknowledge that no distance exists in the realm of mind and that there is nothing abnormal or supernatural about two harmoniously attuned minds

being able to communicate at a distance with the same ease and clarity as two individuals in the same room.

Letters from the same Masters continued to be received in various ways after HPB's death, less frequently but in the same handwriting and style and extolling the same principles and teachings as before, along with wise advice and in some cases prophetically accurate warnings about the condition and future of the Movement. The last known was in 1900, nine years after HPB had passed away, and at the very close of the 25-year centennial cycle. ✨

By an associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists, writing at
BlavatskyTheosophy.com

Notes:

1. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Mahatmas* H.P. Blavatsky Theosophical Articles Vol. 1, p. 302, Theosophy Company.
2. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* p. 288, 289, 298, 301, Theosophy Company.
3. H.P. Blavatsky, *Lodges of Magic* H.P. Blavatsky Theosophical Articles Vol. 1, p. 288, Theosophy Company.
4. *The Theosophical Movement: 1875-1950* p. 175-176, Cunningham Press.
5. William Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy* p. 3, Theosophy Company.
6. Vernon Harrison, Ph.D., *H.P. Blavatsky and the SPR: An Examination of the Hodgson Report of 1885*, Theosophical University Press.

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Seeking the One in the Many

By *Jim Belderis*



Yana Druzhinina

Much of our experience seems to reinforce our sense of separateness. We are surrounded by forms of life that differ greatly from our own, and if we find very little in common with them the differences are bound to make up most of our reality. Yet there are times when we identify so strongly with the life around us that we feel at one with it. These fleeting moments of unity can be so potent that they change the way we see the world. Instead of looking only at the forms, we begin to look within and beyond them for a single unifying source. This is the One that is the essence of the many. Including all life, it must be found in all of life.

But how can we find what is all-inclusive in what we perceive to be very exclusive? Our perception of things usually focuses on those familiar qualities with which we can relate, while whatever has opposing qualities is often dismissed as irrelevant or even threatening. But sometimes we see the connection between ourselves and what we had thought was opposite or unrelated – we recognize some inner relationship that transcends our exclusiveness. This recognition must come from higher senses that seek out the essential common nature of things, senses that can reconcile all our differences because they give us a vision of the whole and a feeling that we belong to it.

Finding this vision of the One in all the many forms of our experience would seem to

be an incredibly difficult task. And indeed it would be if we had to make a constant effort to look beyond all appearances, to examine all our preconceptions about ourselves and others, and to search for our connection with everything we find strange or fearful. Yet this appears to happen without the least effort when we see ourselves in the life around us. Suppose we felt that we had very little in common with the other kingdoms of nature. Judging by appearances, we might think that rocks are just exploitable pieces of dead matter, that plants are not aware of what we do to them, and that animals have no feelings, only instincts. How would our perceptions change if we became lovers of nature? Wouldn't we feel an intimate connection with the earth and all its kingdoms? We might then find it quite conceivable that Earth is a live and conscious entity and that all forms of life including ourselves – are evolving toward the same kind of awareness.

One might even see oneself as this evolving awareness. An exclusive self-image, such as *"I am this body, I am this mind, I am these thoughts and feelings,"* would give way to an ever-expanding identity embracing such thoughts as *"I am all that I welcome into my awareness from moment to moment: the more I welcome, the more I know my Self."* Imagine being seized with wonder at the beauty of Mother Nature, feeling at this



moment that everything is a living expression of one all-pervading consciousness. In this holy instant, all appearances are welcome because their Source is welcome – all are fellow children of consciousness, one in purpose and one in essence.

Such a feeling of oneness with the beauty of nature is not an uncommon experience. But how do we relate to the ugliness of human relations? Judging by a person's behaviour, we may think he has a heart of stone, that he's rooted in selfishness, or that he's beastly cruel. But what if we could see him as a fellow child of consciousness who is terribly frightened of his own sense of separateness? Wouldn't we empathize with someone so blind to the beauty of the One that all he can see is his own distorted image, an image so fearful that it attacks the very relationships that could release him from fear? The ugliness of human relations is the vicious circle where people deny their connection with others, cling only to themselves, and attack those who are a threat to their sense of separateness.

And what of those whom they attack? We all know how quickly we forget our true Self whenever we strike back and start our own circle of fear and denial. But knowing this, we also recognize that we have the



power to break the circuit of separateness by focusing on its very opposite. We know how difficult it is to deal with a person who denies and rejects any connection with us and behaves accordingly. By remembering our inner Self, we refuse to mistake his body and his actions for his inner Self. Looking right past his denial, we affirm that there is indeed a very welcome connection between us. Whatever outward response this evokes, the seed of inner trust has been planted. Sooner or later, our fellow child of consciousness will call his exclusive image into doubt and start looking for the vision that we see in him.

If this sounds too idealistic and impractical, it may be because we too cling to parts of us that we are afraid to lose and feel we must defend. Yet every time we rise above that fear, we are touched by the Reality we can never lose. By refusing to acknowledge separateness and the actions that reinforce it, we see through every thoughtless deed and every ugly emotion to the beauty of the One evolving through all. Whatever form it takes, be it welcome or unwelcome, the interaction of the many is this evolution.

Such a vision could indeed change the way a person sees himself and the world around him. He could begin by thinking, "*I am this body.*" Yet what is this body? All that I know of it is my perception of it – *I am what I perceive.* But in a room full of people, I am also my perceptions of everyone in that room: all of this is my self because this is my awareness. My familiar self needs no defense against my unfamiliar self, for I am one Self; and the more open I am to this oneness, the more conscious I become of the inner

relationships that make it one. I am this evolving consciousness, whose purpose is to grow more and more aware of what I am. By embracing this awareness, I feel the life of the whole, know it as my life, and remember the Source of my being as the Source of all being.

Transforming the mind to think along these lines might seem far beyond our capacity. But each new moment gives us the opportunity to stop identifying with our differences and see ourselves in the life around us. We already find it easy to relate to what we love. Whether we are lovers of art,

music, sports, or nature – the list is endless – it is not unusual to become so absorbed in our



Anna Sullivan

favourite pastime that we feel at one with it. But how did it become our favourite pastime? We have come to know it and love it by relating to it as a whole. We have tried to understand how all its outer aspects result from inner aspects working on many levels - and in these inner workings, we see something of ourselves. Because this relationship is not based on fear, we feel no need to protect our sense of separateness, and we are open to appreciate the inner nature of what we love.

If we could only appreciate each other in this way, as lovers of human nature, we would have much more understanding for



Blake Cheek

our outer differences because we would be sensitive to the whole person, whose words and actions often hide the beauty of his soul. And in our fellow-feeling for this evolving child of consciousness, our higher senses would remind us instantly - we are one. ✨

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Jim Belderis is a writer on theosophical topics and regularly contributes articles to the website of The Theosophical Society, International Headquarters, Pasadena, California - www.theosociety.org

Self Observation is the Key

If we desire to travel the spiritual path we must Practice Self Observation and make changes in our thoughts, feelings, actions and reactions. Gradually we become more calm and balanced and it becomes easier to hear that still small voice within. This is a process and it takes time and practice.

Always remember, you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think and twice as beautiful as you'd ever imagined.

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.

Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.

Rumi

Gelli: Sacred Groves of the Druids

A Tale of Acorns, Blackthorn and The Screech of the Woods!

By **Chris Dixon**

There are several strands to this saga which connect together in a most remarkable way. I'm indebted to Dutch conservationist

Dr Frans Vera for part of the tale in his seminal work *Grazing Ecology and Forest History*. But first I'll start with Cymraeg (Welsh language) and the word *Gelli*, which means a grove and is found in many place names in Cymru.

(Wales) Just down the way from me is Gelli Gemlyn, or Cemlyn's Grove, and a bit further up is Gelli Goch, or Red Grove. Groves were long associated with the Druids as their sacred places. Julius Caesar makes a lot of the Druids as fostering the



Dr Frans Vera,
Dutch biologist and
conservationist.

resistance to Rome and after his brutal ten year conquest and subjugation of Gaul (from 50-40BC), it's thought that many of the surviving Druids fled to Britain and in particular, to Ynys Môn, or Anglesey, which was an important religious centre for the Druids of Britain and the continent.

The Roman historian, Tacitus, writing in his *Agricola*, provides a dramatic account of the Roman invasion and conquest of the island after which "*The religious groves, dedicated to superstition and barbarous rites, were levelled to the ground.*" I'd often wondered about these Druidic groves, what they were made up of and whether they were planted by the Druids or somehow natural. Robert Graves gives some rather fanciful ideas in *The White Goddess* but it was on reading Vera's book that an elegantly

simple explanation became clear – the jays planted them, and here's how.

Jays are beautiful, colourful birds, the blue barring on the wings is especially fine. In the Cymraeg, they're called, most aptly, *Sgrech Y Coed*, which in English is something like the

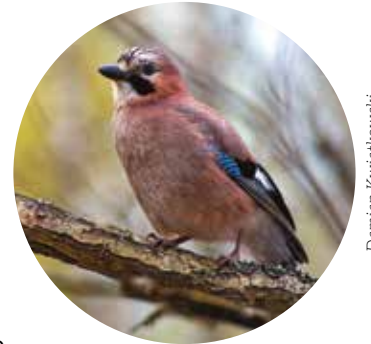
Screech or *Scream of the Woods* (or the *Wood's Screech*). Their Latin name, *garrulus glandarius*, also gives good clues as to their nature and behaviour – *garrulous* means something like babbling, chattering, having the habit of talking a lot, especially about unimportant things and *glandarius* means

"of or pertaining to nuts or acorns".

There you have probably the two most significant features of the bird, the raucous cry when disturbed and their habit of collecting and eating acorns. The fact that they are a member of the crow family and will take young nestlings if the opportunity arises means some people really don't like them, and I mean really don't like them; one of our near neighbours hates them absolutely, with a remarkable vehemence, describing them as cruel and evil. Bit like some people then? Except people have a choice, the jays just follow their own nature.

As the name suggests, jays eat acorns and are well adapted to carrying them, maybe two or three or even more (up to nine!) in their gullets and one in their beak. Over the autumn they will collect several thousand and store them for winter food by burying them. They can fly up to four kilometres before they stash their acorns in individual holes and are thought to be responsible for the relatively rapid spread of oak trees into Britain as the land warmed up after the ice age.

Over the winter and into the spring, they'll return to their many burial sites, dig up the acorns and eat them. By the time spring arrives, some of these acorns may have sprouted, but no worries: the jay will give the young seedling a tug and chances are, oink it out. The two halves of the acorn

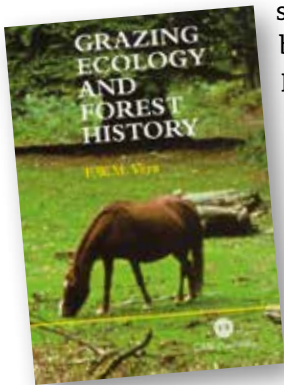


Damian Kwiatkowski



Tina Xinia

Top: Jay; above: oak leaves and acorns.



represent a valuable food source, even after sprouting. However, as the spring progresses, the young oak seedling will rapidly put down a strong tap root and the jay will find it harder and harder to uproot. So, question: Why does the Oak have such a strong tap root when few other trees do? Answer: By natural selection as a result of the action of the jays. The acorns that put down stronger taproots are the ones the jays couldn't pull up and hence have survived to reproduce. The jays will usually 'plant' more acorns than they'll get around to eating anyway so considerable numbers of their planted acorns may grow into fine trees.

We need to weave in another strand here, namely, the blackthorn. This shrubby, small tree is often used in hedging due to its fierce, spiny thorns. Anyone who has anything to do with it – such as attempting to lay it – will tell you that not even the best, thickest gloves will protect you from every thorn. They'll get through and the point – sharper than a needle – will probably break off. Despite half an hour's home surgery with your own needle, you'll be lucky to get it all out, and they invariably go septic. Be warned! The vicious thorns means its amongst the few plants that can establish in the presence of grazing and browsing animals like deer, and is often found in Fridd and along with hawthorn and gorse. Its other main characteristic is that rather

than just spreading by seed, it also suckers.

As the roots spread out through the soil from the mother plant, it sends out new top growth from the roots, thus forming an ever widening circle of thorn, unless controlled. In a natural setting, this ever widening circle expands at the rate of about half a metre a year, perhaps slowed somewhat by herbivores grazing off some of the suckers when they are still young and relatively soft.

Now we can bring in Sgrech again, the jay. The jays don't just bury their acorns anywhere as they need to be able to remember and return to hundreds of different locations. It's thought that they choose sites on the edges of shrubs, and identify each one according to unique patterns of light and shade and it turns out that the edge of a blackthorn thicket is ideal for this. So the jays plant the acorns in the edge of the expanding thicket of blackthorn. Some of the acorns sprout and get a tap root down quickly and the jay can't uproot them. The spiky blackthorn thicket engulfs the oak saplings, protecting them from herbivores. As the thicket continues to expand, the young oaks grow upward for the light and pop out above the thorn, eventually spreading their branches and shading out the part of the thicket beneath them. We get an ever expanding ring of blackthorn with the centre now shaded out beneath growing oaks and grass reappearing beneath the trees – a Grove.

The ring of blackthorn can be dense, impenetrable to most herbivores, but a human – say a Druid – could cut a way in, or possibly follow a route where a wild boar has



Top: Blackthorn blossom;
above: gorse flowers.

pushed through. Inside the protective ring, oaks and a sward, a most secluded, secret place, easily given over to the sacred...

I observed something similar on Argel, my wilderness regeneration project, where spiky gorse fulfilled a similar role to the blackthorn, growing outward, engulfing trees and protecting them from the deer. When the trees popped out the top and spread their branches, the gorse was shaded out and died within just a couple of seasons.

The speed at which plants like gorse and blackthorn will die when shaded out is remarkable. Having been impressed when I was told about genuine Nature 'Reserves' in Tasmania – places where people are excluded by law – I decided that, even though Argel was quite small, I ought to leave part of it completely alone and just not go there, for a time at least. So I resisted visiting one corner for a couple of years. I then thought, well, that's not really very long in terms of a tree, so I waited for five years. I had a look from a distance occasionally but thought, well, it's still not very long, really, so I left it some more. I managed eight years before my curiosity got the better of me and I went down to have a nosey with my notebook and pencil, to record whatever wonders I might find. A large part of the corner had been taken over by blackthorn which had grown layer after layer of branches. Every cubic inch of the space seemed to have spiky twigs growing through it. It appeared to be a dense, impenetrable, thorny barrier, concealing and protecting whatever lay in its interior.

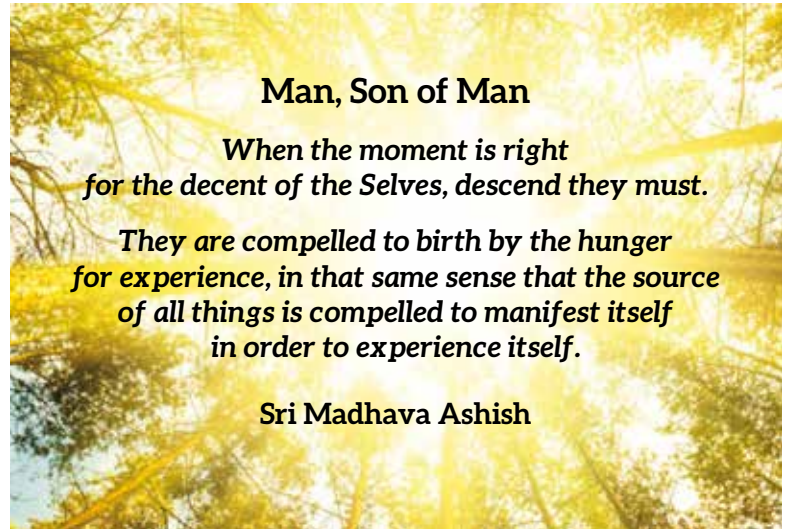
But the blackthorn had in turn been overgrown by an oak from an old hedge line

and most of it was dead and had been for a few years. To my amazement I found that when I touched it with my pencil, it simply fell to pieces. No need for the Druid's Golden Sickle, armed with just my pencil I was able to open a way into the thicket with ease!

So, there we have it, Sgrech Y Coed, acorns and blackthorn result in the Sacred Groves of the Druids, Y Gelli. Isn't nature amazing? ✨



Chris Dixon is a published author and permaculture designer with over 30 years experience, living on a low impact smallholding in Coed Y Brenin.
chrisdixon.substack.com



Women's Suffrage in the UK and the Theosophical Movement

By **Kevin Tingay**

The period at the beginning of the 20th Century, from the death of Queen Victoria up to the outbreak of the First World War, was one of growth and dynamic activity within religious, social, and political movements in many parts of the world. In the United Kingdom the pressure to enfranchise women, which had been active for several decades, began to present a more publicly visible stance with the emergence of the Women's Social and Political Union which was commuted to what we would now call militant direct action.

They became known as Suffragettes, in distinction from Suffragists, who continued to campaign through traditional constitutional methods. The WSPU suffered from division within itself, leading to the foundation of other groups such as the Women's Freedom League.



Jon Bertley

The Theosophical Society, in common with many idealist organisations, also experienced internal disputes leading to the formation of other groups. Some claimed to be the authentic vehicle of Madame Blavatsky's teachings, others expressed the ideals of the movement in language which did not use the term 'Theosophy' but expressed esoteric thought in a variety of ways. In this article, I refer to the Theosophical Society (TS) with its headquarters at Adyar as it was, and is, the largest in numerical terms. I also restrict myself to the struggle for women's rights to the United Kingdom. Several nations had extended the franchise to females some years before a limited number gained it in 1918. Historians disagree whether this achievement was progressed by the militant Suffragettes

or the extraordinary contributions that women made to the conduct of the War.

The TS, from its foundation in 1875, was open to female membership, embodied in its first object. Unsurprising, given the presence of Helena Blavatsky, though she took little part in the administrative developments of the Society, that being the gift of Henry Olcott. The social engagement of the movement showed fruit in Olcott's work in India and Ceylon, and in Great Britain after Annie Besant joined in 1889. Her active political and philanthropic work is well documented so she will not appear directly in this article. She supported those Theosophists who are described in the text but the period of greatest activism coincided with her election as International President of the Society and her domicile in India. A further point that should be borne in mind is that the influence of Theosophy was wider than the paid-up membership of the TS in England. As we have noted, other organisations laid claim to be theosophical, but membership details of these smaller groups is generally difficult to discover. There is also the fact of the overlap of membership with other groups such as the Co-Masonic Order, and the Theosophical Order of Service. Many people in what was described at the time as moving in 'Progressive' circles were sympathetic to the ideals of the TS while not being active members of it. Madame



Blavatsky had died before the period we are considering, though she did move in these circles. Local TS groups were established in many cities and towns throughout the UK in the period under consideration. The presentation of distinctive Theosophical teachings was often supplemented by the presentation of forward-looking social and spiritual concepts from members and visiting speakers.

The Theosophical Order of Service was founded in 1908 and in its early years saw itself as a catalyst for social activism in a variety of fields. It fostered the establishment of leagues for specific campaigns, fourteen were noted in the period up to 1914. Specific

references to the issue of votes for women began to appear in TS literature after the emergence of public activism in the period after 1900. In the November 1912 issue of *The Theosophist*, Mrs K. E. Roy-Rothwell proposed the formation of an International Women's Suffrage League under the auspices of the Theosophical Order of Service (*below left*). She suggested collective meditation on a "definite formula" that could, at stated times, be sent as a thought form to the Houses of Parliament.¹ This bore fruit in February 1914 when an announcement in *The Vahan* established a TOS League to help the Women's Movement. Its object was: "to draw together all those interested in the Women's Suffrage Cause who realise the importance of meditation and right thinking as a force behind this movement."

The group disavowed any criticism of other suffrage groups. They attempted to highlight the harmful effects of forcible feeding in prison. Harold Baillie-Weaver was Chairman; Charlotte Despard, and Miss Townend (probably Gertrude Townend's partner, with Nurse Pine in the Pembroke Gardens nursing home) were among the members of the League's executive council, which arranged to meet each month at 19a Tavistock Square, London, WC. It should be said that this group was founded a little late in the day given that war clouds were looming. With

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INTERNATIONAL WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE LEAGUE

[We are requested to publish the following circular letter—Ed.]

In view of the present grave crisis and the serious social danger all around, could not Theosophists join in trying to move the Government to enfranchise women immediately, for there is no doubt that women would be far more able to help in remedying these evils if they had political power.

An international Woman's Suffrage League under the Theosophical Order of Service might be immediately organised all over the world, and set to work at once to influence the Government to establish the principle of Equality of Sex. Mentally, much could be done by sending out in a definite formula at a definite time, towards the Government, this idea. Members might try to give half an hour daily in meditation, or in study, in private or public work for the cause. Surely there is much in our teaching of brotherhood and equality of the sexes, in our study of religions and the latent powers of the race, to advocate the woman's cause. Were members to study this and give it out again to the world in press articles or speeches, it might be most effective, especially when we consider the power working behind the Theosophical Society. Over and above this, members could help in the usual ways, by corresponding with friends and the local press, by making, saving and collecting money for the cause, by speaking to friends and in public, and, most important of all, by persuading as many men as possible to vote to help the women, or else to lay down their right to vote until the woman's right to vote is won.

20

All who are in favour of woman's suffrage could join such a League, whatever Suffrage Society they belonged to or whatever their party politics. The chief object of starting the League is to gather into one channel as much power as possible, that the Government may be favourably influenced on all three planes, mental, emotional and physical.

When we consider the White Slave Traffic, and the way in which the recent Bill has been rendered useless, the assaults on children, even on babes of three, and the lenient sentences passed by men on those responsible for these wrongs we see that the only way permanently to remedy such outrages is to give women equal power with men in electing the House of Commons. It is because the militants through their imprisonment know more of such evils than other suffragists, that they would rather die in the fight than give in. The accompanying leaflet on social evils shows the sort of knowledge that drives the militants on, a knowledge that Theosophists need to have in order to make the world fit for the coming race. Apart from this, there is great danger of some of the ablest women of our time taking the sword to parish with the sword; already two are sentenced to penal servitude. The race has need of these women, and if we all work together in the true spirit of brotherhood, to establish sex equality this session, we may do much to save them.

Will all in favour of this project please communicate with me without delay, so that a meeting may be called and a committee elected to organise this League, which must be in working order by the time Parliament reassembles, if it is to save our women and carry our cause.

(MRS.) K. E. ROY-ROTHWELL
Northwood, Chatham Close, Erskine Hill,
Hampstead Garden Suburb, London, N. W.

the outbreak of the war, the activities of this League ceased, if indeed they had ever commenced in active reality. However many of the other TOS-led Leagues were active throughout and after the conflict.

The representation of the People Act of 1918 extended the vote to all men over twenty-one and to women aged thirty or over with certain property qualifications. In 1928 all women over twenty-one were enfranchised. The founders of the TS, with the exception of H. P. Blavatsky, were all male, but the commitment to include women was there at the start. The appearance of Annie Besant gave impetus to the recruitment of women, as she had been committed to this cause in social and political fields.

A number of people were members of the TS during the period of the struggle for women's suffrage rights in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For the most part, their commitment to these campaigns, and other social issues, meant that they were less publicly active in the affairs of the TS itself. Clara Codd felt she had to make a choice

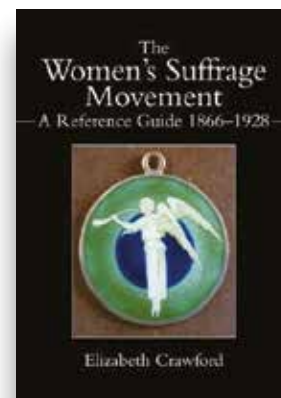


Clara Codd (1876-1971), British writer, suffragette, socialist feminist, and theosophist.

between her political and theosophical activism and made a choice for the latter. It should be noted that women of all religious outlooks in Great Britain were active in the cause, but that progressive spiritual movements, such as Quakers, Unitarians, Theosophists, and others, had a greater numerical representation in proportion to their total membership.

The major source of information on the women's suffrage issue is the encyclopedic work by Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement - A Reference Guide 1866-1928*. Where she has found reference to TS membership or links she notes this.

We should note, however, that many people who supported the issue did so through suffragist groups and their activities did not make the public record. Amongst those whose TS membership or links are noted are Gertrude Baillie-Weaver, Ursula and Esther Bright, Eileen Casey, Clara Codd, Leonora Cohen, Muriel de la Warr, Charlotte Despard, Marion Wallace-Dunlop, Eva Gore-Booth, Mary Hare, Kate Harvey, Olive Hockin, Annie Kenney, Emily Lutyens, Grace Roe. Those who have access to local records of TS groups may discover evidence of the involvement of other individuals. The Dowson family in Nottingham, for example, were active in the non-militant arm of the movement, as well as the establishment of the TS Lodge in the city.



Commemorative plaque at The Grange, Nottingham.



Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867-1954), British women's rights activist and suffragette.

In addition to those tabulated, we should add three important male TS members who were supportive of the cause, and whose biographies are well described elsewhere – Ebenezer Howard, founder of the Garden City movement, and two Labour Members of Parliament – George Lansbury and John Scurr.

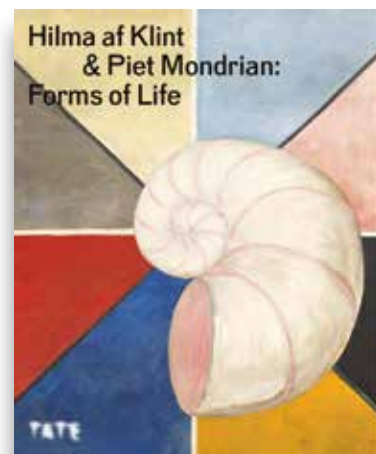
Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, a social activist, was a member of the Suffrage Society

and was introduced to Emmeline Pankhurst and the WSPU in 1906. She became its Treasurer and raised £134,000 (a very large sum of money in those days) over six years. I have not found confirmation that she was ever a member of the TS but she was sympathetic to the movement and later had an interest in J. Krishnamurti.

After 1918, campaigning continued for the extension of the rights of women in many spheres. After 1928, those who had achieved the right to vote often devoted their efforts to wider reforms. Theosophists were active in movements for progressive education, child welfare, world peace, Indian independence, alternative medicine, animal welfare, vegetarianism and other progressive themes.

Some social historians in the past have played down the influence of the TS characterising it as a foolish movement for

foolish people. In recent years it has been taken more seriously in academic circles. Its influence can be discerned in the development of inter-religious relationships, peace movements, 20th-century art, and other spheres of activity. The catalogue of the recent exhibition at Tate Modern in London of Piet Mondrian and Hilma af Klint (right) contains thoughtful engagement with the Theosophical aspects of these two artists. ✨



This essay is a shortened version of a longer paper which includes biographical details of the women noted, information on the TOS Leagues, and bibliographical references. The writer can supply a copy on request to: kgxt@brinternet.com



Kevin Tingay is a retired Anglican priest and university lecturer. He has been a member of the Theosophical Society since 1965.



World Religions

By **HPB**

Noah Holm

It is well known that the first main objective for which the modern Theosophical Movement was founded was to bring about the actualisation of a Universal Brotherhood, without distinction of race, religion, creed, colour, caste, or gender. This can only be achieved by recognising that Universal Brotherhood is not merely a noble and lofty ideal but is actually an eternal fact in Nature, due to the Oneness and Divineness of all life. It is already the case that we are all One in terms of our source and origin, our inner spiritual essence, and our ultimate destiny. But this needs to be recognised, accepted and acted upon.

Those who are acquainted in any way with Theosophy and the Theosophical

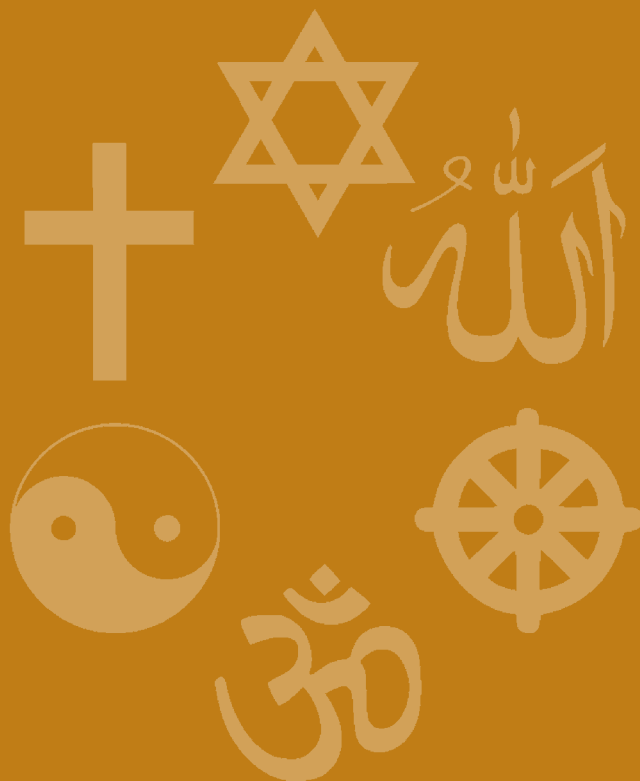
Movement are aware that it places constant emphasis on the unity of all religions. This theme has gained ever-increasing recognition and publicity since the time of H. P. Blavatsky and today much progress has been made in terms of religious tolerance, acceptance and study of others' religions, celebration of religious diversity, and interfaith communications. In this respect, humanity has come a very long way in a very short time.

But this is not exactly the kind of thing HPB and the Masters had in mind when they spoke and wrote of the unity of world religions.

What has just been described is undeniably something good and which should be actively encouraged but are peaceful and harmonious relations between

the different religions of any real or lasting good if the souls involved are still immersed in ignorance, superstition, or inner separateness? An outer, external, objective unity actually means very little if it is not recognised, understood, and appreciated by all concerned that all religions are the same in their esoteric essence.

That essence is the Universal Truth which underlies all the world's religions and which pre-dates and transcends them all, being the primeval and archaic source and fountainhead of all the elements of truth which can be found amongst the many elements of falsehood and unphilosophical dogma.



*“What we desire to prove is, that underlying every ancient popular religion was the same ancient wisdom-doctrine, one and identical, professed and practised by the initiates of every country, who alone were aware of its existence and importance. To ascertain its origin, and the precise age in which it was matured, is now beyond human possibility. A single glance, however, is enough to assure one that it could not have attained the marvellous perfection in which we find it pictured to us in the relics of the various esoteric systems, except after a succession of ages. A philosophy so profound, a moral code so ennobling, and practical results so conclusive and so uniformly demonstrable is not the growth of a generation or even a single epoch. Fact must have been piled upon fact, deduction upon deduction, science has begotten science, and myriads of the brightest human intellects have reflected upon the laws of nature, before this ancient doctrine had taken concrete shape. The proofs of this identity of fundamental doctrine in the old religions are found in the prevalence of a system of initiation; in the secret sacerdotal castes who had the guardianship of mystical words of power, and a public display of a phenomenal control over natural forces, indicating association with preterhuman beings.” **

H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* Vol. 2, p. 99



Aneet Singh

Daughter of Fire



**Compiled from an
interview with
Irina Tweedie, Sufi
and Theosophist.
Published in *Yoga
and Life* Vol. 5 -
No. 5**

Reading Irina Tweedie's spiritual autobiography is to be transported to India and experience directly the beauty and overwhelming magnificence of existing in a subcontinental wonderland. Aryanagar, the district where Irina was to live for two years regularly visiting a Sufi Master, enters into our consciousness as a place where the magic and the mystery of the Unknown are revealed. Her diary entries, written between October 1961 and December 1966 and encompassing her time spent in Aryanagar, London and then finally the Himalayas, take the reader on our own spiritual odyssey. Indeed, the overall effect is to taste the very living presence of



Bhai Sahib.

her Master and his enduring wisdom for ourselves.

With unashamed honesty, Irina Tweedie records her thoughts and emotions as she embarks on her path of self-discovery. Her Naqshbandi Sufi Master, Bhai Sahib (which in Hindi means Elder Brother) is an enigmatic character – cryptic, compassionate, and aloof. Not given to long and verbose discourses on the nature of Reality, Irina is, nevertheless, moved by his presence. In her first formal meeting with him, Bhai Sahib asks her: "Why did you come to me?" Irina's words come spilling out: "I want God," I heard myself saying, "But not the Christian idea of an anthropomorphic deity. I want the Rootless Root, the Causeless Cause of the Upanishads."

"Nothing less than that?" He lifted an eyebrow...

By the time we reach the twentieth century in the West, the belief in an immanent Reality for most people was on shaky ground. Unlike the revival in the East of the universal Mother immanent in all creation, the Post Modernist world had deconstructed all philosophical and religious belief into meaningless abstractions: 'God is dead,' Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was famously to declare. Nevertheless, in a climate where dogma and ideological ignorance were crumbling, it gave rise to new possibilities. The pioneering spirit of women like Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973) enabled more and more women to search independently for their own salvation, to find the Truth for themselves without domestic restraints. Irina Tweedie's own search for spiritual fulfilment is yet another example of an



Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), spiritual guru, occultist and yoga teacher.

independent Western woman taking a stand against what society expected of her.

Prior to visiting India, Irina speaks very little of her past. Born in 1907 in Russia, she was educated in Vienna and Paris. She then moved to England where she was happily married to a naval officer. His death in 1954 caused a grief of such profundity that she sought solace in religion and philosophy, turning eventually to the Theosophical Society. But it failed to inspire. An intense longing for freedom still prevailed and yet nothing would suffice. She then felt compelled to travel to India.

Continuing to Bhai Sahib her reasons for coming, she tells him of the theosophical belief that not even a guru is necessary for liberation, salvation being achievable through our own independent efforts: "Not even in a hundred years!" he laughed outright. 'It cannot be done without a teacher!'

I told him that I did not know what Sufism was.

"Sufism is a way of life. It is neither a religion nor a philosophy. There are Hindu Sufis, Muslim Sufis, Christian Sufis. My Revered Guru Maharaj was a Muslim." He said it very softly, with a tender expression, his eyes dreamy and veiled. And then I noticed something which in my excitement and eagerness I had not noticed before; there was a feeling of great peace in the room. He himself was full of peace. He radiated it; it was all around us and it seemed eternal. As if this special peace always was and always would be, forever...

Immediately, Bhai Sahib instructs her to keep a diary of her experiences. *The Daughter*

of Fire: A Woman's Experience of Liberation through the Teachings of a Sufi Master meticulously records Irina's day-to-day existence (which was later abridged to a much shorter version, *The Chasm of Fire* and published first). It charts her meetings and conversations with Bhai Sahib, as well as her attitudes and frustrations, her insights and dreams.

At first, her entries speak of the sheer physical endurance of Indian life, which becomes an almost insurmountable obstacle: the smells and the noise and the chaos in temperatures well over a hundred degrees.

Nevertheless, provoked by her feisty and often quarrelsome character, Bhai Sahib is forced to break her attachment to the senses and her overriding sense of 'poor me'. Irina is regularly made to sit outside his house, often in the blinding dust or pouring rain, whilst welcoming other devotees into his presence. He also demands that she hand over to him all of her income as a test of her dependence on money. Her protestations are loud but the Master knows it is for her own good:

"The world is for us as we create it: if you say there is a bhut [ghost] in the tree, then there will be a bhut for you. This is all manas [mind]. But what is manas? Nothing. Manas is maya [illusion]. You want everything but are not prepared to make sacrifices, to pay the price... People are not prepared to give anything up. If you want to go anywhere you will have to take the train or the plane, you are expected to pay

the fare, is it not so? Be always a friend of the Almighty and you will never die. Prayer should be done always, even in ordinary prayer; but of course the only real prayer is merging, oneness with God!

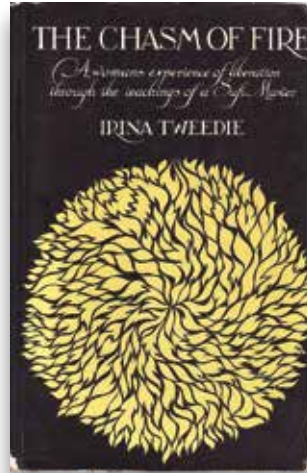
Her heart responds to the essence of his words but her mind is still sloshing with anxiety and confusion. Her desire for permanent release provokes a tireless demand for her Master's assistance:

"Oh please help me! I am so confused!"

"Why should I?" He looked straight at me. "If I begin to help, you will ask again and again for help: how will you cross the stream? You must do it yourself, I will not help. If I do, you will get used to it and will never be able to do without my help. We all have to cross the stream alone. Don't you realize that this is the way? I am telling you, showing you the way. THE ONLY WAY. Why don't you realize that you are nothing? It means complete surrender. It takes time. It is not done in one day. It takes time to surrender."

Bhai Sahib goes on to tell her that his method is the Way of the Silent Sufi. Always in silence and dependent on the maturity of the devotee, practice [dzikr] can either be the path of contemplative meditation [dhyana] in the mind (self-enquiry) or the path of complete renunciation [tyaga] in the heart (surrender). Although both paths ultimately lead to the same goal, the Teacher places greater emphasis on surrender:

"It is like love; it cannot be hidden. If I don't



...speak to you for days, you just sit. If I speak, you speak and never, never must you complain... This is the door, the only door to the King of the Heart. What is surrender of the heart? You people do not even imagine. Not only Western people, I mean Indians too... Learn to be nothing, this is the only way."

It is only through the heart chakra where true surrender can take place and the individual can fall in love with God. Nevertheless, he continues to taunt her:

"To say, 'I love you', is easy but to realize it is difficult. Here is hidden the mystery of the Realization of God or Truth. Because you have to realize one fact: 'You are in my heart, you are everything, I am nothing.' If you begin to realize that, then you really love, and your own self diminishes, the external things begin to lose all importance. The self, and everything else, remains with the Beloved from then on, and the Beloved remains with you permanently when there is no self anymore."

Despite these wise words, her diary entries reveal the personal torment she repeatedly endures. Her antagonisms and resentments are seething inside her, with little outlet for release. At night, she sleeps badly. In the darkness, she can find no peace. Her body starts to shake violently, her skin is weeping sweat. Her mind is wrestling with visions of creatures and demons:

"Without the slightest indication that it may be coming, I was flooded with a powerful sexual desire. It was just the desire, for no object in particular, just the desire, per se, uncontrollable, a kind of wild cosmic force... I sat there helpless, shaking with fear... Good heavens, what was happening? Tried to listen, to feel from where

this vibration came, where it was exactly."

"Then I knew; it was at the base of the spine, just above the anus. I could feel it there distinctly. It must be the Muladhara chakra [psychic centre at the base of the spine]. I went ice-cold with terror... This was the coup de grace! I thought; he has activated the chakra at the base of the spine and left the kundalini energy there to... to what?"

"The most terrifying night of my life began. Never, not even in its young days had this body known anything even faintly comparable, or similar to this! This was not just desire; it was madness in its lowest, animal form; a paroxysm of sex craving. A wild howling of everything female in me, for a male. The whole body was SEX ONLY; every cell, every particle, was shouting for it; even the skin, the hands, the nails, every atom..."

"Waves of wild goose-flesh ran over my whole body making all the hair stand stiff, as if filled with electricity. The sensation was painful, but the inexplicable thing was that the idea of intercourse did not even occur to me... The body was shaking, I was biting the pillow so as not to howl like a wild animal. I was beside myself; the craziest, the maddest thing one could imagine, so sudden, so violent."

And she continues: *"The body seemed to break under this force; all I could do was to hold it stiff, still and completely stretched out. I felt the over-stretched muscles full of pain as in a kind of cramp. I was rigid, I could not move. The mind was absolutely void, emptied of its content. There was no imagery; only an uncontrollable fear, primitive, animal fear and it went on for hours. I was shaking like a leaf... a mute, trembling jelly carried away by forces*

completely beyond any human control. A fire was burning inside my bowels and the sensation of heat increased and decreased in waves. I could do nothing. I was in complete psychological turmoil."

"I don't know how long it lasted, don't know if I had slept out of sheer exhaustion or if I fainted..."

"The whole body was shaking and trembling in the morning. The cup of tea tasted bitter. Felt like vomiting."

But Bhai Sahib reassures her that this is all perfectly natural – it is the awakening of the kundalini energy in the base of her spine, it is the initiation of the soul's longing for union with God. And unlike men, the Teacher continues, women are already well attuned to this mystical relationship:

"Women, because they are nearer to Prakriti, are fertilized by the Divine Energy which they retain in their charkas and, because of this, very few practices are needed. Women are taken up through the Path of Love, for love is feminine mystery. Woman is the cup waiting to be filled, offering herself up in her longing which is her very being."

Through the ensuing days and months, Irina is tossed upon the tidal waves of ecstasy and pain; for every drop of understanding, there is a backwash of unmitigated ignorance. But gradually, the path of love begins to arise within her, the feminine mystery starts to overflow. India, in all her kaleidoscopic splendour, blossoms in front of her eyes; astonishing beauty is everywhere. And now Bhai Sahib also stands before her – Beloved Teacher and guide. Her gratitude is overwhelming; she offers herself up completely and drowns in a sea of unfathomable bliss:

"Deepest peace. And I nearly fall down when I salute him lately. And the feeling of nothingness before him represents such happiness. He will be resting, his eyes closed or open; I sit, bent in two (a comfortable position for me in his presence) under the blow from the two fans; he and I alone somewhere, where nothing is but peace."

"Lately, it becomes increasingly lovely. Deep happiness welling from within. From the deepest depth... Also at home, when I think of him, it comes over me... Soft, gentle. A bliss of non-being; not existing at all. It is difficult to believe, unless one has experienced it, that it is so glorious 'not to be'."

The feeling of nothingness is taking over. All the humiliations and agonies of the past are leading to an unshakeable experience of the Self:

"Walking to his place amongst the busy morning traffic, the noise of children going to school, cows wandering aimlessly, rickshaws driving at great speed, dogs fighting and the sky covered with white clouds, I reflected that the feeling of Nothingness is not only now in his presence. It stays with me... I feel like that before God, before life; it seems slowly to have become my very being."

Irina would treasure this experience for the rest of her life. Indeed, returning to London years later and embarking on giving lectures at the Theosophical Society on Sufism, she would often become carried away with the memory of her beloved teacher. Having taken a vow never to speak of anything other than her experience, her talks essentially became the records of a living tradition, imparted to all those eager to hear. ✨

The Law of Cycles



"**T**he doctrine of Cycles is one of the most important in the whole theosophical system, though the least known and of all the one most infrequently referred to," writes William Judge.¹

The closing quarter of the 19th century was an extremely important and crucial period in humanity's history and evolution. Three great cycles all intersected at the same time, which is a very rare and uncommon occurrence. The first 5,000-year cycle of the Kali Yuga – the Black Age or Age of Darkness spoken of in Hinduism as having begun with the death of Krishna – was due to draw to a close between late 1897 and early 1898. The great significance and importance of this can be found mentioned and referred to in various places in the Theosophical literature.

In the book *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Judge, writing in the 1890s, says "The present cycle, which closes Nov. 17th, 1897-Feb. 18th, 1898, is one of the most important of any that have been."² Theosophy pinpoints "the instant of the beginning of Kali-Yuga" as having been "2h. 27m. 30s. a.m. of February 16th" of the year 3102 B.C.³

HPB, in the introduction to *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888 remarks that "In about nine years hence [i.e. which would be 1897], the first cycle of the first five millenniums, that began with the great cycle of the Kali-Yuga,

will end. ... We have not long to wait, and many of us will witness the Dawn of the New Cycle, at the end of which not a few accounts will be settled and squared between the races."⁴

Later in the same work she says, "The exact extent, depth, breadth, and length of the mysteries of Nature are to be found only in Eastern esoteric sciences. So vast and so profound are these that hardly a few, a very few of the highest Initiates – those whose very existence is known but to a small number of Adepts – are capable of assimilating the knowledge. Yet it is all there, and one by one facts and processes in Nature's workshops are permitted to find their way into the exact Sciences, while mysterious help is given to rare individuals in unravelling its arcana. It is at the close of great Cycles, in connection with racial development, that such events generally take place. We are at the very close of the cycle of 5,000 years of the present Aryan Kaliyuga; and between this time and 1897 there will be a large rent made in the Veil of Nature, and materialistic science will receive a death-blow."⁵

The second of these three great cycles related to the astronomical and astrological ages and involved the gradual fading out of the old Piscean Age and the gradual dawn of the New Age of Aquarius. The Old Age was reaching its close and the Aquarian Age or Cycle was to gradually begin its approximately 2,155 year course from the dawning of the new century in 1900.

From the perspective of observations and calculations made by astronomers, the actual Age of Aquarius still isn't due to commence until another 100 or even 200 years from now. But some statements of HPB

specifically suggest the year 1900 and we know that an old cycle doesn't just suddenly stop one moment and a new cycle suddenly begin the next moment. Night doesn't suddenly turn into day and day doesn't suddenly turn into night. There's always a twilight period, a crossover. Indian philosophy calls this the Sandhya period, the twilight when one cyclic period is fading out and a new one is fading in.

The 1900 date is implied in the series of articles titled *The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*, which mentions that "There are several remarkable cycles that come to a close at the end of this century," HPB concluding that part of the article with the quite prophetic statement that "when the equinox ... enters, in a few years, the sign of Aquarius, psychologists will have some extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter on a great change."

Thirdly, in conjunction with these two, was a cycle which is known in Theosophical terminology as the centennial cycle, or the "end-of-the-century" cycle.

It is said that in 14th century Tibet, Tsong Kha-pa – the reincarnation of Gautama Buddha and the founder of the Gelugpa school or branch of Tibetan Buddhism – had ordained that the Esoteric Brotherhood was henceforth to send one of their own to the Western world in the closing quarter of each century, to help



18th C, golden bronze statuette of Tsong Kha-pa.

bring about further spiritual awakening and enlightenment. It was known and understood that only a particular 25 years in each century could be actively used for this purpose, such were and are the very real restrictions of Cyclic and Karmic Law.

The Masters connected with the Theosophical Movement have made it clear, as did HPB and her co-founder William Judge, that those Masters do not and cannot give out further teachings from their secret wisdom-science except in the closing 25 years of a century. The subsequent 75 years are intended to be used for promulgation and re-promulgation of the concepts and truths that have been presented in that end-of-the-century cycle, enabling and allowing time for the germination and growth of right ideas and right understanding in the minds and hearts of men and women and ideally humanity at large, if the students of the Teaching do their job properly and work for the Cause.

Franz Anton Mesmer, Count Cagliostro, and the Count St Germain were the specifically named agents of the Masters in the world for this purpose at the end of the 1700s:

“Mesmer ... was an initiated member of the Brotherhoods of the Fratres Lucis and of Lukshoor (or Luxor), or the Egyptian Branch of the latter. It was the Council of “Luxor” which selected him – according to the orders of the “Great Brotherhood” – to act in the 18th century as their usual pioneer, sent in the last quarter of every century to enlighten a small portion of the Western nations in occult lore. It was St. Germain who supervised the development of events in this case; and later Cagliostro was commissioned to help, but having made a series

*of mistakes, more or less fatal, he was recalled. Of these three men who were at first regarded as quacks, Mesmer is already vindicated. The justification of the two others will follow in the next century.”*⁶

At the end of the 1800s, this centennial cycle coincided with the closing of the other two cycles. This is an extremely rare occurrence, the first time it had happened in fact since Tsong Kha-pa's edict, and an extremely important and pivotal period in the evolution of humanity and human consciousness. It was no accident, coincidence, or chance occurrence that the Theosophical Movement appeared publicly on the scene on 17th November 1875. The date is very esoterically significant and full of meaning for students of Theosophy.

*“The time was found to be ripe,” stated HPB in 1889, “which fact is shown by the determined effort of so many earnest students to reach the truth, at whatever cost and wherever it may be concealed. Seeing this, its custodians permitted that some portions at least of that truth should be proclaimed. Had the foundation of the Theosophical Society been postponed a few years longer, one-half of the civilized nations would have become by this time rank materialists, and the other half anthropomorphists and phenomenologists.”*⁷

“I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years, an attempt is made by those “Masters,” of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century, you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality – or call it mysticism if you prefer – has taken place.



Top: Franz Anton Mesmer; centre: Count Cagliostro; and above; Count St Germain.

Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge and teaching has been given out. If you care to do so, you can trace these movements back, century by century, as

far as our detailed historical records extend. ... If the present attempt, in the form of our Society, succeeds better than its predecessors have done, then it will be in existence as an organized, living and healthy body when the time comes for the effort of the 20th century.”⁸

Elsewhere, she explained, “Every century an attempt is being made to show the world that Occultism is no vain superstition. Once the door permitted to be kept a little ajar, it will be opened wider with every new century. The times are ripe for a more serious knowledge than hitherto permitted, though still very limited, so far.”⁹

It was HPB who had been chosen and prepared as the Masters’ “Direct Agent” and Messenger in the world for the 1875-1900 cycle. Considering that this period of time involved the intersection of those three great cycles, this may provide some idea or indication to us of the tremendous powers, knowledge, and capabilities possessed by HPB, as well as her status and standing as an Initiate, for surely the Masters would not send forth someone incompetent, incapable, or unfit for the task, unprepared and unsuited for a mission of such great and grave

“I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years, an attempt is made by those “Masters,” of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century, you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality – or call it mysticism if you prefer – has taken place.

Helena P Blavatsky

responsibility, at such a highly important moment.

Indeed, the Master K.H. once found himself needing to remind Col. Olcott: “We have no favourites, nor affections for persons, but only for their good acts and humanity as a whole. But we employ agents – the best available. Of these for the past thirty years the chief has been the personality known as H.P.B. to the world (but otherwise to us). Imperfect and very troublesome, no doubt, she proves to some, nevertheless, there is no likelihood of our finding a better one for years to come – and your theosophists should be made to understand it. ... Theosophists should learn it. You will understand later the significance of this declaration so keep it in mind. Her fidelity to our work being constant, and her sufferings having come upon her thro’ it, neither I nor either of my Brother associates will desert or supplant her. As I once before remarked, ingratitude is not among our vices. ... But this you must tell to all: – With occult matters, she has everything to do. We have not abandoned her; she is not ‘given over to chelas’. She is our direct agent. I warn you against permitting your suspicions and resentment

against 'her many follies' to bias your intuitive loyalty to her."¹⁰

In another letter to another Theosophist, the same Master had previously written regarding what he called "the centennial attempt" of 1875-1900:

"If, for generations, we have "shut out the world from the knowledge of our Knowledge," it is on account of its absolute unfitness; and if, notwithstanding proofs given, it still refuses yielding to evidence, then will we at the End of this cycle retire into solitude and our kingdom of silence once more. ... It is our mission to plunge and bring the pearls of Truth to the surface; theirs - to clean and set them into scientific jewels. And, if they refuse to touch the ill-shapen, oyster-shell, insisting that there is, nor cannot be any precious pearl inside it, then shall we once more wash our hands of any responsibility before human-kind? For countless generations hath the adept builded a fane of imperishable rocks, a giant's Tower of INFINITE THOUGHT, wherein the Titan dwelt, and will yet, if need be, dwell alone, emerging from it but at the end of every cycle, to invite the elect of mankind to co-operate with him and help in his turn enlighten superstitious man. And we will go on in that periodical work of ours; we will not allow ourselves to be baffled in our philanthropic attempts until that day when the foundations of a new continent of thought are so firmly built that no amount of opposition and ignorant malice guided by the Brethren of the Shadow will be found to prevail."

"But until that day of final triumph someone has to be sacrificed - though we accept but voluntary victims. The ungrateful task did lay her [i.e. HPB] low and desolate in

*the ruins of misery, misapprehension, and isolation: but she will have her reward in the hereafter for we never were ungrateful."*¹¹

In his article from 1895 titled *The Closing Cycle*, Judge very clearly emphasises this fact of cyclic restrictions and the responsibility of Theosophists. As we shall see later, however, his words and warnings were swiftly forgotten about or ignored at one of the most crucial periods in the development of the Theosophical Movement:

"Nothing is more plain than that H.P. Blavatsky said, on the direct authority of the Masters, that in the last twenty-five years of each century an effort is made by the Lodge and its agents with the West, and that it ceases in its direct and public form and influence with the twenty-fifth year. Those who believe her will believe this; those who think they know more about it than she did will invent other ideas suited to their fancies."

*"She explained, as will all those who are taught (as are many) by the same Masters, that were the public effort to go on any longer than that, a reaction would set in very similar to indigestion. Time must be given for assimilation, or the "dark shadow which follows all innovations" would crush the soul of man. The great public, the mass, must have time and also material. Time is ever. The matter has been furnished by the Masters in the work done by H.P. Blavatsky in her books, and what has grown out of those. She has said, the Masters have said, and I again assert it for the benefit of those who have any faith in me, that the Masters have told me that they helped her write *The Secret Doctrine* so that the future seventy-five and more years should have some*

material to work on, and that in the coming years that book and its theories would be widely studied. The material given has then to be worked over, to be assimilated for the welfare of all. ..."

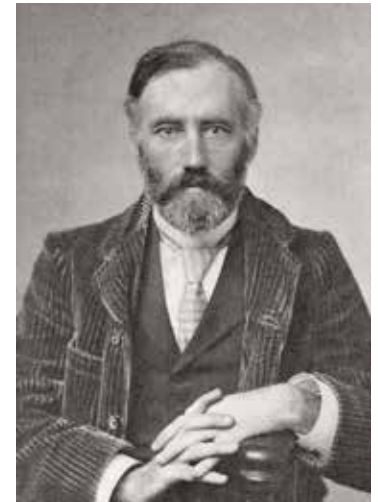
"We have to do as Buddha told his disciples: preach, promulgate, expound, illustrate, and make clear in detail all the great things we have learned. That is our work, and not the bringing out of surprising things about clairvoyance and other astral matters, nor the blinding of the eye of science by discoveries impossible for them but easy for the occultist. The Master's plan has not altered. He gave it out long ago. It is to make the world at large better, to prepare a right soil for the growing out of the powers of the soul, which are dangerous if they spring up in our present selfish soil. It is not the Black Lodge that tries to keep back psychic development; it is the White Lodge. The Black would fain have all the psychic powers full flower now, because in our wicked, mean, hypocritical, and money-getting people they would soon wreck the race. This idea may seem strange, but for those who will believe my unsupported word I say it is the Master's saying."

By the time 1900 dawned, both HPB and William Judge had passed away, HPB in 1891 at the age of 59 and Judge in 1896 at the age of 44. Olcott, whose role had been that of an organiser and administrator more than that of a spiritual teacher, ended up diverging quite seriously from his fidelity to HPB and her work and passed away in 1907, aged 74.

It's a very apparent and undeniable fact that there have been many noticeable and accelerated changes and events that have

come about for humanity and in human consciousness since the close of the 19th century. Think of the extraordinarily rapid growth, developments, and advancements in the realm of science and technology since the start of the 1900s and even more so since the start of this century. There seems to be no end in sight. This is unparalleled in any period of history that is known to us, although Theosophy says that it certainly had some parallel in far older civilisations such as the Atlantean epoch. Think also of some of the more unfortunate developments... two world wars within just one century, not to mention a multitude of other wars, revolutions, and vast world-changing political upheavals, all within 100 years or less. Again, our history shows us nothing comparable.

Our once separated and mysterious world has now become a "global village" thanks largely to the birth and development of the internet. Other notable occurrences of lasting import since "the Dawn of the New Cycle" include – to varying degrees largely determined by geographical location – the liberation and emancipation of women, a great decline in racism and racial prejudice, an increase in tolerance and recognition of the importance of granting equal rights to all, the significant decline of the class and caste system, and disasters with global



William Q Judge (1851-1896), Irish-American mystic, esotericist, and occultist, and one of the founders of the original Theosophical Society.



Deserted apartment blocks in the exclusion zone around the ill-fated Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

consequences reaching far into the future, such as the Chernobyl incident.

Many of the old religious institutions, power structures, and theologies have fallen or are in the process of falling and crumbling into disarray. Cyclic changes mean that

they no longer serve any valid purpose or have any hold or attraction on the evolving minds and consciousness of the masses. Religious and spiritual thought truly is being drawn more and more Eastward as slowly but surely the great Eastern teachings such as Karma, reincarnation, and the divinity of all life, gain increasing acceptance, recognition, and adherence in the West.

In this new era, this new age, this new cycle, the collective consciousness is now very largely drawn naturally towards Universal Brotherhood, the Brotherhood of Humanity, the Oneness and Unity of all beings. And this is the first main objective for which the Theosophical Movement was founded in 1875. ✨

Notes:

1. William Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy* p. 117, Theosophy Company.
2. William Q. Judge, *Letters That Have Helped Me* p. 97, Theosophy Company.
3. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* Vol. 1, p. 662, Theosophy Company.
4. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* Vol. 1, Introductory, p. xlv, Theosophy Company.
5. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* Vol. 1, p. 611-612, Theosophy Company.
6. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary*, Entry for Mesmer, p. 213, Theosophy Company.
7. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* p. 36, Theosophy Company.
8. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* p. 306-307, Theosophy Company.
9. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* Vol. 1, Introductory, p. xxxvii-xxxviii, Theosophy Company.
10. Master Koot Hoomi, *Letters from The Masters of the Wisdom* First Series, #19, p. 49-50, Theosophical Publishing House.
11. Master Koot Hoomi, *The Mahatma Letters* #IX, p. 51, Second Edition, Theosophical University Press.

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The Path by R W Machell



Right: *The Path*, by Reginald Willoughby Machell, 1854-1927. Machell (pictured above) joined the Theosophical Society after meeting Helena Blavatsky in London and later moved to the Point Loma community, where he painted, wrote, and designed furniture.

The path is the way by which the human soul must pass in its evolution to full spiritual consciousness. The supreme condition is suggested in this work by the great figure whose head in the upper triangle is lost in the glory of the Sun above, and whose feet are in the lower triangle in the waters of space, symbolizing spirit and matter. His wings fill the middle region representing the motion or pulsation of cosmic life, while within the octagon are displayed the various planes of consciousness through which humanity must rise to attain perfection.

At the top is a winged Isis, the Mother or Oversoul, whose wings veil the face of the Supreme from those below. There is a circle dimly seen of celestial figures who hail with joy the triumph of a new initiate, one who has reached to the heart of the Supreme. From that point he looks back with compassion upon all who are still wandering below and turns to go down again to their help as a Savior. Below him is the red ring of the guardians who strike down those who have not the "password," symbolized by the white flame floating over the head of the purified aspirant. Two children, representing purity, pass up unchallenged. In the center of the picture is a warrior who has slain the dragon of





illusion, the dragon of the lower self, and is now prepared to cross the gulf by using the body of the dragon as his bridge (for we rise on steps made of conquered weaknesses, the slain dragon of the lower nature).

On one side two women climb, one helped by the other whose robe is white and whose flame burns bright as she helps her weaker sister. Near them a man climbs from the darkness; he has moneybags hung at his belt but no flame above his head, and already the spear of a guardian of the fire is poised above him ready to strike the unworthy in his hour of triumph. Not far off is a bard whose flame is veiled by a red cloud (passion) and who lies prone, struck down by a guardian's spear; but as he lies dying, a ray from the heart of the Supreme reaches him as a promise of future

***“If Wisdom thou wouldst gain, Be Strong,
Be Bold, Be Merciful. But when thou hast attained
Then let Compassion speak. Renounce the Goal,
Return to Earth A Savior of mankind.”***

Inscription on a wooden disk, attached to the lower left corner of the painting.

triumph in a later life.

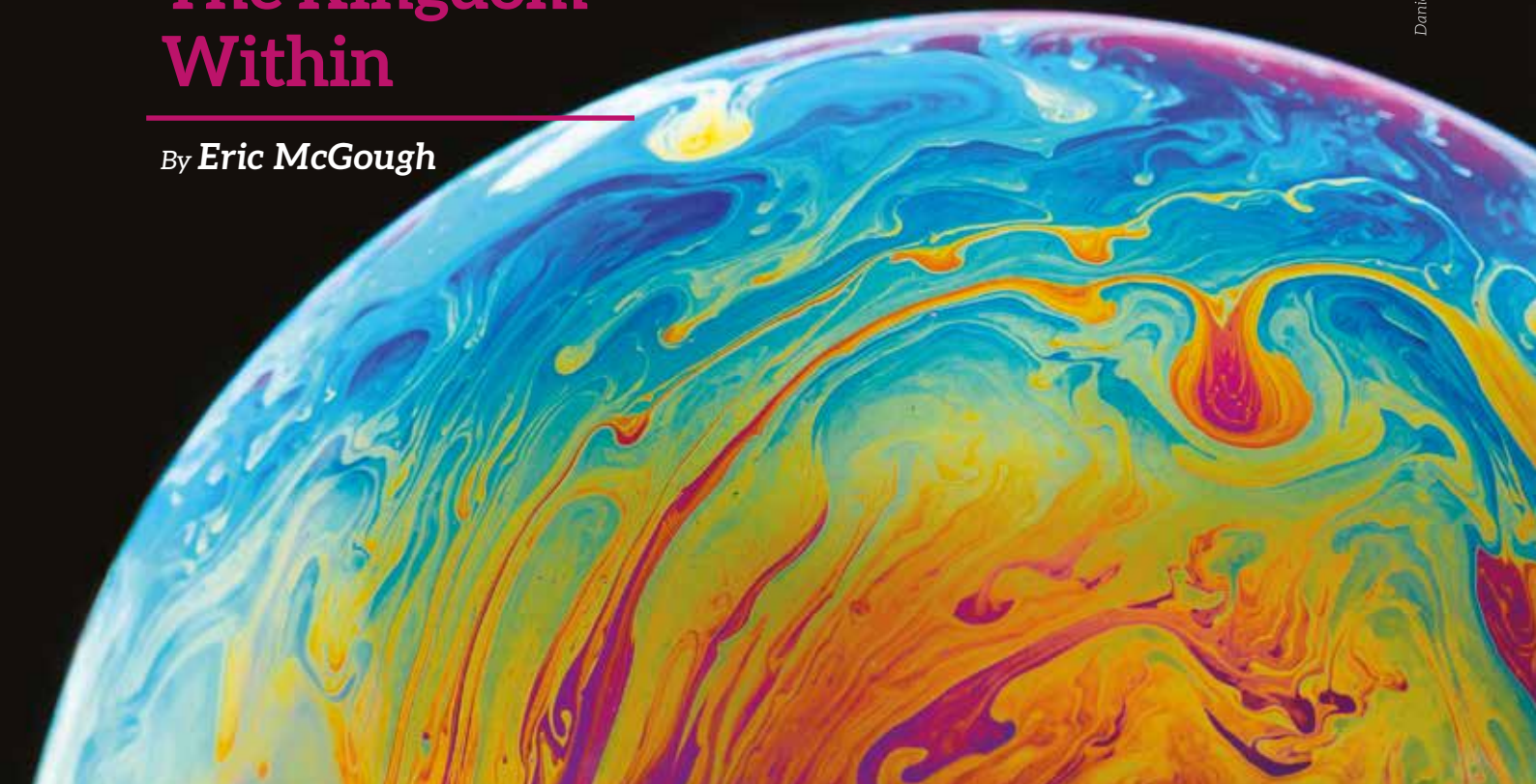
On the other side is a student of magic, following the light from a crown (ambition) held aloft by a floating figure who has led him to the edge of the precipice over which for him there is no bridge; he holds his book of ritual and thinks the light of the dazzling crown comes from the Supreme, but the chasm awaits its victim. By his side his faithful follower falls unnoticed by him, but a ray from the heart of the Supreme falls upon her also, the reward of selfless devotion, even in a bad cause.

Lower still in the underworld, a child stands beneath the wings of the foster-mother (material Nature) and receives the equipment of the Knight, symbols of the power of the Soul, the sword of power, the spear of will, the helmet of knowledge and the coat of mail, the links of which are made of past experiences.

It is said in an ancient book *“The Path is one for all, the means to reach the goal must vary with the Pilgrims.”* ✨

The Kingdom Within

By *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. 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 thoughts, 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 the 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 falls 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



Maitak Bose

the world, to reach concord with all things, and to see the purpose in 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 for 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 brothers and sisters. 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 can not truly serve the world if we do not understand it or ourselves. Without spiritual wisdom, we stumble from one idea 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. ✨

Book Review

by Margaret Placentra Johnston

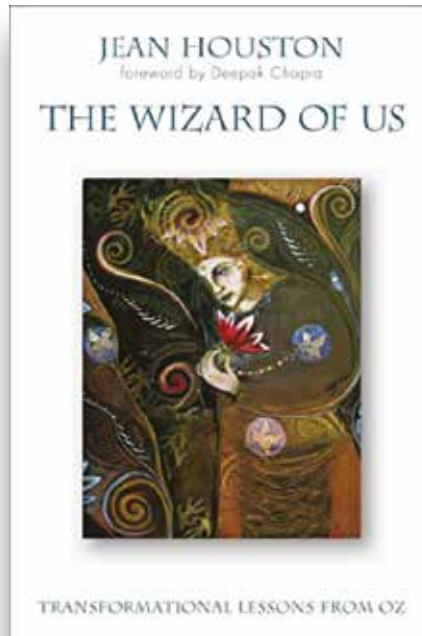
Transformational Lessons from Oz

by Jean Houston

If you are like most people, the first time you watched the film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, you probably just enjoyed it for its entertainment value. You most likely never noticed the rich universal archetypes or benefitted from the movie's profound lessons about personal growth.

In *The Wizard of Us: Transformational Lessons from Oz*, American scholar, author, and philosopher Jean Houston exposes the deeper story hidden within L. Frank Baum's classic Oz fairy tale. Readers gain an appreciation of Dorothy's experiences as Houston relates them to steps in Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. This is a universal pattern found in hundreds of key stories from around the world, in which a protagonist grows toward psychological wholeness by way of a series of events that follow a common theme.

In Houston's interpretation, Dorothy's old life back in Kansas is not working for her very well; she needs to move on. The tornado that sends



her to Oz serves as her *call to adventure* and places her in the world of the unknown, where she is faced with numerous challenges on her *road of trials*. One by one, she surmounts each ordeal, many of them imposed by her *shadow figure* "the Wicked Witch of the West". Dorothy is helped by another archetypal figure, Glinda, "the Good Witch of the North" a *benign protector* and Dorothy's *entelechy*, or her own essence realized to the fullest extent.

Houston claims that we in our

culture are living in "twister times" The old ways of doing things are no longer working. To correct this we must each embark on our own Hero's Journey. By challenging ourselves to grow to our fullest potential, we can form the building blocks of a transformed society. (At the risk of offending real-life Kansans, Houston calls this the need to move beyond the Kansas of our lives, which she describes as a gray, bleak, dreary, outmoded wasteland.) She weaves back and forth between comparing the Oz story with the Hero's Journey and offering exercises to help readers recognize their own "Kansas" and inspire them along their own journey. The overall theme of *The Wizard of Us* is progressing beyond outmoded forms of existence toward the fulfilment found in a deeper story, in new ways of thinking, and in efforts to create a better world.

Dorothy's three travelling companions serve as examples of growth. Each feels he is missing some crucial human element, only to learn he had it all the time revealing that the very quality we may think we lack may actually be what Houston calls our "most potent potential."

The Scarecrow joins the trek in search of a brain. But along the way he exercises what brain he has to

solve various problems, all the while building new mental circuitry and getting smarter all the time. Houston weaves this in with discussions about neuroplasticity, mirror neurons, and contemplative neuroscience. She provides exercises to help readers increase fluidity of mind and deepen access to intuitive wisdom, which she considers important for working toward a more sustainable society.

The Tin Man is invited along in search of a heart. Along with exercises to help readers find a balance between heart and mind, Houston includes several touching stories of "Social Artistry" – people accessing their highest potential by opening their hearts to the needs of others.

The Cowardly Lion, in search of courage, displays his mettle in several particularly audacious acts while trying to save Dorothy from the Wicked Witch. Houston compares this to our present-day challenge to find the courage to be who we really are and to do what we came here to do.

In the end, Dorothy's *ultimate* boon – the purpose of her quest – is realized. All she wanted was to go home to Kansas. But no longer will her Kansas be as gray and bleak, for she returns as a *master of the two worlds*, bringing with her the greening power of the depth realm she learned about in Oz.

Whether the Oz analogy works perfectly for everyone or not, this book is a wonderful tool for propelling ourselves beyond the Kansas of our

lives, through a Hero's Journey along our own yellow brick roads, and toward an expanded life where our personal gifts play a crucial role in creating a transformed society – the Emerald City for which we all yearn.

Unless you have perfect visual recall, try to see the movie again just before reading this book. As Houston's exercises rely heavily on visualization skills, ready mental access to imagery from the movie will come in handy. ✨

The Wizard of Us: Transformational Lessons from Oz, is available at Amazon UK. Search Jean Houston books.

The reviewer is the author of *Faith Beyond Belief: Stories of Good People Who Left Their Church Behind* (Quest Books).

Last Words

*When the power of love
overcomes the love of power,
the world will know peace.*

Jimi Hendrix

About The Theosophical Society

Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

1. *To form a nucleus of universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*
2. *To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.*
3. *To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.*

The Theosophical Society is a worldwide community whose primary Object is the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction, based on the realisation that life and all its diverse forms, human and non-human, is indivisibly 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.

The International Mission Statement of the Society is: *'To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation, and the Unity of all Life.'*

Unity lies at the very heart of the theosophical community and inspires the lives of its members towards unselfish service and inner transformation. Divine Wisdom is One – the paths towards it are many.

The word 'Theosophy' is from Greek origin meaning Wisdom of the Gods (*theo* – of Gods; *Sophia* – wisdom). It is a word which has been used for many centuries and is also known as the Ageless Wisdom.

The Society imposes no beliefs on its members, who are united by a common search for Truth and a desire to learn the meaning and purpose of existence through study, reflection, self-responsibility and self-less service.

It jealously guards and promotes freedom of thought and no member may impose their views on any other.

Since *Esoterica* is available both in printed form and online please let us know if you would prefer to stop receiving the printed version, either by filling out the form below and posting to **50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA**, or contacting **office@theosoc.org.uk**

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ESOTERICA

INSIGHTS INTO THE AGELESS WISDOM

Esoterica, the journal of the Theosophical Society in England,
is a magazine for the inquiring and the curious.
It is for those seeking spiritual answers to those big questions of life:

Who are we?
Where did we come from?
What's our purpose and destiny in life?

Its mission is to explore those timeless truths, occult knowledge and universal laws
which pre-date but underpin all philosophy, science and religion.
We offer thought-provoking and original interpretations
of these fascinating ideas from the perennial philosophy
to unlock the secrets of ourselves and the cosmos.

Above all, it's our intention to offer not just dry theory but, wherever possible,
practical solutions to the difficult issues which face every one of us.

The next edition will appear on the winter solstice,
22nd December 2023.

