



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mrs Radha Burnier*

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Cover Picture: Rangoon Creeper (*Quisqualis indica*) – by J. Suresh

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Official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky, 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this magazine.

# On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

## **Is Moral Feeling to be Ashamed of?**

In the present day, there are many things which are done without any concern about the morality involved. The word 'morality' itself is considered laughable, because the present-day attention is almost entirely dedicated to success. Success does not depend on moral action. There are very successful people, earning money by whatever means they find convenient, because gaining wealth is approved action. Very few among the so-called advanced section of people regard morality as worth pursuing; they believe that this life is the only one, and everything that is possible to enjoy is worth seeking. This same feeling exists in various degrees, reaching from the top-most of the rich to lower rungs of the ladder.

A few are beginning to ask questions about it, and coming to a conclusion at various levels. *The Guardian Weekly* (30.1.2009) has an article on the key to Kindness, which mentions Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, who have written about the virtue of kindness which has been taught by many religions. Mme H. P. Blavatsky says that altruism includes many virtues, and can be called by whatever name one wishes. The Buddhists tend

to call it compassion which embraces all living beings. No real spiritual leader in the world has refrained from advocating a feeling of goodwill, compassion or whatever one may like to call it, towards so-called sinners, those who act out of ignorance, and towards knowledgeable and thoughtful people.

Kindness is one of the ways in which the altruistic spirit can be shown — not kindness for certain purposes, but a feeling which comes of helpfulness to all who need support including the lesser kingdoms of animals, plants and other creatures. In the present day it is regarded as normal to ill-treat and even destroy vast numbers of creatures. It is said that in Macquarie Island, which is halfway between Australia and the Antarctica and at one time a pristine haven, the balance of Nature has been repeatedly interfered with, and at present a sixteen-million rescue plan is being put in operation. Creatures were introduced recklessly, and cats, rats, mice, rabbits and so on were killed in large numbers when it became a problem. We are told that in 1985 the last of the cats was destroyed, and after this the rabbit population increased. This only shows that man's efforts at improvement of natural processes, which keep a balance

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everywhere, have not been successful.

For no reason at all, various animals are tested and checked to see whether medicines being used on human beings are safe. Europe mandates the use of non-animal tests in various cases; but America still continues to use them; chemicals, drugs and cosmetics being tested to determine whether they are harmful to human beings or not. 'The reason we use animal tests is because we have a comfort level with the process . . . not because it gives us any new information', say the more thoughtful. We need to make decisions, but animal tests are no longer the scientific standard to prove this.

Our treatment of human beings is not very different. We feel that certain people need good treatment and others can suffer any hardships, it does not matter. For instance, a lot of electronic rubbish is dumped in very poor countries like Ghana, sometimes with the pretence that these are meant for schools and hospitals. It is reported that more than half a million computers arrive in Lagos every month, of which three-quarters are merely scrap, and sold as such. The European Union has been aware and has taken some steps, but a great deal of illegal activity takes place. There is an increasing number of computers being sold on the world market and what will happen to them after they are of no further use is nobody's concern.

While this is the situation in regard to one problem, we can ask many questions about various other matters. What happens to the women and children who come out of the countries which are poor, hoping

for a better life in a richer world? Many of them ruin their lives in various ways. The reader may check the other problems which arise, and the conclusion is obviously that this world is immoral. We have to wake up morally first, and spiritually next, in order to make our relationships worthy of being human. We are now living as creatures who eat and make money above all things, and if possible, exploit them in order to enjoy more.

Morality is needed in this world above all other things, but what is morality? It really exists along with a universal consciousness, which feels the tragedy of it all. Morality may consist in using as little as possible of the resources of the world, and of not using other people and other resources to benefit oneself, causing no pain and distress to others.

Happiness does not depend on the amount of money or pleasure that one experiences. There are those who are perfectly happy with little, just enough to live in a way that looks after the essential needs. They can be found in many parts of the earth, living freely and joyously with what modern man would consider as nothing. Happiness comes, not of possessions, but through concern for all life.

'It is kindness, fundamentally, that makes life seem worth living; and everything that is against kindness, is an assault on our hope.'

### Wealth and the Global Problem

There is enormous pride, envy and of course other feelings involved, in the discrepancy of wealth which exists all over

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the world. The very wealthy people feel highly satisfied with their own condition; the poor people of whom there are many at various levels, continue to live in poverty. They look all the time at the wealthier people with the desire to be a little more rich themselves.

In some countries of the world, which are very rich generally speaking, there are also the very poor. In the United States, for example, there are a few extremely rich people; they may not even know how rich they are. The satisfaction from their own wealth makes them indifferent to the poor, of whom there is a considerable number in the country. There are a few people like Bill Gates who give large amounts for others to use and enjoy in one way or another, but this does not affect their wealth in the least. We have to congratulate them nevertheless for at least thinking about others who have less.

Today in some countries, as in Switzerland, there is a strong feeling about the inequalities in the population, and many people would like to see the poor become rich enough not to need help. One person who leads the well-known aid organization called Caritas says: 'One of the countries with the greatest inequality in terms of distribution and wealth, almost making it comparable with a Banana Republic', is Switzerland, where the distribution 'can only be described as feudal' because of the increasing wealth in the hands of the few, especially those who have done nothing to earn it themselves.

The wealthiest ten per cent of households have ten times more than the

average income of the ordinary man. But, when the taxation and other contributions are taken into account the wealthy and the poor are treated as the same. What is particularly unacceptable to the people who protest is that those who receive top management salaries are given additional bonuses supposedly based on measures of performance. This strategy we are told was brought to the notice of the public by the Caritas Foundation, and caused a furore. More than fourteen per cent of the population are unable to meet their living expenses and have to rely on the state to help them with the day-to-day costs of living.

In the richer countries of the world the disparity may be worse than in the poorer ones. In India, which is a poor country, there are a few people becoming rich every day, whose total wealth is beyond all comparison to that of the average person. There must be countries which show a still greater state of disparity. How can this be changed? Every move is met by a countermove, because it is said the state of poverty has nothing to do with the cleverness or intelligence of a person.

### What Can We Do?

Probably disparity cannot be eliminated completely, although it can be reduced from the present situation to something more reasonable. Certainly there should be some attempt to eradicate completely the gross violation of natural justice which reigns in the world. There can be a solution in which nobody suffers from hunger, and nobody is deprived of the necessities of living.

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This can happen when there is a greater moral sense. One man in thousands has some feeling, as far as we know for the poor, as does Bill Gates, judging by his actions. But the large majority of such people are not known to be liberal in helping the poor. This sense of morality can come only when there is a general feeling of equality and moral responsibility. Therefore, this side of life cannot be ignored. We can tolerate people having enormous wealth which they cannot possibly use, but not when there are others in large numbers who are malnourished due to starvation, etc. Of course airing a seeming sense of morality is not the same thing as having a real sense of morality, which knows the needs of poor people, etc. Therefore the question arises, what can we do?

One thing is that the educational concepts should make people aware from the earliest stages that we cannot tolerate poverty. Today's children are taught to outdo others in order to rise high in society, but they are not taught that there are millions who do not have enough to eat. This is a shame for humanity as a whole, as we are all responsible. So at least some children should be able to absorb the idea that life means concern for all things living on this earth, not for only the very few who happen to be connected with us.

Secondly, we should learn to give naturally and easily when we know that another person is badly in need. Annie Besant, who was well known throughout the world for her outstanding generosity,

**We have forgotten the art of living . . . as human beings.**

J. Krishnamurti

learnt this when she was a little girl. Her teacher, Miss Marriott, encouraged the few children she looked after to give to those more in need a portion of whatever little they had. A spirit like that needs to be inculcated in children and young people, before they learn of the selfish ways of doing things.

Today's society concentrates on making people aware that they have to do their best to earn as much as they can of money, power, reputation and so on. Almost nothing is said to the young about giving to those who are in need, and that is to a large number throughout the world. The poor are also not given right models, and see only the inequality of possessions owned by others. In older times, society was not so interested in helping people to earn money for themselves. The welfare of all mattered and that attitude of caring for people must be cultivated. The average person remained undisturbed by what the very rich earned, as long as they had enough for themselves and this made the whole land happier; this also needs to be part of the culture. Can we make a change to bring this about?

This means that from the earliest age a different kind of education should be given, which will not be meant only to cultivate cleverness and the ability to push one's way up in life, but will also foster a concern for everyone in the world who needs help — this means, for all. This concern will by itself help to change the character of humanity in general. ✧

# Human Evolution — The Divine Plan

K.V. K. NEHRU

## Preamble

Advances in Communication Systems, Information Technology and Transportation Engineering have brought human communities nearer in an unprecedented manner. Among other things, this has also dramatically increased our power to endanger the environment and all forms of Life, *including our own*.

The Ancient Wisdom points out that concomitant with the evolution of Forms of organisms — which alone is studied by the scientists — there is an evolution of Life and Consciousness, which expresses through these evolving Forms. The more advanced the form is, the more the potentialities of consciousness that can manifest through it. In fact, it is the impetus from the evolving Life that drives the evolution of the forms of the organisms.

It also teaches that the purpose of Creation, insofar as the human mind can comprehend it, is the Evolution of Consciousness — from a 'state' of Unconscious Perfection, through Conscious Imperfection, to the state of Conscious Perfection.

The new generation has to be apprised

of the Organic Unity of all Life, that cooperation — not competition — should be their way of life.

## Goals and the Goal-maker

The major challenges facing mankind today are not due to a lack of education. They are created by highly educated and professional minds — lawyers, business administrators, scientists, economists, military commanders, diplomats and so on. We are producing lopsided human beings, who are very clever, very capable in their intellect but almost primitive in other aspects of life — top scientists and engineers who can send human beings to the moon but who may be brutal with their spouses; human beings who have a vast understanding of the way the universe operates but little understanding of themselves or their lives.

It is not difficult to trace the origin of all the human misery to the phenomenon of the 'I' in the human individual. This is where all the mischief begins. Wars, violence and exploitation have their ultimate origin there. So the problem of world reconstruction is the problem of

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the regeneration of the individual.

In the new context of safe globalization, old goals, at the individual or at the corporate level, become inapplicable — they need to be redefined if survival is to be expected. This requires an understanding of the spiritual nature of Man, since he is the goal-maker: to know why he does not stop with ‘need’ but turns it to ‘greed’.

### Geological Calendar

Scientific investigations indicate that the earth solidified about 4500 MY (million years) ago. Figure 1 depicts this on a scale of twenty-four hours. In the beginning there was no oxygen either in the oceans or in the atmosphere, but only nitrogen, CO<sub>2</sub>, etc. There had been no life on earth until about 2600 MY before the present. This era is therefore called *Azoic*.

At this time blue-green algae appeared and started to convert H<sub>2</sub>O into oxygen

with the help of sunlight, using the photosynthetic process. They brought the atmospheric oxygen level to the present value of 21%, needed for subsequent life forms. Not commonly realized is the fact that these original unicellular organisms, which produced oxygen, themselves thrived most efficiently at an oxygen level nearly half that. Were ‘survival of the fittest’ the only governing principle of the evolution of biological life they would never have produced the 21% level. It seems they were creating an environment better suited for the later life. At many points in the evolution of life it appears as though a Great Plan was being followed, and it has been through a phenomenon of *co-evolution* rather than competitive evolution, on the planetary scale.

Then came the *Archeozoic* and the *Proterozoic* eras lasting for a total of 1450 MY, followed by the *Paleozoic* era (350

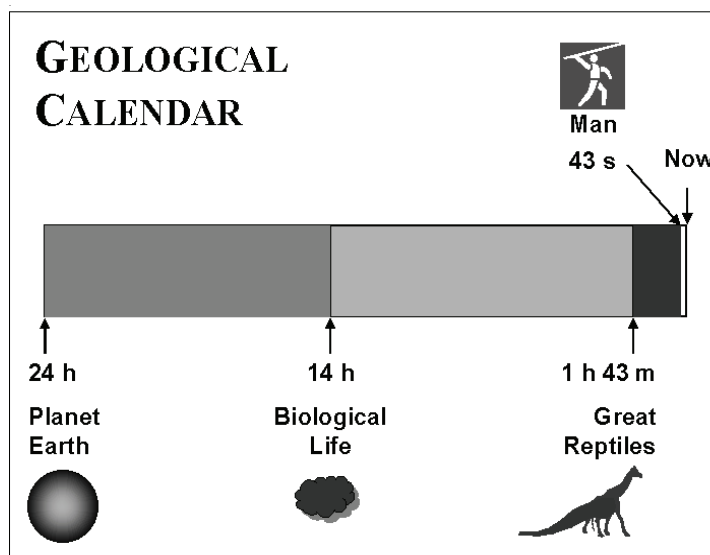


Fig. 1

## Human Evolution — The Divine Plan

MY) of invertebrates and amphibians. The great reptiles came and went in the next *Mesozoic* era (140 MY). Mammals appeared in the next *Cenozoic* era (60 MY). *Homo Sapiens* have appeared in the last few million years.

### Hierarchy of Biological Levels

Ancient Wisdom, given in the esoteric literature of all the great religions, tested and corroborated by the sages, points out that concomitant with the evolution of Forms — which alone the scientists study — there is an evolution of Life and Consciousness, and the living and the non-living systems constitute a hierarchy of organization levels. The more advanced the form is, the more the potentialities of consciousness that can manifest through it. In fact, it is the impetus from the evolving Life that drives the

evolution of the organisms' forms.

In all this long history of biological evolution we can see a gradual building up of structural complexity, and a concomitant functional proliferation. In Figure 2 we depict successive levels of organization of matter. They form a hierarchy, in which any given level contains all lower levels as components and is itself a component of all higher levels. Succeeding levels are structurally more complex than lower ones, inasmuch as a given level combines the complexities of all lower levels and has an additional complexity of its own. *At any level of organization, not only is there a certain autonomy but also the necessity to transcend that in order to meet the requirements of a Greater Whole of which it is a part.*

Something entirely new happens at a supervening level of organization, and

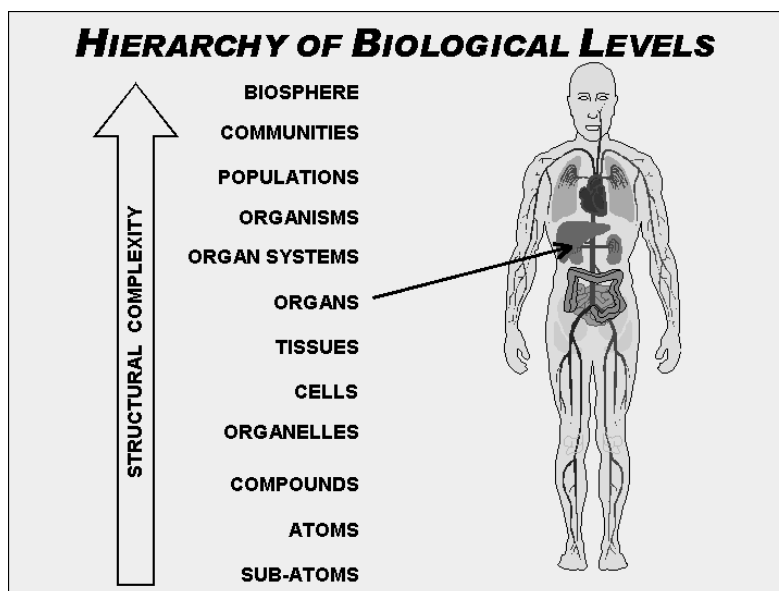


Fig. 2



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this event is *not explainable in terms of the lower level*. A tissue, for example, is more than the sum of its cells. There is thus a leap between levels — gaps or transcendences in the evolutionary process. There is no purely logical explanation of this situation; with present understanding the relation between the levels could not be predicted. Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine called this the process of *self-organization*.

There is another implication of the way life is organized. While higher levels *coordinate* lower levels, *all levels affect each other*. This is not a control hierarchy in the manner of a top-down business organization. The interactions and information flows are multi-linear and flow up as well as down.

### Evolution of Consciousness

In the organizational processes of the living systems, a dynamic balance is

maintained between self-assertion or autonomy and submission to the requirements of the next higher whole in the hierarchy. At present, in the case of human individuals, the next higher level of organizational hierarchy, variously called the 'Heavenly Man', 'Humankind', or simply the 'Global Consciousness' has not yet formed to a degree where its overall supervening control could be felt by the individual consciousness comprising it. However, that this Global Consciousness already exists and that more and more individuals are becoming sensitive and adaptive to this next stage of consciousness development have been amply demonstrated by the extensive investigations carried out at the *Princeton University Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR)* programme over the recent decade.

Consciousness is relatively dormant in the Mineral Kingdom. It acquires the

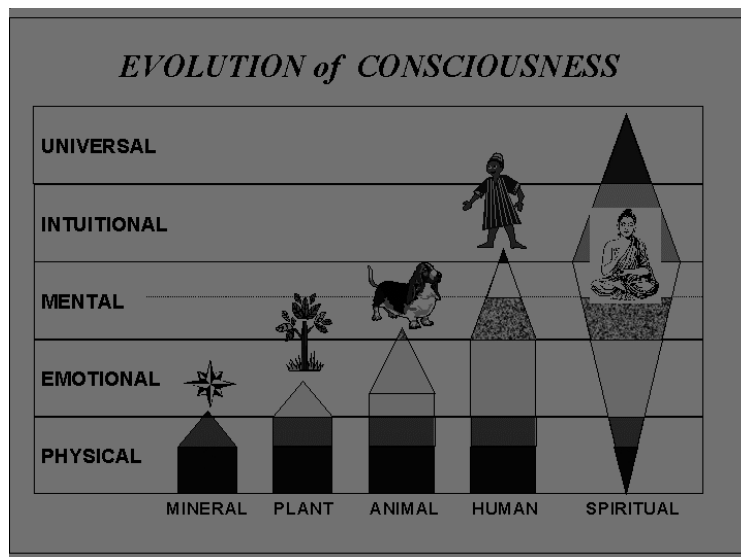


Fig. 3

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power to respond with feelings in the Plant Kingdom. It adds a new dimension of consciousness in the case of the Animal Kingdom, namely, that of thinking. Only in the Human Kingdom does it begin to flower into the dimensions of Creative Activity and into Intuition. Direct experiencing of the unity of all Life, Order (*rta*) in Nature and pure Love characterizes this new dimension of consciousness when developed. We shall refer to this as the consciousness of the 'Ethical Man'.

### The Ethical Man

At the present moment, evolution has brought us to the verge of this next stage of development in the human consciousness. Only a few individuals are showing signs of this development. These are the precursors. The majority of humanity is

still in the stage of emerging from the control of the Animal Mind (passions and drives are predominant) and developing the state of Concrete Mind, and thence to developing the state of Abstract Mind. Instinctive emotional response still plays a dominant role in deciding a man's course of action, as against the 'right' action.

Even though this transition to the next stage is not yet complete, an ever-increasing number of people are showing an awareness of coherence, beauty and goodness, evidencing the dawning of the new consciousness. Not only this: this next stage of evolution is *awaiting our conscious participation*. An understanding of the constitutive Principles of the Human Self (Individual) is therefore in order, since it serves to give us a perspective view of the Great Plan and our immediate role in it

## The Constitution of the Human Being

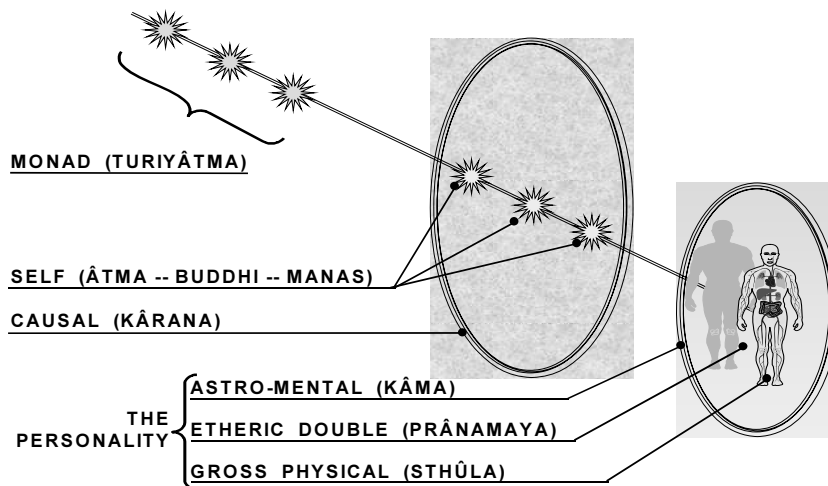


Fig. 4

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and the direction in which we have to work.

The *Monad* (*turiyātmā*), existing on the *Anupādaka* Plane, puts forth a reflection of itself and acquires vehicles on the lower Planes for the sake of gaining experience. The Permanent Atoms and Principles get attached to the Monad with the help of the seven Creative Hierarchies.

The four lower Principles constitute the perishable Personality, which is renewed every incarnation. The real Individual, the Self (*jivātmā*) continues in the Causal Body and lasts throughout the human stage.

The Human Self has a programme and a goal for himself, which is to reach back to the Divinity of his origin in the fully awakened state of consciousness of the Ethical Man. He accomplishes this by gaining experience in the world of time and space through the 'Personality'. The Personality itself comprises four Principles or vehicles of consciousness working in still 'lower' levels of existence, the lowest

of which is the physical world we perceive. These four Principles are respectively the psycho-emotional bodies through which thoughts and emotions are experienced; the Etheric Double, which is the vehicle of the five types of *prāna-s* (Vitality) and nerve energies; and the gross physical body through which sensations are experienced. For long periods of evolution the Personality fancies its own goals in life. These may not be in consonance with the goals of the Human Self (namely, the Ethical Man), which are spiritual. But continued experience and gaining of knowledge make us realize our true spiritual goal. From then onwards the Personality cooperates and harmonizes with the Self, making the world a beautiful and good place to live for all.

### Ecological Footprint

In the middle of the nineteenth century the world's population reached one billion,

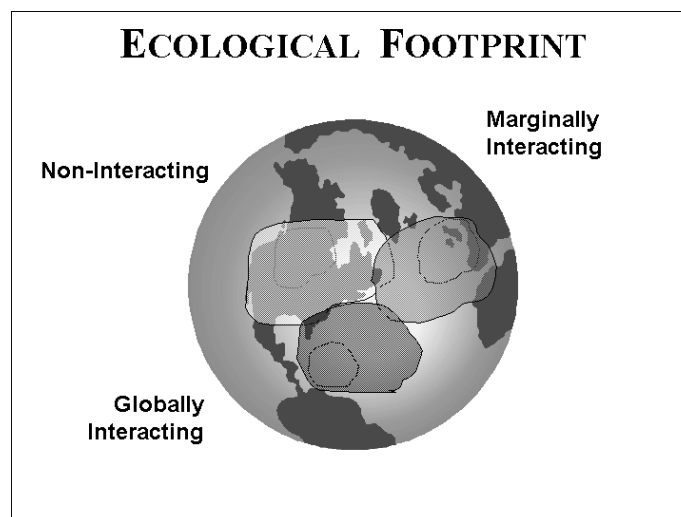


Fig. 5

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and its resource use increased dramatically. Both population and resource use continued to grow throughout the twentieth century. In the past fifty years humanity has used more natural resources than in all the preceding millennia together.

The ‘ecological footprint’ gives a quantitative estimate of the human overload of nature: it defines the share of the planet’s biological productivity used by an individual, a city, a nation, or all of humankind. If the footprint of a settlement is larger than its area, that settlement is not independently sustainable. A city is intrinsically unsustainable because very few of the natural resources used by its inhabitants come from within its boundaries. In 1996 the Earth’s biosphere had 12.6 billion hectares of biologically productive space, making up about one fourth of the planetary surface. Equitably shared, in a population of 5.7 billion this yielded an ‘earth-share’ of 2.18 hectares per person. Today the earth-share has shrunk: there are more people — 6.3 billion — while the biosphere’s biological productivity remained, at best, constant. Thus today’s Earth-share is merely 2.1 hectares for each person on the planet. Yet the average footprint comes to 2.8 hectares and it is growing rapidly.

### Impending Global Crisis

We are approaching the outer edge of the planet’s capacity to sustain human life. The disciplines of General Systems Theory and Systems Ecology point out that living at the edge is dangerous, because ecosystems do not collapse in

piecemeal fashion. Modern societies have been operating on the mistaken assumption that in nature cause and effect are proportional — an additional ounce of pollution produces an additional ounce of damage. This, however, is not so. Ecosystems may be polluted for many years without any change at all, and then suddenly flip into an entirely different condition. Gradual changes accumulate vulnerability, until a single shock to the system, such as a flood or a drought, knocks the system into a different state, less adapted to sustain human life and economic activity. Observations of scientists — of such as the tsunamis — indicate that the world now is heading for such a crisis. They also point out that a vision of a peaceful and sustainable society and adopting simple lifestyles will go a long way towards providing a positive eco-feedback that can avert this mishap.

### The Two Hemispheres

Brain research shows that the two hemispheres of the human brain (cerebral cortex) specialize in different functions. Speech and verbal activity are located in the left hemisphere, whereas artistic and musical appreciations are located in the right hemisphere. Intellectual activity pertains to the left, while creativity and intuition (direct perception of truth rather than reasoning out) to the right.

Unfortunately, the predominant mode of teaching mental phenomena has been verbal and therefore has emphasized the over-cultivation of the left hemisphere functioning. While this suits the learning

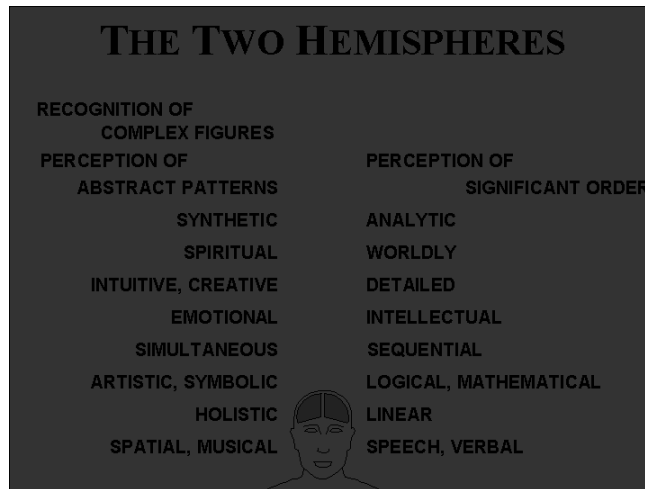


Fig. 6

of analytical and logical skills, it is incommensurate with the faculties pertaining to the right hemisphere.

This lopsided development of the human brain in our present culture can easily be seen with the help of a few examples. Take, for instance, cricket. We no longer enjoy just the play, but get excited by intellectualizations like the run-rate, number of centuries completed, and other such computer-generated information. Similarly, we no longer appreciate the music *per se* of a concert. We keep analysing the *rāga-s* and so on (which is thought, intruding).

The really human qualities like sympathy, love and altruism — all pertaining to the right brain — are wholly lacking in the man of our culture. Instead, he is calculative, divisive and cold. He has been totally operating through the left hemisphere. The sooner some of us realize this and restructure our educational methods, starting from those of the child, the better

it would be for the continuance of Humanity. A major part of the training should involve non-verbal and more direct techniques.

### ‘I’ and ‘Not-I’ in Dynamic Balance

Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller parts. Individual ‘things’ (plants, people, schools, watersheds) are themselves systems, and are not sustainable, separate from the larger systems in which they exist. The Center for Ecoliteracy recognizes that learning to think systemically is critical to education for sustainability.

In the organizational hierarchy, the myriad entities comprising nature are living entities that are *both interdependent and autonomous to a degree*. They are both wholes and parts of larger wholes. In its self-assertive autonomous role, each entity is intent upon its self-consummation, whereas in its role as subsidiary part, each entity is capable of

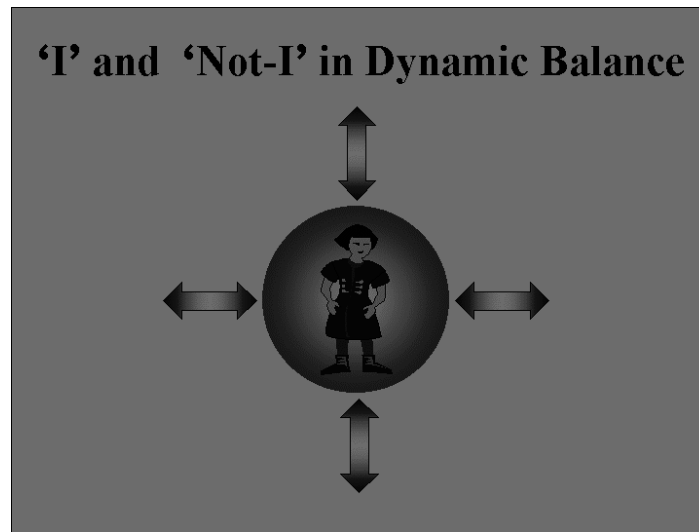


Fig. 7

transcending itself in the interest of the greater whole. There is apparently a dynamic balance to be maintained between autonomy and submission to the needs of the next higher whole in the hierarchy.

All human beings are integrated parts of one Individual Being which is the entire human species. In other words, we all belong to one individual being just as different parts of an organism belong to that organism. Realization of this belonging together can have profound consequences for our consciousness and behaviour, promoting cooperation, harmony and peacefulness.

A global society need not suppress differences between individuals, cultures and societies. However, notwithstanding pronounced social and cultural diversity, a peaceful and sustainable global society must have a high degree of unity. The nations and cultures of the world need to be united by common values and

aspirations, centred on creating a social and ecological environment in which all people can live with dignity and well-being.

Simpler lifestyles must be the rule because people have a deeper sense of responsibility for their communities and their environment.

A renaissance of spirituality is needed as well. With less stress and anxiety in daily life, people can explore the higher and deeper dimensions of their life.

In the final count the decisive alternative to a world of misery, conflict and violence is a sustainable and equitable world that inspires peace in people's hearts — the precondition of enduring peace in the world. In creating a vision of such a world the holistic science of systems and evolution has a major role. And those of us who are developing such a science have a major responsibility in this.

Education in the twenty-first century must concern itself not with greater

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‘progress’ but with the inner transformation of the human consciousness. The following could be the broad outline:

**1) Create a Global Mind, not a Nationalistic One.** We are all citizens of one world and share the earth as our habitat. We may work for local problems but it is important to do so with a global understanding.

**2) Emphasize Human Development, not only Economics.** We must not regard children as raw material for achieving the economic progress of the nation. Education must concern itself primarily with the development of all aspects of a human being — physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual — so that he or she lives creatively and happily as part of the whole.

**3) Encourage Inquiry, not Conformity.** The child must be free to make mistakes and learn for himself without the constant fear of being rebuked by an adult. Such a mind is rational, flexible and open to change and not irrationally attached to an opinion or belief. This implies the absence of all propaganda. ‘Our country is the best country, our culture is the best culture’ is not true — it is propaganda, which divides people.

**4) Cultivate Cooperation.** Team work and the ability to work harmoniously with others is more important than individual achievement. It is important that each individual does his best but it is not essential that that should be better than another’s best. The sense of competition

that we are encouraging in children today leads to envy, jealousy and rivalry, and destroys love and friendship. Therefore, it is evil.

**5) Create a Learning Mind instead of an Acquisitive Mind.** The awakening of intelligence is more important than the cultivation of memory, both in life and academics. The feeling of love, respect, beauty and friendship cannot be taught but like sensitivity, can be awakened: this is an essential part of intelligence.

**6) Create a Mind that is both Scientific and Religious in the true sense.** Not only thought-based intelligence should be developed, but also intuition-based intelligence. A mind that is purely rational and scientific can be extremely cruel and devoid of love and compassion. One that is only religious (in the narrow sense) can be overly sentimental, superstitious and therefore neurotic. Without this undeniable balance between emotion and intellect, a mind is not truly educated.

**7) The Art of Living.** We have equated the quality of life with the standard of living and we measure this in terms of the GNP or the per capita income of people. When we educate not for economic development but for human development, we concern ourselves with the happiness of the individual as a whole in which physical well-being and comfort are a small but necessary part. The art of living consists in enjoying everything one does, irrespective of the results it offers. ✧

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Gather a shell from the strown beach  
And listen at its lips: they sigh  
The same desire and mystery,  
The echo of the whole sea's speech  
And all mankind is thus at heart  
Not anything but what thou art:  
And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti  
*The Sea-Limits*



# Action without Attachment

MARCOS LUÍS BORGES DE RESENDE

FROM where do our actions come? From what level or part of our being? From emotional impulses, attractions, rejections? From a mind with calculated thoughts and personal interests? It is impossible to speak about action without a perception of ourselves, without self-knowledge.

When our actions are the result of emotional impulses arising from attraction or rejection, or of an emotional explosion, many times we are unable to perceive the causes. Actions projected from a mind with personal interests will generate conflicts and disharmony. Almost all of our actions are the result of the superficial aspects of our transitory nature.

To find the right action and the harmony within ourselves, so that we may face all situations in right relationship, we must dive deeply into ourselves, and quieten our emotions and thoughts.

In order to tranquillize our emotions, we must be aware of them at the exact moment when we feel them — not nourishing them, not repressing them. Anger, for example, is an explosion of energy caused by our desire, when we are

not satisfied with some result in the world of form. It really is our own desire. When we are burning with anger, we may disguise it, if we are well educated, but this will produce negative effects, not only at a psychological level, but also in relationships. When we stay with the anger, without interfering, without condemning or without justification, only facing the subjective fact that it is, *ipso est*; our own desire, anger will dissipate. This happens with every emotion. When we perceive them, without an attitude of repression or stimulation, without self-pity or self-importance, but simply contemplate its nature, the wave of emotion will spontaneously become serene. But when we are not aware of the movement of our emotions, we become their slaves.

Every action that is the result of impulsive emotions, which disregard other people, will generate conflict and disharmony, not only within ourselves, but also in our relationships.

To perceive the movement of the mind is more difficult than perceiving emotions. The ordinary mind has a strong tendency towards self-interest. Its movements are

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faster and more complex and subtle than those of emotions. Thoughts, in general, are self-centred, and they circulate around what is pleasant to us, or what is unpleasant, which we should avoid, and so on. We are always projecting what should be, in an eternal movement of comparison and judgement.

In practical terms, the use of thought is necessary. Without thinking we would not be humans, but irrational animals, and it would be impossible to live a civilized life. However, when thought enters the area of relationships, it has a tendency to be egocentric, segregated, compartmentalized, and causes prejudices and conflicts.

Is it possible to stop thought? It seems that every effort and technique to do so is useless. When we try to stop thought with thought, thought only nourishes itself. When one side wants to control the other, at the same level of vibration, as in this case, the only result is the crystallization of the mind, and the mind becomes rigid, which leads to indifference and cruelty.

One cannot stop the movement of thought out of a decision by thought. It should happen in a natural way by observing our thoughts without interference. Then we enter a state of awareness. It is this awareness that leads to the natural quieting of the mind.

In other words, thought is a state of unawareness, of escaping the now. Through many journeys in our memories, our consciousness becomes divided. Part of our consciousness is here, alert; part is dealing with the files in our memory, through judgement, projections and

comparisons. But when we perceive this movement, seeing this division in our consciousness, and we focus our attention on whatever is happening, subjectively and objectively, there is a natural quietening of our thoughts. If there is a new movement of thought, we become aware of it, without any intention to modify it, and then we are naturally in a state of alertness, of awareness, observing impartially everything that happens within and outside of us.

It is necessary to perceive the movements of thought, without repressing or nourishing them, allowing them to be serene. Then a different consciousness will emerge, arising from the inner silence, that is light in spirit, and causes our actions to be wise, harmonious and integrated.

So when we talk about action, we need to clarify from where it comes, from what level of our being it emerges. Practical action demands the use of thought, as a tool that leads to civilized life. But in terms of relationships, every action that is born of emotions or thoughts, which are mostly related to the complex system of memory and projection of images, is potentially a creator of conflicts and problems.

Many times we are externally in a state of agitation, and internally inactive. On other occasions, apparently without action, we are internally in intense activity, not concerned with thoughts or emotions, but with awareness and observation, as in the case of profound meditation. It is necessary for us to perceive and comprehend action in inaction and inaction in action, as taught in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

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When there is no shadow of self-interest or self-importance, but complete self-forgetfulness, action would be wise, effective, appropriate, harmonious, beautiful, happy and healthy. Such action is without attachment.

Attachment is the result of our ignorance about life, its real nature. We are attached to what is transitory, but we must, as stated in *Light on the Path*, grasp that which has no form and substance. If we have our consciousness rooted in the eternal and not in the transitory, our life will flow harmoniously. But, for that, we must comprehend what is eternal and what is transitory.

The material life is impermanent, transitory, and as such is renewed every time. To accept this impermanence, is synonymous with wisdom. But life cannot be divided between the material and the spiritual. Everything is part of the same movement which links the eternal with the transitory. The eternal is not in time. It exists in the dimension of unity, from where everything comes. The universe reflects this reality, for it is at the same time, one and diverse: one, in the more subtle planes, diverse in the more dense ones. Still there is an essential unity interconnecting all the planes of nature, and diversity itself is an expression of this unity.

When through the modern equipment of ultrasound we see an embryo, be it human or of an animal, we observe that the first manifestation of the new being is the pulsing movement in which the heart is formed. The essence of life is pulsation.

This vibration creates the new organism, according to a certain order, and maintains it during life. When life ceases pulsing in the material plane, the organism disintegrates, and we say it is dying.

If we accept life as a movement, like a pulse-beat inside and outside us, we will live harmoniously. If we become attached, trying to retain life's movement, then its waters become stagnant, causing sorrow, illness and pain.

Attachment is the desire for continuity: to transform into permanence what is *by nature* impermanent, transitory. Our thoughts are addicted to this desire for permanence and continuity, always wanting to eternalize everything that pleases and is known, and to keep away everything that seems unpleasant and unknown.

In order to act without attachment, we need to learn to die, becoming conscious that we are not the body, the name, our titles and possessions. All this is baggage that we may all have to carry with us, but that will be gone in one moment or another, and definitely when there is the physical dying. If we realize the truth that in fact we are nothing, but only a pulse of nature, all attachments will be left behind.

To learn to die is to learn to live. We can only live the eternal in the transitory if we permit the baggage that we carry to be always dying. Then, life will always renew itself, in every instant, in the only time that exists, the eternal now.

'On earth, as in heaven.' This is our mission in life — to make this material

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life a life of peace, love, harmony and goodness, bringing to this world all the qualities and attributes which belong to the eternal. This should not be an idea or theory, but be a reality in our relationships with family, neighbours, fellow-Theosophists, professionals, the business world, and so on.

Our mission as Theosophists is to make the wisdom of Theosophy a living reality, by perceiving ourselves and dying to every egocentric feeling, dying to the self — so that we may relate with all beings, with simplicity, humility and happiness.

Action without attachment is the only way to integrate with the movement of life, making out of it beauty and harmony. As we become more psychologically detached — which does not mean to escape from our responsibilities in the world — the more powerful will be our

love and the more wonderful will be our relationships.

Correct action is the result of deep comprehension. There is no time interval between comprehension and action. The comprehension and action are immediate and spontaneous, without conflict between understanding and practice. Krishnamurti said that when comprehension is clear, there is only one way to act, the right one.

When action comes from the deep emptiness, the inner silence, the quietness of emotions and thoughts, it will not be attached, but full of love and wisdom. It is the way to transform this world into a place where life is dignified.

It is up to every one of us to open this inner channel between the eternal and the transitory, making of ourselves instruments of the Universal Intelligence and Love. ✧

**He who binds himself a joy  
Doth the winged life destroy;  
He who kisses joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.**

William Blake

## *View from the Beach*

The gaze rests at the edge of the sky and sea  
Absorbing a realm of space and silence.

Here, we lose our gift of speech;  
Our thoughts constantly stolen by the wind.

After a lifetime of mornings  
The sun rises like never seen before,

Commanding us to be still and to behold  
To dissolve into incandescence,

Oblivious of departure or destination,  
Till nothing separates us from the horizon.

It is time for calling to presence  
Those things that have lost their names,

Those to be born again at the moment  
The ocean rushes to remember the shore.

We fold our hands and close our eyes  
To find peace in the brightness within.

Our travels have brought us to distant regions,  
Searching for what is not far from home.

Victor Peñaranda

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# Privileges Create Responsibilities

ANTONIO GIRARDI

ANNIE BESANT asserted in *The Great Vision*:

When the wealthy are ready to sacrifice something, the dawn of the new era will be seen in the sky above our earth. When wealth, education and power are considered a common patrimony, then the foundations will be laid for a better and nobler state. When educated men and women remember: 'The education I received, thanks to the efforts of the thousands of people who have worked so that I could receive an education, belongs in reality to them, and I must return it to them through my work of service, in order to repay the debt I have contracted with them.' When the rich man feels, within himself: 'I am an administrator and not the owner of this wealth that proceeds from the work of thousands of people; may this wealth help and elevate them' — then Brotherhood will begin to appear upon the face of the earth.

*The Great Vision* of Annie Besant is capable of inspiring a vast interior echo, because it simultaneously reconnects the plane of individual action with the aspects of ethics and social issues. It is therefore

an approach that is closely coherent with the theosophical concept of the Unity of Life.

But what do 'privilege' and 'responsibility' mean from the linguistic point of view? The origin of the word 'privilege' is Latin (*privilegium*) and it is extremely concrete; the original meaning, in fact, derives from *privus*, which means 'individual' or 'particular' and *lex* (= law); therefore the original meaning is: *a disposition that concerns an individual person*. This term soon passed from the juridical ambit of public and private law, from which it originated, to a far wider meaning and extension, indicating a special condition, quality or merit. And this meaning cannot therefore be disjoined from an ethical value.<sup>1</sup>

The word 'responsibility', on the other hand, originates from English and was soon used in France as well — *responsabilité*.<sup>2</sup> Philosophically speaking, responsibility means a situation for which 'an act is presented as a voluntary cause of a certain effect and therefore we are called upon to have pity or to reward the perpetrator, according to whether the effect was opportune or inopportune'.<sup>3</sup>

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The aspect of 'cause' is an integral part of the concept of responsibility; originally, the two concepts actually coincided: the Greeks, in fact, spoke of 'he who was the cause' as the party morally responsible. But the need to relate the aspect of responsibility to the aspect of the voluntary nature of an effect was soon felt.

As a consequence that is not at all secondary, this implies a deeper concept, within the ambit of the philosophical and religious discussion, on freedom and will, where responsibility also means evaluating the 'karmic' consequences, as it were, of an action.<sup>4</sup> And there must be a reference precisely to karma.

In a certain sense, we could say that both privilege, as a fruit of the past, and responsibility, as an action in the present, are still the consequences of responsible action, which are also developed in the future and cannot neglect the close connection with the Law of Cause and Effect. Privilege, in fact, derives from a given karmic position that an individual occupies. But locking up one's awareness in the narrow embrace of privilege (which is perhaps of Calvinist inspiration), will not take us far, as the dominating approach in present-day Western culture demonstrates, where material wealth is the motivation of differentiation among men. This is a concept that makes wealth a sort of blessing from God, therefore justifying all diversity among human beings.

From the karmic point of view of our existence, it could be important to understand how we can responsibly start from our privileges to develop a superior

awareness; an awareness capable of fully receiving the significance of the Unity of Life and the Universal Brotherhood without distinctions. Privilege therefore becomes the cause of responsible and altruistic action; it becomes sharing, love of a full life and for all beings.

None of this can take place, however, if there is no awareness. Awareness is a strange thing, which a young poet who recited his verses on a street corner one summer evening in Perugia, called 'the gate of eternity'. I asked him the meaning of this assertion and he answered that awareness lives in the present, with the ability to understand the full potential of the past, but also with the firmness born of observation. Awareness is a factor out of time, I was told.

The words of Jiddu Krishnamurti came to mind on that occasion:

Order in the totality of awareness, not purely on the conscious level, takes place when the division between the observer and the observed completely ceases to exist. What exists is transcended when the observer, which is the past and time, ceases to exist. The active present, the substance of existence, is not a slave of time, as the observer is.<sup>5</sup>

Awareness is therefore also conceived as the ability to understand the karmic causality, projected into the future.

But whatever does all this concretely mean in the lives of each and every one of us? First of all it means starting from a level of acceptance of life and reality. Something cannot be understood if it is

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rejected and one refuses to accept it and observe it. And this must be done without forgetting the extraordinary level of ignorance characteristic of human comprehension.

Speaking in terms of karma, therefore, for each of us, the time and space and situation of our environment is correct and opportune; it is rich in possibilities to help one's awareness mature; it is rich in possibilities to take action and improve our understanding. Accepting the present means understanding the past. Accepting the present means saying 'yes' to life. It means saying 'yes' to your own life, but also the life of others, of every other being, starting from those who are closest to us.

How can we fail to see the close interconnection that all things and all planes have, even the subtlest ones? How can we fail to consider that the individual human being is the product of an extraordinary evolution, which proceeds with millions of mechanisms that permit life to exist, of which we are not even minimally aware (and perhaps it is better that way)? How can we fail to see a veritable, continuously renewing 'miracle' in all of this?

So acceptance of others and ourselves leads to the possibility of unconditioned observation. It is a type of observation that uses the cultural instruments that we have available, but which is never conditioned by them.

In *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, KH quotes an assertion of the Buddha:

When the true nature of things becomes

clear to the Bhikshu in meditation, then all of his doubts vanish, because he has understood the nature and cause of all of this. Ignorance is the root of all evil. Knowledge engenders the end of all of this unhappiness and so the Brahman in meditation bans the hordes of Māra like the sun illuminates the sky.<sup>6</sup>

The key to the alchemy to transform privilege into responsibility resides in awareness. For the stoic philosophers it was not important to be able to write their own existential script, their own life; it was rather more important to recite one's part well and seek interior awareness.<sup>7</sup> Some could also say: 'Not everyone has privileges; on the contrary, only a minority has them!'

This is not an observation to be neglected and it should be accepted in its incisive nature, which is not devoid of bitterness, to help us realize that, in all probability, all sincere spiritual seekers are privileged. So how can we fail to respond positively to the appeal of the words of Annie Besant, quoted above?

In perusing the historical archives of the Italian Theosophical Society, we found the document of synthesis of the first Convention of our Section, which took place on 1 February 1902. On that occasion, C. W. Leadbeater made a statement that is still very pertinent today:

The great difficulty does not lie in knowing, but in applying knowledge. It is quite easy to accomplish great actions under the impulse of enthusiasm, but it is difficult to live with the ideal of this great cause



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constantly in your heart . . . we must always keep our enthusiasm alive; without it we would not be able to work; and it must be a form of enthusiasm regulated by reason and common sense . . . it is necessary to remember how great the cause of Theosophy is, the glorious cause of the Masters, who are behind us, helping us, but however great they are, they can help us only if we want to be helped.<sup>8</sup>

Stated in an extremely compact manner, it is life itself that is a privilege, in its uniqueness, unity and sacredness. So what does 'responsibility' mean? Responsibility means starting from the awareness of the Unity of Life to succeed in taking action and living for the benefit of all beings. It is a concept that is dear to the Buddhist and Theosophical traditions, but which is equally present in all religions and is definitely also in the heart of men of goodwill.

How can we fail to recall, for example, the Sermon on the Mount, in the Gospel of Luke:

And if you love those loving you, of what credit is it to you? For even the sinners love those loving them. And if you do good to those doing good to you, really, of what credit is it to you? To the contrary, continue to love your enemies, and to do good, and to lend [without interest], not hoping for anything back; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind towards the unthankful and wicked. Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful.<sup>9</sup>

The Sufi Jami says: 'Suppress the words this and that; quality implies difference and hostility. In this universe, everything is full of beauty and is without imperfections. You see but one substance, which is only one essence.'<sup>10</sup>

A responsible life therefore appears to be one of man's possibilities. Responsible life as the ability to observe and the consequent awareness; as an interaction between individual karma, with all of its complexity and inner 'thrust', animated by love, tolerance and the all too often unacknowledged possibilities of the heart.

St Francis of Assisi, who showed considerable awareness of these possibilities, wrote a prayer, which I call the Prayer for everyone. These are his words:

Lord, make me an instrument of your

Peace:

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is discordance, unity.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is error, Truth.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is sadness, joy.

And where there is darkness, light.

Oh, Divine Master, grant that I may not

so much seek to be consoled as to

console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

And it is in dying that we are born to

eternal life. ✧

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### References

1. See 'Privilege' in the Dictionary (Italian: 'privilegio', *Vocabulario Treccani*, p. 254).
2. It appears in English in *Federalist* by Alexander Hamilton, p. 64; compare R. McKeon in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 1957, No. 1, p. 8 and following.
3. *Treccani Encyclopedic Dictionary*, vol. X, p. 118.
4. Abbagnano, N., *Dizionario di Filosofia*, UTET, Turin [*UTET Dictionary of Philosophy*], 2nd ed., 1984, pp. 748, 749.
5. Krishnamurti, J., *Journal*, Ubaldini Editore, Rome, 1983, p. 65.
6. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, first Italian translation by Bianca Vallone (*Lettere dei Mahātma ad A. P. Sinnett*), 3rd ed., Editrice Libreria Sirio, Trieste, 1968.
7. For a contribution to the dynamic understanding of stoic philosophy, read, for example, *Memories (I Ricordi)* by Marco Aurelio, Einaudi Editore, Turin, 1968, p. 81: 'Examine things deeply, do not let the essence or value of anything escape you.'
8. Leadbeater, C. W., speech at the First Convention of the Italian Section of the Theosophical Society, Rome, 1 February 1902, pp. 14–15 of the relative minutes.
9. *The Gospel of Luke*, 6:7–42.
10. The quotation of Jami (1414–1492), Sufi of the fraternity of the Naqshbandi, is from *The Mystics of Islam (Anthology of Sufism)* by Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch, Guanda Editore, 1991, p. 252.

**It is not an easy task to discover, in the words of St Paul, 'the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'. It is to this task we are called. Divine Truth, Divine Beauty, Divine Tenderness, and every factor of hope and glory that is conveyed by the one word Mukti, or Nirvāna, or Salvation, all these reside in ourselves.**

**Could only men be aware of them, the search for their realization will be found as the only way to Happiness. We Theosophists have to instruct mankind as to this new way.**

C. Jinarājadāsa

# What is Practical about Theosophy?

JOY MILLS

THERE is a question which seems to recur in a variety of forms while always pointing to the issue of the practicality of the Theosophical philosophy. One form of the question is simply that of the title of this article, while another directs the matter to the individual: 'But what do Theosophists *do*?' Yet another form of the query involves the membership as a whole: 'Why doesn't the Theosophical Society *do* something?' Whatever form the question takes, it is obvious that the inquirer does not consider study, meditation, lecturing or the publishing of books to be practical activities.

Those who ask such questions usually point to the numerous fine organizations which are actively engaged in what used to be called 'good works' — service which must be applauded for the benefit it brings to those who lack basic material necessities. People who stand in the front lines of causes are thought to be involved in the most practical of all activities, that of 'doing something'. Meditators and lecturers are obviously 'doing' nothing, since there is no visible or measurable service. This is not to say that many Theosophists are not engaged in efforts to alleviate the suffering which exists

everywhere, not only in the human kingdom but among animals and, indeed, all living things.

But what of Theosophy itself? Is Theosophy practical? Will its study result in any lasting benefit, either to ourselves or, more importantly, to the world about us? Is not philosophy a luxury which a world rapidly propelling itself to the brink of disaster can ill afford? Unfortunately, at this time when there is such a hankering after gurus who will solve all our problems with one swift gesture of hand or head, and such an absorption with phenomena that will satisfy our external cravings or bring us personal enlightenment, the study of Theosophy appears to lack a certain glamour or fascination that attracts and holds. Therefore, say our disparagers, it may be dismissed while we get on with the world's work.

It has been said, in regard to Buddhism, that just because its subject is everywhere, one should not claim universal manifestation for it. The same may be truly said of Theosophy: just because Theosophy is everything, we should not make the mistake of assuming that everything is Theosophy. Professor Cheuk-Woon Taam, writing about

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Buddhism, points out that ‘it does not pervade the universe. It presents universal nature — universal mind — but it does so as a particular teaching. Confusing the specific teaching with its vast and undifferentiated subject is a trap that has caught several tigers’. This is an apt description of Theosophy as well, and gives its students a useful warning!

In other words, before we can assess the practicality of Theosophy, we must be very clear what the Theosophical world view is. We can perceive the practicality of Theosophical concepts only when we have, to some extent at least, begun to assimilate its eternal verities through a genuine contact (which involves mind and heart, reason and intuition) with those universal verities.

True, Theosophy has not been defined, nor can it be, at least in terms that comprehend its universality, for every interpretation is by its very nature limited by the mind and understanding of the one who offers it. But the fact that Theosophy is not subject to some one official and final definition does not mean that it is either an amorphous, vague notion or a concept that is limited by whatever anyone wants to make of it. It is a specific *darśana* — a view into the realm of Reality, a view across the plains of existence which is all too often obscured by the mists that arise from them and which, in our ignorance, we may attribute to sources outside ourselves. It is precisely our view about existence and ultimate Reality that determines our action in the world. We may say therefore that the

practicality of Theosophy lies in the extent to which we have permitted Theosophical ideas and ideals to work upon us in clearing up our perceptions so that we may see things whole and unobscured.

Every effort to define or redefine that world view which Theosophy constitutes must inevitably carry us further into the domain of Wisdom, since our very efforts involve us in an understanding of precisely what is contained under the term Theosophy. Certain fundamental principles begin to emerge, although they may appear in numerous contexts and under a number of guises depending on whether they are approached via the great religious traditions or in terms of philosophical concepts or, yet again, by means of truths revealed by science. They are fundamental — radical, in the original sense of that word — because they apply with equal validity to nature, man and society. Open to a wide range of interpretation and capable of re-embodiment in language suitable for the times, these ideas or principles affect the very fabric of collective and individual existence by providing spiritual values that translate into personal attitudes of motive and action. For the Theosophist, they should be no mere theoretical abstractions, but the very stuff of his life as he struggles to realize their truth in his own experience and discovers their transforming power.

Precisely that practicality is emphasized in one of the most remarkable documents to be received during the early years of the Society’s existence — a letter sent to A. P. Sinnett and said to be ‘an

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abridged version of the view of the Chohan on the TS'. C. Jinarājadāsa wrote of the communication that 'This is certainly the most important Letter ever received from the Adept Teachers', adding that it 'is practically the charter for the work and development of the Theosophical Society throughout the ages'. In that document, we read these significant words:

For our doctrines to practically react on the so-called moral code, or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc., we have to popularize a knowledge of theosophy. It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvāna (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow-creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true *Theosophist*.

At the risk, then, of oversimplifying the Wisdom which is true Theosophy, of providing yet another rephrasing of those fundamentals of an immortal truth, we may ask what are the ageless principles which compose the Theosophical world view. Let us for the present suggest a fivefold delineation:

1. The universe and everything within it are one interrelated and interdependent whole, because

2. Every existent being, whether mountain, molecule, or man, whether animal or atom, is rooted in the same universal spiritual Reality which is all

and everywhere and yet transcends all its expressions.

3. Consequently, that one Reality may be perceived everywhere, in the order, harmony, beauty and meaning of the natural world as in the deepest recesses of mind, heart and spirit.

4. Therefore, the unique value of every living being is recognized and honoured. That recognition expresses itself in reverence and compassion for all living things, sympathy for the needs of each, encouragement of every individual to find truth for himself, and respect for all paths that lead man to spiritual enlightenment.

5. Finally, all are engaged in one common enterprise — the search for understanding, and growth towards self-realization; it is this process of inner growth that is the real mark of being human. The whole of human experience is indeed a process of self-unfoldment, of an ever-deepening awareness of one's own true nature. Man's root in universal Reality endows him, therefore, with infinite possibilities of creating a future for humanity 'whose growth and splendour has no limit'.

The practicality of such a world view should be immediately apparent, for it gives meaning and substance to existence and awakens in those who perceive its essential truth the altruism which, according to H. P. Blavatsky's definition, is occultism or pure Theosophy.

Anyone who reads the history of civilization will recognize the validity of the axiom referred to on many occasions by the Adept Teachers in their letters to

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A. P. Sinnett, that 'ideas rule the world'. The force of ideas can never be underestimated, for our own lives exhibit the ideas which shape our actions. A philosophy that is based, for example, on the concept that within God's creation there is an original structure by which a number of interdependent spheres of life exist, each with its own rights, leads inevitably to actions which separate and divide classes, nationalities, ethnic groups, creating antagonisms and conflicts. Such a philosophy, based on the views of Rousseau and the eighteenth century Dutch Calvinist theologian and politician, Abraham Kuyper, has dominated much of European history in this century and contributed greatly to the philosophy of colonialism from which the world is not yet fully liberated.

It has been said repeatedly, from the earliest days of the Society, that our task is to change the thought-patterns of the world. When we see the devastating effects caused by a philosophy of separatism and when we perceive the outcome of philosophies and views that are concerned only with special interests or with temporary results (the so-called 'one life' views), we should be alert to the need for just such a change as the Theosophical philosophy can bring about. The task is not an easy one, nor can it be accomplished overnight; yet surely it is the only worthwhile endeavour and one

to which we should give all our efforts and our constant attention. It is far easier to be caught up in the maelstrom of current events which seem to be leading our present civilization downwards to annihilation; to stand against the current of circumstances and to attempt to stem that 'tidal wave' to which HPB once referred in speaking of the Theosophist's aim, demands a bravery of soul and a courage of the spirit that we must develop at all costs. Yet surely there is no other way, if we would be true to our ideals and loyal to the vision we have seen.

Dr C. G. Jung, the eminent Swiss psychologist, is reported to have said on one occasion: "To the constantly reiterated question "What can I do?" I know no other answer except "Become what you have always been", namely, the wholeness which we have lost in the midst of our civilized, conscious existence, a wholeness which we always were without knowing it."

Just so we must learn to answer that nagging question, 'What is practical about Theosophy?' Studying the Theosophical philosophy, embracing the Theosophical world view, we must learn to live out that wholeness, becoming whole ourselves, and instilling into the world about us those life-transforming ideas and values which alone can lead humanity to a new dawn of understanding, heralding a day of peace and unity. ✧

**Man's mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions.**

Oliver Wendell Holmes

# The Spiritual Path — A Journey to the Unknown

G. RAMANATHAN

THE word ‘spirituality’ has become commonplace in this modern world. Many people may think that those things which are visible to the eye are physical and all other things not visible pertain to the world of spirit. But are we able to look at even physical objects properly? Does not perception differ from person to person, depending upon the eyesight, sensitivity, health and clarity of mind?

Actually clarity of the mind, which is the *rājā* of the senses, is the most important quality in the act of perception. Each one perceives only according to his or her mental disposition. Differences in the mental disposition or conditioning cause perceptual differences. Why should there be this difference in perception? Why is one not able to perceive all aspects of an object at once, so that no aspect is left unnoticed? It is obvious that perfect observation takes place only when the mind becomes unconditioned. It is the mind with which we look at things. If there is distraction of the mind, even if our eyes are directed towards a particular object, we cannot see it at all. This we experience in day-to-day life. The object at which we look comes into cognizance only when

the mind is conjoined with it. It is the same with all the other sensory organs: the nose, tongue, skin and ears. The sensory perception minus the mind is not experienced by the experiencer. Cognizance of the object of perception happens only when the mind joins with impressions received from the external world through the sense organs.

Who is the experiencer? We call it the lower mind or *kāma-manas*. This so-called lower mind which is in operation in our day-to-day life is always turned outwards and is actually pervaded by the senses. It is so intertwined with the senses that it is highly conditioned by external circumstances. Here it would be useful to note the difference between the lower mind and the Higher Mind. The lower mind, comprising the fourth to the seventh subplanes of the mind, is ensouled by the second elemental kingdom which is of a concrete nature. Its tendency is to sink into more and more materialization. It is not on the evolutionary arc. But the Higher Mind comprising the first to third subplanes, and ensouled by the first elemental kingdom, is formless. It is the causal body ensouled by the divine spark.

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It does not vibrate according to external circumstances and is on the evolutionary arc. But the lower mental plane and the astral plane, ensouling the second and third elemental kingdoms, are on the downward involutionary arc. How are we to deal with this curious situation?

The mind, which is the only ladder for climbing upwards, has to be purified. If acting in unison with the astral plane, it dances according to external circumstances without being aware of the higher nature, it can never be on the evolutionary arc. As already mentioned, it is so pervaded by the senses that the mechanism of the functioning of *kāma-manas* remains tricky and always elusive. One requires extraordinary sensitivity and observational capacity to understand it. The lower mind has to be completely dissociated from the sensory perceptions. In a way this is *pratyāhāra*, as mentioned in the *Yoga-sutra-s* of Patañjali. Here, the mind withdraws into itself without being conditioned by worldly things. The de-conditioning of the mind is possible by observing oneself in daily life. Observation enables one to perceive directly the activities of one's mind and how it influences day-to-day life in the physical world. Observation takes place in a detached state of being and is possible when the mind is open. Observation throws the doors open to the aspirant, enabling him to perceive the seriousness of the situation in which he is living and how far he is contributing to the violence and suffering already prevailing in the world. All attempts to transcend the

physical limitations by amassing wealth or gaining power are foolishness, as is evident from what is happening in the world. Can we transcend death by amassing wealth or by ignoring the apparent differences at the physical level?

As long as we give emphasis only to the physical form or level, separative thinking exists. This type of divisive thinking naturally gives rise to violence. All the world wars and various types of tyranny in the history of the world are manifestations of this divisive thinking. All the wars now raging in the world are also a result of this. Observation of the workings of our mind enables us to rise from a narrow personal point of view to a universal perspective and the so-called personal problem loses its illusory meaning. But this happens when we go beyond the form level of existence and reach the spirit behind the form. At the spiritual level there is no difference and its nature is universal. It is not confined to the physical dimensions but is of infinite dimensions.

How can one proceed towards spirituality with the conditioned mind? Whatever is projected from the mind is naturally its own conditioned projection. The ordinary mind is externalized and cannot move beyond the limitations imposed by external circumstances. It is carried away by attractions and repulsions. Anything which appeals to the senses evokes memories of previous experiences and therefore comes within the field of *kāma-manas* and cannot contribute to the perception of unity.



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Spiritual perception is clearly outside the realm of memories or the field of the known. Any desire to ensure the outcome of an action reveals that it is a limited action. Limited movements cannot enter the depths of our being. Spiritual perception takes place when the mind is not conditioned by external circumstances, memories, etc. It is a movement into the unknown where the perceiver becomes the perceived. Any desire to become something or to move to a known end is a movement in the field of thought.

Thought is vibration generated in the lower mind (mental body) which is obviously a reaction to worldly objects or situations. Reaction takes place when there is resistance. The lower mind, which is intertwined with *kāma* or *kāma-manas*, is evolved by its interaction with the material world through millions of years and during its involution the mind has formed a habit of its own, so that it is incapable of going outside the ambit of its own field of activity. It has formed a centre and all our thoughts and actions spring from that centre. It is mere common sense that action from a centre is limited to that centre. The natural flow of life is inhibited by this centre so that sorrow, frustration and violence dominate our life. Our perception is distorted by this illusory centre so that actions emanating from that level always create conflict and violence. Thought originating from this centre is rooted in sensations, so that it can only strengthen addiction to sensuality which, as a matter of fact, aids only in strengthening our wrong identification with our

body. The feeling of 'I am the physical body' is strengthened by succumbing more and more to the activities of *kāma-manas*. In this connection it is relevant to quote J. Krishnamurti who stated in his book *At the Feet of the Master* that 'the body is your animal — the horse upon which you ride'. If we observe our daily life, we can clearly perceive that it is rooted in the wrong sense of identification with our body. The feeling of separation or divisive thinking is the result of this wrong identification. This is the cause of all the types of unhealthy competition, jealousy, war, etc. in this world. Perception from this level can encompass only the form side of things and it cannot see the essence hidden within the forms. When the form side predominates instead of the spiritual side, perception of universal brotherhood is impossible. It becomes only a distant possibility.

The life indwelling in the visible forms in the world is beyond the realm of barriers, and unity can be perceived only at that level. The spiritual realm is of a different dimension which cannot be comprehended by earthly dimensions. The illusory sense that 'I am the body' is a product of millions of years of conditioning, amassed by our existence during our journey into the material planes. Mind is the connection between matter and spirit. If, instead of being a medium to reflect the spiritual self, it reacts, obviously it loses its connection with the spiritual realities of our existence. If a rocket taking off from a space station loses its connection with the control tower,

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it goes astray and finally crashes. This is the case with the mind which is reactive.

The reaction of the mind is in the form of thoughts, obviously conditioned by memories of past experience. It is only a habitual movement and there is no intelligence or dynamism in it. This reaction of the mind is like a pond with ripples where the sun is reflected in a distorted way. Any imposition of rules or regulations or any other control from outside to make the mind non-reactive will only make the situation worse. Only by keenly observing the movement of our thoughts, how thought originates, and how our actions are governed in daily life, can we perceive the nature of thought itself and how our mind reacts to external circumstances. This observation is an action which brings about a new awareness

transcending the conditioned movement of the mind. This state of awareness itself is the true religious discipline where the identification of the self with the personality disappears. By observing the operations of *kāma-manas* one may perceive the limitations of one's thinking and the seriousness of the pathetic situation in which one lives. That perception is not conditioned by external circumstances. Rather is it independent of external circumstance. It may be a state of being where the mind ceases to react and spiritual awareness comes into being. This level of perception goes beyond the mind and therefore any attempt to translate it into words or apply ordinary yardsticks to measure it would be ignorance. It is an unknown realm which we can call 'spiritual'. ✧

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### THE THEOSOPHIST

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