

## Theosophy in Action

by Roy Mitchell

This work of 1923 was published by the Blavatsky Institute of Canada as a memorial to Mr. Roy Mitchell who was the Founder and guiding genius of the Institute.

### FOREWORD

Theosophy in Action deals with problems with which Theosophical students are particularly concerned and for this reason it may have a more limited appeal than the two books of Mr. Roy Mitchell which were published earlier by the Blavatsky Institute. *The Exile of the Soul* presented an ancient, but now seldom discussed, approach to the mystery of the duality of man's being. The far-reaching implications of the ideas presented there by Mr. Mitchell have not as yet been fully explored but later psychologists may acknowledge that in *The Exile*, Mr. Mitchell had anticipated some of their fondest theories and had suggested a basic clue to the understanding of the dichotomy of man's nature. *Through Temple Doors :Studies in Occult Masonry* was, as the title implies, an approach to Masonic symbolism in terms of the universal language of symbolism. Both these books have interested many readers who have little or no concern in Theosophy or the Theosophical Society.

In *Studies* Mr. Mitchell sets forth the original idea behind the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875. Its work was to be that of an 'interpreter'; it was not to impose any new creed or dogma upon mankind; its members were to be students who were concerned with 'studying and explaining with sympathy, with kindness and with insight' those basic ideas which they had found had survived through the ages and which were of the essence of world religions and philosophies. Mr. Mitchell indicated also the inherent difficulty of maintaining the ideal of the original program in view of the very human tendency to shrink away from the position of detachment and independence, and to sink into the safe certainty of dogma, even though intellectually one may acknowledge that any formulation of Truth is merely an expression of our understanding of any fragment of Truth as seen at that time.

Theosophical students will find in this book the marks of a trailblazer - now or in the future when in their own lives and work they come upon the problems discussed by Mr. Mitchell, they will remember that a former student had walked the same path and like a pioneer explorer of strange lands, had left behind him directions for those who would engage upon the same quest. It goes without saying that these 'directions' were not explicit instructions to do thus and so, but were in the nature of 'recalling to memory' certain basic principles in order that the student might accomplish his own reorientation.

Mr. Mitchell was one who stirred up many to take their first step toward the ancient path, 'stretching far away', the path to the recovery of conscious awareness of one's own divinity. His sudden death in July 1944 removed one who in addition to his rare genius as a teacher, had the rarer faculty of awakening deep and abiding friendships with thousands who met him in his Theosophical activities and in his position of Professor of Dramatic Art in the New York University.

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## ORIGINS

It would seem unnecessary at this late date to have to remind members of the Theosophical Society that the Theosophical Movement and the Society are not one and the same thing.

The Theosophical Movement of our time arises primarily out of the reaction from the materialism of the last century, when both religion and science had reached the outermost points of their swing from idealism. Religion posited a restless and whimsical Deity who plunged a new-made soul into a welter of evil, of good, or of mixed environment, and at the end of a few years drew it out and arraigned it for judgement on the one issue of its tenacity of belief in a dogma of redemption, condemning or beatifying therefor. Science, no better, posited a God called nature which for some obscure purpose of its own bred human beings into misery; pitted one against another in order to perpetuate the species of the victor; plunged souls into appalling misery, not for any benefit to themselves, but for the sake of souls and intelligence to be born aeons hence.

It was into this deadlock of opinion that the Theosophical Society came, the herald of a movement, to proclaim the immortality of the souls of all created things, to restate the law of the cyclic return of souls and of the effects of the deeds of souls, to enunciate the doctrine that all religions, philosophy and science at their highest emanated from a body of custodians of the wisdom of the race, and to offer a common meeting ground for religion and science. It said to dogmatic religion: "There is no quarrel with your Scriptures if you will read them in terms of your immortal soul returning again and again to earth". To science it said: "There is no quarrel with your observed facts if you will interpret them in terms of the same evolving entities returning again and again to earth".

This was the original position of the Society, one of explanation and adjustment for the great wave of opinion then setting in against the positions of religious and scientific dogma. That reaction was found to take a host of forms, for the reason, more than any other, that the world stood upon the verge of a return of the souls who had made the last great wave of preoccupation with occult things. When they came they would inevitably bring with them all their schisms, hatreds, fanaticisms, and their cults. For all our talk of reincarnation, we do not lay stress enough on this view of life. We still talk of spiritual movements as energizing one from another, as if the soul of the father created the soul of the son, instead of thinking of the soul of the son as another person who modifies or breaks from the forms which the soul of the father has projected for it the body in which the functions, the house in which he lives, the clothes he wears, the school in which he was educated, the religious system in which he was reared. We are not the products of our predecessors. We are other people than those who believed in infant damnation, and other than those who urged the survival of the fittest.

The great Theosophical Movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then, is itself less an evolution of ideas than of old cults each born with the motive force of centuries behind it, and each with the genius of ignorance and selfishness in it which will destroy it again as they have destroyed it before. One of them is spiritualism, destined from its very birth to degenerate into necromancy; another is that Pharisaism of Jesus Christ's time which laid stress upon spiritual healing and worldly prosperity and denied the existence of evil - the cult whose members Jesus described as whitewashing the sepulchre instead of cleansing it - born again in the multitudes of faith-healing sects; another is Adventism, that world-old hope which becomes father to the thought that an avatar is at hand; another, ceremonial magic;

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another, the scientifically garbed wonder-seeking called psychical research; another, mystical ritualism; another, the development of the lower powers by psychic processes; another, the enquiry into hypnotism and its effect upon neurosis. These on the more perilous side; on its nobler side, mystical Christianity, internationalism, and humanitarian and transcendental movements.

In the beginning the Theosophical Society as custodian of the most ancient and the most complete philosophy, held a central position among them all, to guide, to amplify, to warn, and to answer. Its work was one of explaining the rationale of the movements round it - even the maddest - with sympathy and understanding; to provide a literature, to trace ideas to their origins, to restate the ancient doctrines of the soul of man which have survived the ages, to teach those things which are basic in all great religions and philosophies, and to round out the path of which each of the cults is a fragment.

It is a precarious position and one easily lost. Its most striking analogy is that of centrifugal action in water, where the most buoyant thing can stay at the centre of the swirl, the least buoyant swings out to the circumference. As long as the Theosophist can maintain his place at the centre of the great vortex of cults he will serve the purpose of the Society, studying and explaining with sympathy, with kindness and with insight. The moment he identifies himself with any of the incomplete and fragmentary cults around him he has done less than the task he has assumed. The moment he seeks to drag the Society into a special cult he has struck a blow at its usefulness. If he should succeed and persuade the Society as a body into one or other of the lesser vehicles he would destroy its purpose utterly.

It would then cease to be the explainer. It would become itself only one of the explained.

It is inevitable that in a body of so great extent and with so wide a platform as the Theosophical Society there will be those incapable of staying thus at the centre, who, because they are not trained to study or because they are bored, will find Theosophy insufficient for their needs and seek a more exciting orbit. It is inevitable, also, that from time to time they will draw the Society or parts of it into their eccentricities (in its strict sense). Such things are inseparable from the task it has set itself.

The remedy is that the Society shall apply itself with more devotion and industry to its original work.

The nature of that work and the practical means towards it whereby the lodges of the Theosophical Society in Canada may become more vital factors in the intellectual as well as the spiritual life of their communities I shall discuss in succeeding pages.

## METHOD

The preliminary step to any real efficiency on the part of a Theosophical unit must be an intimate realization of the meaning of the declared objects of the Society.

Let me restate them:

- (1) To form a nucleus for the universal brotherhood of mankind without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour;
- (2) To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science;
- (3) To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

As stated, they constitute a general description of the aims of the Society and a declaration to the world at large. Beneath this generalization they state the threefold means of all occult research - the trinity of essentials without which no Theosophical work can thrive. Neglecting any of them our work inevitably falls below the measure of balance and symmetry which entitles it to the name of Theosophy. I would beg my readers to remember that Theosophy is highest and most inclusive word which we possess to describe the aspirations of man. All other words we use describe only parts of it. It is all the wisdom there is, and when we start in quest of it we are assuming something which will require all our powers.

The initial means in the quest is the pledge of Brotherhood, the first necessity in all white magic. It is not a sentimental consideration for the student of Theosophy. It is a stern and uncompromising fact, the denial of which is deadly peril. The whole fabric of true religion is based on it, occult instruction is only possible when one realizes the law, and instruction can continue only when one embodies the ideal of Brotherhood in his daily life. Denial of Brotherhood in thought or in act checks the vital currents in the body at once, insistence in the denial renders right-hand occultism impossible. The first practice of all occult students must be, as soon as they find their stream of force running low, to trace back to the immediate offence against Brotherhood which has checked the stream. Rarely is it further back than a day, often not more than a few minutes.

The second means is study in the field outside of us. The field designated in the phrase "comparative religion, philosophy and science", is so comprehensive as to include all the symbolic, written and oral traditions of human learning. The Theosophical requirement is that we shall study and that our study shall be comparative, not what is modernly known as comparative religion merely, but comparative philosophy, comparative science, the comparisons of religions with philosophies, of religions with sciences, of philosophies with sciences. It is in comparison that we get fertility. There can be no exoteric religion, philosophy or science in the world complete. Human handling will defile it within the first hour. But by comparison we can arrive at the completeness of which each is a part. In the article on Study I shall have more to say on this point. For the moment it will suffice us to remember that study by comparison is not optional with the Theosophist. It is an obligation put upon him because it is his source of supply of the

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elements needed to round out his knowledge of the God within as well as the God without. Living in the world as Theosophists are required to do, because Theosophy exists for the world and not for its devotees, comparative study is the means whereby he elicits intuitions.

The third is lead understood of all, we have looked on it so often as providing for psychic research, the more phenomenal forms of yoga and recondite science. As a matter of fact it is a covering phrase for the third essential in Theosophical work - the process of testing for verity. It is the means whereby we discriminate between true and false in what we gather by our second means. Without this constant testing in ourselves and by examination of our own latent powers our study goes for naught. What is written in religion, philosophy and science can only have one value for us, its application to our problem of consciousness, and only by our own experience can we know if anything be true. No fact in the universe possesses the slightest value for us unless it is a statement for us in terms of a great cycle of a fact which is true in our smaller cycle. Theosophy which will not test within the cosmos of a man is no Theosophy at all, and by every warrant in the ancient tradition we are authorized to cast it out.

Thus we have in Theosophy three obligations- three because we are threefold, compounded of spirit, soul and lower self - and no Theosophist can be complete without using all three, the field, the aim, and the test. Neglecting any, he is less than a Theosophist, however fine he may be in every other regard. It is not a question of how high he stands. Our question is of balance and even development which alone can give us steadiness. Are we going then to make a Theosophical Society out of individuals who are, each of them, less than Theosophists? People try quite gravely to do so. They say, "I will devote myself to Brotherhood and to development of powers, and leave comparative study to the intellectual people"; or "I will devote myself to Brotherhood and comparative religion and leave tests to those more daring than I"; or some, most foolhardy of all, who say, "my interest is in study and latent powers. I shall leave sentimental considerations of Brotherhood to those who like them".

The means to Theosophical progress cannot be so delegated. Lacking Brotherhood the student cannot go beyond the Eye Doctrine. Lacking comparative study he will starve for the fragments of truth needed to evoke the powers of his soul. Lacking the third means of personal test he will have to rely upon the reputed vision of some other. He will read of hierarchies and *Logoi* and great time cycles as if they mattered in themselves, or as if salvation lay through them instead of through his Divine Self. To such a one, "As above, so below", might as well never have been written.

The health of the Theosophical Society and its efficiency in the tremendous task that it has essayed will be the measure of its even development along these three lines, not development in the aggregate, but development in each individual. Neither the altitude of its thought nor the magnitude of its operations will matter so much. The Lords of Life can endow us with high thought if that would serve, and we only need to cheapen our method to get magnitude. Neither will serve. Adherence to the long-tested balance of our three objects has served before and will again.

## THEORY

Let us assume two things arising out of the previous chapters. The first is that The Theosophical Society holds towards all other occult movements of its time the position of explainer, and in order to do so must maintain a stand central to them. The second is that having accepted such a task the Society must perform it upon the threefold bases of brotherhood, study, and personal test, which alone can make it secure, fertile and honest.

It is evident therefore that because of human shortcomings The Theosophical Society is a precarious structure. It is open to attack from a host of subtle agencies, none of which is more deadly than a misconception of the basic theory of its own existence.

So fragile a growth is a Theosophical Society fulfilling the requirements I have indicated that we have no record of one having persisted, at least since the time of Christ, for more than a few decades. H.P. Blavatsky says that an effort has been made in the last quarter of every century of the Christian era to establish a body which would preserve through a hundred years of life, and that none has succeeded. It is possible for a student of history to discern about the year seventy-five of each hundred years the formation of a body closely akin to our own, and to trace its rise until the turn of the next century. Therefore all such movements have become diffuse, have forsaken Theurgy for thaumaturgy, have developed schisms and sects, and have at last disappeared altogether.

I can recommend no better corrective for misapprehension of the basic terms of our work than an examination of these earlier societies, each with a high hope swinging into the new century, and each defeated by its failure to realize the theory of its own existence.

Why defeat? Are the custodians of the Wisdom Tradition not capable of renewing the impulse in each of these Societies whenever it runs low? Can They not take executive control in a crisis? Can They not issue books and manifestos of such power and clarity as to prevail over error each time it arises? Can They not rouse the torpid, curb the unbrotherly, strengthen the weakling, and chide the fool? If telling mankind these truths we hold so precious be the thing which matters, can They not of Their own number put powerful Teachers at the places where They are needed most? If the truth matter so much, why project it through the distortions of a Theosophical Society at all? Can They not light the world of Their own power? Can They who created not recreate every moment if need be?

Seemingly not. They obey cosmic law, and in Their obedience They assume limitations we have not learned to assume. They assume this limitation, that a Theosophical Society in order best to serve mankind must be a native human growth. They assume that it shall have a seeding time, that the placental period must cease, and that thereafter it must survive of its force and by virtue of conditions within its own body in being or to be.

This was made clear in our Theosophical Society at its inception. In the preface to the private instructions which students were required to study for weeks and virtually to memorize, they were expressly warned that such instruction would cease on December 31st, 1899. The actual words are too well-known to need

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repetition here. They were accepted as a condition of pupilage and were signed by all members of that original school.

What then is to be derived from the repeated failures in the past, and from our own solemn declaration that esoteric instruction must end with the first twenty-five years of the life of the Society? Clearly it is that a Theosophical Society can be nursed by special revelation only during a definite period in its infancy and that for the remaining seventy-five years of its life it must walk unaided as far as direct contacts are concerned.

The whole thing is a magical operation. The work is to project along the face of the earth for a century - itself a significant cycle in the history of man - a stream of effort to keep unsullied in the world certain age-old truths, and the prime essential of the magic is that it be done by men themselves, striving alone with no other assurance than that of their Divine Selves, and not by the intervention of Beings who could save us if They cared to.

Such a theory is cold comfort to those who have hoped to find the God somewhere outside of themselves, who think Theosophy is something to be read in a book or heard in a lecture, instead of something to be created in the fastnesses of their own souls.

Colder comfort still for those who by obliquity, or for lack of vision, have professed to prolong the period of received revelation past its due term. I have no special reference to any esoteric school. There are now to my knowledge operating in America, six separate and distinct schools, all arising directly out of the messengership of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, presenting equally valid professions of authenticity, all professing to be successors of H.P.B., all acknowledging her authority, all ignoring her explicit statement about the termination of special revelation, and none speaking of another except do disparage it. The students who form the outer organization of which these schools purport to be the inner bodies are in complete amity, and tomorrow could be welded into a body of incalculable power for the enlightenment of mankind. The barrier to such a welding is in these levels which claim to be the inner and higher. Surely the law of brotherhood is turned upside down!

Why further revelation? We are not using one-thousandth part of what we had when the nineteenth century, ended twenty-three years ago. (This document being of 1923) Powerful, dynamic books, not yet outbidden by any in their field, are neglected, out of print, forgotten - forgotten most, perhaps, because they demanded that the student create Theosophy instead of merely that he receive it ready made. How we love to have things given to us?

Is this the flaw? Is it possible that this is what happened to those earlier societies whose wreckage is strewn through the centuries? That when the time came for them to cast off from special contacts, keeping their torch alight by secret prayer until the next cycle when it could be renewed, they rushed hither and thither, seeking some other light than their own, uncertain, broken and divided?

The Theosophical Society is ours now, for better or worse, to carry on to its goal and provide a great and enduring culture for the next seeding in 1975, or to lose in a morass of our own self-seeking, our

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quarrelling over personalities, and our infidelity to the powers of the Indwelling God. We have to walk alone in order that the magic of a Theosophical Society native among men be brought to pass upon earth . If this be not so none of the earlier Societies need have failed. Adepts could have carried them down the ages in unbroken line, gathering power as they came, until in our day Theosophy would have been carried by a populous triumphant host, instead of the sparse band of strugglers who now represent it.

Have the Masters failed? I rather suspect that those who were to have walked alone failed. And unless we can so walk, we shall fail.

## LACUNAE

If there be in our Theosophical Society the defect of which I have spoken as destroying the earlier societies, this wonder-seeking (which is inevitably self seeking) on inner planes for contacts with the Great Ones, for initiations, for scraps of information of events outside of us instead of earnest search for processes inside of us, such a defect will show in our work. Most of all, it will show in our literature, because literature is the flower of our work.

There are ample indications that the new or revealed material for our renaissance completes itself within the first quarter century, and that thereafter the task of the Society is to make a reevaluation of life, of letters, of arts, of science, of religion, in terms of that revelation. Mere conservation of forces would require as much. If the unveiling of esoteric truth be accompanied by the dangers of which we have been told so often, why should that process of unveiling be continued long after we have ceased to be able to use what we already possess?

We have not used it. For twenty-five years now scarcely a wheel has turned in thousands of the departments in which The Secret Doctrine has made it possible for us to revalue life. Here and there an isolated worker, deriving directly from the origins of the Society, has produced a reevaluation of moment, but in the main stream of the Society we have made nothing that deserves a place beside those works of the first quarter. I shall receive fierce denials of this, but I shall require of the denier not only that he shall have read those first books, but that he shall have worked and taught in the Society for at least a decade, and not have been caught up in an emotional wave three or four years ago.

Perhaps it is a condition of growth. Perhaps under cycle law we must be fed for a quarter century, perhaps we spend a quarter century in the effervescent follies of adolescence, perhaps then a quarter century of robust maturity, perhaps at last a quarter century of conservation and contemplative old age, awaiting the birth of the new impulse.

In such case we are coming now to our fulness of strength, having done all the silly things our ineptitude dictated, and steadying down into a powerful stride. It is so I prefer to think of it, not to think of the misspent days but of the rectification of our misspending, not to bring accusations of negligence or obliquity but to remedy them.

If, then, we are to grow up into potent manhood there are some errors we must mend. It will not be enough to trifle with lesser magic, to lose ourselves in pools of sentimentality, to claim to be the initiates of this or the channels of force of that, to purport to record the past of inconsequential people - of great people, for the matter of that - to retail small gossip ten times removed from the first teller, who himself knew nothing about it. We shall have to address ourselves seriously to those revaluations which were set us twenty-five years ago and which we have yet scarcely touched.

We have no book on Buddhism. A.P. Sinnett's misspelling of "Buddhism" might lead people to suppose we have, but when we have to study Buddhism, after exhausting a few elementary and not very fertile lectures in printed form, we must go to Edkins, Oldenburg, Carus, Schlagintweit, Eakins, Beal and Rhys

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Dauids. Here in a field from which we draw chiefly, we have no authoritative work. Neither have we any on Hinduism. Again we have a few lectures, a class-book for Hindu boys, and one or two works around the fringe of the subject, but no work which challenges scholarship. Srinavasa Iyengar's book has disappeared. We have a lecture or two on Zoroastrianism and there we stop. In spite of all we claim to know, we have left the field to Martin Haug and one or two others. We have nothing in Egyptian religion, good, bad or indifferent. With all our professed sources of information, we have nothing on Chaldea, nothing on Babylonia, Assyria, Troja. There are books, but none of ours. We can dig up unprovable details about Peru scores of millennia age, but the world has only five Etruscan words and we cannot add a single one to the number. We might as well not know there is such a place as China since H.P. Blavatsky died. We have left that immense and intriguing field to all but Theosophists. Taoism is almost untouched.

We might have made an authoritative survey of Norse myth, but we have not. Neither have we done anything with the Finnish Kalevala, the Nibelungen Ring, the Holy Grail, the Romance of the Rose. We have talked about, but we have not made a book about the alchemists, nor the Troubadours. Dante is our kind and we have left him to the Roman Catholic polemicists.

We have no books on Mohammedanism, none on the Sufis, none on Mithraism (since Mead's) none on Mani, and none on either Talmud or Kabbalah (since Wynn Westcott's booklets). The rich field of animism and fetishism, embodying as they do the fragments of great religions, have been beneath our notice. Maya and Aztec civilization and religion we have left to others, we who lay such stress upon them. The myths of North America are gathered by everybody but Theosophists.

Plato: nothing but some of heroic old Alexander Wilder's essays, never reprinted. Plotinus: a translation by Mead, but no thorough study. Iamblichus: nothing. The Homeric epic: nothing, nor anything on Greek religion, that vast and fascinating field so akin in culture to our own and on which our world of scholarship reads everything printed. On Keltic religion we have no book for all the magic it yields.

Where is our big text on Masonry? Wilmshurst's lectures, but nothing more. Where is our word on occult geography and the Platonic solids? The Great canon of proportion? The magical symbolism of The Thousand Nights and One Night? Aeneid Book VI? The Mahabharata? The Ramayana? What have we on the mediaeval Theosophists? Bruno? Nicholas of Basle? Nicholas Flamel? Gemistus Pletho? The Fugers? Trithemius? The Comacine Masters? Or on Cagliostro? Or Mesmer? We have a book on St. Germain, not a very good book. These are some of the things the world looks for from us, and we expect from ourselves. The clues are all there in The Secret Doctrine, and thousands more, but we are so busy about something else.

We write primers as fast as other and better primers go out of print. We are always striving for a lower doorstep when our house on the inside is stark and naked of the things it should contain. We have even lost what we had. We have let Jerome Anderson's books go out of print, and "*Man: Fragments of Forgotten History*", and Ralston Skinner's "Source of Measures", and Claude Wright's "*Modern Theosophy*", and Willson's "Ancient and Modern Physics", and The Dreamer's "Studies in Bhagavad Gita" and most of Tukaram Tatya's reprints of Hindu Scriptures, and Dvivedi's books. Until a year or so ago H.P.B.'s Glossary was out of print when private persons revived it.

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These are some of the lacunae we must fill, and on the side of scholarship alone. In science, in art, in service, in life, in politics, we have done scarcely so well.

Perhaps it is the mark of our failure. Perhaps it is only the sign of our youth. Theosophists now growing up and to come may be less charitable about it all. At least I think they will try to bridge some of these gaps.

## STUDY

Now, fixing our minds on the things which require to be done and looking back only to avoid repeating the mistakes of our past, I think we will find nothing wrong in the Theosophical Society which cannot be mended with a few years of right effort. The membership of the Society changes with great rapidity - far greater than persons unacquainted with its records would suppose - and a very short time is enough to recreate the spirit of any group. If, then, we assume our tasks, not as an end in themselves, but as laying down a charge and a culture for incoming members, the whole Society can be remade nearer to that first mood in which the work was begun.

The primary requirement will be to create fertile methods of study. Our greatest present disability is our shameful ignorance of the elements of occultism. Our people are not without the wish to know, but they come into the Society with a grave misapprehension of the nature of occult literature - the idea that somebody is going to tell them truth.

The Theosophical Society is not the custodian of truth, but of certain age-old means to the attainment of truth, and when we lose sight of this distinction and proffer to outsiders things we cannot give them, the best outsiders suspect us and refuse to come in, while those less than the best, who come in on such a promise, create so great a disturbance arguing about the right book and the right teacher, that we are in a constant turmoil - a turmoil in which study is extremely difficult.

It will be the duty of those who have found it out to make it clear to those who have not - inside as well as outside the Society - that esoteric truth is never written down exactly in any book. If it were it would cease to be esoteric. The great books in Theosophy are never explicit about anything except the moral steps to the attainment of truth. Regarding matters of fact they are evocative of truth in the reader, not by a process of telling untruth, but by a method of presenting truth in a fragmentary form. A great Theosophical book is not solid nutriment to be broken off and carried away piecemeal, but a mesh requiring to be filled.

For years now we have had study groups engaged in poring over a single book, trying by intense scrutiny to acquire its treasure. If it has been a foolish book which professed to be explicit the effort has been vain, because the book has contained little truth. If it has been a great book the effort has been almost as vain, because the wealth of a great occult book is derived in exactly the same measure that the student takes something to it.

If we bolt an idea entire from a book we have not gained an idea. We have merely entertained an alien. But if the borrowed idea, obeying the same law of polarity as manifests here on the physical plane as sex, unites with one in our own minds, we have gained an idea. Ideas are not born outside of us, but inside of us, and our native-born will be the only ones we can use in the quest of truth.

The single-book Theosophists have given us a great deal of trouble and have seriously impaired our efficiency. If they have eaten a great book they mouth recondite phrases. They are not unlike the old-line Christians who bang the Bible with a positive fist and say, "All any man needs to know is in that Book!" Of

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course it is, but it will never give up its all until the student brings some wealth of his own with which to elicit it. The truth is all in a tree if we know how to read it. But these single-book and single-author people, when their attenuated arguments run out, fall back on issues of loyalty which have nothing to do with the matter. Then the pot boils again. For all they are getting out of their respective treasuries of truth they might trade books and be no better nor any worse off, as long as they think a single book can yield truth.

The solution is in that word I dwelt on in the second of these chapters. Comparative study alone will nourish. The fool cleaves to a single exposition of truth, and is starved. The wise man reads two books and is fed. He knows neither book can be complete and exact. He triangulates on his subject. Each book gives its own bearing and a parallax is established by which values can be measured. Once having learned the process, the wise man will go on taking new bearings on his problem until he sees it in the round. Then he possesses the factors out of which he can make truth in his own soul, and such truth is Theosophy.

The Masters Themselves do not offer truth gratuitously. When a disciple has pondered and comes to Them with his solution, asking if it be true, They are bound to answer "Yes" or "No".

That is what the books They have inspired will do. Students say they find *The Secret Doctrine* a hard book. For the person who comes to it empty-handed, expecting to be given something, it is the hardest book in the world, double-locked and bolted at every page. For the seeker who has gone as far as he can with his problem, and comes with a question, the Doctrine will fall open at the page he needs. My reader must not take this on any word of mine. Let him try it. It is a Master book, and it is bound to say "Yes" or "No".

So with all great books - ours and before our time. They elicit truth from the student. The silly books inform him, and when he gets something for nothing that way, he can take the testimony of the centuries that it is wrong. If it were right, it could not so be told. Exact truth on this plane is Maya. Even  $2 \times 2 = 4$  is not quite right. It is the dim symbolic formula for something only the soul can know.

We will have to set up our study classes with these things in mind, and instead of a somnolent group listening to the drowning voice of a reader, we will demand of each student that he carry on a research parallel to the subject in hand, and bring his gleanings to the class for the filling of the text. One will follow parallel indications in Buddhist, one in Hindu, one in Egyptian, another in Greek and another in Chinese tradition. One may have a scientific, one a philosophic, one a mystical inquiry, and so on. The text itself will suggest search, and the material will be turned into the general store. So we will find out what texts paralyse study, and what ones energize it. Instead of having to fall back upon the bona fides of the writer of the book in hand, and argue about his authority, the students will know him by his fruits.

We will learn also that the sources of *Theosophia* is in the soul, and we will develop by practice the faculty of eliciting it. We will learn how to ask ourselves a question again and again until the Ego creates the answer from the treasure house of his own high origin. Then we shall have an end, perhaps of this nonsense about the evolution of the soul, and find out by definite experiment that the soul does not evolve, but, as the early books had it, it emanates.

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Our real Theosophists will find such a method as fascinating as it is enduring. Our weaker students will not like it because they do not want work. They want alms, or at least a bargain. And since, as our records show, whatever they may do for the Theosophical movement, they are not long for the Theosophical Society anyway, we will be less upset when their karma runs out and they leave. The work firmly built on Theosophical principles can go on.

## **SPEAKERS**

In its capacity of answerer, two great modes of expression are open to the Theosophical Society. One is of speaking, the other of writing. These are its direct means of contact with its generation and require to be used in their highest efficiency - an efficiency for the attainment of which we cannot take too great pains.

The first and readiest, that of speaking, is one which, for insufficient reasons, we have erected into a fetish. Speaking is a great and unusual gift, we say. If we only had speakers how much we could accomplish! And the speech we might use for the carrying on of Theosophical work we waste in regretting the lack of it.

If we are to carry on speaking in terms of true Theosophy, it will be binding upon every chairman to say that the words of the speaker represent his own views and are not to be taken as the voice of the Society. It is then binding on every speaker to go ahead and state those views without fear or favour, erring, for choice - and he must err - on the side of independence of what has already been said on the subject, and great dependence on his own intuitions. He must make up his mind at the beginning that he cannot attain absolute accuracy in his statements. If he did attain complete accuracy he would not be allowed to make the statements, and if he were allowed they would not be understood.

Absolute truth is in another dimension than this; only to be stated in symbol and understood in illumination.

What, therefore, remains for him to do? Better sit down again? No, he is required to say what he thinks and believes about the problems of life in so fertile and sincere a way as to evoke thought and possibly a measure of illumination in his listeners. He is not there to inform them; he is there to initiate them.

This would seem a very high office for the speaker to aspire to. A fine office, but not out of reach. Trees can initiate us, and flowers and all living things, because of their intense preoccupation with the specific thing they are doing. So if our speaker will say his own thought with anything like the simplicity and earnestness with which a tree breathes or a flower turns to the sun, he too can initiate.

The first thing then a speaker must do is go inside to his intuitions for his material. If Theosophy means anything it means that the God manifests Himself in man and that every man is potential God; that the God will yield whatever one prays for, and that the man who is blessed is the man who prays for worthy things.

Thus assured he should sit down and turn his subject over in his mind, asking questions about it. It will not matter very much what the subject is, the God is unbelievably powerful in answering questions if He is intensely asked. The speaker may, if he choose, write down his questions, moving round and round his subject, asking the things he needs to know. He must not pray, "Give me things and I will tell them to these people", but "In behalf of these people I ask these things". This is the difference between a not very

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good speaker and a fine one. The inferior speaker informs his audience; the great one places himself at the head of them as a pathfinder might, and leads them into a country where, in their behalf, he has ventured a little. The audience may admire the first; it will love the second, and with the play of its love initiation begins.

As he goes on eliciting what he requires from his own inner self the speaker will find his information leap in to dress his ideas. This is what reading is for. It is not that we should sop up a book or an article and retail it, preoccupied always of the next step, but to read many books, letting them lie in the mind until they become a rich culture from which his new-born idea can choose the elements of its body and come forth sheathed in fact, illuminated by analogy and vivified by the sincerity of the speaker.

It is ironical that we who of all people should believe in the power of the God to instruct us for speech should be anything but successful in producing speakers. Partly it is that in dealing with so great things we think that unless we can say them greatly we should remain silent. Partly also we are troubled by that diffidence which makes us unwilling that others should find out how little we know, and the fault is more marked in those people who give more worship to their earthly heroes than they do to the inner God - the people who feel that liberation is to be attained by outside interference. They think that theosophic enrichment requires some *person*, when what it really needs is some *thing*. They are our dwellers in Macedonia.

The first thing speaking needs then is that the speaker shall regard himself not as the deputy of some person in authority but of a Divine Presence which he shares with his listeners, and having elicited his material in the manner I have indicated he is required to project it vocally through the mechanism of the personality. Here is where his early troubles become most acute, and to save him as much suffering as possible I offer him some suggestions to quiet the emotions and to uplift the man. They are old and tried rules:

(1) Let him say his prayers just before he begins. Let him also breathe deeply. This is like prayer, because every time we breathe on the physical plane the impulse runs through all planes, right up to the God.

(2) Let him speak: not read. Reading, except with a great reader, does not initiate. Often it scarcely informs.

(3) Let him stand firmly on his feet, resting at any given time more on one than the other, and in the early stages of all lectures and in most stages of early lectures let him tighten all muscles from the waist down. The room will then vibrate with the speaker as the table does with a grounded tuning fork, and his voice will be a part of him instead of seeming a separate entity.

(4) Let him think of his audience as just being contained in a great egg-form, the smaller end of which is at his mouth. If he feels he is just filling this he will be distinctly heard by all his listeners.

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(5) Let him remember that his relation to his audience is not as of one against many but as one containing many.

(6) Let him never under any circumstances ask to be allowed to speak, nor under any refuse to speak when he is asked, if it is humanly possible for him to do so.

(7) Let him, whatever goes amiss in his lecture, keep on speaking. The fluent speaker will achieve a rich texture; the speaker who halts and hesitates for the right word will never get fluency- and rarely the right word. All we ar required to do is to provide a *vahan* of what words we can for spiritual things. The flow of spiritual things will make perfect words.

## WRITERS

When I turn to writers I may be looked upon as addressing a much smaller section of the Theosophical Society than when I deal with speakers. As a fact it is so, but it need not be so. Like speaking, writing is not nearly the elaborate miracle we make of it. The ability to write, like the ability to speak or to draw, is the common heritage of all of us, and the barrier which separates us from it is a technical training the greater part of which we received in school, and the remainder of which can be easily possessed if we have the perseverance to possess it.

To which we must add the element of reincarnation and of powers now dormant, which we have all undoubtedly possessed in the past, and without having possessed which we should not now be interested in Theosophy, which is essentially a preoccupation of the creative warrior caste. It is amusing also, in a sad sort of way, that for all our belief in reincarnation, our people should proceed in their daily affairs as if they had never heard of such a thing. They will speculate about past incarnations and future ones, when the only possible merit of former lives consists in the ability to summon the powers of those lives into the present.

If those of our people, therefore, who have the occultist's point of view about life, and are more interested in the present implications of the doctrine of reincarnation, than they are in the mere fact of it, will set to work on a task of writing they will be amazed to find how soon by creative effort they can bring the powers of the past into play, and how they can make long past apprenticeships serve the living Now.

If my reader will proceed as I have indicated in the articles on speaking by writing down the central idea around which he wishes to build an article, and, by the process of asking the Self questions about it, will write down notes about the idea, he will find presently that the memoranda he is making will almost write themselves. Such notes must be frankly notes and not finished sentences. When they are thought of as finished sentences the mind will run next to the finished article, which at this stage is no business of the writer. He must exist in the ideas he is eliciting from the Self and not in the faults he foresees in the completed work, nor yet in the praise the completed work will bring him. The moment he runs on ahead he has broken the first rule of creative art, which is also the first rule of occultism, that he must live in the present instant.

Gradually his idea will take form. It will become round and clearly marked with the elaborations necessary to explain and amplify it. So as the writer goes on developing the idea he will feel within him a growing desire to begin the actual work of writing. Such desire will increase directly in the measure of the denial of it, until at last the writer, feeling secure in the value of his notes and feeling that they really represent something of value, will find that the task of writing them down as finished copy will be a pleasure rather than a labour because he has enlisted desire instead of having to fight it step by step.

So handled in logical steps it becomes a fascinating process, as all creative processes are. He will find as he goes on assembling his material that arising in and through his conscious thought there will be others of which he has not been conscious before, tricks of expressions, of presentation of thought, of vivid analogy, of figures of speech, ghostly visitors from an unplumbed world of his own great past. This is the artist's consciousness of past incarnations and this it is which reinforces in him in practical use his

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belief of having lived before.

No words of mine can convince my reader of the authenticity of all this He must test it, bearing ever in mind that the benefit of the creative arts is greatly to the artist and little after all to the reader, listener or spectator The experimenter will come upon arid intervals - many at first - when nothing will come to him, when his words seem trite or clumsy or empty, but gradually the intervals will shorten and become fewer if his purpose be strong.

Of what will he write? If he follow religiously the process of which I have spoken it will not matter much, because any subject intensely examined by the process of eliciting truth from the soul will yield great values. And also, working so he will probably be too proud - and this concerns us more - to write about so many of things people do write about. He will adhere to truths and their manifestations in life around him; he will build upon fertile things he has read that energize him to more active thought. When he attests his loyalty it will be to ideas and not to persons. When he thinks of his past or of his future it will be in its bearing upon the one moment in which each of us lives. He will write most about things which stir his mind and least about things which merely stir his feelings. He will, I think, make very few indignant retorts, because this kind of commerce with the Self makes them seem so unnecessary. He will be more interested in fertile suggestions and projections of ideas. He will see the macrocosm as the great index of his own microcosm and hierarchies only as the outer projections of his own powers. He will worship less and wonder more.

He will cease to label what he writes with the labels of the present Theosophical Society and will label it more with the universal labels of life. He will probably realize that our work is not one hundredth so much to promulgate technical Theosophy as it is to combat materialism, whether outside the Society or inside it. After he has found a few times that a clever and glittering unbrotherly saying which he knows in his soul is neither kind, true nor necessary, will dry up his sources of inspiration and make it impossible to go on in a fine vein, he will learn a practical brotherhood which is the brotherhood of the truth-speaker and the artist.

For what publications will he write? For any, if he makes up his mind to it. Outside of our own journals, which are very few now, nobody wants labelled Theosophical articles. But all except a few publications want friendly articles that make people think, that are idealistic in their tendency, that are soundly informative, that satisfy souls and that bring in the pictureful past in which men are as intensely interested as if they knew they have lived in it.

It is with our writing as it is with our speaking. Our work is for the world, and when we labour for the world we achieve our great end.

## INTELLECTUALITY

If we are to succeed in making this Theosophical Society nearer to that first heartening ideal in which it was begun, one of the things we must do is to restore intellect to its place. Not to the highest place, because it is implicit in Theosophy that there are realms into which intellect of itself may not go. There are none, however, from which it may not draw. We will be careful to correct that inferior and popularity-seeking mood in which it has become the fashion to offer new students a bargain route to the Supreme without traversing the realm of mind.

Least of all will we acquiesce in the cheap habit dismissing mental effort as being mere intellectualism and consequently privative of the things of the spirit, especially when such dismissal comes from those who have neither the courage nor the endurance to essay the necessary initiations of mind.

It is so great a temptation for a Theosophical student to try to cover up mental failure by saying "My *Dharma* is not of the mind. Mine is a spiritual path", and thereby exalt his shortcomings into a specious semblance of virtue. His chief difficulty will not deceive anybody long, and this for the best occult reasons.

There is one sovereign test for whether he is living in the world of spirit or in the world of emotion. Focus of consciousness in the spiritual realm will fecundate mind. Focus of consciousness in the emotional realm will not. Spirit vivifies mind; emotion dulls it. Spirit focuses mind; emotion disperses it. If mind will not work freely and connectedly it is because the focus of consciousness is not interior to mind, but exterior to it.

If my reader will find himself in any doubt about this and be not merely of the type that persists in mistaking a brown study for a spiritual experience, he will do well to test it for himself. If an exercise be genuinely spiritual and in even the slightest measure achieve its object, mind will race eagerly along its line of enquiry; it will capture clear analogy from within; it will refine worlds into clear and enlightening use; it will make vivid and flashing revaluations of life; it will endow its participants with a power of tongue. If he has penetrated for an instant into his spiritual being he will show it in thought, in speech which is the firstborn of thought, in movement and in love. These things he will find in himself and these things he is entitled to expect of spiritual devotees wherever he find them.

If it be that he mistakes the full reflection of Buddhi turned upside down in Kama for the pure light of Buddhi itself, he may easily know it. He will have peace of a drugged sort, not an elated peace; he will be turgid and heavy or sounding and empty; he will parrot phrases he has heard instead of making them; he will re-say reams he has read, and utter formulae he does not understand; he will feel far from the centre of life out at the edge of the disc as it spins - and will cling to things; he will be easily made apprehensive of evil, will react easily to anger. If his fear persist he will become fanatic.

Before any man has the right to condemn mind he must satisfy us that he has transcended it, that he is so fully master of mind that he can create momentarily the radiant and golden fruit that is born of the meeting of mind and spirit. As well talk of going through to spirit without taking the initiations of mind as to

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talk of a diameter that does not pass through the centre of the circle, or of a road from two to four that does not pass through three.

Mind is not an end, nor must it ever be considered an end. It is nonetheless a means, and even the Bhakti, most pledged to devotion, considers it so. There comes a time at last for the sacrifice of mind to spirit, but it will profit us little to offer to sacrifice something we have not attained. Since few of us have mental powers worth any great stir in Heaven when we sacrifice them, least of all those among us who talk most of that sacrifice, will do well to tarry a while with mind until we have something worth offering.

So tarrying, we may learn that mind will open many spiritual doors nothing else can. We will find, as so few of our people give signs of having found, that the real problem of attaining to the *siddhis* of mind is the ability to control the lower self. That it is not an intellectual task nearly so much as a moral one. That when one's mind is clumsy and inept and his memory bad, rather than making a virtue of it and pluming himself on being a Bhakti, he had better be about the world of quelling the lower self which renders his mind inefficient.

We Theosophists have come on a bad muddle these later days about the nature and place of mind, and it will be salutary for us to spend more time with Patanjali as we used to do. Patanjali is a regimen and far more healthful than a nostrum. We will learn from him that to be able to follow a line of reasoning to its logical and honest conclusion is a great thing and requires control of the animal nature. That beyond this discursive power lies the power to hold a single image in mind, concentrating attention upon it to the exclusion of all others. That beyond that again lies the power to contemplate an abstract idea until it becomes a full and potent concept drawing magnetically from the past and clarified by the light of Buddhi - of Hermes the messenger of the God. That beyond that again lies the far harder tasks of pushing every image out to the circumference of conscious mind and remaining thus positively and definitely free from a spectacle, to let the cognitions of Buddhi mirror themselves in a crystal-clear pool of mind. This is meditation, the standing midway between the God and the lower self, the postulant of the spirit.

I think that realizing how hard the mount of vision is to climb and that these steps must be taken patiently in the order I have given we will learn to be honest with our newcomers and let waste as little time as possible with our present substitutes for this living proof of the truths of Theosophy. We may then find a more modest word than meditation for that quaint practice of recent years of sitting with palms on knees and feet on floor and thinking at random as at a seance. Even the position is merely funny. It closes no bodily circuits, as in the great postures of meditation, it is like trying to catch water in a bottomless bucket. If we must do it and in groups, another quaint practice against which Jesus earnestly entreated us, let us call it quiet thought or something like that and make it clear that meditation is a great exercise and follows only upon mastery over the mercuric tendencies of mind. That it is the sacramental crown and glory of an intellectual achievement so many of our people have hoped against hope they will not need to bother about. We must be honest above all things. The Masters would like that better than multitudes dishonestly attracted.

So when we hear talk about variety of mind let us remember that there is not nearly so much variety of mind as we think, but only variety of the distortions and disturbances of emotion through which it is projected.

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The ability to think clearly and well, as to speak or write clearly and well, is wrested by toil and patience and repeated effort from the lower self, and anybody with the will to go into his closet and close the door and strive with a mental problem can solve it so. Mind will never defeat him. But laziness will and drowsiness will, and fear of failure and hope of success and doubt of the value of his work, and lack of fortitude, and habitual self-indulgence, restlessness of body and recent anger.

The phrase "Mind is the great slayer of the Real" must not be wrenched out of its true place in the Great Work. There is a phrase that demands attention far earlier on the path than that and with it we are more immediately concerned because so few of us have passed it. "Let not the senses make a playground of the mind". That will hold most of us this life. Any there be beyond that will reveal themselves by their fruits of spirit.

## SPIRITUALITY

I have spoken of intellect as the reward of courage and as a finely wrought tool for the evocation of spirituality. Of what sort will spirituality be when we evoke it and how will it show itself?

Of a certainty, because it is life itself and in its very name the play of breath, spirituality will not be something we have never had. It may easily, however, be something we have never had enough of. It must be a current, an energy. It cannot be what we call Buddhi, because Buddhi is matter of subtle grade, and is on the form side of our world. Neither is Buddhi to be conceived as something within us as our charts are compelled to show it, but as something outside of us, a subtle body which we share with all mankind, and in which we as individuals are atoms, as the animal cells are atoms in us.

Spirituality, then, must represent a process by which the Divine Energy, which we are, breaks its bounds of the individual man, to play in the growing tendrils with which we contact those around us. Our means of increasing it will be to multiply and vivify our ties with mankind and, having thus enlarged our sense of a body of communion, we shall permit a fuller flow of the Spirit, Or, to say it another way, having increased our efflux, we shall have increased our influx from our own Indwelling God.

It is implicit in all religions that no one can increase spirituality in himself to himself, but only in himself for another. It would seem to live in the nexus between him and a second person, in a mesh, as it were, of that great body which is of the whole race. In each added link with the rest of mankind the mesh grows, and with it the flow of spirituality. It is never in men, but between men. "For", says Jesus, speaking in his Buddhic office, "when two or three of you are gathering together in My Name, there am I *in the midst*".

We are prone to think of it as something in us which we can give, or refuse to give. No. It is something common to us all and we vitalize it by finding common ground with men. In the measure therefore that we fashion mind into a delicate instrument for the discernment of the things common to us and those about us, instead of occupying ourselves with differences; in the measure that we can make thought a quest of what we share and not of the things upon which we quarrel- in precisely that measure do we enlarge the body in which Atma can play.

So because an energy can only be answered by an energy it will come to pass that the play of spirit along the tendril of our contact will elicit a measure of spiritual flow in the one who has been contacted. This is the key to that spiritualized brooding of the Masters which is their most potent service to mankind. It is the clue also to the curious swirl or vortex we make among those around us when spirituality flows through us. We are not merely filling our own bodies with light but activating the spiritual bodies of all we contact.

Some may at first take it ill, but that will not matter. We can make our link with the highest in another and stir his Buddhic nature, and because his mind is not attuned to identifies but to disparities he may repudiate the bond. He may become frantic in his denial of the contact, and if the swirl be great enough he may crucify the very man who has roused him. Or, having recognized the swirl for a time, a pall may descend upon him, a pall of his Karma, an old habit of letting his mind feed his passional nature with

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differences. What shall I say of my brother if, having shown zest and enthusiasm with me because of That in the Midst, he become opposed to me? That he is wrong? Shall I too feed my passional nature with differences that will destroy the tendril between us, or upon our communities that will strengthen it? Shall I too draw down my blind of the spirit and fight him in the dark? Or shall I strive harder than ever to keep the bond, knowing that when my blind is down he will in his turn do the like for me? And he will. If I stay his brother in Buddhi the time must come when he will stay mine. The Masters play constantly at such a one-sided brotherhood.

We can posit it then of spirituality that it will live in community and die in separation; it will continued to flow when there is only conscious party to it, that it is fluent, of the nature of life itself, and that by the training of the mind to the creation of images of similarity we can evoke and radiate it. How then will it show itself?

First of all in a sense of abundance, because it is of its very nature an overflowing beyond separate entity - an enlargement of the ramifications of life and a flow of life into the enlarged network. Conversely it will show itself in the generosity which must arise out of realization that the current thus made to flow is as inexhaustible as the God Itself; that there is more force where the last came from and that the pouring out of whatever we have to give - of ideas, of good will, of material aid, of commendation, of precedence to others, of acknowledgement of benefits, of the energy that goes into work - will not beggar but enrich us as enriching that widening vehicle in which we learn more and more to focus life.

Spirituality will show itself also in a widened sense of space and time that will save its custodian from little flurries of immediacy and urgency, of righteous indignation, of feeling that the time has come to do something, or that it will soon be too late to do something else, the little precipitancies of life that betray us into treachery, meanness and sharp practice.

It will show itself in a deep unwillingness to break ties when once they are made - even in order to make new ties. That the man who cuts tendrils once formed is mutilating his body of the spirit as surely as he would mutilate his body of the flesh if he cuts off fingers. Not figuratively. Literally. It is a great light to us the day we find how many of our weaknesses and inhibitions are the direct result of broken courses of the spirit.

It will show itself in a growing realization that these tendrils of spirit are the enduring things in the world and they must remain when all else passes. They are our fruit at the end of life and our seed at the gate of birth.

Spirituality will also, I think, show itself as gaiety and high spirits, as the ability to make and take laughter. Every religious quest, including our own, has suffered at the hands of its humourless saints who have not learned that truth can be conveyed from man to man in a whimsy, in the odd consorting of incongruous ideas in reductions to absurdity, long after precise speech has failed to convey it. That higher than induction and deduction is analogy and a *jeu d'esprit* derives its life from analogy. The one thing hatred, fear, anger and malice and the enclosing passions cannot survive is laughter.

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It will mean a great deal to us in our lodges if we can wrest this idea of spirituality clear of its later Christian ideas of austerity and piety, which are virtues of the separate man, and learn to identify it rather with the relations of one man with another. If we can think of it as zest, light-heartedness and vitality in personal contacts, more in a handshake than in a speech, as the ability to take adversity with a smile, the willingness to let things go by default, the willingness also to give odds, knowing there is more virtue in the effort than in the result, the instinct to proceed more upon bona fides than upon charters, constitutions, by-laws, resolutions and votes, and a confidence in the healing power of time, we will do vastly more for the world for which our Society exists.

Spirituality is the only true entrance to esotericism. Two persons who work together and are so bound can hold a closed meeting in the midst of a multitude. I sometimes think we hold no really closed meetings at all, but these communions of effort, endurance and sympathy. The others are merely symbols of something we must bring to pass.

## RHYTHM

In an earlier chapter I have suggested that the work of our Theosophical Society is a magical one, that it is to lay down on the face of the earth the best projection we can make of such things as we believe to exist on the inner planes of being, and one thing above all others, an inner and compassionate Society pledged to the enlightenment of mankind. Primarily, then, we are incarnating in among men - giving such body as we can to - a process for the renewal of a wisdom tradition regarding man's origins, his nature and his destiny.

It is not enough that we enunciate that tradition. If mere enunciation were the purpose, the Masters who make up that Inner Society could do it far better than we. A few books of great power, some appearances in the flesh and a few simple and well attested miracles could convert the world in a year. This kind of conversion of the world is obviously not the immediate purpose of our effort. Not only must we enunciate the ancient tradition, but we must enact such things as we know to be inseparable from it in order that as men living among men, unaided save by that Divine Presence we share with all men, we may make the *Theosophia* a valid and convincing guide to life.

We must incarnate some measure of the brotherhood without which the Inner Society could not live for a moment. We have done rather badly here, perhaps no worse than was expected of us, perhaps somewhat better than might have been expected under the conditions any form of occultism will create in those new to it, or resuming it after a break. In any case there is vast room for betterment, and it is possible that the residuum of members, who, after they have passed through their baptism of fire, remain to be tolerant, instead of quitting, will increase to a point where a fine nucleus of brotherhood will inhere in the fabric of our Society. That is the hope of the next fifty years.

Next in importance in that Inner Society of Adepts, and the element in it that makes it enduring throughout the years is its strict observance of cyclic law, obedience of which is power and denial of which must end in impotence and futility. All Theosophy comes at last to be no more than a realization of the forces of cyclic recurrence. Some measure of this we must also incarnate and here, I think, we have failed worst of all.

For all our talk of the outbreathing and inbreathing, of periodicity in the making and dissipating of worlds, of chains, globes and rounds, of the rise and fall of races, of the descent and withdrawal of souls, the return of seed-time and harvest, of seasons, of nights and days, of the cyclic return of good and evil gifts to the giver, of the play of breath, of the systole and diastole of the heart, of the pulsations of life in the atoms, it has occurred rarely to us that any enduring incarnation of the Inner Society must be also in terms of this repetition of impact which is the all-inclusive law of life.

So we have gone blithely ahead starting with a brave enough step, assuming tasks we knew we could not maintain for long, tiring, stopping, starting again at our good pleasure, doing a few of this and half a dozen of the other, studying when the mood took us, starting a book with a great rush when it was new to us, and never getting beyond a few pages; lecturing a little, then not lecturing at all; setting a night for something, then changing it because somebody could not come that night; running a class for a few weeks at a certain time, then changing to another time and wondering why the effort petered out;

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assuming that great movements could be initiated and brought to fruition overnight; spending all our energies on the visit of this or that popular speaker, and then with nothing but debris, a deficit and a corporal's guards of wobbly recruits as souvenirs of his visit, declaring that we lived in a poor town for Theosophy; thinking we could manifest a great and rhythmical power by shifty little expedencies, by votes and resolutions; discarding the cumulative power of old friendships and associations for the first glib stranger who came along; rushing into fads for the renovation of this or the Theosophization of that and wondering why our Theosophy seemed wan and peaked when we went back to it again.

We have been an unsteady flame for the lighting of a world, and if our ray has not carried as far as we think it should have, it is no fault of Theosophy but of our embodiment of it. If we are now to save the Society though the fifty years it has to go we must learn that our greatest force lies in the certainty and endurance of our stride.

We must learn, along with all its implications that the way to power is not in the intensity of effort, but in steadiness of stride; that power is cumulative, to be acquired by rhythmical and repeated use of it; and that rhythm once established is a precious instrument of work not to be carelessly thrown away.

That any activity, a meeting, a class or a group once allotted its measure of recurrence and allotted its day and hour, should never be disturbed for any but the gravest cause, and then never radically changed but only modified to suit pressing needs, and then allowed to continue its way gathering strength as it goes. Even though by adherence to rhythm it lose the fickle it will matter a great deal that it lay down in that place and at that time the record of its pulsation. To change it will probably not serve even information; to maintain it against odds will serve magic. It is in terms of magic that our results will be tested. Information is a trivial thing.

That the quest after truth, faithfully returned to at regular intervals and gathering power as it goes will do more for a community than a revival or a campaign, the advent of a practised speaker with a little vaudeville routine of lectures and a hobby to keep him from boredom. All he is likely to do is leave the group a bit worse off by contrast after he goes. We will learn that the business of a visiting lecturer should not be to recruit new members, but to renew the faith of old ones whose task it is to get their own accessions of strength from among those who discern what Theosophy has done for the lives of its exponents near at hand.

We may also be able to persuade our speakers that this conversation of their precious energies for sporadic platform masterpieces is the road to debility and not to power; that a lecture a month is easier and better than a lecture a year, and a lecture a week easier and better than a lecture a month; that each helps the next and each gathers force from the last; that one does not collect material for a lecture but gathers from lecture to lecture the power to prepare a lecture in fewer and fewer minutes until the time will come when he can prepare a lecture in a moment's converse with the God.

We may learn most of all that our duty as Theosophists is to perpetuate something, not merely as saying it but as setting up in *akas* a tradition for the generation that is to say it when we no longer can; that every effort must be for the increasingly forceful transmission of the first ideal.

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So perhaps we will come to see ourselves as apprentices to a great Guild, little responsible for results, but greatly for method, which cannot fail of results in time if it be in terms of the whole World. I think the realization that we have to do something magical as laying down an ideal would save us a great deal of our present discouragement.

## AMATEURS

For the first time now I am at a loss to find kindly words for one of the distortions which is creeping into our Theosophical Society, a distortion which will sooner than any other reduce us to the level of a sect and destroy in us every vestige of that detachment which is the peculiar flower of true occultism.

There was a saying current in the early days that the moment the Society became a sect it would from that moment have failed of its high purpose. Our problem then is to avoid those things which would make it a sect. One of them would be the mood in which Theosophists would claim to be the vehicle of an exclusive revelation. A second arising out of this would be the feeling that the Theosophical Society had something which made it superior to all other occult systems. A third, the converse of the second, would inevitably be that those outside our Society were in some measure inferior, or were at least beyond the circle of the elect, and would not be allowed to participate in certain desirable things, as, for example, the welcoming of a World Saviour. Another potent means towards making a sect of the Society would be that mood in its leaders which would persuade them to compound an error in teaching on the ground that there would be more harm in acknowledging the error than there would be benefit in declaring the truth. There are many other and lesser things that would make us a sect: the development of a hierarchy, of presbyters and shepherds who for vanity or love of power or for any of the pretexts for which individuals vampirize upon a body, have clung to their offices beyond their term of usefulness.

All of these must be dealt with on principle as they may arise. We cannot successfully make rules of them. There is one growing tendency, however, of so gross a nature that it can be dealt with by rules as soon as we are clear-minded and courageous enough to deal with it. It is the offence that contributes most generously to all these others and decently free from which I think sectarianism could make little headway among us. It is the offence of degrading Theosophy into a means of livelihood.

It shows itself in various ways: in the fee taken by some of our speakers, in the custom of having salaried executives and officials, and in the more common custom of private subvention, by which a wealthy enthusiast pays a lecturer a stipend. Today in America it is the custom to ask a lecturer what fee he requires or what proportion of the collection he is accustomed to receive.

I am only slightly concerned here with what happens to the man who takes pay for his Theosophical work, except to record the inevitable deterioration of his spiritual powers that follows on any attempt to play his vision of truth against his daily necessities. Sooner or later he will learn, unless indeed he fall into left-hand magic, that to become a professional occultist in however small a measure does not set him free to devote himself to God, as the pious phase has it, but binds him all the more to see God through a fantastic lens of timidity, petty expediency, of ambition, of passion, of resentment of criticism and of fear of loss. He will learn that it is wise to keep these two elements of livelihood and of truth-telling separate lest his desires defile truth; lest he be tempted for too small cause to fulfil his ambitions or slake his lusts at the cost of the Theosophical Society.

I am much more immediately concerned with another aspect of it - ours as members of the Society. There is room for argument about the precise nature of the wrong he does himself and those about him. For us, pledged to make the best of this great inquiry after truth, it only means that the man who is

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incapable of earning his living and of finding time for the service of the Society is not a big enough man for any of the posts we have to fill. He is a little one-track fellow who is practising the love of God for money, and for our purposes is no better than the woman who practices the love of man for the same commodity. For all his skill as lecturer or executive, he is none the less a cut lower on the moral side than those of our people who, whatever their capacity, earn their bread elsewhere and come clean to the Society with nothing to serve but its welfare and honesty.

Our Theosophical Society offers no career for a first-rate man. It is not a business. It is a philanthropy. The men who are good enough for our work will be beyond our power to pay. With all the fields of commerce, learning, the arts, government, the professions, open before him, the man of any stature will be the one who can make his way in one of them and, having achieved something, offer it to the Society as his gift, giving Theosophy the weight and distinction of his accomplishment, championing its principles in the minds of men.

There are things it is lawful for a worker to take when he is on actual service, and things he can take without hurt to himself or to us - his food, his bed and his journey money to the next town - and these only when he is on service. What, then, someone asks, if he give up his whole time to the work? Is he not entitled to his whole support? I do not think he should give up his whole time to the work here in the Society, even if he can afford it. Sacerdotalism lies that way. We are a community of laymen and it is implicit in Theosophy that there is as much virtue in carrying its principles into our effort in the world as there is in carrying our efforts into Theosophy. We are at our highest efficiency when we carry both and certainly at our greatest dignity.

If we set it up as our minimum measure of a man that he be able to earn his bread and fulfil his office in the Society we might not get things so well done. We might not get so much done, but after all so many of the things we now get done might as well go by default. I think we should get the essential things better done. There might be less of headquarters activity, but there would be for that very reason a greater focus in the many centres in which Theosophy must grow. We might have fewer *imprimaturs* and *nihil obstats* to lean upon, but we might be compensated by a greater freedom of interpretation of the clues to truth we now have and a greater autonomy in our actions. Clinging to office might wane a little if it were recognized as a disgrace to live upon the Society or upon wealthy devotees, and freed of the burden of carrying holy men on their salary lists our affluent members might put their money into publishing, into building and the forms of Theosophic beneficence which stain nobody.

So we might come at last to slough off our rice-Christians and leave them to practice their trade of simony in little cults of their own where people do not value the nice distinction between the man who makes his livelihood work for Theosophy and the man who makes Theosophy work for his livelihood.

Then, taking our stand firmly as fine amateurs in religions, and satisfying the world that we have no other motive than the service of truth, we would possess a distinction that could transform all the grubby little upper rooms in which we meet into temples of the God. And we could convince men as Paul convinced them: 'Ye, yourselves, know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities ... For ye remember our labour and travail, labouring night and day because we would not be chargeable unto any of you.'

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So if we must entertain selfish and ambitious men- and we must - let us make it our business to see that they get the fullest exercise for their ambitions and selfishness in their private avocations; that they do not play these games of the desire nature without our principles for counters. It is hard to sit patiently by while a man uses his Chalice of Living Truth to give his dog a drink.

## PURITY

Throughout these essays I have urged that we of the Theosophical Society are required to be more concerned with method than with result. A high method must inevitably bring a wide result, and it will be none of our business if the result is not in our time. Knowing as we do the slow cyclic process by which Nature works from a cause to a visible effect, we of all people should learn to be patient in the knowledge that once the cause is laid down the effect will inevitably follow in its due course, whether we live to see it or not. When we drop to the materialistic mood in which we wait impatiently for results to follow at once upon the causes we have set up, we step into a region of *Maya* where we try to persuade ourselves - and succeed all too frequently - that we have brought about conditions which are in a reality the flowering of long antecedent causes. We do not create a Theosophical Society out of nothing; we draw to a focus long-gone students of the mysteries, united for the most part in one thing only, their preoccupation with the mysteries. They are hampered by all their individual karma, their racial and family limitations, and the one grave mistake they can make about themselves is that because they were persuaded to Theosophy in an hour they can, on grounds of reason alone, persuade others in an hour. We do not make a Theosophist as we so naively believe: we awaken one.

Nor do we awaken his theosophy alone. We rouse with it all this theosophic karma and the forms into which his theosophy has been cast in ages gone by. This one with his spiritism, that one with his magic, another with his love of cloistered community, a fourth with his sense of a need of personal teacher, a fifth with tatters of ritualism still flapping in his mind. One with pledges given to art, or one to social service, or one to scientific inquiry.

These are all as they should be. They are our filamentary ties with the life around us, ties through which our force may go and ties also through which we will draw our sympathy with the life of our generation. That theosophy should exist for itself or for its students is not enough. Every law requires of it that it should exist for the world and wax strong by its service of the world. If the Theosophical Society did not have them but lived to itself it might as well not exist. They are our great advantage.

None the less, they are also our great peril. While our big fellows can draw from Theosophy their refreshment and energy, and then going into the world can lavish it upon what they love best, the little, muddy-minded fellows - and it will not be unbrotherly to admit that we have a few - must needs lug their dear desires into the Society itself and demand of us in the name of tolerance and brotherhood that we also love and feed them.

We have been told so often how hard it is to carry a Theosophical Society in the purity of its first ideals. This is the reason. Because we fail to discriminate between pure Theosophy and all its applications we are overborne by foreign growths, all perfectly valid in their own places and all ruinous in ours.

The churches have had to learn the lesson again and again. Just a few years ago some sentimentalist invented the idea of having a special Sunday, with a special collection for something or other. Then somebody added another, and presently another. But there are only fifty-two Sundays in a year, and when it began to tell on the revenue the amiable people who could not see it as a mistake in principle did see it as a mistake in finance, and I think they stopped it. We may have to run the same course, and

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when our Theosophical Society has been picked white by a host of affiliated movements, our sentimentalists may be able to descry in physical deficits a truth they could not understand in the realm of ideas.

Then we will know, widely enough for it to be of any practical use, that our Theosophical Society is at its greatest potency when we conceive it as a power house that makes energy for whatever purpose the user may have for it. He may use to give light, to give warmth, to turn a machine, to cook his food, to cure his diseases, to shock himself off this plane altogether if he insists upon it, but we will be at great pains to see that when he acquires the power he will carry it afield and make it his contribution to the world. It will be so much better than coming in taking up our good time with long arguments about the use to which the powers could be put. Mostly we have ideas of our own on that subject, and if we are too proud to beg the Theosophical Society for help with our hobbies, we should try to instil a similar pride in him. Failing that we should protect the Society against him.

Because I am of the theatre shall I make this Theosophical Society which has given me so much and which I love for it, a cockpit for all the quarrels, jealousies and frenzies of the theatre? Should I not rather carry my ideas of Theosophy into the theatre? Because I am a Mason shall I carry Masonry into Theosophy or Theosophy into Masonry? Shall I bring politics into Theosophy or take Theosophy into politics? There is surely no problem here if we stay with the principle involved; if we feel in our hearts what we say with our lips that Theosophy is a whole world and a whole culture and an ample field in which no fertile mind need fail for lack of work; if we decide that Theosophy is to be kept above our karma and the swirl of our desires; if we confine ourselves to pure Theosophy and leave the debatable and always difficult application of it to individuals working on other spheres than ours.

A simple and patient tree that stands by the road has a device by which it throws its seed far from it lest the seed grow up and choke it, and although in our sentimental moods we think it tragic that the tree should never be able to caress and encourage its little seedling, it achieves the Lord's work better that way. It lives longer and has more little seedlings.

I think sometimes that if I were a Black Magician and wanted to destroy the Theosophical Society this would be the surest way, I should not fight it head on. That would make it flourish more. I should do everything I could to encourage its little cart-before-the-horse adherents to weave a myriad votive garlands of their hobbies and distantly-related enthusiasms and lay them reverently upon it until they had crushed it to death in the sacred name of Brotherhood.