

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### WHAT IS TRUTH?

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The truth that can be spoken is not eternal Truth.

Relative Truth is the correct understanding of the proper relationship that exists between things generally.

WHEN Jesus was brought before Pilate, he asserted that he had brought truth to the people. But when Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" Jesus remained silent. Was his silence the result of lack of knowledge? We believe not. It was rather the result of a full realization on his part of the futility of trying to assert the nature of truth; first, because truth in its absolute sense has no form, colour or limitation; secondly, because truth in its limited and relative aspect becomes a basis for endless discussion and speculation. The countless forms of religions, philosophies and systems of thought testify to this fact all too well.

Meanwhile man must live, move and have his being in a world of *maya*, relativity. This is evidenced by all our experience and expressed throughout the literatures and philosophies of all peoples. "Things are not what they seem." "It all depends upon your viewpoint." "O wad some power the giftie gie us to see oursel's as others see us!" These and many other phrases express the thinking person's admission that we live in a world of illusion.

Theosophists, like all others, are subject to the great illusion called matter. The difference between the student of Theosophy

and others, however, is that in the light of his philosophy he is beginning to look *consciously* for the proper relationship that exists between things generally, and it is this that makes him a student of life. Now of course all people are doing this in varying degrees, usually unconsciously. They are seeking for a satisfactory explanation of the world about them and a satisfactory adjustment to their environment. In one way or another, through one philosophy, one religion or another, man is trying to find the solution to three basic questions, and, by reason of his nature, he will always search for their answers.

These questions are related, first, to the cause and origin of existence generally; secondly, to the Law that is inherent and operative in things generally; thirdly, to man's own position in the universe and his relationship to things generally and to the object of existence. These three questions should be basic to all philosophies, religions and systems of thought. Unfortunately, most of the evils of the world develop from the fact that the answers to these questions, as supplied by popular religions and philosophies, are circumscribed by grave limitations as they are based on a limited knowledge of man's nature and his ultimate needs. Too often these religions and philosophies have deteriorated into creeds which express rather the wants of man than his spiritual or moral needs.

Ultimately, for each individual in his own time, the answers furnished by religions become inadequate. He demands a wider horizon, a broader vision, than that supplied by secular systems of thought. No longer do these express the proper relationships between things generally; rather do they provide more contradictions than solutions. So, in order to understand correctly the proper relationship that exists between things, the expanding consciousness of the individual must use a different standard of judgment. The all-embracing system of thought called Theosophy, a system which is both scientific and religious, alone appeals to the heart and at the same time does not violate the demands of the logical mind.

Does Theosophy supply satisfactory answers to the three questions posed above? Does it provide a correct understanding of

the proper relationship between things? Its first postulate is that Deity as the Cause and Origin of all existence is a boundless, abstract Principle, beyond the reach of all thought, and on which all speculation is impossible. Yet, because it is Absolute, it must be the very basis of our nature. Thus is struck the note of unity and oneness.

Law, absolute and immutable—not caprice or arbitrary decisions—is the means whereby all things are governed and is the basis for the ultimate meting out of justice. This is the answer to the second question.

There is no basic separateness between men or things, but "all is soul and spirit ever evolving under the rule of law which is inherent in the whole." The fundamental identity of all souls with the Universal Oversoul is demonstrated in Theosophy and the possibility of man's perfectibility is pointed out. Here are standards that are not revolting to the intelligence and do appeal to the heart—standards that to the extent they are applied will solve all the problems which confront human society today as in all times. Surely any system of thought which can do this must give a correct understanding of the relationship between things generally, and this is Truth.

Make application, if only periodically at first, of these principles in everyday living, and the results will be cumulative. Regard your fellow man, anywhere in the world, as one with yourself, and watch the change this brings about in your attitude. Start judging your adversary in these terms: "He is acting according to the law of his nature"; or, "He does good who knows how to do good." Then observe the change in your emotional reaction to those you think have wronged you. We shall find ourselves, not condoning the act, but regarding the actor with understanding and forgiveness. Let our life be governed by the historical perspective which the Third Fundamental provides, its conception of the continuity of life; its exalted goal which is to be the future of all mankind, and then observe the sense of fulfilment and purpose which must accompany every effort on our part to live a wise and well-directed life.

To govern our life by these principles is to make an experiment

in living, more rewarding, more satisfying, than any other possible approach to life. The personality becomes the actor and the human soul becomes the director of the drama as we persistently and patiently apply the pressure which will direct the course of the actor so that his lines will be spoken in accord with the script of fundamental propositions, which form the basis for the life of the Real Man.

Gradually and almost imperceptibly the student-aspirant begins to accept the phenomenal or the relative aspects of daily life. Though he may continue to react as if his experiences were absolutely real, yet the teachings and the dictates of his mind tell him that the testimony of the senses is false.

He begins to learn, to realize, the false aspects of experience. Eventually, if he is sincere and his effort unremitting, the lower nature, Kama-Manas, begins to follow the dictates of the higher mind. The realization of the relative nature of all experience becomes more and more a conscious reaction. When this stage is attained, one becomes ready for positive and constructive procedures. The new processes produce a new birth and a new outlook on life. Meanwhile the student-aspirant continues the fight to create order out of chaos. He relies more and more on principles rather than upon caprice and rationalization.

While admitting that life is relative, he strives to overcome the lethal grip of *maya*. The fact that others regard material life as stark realism is a source of concern to him. If all were endless confusion then indeed would the task be hopeless. But order can be found even in the realm of the senses. For, though we are forever barred from the realm of Absolute Truth while groping through the realm of sensuous existence, yet there is a path through the *mayavic* labyrinth of earthly life. If we cannot grasp the true nature of things in their noumenal aspect, we can at least come to realize the correct relationship that exists between them generally.

It is Theosophy and Theosophy alone which provides the keys that will unlock the door of relative existence. The message of the Wisdom-Religion is with us that we may come to a correct understanding of the proper relationship that exists between things

generally, and this is truth. In the whole of manifested existence there is naught but contrasts. But these contrasts need not be confounding. They all have their proper place in the scheme of things. It is for us to develop our understanding that we may come to realize these relationships, not through the eyes of prejudice and preferences but with the calm eye of impartiality. This is why the teachings insist upon detachment as the means whereby we can obtain an unobstructed view of the "world's eternal ways"—which ways are all proper relationships awaiting our adjusted perspective, perspective adjusted in terms of the eternal, fundamental principles.

There are then two aspects of truth: one absolute, eternal, unmodified; the other, relative but harmonious. The immediate goal for us is to obtain a proper understanding of the relationship that exists between things. Once this is obtained, maybe we will see this Universe of *maya*, of relative truth, as an exact reflection of the Absolute Truth, and, as such, as an aspect of the One Absolute Life.

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ONCE Theosophy and its principles are known, it will be demonstrated that our philosophy is not only a "close relative of modern science," but its forbear, though greatly transcending it in logic; and that its "metaphysics" is vaster, more beautiful and more powerful than any emanating from a dogmatic cult. It is the metaphysics of Nature, in her chaste nakedness, both physical, moral and spiritual, alone capable of explaining the apparent miracle by means of natural and psychic laws, and of completing the mere physiological and pathological notions of Science, and of killing for ever the anthropomorphic Gods and the Devils of dualistic religions. No one believes more firmly in the Unity of the eternal laws than do the Theosophists.

— H. P. BLAVATSKY

## THE THREE OBJECTS

THEOSOPHY is the friend of all movements that seek to work in unison for the improvement of humanity and the amelioration of the race. It is therefore ever ready to applaud the altruistic motive, the loving sacrifice and the stern adherence to duty and to justice. A Theosophist is expected to work strenuously for the promotion of brotherly feelings among nations and races. It therefore becomes the duty of all Theosophists to assist in the international exchange of useful arts and products by advice, information and co-operation with all worthy individuals and associations, provided, however, that no benefit or percentage is taken by the Theosophists or their Society for their or its corporate services. If this is the duty on the international plane, the same duty becomes much more imperative for realms that are constantly touched upon in daily life. In many countries, the social condition of large masses of people renders it impossible for either their bodies or their spirits to be properly trained, so that the development of both is arrested. This training and development is one of the express objects of Theosophy and all Theosophical centres have to be in thorough sympathy and harmony with all true efforts in this direction.

Theosophy does not segregate its votaries nor does it invest them with a halo of exclusiveness. The student of Theosophy can and does admire in others the one-pointed effort at virtue and the endeavour to live a life of altruism and holiness. But at the same time he has to distinguish between the Path he has chosen and the widely-branched faith and infinite objectives which are adopted by those who follow not the system which Theosophy advocates. However, it often happens that the student's very refusal to be a party to any narrowing dogma has its dangers for unwary feet. There are occasions when even a sincere student gets glamourised by the depth of metaphysical knowledge or by the psychic power of another. He covets that lucid knowledge; he is enraptured by the play of psychic forces at work. Is this the Guru for whose advent he has been waiting? Not having the capacity to discriminate, he cuts the Gordian knot by labelling the object of his adoration a

"Theosophist." By so doing, he proves untrue to his Cause. He forgets that there were, as there still are, men who, though holy and striving after liberation, do not subscribe to the three objects of the Theosophical Movement and who are in disagreement with the Aim, Purpose and Teaching that have formed the basis of the original plan and programme of the Masters. Bending of knees—even in thought—to persons who owe allegiance to other ideologies and who have other objectives, is an expression of a transfer of loyalty—a removal of faith from one vessel and the pouring of it into another. Such reversing of attachments is fraught with great risk to the inner growth which may either get atrophied or become misshapen.

To the earnest disciple, three objects, leading to three courses of daily action, remain paramount. For him, these objects must remain inviolate and cannot be substituted by other practices which subserve other objects. Once he has declared his sympathy for these three objectives, the student is wedded to them and can neither ignore nor bypass them without inviting Karmic reactions. These three objects do not present a choice nor do they invite specialization in any one object to the disregard of the others. Each must claim a share in the waking hours of the disciple's life. In the measure that the student adheres to these three objects, in that measure does he deserve to be called a student of H.P.B. and of her Masters for whom she served as an open window through which they could shed their Light into darkened interiors.

Speaking about the "why" of her efforts, H.P.B. wrote that what she was doing was not for self-gratification, but

only in the hope of training a few individuals to carry on our work for humanity by its original programme when the Founders are dead and gone.... At present, the main, fundamental object of the Society is to sow germs in the hearts of men, which may in time sprout, and under more propitious circumstances lead to a healthy reform, conducive of more happiness *to the masses* than they have hitherto enjoyed. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 254-55)

The sowing of the germs was possible only by the implementation

of the original programme which in time became crystallized in the three great objects of the Movement. The student had to form an equilateral triangle by the judicious and deliberate observance of each of these three, endowing them with life by his soul-force.

The three objects of the Movement are thus stated by Madame Blavatsky in her *Key to Theosophy*:

I. To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, or creed.

II. To promote the study of Aryan and other Scriptures, of the World's religions and sciences, and to vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, namely, of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian philosophies.

III. To investigate the hidden mysteries of Nature under every aspect possible, and the psychic and spiritual powers latent in man especially.

From the great mass of men who hunger for spiritual knowledge, anyone may, if he so chooses, join a working centre of Theosophy if he is in genuine sympathy with these three objects. But the mere act of joining cannot make a Theosophist of him who has no sense for the divine fitness of things, or of him who understands Theosophy in his own sectarian and egotistic way.

The first object of the Movement is the formation of a nucleus which in times yet to come will grow and develop into one vast, compact, living Brotherhood of men. Such a nucleus can only be formed by nucleoles which gyrate round a centre of active cohesive force. That cohesion will be lasting which is free of the pulls of race, colour or creed. To be worthy of being a nucleole—of moving in orbit around a central spiritual entity—one has to enter upon a course of entire renunciation of one's personality. This means that the individual has to become an altruist and to make his pride and self-regard bond-maidens to his devotion to the best interest of others. His ideal must be to live a life of abstinence, of self-denial and strict morality, doing his duty by all men. Unless the aspirant makes an effort to achieve this, he does not fall into orbit. He is either loosely connected to the nucleus or strays away into other layers of space.

To an individual wanting in his effort, Brotherhood is a word having only an emotional content. This is so because he remains susceptible to the pulls of sympathy and antipathy. He can have no vision of the work of the living Brotherhood of White Adepts, for he himself is not linked to their objectives and, where no such link exists, how can he be expected to produce on earth a copy in miniature of the ideal Brotherhood which exists among the *élite* of Soul and Spirit? It is a truism that well-regulated efforts produce wonders and that mutual aid, sympathy and co-operation can bring down influences from the higher regions. What is required is human material which must be made ready to the Master's hand. A life in which the three objects are woven is the life which is desirable and fit for the great work to be done now or centuries hence. It is not for the aspirant to choose the timing. He is the ploughshare and it is the farmer who chooses when and where to put it to use.

Outside of such a nucleus as is envisaged by the first object, no individual or institution can expect to produce a universal or even a national benefit—not even to himself. One who does not subscribe to the idea of the great White Lodge of living Adepts, one who, moreover, cares for his own salvation and who therefore rejects the ethics of Theosophy, must remain outside of the area of occult effort. His faith is not in the inviting of suffering on himself so that others may benefit from his pain. He wants a yardstick to measure his daily progress, and if he finds the progress halting, he wants to know the reason why. He may call himself an altruist and a friend of all creatures, but lacks the essentials for a training which, begun in this incarnation, will in some distant life weld him with other volunteers into yet another section of the Guardian Wall which shields mankind, protecting it from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

About the second object of the Movement, Madame Blavatsky wrote in her article on "Chelas and Lay Chelas":

A Lay Chela is but a man of the world who affirms his desire to become wise in spiritual things. Virtually, every member of the Theosophical Society who subscribes to the second of our

three "Declared Objects" is such; for though not of the number of true Chelas, he has yet the possibility of becoming one, for he has stepped across the boundary-line which separated him from the Mahatmas, and has brought himself, as it were, under their notice. In joining the Society and binding himself to help along its work, he has pledged himself to act in some degree in concert with those Mahatmas, at whose behest the Society was organized, and under whose conditional protection it remains.

Once this pledge is taken, it has to be redeemed. From this point, there can be no looking back, no straying into forbidden or even alien territory. The study of ancient religions and sciences is the field of research that broadens the view and universalizes the mind. It shatters exclusive claims; it shows that centuries and ages back the same Knowledge and Path which the Wisdom-Religion discloses was known and practised by individuals and even nations; that, in fact, at some remote time in antiquity gods walked the earth and held confabulations with men. Such a study becomes essential for giving a new orientation to the mind. By delving deep into ancient lore, the student tries, in fact, to assess his own vast heritage and trace for himself his lineage from a distant past. This study must sooner or later forge him into a unit within a vaster brotherhood than that commanded by any religion.

But such a study may have its pitfalls also. All too often the family and caste *skandhas* (attributes sticking to the person through karmic and atavistic action) overpower the student's leanings towards the Universal, and, failing in his attempts to free himself from these, he seeks to hide his divagations by averring that *his* religion and even its ritual is pure Theosophy. It is thus that orthodoxy driven from one battlefield scores a signal victory on another and more vital front. Failure to give adequate importance to the second object tends to circumscribe and narrow the vision, which then fails to become universalized. Faith in the relevance of the second object diminishes, and, in consequence, there occurs an inversion of values in the student's mind and he tries to assess and evaluate Theosophy by the norms of creeds and castes, sciences and half-baked philosophies. The *sui generis* aspect of the Teachings

is not searched for nor recognized. When this stage of shakiness in faith is reached, the channel of communication with the Theosophical Mahatmas gets closed.

The third object of the Movement is an aid in fulfilment of the duty to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions. It is only through intuition that the student can have an abounding faith in the plenitude and correctness of the Teachings. It is this only which can make the neophyte resolute in his task of opposing and counteracting bigotry in every form, whether it be religious, sectarian, scientific or social. He has to destroy, first within himself and then in others, the belief in miracles or anything supernatural. He has to investigate and through that investigation to convince himself and others that psychic and spiritual forces are not the special preserves of any religion and that they are lying dormant in all. To achieve this, he has diligently to seek Knowledge of the laws that govern Nature in all its multifarious aspects. This study and investigation is the testing ground of his faith. Does he get glamoured by phenomena for which he has no answer? Does faith need demonstrations which the eyes can see and the ears hear before it can get confirmed? Does the student repeat the mistake of those who in the formative years of the Movement felt that phenomena like astral bell-ringing can win adherents to Masters' Cause? The flame of true Faith is not ignited at ignoble flames, neither does the possession of lower psychic powers bring one recognition from the Masters.

The student is expected to "investigate." He has to understand the vast potencies that reside in each of his sheaths—the physical, the astral, the psychic, the manasic and the spiritual. That investigation must lead him in time to a recognition of the faculty of intuition and the existence in each of inner sets of senses. When he puts his faith in the reality of that which he has investigated, he may find other Theosophical instructions awaiting him in the same texts from which he distilled his initial knowledge. The new light and the ability to read within the words come from the higher planes of being and are the rewards of an unshaken faith in the Teaching and the Teachers.

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## CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

IN all human beings consciousness is a unit, is indivisible. However many its manifestations through one instrument or another, it is always a unit and that is why we call ourselves individuals.

That indivisible unit is constantly unfolding and growing, progressing and advancing. Consciousness is like a seed; it unfolds from within without by the power latent within it.

The relation of that unit, that individual, to anything we are dealing with has to be sought. If we are dealing with the mind, we have to look for the relationship of the individual to the mind. If we are dealing with the feelings, we have to look for the relationship of the individual to the feelings. Whether we are dealing with impulses, instincts, intuitions, or anything else, we cannot isolate them from the individual. That unit or that individual remains one and the same, whatever it deals with. It deals with different things because it, as an indivisible unit, is in the process of unfoldment. Unfoldment implies its contact with new and newer things. It grows from within without and, therefore, with every step of growth it contacts a different phase and more of the without.

From that simple view we can survey the whole field of evolution and ourselves in it.

What is true of consciousness which is human is also true of all individualized consciousness. That consciousness which is the consciousness of an atom is a unit, indivisible, unfolding. That consciousness which is the consciousness of a cosmos or a world is a unit, indivisible, unfolding.

The unfolding unit that we call consciousness never came into being and can never go out of being. It always *is*. The process of its unfoldment is a continuous one. Hence, what we call our human soul or consciousness is timeless; it lives continuously.

Our instincts, our impulses, our feelings, our thoughts, our intuitions are all instruments through which the indivisible and unfolding life, the consciousness or soul, makes its own growth, carves out its own path of evolution. It looks to us as if there are many different entities in us when we look at them from without.

We are apt to make a division and say, "My feelings are different from my thoughts." We put emphasis on the words "feelings" and "thoughts," forgetting to put emphasis on the common word "my"—*my* feelings and *my* thoughts. We proceed from the point of view of that which divides instead of proceeding from the point of view of that which is the common basis. That "*my*" is the indivisible aspect, and feelings, thoughts, etc., are the unfolding aspect.

We are unfolding different aspects of ourselves. If we look only at these different aspects we cannot know what we are. We proceed by the method of analysis instead of proceeding by the true method of synthesis. We proceed from details to laws, from particulars to universals. The ancient method was to proceed from the universal to the particular. Therefore we find that in all old books the description of the creation of the universe precedes the description of the creation of man. Man is because the universe is. Mind is because the soul is. We have today reversed the process.

Modern science posits the brain and the sense-organs as the primary factors, consciousness as the secondary factor. Asiatic philosophy and Theosophic teaching say: Because man desired to see, therefore the sense of sight was conceived by him; and because he conceived the sense of sight, therefore he built for himself the organ, the eye. He wanted to think, therefore he developed the mind; he wanted the mind to work a body, therefore he built the brain. Brain did not produce thought; it is the product of the mind. Mind developed because of the energizing power of creative thought in human consciousness.

Therefore we have to proceed with our "I" and trace in the human constitution as it is at the present moment the ramifications of that "I." We must, first, get this thought clearly in our mind that everything in the body of the universe is in the human body, for the same reason that everything that is in cosmic or God-consciousness is in human consciousness. The properties of the drop of water are the same as the properties of the ocean. The properties of a ray of light coming through a window are the same as the properties of light everywhere. Human consciousness, being part of the divine consciousness, has in it all the properties of the divine consciousness.

Certain aspects of divine consciousness have already manifested themselves in us; certain other aspects have not yet made themselves manifest. An understanding of this is the first step towards finding our own place in the scheme of the universe.

We have all unfolded, at various stages of our evolution, sense consciousness, feeling or emotional consciousness and mind consciousness. A new faculty is now unfolding in the human kingdom—intuition; hence we speak of intuitional consciousness. We may unfold still other aspects of consciousness during our evolution in the future.

There is a science which tells us how to deal with these many aspects of our consciousness or soul. That science is the result of correlating the experiences of human beings for millions of years and the common fund of experience gives us the common sense which enables us to know what truth is. Common sense is that sense which enables us to go to that common fund of experience. That is what the science of Theosophy, the Science of the Soul, deals with. It is a science which explains all phenomena and all experiences of all souls, and as each of us is a soul it is a science that touches us intimately.

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MEANING is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of your own past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of the experience of humankind as it is passed on to you, out of your own talent and understanding, out of the things you believe in, out of the things and people you love, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something. The ingredients are there. You are the only one who can put them together into that unique pattern that will be your life. Let it be a life that has dignity and meaning for you. If it does, then the particular balance of success or failure is of less account.

— JOHN W. GARDNER

## PROMULGATION OF THEOSOPHY

HOW can students of Theosophy help in Theosophical work? In *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky says that they can help, first, by studying and comprehending the Theosophical doctrines, and then teaching them to others. Secondly, by talking to others and explaining what Theosophy is and what it is not, thereby removing misconceptions. Thirdly, by buying Theosophical books and lending and circulating them. Fourthly, by defending the Society founded by her from the unjust aspersions cast upon it. Fifthly, by the example of their own lives. This clearly shows that work for Theosophy involves study, application and promulgation of Theosophical doctrines.

The Declaration of the United Lodge of Theosophists refers to the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy as the work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view. This dissemination is like the spreading of seeds. Each seed which falls on a good soil and is nurtured well might grow into a tree which will bear fruit and produce more seeds in its turn. A lot of emphasis has been put on promulgation of Theosophy. Why? The Great Master wrote over a hundred years ago that "between degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism, the White Dove of Truth has hardly room whereon to rest her weary unwelcome feet. It is time that Theosophy should enter the arena."

This is true even today. Materialism, conflicting religions and superstition are still rampant. Degrading customs and rituals and effete traditions still exist. There is as much suffering now as there was before, and the struggle to be free from that suffering goes on.

*The Voice of the Silence* says, "Give light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim." One may be a scientist, a teacher, or a manual worker, but each is a pilgrim in life's journey, in the ultimate analysis. Each one is toiling on the path of human evolution. "Seek out him who knows still less than thou," we are told. One may know little, but there is always someone who knows still less and who "sits starving for the bread of wisdom...without a teacher, hope or consolation." This is the state of mind of many for whom life is a

constant struggle, an abyss of never-ending suffering. It is difficult for such people to have hope and faith. These are the ones who need the knowledge of the Law. They need the assurance that there is after all a moral law, that one suffers because of one's own doings, and that finite causes can have but finite effects. It gives one a feeling of hope, security, and a sense of justice. We tend to identify happiness with success and comfort. We feel life has meaning only if it is successful in the worldly sense. But the Theosophical philosophy teaches that there is meaning even in a seemingly miserable life.

So Theosophy emphasizes study, practice and promulgation—especially of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. It is when people are ignorant of these laws that they suffer. As *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 644) puts it:

Knowledge of Karma gives the conviction that if—

"...virtue in distress, and vice in triumph

Make atheists of mankind,"

it is only because that mankind has ever shut its eyes to the great truth that man is himself his own saviour as his own destroyer. That he need not accuse Heaven and the gods, Fates and Providence, of the apparent injustice that reigns in the midst of humanity.

Two-thirds of the world's suffering is the result of man's inhumanity to man. So what needs to be changed is man's inner nature. The mental and moral sufferings of men and women are more important. The real woe of the race is not just physical sorrow. People are not able to find a purpose or meaning in life. So we need to pass on the teachings if we have benefited from them. In one of his letters Mr. Judge quotes the words of "one who had won the right and the sacred duty of teacher":

That law is immutably fixed which declares that he who has received spiritual benefit, no matter how little, must not willingly die, unless he has communicated that which he has received to at least one other person. And therein it is also stated that by *communicating* is meant, not merely verbal delivery, but patient care until that other person fully understands. (*Letters That Have*

*Helped Me*, pp. 163-64, 1996 ed.)

This requires some sacrifice on our part. It is not so much of a sacrifice when we skip our relaxation or TV-viewing and the like, in order to help someone. Still greater sacrifice is one where we are willing to come down from our level to the level of the one we are trying to help, thus identifying ourselves with him or her. This is the spiritual tradition. As *Light on the Path* (p. 31) says, "To those...to whom the passage of Time is as the stroke of a sledge-hammer, and the sense of Space like the bars of an iron cage, I will translate and retranslate until they understand fully." So there has to be a willingness to go through endless trouble.

How successful we shall be in explaining things to others depends a lot on our own understanding. Mr. Judge writes that there are students who are not able to make clear the teachings to others because they have not taken the time and trouble to learn the fundamental doctrines and how to apply them to any and every question. We have to read and reflect. We may read only a book or two containing the fundamental ideas, but we must read in such a way that the whole of it becomes a part of our mental luggage. Reading a book casually once or twice will not do. We need to read it again and again. When we make a sincere attempt to understand, when we have read with one-pointed attention, only then does our exposition, whether through the spoken or written word, command attentiveness from others. Our own deeper understanding touches the heart-strings of the listener or reader.

Similarly, when a student has been applying the teachings, he is able to make an appeal to the heart of the listener. We are doing our duty when we pass on what we have learnt, but if we want to contribute in a more effective manner, then we must reflect upon and practise what we preach.

It is useless to make excuses. As *The Voice of the Silence* puts it:

If Sun thou canst not be, then be the humble planet....Point out the "Way"—however dimly, and lost among the host—as does the evening star to those who tread their path in darkness. (p. 39)

Our light may be dim, yet it can prove useful to others. Whatever little guidance we can give is better than no guidance at all. A brief exposition of Karma and Reincarnation and states after death, for instance, can help a person on the verge of suicide. Even the "evening star" makes its contribution in lessening the darkness of the night.

Some people feel that they are not good at promulgation. What Theosophical work needs is not orators or seasoned writers, but students who will attempt to give out the original teachings faithfully and to the best of their ability. To those who may say that they are not good at promulgation, Mr. Judge has these words of advice: "...if a man knows he is bad at business, he should mortify himself by making himself learn it, and thus get good discipline." (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 107-8)

Again, Mr. Judge writes in his article "Theosophical Study and Work":

Many persons, however, think that they can belong to the Society, and while negatively selfish, that is, ready and willing to sit down and hear others expound theosophical doctrine and never work for the body themselves, they may receive benefit in the way of comprehension of the doctrines of man and nature which are promulgated among us. But they forget a law in these matters of great importance, one, indeed, that they may not be willing to admit, and which is much opposed to our modern ideas of the powers and functions of the human mind. It is that such an attitude by reason of its selfishness builds up a hard wall between their minds and the very truths they wish to know. I speak of an actual dynamic effect which is as plain to the eye of the trained seer as is any object to the healthy eye....But it is a fact that the mind of the selfish person is always making about itself a hard reflecting surface which throws off and away from its grasp the very knowledge the man himself would take if he but knew the reason why he fails. (*The Heart Doctrine*, pp. 76-77)

This passing on has to be done in total humility. As Mr. Crosbie says, just as we have received benefit, we must pass it on so that others too may receive the same benefit. We did not invent

Theosophy; it was given to us. Just as at the time of fire people used to pass on buckets of water, so also we are one "passer" in the line, passing on the "water of life." If people show gratitude, we must know where the gratitude belongs, and say, "Don't thank me; thank Theosophy—as I do. It enables me to help others; it will also enable you."

We are all at best "pupil-teachers." As *Light on the Path* puts it:

The disciple who undertakes the task, secretly hoping for fame or success, to appear as a teacher and apostle before the world, fails even before his task is attempted, and his hidden hypocrisy poisons his own soul, and the souls of those he touches. He is secretly worshipping himself, and this idolatrous practice must bring its own reward. (p. 68)

The attitude should be that it is Masters' work we are carrying on. "It is the Master's work to preserve the true philosophy, but the help of the companions is needed to rediscover and promulgate it," says Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Each sincere student is a companion. In our earnest attempt to put forward the right ideas, we are helping the Masters and their disciples in their task of holding back the powers of darkness. Mr. Judge says that every student who wants knowledge, not just for himself, but so that he can help others, is really making the Theosophic body as a whole open and porous to unseen but powerful influences managed from behind the scenes by the great beings who are helping the Movement. He writes that if the testimony of those who have been long in the Movement is to be believed, then, as they assert, there are among us many Chelas who help the sincere and unselfish students. This help comes to all those who sincerely try to understand Theosophy so that they can teach others. Thus, whenever we succeed it is because of the greater force which is working behind the scenes.

So, whether we succeed or fail, it is Masters' work we are carrying on. With this attitude, we shall not be totally disappointed if we do not succeed, say, in drawing a large number of people to our meetings. As Mr. Crosbie writes, it is the effort made that counts and not the apparent results. The latter are taken care of by

the Law. The radius of influence must not be judged by the number of people present in the audience, because those few will talk about it to others, and they in turn to still others, and so on. So it is well to bear in mind the wider range of influence of our work.

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## ACCURACY, PUNCTUALITY, PURITY

WE all live in the world of matter, in the world of feeling-desire, and in the world of mind or thought. The higher soul-nature functions actively in us or remains latent. The purpose of human evolution is to bring all the lower aspects of man under the control of the soul.

How shall we set about achieving this? One way of achieving is by the observance of three important principles—accuracy in space, punctuality in time, purity in causation.

Accuracy implies right action, right feeling, right thought; right appreciation of things, right relationship between things; tidiness, or the right thing in the right place; cleanliness, for dirt is something out of place; correct perception, correct memory, correct speech. We have to gain the capacity to look around us and see what is accurate as well as what is inaccurate. From slovenliness in little things comes slovenliness in big things. Nothing is too small to be done attentively or accurately. Everything has its right place; everything has some place where it "fits." Slipshod work cannot be condoned by the earnest student of Theosophy. The cultivation of accuracy is therefore an essential part of his training.

To obtain accuracy we must think ahead, plan, and watch the results of the planning; we must listen carefully and see accurately. Measurements, numbers and geometrical forms are related to the spiritual side of Nature, and our planning must be based on such measurements and numbers and geometrical forms. Accuracy removes all carelessness. The inaccurate word, the inaccurate action, judgment or decision, causes chaos in life.

To know the right time for the performance of anything is the next requisite. There are those who take the attitude, "Does it matter *when* things are done, whether they are done *in time*, whether the plan formed ahead is carried out *as scheduled*? Why bother! Any time will do!" But the spiritual life cannot be lived this way. There is a right time and a right place for everything. Shakespeare said that "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." If this right time is allowed to slip away, "fortune"

does not follow. Lost opportunities rarely come again. A good gardener does not sow seeds at the wrong time. H.P.B. tells us that had the Theosophical Movement not been launched when the time was ripe, half of humanity would have turned towards materialism, anthropomorphism or phenomenalism. The great Masters know when to act and when not to start a new cycle of spiritual work in the world. The stars and the heavenly bodies move with rhythmic regularity and punctuality. But we as Nature's helpmates do not realize that we too need to practise punctuality. Lack of punctuality may cost lives; it often costs money, or gives rise to anger and exasperation! To be unpunctual, as much as to be inaccurate, means that we are untrustworthy.

One good test of whether the time is ripe for a particular action (and action includes words, feelings, thoughts) is to apply the law of necessity. "Is this necessary?" is a good question to ask ourselves before we act. That which is unnecessary is out of place and out of time.

Purity in causation or of motive, which is the third of the principles of action we need to follow, means lack of personal attachment, or doing things because they *have* to be done. We need to examine our motive and the effects of our present actions, and again we need to plan and think in terms of the reaction that will follow. If we plant a seed in poor soil we do not get a healthy plant. If we perform acts with a personal thought, we fail. Therefore Krishna says that all that we do should be done *for* Him, *i.e.*, for the Higher Self in us. We study the Law of Karma, but if we do not plan and think ahead, we fail as far as our spiritual development is concerned, though outwardly we may seem to succeed.

All Nature works in harmony, and even the slightest inaccuracy, unpunctuality or impurity does cause havoc. So to begin to live the spiritual life we need to practise, in all our waking hours, accuracy, punctuality, purity.

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## THEOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

[Collated from the writings of H. P. Blavatsky]

EDUCATE! Educate!! The children are our salvation. Just as the student of occult nature can imbue the new atoms of his body which momentarily replace the old ones, with less vicious tendencies and thus regenerate himself by moral Alchemy and attain the "Elixir of Life," so can a nation work its own regeneration by educating the new atoms of its national body, its children.... True it is that bullying is not so flagrant as it was, but it is still popular; and a "fellow" still thinks it a legitimate amusement; in fact a reward of virtue, for was he not "ragged" when he was a "junior" and so has won the prerogative in his turn with suffering? Thus the weary round goes on, and hate breeds hate; unfeelingness and animalism breed their like unceasingly, and the finer sentiments and intuitions are crushed out of all our children and replaced with a Spartan cruelty in which they ignorantly glory.... "The child is father to the man," and the early habits of thought and feeling continue throughout life. Oh the pity of it! When will the *mind* of the nation, its parents, guardians and preceptors, be strong enough to influence its *matter*, when? ("Going To and Fro," *Lucifer*, December 1890)

It is a truism of too long standing, a policy acted upon by every civilized nation from antiquity, that the prosperity of every state is based upon the orderly establishment of family principles. Nor is anyone likely to deny that social ethics depend largely upon the early education received by the growing-up generations. On whom does the duty devolve of guiding that education from early childhood? Who can do so better than a loving mother, once that her moral worth is recognized by all, and that no evil report has ever sullied her fame? The youth and his later intellectual training may well be left to the firmer hand of the father: the care of his childhood belongs by all divine and human rights to the mother alone; the parent who gave her offspring not only a part of her flesh and blood, but a portion likewise of her immortal soul—that which shall create hereafter the real man, the true EGO. This is

the A B C of the life-duties of mankind; and it is the first duty of those in power to guard the sacred maternal rights against any brutal violation. ("Our Christian XIXth Century Ethics," *Lucifer*, August 1888)

The child is father to the man. It is the first impressions, visual or mental, which the young senses take in the quickest, to store them indelibly in the virgin memory. It is the imagery and scenes which happen to us during our childhood, and the spirit in which they are viewed by our elders and received by us, that determine the manner in which we accept such like scenes or look upon good or evil in subsequent years. For, it is most of that early intellectual capital so accumulated day by day during our boyhood and girlhood that we trade with and speculate upon throughout later life. The capacity of children for the storing away of early impressions is great indeed. ("Children Allowed to Train Themselves for Murder," *Lucifer*, December 1888)

Professor Buchanan has hit upon the real source of danger which is so gloomily overhanging the Western world and threatening it with moral and spiritual ruin. The cultivation of mere intellect, as the means of material advancement, leaving out the higher nature of man to go to seed, utterly untended and uncared for. The whole system of modern education is entirely at fault and the result is the production of ill-shapen monstrosities. Education is the attempt to realize the harmony between nature and man. It is to find out the real aim and object of life, and when found to render them an unswerving and life-long devotion. Education is the acquirement of the capacity of enjoying life to the fullest extent, its want is suicide, partial or complete. Professor Buchanan's ideal lies in the same direction as our own....

Before the mould is prepared upon the western model for casting the minds of our future men and women, it is profitable to consider what competent experts declare as to the value of that model. Professor Buchanan after half a century's experience delivers his opinion thus:

There seems to be nothing in existence at present on a large scale in the leading institutions which can be properly called a *liberal education*, for that which makes the most imposing claims to be recognized as liberal education in the universities appears, when viewed from the standpoint of anthropology, not only lame, feeble, and defective in the most essential elements of a liberal education, but positively *illiberal* in its contractile influence upon the intellect and soul, as well as its degenerative influence upon the body....

Every thoughtful observer has found that the present pernicious system of pampering the intellect to the utter starvation of the other faculties can lead to no good result—not even lead the much favoured one to the highest pitch of development it is capable of attaining. Professor Buchanan, a student of the true science of man, has put forward a system of education which is as scientific as beneficial. Education naturally admits of division into five classes, in accordance with the different classes of faculties to be dealt with. (1) Physiological development, aiming at the formation of the manly, healthy constitution capable of lasting a hundred years and competent to enjoy life and make it a source of benefit to humanity. (2) Industrial Education, which alone can lead to the disappearance of those unproductive classes, now preying upon the life-blood of society like vampires. (3) Medical Education, supplying the people with means to stamp out diseases at their first approach and eradicate our splendid heritage of diseases. (4) Moral or Religious Education, whereby the life secured by the other three kinds of education, is made worth living. (5) And lastly comes Intellectual Education, which now holds its revels on the ruin and degradation of man. The scheme is complete but it is likely to provoke a sneering smile on the self-satisfied dogmatic lip, as being quite utopian. Life is not long enough, it may be urged, for such elaborate training. But the utter silliness of such objection has been conclusively shown by the learned Professor. The first eighteen years of life after the first-dawn of intelligence is quite enough for the whole curriculum being gone through. ("Prof. Buchanan and Moral Education," *The Theosophist*, December 1883)

All western, and especially English, education is instinct with the principle of emulation and strife; each boy is urged to learn more quickly, to outstrip his companions, and to surpass them in every possible way. What is miscalled "friendly rivalry" is assiduously cultivated, and the same spirit is fostered and strengthened in every detail of life....In the East the spirit of "non-separateness" is inculcated as steadily from childhood up, as in the West the spirit of rivalry. Personal ambition, personal feelings and desires, are not encouraged to grow so rampant there. When the soil is naturally good, it is cultivated in the right way, and the child grows into a man in whom the habit of subordination of one's lower to one's higher Self is strong and powerful. ("Practical Occultism," *Lucifer*, April 1888)

To whom shall we look for the revival of Aryan wisdom, the resuscitation of Aryan nationality, the beginning of a reformation of modern abuses? Not to the middle-aged or the old, for their tendency is towards conservatism and reaction. Much as such persons may intellectually revere the sages of old, it is worse than useless to look to them to set an example of putting away prejudices, customs and notions which those very sages would have abhorred and many of which they actually denounced. The hope of the century is in the young, the ardent, the susceptible, the energetic, who are just stepping upon the stage. It is worth more to fire the heart of one such lad than to rekindle among the ashes of their elders' hopes the flickering semblance of a flame. So let us give the young men a chance to explore old records, question and counsel with their parents and teachers, and then publish the results to the great public. They may not always say very profound things, nor use the most elegant phrases, but at least they are sincere and, if encouraged, will be stimulated to study more, take further counsel, and try to write better next time. And their example will be followed by others. ("A People's Monthly," *The Theosophist*, June 1880)

You forget one thing, which is that your much-boasted modern education is precisely that which makes it difficult for you to

understand Theosophy. Your mind is so full of intellectual subtleties and preconceptions that your natural intuition and perception of the truth cannot act. It does not require metaphysics or education to make a man understand the broad truths of Karma and Reincarnation. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 243)

What is the *real* object of modern education? Is it to cultivate and develop the mind in the right direction; to teach the disinherited and hapless people to carry with fortitude the burden of life (allotted them by Karma); to strengthen their will; to inculcate in them the love of one's neighbour and the feeling of mutual interdependence and brotherhood; and thus to train and form the character for practical life? Not a bit of it. And yet, these are undeniably the objects of all true education. No one denies it; all your educationalists admit it, and talk very big indeed on the subject. But what is the practical result of their action? Every young man and boy, nay, every one of the younger generation of schoolmasters will answer: "The object of modern education is to pass examinations," a system not to develop right emulation, but to generate and breed jealousy, envy, hatred almost, in young people for one another, and thus train them for a life of ferocious selfishness and struggle for honours and emoluments instead of kindly feeling. (*Ibid.*, p. 263)

Now "science" teaches that intellect is a result of the mechanical interaction of the brain-stuff; therefore it is only logical that modern education should be almost entirely mechanical—a sort of automatic machine for the fabrication of intellect by the ton. Very little experience of examinations is enough to show that the education they produce is simply a training of the physical memory, and, sooner or later, all your schools will sink to this level. As to any real, sound cultivation of the thinking and reasoning power, it is simply impossible while everything has to be judged by the results as tested by competitive examinations. Again, school training is of the very greatest importance in forming character, especially in its moral bearing. Now, from first to last, your modern system is based on the so-called scientific revelations: "The struggle for existence" and

the "survival of the fittest." All through his early life, every man has these driven into him by practical example and experience, as well as by direct teaching till it is impossible to eradicate from his mind the idea that "self," the lower, personal, animal self, is the end-all, and be-all, of life. Here you get the great source of all the after-misery, crime, and heartless selfishness, which you admit as much as I do. Selfishness, as said over and over again, is the curse of humanity, and the prolific parent of all the evils and crimes in this life; and it is your schools which are the hotbeds of such selfishness. (*Ibid.*, pp. 263-64)

A proper and sane system of education should produce the most vigorous and liberal mind, strictly trained in logical and accurate thought, and not in blind faith. How can you ever expect good results, while you pervert the reasoning faculty of your children by bidding them believe in the miracles of the Bible on Sunday, while for the six other days of the week you teach them that such things are scientifically impossible? (*Ibid.*, p. 268)

If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by *proper and truly theosophical* education. (*Ibid.*, p. 268)

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## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In the past several decades, many philosophers and others have asserted that people who come from or represent different mind-sets or language communities cannot really interact or communicate with one another. Those who have held this view have claimed that different "conceptual schemes" or "frameworks" are "incompatible, incommensurable (meaning that they cannot be compared), and untranslatable" (for brevity called the IIU thesis).

In the July issue of *The World and I*, Lloyd Eby examines this thesis:

The debate about this problem or question is not just an academic exercise; it has many implications for our lives and behaviour. The present-day concern with multiculturalism, diversity, and historical relativism has roots in, among other places, the view that different racial, ethnic, cultural, and historical groups cannot really understand or speak to or for each other—that only a black person can really understand or speak for black people, only an American Indian for American Indians, only a Jew for Jews, only a woman for women, and so on. The issues in this debate draw on many fields, including linguistics, philosophy, theory of science, and ethics.

If the underlying thesis is correct...then genuine understanding between persons or groups with major differences is in principle impossible....This would seem to mean that the hope or goal of making a universal human community could not succeed. If, however, the IIU thesis is false, then it promotes racial and other animosities and divisions where these are unnecessary....

There are limits to communication, but there are no completely closed circles for any problem that we can clearly specify....The conclusion is that arguments that claim to prove the IIU thesis—arguments that purport to show the existence of closed interpretation or hermeneutic circles—are mistaken both because they assert too much and because they do not fit what actually happens in scientific argument and assessment. If they do not fit scientific language, then there is no good reason to

suppose that they fit moral or religious language either....

Practically speaking, all this means that the central philosophical underpinning for the notions of multiculturalism, diversity, and historical relativism has been taken away. Although the discussion here has been primarily concerned with science and the language of science, this also has important implications for ethics. Those views are mistaken that claim that different people cannot understand one another, or that different ethical views cannot be compared, or that every system or theory or view is as good as any other. Therefore, attempts to uphold those mistaken views or to base social policy on them are ethically offensive, promoting social division and rancour where it is unnecessary.

Since the Theosophical Movement was launched in 1875 with its affirmation of a Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, caste, colour, sex, or social position, the concept has gained much ground—and Brotherhood implies the ability to discuss things with one another and to come to a mutual understanding, no matter what the outward labels. In fact, the phrase "without any distinction" has now passed into common usage, especially when such part of any Act, Article or Rule that puts emphasis on justice, equality and oneness is to be suitably worded. The phrase has been used in several clauses and sub-clauses in the Indian Constitution, as also in other statutory laws. It is used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1948. People may live in different frameworks, have varied backgrounds, yet they share their common humanity; all are souls having a common origin and a common destiny—and that matters more than any superficial groupings or distinctions based on race, religion, sex, language, etc.

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Nations talk of peace, yet prepare for war. There is mutual distrust. Even developing nations with limited budgets spend more on defence than on education and social uplift. Why do mutual suspicions persist at the international level, and why has a permanent

state of world peace not become a reality? Richard Hewitt suggests an answer in *New Outlook*:

Let's not make the well-nigh universal mistake of looking far afield for this vital and much-sought-after solution. It will be found only where Jesus told His followers the Kingdom of God was to be found: "Within you."

True peace can't be legislated. International law may aid in preserving it: but it will come about only when those people who really want it take the proper steps to bring it into being....

Each of us has a separate and individual share in the work of wiping out wars. How? By remembering that a war is the same as a quarrel between two neighbours, except in size. Wars involving whole countries have been known to grow out of trifling, sometimes childish, disagreements between two stubborn men....

To become a reality, world peace needs first of all to be practised privately. It will become that reality when more private citizens are working for it than against it. You and I work against this desirable state when we permit our individual lives to be shot through and through with disagreements and quarrels with our immediate neighbours. We work for it when we make an honest effort to listen to our neighbour and understand him instead of "shooting first and talking afterward."

You might wonder what possible effect your personal conduct can have on the international situation. After all, you're just one person in millions. But it's easy to figure out. Multiply one individual state of peacefulness by the population of the world and the result becomes plain.

In other words, "the responsibility of worthy citizenship is a personal one." There would be no world problems if there were not similar problems at the individual level. Wars and conflicts in the world without are but reflections of wars and conflicts within each of us. The responsibility is ours.

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*The Secret Doctrine* tells us that every new Round, or Life-Cycle, "develops one of the Compound Elements, as now known

to Science." Thus, the first Round developed but one element—Fire. (I, 250)

*Fire* was never "discovered," but existed on earth since its beginning. It existed in the seismic activity of the early ages, volcanic eruptions being as frequent and constant in those periods as fog is in England now. And if we are told that men appeared so late on Earth that nearly all the volcanoes, with the exception of a few, were already extinct, and that geological disturbances had made room for a more settled state of things, we answer: Let a new race of men—whether evolved from angel or gorilla—appear now on any uninhabited spot of the globe, with the exception perhaps of the Sahara, and a thousand to one it would not be a year or two old before discovering fire, through the fall of lightning setting in flames grass or something else. This assumption, that primitive man lived ages on earth before he was made acquainted with fire, is one of the most painfully illogical of all. (*S.D.*, II, 523-24)

And yet, for scientists, the search for when, where and how prehistoric humans learnt to light a fire still continues. Prof. Stev Weiner, a structural biologist at Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science, is one such. *Israel Today* (May/June 1997) reports that, after a decade of research, Weiner has discovered how to identify and analyse ancient ashes—considered to be the most direct evidence of fire—after they have almost entirely disintegrated. Weiner with his team has worked in northern Israel's prehistoric caves, inhabited some 250,000 years ago, and has found sediments of ash all over the cave floor. He was recently invited to work at China's famous Zhoukoudian cave, home to the bones of Peking Man, who, scientists believe, were among the first humans to use fire deliberately, some 500,000 years ago. Weiner and his colleagues are at present engaged in finding out exactly what the Zhoukoudian sediments are made of, and if there proves to be ash, that it came not from a brush fire, but from one that was man-made and deliberate.

Considering that thinking man has been on Earth for some 18 million years, the deliberate use of fire must have been known to him much earlier than modern scientists have any idea of. "Fire by

friction was the first mystery of nature, the first and chief property of matter that was revealed to man" by his early Instructors (*S.D.*, II, 373). For, in those days he was not left alone to fend for himself, but had the aid of more evolved beings from other spheres, who became his guides and from whom he got his first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge.

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One of the signs of our cycle is civilized society's addiction to speed. Speed is such an integral part of contemporary life that it is easy to lose sight of just how much power it has over us. Jay Walljasper's essay, "The Speed Trap" (*Utne Reader*, March-April 1997), suggests that what the world needs now is a conscientious slowdown, for constantly soaring speeds not only diminish the quality of life, but also endanger the future of the planet.

Speed is generally viewed as an asset in achieving a better society, yet, states Walljasper, "it seems that the faster we go, the farther we fall behind. Not only in the literal sense of not getting done what we set out to do, but at a deeper level too":

We've witnessed a proliferation of dazzling time-saving innovations—jet travel, personal computers, Fed Ex, cell phones, microwaves, drive-through restaurants, home shopping networks, the World Wide Web—and yet the pace of life has been cranked up to a level that would have been unimaginable three decades ago....

There is a small but growing chorus of social critics who believe that faster is not always better and that we must pay attention to the psychological, environmental and political consequences of our constantly accelerating world. Environmental activist Jeremy Rifkin was one of the first to raise questions about the desirability of speed in his 1987 book, *Time Wars*. "We have quickened the pace of life only to become less patient," he wrote. "We have become more organized but less spontaneous, less joyful. We are better prepared to act on the future but less able to enjoy the present and reflect on the past."

As the tempo of modern life has continued to accelerate, we

have come to feel increasingly out of touch with the biological rhythms of the planet, unable to experience a close connection with the natural environment. The human time world is no longer joined to the incoming and outgoing tides, the rising and setting sun, and the changing seasons. Instead, humanity has created an artificial time environment punctuated by mechanical contrivances and electronic impulses.

A number of advocates of slowness—scholars, environmentalists, business leaders and activists from around the world—gathered recently in Amsterdam for a conference. The prominent German environmental thinker Wolfgang Sachs argued that speed is one of the factors fueling environmental problems, and that a slower society would make life more pleasant and meaningful:

A society that lives in the fast lane can never be a sustainable society. In a fast-paced world we put a lot of energy into arrivals and departures and less into the experience itself. Raising kids, making friends, creating art, all run counter to the demand for speed. There is growing recognition that faster speeds are not just a natural fact of the universe. It's an issue for public attention. What has not been discussed before now is: What kind of speed do we want?

Another speaker at the conference, Jogi Panghaal, who works with community groups in India, raised the question of whether we will have any choice in determining the tempo of our lives, or will all be dragged along by the furious push of a technologically charged society. India and other traditional societies of Asia, Latin America and Africa, used to a slower, simpler way of living, are already undergoing culture shock in trying to keep pace with the industrialized nations.

Though many realize that a fast-paced world is not bringing them the overall satisfaction that they seek, yet few see a way out of this "speed trap." People need to know first of all what they want out of life, and whether what they want satisfies the needs of the inner man and brings lasting happiness. They can awaken to the true joy of living only if there is an aim in life which is beyond mere social, economic or political aspirations, or physical or even

intellectual enjoyment. As they pursue that aim, more and more will they feel that life is not a gruelling race toward a finish line they never reach. It is especially the rising generation who need proper and sane education which will give them something worth living for, something enduring that they can cherish throughout life.

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Every culture has accepted the necessity for disciplining the mind so that its powers may express themselves creatively rather than destructively. With this end in view, there has arisen today a breed of "quick-fix gurus" who claim to impart instant knowledge of practices like meditation. In fact, "there is no fast-forward button in meditation," and, without a proper grounding, all exercises in meditation are not only empty but even dangerous, warns Hasso Dagia (*The Times of India*, July 2):

The truth is that—with the advance of commercialization—traditional practices like meditation have come to be treated as little more than a health fad or a mode of relaxation. In this misdirected application of ancient wisdom lies immense potential for mischief.

True meditation stills the fluctuations of the mind and eventually leads the meditator to a sense of serenity. When correctly practised, meditation transforms the meditator: she/he discards the accumulations of tradition and habitual behaviour, renounces false hopes and pierces through blind faith.

In other words, meditation is not truly meditation if it does not generate a keen awareness of one's emotions and actions, and a constant mindfulness of one's Self. The omission of these key concerns has often led the contemporary practice of meditation astray....

Patanjali, the great teacher of Yoga, specified the overcoming of certain obstacles as a prerequisite for the meditative life: laziness, passion, an overweening sense of personality, a clinging to life. The Yogic tradition also teaches that the true seeker must abstain from falsehood, incontinence and greed. Assent to such sacred concepts is one thing, the absorption of their essence in one's living quite another. Can the modern mind live with this

discipline, in an age when humankind rejoices in the unbridled expression of desire?....

Indeed, the uninstructed meditator may well be overwhelmed by psychic forces that she/he activates but cannot restrain. Meditators who do not feel their way ahead slowly may do themselves considerable bodily and psychological damage, instead of attaining perfection: some may suffer hallucinations; others may descend into a chronic egoism, imagining themselves to be masters of wisdom; yet others may misuse the borrowed aura of sanctity, offering spurious instructions for a fee, claiming to raise the *kundalini*, provide recall of past lives and so forth.

Standing at the edge of an ocean, it is necessary to ask humbly, "Why am I here? What am I seeking?" Somewhere along that quest, we may be forgiven for reaching the conclusion that the goals of meditation are well attained if we creatively transform our routine, excel at our work, illuminate our actions with ethical reason. That is, perhaps, an adequate approach to perfection for most of us. As for the rest, well, you have been warned.

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ANYTHING that restores a sense of control to a patient can be a profound aid to a physician in treating serious illness. That sense of control is more than a mere mood or attitude; it may well be a vital pathway between the brain, the endocrine system and the immune system.

At some time not far off, it is likely that physicians will prescribe not just out of a little black bag but out of their knowledge of the human body's own healing system—what caused a problem in the first place and what is required for setting it right. In that context, the skill of the physician in helping to unblock or enhance or augment the patient's healing system will constitute the grand confluence of the art and science of medicine.

— NORMAN COUSINS