



## IS THEOSOPHY AUTHENTIC?

FRANKLIN MERRELL-WOLFF

Is Theosophy authentic? This question has arisen many times since the founding of the movement, and many answers have been given. Yet the question has arisen again and by individuals who are genuinely oriented to the Enlightened Consciousness and who, therefore, must be viewed as entirely sincere. As a consequence the writer has felt himself called upon to face once more this query which had been one in his own mind in earlier years. In the present instance the questioning has come from individuals who are sincerely oriented to the Buddhistic Dharma and thus presents a different and, on the whole, a higher form of doubt than that expressed by those with a western scientific or orthodox Christian orientation. Accordingly, here the problem will be approached with a primary reference to the relationship between Theosophy and the traditional Buddhistic Teaching as it exists available for a non-initiated student.

First, in order to clear the field, it will be desirable to determine in what sense "Theosophy" is to be understood. This is necessary since the word is old and can be traced at least to the time of Plotinus, and is not always employed in the same sense. The word has been used from time to time by various societies belonging to the Christian milieu, once at least as early as the seventeenth century. Vaughan has identified "Theosophy" with philosophic mysticism thus placing it in contrast with the non-rationalistic forms of mysticism.

If, then, Theosophy is not identical with Buddhism, Vedanta or any other openly known philosophy or religion, but what is it? The source works are definite on this point. Considering Theosophy in the sense of a doctrine or teaching, rather

than in the other sense of "way of life," it is said to be a partial statement emanating from pure Bodha or the Eternal Wisdom of which every authentic religious movement or philosophy is, in its origin, a partial statement. Bodha in its essence and purity is beyond name, form and symbol and is eternal, but in variable degree and in less pure form is revealed in name, form and symbol. The degree in which it can be revealed to the individual consciousness depends upon the purity and evolutionary development of the latter. Consequently, the higher aspect of the Revealed Bodha is unavoidably esoteric for most men. The open religions and philosophies are in the nature of stepped-down or exoteric statements, not for arbitrary reasons, but from the necessities imposed by the limitations of the understanding of most human beings.

The esoteric Bodha has existed in this world as long as man has existed. From time to time exoteric presentations have appeared throughout the whole history of mankind, but all such presentations have been only partial and, apparently, have always been subject to corruption and decay. From this source came Buddhism, the Vedanta and all the other great religious and philosophical movements ever known among men. Theosophy, in its primary meaning, is identical with both the utterly pure Root-Bodhi and its esoteric

### TABLE OF CONTENTS<sup>1</sup>

<a href="#">Is Theosophy Authentic?</a>	1
<a href="#">The Global Village</a>	24
<a href="#">Correspondence</a>	27
<a href="#">Material Progress</a>	29
<a href="#">The Fullness and the Void</a>	30
<a href="#">The Delphic Oracle</a>	32

<sup>1</sup> "Point out the Way" and "Dyaneshvari" will appear in the January *Supplement*.

manifestation, while in the more objective sense as a movement starting in 1875 it is another opening of the door of presentation. Such is the statement one finds in the source material.

The question as to whether Theosophy is what it claims to be does not concern us at this point. For the present we are interested only in its self-definition and its consequent relation to extant religions and philosophies, particularly historic Buddhism. As self-defined it is identical with the Root of all these religions and philosophies and, in especially marked degree, with the Root of Buddhism and Vedanta. Thus, in the FUNDAMENTAL sense, it claims to be identical with both Buddhism and Vedanta.

It may well be that a scholarly study of the source literature of Theosophy would find a predominance of the Buddhist approach and language. If so, this is quite understandable since the two intelligences most responsible for Theosophic literature are self-confessed Buddhists in their personal consciousness and background. Nonetheless, they do not affirm Truth as being the exclusive monopoly of historic Buddhism. It is also possible that there does exist some Buddhist sect in which the formulated Dharma exists in a greater state of purity than elsewhere. In any case, Theosophy is not identical with the whole of exoteric Buddhism nor with any other Oriental philosophy or religion. It ties in with occidental currents as well.

## PART II

The present challenge<sup>1</sup> of the authenticity of Theosophy comes from persons

<sup>1</sup> [As one who had graduated from Stanford and taught Mathematics at Harvard prior to relinquishing his exoteric career in favor of an esoteric Search, FMW was familiar with the scholastic and scientific reservations about Theosophy. Therefore he establishes his presentation along lines they would be likely to accept. As this paper was written around 1965, it also brings supporting evidence from science not available in 1888. — ED., A. 7.]

who assume, or apparently assume, the primacy, at least within the limits of objectively known history, of the One who was known as Gautama Buddha. The Theosophic literature gives abundant evidence that its authors gave the same valuation to the entity who was known as Gautama in one of his incarnations. The present writer testifies to his sharing in the same view. So we start with agreement at quite an important point. But in as much as there are clearly discrepancies between the extant and accessible formulated Buddhist Dharma and the teachings of Theosophy, the question naturally arises as to which is authentic. The challenge of Theosophy lists a number of items which are given below.

e(1)) <sup>2</sup>Fundamental in the teachings of traditional Buddhism is the doctrine of *anatman* or the denial of a persistent self or soul. Since this doctrine is found very widely spread throughout the great divisions and sects of Buddhism, despite their divergence and even incompatibility on many other points, the conclusion seems ineluctable that this was a primary teaching of Gautama Buddha. In contrast, Theosophy seems to assert the reality of the *Atman* in certain senses while agreeing with the anatmic doctrine in other respects. An incompatibility is suggested which seems to force a choice.

e(1)) Buddhist teaching is *nastikata* or nontheistic viewing the ultimate as an impersonal “Suchness” to take a term from the *Shunyata* (Voidness) form of the Mahayana. On this point Theosophy is in agreement in affirming the ultimate Root to be an “Eternal, Boundless, Omnipresent and Immuta-

<sup>2</sup> [As the reader moves through the presentation it helps to remember that the letters and numbers are usually double: 1. Presentation of an objection or criticism, and 2. Answer to that objection or criticism. For example, the answering presentation for the above “a)” begins at paragraph 2 of Part IV. — ED., A. 7.]

ble PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and can only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude.” But Theosophy does affirm the existence of a number of more-than-human intelligences. Some trans-nirvanic that may be, and at times have often been called “gods.” The correspondent suggests a discrepancy here. [Answering presentation {AP} begins first paragraph, Part V.]

e(1)) Theosophy teaches or seems to teach, the ultimate reality of *Svabhava* or *Svabhavat* as the one real element from which both spirit and matter are derived, whereas Buddhism teaches *Svabhavashunyata* or that all things are empty. Thus Theosophy appears to give a substantive value to the Ultimate while Buddhism is radically non-substantive or positivistic in the noumenal as well as in the phenomenal sense. [AP begins paragraph 14, Part V “The third point raised...”]

e(1)) Theosophy teaches the existence of an esoteric doctrine requiring initiation for realization of it, while it is said that Buddha had no esoteric doctrine and repudiated the idea. [AP begins para 1 of Part VI]

e(1)) Points are raised below the philosophic level that challenge the motives and integrity of H. P. Blavatsky and the authors of *The Mahatma Letters*. They involve the following contentions:

1. The phenomena reported to have been produced seem, too much like card tricks and stage-magic to be authentic, with added doubt cast by the Coulomb affair and the SPR report in connection therewith. [AP begins para 3 of Part VI]
2. No new Buddhistic material translated and given to the public.

3. A particular translation given in *The Mahatma Letters* was only a paraphrase of Beal’s *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures*.

4. *The Mahatma Letters* are too argumentative and gossipy and the philosophy is limited and has been better stated in other exoteric sources. [AP for 2, 3 & 4 begins para 10 of Part VI]

5. “Theosophy” uses *nirmanakaya* to mean a bodhisattva who is not physical but is working on the astral plane. The Buddhist *nirmanakaya* INCLUDES those living on the physical.<sup>1</sup> [AP begins para 17 of Part VI]

<sup>1</sup> The entry for “Nirmanakaya” in the Glossary appended to *The Key to Theosophy* has this to say: Nirmanakaya (Sans.) Something entirely different in esoteric philosophy from the popular meaning attached to it, and from the fancies of the Orientalists. Some call the Nirmanakaya body “Nirvana with remains” (Schlagintweit), on the supposition, probably, that it is a kind of Nirvanic condition during which consciousness and form are retained. Others say that it is one of the Trikaya (three bodies) with “the power of assuming any form of appearance in order to propagate Buddhism” (Eitel’s idea); again, that “It is the incarnate avatara of a deity” (ibid.) Occultism, on the other hand, says (“Voice of the Silence”) that Nirmanakaya, although meaning literally a transformed “body,” is a state. The form is that of the Adept or Yogi who enters, or chooses, that post-mortem condition in preference to the Dharmakaya or absolute Nirvanic state. He does this because the latter Kaya separates him for ever from the world of form, conferring upon him a state of selfish bliss, in which no other living being can participate, the adept being thus precluded from the possibility of helping humanity, or even devas. As a Nirmanakaya, however, the adept leaves behind him only his physical body, and retains every other “principle” save the Kamic, for he has crushed this out for ever from his nature during life, and it can never resurrect in his post-mortem state. Thus, instead of going into selfish bliss, he chooses a life of self-sacrifice, an existence which ends only with the life-cycle, in order to be enabled to help mankind in an invisible, yet most effective, manner. (See “Voice of the Silence,” third Treatise, “The Seven Portals.”) Thus a Nirmanakaya is not, as popularly believed, the body “in which a Buddha or a Bodhisattva appears on earth,” but verily one who, whether a Chutuktu or a Khubil Khan, an adept or a Yogi during life, has since become a member of that invisible Host which ever

6. Theosophy, though claiming to be an esoteric doctrine, does not rise to an elementary understanding of the publicly taught doctrines of Buddhism. [AP begins para 19 of Part VI]
7. Hindu and Buddhist terms are mangled and jumbled up together without distinction. [AP begins para 20 of Part VI]
8. Theosophy emphasizes saving the world in the face of a crisis, while Buddhism vows salvation as a perpetual problem.
9. Theosophy is activist while Buddhism, along with Hinduism, is contemplative. [AP begins para 28 of Part VI]

Other minor points are raised, but not of enough importance for consideration here.

The specific implication of the above queries is given explicitly in the question: Was H. P. Blavatsky a "phony?" Before undertaking the detailed consideration of

---

protects and watches over humanity within Karmic limits. Mistaken often for a "Spirit," a Deva, God himself, &c., a Nirmanakaya is ever a protecting, compassionate, verily a guardian, angel to him who is worthy of his help. Whatever objection may be brought forward against this doctrine, however much it is denied, because, forsooth, it has never hitherto been made public in Europe, and therefore, since it is unknown to Orientalists, it must needs be a "myth of modern invention" — no one will be bold enough to say that this idea of helping suffering mankind at the price of one's own almost interminable self-sacrifice, is not one of the grandest and noblest that was ever evolved from the human brain.

Another entry states that "*Nirmanakaya* is the name given to the astral forms (*in their completeness*) of adepts, who have progressed too high on the path of *knowledge* and absolute truth, to go into the state of Devachan; and have on the other hand, deliberately refused the bliss of nirvana, in order to help Humanity by invisibly guiding and helping on the same path of progress elect men. But these *astrals* are not empty shells, but complete monads made up of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th principles." [Blavatsky: *Collected Works*, xii, p. 189fn]

the above points, the writer will briefly consider this last question.

### PART III

Was H. P. Blavatsky a phony? The charge of conscious fraud is serious, yet, in view of the very great intelligence evident in the production of *The Secret Doctrine*, and its all but super-human scholarship, the hypothesis that it was a massive but honest self-deception seems well-nigh unthinkable. It would seem that we must view the whole theosophical conception as either a fraud or else that it is just what it claims to be. Several considerations could be raised that discredit the hypothesis of fraud, but the writer will here consider but two which in his mind are practically conclusive.

- (a) There must be an adequate motive for the perpetuation of a conscious fraud. The labor involved in one work alone, *i.e.*, *The Secret Doctrine*, is so vast that it seems unthinkable that a person of such ability could not have perpetrated a fraud that would have given her some tangible worldly advantage. Actually, all she got out of it in a material sense was work in poverty while enduring the pain of a body that was far from well and, withal, subjected to much adverse criticism and calumny. A motivation of lofty compassion seems the only one adequate to explain the willingness to put forth the Herculean effort in the face of so much pain. This seems enough to cover the point.
- (b) Some years ago the writer in preparation for a lecture made a comparison of the state of Western science as it was at the time of the publication of *The Secret Doctrine* and as it was at the time of the lecture, the twentieth century physics having been well developed at that time. The special points noted were those in which the Secret Doctrine took exception to sci-

entific conceptions and suggested a counter point of view based upon the occult teachings. The writer had little difficulty in finding twenty-four or five points in which the change in scientific views was definitely toward agreement with the occult teachings as given in the Theosophical literature. Some of the shifts were very important, and others were minor. The instances are noted below.

In the tenth<sup>1</sup> letter of the second edition of *The Mahatma Letters* there is to be found the following statement: "Rejecting with contempt the theistic theory we reject as much the automaton theory, teaching that states of consciousness are produced by the marshalling of the molecules of the brain; and we feel as little respect for that other hypothesis — the production of molecular motion by consciousness. Then what do we believe in? We believe in the much laughed at "*phlogiston*" see article "What is force and what is matter?" (*The Theosophist*, September, 1882), and in what some natural philosophers would call *nisus*, the incessant though perfectly imperceptible (to the ordinary senses) motion or efforts one body is making on another — the pulsations of inert matter — its life. The bodies of the Planetary spirits are formed of that which Priestly and others called *Phlogiston* and for which we have another name — this essence in its highest seventh state forming that matter of which the organisms of the highest and purest Dhyanas are composed, and in its lowest or densest form (so impalpable yet that science calls it energy and force) serving as a cover to the Planetaries of the first or lowest degree."

If we turn to the article in *The Theosophist* for September, 1882, we find the following significant statement. "Neither an atom of silicon, nor an atom of oxygen, is capable of any further subdivision, into

something else — they (the scientists) say. But the only good reason we can find for such a strange belief is that they have tried the experiment and failed. But how can they tell that a new discovery, some new invention of still finer and more perfect apparatuses and instruments may not show their error some day? How do they know that those very bodies now called "elementary atoms" are not in their turn compound bodies or molecules, which, when analyzed with still greater minuteness may show containing in themselves the real, primordial, elementary globules, the gross encasement of the still finer atom-spark — the spark of LIFE, the source of electricity — MATTER still!"

The *phlogiston* theory is one suggested by Stahl and advanced by Priestly in the seventeenth century. The *phlogiston* was conceived as "the matter of fire in composition with other bodies." Ordinary burning, such as flame, was conceived as a release of this phlogiston. Subsequently, the theory was abandoned and replaced by the familiar conception that fire is an effect of oxidation and thus is not itself a kind of matter. In its original form the notion of phlogiston is outmoded in science but it is not hard to see that the essence of this conception has returned in a subtler form in twentieth century physics.

Dampier Whetham (*A History of Science*) gives 1897 as the date at which the modern revolution in physics begins, and this is fifteen years subsequent to the letter and article above quoted. Today we definitely view the atom as compounded and subject to disintegration both in nature and under conditions controlled by the scientist. Chemical elements have been transformed into other chemical elements and even some elements synthesized which have not been found in nature. The atom bomb has publicized this fact to all the world. In the explosion of the atom bomb there is a development of very intense heat and light and extensive radiation. Now, to be sure, this phenomenon is not fire in the

<sup>1</sup> In the chronological edition printed in the Philippines it is listed as ML letter No. 88.

ordinary sense of oxidation, yet it is very reasonable to view it as a kind of fire. May we not view the radiation as a "matter of fire in composition with other bodies?" Today science does view radiation as essentially a state of matter holding the property of "mass" in common with ordinary matter. Have we not at last found the real *phlogiston*?

Today the idea that matter and electricity are of one sameness is virtually a commonplace, and the idea that electricity and life are essentially the same is not strange. Now the point in this discussion has probably become clear. A view of matter advanced in Theosophical literature as early as 1882 has, in the period from 1897 to the present, become so dramatically established that the whole field of human life, political and otherwise, has been profoundly shaken. It would be a remarkable "phony" that could call a turn like that.

Another striking Instance or rapprochement between the teachings of Theosophy and of western science, during the period subsequent to the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*, is found in the change in the estimation or the age of the earth. Dempier-Whetham reports that Lord Kelvin estimated the age of the earth in 1882 as less than 200 million years since it was in a molten state and in 1899 shortened the period to between 20 and 40 million years. None of the astronomers and physicists gave figures sufficiently large to satisfy the needs of the geologists and biologists. In *The Secret Doctrine* (Vol. II, p. 71-71, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.[68-69 in original edition]) figures are given from the Tamil calendar called *Tirukkananda Panchanga* for the age of the earth which are said to agree approximately with the figures of the Esoteric Philosophy. The figure for the evolution of the solar system up to 1887 is 1,955,884,687 years. As is well known, *The Secret Doctrine* statement of the total period of earth-evolution is 4,520,000,000 years and the present is roughly at the half-way

point. Hence the round figure in either case is on the order of 2,000,000,000 years. Now In his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, the late Sir James Jeans, a top-shelf astronomer and physicist, gives the age of the earth as also on the order of 2,000,000,000 years, a result reached by two lines of evidence and calculation, one of which is particularly interesting. It appears that the age of a piece of uranium ore can be calculated by weighing the relative amount of uranium and uranium lead in the ore, since the rate of decay of uranium to lead is known. The above figure is derived from uranium taken from the oldest known rocks.

Since today's science is convinced, with good reason, that the source of solar energy is not shrinkage or solar combustion, in the ordinary sense, but radiation released from intra-atomic levels, the sheer mass of the sun is sufficient to supply radiation for much more than 2,000,000,000 years, no difficulty arises because of the time indicated by the decay of uranium. Thus, in the light of present knowledge, the figures appear to be sound and, at the same time, are reached quite independently of either the Indian or esoteric figures.

The foregoing are two samples of correlations which the writer allows may be extended to several more instances. (Indeed, an exhaustive study along this line might prove very profitable.) However, we shall forego the examination of other instances here as this seems enough documentation of the argument at the present time.

If, now, in twenty-five or more instances it can be shown that late science has developed in the direction of agreement with the teachings of Theosophy, when compared with the views of science in 1889, what is the probability that the Theosophical movement was a fraud or hoax? It is not hard to realize that the theory of probability would give us a very small fraction, particularly as some of the

conceptions are quite complex. On this line of evidence alone it appears to the writer that the conclusion that those responsible for the basic Theosophical teachings had “something” is ineluctable. Also that “something” must be pretty big.

It is not suggested that the basic Theosophical teachings are to be viewed as beyond serious criticism. But any adverse criticism aimed at overthrow of the system as a whole would have to be a major and profound piece of work if it is to deserve serious consideration. The typical attacks which are based mainly, if not wholly, on the argumentum ad hominum<sup>1</sup> are contemptible and should be received with scorn.

<sup>1</sup> [*Argumentum ad hominem* literally means “argument directed at the man”; there are **two** varieties.

The **first** is the abusive form. If you refuse to accept a statement, and justify your refusal by criticizing the person who made the statement, then you are guilty of abusive *argumentum ad hominem*. **For example:**

“You claim that atheists can be moral — yet I happen to know that you abandoned your wife and children.”

This is a fallacy because the truth of an assertion doesn’t depend on the virtues of the person asserting it. A less blatant *argumentum ad hominem* is to reject a proposition based on the fact that it was also asserted by some other easily criticized person. **For example:**

“Therefore we should close down the church? Hitler and Stalin would have agreed with you.”

A **second** form of *argumentum ad hominem* is to try and persuade someone to accept a statement you make, by referring to that person’s particular circumstances. **For example:**

“Therefore it is perfectly acceptable to kill animals for food. I hope you won’t argue otherwise, given that you’re quite happy to wear leather shoes.”

This is known as circumstantial *argumentum ad hominem*. The fallacy can also be used as an excuse to reject a particular conclusion. For example:

“Of course you’d argue that positive discrimination is a bad thing. You’re white.”

This particular form of *Argumentum ad Hominem*, when you allege that someone is rationalizing a conclusion for selfish reasons, is also known as “poisoning the well.”

<http://www.infidels.org/news/atheism/logic.html#hominem>

## PART IV

It is hoped by the writer that what has been said so far will serve to lift the present argument well above the level of mud-slinging and the impugning of the motives or the ability of those responsible for the Theosophical Movement and Its basic literature. The question of its relation between Theosophy and traditional Buddhism, or the Vedanta for that matter, is a high level question and should be treated with seriousness and dignity, as between these three systems there are certain obvious and unquestioned agreements. But there are also differences of sufficient importance to force upon the student the responsibility of decision as to which is the most profound and truer. As the writer understands the attitudes of the proponents of these systems they all grant the seeker the right of free and honest decision, but urge *serious* and unbiased study. We propose to approach the subject in that spirit.

- a) The first query, the one relative to the *anatmic* doctrine, is probably the most important of all. This doctrine is so basic throughout Buddhism, with all its multitudes of divisions, that it may well be viewed as the most crucial doctrine principle of that system. In contrast, Theosophical teaching on its surface does not appear to stand in agreement. Thus it might appear that the two systems must fundamentally diverge. This is a question which we must examine with some care.

According to the accounts of the life of Gautama Buddha, as they have come down to us, the Great One, early in His search for the Truth that might resolve the problem of suffering, sought wisdom at the feet of certain Brahmin Pandits. They taught him karma, reincarnation and the doctrine of a persisting *Atman*, which is variously translated as “Self” or “soul.” Gautama, after penetrating into these teachings, confirmed the soundness of the first two but denied that the conception of

a persistent self or soul was valid. It appears that in his subsequent discourses no point was more emphasized than this. It also appears that the Indian world as a whole did not find this teaching acceptable and it has posed a difficult problem for western man as it was quite contrary to centuries-old Christian teachings. In the various divisions and elaborations of Buddhism that have developed since the time of Gautama, this teaching apparently persists throughout, although with variations, some apparently more sweeping than the original doctrine and some, also presumably, less sweeping. As a matter of fact, the exoteric scholar can never be perfectly certain as to the exact content of Buddha's teachings, since He seems to have never written anything, and, subsequent divergences in the doctrines are plainly evident. We must infer a good deal. But there can be no reasonable doubt that *anatman* in some sense was taught and that it was fundamental to the formulated Dharma.

The central core of Buddhistic psychology, which appears as most ancient and probably was taught by Shakyamuni himself and is generally accepted by the various sects, may be stated quite simply in a few words. Quoting from McGovern (*An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism*, p. 153) the teaching is outlined as follows: "There is no *Atman* (permanent self or soul) for the personality consists of five skandhas or aggregates, or faculties, *vis.*:"

- (1) Rupa, body or form, in other words, the physical body,
- (2) Vedana, sensation or perception,
- (3) Samjna, conception or ratiocination,
- (4) Samskara, mental qualities such as love, hate, etc., and
- (5) Vijnana, consciousness, more especially in this connection, self-consciousness.

None of these can claim preeminence. One is not the basis around which the others are grouped. They are all coordinate parts, constantly changing, so that at

no two moments can the personality claim to be identical, yet at the same time there is a constant Karmic persistence<sup>1</sup>."

The picture one may receive from this is of an organism of distinguishable but self-existent parts that are always in a state or condition of constant change or becoming or never-ceasing interweaving, with Karmic Law serving as the only binding unity. Disregarding the specific form of the classification, the basic idea is not unknown in the history of western thought. One is reminded of the universal flux of Heraclitus and the quite modern psychophysical concept of organism as body-mind rather than body and mind. We also find something quite similar in the Theory of Relativity of modern mathematical physics wherein even space and time are no longer absolutes and there is no permanent atom.

However, though the conception of the *Atman*, in the sense of a permanent and substantial self or soul is denied, there is

<sup>1</sup> [HPB uses this "karmic kernel" as a point favoring the idea of a Higher Ego: "There is the Karma of merit and the Karma of demerit. Karma neither punishes nor rewards, it is simply *the one* Universal LAW which guides unerringly, and, so to say, blindly, all other laws productive of certain effects along the grooves of their respective causations. When Buddhism teaches that "Karma is that moral kernel (of any being) which alone survives death and continues in transmigration" or reincarnation, it simply means that there remains nought after each Personality but the causes produced by it; causes which are undying, *i.e.*, which cannot be eliminated from the Universe until replaced by their legitimate effects, and wiped out by them, so to speak, and such causes — unless compensated (during the life of the person who produced them with adequate effects, will follow the reincarnated Ego, and reach it in its subsequent reincarnation until a harmony between effects and causes is fully reestablished. No "personality" — a mere bundle of material atoms and of instinctual and mental characteristics — can of course continue, as such, in the world of pure Spirit. Only that which is immortal in its very nature and divine in its essence, namely, the Ego, can exist for ever. And as it is that Ego which chooses the personality it will inform, after each Devachan, and which receives through these personalities the effects of the Karmic causes produced, it is therefore the Ego, that *self* which is the "moral kernel" referred to and embodied karma, "which alone survives death." — ED. A. T.]

not a complete absence of all permanency. All stands interconnected and unified by Law or Karma (the analogue of the mathematical but nonsubstantial invariants of modern Relativity). Thus there is a thread of continuity or unity between youth and age and between the various entities of a series of incarnations. There is that which does persist through all changes, including those of birth and death, and so a meaning does attach to the conception of an effort to attain Emancipation or Enlightenment which extends over more than one incarnation.

In the preface to his *The Gospel of Buddha*, Paul Carus makes his point that the notion of “self” or “soul” should have been and could be defined in a way that it would have been quite acceptable to Buddha. The objection was aimed at the conception of the “self” as a permanent substance, an idea that was widely current at His time. Thus if the “I AM” identification is with the continuum of the LAW, then the conception of a permanent *Atman* or “I” would be acceptable with primary Buddhism. That it is the notion of substantiveness, which is really the focus of objection born out by the frequent reference in many Sutras to “ego-substance” and “self-substance.” Furthermore this ego-self-substance is denied not only of all periods and sentient beings, but likewise of all things. This is a usage which the writer for a long time found difficult since it seemed quite unreal to attach the notion of “Self” to anything so objective as “substance” or “thing.” Likewise the notion of “*Atma*” in Shankara’s “*Atmavidya*” does not at all suggest the objectivity which normally belongs to the notion of “substance.”

There is another point to note before turning to consideration of Theosophical psychology. In *The Gospel of Buddha*, we find the following sentence given as part of a discourse by the Buddha: — “That which men call the ego when they say “I am” is not an entity behind the skandhas; it originates by the cooperation of the skandhas.”

If we may assume that this quotation is a valid representation of the original teaching, then it throws a considerable light upon the meaning of the *anatma* doctrine as it was meant by Buddha Himself. The “I am” in this sense seems to be none other than personal egoism which carries the force of “I am I and none other” and, therefore, is separative and the base of selfishness. Furthermore, it is viewed not as the core which supports the aggregates as attributes, but as a sort epi-phenomenal effect growing out of the interaction of the aggregates. As compared with the aggregates, the personal ego is a *maya* or a mirage which, while the belief in it produces practical effects, yet it has only a transitory or unreal existence which vanishes completely after the final death of the incarnation. With new birth its successor appears, but it is not the same ego, although karmically related. If this is true to the real meaning of the Buddha’s teaching, as we shall see later, there is no discrepancy between the *anatma* doctrine of Buddha and the Theosophical psychology.

The psychology of Theosophy is basically similar to that of Buddhism in that it conceives man as an aggregate, though the term “principles” is most commonly employed. But the classification differs from the aggregates as given both in the sense of a variation in the definition of component parts and in that the number is seven instead of five. However, the different Buddhist schools do not always use the five-fold system and, according to McGovern, the Yogacharya school of the Mahayana branch has an eight-fold system. Similarly, the Theosophical system has not had a constant form even during the lifetime of the founder of the Movement. Though the main classification remained septenary there are three principle listings of the component principles involving certain changes, these changes being explained as progressive approximations to the truth necessitated by pedagogical consideration. Also there is a four-fold classification given in *The Key to Theosophy*,

which, however, involves no contradiction. The following classification seems to present the picture with reasonable accuracy.

- (1) *ATMA* or HIGHER SELF, the inseparable ray of the universal or ONE SELF, which can never be ‘objective’ under any circumstances, even to the highest spiritual perception and is really the ABSOLUTE and indistinguishable from IT.
- (2) BUDDHI or SPIRITUAL SOUL, the vehicle of *Atma* and passive with most men, but when united with Manas or the Mind-principle, as in him who is Enlightened. becomes the spiritual or divine EGO.
- (3) MANAS or MIND-PRINCIPLE, the basis of the relatively permanent Inner or Higher Ego or individuality which persists from incarnation to incarnation.
- (4) LOWER MANAS or the personal or animal mind which, in connection with the three lower principles forms the lower or personal ego.
- (5) KAMA RUPA, literally the form or body of desires which is not a body during life but becomes such for a season after death in Kama Loka.
- (6) PRANA or the LIFE PRINCIPLE in its more objective aspect which sustains embodied existence.
- (7) LINGA SHARIRA, sometimes called ASTRAL BODY and sometimes ETHERIC BODY, but it is really the Paradigm upon which the physical body or objective appearance is draped, as it were.

The earlier classifications listed the physical body but later it was explained that this is properly an effect of the conjunction of the Principles rather than being a Principle in its own right. In the final and less well known classification the *Atman* is replaced by another principle, it

being explained that *Atma* is no true Principle but rather the all-embracing ABSOLUTE. Thus *Atma* in the Theosophical system may be viewed as having the same meaning as the ALAYA VIJNANA in the Yogacharya system as given by McGovern.

Theosophy is definite and insistent in its teaching that the lower self or personal ego is essentially unreal and evanescent, lasting only during one life-time and during a limited after death period of rewards or penalties. The personal ego associated with the subsequent incarnation is a new ego but is the Karmic effect of its ancestor.

It would seem that so far as the personal ego is concerned the teaching of Theosophy is in fundamental agreement with the Buddhist teaching as thus far considered. If this is the sense in which Gautama Buddha, employed the notion of *Atma* in asserting the *anatma* doctrine there is no disagreement between the original Buddhism and the Theosophical teaching on this point. There are references which support the view that this was the case.

The following quotation is taken from the third volume of the third edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 395<sup>1</sup>. “Said the All-Merciful: Blessed are ye, O Bhikshus, happy are ye who have understood the mystery of Being and *Non-being* explained in the Dharma, and have given preference to the latter, for ye are verily my Arhats. . . . The elephant, who sees his form mirrored in the lake, looks at it, and then goes away, taking it for the real body of another elephant, is wiser than the man who beholds his face in the stream and looking at it, says “here am I . . . I am I” — for the “I,” his Self, is not in the world of the twelve Nidanas and mutability, but in that of Non-Being, the only world beyond the snares of Maya. . . . That alone, which has

<sup>1</sup> [This quote appears on p. 408, Vol. xiv, *Blavatsky: Collected Works*, “An Unpublished Discourse of Buddha.” — Ed. A. T.]

neither cause nor author, which is self-existing, eternal, far beyond the reach of mutability, is the true “I,” the Self of the Universe.”

Here quite clearly the “I” or “Self” is denied and in another transcendent sense is affirmed. This position is consistent with the Theosophical teachings.

The following is from the *Abhidhama Kosha Vyakha*: “Mendicants: remember that there is within man no abiding principle whatever, and that only the learned disciple who acquires wisdom in saying “I am” — knows what he is saying.”

Here the point is that there is a valid I — reference but it is not a principle within man. Both the *Atman* of Theosophy and the ALAYA VIJNANA of Buddhism are not principles within man. Nor indeed are they without, being neither within nor without. Again, consider the incident where the Buddha refused to answer the question of the monk Vacchagotta when he wished to know whether there was or was not an ego in man. According to the *Samyuttaka Kikaya* when subsequently Ananda asked of the Blessed One why he maintained silence, the latter said:

“If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me: “Is there the Ego?” had answered “The Ego is,” then that, Ananda, would have confirmed the doctrine of the Samantas and the Brahmanas, who believe in permanence. If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked, “Is there not the Ego?” had answered “The Ego is not” then that, Ananda, would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believe in annihilation.”

This carries the implication that the Buddha’s teaching was that “the Ego neither is nor is not,” or, equally, “the Ego both is and is not.” As is always the case with paradoxes, the reconciliation consists in taking the terms in two senses. In this case it could mean, and probably does

mean, denial of the personal ego, while affirming the higher Self.

In this quotation the implication of an esoteric teaching is very clear. Not everything was taught to everybody, but only as the understanding was prepared to receive. This is the essential meaning of an Esoteric Doctrine.

It is perfectly true that one can take quotations from other Sutras which at least seem like a radical denial of all selfhood or egohood up to the loftiest conception of an Universal Self or *Atman*. It is also possible to find quotations which suggest that Buddhism is annihilistic materialism, as such. For example, the following quoted by Rhys Davids from the *Brahmaja Sutra*:

Upon what principle, or on what ground, do these mendicants and Brahmans hold the doctrine of future existence? They teach that the soul is material or immaterial, or is both or neither; that it will have one or many modes of consciousness; that its perceptions will be few or boundless; that it will be in a state of joy or misery, or neither. These are the sixteen heresies, teaching a conscious existence after death. Then there are eight heresies teaching that the soul, material or immaterial, or both or neither, finite or infinite or both or neither, has one unconscious existence after death. And, finally, eight others which teach that the soul, in the same eight ways, exists after death in a state of being neither conscious nor unconscious. Mendicants, that which binds the teacher to existence (viz., *tanha* or thirst), is cut off, but his body still remains. While his body shall remain, he will be seen by gods and men, but after the termination of life, upon the dissolution of the body, neither gods nor men shall see him.

Rhys Davids goes on to remark: “Would it be possible in a more complete and categorical manner to deny that there is any soul, — anything of any kind which continues to exist in any manner after death?”

Mr. Rhys Davids, who in his time was the ranking western Buddhist scholar, states categorically that “Nirvana” means

complete extinction and that Buddhism is materialistic. Also Spengler asserts that it is materialistic. Quotations can be found which seem to justify these views. What is the truth? Clearly not all the Sutras, both northern and southern, can be viewed as the authentic teachings of Gautama Buddha, and while it is unquestionably true that there is much in Buddhist literature which is valuable and sound, which was spoken and written by others than Gautama Himself, yet it is His teachings which most properly define what real Buddhism is. How are we to know what this is? It would appear that if there is no esoteric authority, such as a hidden and preserved record, to resolve this question, then we run the danger that mere individual taste, favorable or malicious, will answer the question in innumerable and incompatible ways. Theosophy claims to speak from such authority and builds a strong supporting case.

The Theosophical psychology has more elaborate ramifications than appear to have been the case with the earlier exoteric Buddhism taught by the Buddha. The four lower principles may be viewed as substantially an aggregate in the Buddhist sense with respect to which the personal ego is no more than an epi-phenomenal effect, lasting through the life-cycle and a limited subjective period after death, but no longer. But Theosophy posits a Higher Ego, identical with a higher phase of Mind, which persists from incarnation to incarnation, and which is identified with individuality, conceived as distinct from the objective personality. It is not hard to find Buddhist statements which also affirm the continuance of individuality from incarnation to incarnation. Take for example the following from *A Buddhist Catechism*, by Subhadra Bhikshu. "Buddhism teaches the reign of perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal GOD, continuance of individuality without an immortal soul, eternal happiness without a local heaven, the way of salvation without a vicarious Savior, redemption worked out by each

one himself without any prayers, sacrifices and penances, without the ministry of ordained priests, without the intercession of saints, without Divine mercy. Finally, it teaches that supreme perfection is attainable in this life and on this earth."

It is thus quite apparent that at least some forms of Buddhism stand in agreement with the Theosophical teaching of a persisting individuality. There may be a difference due to the naming of this individuality, "Higher Ego," but one may well doubt that this point is fundamental. For Theosophy does not teach that the Higher Ego is permanent in more than a relative sense. In fact, Theosophy distinguishes between "egoism" and "egoity," the former applying to the personal ego and identical with "selfishness" while the latter is identical with "individuality." It would be Theosophically correct to say that Gautama Buddha had no egoism but had egoity for He had a recognizable character. The word "ego" corresponds to the sense "I am I" which, while in the lower sense this takes the form "I am I and none other," in the higher sense of egoity means "I am I and also others."

It is Theosophically correct to say that all egoity is achieved and, in addition, what is also taught by Buddhism, that everything which becomes is impermanent. There is a difference of relative persistence in the different kinds of egos, just as a granite outcropping has a greater persistence than a mushroom, but in time all is resolved back into the Primordial and Indeterminate Permanency.

Theosophy teaches that the two-fold ego-hood is a general characteristic of mankind, though there are some exceptions both of a supernal and infernal sort. It is also taught that there is a rare third form of egoity. This is the Divine or Spiritual Ego, the conscious union of Buddhi and Manas and it would seem to constitute the Egoity of the Buddhas or Christs, though the literature gives but little more than hints on

this subject. The Spiritual ego is definitely viewed as an attainment, so far realized by very few units among mankind. The writer would suggest, on his own authority here, that this egoity may be achieved only by Him who, having reached Nirvana, makes the Great Renunciation.

The Theosophical literature gives very scanty material upon the subject of the Spiritual Ego and the references are often ambiguous. The clearest statement is to be found in the *Key to Theosophy*, but elsewhere one gets the impression that it is the same as the Higher Ego, (as in the *Theosophical Glossary*, and also as being the same as the "Higher Self," as in the case of certain references in *The Secret Doctrine*. But in *The Key to Theosophy*, this ambiguity is acknowledged and the statement there is intended to clarify the subject. In the latter case the Spiritual Ego is not identified with the Higher Self. Here the Higher Self is identified with the Universal *Atman* in the sense of the ABSOLUTE, and involves no element of individuality or becoming. The Higher Self may be identified with the ultimate reference of "I" but it definitely is not "I am I" in any sense however lofty or inclusive.

Definitely, it is taught in Theosophy that Spiritual Egoity is achieved. It is not an entirely existing endowment of all men, whereas the Higher Self is a universal fact, the same in the beginning as at the end. It thus follows that even Spiritual Egoity is not absolutely eternal or permanent. Thus there is no contradiction here with the general thesis of Buddhism that all egohood is temporary and, therefore, is in the most ultimate sense unreal when Reality is identical with ultimate performance. However, the teaching is more elaborate than that which seems to have been a part of the original exoteric teachings of the Buddha. But this does not necessarily imply any contradiction between the two teachings if it is granted, as Theosophy affirms, that Buddha had an esoteric doctrine as well as

an exoteric teaching designed to meet the limited understanding of the masses.

To conclude this part of the discussion, in summary we may say that it appears, from the records available, that the original *anatman* doctrine taught by Gautama Buddha applied to the notion of a permanent personal ego conceived as a differentiated core supporting the aggregates as attributes. Buddha denied that there was any such core and affirmed for the personal ego only an ephemeral epiphenomenal existence as an effect of the interaction of the aggregates. Theosophy stands in essential and perhaps complete agreement with this view, but posits two higher forms of egoity which are relatively more permanent, but not absolutely permanent, and does not apply the notion of *Atman* to ego-hood in any sense. Thus there is some discrepancy in the use of words, but not therefore a difference of meaning. There are Sutras, more especially belonging to part of the northern canon, which rather strongly suggest, with respect to the doctrine of *anatman*, a contradiction between Theosophy and the forms of Buddhism oriented to those Sutras. Thus before one could say that there is a definite disagreement between Buddhism and Theosophy on this point one would have to decide which form of Buddhism is authentic. Upon this question a completely objective decision, without any reference to esoteric knowledge, appears extremely difficult if not impossible, and it appears that there is real danger that wishfulness or prejudice may become determinant in one's choice, in the absence of esoteric insight, with the result that one's conclusion may be mainly significant as a subjective psychological confession.

## PART V

- b) The question as to whether Theosophy and Buddhism agree or diverge in their attitudes on theism is very easily answered. They both teach a non-

theistic doctrine. That this is true of Buddhism is well known; that it is also true of Theosophy can be confirmed by several references, but for a clear statement on this point we shall simply quote from the tenth<sup>1</sup> letter of *The Mahatma Letters*:

Neither our philosophy nor ourselves believe in God, least of all in one whose pronoun necessitates a capital H. . . . We deny God both as philosophers and as Buddhists. We know there are planetary and other spiritual lives, and we know there is in our system no such thing as God, either personal or impersonal. Parabrahm is not a God, but absolute immutable law, and Iswara is the effect of Avidya and Maya, Ignorance based upon the great delusion.

Such are the words of one of the two men who were most responsible for the Theosophical Movement and its teachings, though acting behind the scenes. Repeated confirmation of this view is to be found throughout the literature. There are statements in which the terms “God” and “gods” appear but they are definitely not to be taken in the theistic sense.

However, Theosophy does teach that there are developed beings, so far transcending man that the ignorant may very well think of them as gods. Yet such are ex-men, and belong to a higher and humanly inconceivable order of evolution. They are said to have much to do with the government of worlds and lokas. In *The Secret Doctrine* and *Mahatma Letters* they are commonly called “Dhyan Chohans,” though other names are also given. A hierarchy of intelligences is definitely affirmed. But this in itself does not imply a divergence from the teaching found in some Buddhistic sutras.

So far as the writer knows the term “Dhyan Chohan” does not exist in the

<sup>1</sup> Found on p. 52 in the various reprints of A.T. Barker's original compilation. In the chronological edition, it is letter #88, p. 269.

available translations of exoteric Buddhist Sutras, but there are other terms which may be equivalent. The *Mahatma Letters* confirms this in the three following quotations.

In letter No. XVI we find the following (p.100):

The Deva-Chan, or land of “Sukhavati,” is *allegorically* described by our Lord Buddha himself. What he said may be found in the Shan-Mun-yi-Tung. Says Tathagata: “Many thousand myriads of Systems of worlds beyond this (ours) there is a region of Bliss called *Sukhavati* — This region is encircled with *seven* rows of railings, *seven* rows of vast curtains, *seven* rows of waving trees; this holy abode of Arahats is governed by the Tathagatas (Dhyan Chohans) and is possessed by the Bodhisattvas. It hath *seven* precious lakes, in the midst of which flow crystalline waters having “*seven and one*” properties, or distinctive qualities (the seven principles emanating from the ONE). This, O Sariputra is the “*Deva-Chan*.” Its divine Udumbara flower casts a root *in the shadow of every earth*, and blossoms for all those who reach it. Those born in the blessed region are truly felicitous, there are no more griefs or sorrows *in that cycle* for them. . . . Myriads of Spirits resort there for rest and then *return to their own regions*. Again, O Sariputra, in that land of joy many who are born in it are *Avaivartyas*.

Again, from the same letter (p. 102):

Everything is so harmoniously adjusted in nature — especially in the subjective world, that no mistake can ever be committed by the Tathagatas — Dhyan Chohans — who guide the impulses.”

Finally, also in the same letter (p.108):

Every such “world” within the Sphere of Effects has a Tathagata, or “Dhyan Chohan” — to protect and watch over, not to interfere with it.

Here the identification of the Dhyān Chohans with the Tathagatas is unambiguous. Thus the Dhyān Chohans are as little to be viewed as “God” in the theistic sense as are the Tathagatas. Also it is clear that in Theosophical usage the conception of Parabrahman is not to be viewed in the theistic sense. So we must conclude that there is no discrepancy between Theosophy and Buddhism as to their respective views with respect to a theistic “God.” The writer would like to add a question suggested by the above quotations. Is Sukhavati the same as the “Buddha Lands”?

- c) The third point raised concerns the nature of ultimate Reality. The correspondent points out that Theosophy teaches *Svabhava*, which suggests a substantive character, while the Buddhism of the Orientalists teaches *Svabhava-shunyata* (all things are empty in their self-nature), which suggests a radical positivism and, indeed, to many minds absolute annihilation. Here we face what is probably the most abstruse and difficult feature of both teachings and the derivation of a clear conception or what is meant by either teaching is by no means easy. However, some facts are definite and easily understood.

First or all, it should be noted that while in some sense there is substantial agreement among Buddhistic sects on the doctrine of *anatman*, there is great divergence in the treatment of Ultimate Reality. McGovern says, (p.53): “On no point is the diversity of Buddhist philosophy so exemplified as on that of its various theories of the nature of Ultimate Reality.” As a consequence we cannot contrast traditional Buddhism as a totality with Theosophical teaching with respect to this point. To show a contrast one must pick the teaching of particular sects or schools or particular Sutras. All that is then shown is at most that there is a contradiction between Theosophical teaching and that of

the sect or school chosen. To go further and say that the contradiction is between Theosophy and Buddhism as such implies the prior judgment that the given sect or school is identical with authentic Buddhism, while all adverse Buddhistic teachings in other sects or schools are in error and apocryphal. Certainly, unless such a judgment is adequately documented it is arbitrary. A clear and concise picture of the differences between five of the schools of Buddhism is formulated by McGovern and perhaps the simplest course would be to quote from him. On pages 54-55 he gives the following summary:

1. *Primitive Buddhism*, or psychological agnosticism, for which no attempt is made to explore the recesses of the noumenal world, and no theories concerning ultimate realities are postulated.
2. *Hinayana Buddhism* teaches a materialistic realism, that the universe consists of a certain small number of elements, uncreated, which enter into combination in accordance with causal law, unconnected with any supernatural law giver.
3. *The Madhyamika School of Mahayana* broke up these elements into components parts, and stated that there is only a fluid, fluctuating stream of life, and that therefore all seemingly unchanging phenomena have only a conceptual existence.
4. *The Yogacharaya School of Mahayana* called this stream of life Essence of Mind or the Alaya Vijnana, which is no less fluid or devoid of eternal particularity. The evolution of this Essence of Mind brings about the phenomenal universe.
5. *Chinese and Japanese Mahayana* (especially the Tendai and Keron sects) have developed the theory of the Absolute latent in the foregoing conceptions, and states that the Bhu-

tatathata is both the Norm or Pure form.

Assuming that the foregoing is a substantially correct representation of the Orientalist's view of Buddhism, a brief discussion of the five theories may be of profit to us.

1. The primitive Buddhism would seem to be closer to the actual public teaching of Gautama Buddha Himself. It is said that He taught publicly only a practical or ethical doctrine and was silent upon metaphysical questions since discussion of these would be only confusing for those who were not prepared. But there is also a tradition that He gave further teachings to His qualified disciples, and the claim is made by proponents of the Mahayana that their metaphysical teachings are derived from these. These contentions imply that he did have an esoteric doctrine as is maintained by Theosophy. In any case, in this instance, it is impossible to predicate a contradiction between Buddhism and Theosophy.
2. There is doubtless a greater or lesser incompatibility between Hinayana materialistic realism and Theosophy. An extensive study of Theosophy gradually brings out the fact that it is neither realistic nor idealistic but occupies a sort of middle position and is capable of accommodating itself to both views. However, it is inconceivable that its teachings would ever suggest to anyone a nihilistic materialism, while Hinayana Buddhism seemed to be such to Rhys Davids.
3. The Madhyamika teaching, as given above, suggests much the view of Vitalism, in western philosophic classifications. Especially can one see a similarity to the views of Schopenhauer who posited the *Will*

as the ontological principle while the *Idea* constituted the basis of the phenomenal. Schopenhauer expressly stated that the Will is essentially identical with Life, the latter being the Will manifested. As for Theosophy, one of his terms for the all-in-all is "The One Life," as is shown, for instance, in the following quotation from the *Mahatma Letters* (p.129),

We call "Immortal" but the one *Life* in its universal collectivity and entire or Absolute Abstraction; that which has neither beginning nor end, nor any break in its continuity.

Thus to this extent, at least, there is no disagreement between the teachings of the Madhyamika school and Theosophy.

4. The Yogacharaya School in viewing the stream of life as the Alaya Vijnana accentuates a different facet from the preceding. "Alaya Vijnana" is commonly translated "essence of mind" but McGovern suggests "Receptacle Consciousness." Since "Alaya" means literally "home" or "seat," it readily suggests the meaning of "Basis" or "Root." Hence we would just as well call it "Root Consciousness" with the same meaning as "Absolute Consciousness." The shift in accentuation is from "Life" to "Consciousness." This suggests a certain similarity to the Hegelian philosophy. "Absolute Consciousness" is one of the terms employed for designating the Ultimate Reality. This is documented by the following quotations from *The Secret Doctrine*:

It (the Ultimate Reality) is the ONE LIFE, eternal, invisible, yet omnipresent, without beginning or end, yet periodical in its regular manifestations — between which periods reigns the dark mystery of Non-Being; unconscious, yet absolute Consciousness, unrealizable; yet the one self-existing reality; truly, "a Chaos to the sense, a Kos-

mos to the Reason.” (*Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, p. 32, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [p. 2 original edition])

Parabrahman, the One Reality, the absolute, is the field of Absolute Consciousness, *i.e.*, that Essence which is out of all relation to conditioned existence, and of which conscious existence is a conditioned symbol. But once we pass in thought from this (to us) Absolute Negation, duality supervenes in the contrast of Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter, Subject and Object. (*Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 43, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.[p. 15 original edition])

There are “Seven Paths” or “Ways” to the “Bliss” of Non-Existence, which is absolute Being, Existence and Consciousness. (*Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 70, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.[p. 38-39 original edition])

In the Occult teachings the Unknown and Unknowable MOVER, or the Self-Existing, is the Absolute Divine Essence. And thus being *Absolute* Consciousness, and *Absolute* Motion — to the limited senses of those who describe this indescribable — it is unconsciousness and immovableness. (*Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 86, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.[p. 56 original edition])

It would appear from these quotations that there is no contradiction between Theosophy and the primary teaching of the Yogacharya School as given above.

5. The conception of the Tendai and Kegon sects that the Absolute, or Bhutatathata is both Supreme Idea and the fundamental essence of all life appears as something of a synthesis of the two foregoing views. It approximates the view of von Hartmann who really synthesized Hegel and Schopenhauer. From what is already written it should be clear that this view does not suggest a contradiction with Theosophy.

The doctrine of the “Shunyata” (Voidness, Emptiness, Nothingness) is characteristic of the Mahayana, according to McGovern, and is particularly developed in the “Shraddhotpada Shastra,” believed to have been written by Ashvag-

hosa. It is said this Shastra is viewed as orthodoxy by all branches of the Mahayana. In this teaching the Absolute is said to have two phases, the Unmanifest and the manifest. The Shunya conception occurs in the detailed explanation of the Unmanifest phase. We quote McGovern’s condensed statement of this.

The UNMANIFESTED PHASE is the Ideal World the underlying unity; the quintessence of all being. It is the eternal sameness under all apparent difference. Owing to our subjective activity (men) we build up a vision of a discrete, particularized universe, but in reality the essence of things ever remains one, void of particularity. Being absolute it is not nameable or explicable. It cannot be rendered in any form of language. It is without the range of perception. It may be termed Shunya or the Void, because it is not a fixed or limited entity; but a perpetual becoming, void of self-existent component parts. It may likewise be termed Ashunya, the FULL or the Existent, because when confused subjectivity has been destroyed we perceive the pure soul manifestation itself as eternal, permanent, immutable, and completely comprising all things that are pure. (compare *Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 62; p. 35 original edition<sup>1</sup>).

The important point to note in this quotation is that the Ultimate is viewed as both Shunya and Ashunya, or both Void and Full. It all depends upon the perspec-

<sup>1</sup> [FMW references the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition specifically in earlier quotes and we think he considers no need for repetition. As the introductory reference is McGovern, his ending reference is an invitation we think he is inviting a comparison to the *S.D.*, and in the *original edition* p. 35 has this: “The ‘Parent Space’ is the eternal, ever present cause of all — the incomprehensible deity, whose “invisible robes” are the mystic root of all matter, and of the Universe. Space is the one eternal thing that we can most easily imagine, immovable in its abstraction and uninfluenced by either the presence or absence in it of an objective Universe. It is without dimension, in every sense, and self-existent. Spirit is the first differentiation from That, the causeless cause of both Spirit and Matter. It is, as taught in the esoteric catechism, neither limitless void, nor conditioned fullness, but both.” *S.D.I.*, 35 — Ed., A.T.]

tive. In this connection the attention is directed to the phrase "this (to us) Absolute Negation" in the second quotation from the *Secret Doctrine* on page 33[orig. ed. p.15]. The development of the conception of the Ultimate Reality as absolute negation is nothing more nor less than the Shunya doctrine.<sup>1</sup> The impression of apparent contradiction can be derived from the Sutras that develop the Shunyata Doctrine with exclusive emphasis, but it is evidently an error to view this sort of statement as comprising the full meaning of the Mahayana. On the whole, Theosophy emphasizes the positive view and so if there is a difference on this point it is one of emphasis rather than of essence.

From the statement of pedagogical considerations it is very questionable whether emphasis on the Shunya aspect would help to advance the acceptance of the Dharma by activist western men.

Summing up — the Theosophic teaching of *Svabhavat*, the One Element from whence proceeds both Spirit and Matter, both Subject and Object is not in principle incompatible with Buddhist teaching in the Mahayanistic form, although it may be incompatible with the Hinayana.

<sup>1</sup> [The Arahat secret doctrine on cosmogony admits but of one absolute, indestructible, eternal, and uncreated UNCONSCIOUSNESS (so to translate), of an element (the word being used for want of a better term) absolutely independent of everything else in the universe; a something ever present or ubiquitous, a Presence which ever was, is, and will be, whether there is a God, gods or none; whether there is a universe or no universe; existing during the eternal cycles of Maha Yugas, during the Pralayas as during the periods of Manvantara: and this is SPACE, the field for the operation of the eternal Forces and natural Law.... Space then, or Fan, Bar-nang (Mahâ-Sûnyatâ) or, as it is called by Lao-tze, the "Emptiness" is the nature of the Buddhist Absolute. (See Confucius' "Praise of the Abyss.") (C.W., vol. iii, 422-23) — Ed. A.7.]

## PART VI

- d) On the question of whether or not Buddha taught an esoteric doctrine it is not necessary to say much. It may be that some sects deny an esoteric teaching, particularly among the Hinayanans. But one can find plenty of evidence of an esoteric tradition among the Mahayana schools, and so the Theosophical contention is not negated by Buddha as a whole, at the very least. The story of Buddha's maintaining silence when the monk Vacchagotta asked his questions simply implies that there was a teaching that was not given out generally. It has been said Buddha did lift the veil of secrecy to some extent, but He by no means tore it down completely. The whole point of an esoteric teaching is founded on the difference in ethical character and developed understanding of different human beings. What is food for one man may be poison for another.

To be sure, the correctness of the thesis that there is an esoteric doctrine which constitutes the heart of the Buddha's teaching as well as that of the Vedanta and of all the great religions is not itself proof that Theosophy is derived from that source. In the nature of the case objective proof to the un-initiate is impossible. At best a presumption may be built and each individual must decide for himself whether the presumption of truth developed is sufficiently strong to make the *test with his life*. *This test may bring an incommunicable assurance, but in these matters certainty cannot be attained by him who is fearful of daring.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [The disciple who has the power of entrance, and is strong enough to pass each barrier, will, when the divine message comes to his spirit, forget himself utterly in the new consciousness which falls on him. If this lofty contact can really rouse him, he becomes as one of the divine in his desire to give rather than be helped, in his resolution to feed the hungry rather than take manna from Heaven himself. His nature is

e(1)) On the problem of phenomena associated with the person of H. P. Blavatsky, we are dependent as to the question of fact upon the testimony of individuals who in few or no instances are still among the living in this world. On the question of possibility of such phenomena a presumptive attitude may be derived from both the philosophy of Theosophy and of Buddhism. Both affirm the possibility of super-normal phenomena, of which the general philosophical rationale is easily understandable, however difficult it may be to understand the specific processes and to master the art. From the general thesis "nothing exists save as it is seen of the mind," it is easy to see how in principle, conscious voluntaristic production of effects in nature and the psyche is a possibility, once the general thesis is assumed or known to be true. The actual production, given instances of phenomena, could be valuable as a partial confirmation of the philosophy, or for the purpose of breaking down adverse skepticism in minds that were sincere and honest.

As to the actuality of the phenomena in question the writer has nothing to offer on his own authority.

There is the record and the published testimony and the reader is referred to this as a basis for forming an independent evaluation and judgment.

As to the Coloumb affair and the Society for Psychic Research (SPR) report<sup>1</sup>, the data has been collected, analyzed

---

transformed, and the selfishness which prompts men's actions in ordinary life suddenly deserts him. (Light on the Path, p. 69) — ED, A.7.]

<sup>1</sup> ["Though Madame Blavatsky was, indeed, declared a fraud by the SPR, it was the result of a terribly flawed investigation done by Dr. Richard Hodgson, a fledgling representative of the Society. So flawed, in fact, that the SPR itself commissioned a reexamination of the entire affair in 1986, and the conclusion contained in the twenty-five page critique and analysis by the SPR's Dr. Vernon Harrison in *The SPR Journal*

and competently evaluated in a work called *The Theosophical Movement* (E. P. Dutton, 1925) and any student who wishes to reach a just and honest understanding should read this. The following quotation from this source strikes at the core of this matter. (See p. 91, *The Theosophical Movement*.)

In no one thing, perhaps, is the weakness of the S.P.R. investigation more fatally self-betraying than in the motives they assign to account for the long continued combination and deliberate deception instigated and carried out by Madame Blavatsky. That anyone, let alone a woman, should for ten or more years make endless personal sacrifice of effort, time, money, health and reputation on three continents, merely to deceive those who trusted her, with no possible benefit to herself; should succeed in so deceiving so many of the most intelligent men and women of many races that they were convinced of the reality of her powers, her teachings, her mission as well as her phenomena, only to be unmasked by a boy of twenty-three who, by interviewing some of the witnesses and hearing their stories, is able infallibly to see what they could not see, is able to suspect what they could find no occasion for suspecting, is able to detect a sufficient motive for inspiring H. P. B. to the most monumental career of chicanery in all history — this is what one has to swallow in order to attach credibility to the elaborate tissue of conjecture and suspicion woven by Mr. Hodgson to offset the solid weight of testimony that the phenomena were genuine.

"No crime without a motive." What then was the motive attributed by Mr. Hodgson and the committee to make

---

(Vol. 53, April, 1986) was that Madame Blavatsky had been unjustly condemned by the SPR one hundred years earlier. To its credit, the SPR issued a press release on May 8, 1986, apologizing for its error and exonerating Madame Blavatsky of the wrongdoing she was accused of." (From Eli Bernzweig's letter (8-4-03) to the *New Encyclopedia Britannica* (15<sup>th</sup> ed., 2002) pointing out their continued repetition of misinformation on page 278 of Vol. 2) — ED.A.7.]

credible their conclusion that she was “one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history?” SHE WAS A RUSSIAN SPY, AND HER MOTIVE WAS TO DESTROY BRITISH RULE IN INDIA!

As a matter of fact, one who has studied the whole question without prejudice is forced to the conclusion that the procedure of the SPR was incompetent and unjust and the motive of the members of the Committee suspect.

e) (2), (3) & (4) The point has been raised that if the authors of *The Mahatma Letters* were Buddhists, as the writers themselves affirm they are, then there should have been material from sources not reached by orientalists. In one instance of a translation, it is pointed out that it is really a paraphrase of Beal's *Catena of Buddhist Scripture*, the apparent suggestion of the correspondent being that the *Letters* were a fabrication or a hoax. The writer fails to see how there is much force in this line of reasoning. Thus there is nothing surprising that if two individuals independently translate from the same source that the results should be similar, but not identical. For the source is the same. Further, the writers of the *Letters* are, by hypothesis at least, masters of the inner essence of Buddhism and thus speak from out themselves what they know, rather than merely recite and copy.

It should always be borne in mind that these *Letters* were written to individuals and not for publication and general dissemination. There may be a question as to whether the publication of the *Letters* was just to either the writers or recipients, but to judge the *Letters* out of context of the specific problems of the time and the purpose for which they were written is less than just. However, since *The Mahatma Letters* have in fact been published it would seem to be our duty to evaluate

them by the inherent worth of their content.

The correspondent writes:

... my general impression of the letters is that they are gossipy and argumentative with a little philosophy, which had been better stated in a hundred other purely “exoteric” books.

It is presumed that anybody has a right to his general impressions. The writer too has his general impression, ... Let us oppose impression to impression since such matters cannot be argued objectively. His impression is — the *Letters* reveal the activity of intelligences which in sheer range and depth have been surpassed by none in the whole range of literature with which he is acquainted; intelligences abreast of the western science and philosophies of the day, masters of the intricacies of the Oriental philosophies and religions, and of something far more profound which man in the world cannot measure. Beyond this he has an impression of a selfless compassion and a patience rarely exemplified in the history of man. And, finally, he has an impression of power combined with majesty in the best sense.

To be sure, the *Letters* are fragmentary, for reasons adequately explained. In part they deal with intimate personal problems of the time which were the concern of the recipients and the writers. The ideas are patiently argued as to convince rather than compel those to whom they were sent. They reveal none of the spirit of categorical ex-cathedra dogmatism so characteristic of the religious and political dictator, and that, in the opinion of the writer, is one of their outstanding merits.

After twenty-three years of acquaintance with these *Letters* the writer finds them an unexhausted source of knowledge and wisdom, of more worth than the total of all exoteric Vedanta and Buddhist literature which he has read. So much for

testimony which is, admittedly, not objective argument.

e) (5) The question of the use of terms in a different sense by Theosophy as contrasted to Buddhism, in the form available to Orientalists, proves nothing as to the authenticity of Theosophy. If once we grant the thesis that formulated Theosophy is derived from an enduring esoteric wisdom which, among other things, is identical with the hidden meaning of Gautama Buddha, then the fact that basic terms are interpreted in different ways is not only not surprising, but to be expected. The one all important question is: "Is Theosophy what it claims to be?"

An objective and definitive answer to this question is impossible on exoteric grounds alone. A presumption one way or the other can be built, but that is all. To go beyond this, one must be willing to gamble his life in faith,<sup>1</sup> though prior testing in every way that is possible is not only everyone's right but is perfectly proper.

<sup>1</sup> ["This is one of the contradictions in life which occur so constantly that they afford fuel to the fiction writer. The occultist finds them become much more marked as he endeavors to live the life he has chosen. As he retreats within himself and becomes self-dependent, he finds himself more definitely becoming part of a great tide of definite thought and feeling. When he has learned the first lesson, conquered the hunger of the heart, and refused to live on the love of others, he finds himself more capable of inspiring love. As he flings life away it comes to him in a new form and with a new meaning. The world has always been a place with many contradictions in it, to the man; when he becomes a disciple he finds life is describable as a series of paradoxes. This is a fact in nature, and the reason for it is intelligible enough. Man's soul "dwells like a star apart,"... The disciple's effort is that of awakening consciousness in this starry part of himself, where his power and divinity lie sleeping. As this consciousness becomes awakened, the contradictions in the man himself become more marked than ever; and so do the paradoxes which he lives through. For, of course man creates his own life; and "adventures are to the adventurous" is one of those wise proverbs which are drawn from actual fact..." (*Light on the Path*, p. 59-60) — ED, A.T.]

(6) The correspondent writes: "Theosophy, far from revealing a more esoteric side of Mahayana Buddhism, does not rise to an elementary understanding of the publicly taught doctrines." So! How is anyone to decide this unless he is an Initiate? Among the early contributors to *The Theosophist* were high Buddhists who quite competently gave expositions of Buddhist teaching, but how is one to form a judgment on this matter? There are many Mahayana sects, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan and an enormous canon. Theosophy does not claim to be an exposition of all of this. There is not a doubt in the world that one can find sutras that build a different picture of the Mahayana Buddhism from that found in Theosophical teachings. But how shall it be decided which picture is authentic?

(7). It is affirmed that Hindu and Buddhist terms are "mangled" and "jumbled" and that the whole forms a "labyrinth of ill digested concepts." Well, no doubt there is some indigestion, but who is it who has the stomach trouble, the writer or the reader of *The Secret Doctrine*? But seriously, there is an intermixed use of Hindu and Buddhist terms and, it might be added, Cabbalistic terms as well. But in what way is this surprising?

Let us recall the primary thesis of Theosophy that it is a formulation of a portion of the Esoteric Doctrine COMMON to the great religions and philosophies. Assuming the truth of this thesis, does it not follow that traces of the Doctrine will be found in the different systems? Naturally we would expect identity of conception underlying different terms and different approaches and organizations. Let us not forget that Theosophy aims at integration rather than an exclusive approval of one preferred extant system. It does not say that one must become a member of such and such a Buddhist — or Vedantist, sect or he is hopelessly lost. Rather it says: "Clear the conceptions of the systems to which you are oriented of

false and extraneous growths and then you will find revealed a facet of ultimate Truth. But remember that this is equally true of the outwardly different Systems to which some of your brothers belong.”

By learning to see identity of meaning in seemingly quite different terms, progress is made toward unity and brotherhood. The effect would be quite different if it were said that everyone must become Buddhist, or everyone must become a Vedantist, or Cabbalist in the exclusive and separative sense. That spirit is definitely alien to Theosophy.

The complaint is often made by the reader of *The Secret Doctrine* that it uses so many words for the same thing and departs so often from the line of pure teaching into side-excursions, that the total effect is that of confusion. The writer can sympathize with this feeling and he admits that he would have found a clear-cut line more comfortable. But he who would find gold must go to nature and delve for it in the forms in which nature has provided it, and this is seldom upon a “silver platter.”

Now, the ultimate Doctrine is half revealed and half concealed, and to understand it at all the student must work. He is spared long years of sitting cross-legged in a sealed-up cave, but he must use his mind and have patience. He must overcome prejudice. Thus it may be more natural for one to speak of Archangels, but he might learn to accept the fact that when others say “Elohim,” “Kumara,” “Dhyan Chohan,” “Dhyana Buddha,” “Ahi,” or “Tathagata,” they mean, knowingly or not, with greater or less understanding, the same thing.

The extensive side-excursions one finds in *The Secret Doctrine* are not intended to increase confusion but mainly to build up presumptive evidence not only to support but also to render more acceptable the primary thesis. To be sure, the excursion that helps one may not help another and vice versa, but the announced purpose

is to help all, as far as may be, and not merely a preferred few. Further, the central doctrine is largely in the form of fragments and hints, partly because there were reasons why all could not be given explicitly, and also partly because the student must earn the right to understanding by work.

Part of *The Secret Doctrine* is obsolete today because a cross-sectional view of western science now is different when compared with what it was in 1888. As a result, quite an amount of the polemical material would no longer be needed or would have to be changed as to form. The writer is convinced that the positive help or support from science today would be far greater, but all this involves no change in the meaning of the central Doctrine.

Some temperaments object to the lengthy arguments which run all through the basic Theosophic literature. They would have preferred definite categorical pronouncements. But on this point the announced policy of the real founders was definite and for reason. Bare assertion of conceptions, no matter how true they may be, implies upon the part of the reader blind acceptance or rejection and injects the spirit of authoritarianism. The founders were emphatically opposed to this. To be sure, there are individuals who need little more than bare statements to awaken the “Inner Eye,” but the Theosophical writings are not aimed at these who need little or no help at all. For the rest, the policy was to build as convincing a case as possible, leaving the student free to decide in the light of the presented evidence and reason, what appeared true to his uncoerced consciousness. To many, the writer among them, this attitude constitutes one of the strongest appeals of Theosophical literature.

(8) & (9). These two points are really interconnected and so will be handled together. There can be no question but that one can receive the impression

from much of Mahayanistic literature that the labor toward the salvation of all creatures is a perennial task, rather than a passing crisis. On the other hand, Theosophical literature does emphasize certain critical junctures such as the present which is said to be the cycle of transition between the first 5000 years of Kali Yuga and a subsequent period. But this hardly involves any contradiction since logically both standpoints could be valid. A perennial condition could, quite conceivably, have critical phases. But this matter becomes considerably less simple when it is borne in mind that Theosophical teaching does give the impression of accentuation of the activistic factor while both Buddhism and Hinduism strike one as more oriented to quietism. In its deeper ramifications the ultimate question becomes: Does Enlightenment imply the permanent transcendence of the activistic or evolutionary process, or does it have some interconnection with this process?

In its exoteric form, both the Vedanta and Buddhism give the impression that the whole meaning of Liberation or Enlightenment is the correction of error. The correction of the error leads to transcendence of the World-field and all dualistic consciousness in essentially the same way that a dream is destroyed by awaking. Thus to the awakened consciousness there is no more activity in the sense of an evolutionary process. In contrast, Theosophy views the active phase as fundamental as the inactive or unmanifested phase. Enlightenment has the value of New Birth before which lie both active and passive possibilities. To be Enlightened is to be an Adept and no one is an Adept in the Theosophical sense who is not Enlightened. There are seven degrees of Enlightenment and the full Buddha is one who has culminated all these seven steps. A full Adept is the same thing as a full Buddha, and the Tathagata is the same thing as a Dhyan Chohan, a guiding Intelligence in Nature.

It is easy to see that Theosophy implies an Enlightenment such that the resultant consciousness is a sort of fusion of the unmanifested with the Manifested aspects, or of nondualistic into dualistic consciousness. In this state the error of delusion is destroyed, but action, including evolution and quietude both remain. The refusal to accept the private enjoyment of the Bliss of Nirvana, while including the meaning of continued effort in the direction of redemption of all creatures, as well as other and even more fundamental values; values which would still remain although all creatures were finally redeemed.

The writer does not mean to suggest that the inner meaning or both the Vedanta and Buddhism is at variance with Theosophy in the above respect. There may be inner agreement and, indeed, this seems very likely. But the other impression does exist and there is literature which at least seems to confirm it. It is with respect to this latter impression that a contradiction exists.

As a matter of strict logic neither action nor inaction can be predicated of a non-dual Reality, and it is thus as close to the active phase as to the inactive.

There can be no doubt that the appeal of the active or inactive phases appeals different to individuals and races of different temperaments. One may prefer inactive contemplation while the other prefers activity. But such preference has no force as a determinant of the nature of ultimate Reality. Western man is, on the whole, activistic while Eastern man is more largely quietistic but neither is therefore more right or righteous than the other.

We have been comparing doctrines which, as the Oriental would say, exists in terms of name and form, as indeed that is all that is possible to be compared and discussed. All three, Theosophy, Vedanta and Buddhism, agree in saying that the ultimately true Dharma or Theosophia transcends all name and form, all possibil-

ity of definition in any way. For this, to relative consciousness, appears exclusively as Absolute Negation, or That of which nothing whatsoever can be predicated in the private sense. Before THIS, all beings whatsoever, high or low, must stand SILENT in the face of utter MYSTERY.<sup>1</sup>

OM TAT SAT



# The Global Village

New Places for Spanish Study

## EAST LOS ANGELES

Martes: 6:30 p.m. a 8:00 p.m.

6641 Easton Street, Este de Los Angeles, Ca.  
90022

Entre Wittier Blvd. y Olympic cerca de, Garfield Ave.

Tel. (323) 264 4065 Llamar entre, 4:00 p.m. y 6:00 p.m.

## LONG BEACH

Segundo y Ultimo Sábado del Mes; 5:30 p.m. a 7:00 p.m.

3127 South Street, Suite E, entre Downey y Paramount Blvd.

## "LIBRERÍA Y DISCOTECA LATINA"

Sábados, De: 7:00pm a 9:00pm

6316 Pacific Blvd. Huntington Park, Ca. 90255  
(Entre Gage y Clarendon) Tel. 323 581 4248  
Estacionamiento Gratis detrás de la Librería

"ESTUDIOS Y PARTICIPACIÓN GRATUITOS"



<sup>1</sup> Copyrighted material, used by permission.

## United Lodge of Theosophist

3766 El Cajon Blvd

San Diego, Ca 92105

(619)283-0142

E-Mail: jim2sal@aol.com

Sundays 10:45-12Noon

- \* The True Christmas Dec. 21, 2003
- \* Creation vs. Evolution, or--? Jan 25, 2004
- \* The Right to Die Feb 29, 2004

Theosophical Book Center Wednesdays — 11a.m.-1p.m.

- \* Hands On Art Demonstration Dec. 15, 2003 (11am
- \* Past Life Regression Jan 4, 2004
- \* Near Death Experiences Feb 11, 2004
- \* Organic Gardening and Composting March 17, 2004

Regular Meetings:

Sundays: 10:45 a.m. to Noon Karma and Reincarnation  
Wednesdays: 12 Noon to 1p.m.

Psychotherapy of *BhagavadGita*

Fridays: 7p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Basic Theosophy

## Sarasota, Florida Theosophy Group

Meets Weekly on:

WEDNESDAYS: — 7 – 8:15 P.M.

SUNDAYS — 11 AM – 12:30 PM

We are a very friendly group of students with various religious and philosophical backgrounds. Our goals are to discuss and understand the universal truths of Theosophy.

On Wed. nights we are studying, *The Ocean of Theosophy* by W.Q. Judge, and on Sunday mornings we're discussing *Isis Unveiled* by H.P. Blavatsky and *Light On The Path* by Mabel Collins.

Our address is: 2700 S. Tamiami Tr. Suite #14 (we're moving to Suite #11 in October), Sarasota, Florida, and our phone number is: 941-312-9494.

Please feel free to call Bob Waxman if you need any additional information.

---

## United Lodge of Theosophists

1917 Walnut Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103

All welcome No collections

---

# Theosophy Discovery Circle

Schedule 2003-2004  
Interactive study classes  
11:00a.m. – 12:30 p.m.,

## Bhagavad Gita & Secret Doctrine

Every other Sunday

Sep. 28	Feb. 1, 15, 29
Oct. 12, 26	Mar. 14, 28
Nov. 9, 23*	Apr. 11, 25
Dec. 7, 21	May 9,* 23
Jan. 4,* 18	June 6, 20

### Located at:

TRS Professional Suites, 12<sup>th</sup> floor  
44 East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street (between Park & Madison)  
New York, N.Y.  
Near subway and bus lines.

### Contacts:

[Amedeo@optonline.net](mailto:Amedeo@optonline.net)  
[Tmwriters@mindspring.com](mailto:Tmwriters@mindspring.com)  
[David@grossmanphotos.com](mailto:David@grossmanphotos.com)  
[Http://www.geocities.com/theosophycircle/](http://www.geocities.com/theosophycircle/)

### Phone:

David – (718) 438 – 5021  
Amedeo – (973) 697-5938

*Classes are free and open to all*



## United Lodge of Theosophists

Robert Crosbie House  
62 Queens Gardens  
London W23AH, England  
Tel +(44) 20 7723 0688  
Fax +(44) 20 7262 8639

Contact us: [ult@ultlon.freemove.co.uk](mailto:ult@ultlon.freemove.co.uk)  
SUNDAYS 8.00 – 9.00 p.m.

ULT London UK

### PROGRAMME

T. B. A.

### Introductory Class

One Thursday a month 7 - 8<sup>30</sup> pm

A monthly class that introduces the fundamental ideas of man's constitution, his relation to the cosmos and universal laws such as karma and reincarnation.  
Mar 6<sup>th</sup>

### Study Group Wednesdays 7 - 8 pm

This group studies the Theosophical concepts and their ramifications, including references from the Secret Doctrine and the great world religions.

It's an opportunity for enquiring discussion and the search for the meanings within these traditions.

### Talks and informal meetings

Sundays 7 - 8 pm

Talks, followed by questions, or informal meetings where articles are read and discussed.

### Practical information

By Bus: 7, 15, 23, 27, 36.

By Underground: Paddington or Lancaster Gate.

Visitors are welcome and may use the reference library, please call or e-mail to arrange.

Meetings are free, can be joined at any time and it is not necessary to register for attendance.

### United Lodge of Theosophists

#### Theosophy Hall

77 W. Encanto Blvd.  
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Telephone (602) 290-0563

Email: [phxultlodge@hotmail.com](mailto:phxultlodge@hotmail.com)

Web: <http://www.phx-ult-lodge.org/>

### Study Classes Sunday Evenings

7:30 — 8:30 pm

THE SECRET DOCTRINE by H. P. Blavatsky

### Saint George, Utah

#### Theosophy Class

#### Currently Studying

*The Ocean of Theosophy* by Wm. Q. Judge

Meets every Thursday from 7 to 8 p.m.

At the St. George Branch

Of the Washington County Library

Contacts: Tommie & Don Zook,

1-435-668-6221 or 1-435-627-0912

All are welcome

No fees, dues, or Collections

### THEOSOPHY HALL

347 East 72 Street  
New York, NY 10021  
(212) 535-2230

E-mail: [otownley@excite.com](mailto:otownley@excite.com)

All meetings are free. No collections, fees or dues.

### Discussion - Multi-Media Monday Night

7:30-9:00pm

Investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature, and the psychical powers latent in man.

Free Study Materials Provided

- Meditation & Raja Yoga
- Dreams and the Dreamer
- Karma and Reincarnation
- Places After Death
- Spiritual and Psychic Realms
- A Relationship with God
- Science and Psi Phenomena

THEOSOPHY HALL  
347 East 72 Street, NY NY 10021  
Doors Open at 6:45PM  
Phone: (212) 535-2230

**Refreshments Served**

Current topics: Contrasting ancient theosophical teachings with the standard scientific view of the world, and current psi phenomena. Including distance viewing, crop circles, remembering past lives, etc.

Texts include "The Secret Doctrine", "Isis Unveiled" and other original Theosophical sources.

**"The Bhagavad-Gita"**  
Wed. Night — 7:30-8:45

Free Study Materials Provided

The ancient psychology of the East and its application in this "era of Western Occultism."

SPANISH STUDY CLASS

"Ecos del Oriente", by Wm.Q. Judge  
Meets the first two Wednesdays of the month  
THEOSOPHY HALL  
347 East 72 Street, NY, NY 10021  
Doors Open at 6:45PM  
Phone: (212) 535-2230

**THE United Lodge of Theosophists**  
"Maitri Bhavan" 4, Sir Krishna Rao Road,  
Near Lalbagh West Gate, — Basavanagudi,  
Bangalore-560 004.

## THEOSOPHY

*Secret Doctrine Classes*

**Sunday 11am - 12:45**  
Theosophy Discovery Circle  
44 E. 32<sup>nd</sup> St [between Park & Madison]

**Monday 7:30 to 9 pm**  
New York ULT 347 East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street

**Wednesday 2 to 4 pm**  
Antwerp ULT, Belgium

**Wednesday 7:30 to 8:45 pm**  
Los Angeles ULT

**Saturday 10 am to 12 noon — Theosophy Centre**  
**Long Beach — First Saturday of every month**  
**Wednesday — Bangalore ULT, India**

### LOGIE UNIE DES THÉOSOPHES

Loge Unie des Théosophes  
11 bis, rue Kepler – 75116 Paris

**Conferences Mercredis, 19 h 30 – 20 h 45**

*Loge Unie des Théosophes Douala*

*Cameroon*

*B.P. 11372 Douala Localisation Ndog - Bong*

*Heures d'ouverture: mercredi 19h – 20 h 15*

*Samedi 19h – 20 h 15*

**Toutes les activités de la Loge sont libres et gratuites**

**Les reunions commencent et se terminent aux heures précises indiquées**

**La Loge est maintenue en activité par des participations bénévoles**

**Tel: 40-76-72**

### United Lodge of Theosophists

4865 Cordell Avenue, Suite 4

Bethesda, MD 20814

phone (301) 656-3566

web: [www.ultdc.org](http://www.ultdc.org)

**Meetings: Sundays 11 a.m. to 12 noon**

(Lectures followed by questions and answers, or group discussions.)

### Den TEOSOFISKA

Ursprungliga Undervisningen

UNITED LODGE OF THEOSOPHISTS,

Malmögen

Kungsgatan 16 A, 211 49 Malmö, tel. 0709 26 22 12

### TEOSOFISKA FÖREDRAG

**Höstterminen 2003**

**Start:**

den 5 november	Hur kan jag använda mina drömmar?	
den 12 november	Teosofins ABC –	Astralljuset (7)
den 19 november	Den tidlösa	Visdomsreligionen
den 26 november	De ockulta symbolerna: 2. Swastikan	
den 3 december	Magins grundsatser	
den 10 december	Teosofins ABC – De Mästarna (8)	verkliga
den 17 december	Den gnostiske Christos	

**Vinterterminen 2004**  
**Start:**  
den 14 januari      Zodiakens Tolv Tecken

Stiftelsen Teosofiska Kompaniet  
 United Lodge of Theosophists – Malmölogen  
 Peter Bernin, Roslinsväg 6, 217 55 Malmö  
 +46 (0)709 26 2212  
 hemsida: [www.teosofiskakompaniet.net](http://www.teosofiskakompaniet.net)  
 email: [redaktionen@teosofiskakompaniet.net](mailto:redaktionen@teosofiskakompaniet.net)

## CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Friends,

I was delighted to receive a copy of the *Aquarian Theosophist* (November 17, 2003). It was quite rewarding to see my grandfather's work so prominent.

Franklin Wolff loved Theosophy, particularly the Lodge. He became interested while a student at Stanford, meeting John Varian.

When I was only twenty one he suggested I join the Lodge here in Phoenix and learn spirituality directly from HBP's writings, as well as Judge's.

The author is right. Franklin Wolff found the teachings of Shankara through the Secret Doctrine, initially.

He once defended Theosophy in a 20 page paper. If you are interested, I would be happy to forward it.

Being Jungian, I was also delighted to read the article on synchronicity.

Sincerely,  
 Doroethy Leonard

Dear Doroethy,

I am certainly glad we made contact! Yes, we would be delighted to use FMW's 20-page paper defending Theosophy in *The Aquarian Theosophist*.

Yesterday, we were talking about his life with several others here at the lodge. Does he have a grandson? Was it a child by his first marriage?

I have his Associate Card on my desk, but would like to check with you to make sure it is really him. The card was signed "Franklin F. Wolff", Halcyon, Calif. and dated by the local registrar, Brinton Jones as 12/16/22. I was expecting the "Merrell-Wolff," but perhaps he did not *always* sign that way in 1922. What do you think?

jerome

P.S. I have put you on the subscription list. It is free. — and I can remove it at any time should you wish. We have two formats: Word and PDF. Currently, you are on the Word list. Anything you would like to write about FMW would be gratefully received.

Dear Jerome,

I am delighted to receive your newsletter. I have a rather informal one myself, and would be happy to send it to you. I try to keep some of FMW's work available.

He was Franklin Fowler Wolff until he married my grandmother, Sherifa. They met at Halcyon. Actually, Franklin was celibate all his life. When he married, my dad was 6 years old. So, he was always my grandfather. There is also my brother, Robert Briggs.

I had forgotten he didn't formally associate with the Lodge until 1922. He was part of the Halcyon group for years before that, but broke away about 1922.

Franklin spent his last years in Lone Pine, California, and I am now owner of this property on the eastern side of the Sierras. I keep his library intact.

It has, of course, all the early Theosophy books, and many of the journals.

I'll check on the article and send it to you soon. Yes, I am glad we have this connection. I met Fara Darland in the early 1960's, and we still visit ever so often. She is one authentic lady!

Doroethy

---

Dear Doroethy,

Yes, send me your newsletter, it would be very welcome! If it's ok with you I will probably use our correspondence in one of the *Correspondence* columns of the *A.T.* as several of our readers have expressed great interest in what you say about FMW. What do you think of Ron Leonard as an editor? I am a little leery of him in view of this in his "forward" to *Transformations in Consciousness*:

However, even though the editing process has remained within the given structure, two modifications were made based on anticipated revisions of a further draft. First, Wolff included a few statements that are founded neither on his introceptive faculty nor on empirical fact, but instead are borrowed from unreliable secondary sources. Inasmuch as they have nothing essentially to do with his philosophy, and the reader would find them perplexing or distracting, they have been omitted." (p. xix-xx)

I noticed that neither the word "Theosophy" nor "Blavatsky" showed up in the index — so I began to wonder if theosophical references were considered by Mr. Leonard to be "unreliable secondary sources."

What do you think?

best regards, and thanks again for your help,  
jerome

---

Jerome

I think you are right about Ron's editing. I didn't like his he/she thing either. I didn't catch it for some reason...

Franklin didn't reference Theosophy much, nor any other of his main loves, e.g., Inayat Khan, the earlier Tibetan teachings, etc., but he did think Theosophy was a very reliable source. I

do think you picked up on Ron's bias, however.

I am attaching the last issue of our newsletter.

Doroethy

---

Thanks, Doroethy, the *Sangha* is a wonderful Newsletter! I immediately read the first story and was crestfallen that it was continued! so I will have to learn patience! Also, got good idea for an *A.T.* insertion from FMW's writings from the Mcfarlane article — page 261-62 in *Experience and Philosophy* will make an excellent short article for my subscribers who meditate and study the SD. It's practically a paraphrase from various pages of the S.D. FMW was certainly a very *authentic* mystic. Interestingly enough he seems to put forth an idea I have always held regarding the SD and the *Voice*: That they secretly push a person, who is dead-serious in assimilating their message, in the direction of *Realization*; or in other words they push toward that life and experience that transcends language. So often I have heard (and even experienced) of mystics with an unusual psychic experience going to an inaccessible spot in nature and forming groups. Usually a thorough knowledge of such activities is disheartening for one harboring the concept of "universal brotherhood" as a #1 priority, but in FMW's case it seems to have been just the opposite! His writings, bodhisattva vow, lecture trips, etc. are a testament-in-deeds. Many of the *A.T.* family who meditate and study the Blavatsky-Judge-ML material find his words consonant and clarifying.

I looked up Inayat Khan on the web and can see why there was a connection there.

best regards, and thanks again,  
jerome

---

## MATERIAL PROGRESS

H.H. THE XIV DALAI LAMA

In my opinion material progress is certainly highly necessary and is a good thing, as it is of benefit to mankind. What is essential and would be more beneficial is that we should be able to balance material progress with mental development. By the various talks that I have had during the last few days with people from different walks of life, I am convinced that man *must be placed above materialism*, and that we must realise the true value of human beings. Materialism should serve man and not man serve material progress. And as long as we keep our goals and methods in their proper perspective, material progress will continue to benefit mankind.

I have liked science and technology since my childhood and I realise now more than ever before that material progress is highly necessary to mankind, but at the same time I believe material things provide us mainly with physical comfort, not with mental peace. As I have already mentioned, good human qualities—honesty, sincerity, a good heart—cannot be bought with money, nor can they be produced by machines, but only by the mind itself. We can call this the inner light or God's blessing or human quality. This is the essence of mankind.

To this human end different religions have a very important role to play. Despite different conceptions of the universe, life after death, etc., all religions are essen-

tially the same in their goal of developing a good human heart so that we may become better human beings. Of course, if you are out to find differences among religions, you will find plenty. This is only obvious. But the essence of religion is the development of a good heart, a true sense of brotherhood, love and respect for others.

Those of you who have taken an interest in Buddhism or have even become Buddhists, have done so because you have found it suitable to yourself. While it is extremely important to choose something suitable to you, it is not good to change one's religion for the sake of it or because of one's dislike for some other religion. Religion is at best a tool to help you to train your mind in some desirable direction. Religion exists in order that you may practise something that will help you to control your mind; the aim is to transform the bad self-destructive thoughts like anger, avarice, pride, jealousy, hatred into their direct opposites. On recognising the destructive nature of bad thoughts, you practise religion in order to overcome them and in Mahayana Buddhism you do so not for yourself only but for the sake of all other beings. ["Universal Responsibility and the Good Heart," p. 10-11]

## The Fulness and the Void

In the following quote FMW (Franklin Merrell-Wolff) is discussing that concepts only travel so far, then all knowledge is first-hand and implies identification, so that what the personality would label Sunyata or voidness, in the outer realm would become fullness or Absolute Being in the Inner

=====

“Again, I am implying that the office of conceptual thought in relation to the function of introception is of instrumental character. However, this is instrumentalism interpreted in a very different sense from that of the pragmatist, wherein conception is viewed as serving solely the end of more experience.

If by the *meaning* of a concept we understand a perceptual experience, whether as an object for sensation, a program of action, an adjustment to life, or so on, then with respect to the conceptual relation to introception, we would not say that the concept enrobes its meaning. It rather points toward its meaning, in the only sense in which significance can be understood. This is not the only kind of meaning recognized. When concepts carry meaning only in this sense, they are purely sign pointers, and thus are instrumental relaters exclusively. This is meaning taken strictly in the objective or extraverted sense. However, there is another form of significance that is related to the subject, in which the relationship of the concept to its meaning acquires quite a different form. It is not a meaning objectively experienced to which the concept or idea leads. The significance lies within the concept, so that we would properly speak of the concept enrobing the meaning, rather than pointing to it in the sense of the figure of the signpost. One finds this inherent meaning, not by the appropriate kind of action, but by the correct kind of meditation, that is, by a process of introception. The difference between these two proce-

dures is of enormous import. For one thing, one must understand that introceptive meditation is not merely a process of reflection about an object, whereby one deduces or infers consequences. It is a movement of consciousness such that a successful outcome implies a transcendence of both thinking and perception, so that consciousness enters something like another dimension. The inward penetration into the significance of a concept is the epistemological or psychological parallel of the introceptive movement toward the self, wherein the self is not transformed into a new object, but remains unaltered in its subjective character. This is not a conceptual relation considered either in pragmatic or in realist epistemology.

A given concept may have both perceptive and introceptive kinds of relations, but evidently some concepts possess more than one kind of meaning, while others are more valuable in the opposite sense. We can say with a considerable degree of generality that the more concrete the character of a concept, the more it may be taken as meaning a particularized perceptual experience, while the more abstract it is, the more the reference is to an introceptive content. In other words, increase in abstraction is a movement toward a spiritual orientation. As an illustration, we may take two notions such as 'a beautiful scene' and 'beauty', the former the more concrete, the latter the more abstract. The notion of a beautiful scene implies a judgment related to the end of more experience in the perceptual field. Here both knowledge and the conceptual function are to be viewed as *relatively* terminal with respect to experience. The kind of conception that has transcendental roots *is not derived from experience*. With respect to this kind of conception, experience enters into the picture only as a catalytic agent that drops away more or less completely as the conceptual process takes hold on a totally different kind of

base. One comes to value experience for the knowledge it arouses and the conceptual process that it helps to initiate, rather than the other way around. The pragmatist values knowledge and knowing because of the further experience to which it leads. Thus a radical difference of orientation is implied. In the end, the conceptual process leads beyond itself, but, in the case of introception, the goal is a spiritual Realization, not merely more experience. After the attainment and anchorage in the spiritual Realization, the conceptual order may serve a new office, with bearings upon the field of experience. In this case, however, the relationship is hierarchical, with conception serving as the lawgiver with respect to experience and the perceptual order generally. Even so, for an individual consciousness that does not know the latter directly, conceptual knowledge is only a surrogate for the introceptive content.

The thinness of concepts has a two-fold connotation. In one sense, which James employs in his *Pluralistic Universe*\* and elsewhere, the concept is thin because it lacks substance. It is like the blueprint and specifications of a bridge, building or machine, because in this regard it is a practical *instrument* for the effecting of consequences in the realm of perceptual existence. Everything that can be conceived concerning the bridge, building, and so on, can be conceived of the blueprint and specifications, but the corresponding perceptual existences have something that the latter does not possess. They lend themselves to empiric use. It is this latter *functionality* that constitutes "thickness," in James's sense. In contrast, thinness takes on quite another meaning when it is understood in the sense of the Voidness (Shunyata) of the Buddhists. Shunyata is voidness only in its seeming as it appears to relative consciousness, particularly in the sense of perceptual consciousness. In its inherent nature, it is the one and only self-existent Substance. The spiritual concept

or, in other words, the concept when united with introceptive *content*, can be called "thin" only in the Buddhist sense. Realized in its essential nature, it possesses a higher substantiality than perceptual experience. Thus it is entirely possible to realize greater fullness, greater substantiality, in the case of some concepts than that given by experience. Consequently, there is a sense in which the most abstract knowledge — just that which James would call most "thin" — is in reality the most concrete of all. Unless one appreciates this fact, he or she will miss the real force of transcendentalist thought.

A given concept may have both perceptive and introceptive kinds of relations, but evidently some concepts possess more than one kind of meaning, while others are more valuable in the opposite sense. We can say with a considerable degree of generality that the more concrete the character of a concept, the more it may be taken as meaning a particularized perceptual experience, while the more abstract it is, the more the reference is to an introceptive content. In other words, increase in abstraction is a movement toward a spiritual orientation." (Transformations in Consciousness, p. 167-69)

---



## The Delphic Oracle

ELOISE HART

THE ORACLE of Apollo at Delphi was one of the world's most intriguing and unusual establishments. Within that ancient temple-sanctuary located beneath the "Shining Rocks" of Mount Parnassus, the god Apollo spoke through a Pythia, or human priestess, and offered inspiration and guidance to all who sought his aid. For over a thousand years, before and after the time of Christ, the great and less great came to consult him. Pythagoras went there, and stayed to train a Pythia to serve as voice of the god. Herodotus also went there to record what was said. Plutarch served as priest of Apollo for many years. The great lawgivers Lykurgos and Solon obtained suggestions for laws which made their city-states models of justice and freedom. Oedipus, King of Thebes, consulted the Pythia and so did Alexander the Great. Croesus, King of Lydia, sent envoys as did innumerable others of the Greek, Roman, and Christian world. Today tourists travel regularly to Delphi even though the god is silent and few believe, as the ancients did, that divinities communicate with mortals. Yet, in examining the procedures and responses of this most respected of oracles, one wonders if we are wise to close our minds to the possibility of there once having been this form of divine assistance.

Legends tell us that Delphi and its environs had long possessed a mystic power. Diodoros Siculus, Greek historian of the 1st century B.C., for example, wrote - whether as fact or fiction we cannot be sure - that a herdsman, following his goats into a rugged glen suddenly became wondrously inspired and saw the future before him. His goats also were affected, gamboling about and bleating oddly. Others even now mention feeling

"something" uplifting; and Plutarch, when officiating at the temple at Delphi, explained that "not often nor regularly, but occasionally and fortuitously, the room in which they seat the god's consultants is filled with a fragrance and breeze (*pneumatosis*) as if the adyton were sending forth the essences of the sweetest and most expensive perfumes" (*Moralia*, 437c).

The area of Delphi, originally was called Pytho and belonged to Gaia, goddess of Earth. She and her daughter, Themis, are believed to have spoken oracles ages ago. In the *Odyssey*, Homer (c. 800 B.C.) has Agamemnon consult the deity there about his prospects in a war against Troy. Earlier, or later than this — legends are vague about time sequences — Apollo is said to have journeyed south from the Hyperborean "Land of Truth and Virtue," and arriving at Pytho (Delphi) he slew the great python-dragon that guarded the site and thereon established a sanctuary. This, in the language of myth, suggests that Apollo, a semidivine teacher using the name of the god, revitalized the old and declining serpent- or wisdom-mysteries at Delphi. As representative of Zeus, he offered advice on personal, civil, and sacred matters through Pythias or priestess-prophetesses — advice that was highly esteemed by the many who visited the Apolline centers, whether at Delphi, at Klaros and Grynia, at Thebes in Boeotia, or elsewhere.

Archaeological findings indicate that the first sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi was erected in the 8th century B.C. This may have been the fabled "first three temples of baywood, beeswax and feathers, and bronze" which were destroyed by fire and rebuilt of stone. The crumbling columns and statues one sees there today are apparently the ruins of temples, treasuries, and theater built during the 4th century B.C. However, centuries earlier, Delphi had become a well-established oracular center whose dignity of procedure, and wisdom of pronouncement drew multitudes. Its pres-

tige continued during the entire golden era of Hellenic culture. This was a time when there flourished a galaxy of enlightened men and women whose lives and achievements in the fields of the arts and sciences have become ideals of human endeavor. Solon and Thales lived then, as did Pindar, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Euripides, Pericles, Herodotus, Demosthenes, Phidias, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. But these wonder-days declined and with them the flow of Apollo's inspiration. His oracles functioned less often and finally, by the 4th century A.D., when the Roman emperor Theodosius ordered all oracles closed and forbade divination, the god had already withdrawn. When the emperor Julian asked how he could help restore the Pythia to power, Apollo replied: "Tell the emperor that my hall has fallen to the ground. Phoibos [Apollo] no longer has his house . . . nor his prophetic spring; the water has dried up" (Fontenrose, p. 353). Earlier, when Emperor Augustus had asked: "Why is the Oracle silent?" he was told: "A Hebrew boy, a god who rules among the blessed bids me leave this house . . . So go in silence from my altars" (op. cit., p. 349).

What has been recorded of the procedure followed at these oracular centers is fragmentary, possibly because it was so well known no one felt the need to describe it. Centuries later reliable writers culled what they could, while others filled in details from imagination. All agree, however, that young girls were selected and carefully trained so that they could transmit the high inspiration of the god without in any way marring its purity and meaning. Later it was found prudent to use married women — who were required to live apart from their husbands before and during their oracular duties. In fact, even those who consulted the Pythia were expected to practice chastity, and also to undergo purification, offer sacrifice, approach the holy precincts with reverence and trust and, when waiting in the vestibule, to remain silent, thinking pure thoughts.

The Pythias, keenly aware of the sanctity of their responsibility, endeavored to live accordingly. They purified themselves in various ways, such as drinking from the crystal waters of the Castalian spring, and wearing simple garments as shown in vase-paintings on Greek pottery. On the days of consultation the prophetess burned bay leaves and barley meal on the altar and mounted the "high seat," as the tall tripod was called. Once seated and attended by a priest, she waited for the divine afflatus or "breath" to infill her. When she was ready, inquirers were escorted into her presence one at a time. They either asked their questions orally or in writing. She answered them "directly and clearly." Accounts of these sessions mention that "the enquirer spoke directly to the Pythia (or to the god) and that then the Pythia (or the god) responded directly to him," unless the consultant had been sent by someone not present. In such case the response was copied by the priest who sealed it in an envelope, and gave it to the envoy to deliver to the consultant (op. cit., p. 217). When the sessions were finished the Pythia departed, feeling, as Plutarch says, "peaceful and composed."

It is well when examining the god's pronouncements to bear in mind that what has come down to us may or may not be authentic, or carry high inspiration. Some messages undoubtedly were so lofty and private they were treasured in silence, others have suffered through translation and interpretation, and a few may be pure fiction composed long after Delphi had ceased to function. Thus, like the original recipients, we would be wise to test each statement against our inner judgment.

A general procedure was followed: first, the Pythia announced that Apollo himself was the speaker and therefore the message should be heeded. Then she, as the god, expressed concern for the consultant, *e.g.*, "Happy is this man who enters my house. . . ." Next, she answered the query proposed, and finally gave a mes-

sage that challenged the recipient's judgment and intuition. As Herakleitos declared: "Nowhere or ever did the God of Delphi either reveal or conceal. He indicates only." (Fragment 93)

An example of this type of pronouncement is that received by a Scythian prince who had asked how he would die and was told that a *mus* (mouse) would cause his death. Forewarned, the prince not only had his houses cleared of mice but refused anyone named Mus to approach him. He died from an infected muscle in his arm, having overlooked the fact that the Greek word for muscle is also *mus*.

The majority of questions asked of Apollo concerned personal affairs, though some, from statesmen, sought guidance as to what laws or reforms would benefit their state, or sanction to build a temple, found a city, establish a colony, declare war, or make peace. On occasion the oracle found it necessary to deflate an ego as, for instance, when a wealthy magistrate, after sending Delphi a sizable offering, asked: "Pray tell me, who is the most pious man alive?" Apollo told him it was a peasant who had offered a handful of barley.

The earliest oracles are believed to have been given some time between the 9th and 7th centuries B.C. to the Spartan king Lykurgos who on two or three occasions sought advice on how best to govern his unruly subjects. The responses he received enabled him to establish a constitutional government whose benefits were unique in the history of the Greek city-states. We quote from Diodorus Siculus two examples of quasi-historical responses (Fontenrose, pp. 270, 272):

Q7— Request for good order.]

R.— *You*, Lykurgos, dear to Zeus and all the gods, enter my temple. I don't know whether to call you god or man, but I rather think god. [You have come in quest of good order. I shall give you an order such as no other city has (Diodoros)].

Q9—What shall the rulers do to rule well and the citizens to obey?

R. —There are two ways opposite to each other, one leading to the house of freedom, the other to the house of slavery. Lead the people on the road that goes through courage and harmony; avoid that which leads through strife and ruin.

Thus encouraged, Lykurgos established a council of Elders or Senate, and an Assembly, and when the new constitutional order was functioning smoothly he instituted further reforms sanctioned by Delphi. He was, in fact, so successful in bringing divine law within human reach, that after his death his countrymen built a temple in which they and future generations could pay tribute to this man who in character and wisdom was equal to a god.

The best known Delphic injunction was carved into the lintel at the Temple of Apollo: GNOTHI SEAUTON, Know Thyself. These words may have originated in Apollo's response to a question Chilon of Sparta asked: "What is best for man?" The reply, "Know thyself," is similar to the one believed to have been given to the Lydian king, Croesus, when he was told that he must know himself if he would live most happily. Croesus, a man of action and not philosophical, took this to mean that he should know his own strength, know what he wanted, and should rely on his own judgment. Others have found deeper meaning in these words, taking the "self" to mean the higher self, the true Self; to imply that as man is the microcosm of the macrocosm, he who knows himself knows all.

Many who consulted the oracle missed the god's meaning. Still, Apollo gave help through inspiration and the gentle guidance of ideas, without coercion or any interference in an individual's free will. Nor was there ever any appeal to egoism.

Philosophical responses are recorded:

Q.—Does the soul survive death or does it vanish?

R.— While the soul is bound to the body, it yields to mortal ills. But when it finds release at the body's death, it goes entirely to the sky, always ageless, and remains forever whole. For this is the ordinance of divine providence (Fontenrose, p. 428).

And when asked how men can become good, and godlike, Apollo said: "By acting rightly like the gods, and telling the truth" (Davis, p. 26).

These responses give an idea of the quality of guidance offered at Delphi, and they dispel the erroneous idea that has somehow arisen that the prophetess was in any way intoxicated or in a mediumistic trance. H. W. Parke denies such ideas unequivocally in his *A History of The Delphic Oracle* (pp. 21-2), saying: "Geologically it is quite impossible at Delphi where the limestone and schist could not have emitted a gas with any intoxicating properties." Nor did any ancient writer mention such fumes. The idea that the Pythia was intoxicated or that she entered a cavern evidently came from the Romans who, when they rose in power, applied to Delphi the features they were familiar with both in the cave-sanctuary of Klaros and the grotto at Cumae. Later writers, unfamiliar with the geological and procedural differences, picked up this explanation and in some cases romanticized it.

Another misconception is that the Pythia's messages were ambiguous and incoherent. Joseph Fontenrose (pp. 223-4) carefully examined the genuine responses and found them unusually clear and direct. What ambiguity he found may have been put there, he believes, by the poets who at one time attended the sessions and wrote the responses in hexameter verse. They, not the Pythia, added the metaphors, riddles, and pompous phrasing. When their services were discontinued, the responses came through again as clear and understandable as originally.

Plutarch, an initiate and careful biographer, explained how the Pythia transmitted the inspiration of Apollo:

the prophetic priestesses are moved [by the god] each in accordance with her natural faculties . . . As a matter of fact, the voice is not that of a god, nor the utterance of it, nor the diction, nor the metre, but all these are the woman's; he [Apollo] puts into her mind only the visions, and creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration is precisely this. —*Moralia*, "The Oracles at Delphi," V, 397d

Plutarch also rejected the idea that the god in any way possessed the body of the prophetess or that there was mediumship involved. For him the Pythia's inspiration was her reception of divine force, for she had been trained to receive "the inspiration without harm to herself" (op. cit., 438c), and could receive it safely only when she was rightly prepared. An example is often cited of an ill-prepared priestess who was forced against her will and better judgment to enter the adyton and respond to a questioner. She gave a response, but suffered acutely, collapsed, and died a few days later.

The idea that the Pythia was in a trance condition may have come from a misunderstanding of how the Greek words *mania* and *pneuma* were used in connection with oracles. While today the term *mania* refers to various forms of hysteria and insanity, to the ancient Greeks it meant ardor, rapture, enthusiasm, *i.e.*, being in-filled with a god. The word *pneuma* was used for "air," "vapor" and, philosophically, for "soul" and "spirit." When the Pythia mounted the tripod she received, according to Strabo, the *pneuma*, the divine "breath" or *afflatus*, a word defined as a divine imparting of knowledge and power and of inspiration, meaning in this case the divine wisdom or breath of Apollo.

Initiates of the Greek Mystery schools were familiar with the idea, having themselves undergone arduous moral, psychological, and mental training and purification in preparation for the sacred experience of transcendent Reality. In similar fashion, the Pythias, by subjugating a portion of their nature, were able to receive and pass on to others something of this import and wonder.

Has this oracular gift been withdrawn from mankind? Many are asking today if it is still possible to receive such inspired advice. Perhaps it is: if we take to heart Apollo's injunction, *Know thyself*, and turn inwards for counsel. What we make of that counsel, however, is our challenge. Lykurgos used what he received to raise the level of Greek thought and conduct. Croesus, blinded by ambition, misunderstood, and destroyed his kingdom. Others found in the words of the god — whether they came through oracle-priestess, prophet, or their own inner source — guidance of a very high order.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barr, Stringfellow, *The Will of Zeus: A History of Greece from the Origins of Hellenic Culture to the Death of Alexander*, J. J. Lippincott, 1961.
- Davis, George, George Hoyningen-Huene and Hugh Chisholm, eds., *Hellas: A Tribute to Classical Greece*, J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1943.
- Fontenrose, Joseph, *The Delphic Oracle, Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalogue of Responses*, University of California Press, 1981.
- Parke, H. W., *A History of the Delphic Oracle*, Basil Blackwell, 1939.
- Plutarch, *Moralia*, tr. Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Library Series, Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Pollard, John, *Seers, Shrines and Sirens*, Allen and Unwin, 1965.
- Purucker, G. de, *The Esoteric Tradition*, Theosophical University Press, 1935.
- Severy, Merle, "Quest for Our Golden Heritage" in *Greece and Rome: Builders of Our World*, National Geographic Society, 1968.

[Used by Permission. This article originally appeared in *Sunrise*, October/November 1985, pp. 7-14. For additional information see:

<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sunrise/sun-back.htm> ]