



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover Picture: Memorial to the Unknown Members, Adyar (see page 93) –J. Suresh

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.



On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

Who is the Winner?

In a recent match, the two sisters Venus Williams and Serena Williams were pitted against each other. Serena, the younger one, won this time, her third Wimbledon singles title. Of course, she was in great spirits after this victory. But from what the papers report, the two sisters are quite as friendly with each other as they have always been. They have fought against each other on tennis courts several times with great professional competence, but we are told that they are just as friendly with each other, whatever the result. They have been doing this for a long time, playing with the intensity the games require, but remaining affectionate sisters at home.

It is normal if one comes to consider it from the games point of view. These games are played for achieving quality, and both Serena and Venus have taken part in these several times, with one sister or the other winning. All games are meant to be only part of sport, to gain control over the body and show the audience what can be achieved by anyone. But they have slowly become, instead of games, like a place of battle and the real spirit of 'fighting' each other in friendship has been lost, so the game becomes, instead of a lovely way of showing skills and

ability, a battleground. Nowadays, almost all well-known contests like the Olympic Games have lost their grace and fun because there is so much in the media of the victory of some over others.

That the game should prove the quality of action is important, and not winning anything from opponents. A fine quality in doing any kind of work is a great blessing. We should all become proficient in that sense; whether we learn music, play a game or learn to cook or calculate, the result of doing a piece of work is important. It does not matter whether one wins or loses temporarily in the game of life. Everyone is going to win and become a beautiful piece that fits in with everything else, and make people wonder. But to learn to fit in we have to become good at 'play', and this is what we begin to see through the winning or losing. In a game, both winners and losers can have a good time and try to do better when the opportunity arises.

So, the game of life can be — should be rather — enjoyable, whatever we do; it might be losing or winning, but we know that both are the same. The importance of both is the game when it is played well. Then one is prepared for higher things. Are we ready?

Unlimited Seeing

Brotherhood is not an Object of the Society as imagined by many people, but 'Universal Brotherhood' is, as mentioned in the first Object of the Society. Universal Brotherhood implies that it must be practised in respect of all persons, rich or poor, important or not important, doing any kind of work or none at all. It is meant to include all human beings.

Unfortunately 'Brotherhood' suggests a sexual difference to some people, but this was not meant when the word was used. 'Brotherhood' was a term that included women also and therefore the Society's Object concerned all humanity. In English, there is no word which can stand for brotherhood or sisterhood combined, but the common factor in the two words is what is meant.

The term 'universal brotherhood' means, to all those who know and have 'eyes to see', a vast, in fact an unlimited, vista. The spiritual level embraces all the other levels including the lowest and the highest and to see what brotherhood is from the spiritual point of view, our eyes must be more and more open as we proceed. We would then see not merely the outer surface of everything, but the inner content and meaning. So brotherhood, or whatever else we may call it, perhaps 'the sense of unity', will be absolutely natural.

We will feel at one with all beings, which formerly was not possible. Some creatures appear to us as not so nice, or as beautiful and lovable as do the ones we like; but likes and dislikes

disappear in the glowing reality of oneness. It is said that the illumined ones see all of life, filled with Divine qualities, lie before them and appear differently from what it does to most people. The impression that some are better than others disappears. So, for the illumined consciousness everything has equal value and is equally lovable.

There is great beauty in the evolutionary process, but we see that beauty only in some places, if at all. A person may have an old face with wrinkles and other signs of age, but it exhibits great beauty all the same. There are some paintings which give this impression. The fact is that in the light of real beauty, old age and youthfulness, the more evolved and the less evolved, are equally beautiful. In fact, beauty exists whether there is a form to show it or not.

The Divine is all around, and surrounds the person who has a sufficiently developed consciousness, and hence in that consciousness there is truth, knowledge, eternity, deep joy, and so forth. These are not separate aspects of reality, they are like the facets of a diamond, which people may see as separate from each other, but they are all from the one source.

To be aware of this, the Divine in so-called ordinary things, one should put aside thought, except when it is needed concerning ordinary things. If there is thought of this kind, everything is brought down to its own level; and when no such thought fills the mind it is free to see things as they are. Unfortunately, when

we realize that there is something more than usual that can make itself known, in searching for it we intend to discover what we already know. The desire to see great art or anything similar is the satisfaction of getting some ideas from the minds of other persons.

There is a story told about a Teacher. He gave a talk one day, it is said, when a bird sitting on the window sang a song. The teacher became silent. When the bird finished he said the sermon was over. There is a song in everything. The whole universe is full of beautiful music, if we can hear. Something of that song shows that the Divine beauty, which needs no object, is present. But these moments are rare. The silence of the mind, the stillness to hear are rare and therefore our relationships are incomplete.

Can we spend a few minutes without such image-making? Can meditation begin when the mind already has a picture in the background, or, does it commence with an empty mind? The emptying of the mind requires much practice. Even if there is an interval of quiet for a short time, some observation is possible. But the observer thinks that he knows only if he is present. He does not want to subside or die and this is the problem. What can we do to go beyond the level of mental knowledge to perfection or awareness? Perhaps, we can teach ourselves not to analyse or do anything else, and just be. This may be what the future holds for everybody — an awareness which makes people see.

The Question of Breeding

They have now found a means to reduce the time required for plants to acquire qualities which would have formerly taken years. For instance, we are told in an article printed in *Newsweek* that the technique to create a new strain of corn has been reduced from ten to four years. Conventional breeding is now able to do things with the plant world which were not even tried earlier. The new techniques are beginning to replace bio-transformative techniques and the use of old techniques of breeding and cross-breeding will boost productivity, reduce the damage done by bad weather, disease, and so on.

Europe and a great deal of Asia and parts of Africa have strongly resisted genetically modified food. The result is that now competent people are choosing the crops and breeding and crossbreeding by normal means to have enough for the growing world population. Apparently most of the Asian, African and European countries have been averse to using the modern genetic techniques to create new varieties. Genetic manipulations done by a few people in companies, mostly of well-to-do countries, are suspect. Many users have grave doubts about the result of the new varieties created by these specialists, who can do whatever they please if bio-technique is used.

There are many manipulations in the present day about which the average person does not know anything. The manipulators are much cleverer than the public to which they sell products. So, to

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learn that protests have been so successful is rather gratifying. Technology makes it possible for technologists to get away with many things and at a price which they dictate. It is said that the GM products cost a great deal more than the

above-mentioned kind of improvements.

We cannot but hope that the educated members of the public will get more and more used to taking things in hand which will be altogether more reliable than if left to a few technocrats. ✧

The Founders of the Theosophical Society, Col. H. S. Olcott and Madame H. P. Blavatsky, chose Adyar in 1882 to be the international headquarters of the Society after searching in various parts of India for a suitable place. The beauty of the river, ocean and trees, and the tranquillity which reign at Adyar, make it an ideal centre for spiritual living, besides providing facilities for the administrative work.

Since 1882, countless persons have benefited from the life and activities at Adyar. They have come for walks, lectures, study, discussion, inward-turning. People of all nations participate in the courses and conventions which take place every year. Scholars and students journey hither to spend moments with the precious treasures of the Adyar Library. Books and other literature are sent out to the world from here to be used and translated. There has been a constant international exchange through Adyar and a constant atmosphere at Adyar for learning the 'daily conquest of the self' and the meaning of man's life.

Radha Burnier

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Finding the Key to Theosophy

G. P. SIVRIS

‘THE means is the end and the right means is leading us to the right end,’ says Krishnamurti. Elucidating further, he suggests: ‘Before we start searching we must have the instrument for search; we must be capable of searching — not merely start out to search.’ Which means that to have the capacity to search we must surely understand ourselves beforehand. How can we search without first knowing what it is we are searching for, and what it is that is searching? It is of primary importance to know ourselves and to find out who is the person that is seeking, and what he is seeking.

If the object of our search is Theosophy, we shall have to find out the proper means which will lead us to that end. Hence the necessity of finding the mystical key. The key is most important; for it is the first movement in our search for Theosophy.

Theosophy is not found in the books. How can we find the key which will enable us to unlock the treasury of Theosophy, to unveil the face of Isis, Isis being an allusion to divine knowledge? We are looking for something which is not visible, which is in a potential situation,

that we are not aware of, being latent and hidden and to be discovered.

With the mind which is the known we cannot have an understanding of Theosophy, which is the unknown. Therefore another kind of perception is needed. The key is the unknown Self, the true divine nature, which we shall have to nurture. Our true nature, the self-nature, is hidden deep within ourselves. That is why all the ancient religions and philosophies insist on the necessity of learning the art of self-knowledge.

Krishnamurti says that without self-knowledge there is no right thinking. Right thinking is an attribute of divine Wisdom. More specifically, he says: ‘The more you know yourself the more clarity there is.’ Self-knowledge has no end. It is an endless river. As one studies it and goes into it more and more, one finds peace. Only when the mind is tranquil — through self-knowledge and not through imposed discipline, can reality come into being. Then there can be bliss and creative action.

Truly it is hard work to observe oneself as we are and to investigate deeply the inner part of our nature, maybe

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because we do not have the capacity to look into ourselves. Krishnamurti says: 'I am asking you the impossible.' Yet he insists that we should do it as there is an urgent need for a deep and radical change in our mind and heart. Probably the impossible referred to is the human personality and the human intellect, but not the spiritual individuality. As it is said in the Bible: 'The impossible to people is possible to God', and respectively to the inner Self, to the god within. Hence the necessity of knowing our true self.

As Krishnamurti also says: 'The known is the action of will. And in self-knowledge one should start from the unknown and begin from the other shore, from the other side.' According to a Buddhist teaching, reaching 'the other shore' (*pāragata*) is interpreted in Chinese as freedom from birth and death. So, starting from the 'other shore' can be possibly explained as starting from the realm of reality, which is the abode of the Masters, of the Mahatmas. Krishnamurti says 'The awakening of intelligence is not a matter of will. It must happen.' According to a saying by St Paul: 'It is not a matter of will or haste, but of God's grace.'

The well-known Spanish Christian mystic, St John of the Cross, says in his book *The Dark Night of the Soul*: 'A work of this magnitude, which is the union of the human will with the Holy Will of God, must be begun by God, and accomplished by Him. The beginning consists in the grace of vocation, the end in the beatific vision.' The ending of human will is the beginning of God's will, of God's grace.

The same topic is found in Greek mythology and is presented as follows:

'All soul is part of the universal soul, whose totality is Dionysus; and he leads back the vagrant spirit to its home, and accompanies it through the purifying process, both real and symbolical, of its earthly transit. He is the immortal suitor of Psyche (soul), the divine influence which physically called the world into being, and which, awakening the soul from its Stygian trance, restores it from earth to Heavens.'

If we would like to adapt this myth to the Theosophical teaching, we can say that the divine influence is emanating from the other shore, from the unknown heaven, where the abode of the Masters is situated who form the 'bundle of living', the body of Theosophy, the interpretation of which could be that the awaking spirit of Theosophy is acting secretly on human conscience in the same way as Dionysus on the soul. The will of the Masters is transmitting to humanity the will and the Grace of God.

If by Theosophy we mean the wisdom of the divine Beings, of the Holy Masters, then we can say that the powerful Theosophical energy is acting benevolently in the world — taking for granted that Theosophy is not an idea, or a theory, but a living thing, which exerts its blissful influence on human life.

Therefore when we think of Theosophy, our aspiration should be directed to the blessing of our Elder Brothers, who were the Inner Founders of the Society and who continue to

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invigorate and guide it. We must repeat here the invocation and express the wish: 'May those who are the embodiments of love immortal bless with their help and guidance this Society, founded to be a channel for their work. May they inspire it with their Wisdom, strengthen it with their Power, and energize it with their Activity.'

Both the invocation and the wish will have a validity if they rise from the depth of our inner self and not from the surface of our egoistic personality. The blessings from above are not destined for our carnal being but for our immortal self, the connection between man and Theosophy.

According to the esoteric tradition, the egoistic personality is a blemish to God, and of course to the divine Beings, who are called the servants and ministers of God. It is considered the enemy of man and therefore it does not deserve the blessings and the help of our Elder Brothers.

The Masters, our Teachers, would expect us to sacrifice our lower self. This is a prerequisite for their blessings to pour down upon us. This is, of course, a painful, but an imperative, sacrifice. An ancient dictum says that the clean is not permitted to be touched by the unclean. It is a divine command that the unholy cannot approach the holy, which is Theosophy. As Krishnamurti says: 'The old must come to an end for the new to be.' And Mme Blavatsky testifies in *The Voice of the Silence* that 'one must die (as a physical personality) in order to live in spirit, i.e. in order to be a real Theosophist.

Replying to the question why learning and knowledge are impediments to understanding, Krishnamurti responded as follows: 'Take, for example, a very ordinary thing that happens to most of us: Those who are religious — whatever that word may mean — try to imagine what God is or try to think about what God is. They have read innumerable books, they have read about the experiences of the various saints, the Masters, the Mahatmas, and all the rest, and they try to imagine, or try to feel, what the experience of another is. That is, with the known you try to approach the unknown. Can you do it? Can you think of something that is not knowable? Obviously, if our mind is crowded with the known, there is no space in it to receive something that is of the unknown. The very nature of the mind is fixed in the known, in time.' It is therefore true that the intellect or the mind cannot understand what is Truth or God, or as an old philosophical dictum says: 'The unknown cannot be perceived by the known, and the All cannot become known by the part.'

Consequently, in order to be able to see the truth we shall have to go beyond the intellect, which means to fly from earth to heaven, and this is considered to be real meditation. We are told that right meditation cannot exist if we do not lay at first the foundation of virtue and morality. As Pythagoras said: 'We must first be men and afterwards become God. The civil virtues make the man, and the sciences lead to Divine Virtue which makes the God.' Elucidating further on this matter,

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Krishnamurti says: 'There are so many schools where meditation is taught; but if one would understand what meditation is, one will have to lay the foundation of a moral behaviour.' Without this basis meditation is in fact a form of self-hypnosis. Without being free from anger, jealousy, envy, greed, the desire for possessions, the hate, the antagonism, the desire for success — without placing the right basis, without living freely, an everyday life free from the distortion of personal fear, anguish, avidity, etc., meditation has very little meaning. The foundation is to be built through relationship by practising the art of self-knowledge. *The tricks of the mind are not meditation.* Therefore he says that meditation is the beginning of self-knowledge; and without meditation there is no self-knowledge. Meditation is watching, observing, being aware of oneself, not only at one particular hour of the day, but all the time, when we are walking, eating, talking, reading, in relationship — all that is the process in which we discover the ways of the 'me' and finally are driven to the ending of the 'me'. As it is said in *The Voice of the Silence*: 'When he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the ONE — the inner sound which kills the outer.' It is obvious from the above that the action of meditation is not limited only to the knowledge and the elimination of the self. There are various stages in meditation and the first and most important is the process of purification, of the cleansing of the heart and the mind, of the necessity to acquire a new, fresh mind and an innocent heart; this

can be effected through the practice of self-knowledge by the Energy of Love, by the Power of Truth.

The Masters of Wisdom are clearly stipulating that if we would like to live in their world, we shall have to abandon this world and renounce our own self. This is clearly pictured in *The Voice of the Silence* by the similitude of the Three Halls, which corresponds to the three states of consciousness. 'Give up thy life, if thou wouldst live. Give up the life of physical personality if you would live in spirit,' adds Mme Blavatsky.

The meaning of this message is that we cannot go straight to the state of perfection, to the ecstasy of meditation without first passing successfully through the intermediate preparatory and probationary stages. People usually ignore this fundamental esoteric rule. They usually try to climb with their imagination to the upper stage of superconsciousness without having earlier developed the proper buddhic-vehicle with which only they can fly and run out of this triple world of delusion and ignorance and rise to the supreme and perfect enlightenment of the Nirvānic state of full development.

Very instructive on this matter is the following ancient Buddhist fable:

'Once there was a wealthy but foolish man. When he saw the beautiful three-storeyed house of another man he envied it and made up his mind to have one built just like it, thinking he was himself just as worthy. He called a carpenter and ordered him to build it. The carpenter consented and immediately

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began to construct the foundation, the first storey, the second storey, and then the third storey. The wealthy man noticed this with irritation and said: 'I don't want a foundation or a first storey or a second storey. Build it quickly.' The moral lesson of this fable is the following: 'A foolish man always thinks only of the results and is impatient without the effort that is necessary to get good results. No good can be attained without proper effort, just as there can be no third storey without the foundation and the first and the second storeys.'

Another esoteric teaching, coming from the Kabbalah, which is very beautiful and wisely enlightens the aforesaid Buddhist narration, says the following: 'The names and grades of the soul of man are three: *Netesh* (vital soul), *Ruah* (spirit) *Neshamah* (innermost soul, super-soul) corresponding to the three Theosophical bodies of the human soul: astral, mental, spiritual — the three are comprehended one within the other — i.e. forming one building — but each has its separate abode — each a separate storey or plane. *Netesh* stands in relation to the body, nourishing and upholding it; it is below the first level. Having acquired due worth, it becomes the throne for the spirit (*ruah*) to rest upon. And when these two, '*Netesh* and *Ruah*, have duly readied themselves, they are worthy to receive the "super-soul" (*Neshamah*) resting in turn upon the throne of the spirit (*ruah*). The super-soul stands pre-eminent, and not to be perceived. There is a throne upon throne, and for the highest a throne. *Netesh* and

Ruah are conjoined, while *Neshamah* has its abode in the character of a man, which place remains unknown and undiscovered.'

Both the metaphoric and the moral meanings of the two texts are, as we can see, very similar. The Kabbalistic moral teaching, the same as the Buddhist, concludes as follows:

'If a man strive to a pure life, he is therein assisted by Holy *Neshamah*, through which he is made pure and saintly and obtains the name of Holy. But if he does not strive to be righteous and pure of life, there does not animate him holy *Neshamah*, but only the two grades, *Netesh* and *Ruah*. More than that, he who enters into impurity is led further into it, and he is deprived of heavenly aid. Thus, each is moved forward upon the way which he takes.' (*Neshamah* is defined as the 'holy soul', super-soul, the deepest intuitive power, which leads to the secrets of God and the universe.)

Lord Buddha also shows us the way which leads to Truth and thereby to liberation through the Noble Eightfold Path, which opens the eyes, bestows understanding, and leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to *Nirvāna*. The question, therefore, as put forward by Dr John Algeo, stands opportune: 'Are we alive to the truths of Theosophy? Because unless a truth is alive in us, that truth is dead as far as we are concerned. And consequently, we are dead to that truth and slaves instead to a lie.'

Mrs Radha Burnier, in her Presidential

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Address in December 2005 says:

‘We are conscious that a way must be found out of the pervasive state of violence, hatred and spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*) which darkens the world, but how can we set our feet firmly on the path leading to peace, love and knowledge?’

I suggest that in this context we must begin by asking not only whether we are alive to the truths of Theosophy, but whether we are alive at all, and if we are, how alive are we?’ Which means how much we know our true self, the mystical other nature we are searching for. ✧

God must become man, man must become God; heaven must become one thing with the earth, the earth must be turned to heaven: If you will make heaven out of the earth, then give the earth the heaven’s food, that the earth may obtain the will of heaven, that the will of the wrathful Mercury may give itself in unto the will of the heavenly Mercury.

But what wilt thou do? Wilt thou introduce the poisonous Mercury (which has only a death’s will in itself) into the temptation, as the false magus does? Will you send one devil to another, and make an angel of him? In deed and in truth I must needs laugh at such folly: If thou wilt keep a corrupt black devil, how dost thou think to turn the earth by the devil to heaven? Is not God the Creator of all beings? Thou must eat of God’s bread, if thou wilt transmute thy body out of the earthly property into the heavenly.

Jakob Boehme

Hinduism's Greatest Gift to the World

KLAUS K. KLOSTERMAIER

ERWIN SCHRÖDINGER, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1933, introduced a lecture on the 'Spirit of Science' in 1946 with a quote from Śankara's *Brahmasutrabhāṣya* (Schrödinger, 1946). Schrödinger stated that the search for the Self and its relationship to the Absolute had so much occupied the attention of Indian thinkers 'who were the equal of Plato, Spinoza and Kant as far as depth and grandeur or perception are concerned', that they neglected the investigation of objective nature 'which surrounded them for centuries the same way as it surrounds us'. Rather than criticizing the Indian sages for what they did, or had neglected to do, Schrödinger thought that they have an important contribution to make to our scientific world: 'The subject of every science is always the spirit and there is only that much true science in every endeavour, as it contains spirit.' He wished to see 'some blood transfusion from the East to the West' so as to save Western science from

spiritual anaemia. In another lecture series he explicitly affirmed his conviction that Vedāntic *jñāna* represented the only true view of reality — a view for which he was prepared to even offer empirical proof (Schrödinger 1964).

Aldous Huxley, a twentieth century giant in the realm of Humanities, whose *Perennial Philosophy* is not only an unsurpassed anthology of world religions but also an outline for a universal religion, similarly suggests that Vedāntic *jñāna* is the key to unlock the gate to the meaning of human existence. In the first chapter, Huxley parallels the famous dialogue between Śvetaketu and his father, Uddālaka Āruni, from the *Chāndogya Upanishad* with statements from a variety of mystics and philosophers. He comments: 'Based upon the direct experience of those who have fulfilled the necessary conditions of such knowledge this teaching is expressed most succinctly in the Sanskrit formula *tat tvam asi . . .* and the last end of every human being is to

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discover the fact for himself, to find out Who he really is' (Huxley, 1973).

Statements like these, which could be multiplied easily, suggest dissatisfaction by prominent Western intellectuals both with Western science and religion and express the conviction that Vedāntic *jñāna* could show the way out from the present dilemma.

1. *Jñāna*: For a More Adequate Rationality and a Truer Religiosity

While in the popular mind science still proceeds triumphantly and the notion of 'truth' is virtually synonymous with 'scientific finding', uneasiness with present-day science is growing among the avant-garde of thoughtful scientists themselves. Not only have scientists signed petitions that would limit the application of some of their discoveries for ethical reasons, some also warn against replacing traditional pre-scientific and non-scientific insights by science as is often done today. Erwin Chargaff, one of the most prominent biochemists of our time, speaks of the 'metaphysical nausea' that gripped him, the existential terror that struck him when hearing about the detonation of atom bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He castigates the mindlessness of a science that has degenerated into a sort of stock-market speculation and he warns of scientific totalitarianism. 'The great pendulum of birth and death, the darkness and mystery of human destinies; the great concepts that for many thousands of years spoke to the mind, and even more to the heart of humanity — reconciliation and

charity, redemption and salvation — have they all been pushed aside and annihilated by science? I do not believe so. But if it really were the case, then science would carry a guilt even greater than its most embittered detractors have asserted' (Chargaff, 1977). Science, he had said somewhere else, is not a substitute for religion and philosophy. It has to understand its limits and not to attempt to define reality, but be content with investigating it.

Physicist Roger Jones would go even further and contend that modern science failed to do even that. Instead of investigating reality modern science has built up a system of mutually interlocking concepts, none of which really have any reality content, and none of which explain what science talks about. 'Starting with Copernicus and Bacon, we began to take as synonymous with truth itself, any collection of hypotheses that explain all the appearances. We began modern idolatry, we have not only dehumanized science but also lost sight of our integral connection with the continuing body of scientific and philosophical thought that goes back 2500 years . . . and beyond that to the mythic origins of religion and philosophy' (Jones, 1982). The shortcoming of the rationality of modern science is not its lack of consistency, but its deficient connection with reality in more than a commercial sense.

Many have pointed out that science, far from solving the questions it initially set out to answer, has moved away from these very questions. Physics, which

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emerged as science with the claim to rationally investigate the qualities of things perceived by the senses, eventually denied the existence of qualities altogether. Instead of explaining the nature of colour, it reduced colours to a set of differing wave-lengths in the electromagnetic spectrum. The very nature of the sensible world thus ceased to exist in a meaningful manner. Similarly biology, initially meant to explore the nature of life, turned into a science that eliminated the concept of life altogether, setting its goal to reducing every expression of life to the laws of physics and chemistry, looking at nature 'with a dead man's eye' (Roszak, 1973). The same happened in psychology. Instead of illuminating the idea of soul, as the great classical philosophers had attempted to do, modern psychology denied its reality and restricted itself to quantifiable observations of physiological reactions, again largely in terms of physics and chemistry. In spite of all the efforts of modern science, the real world of things is still around us. Colours and sounds are undeniable common experiences, giving rise to the arts without which life would be so much the poorer. Life is as surprising, exhilarating, tragic and mystifying as ever. The soul refuses to quit. What we need, obviously, is not a world that conforms to modern scientific rationality, but a rationality that is more adequate to comprehend reality as it is.

Post-moderns have targeted the 'logo-centrism' of modern Western thought as the source of much that is wrong with it. It appears, however, that

what post-modernists oppose is not so much the logos as understood by the Platonic tradition, but the logic of Bacon and Descartes and their followers who initiated the 'modern western rational tradition'. The Platonic Socrates took his clues from the Delphic oracle's *gnothi sauton*, and the logos whom he followed faithfully unto his death was not a scientific theory but an all-embracing reality-principle. Finding the logos of everything meant relating everything to the in-depth self-understanding, which preceded it. The logos is not sought in order to control natural processes but to find guidance in public and private life. The fact that questions of measurement, problems relating to quantitative aspects of external reality are easier to solve and can be answered with greater precision than questions of ethics and metaphysics, does not permit the conclusion that these are the only meaningful questions to ask.

Our entire scientific enterprise — and with it a large part of our public educational effort — is largely dedicated to avoiding the great human questions rather than addressing them. The reduction of rationality to the mathematical manipulation of data, which finds its epitome in the computer, not only restricts the scope of science and makes it ignore questions of meaning, it also convinces the average scientists and the masses who believe in science that questions of meaning, questions relating to the Self, are 'unscientific' and thus not worth pursuing. Research into such questions apparently 'does not pay'. Modern science leaves

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out, on principle, questions which include the entire range of ethics, of aesthetics, of spirituality. Nobody in one's right mind would contend that these are not vital areas for the well-being of individuals and societies. But who is going to offer a 'scientific method' for these areas?

The 'Western Rational Tradition' which has guided modernity since the sixteenth century has come under attack. While it had helped the West to emancipate itself from an oppressive medieval religious, cultural, intellectual and political authoritarianism, it proved impotent in the face of twentieth century cultural and political developments. The Western Rational Tradition was essentially individualistic, humanistic, bookish, and academic. It did not comprehend what was happening when the Industrial Revolution changed the lives of many millions of ordinary people. It did not understand the implications of the colonial expansion that was associated with it. It was content with formalizing and universalizing education in the mode of the Western rational tradition and attempting to turn Asians into Europeans. The Western Rational Tradition was unable to prevent the World Wars, which effectively undermined its authority at home as well as in the colonies. It was unable to prevent the rise of dictatorships in the heartlands of Europe where it was supposed to have established itself most securely. Ironically, it was through the willing cooperation of representatives of that Western Rational Tradition that these dictatorships could not only succeed but

even receive support from the institution most typically its creation, the modern universities. The list goes on. The disintegration of societies, the large-scale break-up of human relationships, the destruction of the natural environment — the Western Rational Tradition has not been able to prevent any of these, or to offer solutions to humankind how to overcome them.

Proponents of the Western Rational Tradition like to give it credit for the development of parliamentary democracy and 'value-free' science. The only alternative to this tradition, which they seem to know of, are authoritarian government and theocratic 'faith', the condition from which the Western Rational Tradition liberated Western Europeans in early modern times. Asian alternatives are rarely considered, and more often than not rejected as unworkable in the West, which is not willing to sacrifice its rational and liberal traditions. Simplistically, the 'other' is conceived as total negation of one's own self. The 'other' to the specific scientific Western notion of rationality has to be irrationality; the 'other' to parliamentary, party-based democracy must be 'autocracy'. That type of thinking neither recognizes the limits of these specific historic forms of 'rationality' and 'freedom', nor the vast range of alternative 'rationalities' and forms of good government found elsewhere and in other historic periods. While it is becoming increasingly clear that the Western Rational Tradition is no longer viable and that liberal democracy based on the political party

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system has become often a travesty of itself, there is of course, little willingness to return to the *status quo ante*. One does not have to.

Those of us Westerners, who decided to go into Asian Studies did so (in many cases) not because of some romantic attraction to ancient Asian poetry and art, but because of a felt need for a widening of the intellectual (and practical) horizon of Western culture. From information picked up before making Asian Studies our specialty we recognized that here was an intellectual tradition and a way of life that deserved respect and attention and that could possibly teach us something about our own institutions and about humankind in general. The proven long-term stability of many Eastern societies, the ideal of harmony of human relationships, the intuitive depths of understanding expressed in its literatures are not just 'facts' to be registered, or 'exotica' to be marvelled at, but human achievements that must be studied for the sake of survival of humankind. While often enough failing to live up to these ideals, these traditional Asian societies nevertheless possessed parameters for the 'good life' that had validity, and a sure sense for enduring values.

To sharpen the focus to the specific rationality that characterized the Western Rational Tradition and that clearly has proven inadequate, the Indian notion of *jñāna* provides an alternative that is neither 'irrational', nor simply another variety of instrumental reason. It is a depth-dimension of 'reason' in which the

theoretical and the practical join, free from many of the shortcomings of Western Enlightenment rationality, such as its anti-religious animus, which can be explained only by the single-minded Western identification of 'religion' with an authoritarian and clericalized Christian Church.

Jñāna allows us to expand the range of rationality, which has been narrowed down time and again during the last few centuries, till it became completely identified with formalized logic and mathematics. To be sure, also in Indian traditions attempts were made to narrow down the meaning of *jñāna* to sect-specific understandings of it. However, Indian mainstream tradition was always able to keep *jñāna* open.

Jñāna allows us to re-connect rationality with reality, overcoming the truncated rationality of the modern West, which bracketed out the source and end of all human thought. There is no need for the pathetic dichotomy between philosophy and theology, whose representatives are more concerned with building walls between each other than addressing real issues of substance. An appeal to *jñāna* is not an appeal to right-wing politics, obscurantism, oppression and intellectual dishonesty. It is an appeal to the humane in thought and deed, to the integrity of thought and life, the continuity of consciousness and reality. While it contains elements of both 'faith' and 'science' as understood in the Western tradition, it is different from both and overarches them.

For the average person *jñāna* will appear in the form of *jijñāsā* — a reaching out to understand rather than the possession of definite ‘wisdom’. The existential nature of *jñāna* forbids it to have it expressed in dogmas and formulae. Although such formulae have been attempted — e.g. the Advaitic *brahma satyam jagat mithyā* — the Advaitic understanding of *jñāna* is not necessarily the only one and the formula can be interpreted in many different ways. *Jijñāsā* as constantly renewed attempt to reach *jñāna* — a search informed by some inkling, a spark of illumination, some kind of spiritual gravity — is the response to new challenges and questions from the level of *jñāna*.

Whatever flaws his attempt may have had (and all *jijñāsā* is flawed) Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan may serve as an example of a *jijñāsu* of our time — someone who qualified as traditional Vedāntāchārya by virtue of commenting upon the *Bhagavadgītā*, the Upanishad-s and the *Brahmasutra* and who, in addition (and partly in his commentaries) engaged in the important questions of the age and day and gave advice to high and low on how to deal with them. Less conspicuously, many contemporary Vedāntin-s have done and are doing this as well. Vedāntic *jñāna* will remain alive only in the ongoing *jijñāsā*-s of those who look into themselves as well as into the world around them and try to match the two visions.

The exemplary character of *jñāna* consists in its synthesis of object and subject knowledge, its refusal to divide the

world into fact and value, its insistence on rationality as reality, which does not exclude anything. It combines an insight into nature with reflection, objective knowledge with self-cognition. It implies and demands an ethic, a discipline as antecedent to its application. By seeing *ātma-jñāna* as irreducibly linked to *brahma-jñāna*, and both as the depth-level of any type of knowledge, it infuses into the human drive towards knowing the dimension of the *unum necessarium*, the one thing needed to save ourselves, and the world in which we live.

II. Historicity and ‘Life-Historicity’

For every modern educated humanist ‘historicity’ is central to any kind of hermeneutics (Campbell, 1992). For those subscribing to it there are no ‘eternal truths’ to be investigated, but only historical expressions, historical contexts and historical roots to everything, especially to the religious traditions. The very use of the word ‘traditions’ instead of ‘religions’ may be indicative of this historicity-consciousness. While agreeing with much of what historical consciousness has taught us, we may add the perspective of ‘life-historicity’, especially when dealing with literary expressions of Indian religions. People are either baffled or otherwise react negatively against the other-worldliness found in many Vedāntic writings that seem to express disregard for nature, life, youth — all the things that are highest ‘values’ for us (post-)moderns. Critics seem to forget that these texts were never meant

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to be read by the uninitiated and were not intended for them. As part of the hermeneutical presuppositions of interpreting such texts, one will have to accept the qualifications demanded by the writers. That may militate against the 'modern' prejudice which assumes that everyone is or ought to be in a position of reading/understanding any text whose grammar and vocabulary he or she knows. It also goes against the 'post-modern' prejudice that disregards any and all intentionality of authors as inhibiting the limitless freedom of the reader to read out of, or into, the text whatever one likes.

Underlying these assumptions is egalitarianism gone too far. While one requires training and a licence to be permitted to clean rooms or to sell newspapers, when it is a matter of interpreting the most difficult matters concerning nature, humankind and God, every person is considered equally (un-)qualified. Again, it seems appropriate to expect a young person to do elementary and high school mathematics before enrolling in university courses. However, when it is a question of reading Vedāntic texts, any or no qualification seems sufficient. Behind such attitudes lies, of course, profound disrespect for this kind of knowledge, disregard for the unknown, lack of appreciation for anything that does not translate into cents and dollars.

Jñāna, as understood by the Hindu tradition, is 'life-historical', i.e. it does not reflect 'everyman's idea of the world' and it is assumed to arise only at the end of a

long process of mental and spiritual maturation. It is 'privileged' knowledge, even 'hierarchical' knowledge, but not in the sense of a 'Herrschaftswissen', i.e. knowledge used to control and exploit for one's own purposes either humans or nature. Admission to this kind of training requires ethical as well as intellectual qualifications. The very interest in *jñāna* presupposes a certain nobility of mentality and it gives an upward direction to a person's intellectual search.

The *Aparokshānubhūti*, a standard treatise on Advaita Vedānta, ascribed to Śankara, details the presuppositions for *jñāna*-seeking in the following manner: As pre-preparation it requires 'worship of God' (*Haritoshana*), austerities (*tapas*) and fulfilment of obligations appropriate to one's *varna* and one's stage in life (*āśrama*). Preparation properly speaking requires detachment (*vairāgya*), discrimination (*viveka*), ethical virtues (*śamadamādishatkasampatti*) and interest in emancipation (*mumukshā*). Only then can one embark on the quest for *jñāna* in the hope of gaining insight into reality.

The way in which these preconditions are formulated requires already life-historicity as 'hermeneutics'; otherwise they sound offensive or 'impossible'. A Western author in a recent article dealing with Hindu attitudes to nature took offence at the way the *Aparokshānubhūti* defined *vairāgya*: 'It is not difficult to imagine what attitudes towards nature our taxi-driver might learn if he chanced to read, or hear a sermon based on verse four of this text: "Pure non-attachment

is disregard for all objects — from the god Brahmā down to plants and minerals — like the indifference one has towards the excrement of a crow.” Would this inspire him to revere nature as spiritual life, or would it rather teach him the irrelevance of nature to spiritual life?’ (Nelson, 1991).

In the light of the foregoing it should be clear that a text like the *Aparokshānubhuti* was not aimed at taxi-drivers, to begin with. It was meant for novices in an Āśrama, people intent on making the search for ultimate truth, their sole occupation. It was clearly not meant to teach environmentalism, however noble that may be. Surely some Śankara texts could be found that would be more suitable for that purpose. If a present-day Śankarāchārya were asked to address a gathering of environmentalists, he probably would not quote *Aparokshānubhuti* but would say something along the lines of Śankara’s commentary to *Brahmasutrabhāshya* I.1.2. To get to the core of the matter: Our Western critic seems to have misunderstood the very intention of the text quoted. Far from denigrating nature and instilling indifference towards nature in the sense in which the Western outsider understands it, the text tries to promote *vairāgya* (as it explicitly says), i.e. an attitude that refrains from physical and emotional appropriation of nature for selfish purposes. It discourages all graspingness and does so by employing an effective metaphor. One is not likely to induce a spirit of renunciation in someone by describing

that which one is told to renounce as the most valuable thing in the world. That would be perverse.

Someone whose major concern is still with the world — and this is not only a legitimate but a necessary concern for the *grhastha* — will not be able to appreciate *vairāgya* and should not practise it. However, not only in Śankara’s, but in every age many people become progressively disillusioned, disappointed, disaffected with ‘normal life’ as they grow older and wiser. A person normally earns little gratitude for the good deeds done throughout a long life. The daily grind involved in making a living even in good times wears people thoroughly out. Most people have to fight even for minimal recognition of their worth. Wars, famines and bad times in general that so many have to live through in addition, are not helping to create an impression that ordinary life is just one great feast. The kind of pseudo-heaven, which Disney-worlds try to create has to be paid for with hard dollars, and the sort of eat-your-cake-and-have-it religion of American televangelists will turn off each and every thinking person.

Vedānta, however, is a thinking person’s religion. *Vicāra*, reflection, thought, deliberation is the means to *jñāna*. The ‘interest’ that informs this kind of search is circumscribed by the questions to which *jñāna* is helping to find answers: ‘Who am I? How is this world created? And who is its creator? Of what is the world made?’ These kinds of questions are neither answered by

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religions, as normally understood, nor by science. But they are the decisive questions. They require a kind of rationality that is different from both 'faith' and 'instrumental reason'.

Jñāna is 'life-historical' also insofar as it considers the 'ethic' of a person as an indispensable condition for 'knowledge'. The claim to be on the way to truth can only be made after certain qualities of character have been established — freedom from passion, from egotism, from ambition — otherwise it is sheer hypocrisy. *Jñāna* would also expose the fallacy of a 'value-free' science: Knowledge is a value by and in itself and truth-search is a value-orientation. If it is not, it is a perversion. *Jñāna* could not be used to support the machinations of a criminal government, as science can do very well, as we all know. Mahatma Gandhi could serve as a contemporary example for *jñāna*: His life, which he described as 'Experiments with Truth' was a contemporary *brahma-jijñāsā*. Gandhi was dedicated to serving his people in a very concrete and practical way. But he also knew that this service was contingent on his ability to 'live the truth', on his inner connection with the ultimate, on the purity of his motives, and on the ethical character of his actions. The proof for the truth of a thought of any depth is not its logical coherence but the life of the author who stands behind it. The 'value-freedom' of science is the secular equivalent to the medieval Church's notion of the efficacy of sacraments *ex opere operato*. It absolves the

authors from any ethical responsibility for their actions — and does not convince anybody. In matters of spirit the spirit matters!

Conclusion:

Brahmajijñāsā as an effort towards 'meaningful knowledge', as reality-search and as ethical orientation can be real only in living persons, not in formulae or institutions. *Brahma-jijñāsā* is not an excuse to withdraw from the real life-concerns of one's time. Quite the contrary, it implies an engagement at a much deeper level and with a much greater stake in the outcome. There was practical wisdom in the traditional Hindu provision that only a person who had fulfilled all the usual obligations towards family and society was entitled to *brahmajijñāsā*. While the inner and outer independence of the *vānaprastha* and the *samnyāsi* was essential, the search itself was seen as of utmost importance for family and society. Such mature seekers based their search on concrete knowledge and experience of 'real life'. They did not become 'other-worldly' in the wrong sense, i.e. they did not imagine a parallel world without the problems of this world, but they plumbed the ultimate dimension of the world we all know or believe to know.

Brahmajijñāsā is not so much the preserve of professional philosophers as of the intellectual, spiritual, moral quest of mature people with all kinds of backgrounds. In our age it would be especially the scientists who, in their search for truth about nature have reached limits of

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objective knowledge and who have become aware of the ethical dimensions of their undertaking. They would be eminently qualified for *brahma-jijñāsā* and to throw light from this search onto the ordinary world in which we live.

Among the traditional reflections, which were considered as leading to *jñāna* there were topics that have occupied all scientists for their lifetime. However, the crucial question, a question usually considered with the appropriate seriousness only at a somewhat advanced age, is 'Who am I?' Indian tradition provides a variety of answers to this question, differentiated according to the level of consciousness a person has reached. However, at the ultimate level, the *turiya*, the answer to this question coincides with the question of what is reality. Not in megalomaniac egotism but in

complete abandonment of the small 'I'-consciousness in the universal consciousness: the *tat* and the *tvam*, the *ātman* and the *brahman* become one and the same, because there is only one reality.

Jñāna is Hinduism's greatest gift to the world and Hindus will earn the respect and gratitude of the world for keeping *brahma-jijñāsā* alive. The world needs it and seeks it. In the context of the most recent ecological theory *ātma-jñāna*, Self-Realization, is emerging as prime motive for ecologically responsible action (Zimmermann, 1994). If Hinduism would turn just into another one of those clerical institutions that claim political power on the basis of a dogmatically narrowed down religious tradition, it will become untrue to its own Self and will betray its real mission to this world of ours. ✧

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Living Theosophy

LINDA OLIVEIRA

The Contemporary World — Are there Causes for Optimism?

It would be easy to become disheartened — even positively crushed — about the state of the world today, if we were to limit our awareness to the news stories we hear every day. This is not to deny that human suffering exists. Suffering was so accurately diagnosed as a common human condition by the Buddha a few thousand years ago, and is a part of the reality of worldly life. Suffering is a fact, whether it applies to human individuals, families, local communities, specific cultures, nations or to the global situation. A pessimistic view of life on this planet today is not the exclusive province of perennial cynics, but has also become part of the permanent mindset of many others.

However, it is important to take into account several additional considerations:

Alongside with suffering, good, even marvellous, things also happen in the world every day. Even the more significant of these tend not to be given much space by the media, for a variety of reasons. It is suggested here that in effect

we are presented with an incomplete and lopsided view of the truth about our world. Dollar-driven sensationalism is the order of the day.

It seems that evolution is an *immensely* slow process, whether it relates to universes, planets or human beings. The Wisdom teachings affirm that the evolution of a human being is the ongoing ‘project’ of lifetimes on earth.

Admittedly, not all members of the Theosophical Society subscribe to the teaching of reincarnation but, if we take it into account, then a pessimistic view of humanity by many at this time is relocated within a broader perspective. This teaching will never excuse certain types of behaviour. However, it is a reminder that we humans have a long, long road ahead with a gradual emergence of our latent divinity. Considering the possibility of reincarnation may help us to be a little less judgemental about others.

Furthermore, it is said that the long human journey inexorably leads us to that state which is often referred to as ‘Self-realization’ and to liberation from the wheel of birth and rebirth. The Wisdom

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teachings suggest that there will be further choices available at that point, one of which is the hallowed Bodhisattva Path — that choice through which an individual renounces the bliss of Nirvāna out of pity and compassion for all sentient beings, until there is no more suffering. This must be the ultimate sacrifice.

Dharma

The teaching of *dharma* is pertinent here. It is commonly taught that this is an individual preserve; that we each have our *own dharma*. Just what does the term mean? It is commonly translated into English as ‘duty’, yet *dharma* is much more than that. The word is a Sanskrit term, derived from the root *dhr* which means ‘to establish’, ‘to hold’, ‘to support’, ‘to sustain’, ‘to bear’. *Dharma* is given many nuances of meaning in English including equity, justice and conduct, in addition to duty. This may be a little confusing but *dharma* also has a secondary meaning: ‘an essential or characteristic quality or peculiarity’. Therefore, we can think of *dharma* as *those actions which sustain our essential or characteristic quality*, or establishing ourselves in the Truth of what we are.

Life provides each one of us with a range of opportunities to draw out our *dharma* or essential nature. The Wisdom teachings suggest that these opportunities span the course of many lives. It is up to us how we utilize them. *Dharma* may be unique for each individual but perhaps there is a broad ‘dharmic principle’ which all humanity has in common, for *dharma* has also been described as *our duty to the*

world, which is so very relevant when we consider the current state of the planet. Each of us may carry this out in different ways and to a different extent, but every little bit surely helps. Some assistance proffered to a person or group of individuals in need may be an important aspect of this duty. Yet the Wisdom teachings also maintain that our human actions at subtler levels are *far* more potent again than physical actions. HPB certainly pointed this out. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider seriously that our thoughts and feelings are also potentially important tools for service.

The Last Quarter of a Century

Another teaching in the theosophical tradition is that, in the last quarter of a century, a special impetus is given by those Great Ones who work behind the scene to help human evolution onwards. This can manifest in a range of events which may stimulate the evolutionary process, as some individuals receptive to such an impetus are prepared to act in specific altruistic ways. Members would no doubt have various views about what occurrences could have been the result of such unseen efforts in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Here is just one example which may fall into this category. Consider the following:

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. . . . The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity and beauty is a sacred trust . . .

We must decide to live with a sense of

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universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. . . .

Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world.

Evolution. Responsibility. Life. Diversity. Beauty. Sacred trust. Do these words, and the general sentiments expressed, sound familiar to students of Theosophy? Could they have been written by a Theosophist? 'Yes', many would say. In fact, this extract is part of the Preamble to that magnificent Earth Charter which was released by the Earth Charter Commission in 2000. That Charter is described as the product of 'a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural conversation about common goals and shared values'. In fact, it was in 1987 that the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development first issued a call for the creation of such a charter that would incorporate fundamental principles for sustainable development. Its evolution therefore took place within the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The Charter incorporates a number of main principles, each including several salient points. These principles are: 1. Respect and care for the community of life, 2. Ecological integrity, 3. Social and economic justice, and 4. Democracy, non-violence and peace.

Let us return to some of the words used in the passage quoted from the Charter's Preamble.

Some Points to Consider

Vitality: Earth's vitality is sustained by *prāna*, that life-principle or vital energy which is commonly linked to physical matter but is also understood to permeate subtler fields. Through mismanagement of planetary resources, however, that vitality is being curtailed, quite severely, in various ways. One of our most important collective responsibilities at present is to consider our individual contributions to the global environment, and the mental environment, and therefore to the vitality of the planet.

Diversity: Earth is our collective home and is indeed diverse, entrusted at this stage to the stewardship of humanity. The diversity on this planet spans all the kingdoms of Nature. We may relish the opportunity to observe and find out about the many species in the animal kingdom, perhaps through television documentaries. Yet diversity in human nature and human culture is not so well tolerated, for complex reasons. Anyone who does not conform to the mainstream values of our age in various respects is almost invariably regarded as an oddity! Also, diversity is being diminished through the emergence of an increasingly global mass conditioning. This underscores the necessity for a culture of independent thinking.

Beauty: The earth, particularly in its more pristine locations is awesomely beautiful. However, it is too easy to overlook or even forget that beauty in day to day life if we become stale and are not receptive to it. True beauty has its own timeless quality and can be a source of

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great joy, renewal and upliftment. Who can forget that magical moment when astronauts landed on the moon and this magnificent globe in all its glory was beamed back to our televisions as one seamless, unfragmented whole?

As the Preamble to the Earth Charter asserts, the protection of Earth's vitality, diversity and beauty *is* indeed a sacred trust. Here is another passage from it:

Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about *being* [italics mine] more, not having more.

Yes, fundamental change is needed in order to address major problems on the planet. Such change needs to be lasting and robust. The notion of fundamental change is no stranger to the serious spiritual aspirant. Such a radical change requires permanent access to our individuality, transpersonal Self, inner Self, higher Self, upper triad — whatever term we prefer. But it amounts essentially to one thing — becoming progressively less self-centred and more universal and compassionate in our living. Much theosophical literature provides various keys to help this process take place.

And what an insightful inclusion to the Preamble of the Earth Charter — the statement that human development is about *being* more, rather than having more! This is clearly a pointer away from materialism, towards spirituality. It suggests a more spiritual approach to life

in which quality is more important than quantity, and in which unsatiated greed at one extreme is transmuted into a genuine contentment and appreciation of what we have, knowing that ultimately all really *is* well.

There is a third, rather extraordinary quotation in the Preamble which is noteworthy:

Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

According to the Hindu tradition, we are said to be in Kali Yuga, an age of spiritual darkness and material advance. Considering this and the materialistic state of the world, the fact that such statements as those mentioned above appear in a Charter for all humanity at this time is inspirational!

Reverence is common to all spiritual traditions. To revere means to venerate. When we venerate something it means we deeply understand its preciousness, hold it sacred. There is also an acknowledgment in this passage of the mystery of being, implying that there are dimensions to life which we cannot fathom or access, yet which hold immeasurable value.

'Humility regarding the human place in nature' is a reminder that humanity is not greater than any other life form. We tend to take far too literally the notion that

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we have dominion over the Earth. As *The Voice of the Silence* so poignantly says, 'Help nature and work on with her; and nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.' What is crucial here is that we have enormous responsibility because we have that gift of *manas*, the mind principle, and *can* make a difference.

What really inspired the Earth Charter? Was it indeed, perhaps, part of an inner impetus forward in the last quarter of the last century?

The suggestion that in the long term there is cause for optimism does not mean that we should have blinkers on. There are numerous opportunities to give assistance of some sort. The quotations above from the Earth Charter are only one reminder that good things *are* happening in the world and that there is, indeed, cause for a certain cheerfulness and confidence in the future. This Charter has been disseminated to all sectors of society throughout the world and must have had a degree of impact already, as a potent

reminder of our collective responsibility. Its main principles are broad ranging, theosophical and universal.

We may hear relatively little about the many positive things happening today, but information is there if we are interested, especially on a number of websites. An optimistic outlook on life, tempered with common sense, can help to counteract the excessive negativity in the world.

Emily Sellon, an American member, encapsulated the optimism of this world view in *The Pilgrim and the Pilgrimage*. She said:

every Theosophist has to be an optimist, because we feel that nothing is lost, nothing is wasted. . . . This may sound simplistic, but the theosophical view of human nature and of the world is one of ever-increasing fulfilment.

When the teachings of the Perennial Wisdom become deeply embedded in one's consciousness, life takes on a new vibrancy and lustre, undiminished by the short-term vicissitudes of a single life. ✧

. . . birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

BUT ah! How patient they were for the most part, how sadly, pathetically patient, this crucified Christ, Humanity; wrongs that would set my heart and my tongue afire would be accepted as a matter of course. O blind and mighty people, how my heart went out to you; trampled on, abused, derided, asking so little and needing so much; so pathetically grateful for the pettiest services; so loving and so loyal to those who offered you but their poor services and helpless love. Deeper and deeper into my innermost nature ate the growing desire to succour, to suffer for, to save. I had long given up my social reputation, I now gave up with ever-increasing surrender ease, comfort, time; the passion of pity grew stronger and stronger, fed by new sacrifice, and each sacrifice led me nearer and nearer to the threshold of that gateway beyond which stretched a path of renunciation I had never dreamed of, which those might tread who were ready wholly to strip off self for Man's sake, who for Love's sake would surrender Love's return from those they served, and would go out into the darkness for themselves that they might, with their own souls as fuel, feed the Light of the World.

Annie Besant

Henry Steel Olcott and Magnetic Healing

JULIO GERARDO POMAR

COLONEL H. S. Olcott and Mme Helena Petrovna Blavatsky were well known around the world as the co-founders of the Theosophical Society in 1875. As the President-Founder of the Society, Col. Olcott travelled for thirty-two years throughout India, Asia, Europe and America giving lectures on Theosophy and establishing bases of the organization he had helped to found. It has been said that if Theosophy and the Theosophical Society expanded around the world, it was due to the indefatigable work of Col. Olcott, an organizer, lecturer and public relations man. The role of Mme Blavatsky was that of writer, ideologist and spiritual master.

Col. Olcott always professed and practised high ideals. He had great ethical objectives and a total devotion to his ideals. Many texts have been written about his life. His example of self-sacrifice and unselfish behaviour have been emphasized many times; but the best words that define his life and personality were written by KH, one of the Mahatmas behind the TS:

Him we can trust under *all* circumstances,

and his faithful service is pledged to us come well, come ill. My dear Brother, my voice is the echo of impartial justice. Where can we find an equal devotion? He is one who never questions, but obeys; who may make innumerable mistakes out of excessive zeal but never is unwilling to repair his fault even at the cost of the greatest self-humiliation; who esteems the sacrifice of comfort and even life something to be cheerfully risked whenever necessary; who will eat any food, or even go without; sleep on any bed, work in any place, fraternize with any outcast, endure any privation for the cause.¹

The figure of Olcott as President-Founder dominated almost all the public attention he received, but he had a versatile mind, and many interests and activities. For example, he was a very successful agricultural engineer of those days, who left written works on agricultural subjects. He was also a professional journalist and wrote many articles for different newspapers in his country. He is well known for the interest he had in authentic Spiritism and made investigations on this issue. His interest in this

Mr Julio Gerardo Pomar is the chief worker of the TS in Peru.

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field led to his Theosophical relationship with Mme Blavatsky. He was also a lawyer and an outstanding auditor in the US Army, working against corruption related to goods in military commands. He was decorated and named Colonel for his success and efficiency. Besides, he was a remarkable member of American Freemasonry and obtained the highest level in this fraternal order.

One more area of his versatile life is his practice as a magnetizer, hypnotizer and curer — medical practices also known as mesmerism or magnetic healing. He made very valuable personal studies, practices and investigations in this field as a disciple, or follower of the Viennese doctor, Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815).

Dr Mesmer is considered the initiator or father of modern clinical hypnosis, in spite of the attacks made against him by the medical circles of that age. He believed all living beings have a fluid that supports life and this vital fluid has a magnetic nature that may transmit itself voluntarily. The fluid, which circulates in the nerves, works immediately as a healing agent of nerve and physical diseases. Mesmer called this nerve fluid 'animal magnetism'. Dr Mesmer was renowned and successful in Europe. He had many followers but many detractors were against him as well. These accused him of being a 'charlatan and cheater'. The anger against him was due to economic, corporate and scientific reasons.

In 1784 the King of France appointed a scientific commission to study Dr

Mesmer's methods and healings, and after much disturbance and commotion, the commission expressed its verdict that the healings were true but not because of animal magnetism, but because of the 'patients' imagination'.² Mesmer was discredited and forever forgotten, but curiously his ideas, the so-called mesmerism and the magnetic healings, spread round the world under different names. His methods are practised by different alternative medical and religious groups, and persist to this day, although Dr Mesmer, the inventor of this method, is not mentioned at all.

Col. Olcott did not think about practising magnetism when he arrived in India in 1879, even though he had demonstrated magnetism and hypnosis in order to interest the public in Theosophy.

I deeply knew magnetism and magnetic healings since thirty years ago, but I did not practise it except for a few experiments that I made at the beginning.³

But three years later when he was in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in order to confront Christian missionaries that were trying to erase the spiritual legacy of the Buddha, and when he was devoted body and soul to the promotion and reorganization of the Buddhist religion, there happened an event that obliged him to use mesmerism. A peasant was healed after drinking water from a well and rumours started in the village that the water had miraculous properties, like in Lourdes; Olcott's strategic mind anticipated what could happen: Real healings can be made

Henry Steel Olcott and Magnetic Healing

once the village is under hypnotic suggestion. This worried him very much because the ignorant Buddhist village might abandon their religion and turn to Catholicism.

Therefore, Olcott tried to convince the Buddhist high clergy to heal sick people but the monks, terrified by the idea, said they did not know anything about 'spiritual' healings. So, Olcott was forced to heal sick people and organize Theosophical and Buddhist conferences for fifteen months, until the end of 1893.

The report is in his book *Old Diary Leaves* where his healing faculties are detailed. He cured paralytics, the deaf and the blind, rheumatic and possessed persons, and many kinds of sicknesses. These kinds of healings, also mentioned in the Gospels, seem miraculous, and inevitably create opinions. Do miraculous healings exist? Or are they the outcome of a capable management of knowledge and techniques that occidental medicine has rejected because of its completely materialistic approach to reality?

Olcott tried to find explanations for the causes of the healings:

Magnetic healings are not due to faith necessarily, but to a vital aura transfusion (from operator) to the patient.⁴

The Colonel continued with Mesmer's theory on the vital fluid, distinguishing them from those of the English doctor, James Braid, who abjured Mesmer and gave the hypothesis of suggestion as the real cause of healings and denied the existence of any other type of subtle

energy. The Colonel stated:

My healings do not consist of hypnotic suggestion, but of true psychopathy, honest and old fashioned.⁵

Col. Olcott successfully cured hundreds of people during those fifteen months. But, many of his healings also failed and hundreds of them were just alleviated temporarily, probably because he was always on the move and could not give his patients regular treatment. As he was curing a lot of patients every day, he became debilitated, and thought about reducing his work. Without any intention, he enlarged Mesmer's theory of vital fluid. According to his observations, some patients needed just a short treatment, and others recovered their health permanently in just thirty minutes; others needed several hours in different sessions, notwithstanding which, healing was temporary and incomplete. He developed his theory of 'sympathy among fluids'; if the nerve fluid of both operator and patient was compatible or linked, it was convenient to proceed with treatment as the cost of energy and time of the operator would be less and the treatment more effective.

The effort was not worthwhile if both fluids were not compatible — like an electric current that cannot cross a body that is not a good conductor. He found this out through simple tests made by imparting his own energy to many non-compatible patients. In that way, he saved his nervous and physical energy and the time that would have been lost treating non-compatible patients.

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The magnetic healing cycle in Col. Olcott's life ended in 1893, due to nervous exhaustion and his Master's orders. However, he achieved his objectives of preventing Christian missionaries from weakening further the Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka. Moreover, he alleviated many people's sufferings and left useful teachings to magnetic healers or mesmeric practitioners and students. We now know this kind of healing as 'prānic' and it is used with other techniques

and combinations, like suggestion, clinical hypnosis, hypo-analysis, etc.

The day Col. Olcott died — 17 February 1907 — the Masters presented themselves and thanked him for his loyal services and valuable contribution to the spiritual progress of humanity. All of us who admire him for his spirituality, multiple capacities and proven unselfishness, should also thank him for the Theosophical Society and for all that he left to us. ✧

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The Dwelling of the Tathāgata is the great compassionate heart within all living beings.

Saddharma-pundarika

Books of Interest

MAN AND HIS BODIES by Annie Besant, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, 2008, pp.167.

This book, the seventh of a series of manuals, 'not written for the eager student whom no initial difficulties can daunt . . . seeks to make plain some of the great truths that render life easier to bear and death easier to face'.

The author states (p.5): 'By man I mean the living, conscious, thinking Self, the individual; by bodies, the various casings in which this Self is enclosed, each casing enabling the Self to function in some definite region of the universe.'

This book has been very popular with more than one generation of students and has been wisely used by many in their life and relationships, in the true spirit of philanthropy in serving mankind. Without going into the comprehensive, in-depth rendering which the author has accomplished so well, reference is made here

only to the last chapter, 'The Man', which sums up this philanthropic attitude:

This is the ultimate triumph of man. All that I have spoken of would be worthless were it gained only for the narrow self that we recognize as self down here. All the effort put forth would not be worth the taking if it only set us at last on an isolated pinnacle apart from all the sinning, suffering selves, instead of leading us to the place where they and we are one.

In this lofty and noble objective, Theosophy is linked with the First Object of the TS, namely, 'To form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. . . .' This link between Theosophy and the Theosophical Society which is 'to popularize a knowledge of Theosophy' needs to be grasped firmly.

This book is of great value in the practical world which is beset with violence and sorrow.

A. KANNAN

THE ASTRAL BODY AND OTHER ASTRAL PHENOMENA by Arthur E. Powell, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, 2009, pp.265.

Theosophical literature has opened 'a new continent of thought' for intellectuals around the world. It is aimed at providing more and more valid information about the manner and method of manifestation

and the correspondence as well as identity of the human being with the universe. These pieces of information were available to the world, scattered in the sacred scriptures of different nations, but were forgotten and went into oblivion for various reasons. The need for these ideas in a language and style that suits the contemporary times was realized by the

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leaders of the Theosophical Society. As the literary output at a certain point in time had become too voluminous, a need for consolidation and thematic presentation was found necessary. Arthur E. Powell, the writer of this book and many others in the series, had a keen interest in attempting this role of a compiler and dedicated the work 'to all those whose painstaking labour and researches have provided the materials out of which it has been compiled'. He drew material for these series from Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater primarily, and occasionally from others.

'A condensed synthesis of the information' available together with a description and explanation of the astral world and its phenomena was brought into this text. This was first published in 1926 and many reprints were brought out since then.

Divided into twenty-nine chapters, besides the Introduction and the Index, the text furnishes the general description of the Astral body, its composition and structure, and its relationship with the Astral plane of Nature. A description of the plane, its inhabitants and their continuing areas of work is vividly given. The continuity of consciousness both in the dream and after-death states, various modes of phenomena leading up to astral death and rebirth are stated. Certain ways of developing the astral capacities and correlating them to the faculty of clairvoyance are provided. The intervention of invisible agents in human affairs is specially dealt with in a chapter entitled 'Invisible Helpers'. The practice

of simple virtues like single-mindedness, self-control, calmness, knowledge and love are indicated as the entry points into the band of Invisible Helpers.

The straightforward and crisp presentation of the subject makes the text readable and profitable for one's inner life.

MAN: VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE by C. W. Leadbeater, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, 2004, pp.126.

C. W. Leadbeater, an exponent of Theosophical philosophy backed by his clairvoyant powers 'to see things as they are', has produced many books on occultism and hidden things. The book under review was first published in 1902, and translated into various languages. It is still in demand for the simple reason that it contains original information derived from personal investigation and deep study. The author takes for granted that 'clairvoyance' is a fact and 'proceeds to describe what is seen by its means'. He provides examples of different types of men as seen by trained clairvoyants and also three diagrams and twenty-two coloured illustrations. How the soul and its vehicles appear when examined clairvoyantly, and what the appearances in colour mean in terms of qualities and attitudes is clearly explained.

Beginning with the planes of nature, the author focuses upon the bodies we have, their origin and development, the impact of feelings and emotions on them, and how we could develop into

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Adepts. There is no dogmatic presentation and the points given are rational. The presentation helps understanding that human nature is a part of the divine nature. A study of man invariably takes one to the study of nature, the source,

and ultimately the Oneness, of all.

Ancient facts and laws are made available here in a terminology that is more contemporary and comprehensive to those who are keen to obtain knowledge leading to Wisdom. ✧

N. C. RAMANUJACHARY

This groggy time we live, this is what it is like:
A man goes to sleep in the town
where he has always lived, and he dreams
he is living in another town.
He believes the reality of the dream town.

The world is that kind of sleep.
The dust of many crumbled cities
settles over us like a forgetful doze,
but we are older than those cities.

We began as a mineral. We emerged into plant life
and into the animal state. Then into being human,
and always we have forgotten our former states,
except in early spring when we almost
remember being green again.

Humankind is being led along an evolving course,
through this migration of intelligences,
and though we seem to be sleeping,
there is an inner wakefulness that directs the dream.

It will eventually startle us back
to the truth of who we are.

Jalaluddin Rumi

Theosophical Work around the World

India

The international Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, and the Head of the Editorial Office at Adyar, Mr Pedro Oliveira, visited a number of Theosophical Lodges in India between 15 September and 6 October 2009. They first visited Kakinada, in Andhra Pradesh, on 15 September, where they addressed both the local TS Lodge and a well-attended meeting of both students and teachers at the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University. They then proceeded to Guntur on 16 September where they spoke to the members and the public at the Sri Krishna Lodge. Both Mrs Oliveira and Mr Oliveira addressed students and teachers at the Hindu College in that city. Their next stop was Hyderabad on 19 September where they spoke at three Lodges in that area: Hyderabad Theosophical Society, Secunderabad Lodge and the newly-formed Jñāna Bharati Lodge. All the meetings attracted a number of members as well as visitors.

Arriving in Nagpur, Maharashtra, on 24 September they spoke to the members of the Nagpur Theosophical Society and also addressed a public meeting co-organized by the Nagpur Lodge and the Senior Citizens Associations that was held at the Jñāneshwar Mandiram. In Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, Mr Pedro Oliveira delivered the annual I. K. Taimni

Memorial Lecture at Ananda Lodge on 27 September and the Vice-President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, gave a talk to the members. They also planted a tree each in the courtyard of the Lodge.

The Vice-President's lecture titles during the tour included: 'Theosophy: Hope for the 21st Century', 'The TS as a Deeply Humanitarian Organization' and 'The Significance of a Lodge of the Theosophical Society'. Mr Oliveira's titles included 'The Purpose of the TS', 'The Opportunity of this Life' and 'The Adepts' Dream'.

At the Indian Section Headquarters in Varanasi, Mr Oliveira gave a public talk on Dr Annie Besant's Birthday on 1 October and, together with the Vice-President, conducted a Study Camp on Mr N. Sri Ram's book *Seeking Wisdom* from 2–6 October which attracted more than 140 registrants mainly from parts of India outside Varanasi. The uplifting atmosphere of the Besant Hall at the Headquarters contributed to the spirit of listening and enquiry that pervaded the Study Camp.

Argentina

A national gathering was organized on 10–12 October 2009 by three Lodges of the TS in Argentina, namely San Lorenzo, Rosario and Casilda. It took place in the town of Casilda. The main theme was 'On Love'. The gathering was opened by

Theosophical Work around the World

Mrs Silvia Liliana Pastore, General Secretary of the Argentinian Section. In the first session participants explored the theme 'Divine Love as a Universal Pulsation. Channels through which the Divine Love flows'. The theme for the second session was 'What is true love? How can we develop it in ourselves? In

the art of living for others do we need discernment?' In their last session participants delved into the theme 'How does the energy of love manifest itself? What are the errors, failures and sins against love?' The gathering also included group work and plenary sessions as well as visits to places of cultural interest. ✧

On the 17th of November next the Septenary term of trial given the Society at its foundation in which to discreetly 'preach us' will expire. One or two of us hoped that the world had so far advanced intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the Occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research. Others — wiser as it would now seem — held differently, but consent was given for the trial. It was stipulated, however, that the experiment should be made independently of our personal management; that there should be no abnormal interference by ourselves. So casting about we found in America the man to stand as leader — a man of great moral courage, unselfish, and having other good qualities. He was far from being the best, but (as Mr. Hume speaks in HPB's case) — he was the best one available. With him we associated a woman of most exceptional and wonderful endowments. Combined with them she had strong personal defects, but just as she was, there was no second to her living fit for this work. We sent her to America, brought them together — and the trial began. From the first both she and he were given to clearly understand that the issue lay entirely with themselves. And both offered themselves for the trial for certain remuneration in the far distant future as — as K.H. would say — soldiers volunteer for a Forlorn Hope.

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett

To those unknown members of the Theosophical Society throughout the world
whose silent loyalty and sacrifice ensures to it the Masters' constant blessing.
Inscription on the Memorial at Adyar (Cover Picture)

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Date refers to the date of formation

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