

## UNITY CALLS — HOW DO WE ANSWER?

**Barend Voorham**

*(Summary of Public Lecture delivered on 2.1.2017)*

Suffering in the world is caused by the fact that humans maintain illusions in lieu of reality. Because theosophists want to stop the suffering in the world, we have to examine the nature of illusion.

Illusion means that the phenomenal world exists because a conscious force is working through it. Every manifestation has a beginning and therefore an end.

According to the philosophical concept of “objective idealism” something is real when we attribute reality to it. We attribute reality to transient things and therefore we suffer. The world today is, for a great part, characterized by separateness in thinking, which results in specific cultures, great difference in welfare, and so on.

By judging the external world on the driving force behind it, it is possible to recognize the illusory character of the phenomenal world. So a better world does not depend on the political situation, but on the state of mind of the people.

If one examines the phenomena intellectually (*manas*), then they are a reality

for you; if philosophically (*buddhi*), one knows the outer world is a projection of consciousness; and if religiously (*atman*), one sees the divine nature of everything, knowing that all phenomena come from the divine Source. When we have developed this highest vision, we know that, although the phenomena are an illusion, yet they are all divine as well, because they come forth from the same divine Source and are integral parts of the Cosmic Unity.

Nevertheless, we can never grasp the idea of Cosmic Unity *completely*. It is incomprehensible to conscious beings. But everyone can develop a view of Unity, although some have a greater view than others. Our perception of Unity is never complete. Therefore we should realize there should be no dogmatism whatsoever.

In reality, Unity exists and instead of striving for it, we should answer the call from Unity. That means working with Nature and perceiving the interconnectedness of all beings. Working against Nature is to cherish the

diversity. So unity and diversity are in our own consciousness.

Unity does not mean that everybody should have the same opinions, but it means awareness of the fact that we are in the core ONE. The more we find the oneness in ourselves, the better we can show others the way to Reality.

To get to know Unity, we have to imagine it. We should make a mind picture of Unity. Build up an ideal of the most harmonious world you can imagine. And live up to it. Answer the call of Unity.

Theosophical teachings cannot be understood without the concept of unity, which is the core of it. We should live and teach that unity. All theosophical teachings are arguments in favour of unity.

If theosophists can be *mentally* and

*spiritually* united, they will be better able to fulfill this noblest of all tasks. Then they will be a useful instrument for the Masters. Therefore, we have to build an ideal of the most perfect theosophical movement we can imagine, a good and open cooperation between all the theosophical organizations. See it before your spiritual eye. A powerful, international, yes *universal* movement of good, willing men and women with theosophical insight, working for the benefit of all beings. We will form a nucleus and attract others. Everybody will have access to Theosophy. That does not mean that all our literature is on the web, but that everybody who longs for knowledge and wisdom can find us and can get to know us personally. Thus, Theosophy will have its rightful place in the world.



## BEYOND ILLUSION

*(Summaries of Symposium Lectures delivered on 2.1.2017)*

### **Clemice Petter**

Much has been said and written about Truth. Many feel they know what it means to live a spiritual life. And they feel they know the way, the “practices” required, and how one is to reach, to come upon Truth. We easily forget what many teachings have pointed out. Jiddu Krishnamurti and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky have quoted the Kena Upanishad as saying that those who say they know, do not know.

The assumption that we know, may be the greatest illusion of all. If we look very closely into the history of

humanity, we will see that those who thought they knew, were sure of themselves and created formulas and moulds for life, and because they thought they knew, put themselves in the position of dictating how others should live, thereby bringing misery and corruption. Our social structure is built on the moulds of readymade answers to the challenges of life. Our educational systems are directed to shape the child’s mind in a predetermined direction. We assume we know what the correct way of life is, so we

train our children to be as miserable as we are.

Because we do not know freedom, we are afraid to let it flower; because we have been moulded in a certain pattern, we think that to follow that pattern is the way of life. Each one has his own formula about what others should do or be. Of course we do not apply our theories to ourselves, in our own life, but we want to apply them to others, we are sure about what is wrong in the world and how it has to be corrected, but we are helpless in our own home. We do not know how to end our sorrow, our daily uncertainties and deep fears, nor do we know how to talk with our children when they ask the

simplest and most innocent questions. The fact is that we do not know how to relate, how to live together in harmony and cooperation.

Very few, it seems. J. Krishnamurti travelled the world over for more than sixty years, explaining in a thousand different ways this deep teaching of Blavatsky. How many of us are capable of listening to it? No Teacher before Krishnamurti has gone so deeply explaining so much, in such a detailed way, the awakening of illusion and the means and ways of the mind — “the great slayer of the Real”. But, because his language is simple and he does not promise anything, very few are willing to listen.

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### **John Vorstermans**

As we explore Theosophy, we come across the idea that the world is not quite real. Some call it an illusion, not exactly what we perceive, yet the world we live in appears very real to each of us. We feel intensely pain and suffering, find ourselves caught in mental states of worry and anxiety, experiencing the world through our senses and believe all this to be real. Is this all an illusion?

From a scientific perspective, we know that our sense of sight and hearing show us only a limited spectrum of reality as proven through the instruments it has created, which show a much-expanded reality. The Ageless Wisdom also teaches other modes of perception not active for most of us, such as clairvoyance and clairaudience which are simply extensions of our senses.

Theosophical theory puts before us an expanded view of reality, one where we once were as gods in the universe. Over eons of involution into the human form we have become so focused on developing our human nature and senses that we have all but forgotten who we are, having become disconnected from our true nature to view a limited form of reality through our senses.

We are now at a stage in evolution where we are drawn by a deep impulse to rediscover who we are. Study and reflection of some of the sacred texts can lead one to explore a reality which lies beyond our psychological nature, can slowly break apart the illusory nature, and begin to gain a glimpse of a far more dynamic reality. However, it is like peeling an onion, overcoming

multiple layers of ideas and beliefs that prevent us from seeing the real. So it is an ongoing journey .

This process of unfolding our true nature is something we must each work through to know ourselves. H. P. Blavatsky suggests that this does not happen naturally as part of evolution, rather it requires effort on our part.

Fortunately, we have many resources to awaken our truer selves, found in many of the sacred texts, that give us methods of exploring ourselves, like constant self-examination, reflection on our reactions to life, concentration, meditation, chanting and many other to be practised with intention and persistence.

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### **Sonal Murali**

If there is one common thing that all of us desire — it is wholesomeness for our existence, because increasingly the world has stopped making sense to many. However, any attempt at wholesomeness is being continually nullified and sabotaged by an increasing sense of individuality and importance given to it today. Our life seems to consist of interaction between self and the external world, the inner and the outer, our existence in Existence itself, so we need to understand what is happening. The world that we perceive seems very real to us, actually the only reality that we know of. The sunrise, the fragrance of flowers, emotions, this theatre, all of us sitting here, it is all very real and it is corroborated by the fact that everyone here perceives it similarly.

In all spiritual traditions reality as we perceive it has been termed as illusion, or Maya. We perceive the world through the window of the senses. But the catch is that the window here is transparent, and we are not aware of it. So reality seems to be entirely subjective. We seem to be living in a simulated world created by

us — ‘a virtual self in a virtual reality’.

For each person the experience is only through his or her ego tunnel, the inner landscape that through consciousness is blending it all and giving it a cohesiveness, a centre which we call “self”, an eddy created in the stream of consciousness, as Krishnamurti would say. The small whirlpool is our log-in into the collective delusion.

Maya is most strange. Her nature is inexplicable and inscrutable. It operates by deception (*kapat*). *The Voice of the Silence* asks us to mistrust fancy’s false suggestions. It says, “Mistrust the senses, they are false. Look inward.”

It is only Right Knowledge constantly applied which will make us infer the effects of Maya. In the very perception of it, it will be dissolved. To become aware of it will put an end to it.

What is, then, beyond illusion?

Madame Blavatsky introduces the concept of “progressive awakenings”. As we rise in the scale of development we perceive that during the stages through which we have passed we mistook shadows for realities. And with the upward progress of the Ego,

a series of progressive awakenings take place, each advance brings with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached 'reality'. But only when we shall have reached the absolute Consciousness, and blended our own with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Maya. Krishnamurti has called it

“stepping out of the stream of consciousness.”

Then we would have found Unity and everlasting Peace. We would be in the world but not of it. The 'self' that was constantly in the throes of Maya, a perceived separation, would operate from compassion and empathy.

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## **A CALL TO UNITY**

*(Summaries of Symposium Lectures delivered on 3.1.2017)*

### **S. Sundaram**

In spite of all the intelligence and intellectual faculties that we are endowed with, we have failed to bring about peace, harmony, and unity in life; to live in harmony with Nature; or to live in righteousness and brotherhood. This is due to our limited, narrow outlook, and selfish attitude having blurred our vision, preventing an unveiled perception of life in its totality. The vital issue arises from our relationships and our minds.

In order to attain lasting peace, harmony, and unity one must have a clear perception of the reality of Universal Brotherhood and oneness of life in its immeasurable vastness and unfathomable depths. One has to have an implicit understanding of the essential unity of all life. No two things in manifestation are alike or identical and yet underlying them is the one life, one essence; the beauty lies in the independent identity and their interdependency.

Learning the art of leading an independent life and at the same time

respecting each other's role, function, and dharma will bring about a transformation in human relationships.

As each individual is an inseparable part of humanity at large, human effort towards peace and unity must begin at the individual level with individual initiative. What is needed is the individual's awareness towards universal responsibility, towards creating a positive and harmonious atmosphere for the welfare of all beings.

The Theosophical Society has been helping and encouraging its members to deepen and expand their understanding of the higher values of life. How theosophical objectives, tenets, perception and approach can help in dealing with some of the prevailing problems should be placed before the general public from time to time. How can we generate, promote and strengthen the spirit of selfless service? How can one rise above narrow considerations and live a dedicated and unselfish life? How can the bonds of unity and brotherhood be strengthened? How can we live in

harmony with a sense of oneness with all beings? These, and several such questions, may help us to understand where we actually stand and what

more requires to be done in order to channelize our creative energies and our various faculties in the right direction more effectively.

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### **Jenny Baker**

Of the three objects of the Society, it is the first, "To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour" that most unites the members of the Society. It also reflects the diversity of our membership living in all parts of the world and with different cultures and religions.

As students of theosophy we are encouraged to approach our theosophical lives in three ways. These are Theosophy as study, Theosophy as meditation and Theosophy as service. These three mirror the three forms of yoga depicted in the great work, the *Bhagavadgita*. In this inspiring book the Lord Krishna instructs the warrior Arjuna, as he is about to go into battle, on the three different paths that lead a sincere spiritual aspirant towards enlightenment: *jnana yoga* which is the

yoga of intellectual study and a knowledge of how to discriminate between the Real and the Unreal, *bhakti yoga* which is the yoga of devotion and meditation in which the student devotes all his or her work to the glory of the Divine, and *karma yoga* which is the yoga of selfless work and service to others.

Although these are separate paths, suited to various temperaments and life styles the ideal is for them to work together. Students of Theosophy should therefore study diligently, meditate sincerely, and serve humanity in whichever way is appropriate for them.

The theosophical nucleus can be thought of as the hub of a wheel whose spokes reach out in all directions. Each member of the society can be a 'spoke' whose duty is to let the world know of the existence of Theosophy.

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### **Patrizia Calvi**

The Law of laws is unity in everything, which means harmony, cooperation and helping each other; everything in the universe lives for everything else and for theosophists like us, it logically follows that we should lead lives that benefit humankind.

Taking a disinterested approach

brings sweet fruits. Once we have realized and achieved this, there will be a combination of peace, wisdom, light, and impersonal love within us that cannot be described in words.

To paraphrase *Light on the Path*, there is no doubt that inside us there is a "spirit of brotherhood": the light of

the world and the only light that can illuminate the Path. However, if we are unable to perceive it within ourselves, there is no point looking for it elsewhere, and perhaps even accusing others of lacking it.

The Theosophical Society is not just any association; we are expected to offer impartial brotherhood. We are the knights of universal brotherhood without distinctions. We all represent the Theosophical Society, but what is our state of mind? With what sort of motivation do we renew our pledge of

love for Life and the Masters every day? And what is our approach to our fellow brothers and sisters? Can we truly claim to talk authoritatively about brotherhood? Are we genuinely capable of testifying to this lofty ideal, first and foremost within our own association?

As theosophists, we cannot feign ignorance of the laws of life. We have had the privilege of encountering Eternal Wisdom and the responsibilities that come with this Wisdom are immense.

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## THEOSOPHY AROUND THE WORLD

The TS in **Canada**, with 118 members, has a new Lodge in Val-David, near Montreal, and they also appointed a new Treasurer. Also, new study centers were approved in Calgary and Nanaimo. Their annual general meeting was held in September in Quebec. Vice-president Robert Béland returned to Adyar last December and January to attend the School of the Wisdom and International Convention, and in July the Organizing Secretary attended the National Convention of the TS in America.

The TS in **Spain**, with 318 members in 14 Lodges and 6 study centers, held the 9th Silent Retreat guided by Trâm-Thi-Kim-Diêu in December, attended by 33 people. This year the indepth study was based on “The Golden Stairs” of H. P. Blavatsky. In late April, Carmen César held a seminar on “The Emerald Tablet”, attended by 25 members. In

August they had a Summer School in Sant Feliu de Guixols on “Meditation” with 108 participants, and the international lecturer Pablo Sender conducted sessions that were theoretical as well as practical.

The **Icelandic Section** membership increased by 15 this year to 262. Their website is both in Icelandic and English. Their Friday evening and Saturday after-noon meetings are advertised in the newspapers as free and open to the public. They had 45 meetings with 40 to 60 persons attending. After each Friday talk, people have an opportunity to meet the lecturer for further discussion over refreshments. Some Lodges also have members-only meetings on Sundays.

The **Russian** Presidential Agency had overall growth of activities and 11 additional members, with a total of 170. Two study centers were created

in Makaryevka and Yurga, and work is going on to create a Siberian Theosophical Center. Big publishing projects are going on to develop a theosophical review, *Miscellany*, with the complete works by H. P. Blavatsky, and a theosophical library. The 8 Lodges are cooperating with common projects, and social networks are actively visited and updated with the new materials. A dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian theosophists has been established.

The **Swedish Section** has 155 members. Their magazine, *Timeless Wisdom*, was published four times in 2015. Their 6 Lodges had many lectures on various theosophical themes and also had study groups and workshops. They have arranged mini-schools at the head-quarters in Stockholm twice a year, each with around 15 participants. Their summer school was on Shirley Nicholson's *Ancient Wisdom — Modern Insight*, with 19 members participating. Their TOS work has helped orphan children in Latvia and they also have a website.

The TS in **Greece** is translating *Talks on the Path of Occultism* by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater. Membership dropped to 156 from 187, and Apollon and Kaviros Lodges have lapsed. The study group Prokris is inactive, but Radamanthis and Minos Lodges in Crete are working very well.

The **Scottish** Regional Association, with 129 members in 3 Lodges, has a substantial Library with TS teachings

from the earliest days. It is now being catalogued electronically to make it a resource for members and students worldwide. They continue to have international TS speakers for two weekends per year. Lodges with study groups have been working on *The Key to Theosophy* and the abridged *Secret Doctrine*, among others.

The **German Section's** summer school was their main event, with Dr Andreas de Bruin once again, and Jutta Häuser-Hartung, a specialist in yoga and the Upanishads. It was attended by 40 members, some of them from the TS in Pasadena and Point Loma. During the School they commemorated the work of former General Secretary of the TS in Germany, Elisabeth Schmidt, who died in June at 79. Work and meetings with 119 members in 7 Lodges continues on a regular basis. Their magazine, *Adyar*, is published three times a year. We are glad to learn that they are attracting younger people to theosophical work.

The TS in **Portugal** had a visit by Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy and members from Porto, Évora, and Lisbon attended his lecture on "Theosophical Teaching and Krishnamurti's Message". The Lodges mentioned above and the study groups in the Azores and Setúbal continue to work with enthusiasm and dynamism, attracting new sympathizers. The Section reports 111 members in 10 Lodges and 2 study centers.

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**Number of delegates registered as on Monday, 2 January: 875**

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