

THEOSOPHY: ITS BENEFICENT POTENTIALITIES



by **Geoffrey Farthing**
2001 Blavatsky Lecture

Printed 2001 by Doppler Press, Brentwood, Essex, U. K.
Artwork and design by Colyn Boyce
Front cover: Hudson Bay Mountain, B. C., Canada. photo by Colyn Boyce

THEOSOPHY: ITS BENEFICENT POTENTIALITIES

by **Geoffrey A. Farthing**

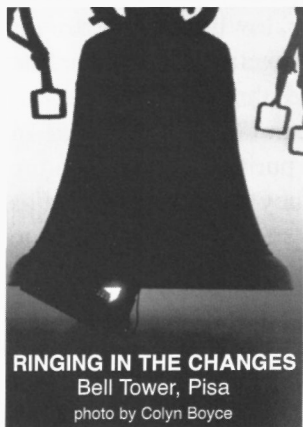
THE BLAVATSKY LECTURE
delivered at the Summer School of
the Theosophical Society in England
King Alfred's College, Winchester, U. K.

Sunday 29 July 2001

The Theosophical Publishing House
50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA

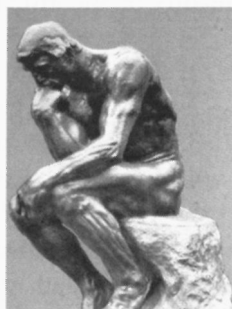
THEOSOPHY - ITS BENEFICENT POTENTIALITIES

INTRODUCTION



But you, Occultists, Kabbalists and Theosophists, you well know that a Word, old as the world, though new to you, has been sounded at the beginning of this cycle, and the potentiality of which, unperceived by others, lies hidden in the sum of the digits of the years 1 8 8 9; you well know that a note has just been struck which has never been heard by mankind of this era; and that a New Idea is revealed, ripened by the forces of evolution. This Idea differs from everything that has been produced in the nineteenth century; it is identical, however, with the thought that has been the dominant tone and the keynote of every century, especially the last - absolute freedom of thought for humanity. [C.W.XI, 133]

Theosophy is in its fulness a comprehensive knowledge of the nature and the workings of Nature, in which man plays a prime part. The human kingdom is a critical stage in the immense evolutionary programme when 'Man', the thinker, is born. The knowledge of Theosophy is gained by generations of trained seekers and enquirers, Initiates in the Arcane Mysteries. It claims to be an expression of Truth, the facts of existence. It is therefore not a matter of conjecture or belief.



'The Thinker', by Rodin

Nature herself is seen as a collectivity of all that comprises her in a series of hierarchies of living beings from the very lowliest to the highest, from the elements comprising the matter of our objective world, up the evolutionary ladder through the kingdoms of Nature to man and beyond, into the realms of super-humanity. Theosophy postulates grades of

superhuman beings which, as collective beings with their accumulated wisdom and knowledge, comprise the 'creators' and 'governers' of our planetary system.

Theosophy tells us that at the heart of all things is one common Essence. This essence manifests as 'Life'. Everything is endowed with it; there is no dead matter. Similarly everything has its degree of sentience, even if only an ability to respond to, or just 'feel', i.e., react to outside stimuli, and even memory. In its more developed forms sentience becomes consciousness. This sentience manifests from the lowliest elemental or mineral forms, through the more complex ones of vegetable and animal, to full-blown consciousness in man. Thereafter it passes through all gradations to levels of awareness of a grandeur hardly dreamt of at our level of evolution. Because of the developed faculties and purified spiritual nature of these denizens of the highest levels of being, they may be regarded as gods. As they have developed them in themselves, so they can bequeath to man who can express them the most ennobling and compassionate impulses. These increase as the ladder of evolution is ascended.

The potentialities of Theosophy then can be thought of in terms of the ways that they affect behaviour. This is particularly the case in man himself and the whole human situation. Twelve aspects of these potentialities can readily be identified:

1. The notion of Deity in Cosmos and Man.
2. The Occult Constitution of Man and the Planes of Being.
3. Divine Law, regulating the all-embracing cosmic process.
4. Evolution, Life ever-becoming, the majestic march to perfection.
5. The notion of Reincarnation, in relation to Cycles of Becoming.
6. Religion: all systems for the guidance of Man on his spiritual journey.
7. After-death states, Spiritualism and the Paranormal.
8. Ecology, a sympathetic relationship to Nature.
9. The Ordering of society: freedom within a framework of wise laws.
10. Education: the instilling of healthy values and right culture of the individual.
11. Science: man's attempts to understand the workings of Nature.
12. The Arts, Health, Psychology and Parapsychology.

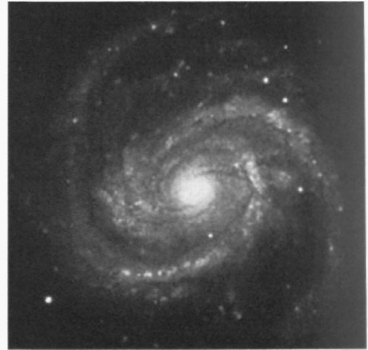
Some students of Theosophy may wonder why Theosophy's grand Cosmology has not been mentioned. The Cosmology when studied in depth provides answers to many questions as to how things come to be and to be as they are, and 'things' here include those things which to us at the physical level are not only objective but subjective, pertaining to our inner natures. This Cosmology, or an acknowledgment of it, is not, however, a potentiality for the benefit of humanity ordinarily at the present time.

One of the principal potentialities of Theosophy is its explanatory nature. It provides us with an encyclopaedic knowledge, data for a viable universal model or paradigm to use the language of modern science, until we can **know** for ourselves.

Potentiality One: THE NOTION OF DEITY

The notion of Deity can be regarded as Theosophy's foremost beneficent potentiality. By it man, in his inner essence, is regarded as divine, with an inseverable relationship to the Cosmos. He is not just in it, he is of it. This is exemplified in the theosophical constitution of man, wherein all his principles reflect the cosmic planes of being. Cosmos functions on various levels, from the physical to the highest spiritual.

The total universal process is an expression of the One Life. This is the animating dynamism behind the activities of everything. It is its life manifesting as its internal energy. It is the vast dynamic force which keeps the whole ordered process going, right from the beginning of a period of activity, i.e., the birth of the Cosmos (Manvantara), to its end when the whole mighty process subsides into rest (Pralaya) bearing with it the fruits of its immense period of activity. These fruits are the aggregate experience of countless myriads of lives that have come and gone in their season during the whole mighty process. All is garnered and stored as universal memory.



Spiral nebula in the constellation
of Canis
courtesy of NASA

Deity is the very essence of each man's being. The influence of this idea may at first be tentative and spasmodic but it increases as does his spiritual nature with his experiences in his long series of personal lives. He slowly becomes more or less conscious of his inner divine nature. This manifests as inspired motivation in his actions; he feels the guidance of conscience.

Concerning the notion of Deity in the creation and governance of the universe, there is a passage in the *The Secret Doctrine*:

It [the Secret Doctrine] admits a Logos or a collective “Creator” of the Universe; a *Demiourgos* - in the sense implied when one speaks of an “Architect” as the “Creator” of an edifice, whereas that Architect has never touched one stone of it, but, while furnishing the plan, left all the manual labour to the masons; in our case the plan was furnished by the Ideation of the Universe, and the constructive labour was left to the hosts of intelligent Powers and Forces. But that *Demiourgos* is no *personal* deity, - i.e., an imperfect *extra-cosmic* god - but only the aggregate of the Dhyani-Chohans [Archangels] and the other forces.

As to the latter -

They are dual in their character; being composed of (a) the irrational *brute energy*, inherent in matter, and (b) the intelligent soul or cosmic consciousness which directs and guides that energy, and which is the *Dhyani-Chohan*ic thought reflecting the *Ideation of the Universal Mind*. [S. D. I, 279]

The Theosophical Deity is an Entity, but only in the sense of a collectivity, an aggregate of the Dhyani-Chohans, described as “the highest gods . . . the divine intelligences charged with the supervision of Kosmos”. (*Theosophical Glossary*)

This might cause us to think of Deity as “out there”, something apart from us individually. We must, however, be mindful of the teaching in *How to Study Theosophy* (H. P. B. - *The Bowen Notes*) where it says (p8),

No matter what one may study in the *S. D.*, let the mind hold fast, as the basis of its ideation, to the following ideas:

a) The FUNDAMENTAL UNITY OF ALL EXISTENCE. This unity is a thing altogether different from the common notion of unit - as when we say that a nation or an army is united; or that this planet is united to that by lines of magnetic force or the like. The teaching is not that. It is that existence is ONE THING, not any collection of things linked together. Fundamentally there is ONE BEING.



Archangel Michael
by Perugino

The implications of this are profound, far reaching and hard to realize, but the clear meaning is that there is not Deity **and** us. There is only one thing. Everything, including each human being, is that 'One Thing'. For Theosophy to become real, every student must come to this realization. What a change in perspective, in attitude towards one's self, is thus engendered!

This principle of UNITY is of greatest significance in the fields of Science, Religion, Education and Ecology.

Unity expresses itself during manifestation as almost infinite diversity. This diversity leads to the sense of separateness in humans causing the prolific difficulties in human affairs. Eradication of the effects of these difficulties in our society is a major benefit of this Potentiality. The notion of Deity as Unity, when sufficiently realized and worked out, becomes a powerful background to our attitudes.

There is a significant corollary to the idea of Unity in the *Bowen Notes* (p 9(a)):

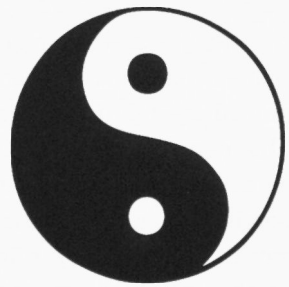
The third basic idea to be held is that Man is the MICROCOSM. As he is so, then all the Hierarchies in the Heavens exist within him. But the truth is there is neither Macrocosm nor Microcosm but ONE EXISTENCE. Great and small are such only as viewed by a limited consciousness.

This idea should be kept in mind when studying the Constitution of Man, Potentiality Two.

Potentiality Two: THE OCCULT STRUCTURE OF COSMOS AND MAN

In the teachings of the Great Knowledge, Theosophy, there are seven levels of cosmic being, each classified according to its characteristic nature. Of these seven one is physical, the others are non-physical, inner and invisible to it. They are: first, at the highest level, Spirit (Atma) which is supreme, but without some vehicle to operate in or through it is ineffective. The next level down is that of the vehicle (Buddhi). Taken together these two levels constitute a duality, or two poles of Being, Spirit and Matter, referred to as Monad, which pass down through all levels of creation. The duality is the basis of subjectivity and objectivity manifesting in us as consciousness, and that in which consciousness can arise, i.e. form or vehicle. It is also that of which consciousness can be objectively aware.

The two aspects of the One in manifestation (the Monad) give rise to the dualities of life and form, positive and negative, active and passive, male and female, and so on. Their Essence is the ultimate universal Unity, common to every thing in existence, to all creatures including man. Their existence is according to cyclic law. Periodically they (or it, the Monad) manifest as substance or things with form, the objective side of Nature, and as inner or subjective which is motion or activity, the basis of sentience or a degree of consciousness depending on evolutionary status, i.e. the development of forms.



Male and female energies
expressed in the Yin Yang

All activity of living things is subject to alternations of activity and rest, in-breathing and out-breathing, heart beats, tide and season, and so on. These rhythms are universal. The nature of their diverse expressions depends upon the characteristics of the vehicles, the life forms, through which they function. These vehicles, in the aggregate, constitute manifest or objective Nature, at all her levels, physical and non-physical.

In man his Individuality (Ego), his feeling of “I”, is focussed in his mind, his thinking principle (Manas). In universal terms this is Mahat, the cosmic principle of Mind or Divine Ideation. Manas has two aspects, an upper and a lower. The upper is orientated towards the Monad, i.e., Spirit (Atma) operating through its vehicle Buddhi, and the lower is the vehicle for the normal personal thinking process. There is, however, only one mind principle but it operates at these two levels: one the divine (the Universal) and the other the personal self, during the life of a man.

Ordinarily these two aspects of mind are in effect separate, the higher affecting the lower only occasionally. The lower mind is the personal one, periodically in incarnation in distinct successive physical bodies. The higher spiritual individuality (Ego) is on a long evolutionary journey. It gathers its nurture from the purely spiritual experience of its personalities. The ordinary experiences of personal life do not contribute to it.

The personal man is four-principled. He has his lower mind (Manas), emotions (Kama), a ‘life’ principle (Prana), with its vehicle (Astral) and lastly the objective, physical body.

In the average man the personal mind is associated closely with his desires, passions, and concerns of a mundane, purely personal nature, his immediate family, his possessions, his livelihood, his social position, etc. This personal mind is his ‘tool’ for performing all the necessary functions of a mental nature, i.e., calculating, memorizing, forming judgments, coming to decisions, all necessary for his effectiveness as a person in the world. The majority of them are not spiritual. Faculty and competence may be acquired by experience at personal level but they are of no consequence to the development of the divine Egoic entity. Only the highest of motivations like duty, love, compassion, pity, altruistic helpfulness and so on, affecting actions, are of a spiritual nature.

This list of spiritual qualities not only reflects the nature of our divine selves but reflects into the sub-principles of our personal emotional nature. There are aspects of them in different modes at different levels of being. In their pure form they are spiritual but at personal level most of even our highest emotions are tinged with selfishness.

Below mind (Manas) the next principle is the personal emotional one: the principle of desire in all its forms. This principle is closely coupled with the lower mind, which can always justify what we 'want' to do. This combination of mind and emotion is sometimes referred to as the 'psyche' or mortal soul.

The last of our principles is our physical body, in which during earth life all our internal subjective activities are focussed. Emotional urges are turned into appetites, hence our more animal urges. Our bodies are our means of perception and action in the physical world. It is in our bodies (physical brains) that we are normally conscious. The 'here and now' for us wherein we have our very existence is tied up with our bodies. There is evidence, however, that independent subjective existence is possible, for example, in out-of-the-body experiences.



Old Chinese print depicting an out-of-the-body experience

It is obvious that our physical bodies are endowed with 'life' which is regarded as a separate principle. This 'life' principle (Prana or Jiva), as animating energy, is 'collected' and stored in another principle closely associated with the physical, a very important one, known as the Astral body. It reflects the Astral Plane wherein exist the forms that are projected into the physical world. The Astral as either a body or plane is also the reservoir of memory.

This information about the occult constitution of man is, perhaps, not in itself a beneficent theosophical potentiality but it is essential to an understanding of the religions, the post mortem states, the spiritualistic phenomena, the operations of Karma.¹

¹ To the more advanced student, man's relationship to the 'Hierarchies of the Heavens' becomes of importance to his fuller understanding (see *Bowen Notes, C. W. II*, p568, and Diagram V opposite, p660).

It is through our physical bodies, however, that normally all our activities both inner and outer express themselves. On its activities depend the significant experiences we gain from living.

Our physical bodies are living entities, composed in their entirety of hosts of subordinate lives (cells). All of them are specialised to perform the body's various functions. Even our brains are composed of such specialised cells. One of the secrets for the proper understanding of the functioning of our brains is that they, and even each of their constituent cells, like us, have their principles in the invisible worlds. Each cell of our body is a living thing, very importantly with its own consciousness and memory (and even will). It has its counterpart in the Astral and, whether active or dormant, at even higher levels of being, i.e., the emotional, mental and spiritual. Obviously also the cells are suffused with the life energies which sustain and animate our physical bodies.

Through the inner subjective realms we are given some understanding of ourselves otherwise unknown to us. For example, they provide data for a more comprehensive system of psychology, relating us not only to emotional but to mental and spiritual levels, right up to the divine.

These principles of man are seen as reflections of the seven cosmic planes. By analogy, "as above, so below"; man's total being in all respects is the same as that of the Universe. He is a microcosm to its Macrocosm. As everything in Cosmos is living, the planes are constituted of lives which in turn are members of an ascending Hierarchy. Overriding all these various aspects of being is that of Unity, never to be overlooked or forgotten by the student.²

² See Appendix for the Occult Constitution of Man as given in *The Key to Theosophy*, pp22, 91, 175, Original Edition.

Potentiality Three: DIVINE LAW

All of us are born at a certain time to certain parents living in a certain place in a certain country. We are of a certain nationality and religion and come into the world endowed with certain personal gifts or deficiencies, as a male or a female, born into a house of riches or poverty, to parents of culture and refinement or the very opposite. This place we are born into is somewhere on the surface of the planet.

When we are old enough we will look into the heavens and see something there of the endless spaces and something of the multitudes of stars. When we are even older maybe we will discover the enormity of those spaces. We will learn that the whole vast scheme of things has been going for unimaginable ages in terms of earth years. But there it all is, now; in some miraculous way the whole boundless plane, periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing . . . ” (See *S. D. I. Proem*), has survived.



Our ongoing fascination
with the night sky

The Ancient Wisdom teaching is that both our private individual affairs and those of the boundless universe are all ordered according to universal or divine law. When the law is applied to human beings particularly it is referred to as the Law of Karma, but it is nevertheless always an aspect of the universal Divine Law, of which H. P. B. has this to say:

. . . we consider it as the *Ultimate Law* of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, *Karma* is that unseen and unknown law *which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself *unknowable*, its action is perceivable. [Key, 201. Original Edition]

Its action is the endless flow of events through time, with everything in that flow determined by what went before. In this sense the law is that of causation, of action and also of effect. Everything in the Cosmos, including ourselves, is an effect of causes generated in the past. All our actions become causes for future effects. Just as the universe and everything in it persists for periods of time long enough for everything in it to perform its function in the total process, so men, animals and plants live long enough to fulfil their part in the scheme of things. In the case of man this period is variable depending on many factors, such as state of health and so on, but those factors themselves are the effects of causes set up in the past.

The teaching says quite unequivocally that according to law we and our circumstances are all determined as a comprehensive result of what we have done in the past. What we have done includes our relationships with other people: our immediate families, our relations, our religious group, our nation, our race. All of these in themselves generate their own Karma to which to an extent we are all heirs. Although we are all responsible for what befalls us in life, this is not wholly dependent on our own doings but on those of the groups to which we belong. Again according to the Law the circumstances of our birth and our parents are all predetermined, so is our physical constitution with a tendency to, or an immunity from, certain diseases.

All that befalls us in life might have been considered as fate, providence, even chance or luck, which some over-ruling Power arbitrarily dispenses, but the grand teaching tells us quite otherwise. It tells us that, whether we are aware of it or not, all that befalls us is the result of what we have done. The 'doing' involves even thinking and feeling. The law is one of perfect justice. We get our deserts no more and no less. As we said earlier, however, these deserts can to a degree be modified both by ourselves in our present actions and by the groups that we have belonged to: we cannot escape that group Karma but as a member of that group we contribute towards it.

The beneficent aspect of this potentiality is its perfect justice. The law takes account of the degree of our immaturity and of our motives for whatever we do. The Karmic effects of a child's actions will be different from those of similar acts performed by a responsible adult.

This may be difficult to understand as it is said that the Law adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause. How can a universal law be wise or intelligent? The answer is in the livingness of everything, be it the life of a sub-atomic particle or of a great being. The essential beingness of all things is not in their objective but in their interior state, in the subjective worlds.

The great beings who, so to speak, operate the Law are collective beings, aggregates in terms of consciousness, knowledge and experience of many, many lives at all levels of development. They do, however, manifest a unit intelligence or a single consciousness, at a level commensurate with their development. These great beings function through subordinate entities on lower hierarchical levels who in their turn constitute the ordering principle of the universe. Their aggregate action is the Law in operation, but they are themselves subject to it. By the continuous cycle of Nature's processes these beings are heirs to a vast experience extending back into unimaginable epochs of time. It is this accumulated experience that conditions or regulates their actions in the ordering of things. They are the agents of the Law, or of the laws to which Nature in all its collective activities subscribes.

The certain operations of the Law, in which we are inescapably involved, gives us an unshakeable assurance that in the end all will be well. As an old hymn says, "God is working his purpose out", and according to the Ancient Wisdom that purpose is the evolutionary process for everything, a journey to perfection by stages. We are part of that process.

Again, an immediate aspect of the Law for each of us is not only this confidence that all will be well but it bestows self-reliance and responsibility on each of us. In the light of it, insofar as we can accept it, we become mature beings, knowingly playing our part in Nature's endless progressive journey.

A significant insight applying the Law to the human condition is the following:

Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways - which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate, while another sees in them the action of blind Fatalism, and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them - would surely disappear, if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence". [S. D. I, 643]



Destruction of Jerusalem & Its Great Spiritual Riches by the Romans under Titus (70 A. D.)
reproduced from Pictorial History of Philosophy by Dagobert Runes, Philosophical Library, New York

Potentiality Four: EVOLUTION, LIFE EVER-BECOMING

The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a *higher life*. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. The whole process of evolution with its endless adaptation is a proof of this. The immutable laws that weed out the weak and feeble species, to make room for the strong, and which ensure the “survival of the fittest”, though so cruel in their immediate action - all are working toward the grand end. The *very fact* that adaptations *do* occur, that the fittest do survive in the struggle for existence, shows that what is called “unconscious Nature” is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits (Dhyani-Chohans), whose collective aggregate forms the manifested *verbum* of the unmanifested LOGOS, and constitutes at one and the same time the MIND of the Universe and its immutable LAW. [S. D. I, 277/8]

In the spiritual realms of being the life process is continuous and virtually everlasting but all the forms that life uses or inhabits, from mineral up to human, are only temporary and must necessarily have an end. Ends, however, are always followed by beginnings in the continuous but cyclic process.



'Living' quartz crystals
photo by Colyn Boyce

In Potentiality Two we saw man in a direct relationship with the universe. His existence, as is that of every thing, is subject to law, and an aspect of the Law is the evolutionary process. The process has many aspects, all beneficent in their way. They work in their own time and involve factors relating to the inner worlds not yet recognized in modern philosophies. The problems of evil involve universal balance and the Law's cause and effect aspect. Every thing in existence is as it is as a result of what went before. Always there are antecedents to everything.

The human lifespan is variable. It is a cycle within a greater cycle in the graded evolutionary process. The progress of the whole human kingdom

depends, in the aggregate, on the efforts made by, and the achievements of, its members. These are of infinite variety: they include, for example, a wide range of mental processes at one level, down to the most humdrum physical work, all of which are necessary for the survival of the race. These activities result in rich experience, the fruit of living. The aggregate of individual experience is that of the race. As the race persists, so is this experience on-going and is accumulated and stored in the cosmic memory.

Much experience is in terms of relationships, either between individuals or between the individual and the environment. In theosophical terms both kinds are complex because of their effects in the inner worlds, in man particularly on his inner principles, all of which are modified by experience. Everything in Nature also has its inner principles, more or less developed and active, or dormant.

Evolution is the process of the ever-improvement of life forms to fit themselves to express more and more of the potentialities of spirit. Improving forms are in effect the development of the Monad. By its nature the Monad, reflecting the absolute in existence, or as the One Manifest, does not change or grow. It is the forms that it energizes or animates, and through which it expresses or manifests its own unlimited characteristics or qualities, that have to grow or expand both in size and complexity. All Nature has its 'form' aspect; its spirit is 'Life' itself.

The mere exigencies of existence ensure that in the long run, in due season, forms do grow, expand, develop, in all the ways that are necessary. This growth is accomplished by accumulating experience on the one hand, and 'effort' on the other. Living forms develop by effort; muscles grow thereby, so do minds. Both need exercise.

In our opening paragraph to this Potentiality the phrase "survival of the fittest" is used. It is significant and contains a lesson for us all. It is by survival that the process of adaptations can work. This process applies to us all. The moral is that we are here in earth life, life after life, to learn, passively by experience and often suffering but actively by making effort in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Easy lives are unproductive in the evolutionary sense. Having had this pointed out to us the rest is up to us.

Potentiality Five: REINCARNATION

The immortal spiritual Egoic principle in the occult constitution of man is a key factor in the understanding of reincarnation: this is, however, not generally recognized. Reincarnation is commonly understood to mean a return to earth of a deceased personality, a rebirth of that same person, a kind of resurrection. The theosophical teachings correct and amplify this popular view. Reincarnation and its associated Law of Karma was dealt with by H. P. Blavatsky in one of her essays:

If Theosophy prevailing in the struggle, its all-embracing philosophy strikes deep root into the minds and hearts of men, if its doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, in other words, of Hope and Responsibility, find a home in the lives of the new generations, then, indeed, will dawn the day of joy and gladness for all who now suffer and are outcast. For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possession, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there indeed. [C. W. XI, 202]

This passage refers to Reincarnation and Karma as doctrines of Hope and Responsibility. Elsewhere H. P. B. refers to them as the twin doctrines. The one cannot be properly understood without the other. We dealt with Karma under Potentiality Three, the Law, which has a number of aspects all more or less relating to that of cause and effect. Successive personalities are the effects of causes set up by their immediate predecessors and possibly those before that.

But what is the process of reincarnation? It is the flow of 'Life' through a series of successive temporary forms. The process is continuous but alternately passive and active. It applies to the largest of manifest things, e.g. universes, down to the very smallest, e.g., sub-atomic particles. Everything has a period of existence and a period of withdrawal, but there

is THAT which continues through both states, LIFE itself, everlasting Essence or Spirit.

Man is regarded as essentially a unit of the Universal Spirit, an Ego or Individuality. At intervals of a few millennia of earth time (variable with circumstances) this Spiritual Entity projects into the physical world by a complicated process of rebirth a new personality. Each personality is linked to its predecessor by a number of “hereditary” factors which condition the new one from birth, and each personality has an allotted life span of a relatively short duration (commonly 70 to 80 years).

During each life the personality is subject to Karma, even to his/her inherited characteristics. In a lifetime the personality gains many experiences, then eventually dies. Life experience is said to be of two kinds, personal and spiritual. The purely personal becomes a hereditary factor in the conditioning of later personalities. The spiritual is separated out after death and is assimilated by the spiritual Individuality during a very long inter-life period in an unalloyed blissful subjective state.

The importance of a person’s realization of his/her essential divine nature is much stressed in theosophical literature. If it can become a consciously recognized fact in our lives it affects every aspect of our behaviour for the better. As H.P.B. has expressed it, it humanises the otherwise animal man.

Reincarnation, as far as man is concerned, is the *modus operandi* of the vast evolutionary journey that we are all engaged in.

Against a background knowledge of the reincarnation process death can be seen in perspective. This can reflect into the making of very different decisions. For example, in the case of brain damaged patients on life-support machines, what is the purpose of our striving to keep physical bodies alive beyond their useful conscious lifespan? Similarly we are casting doubt on the usefulness of much vivisection research and other cruelties inflicted on animals to produce medicines. Our bodies may be kept alive for a period longer than if we did not take animal-tested drugs, but in the light of reincarnation and Karma is such a practice justified?

The teaching tells us of a virtually endless progressive unfoldment of the potentialities of spirit. These reflect into the personalities which are also progressively developing, manifesting as they do more and more of the qualities of the divine Essence. Personalities are also on a journey to perfection, by stages, culminating in their complete spiritual regeneration.

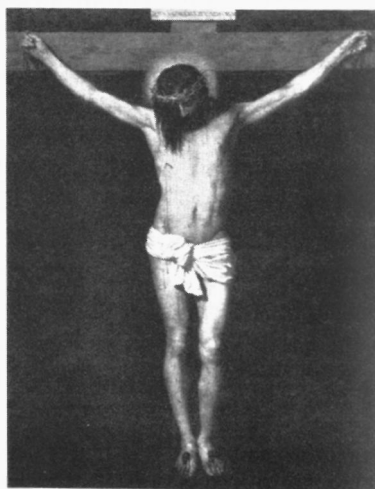
These stages are marked by the progressive unfoldment of proper human faculties with their expression on one hand in the personality's living, its relationships, attitudes and actions and on the other in an expanding consciousness. The person becomes increasingly sensible of the spiritual powers. As he grows, so he becomes aware of the fact that he is inseverably linked with whatever beings there are at those high levels.

All these great ideas must surely give us a vision or a hope for our future that we could never otherwise have had. Our responsibility is to discover the ways and means, according to the Law, of realizing them.

Potentiality Six - RELIGION

Another potential of Theosophy is in the field of religion. Its beneficence is that, if the tenets of Occultism were more widely known and accepted, and allowed to affect human behaviour, a mass of the world's religious strife would be ended. This strife has persisted through long ages. It results from the differing belief systems propagated by institutional religions, and this is often aggravated by political factions for their own ends. Essentially religions are based on universal verities but they have become overlaid by superstitions, ignorance and irrelevant practices. Many differences are due to arbitrary interpretation of scriptural writings. The proper meanings of their myths and allegories have been lost or remain hidden in the stories.

An example of this is the supposed sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world, past, present and future. This omnibus pardon was for all who would believe in him. Anyone who thinks seriously about this must realize that an omnipotent and omniscient God with a knowledge of the past, present and future would have foreseen the events of the life of Jesus, his only son, including the crucifixion. He would surely have been moved to compassion and intervened to prevent such a tragedy. One can also ask whether the Ruler of the Universe could or would really require such a sacrifice. If not, one must assume that it could not possibly be true, or that the whole episode was actually contrived by that God. Does not the whole idea stem from the ancient primitive custom of sacrifices to gods to appease their wrath or to ensure their favour in national preservation or bountiful harvests? Was Jesus really a scapegoat? Surely these ideas are quite untenable in this age and yet the story is a main tenet of the present Christian Church.



Jesus on 'the Cross of Matter'
painting by Velaquez

The religions referred to here are the religious establishments, institutions, with their hierarchical, sacerdotal government structures. These establishments are powerful and generally wealthy, with their ‘servants’ making a living from preaching, usually in the name of God. This promotes the religion but at the same time promotes the interests of the institution and ensures its preservation. The power of these establishments can reflect into, or even become factors in, secular government. State religions or religious states are thereby born. Instead of a man being able or encouraged to see his relationship to ‘god’ within himself and in his own way, he is forced by social pressures to subscribe to priestly authority, to adopt passively a ready-made belief system which he dare not challenge or examine at all critically. All this makes for not only artificial barriers in human society but bitter enmity and strife between those of differing beliefs.

Theosophy is the great, nay the only, remedy for all this. It reconciles all the various religions, showing that in their origins they are all the same, and demonstrates the common spiritual heritage of all men, furthering the idea of Universal Brotherhood with all that that means in terms of right relationships. Theosophy purports to be the “eternal verities”. Its literature indicates that, in the first instance, these relate to an “Everlasting Divine Principle” which always IS, unchanging and unchangeable. It is referred to as The Absolute beyond all conception or power of thought. Theosophy does not countenance the idea of an anthropomorphic God with human feelings of jealousy, wrath, vengeance, albeit merciful, just and loving, to whom prayers can be addressed, or of vicarious atonement by any kind of sacrifice.

In the light of these ‘verities’ may not the crucifixion story be an allegory depicting the crisis point (nadir) on the descending arc of the “materialising” of Spirit. The moment of the crucifixion is when the son of Man (Monad plus Manas = Ego or Christos) knows that the end of the phase has come. Thereafter the Spirit looks upward to the process of the spiritualization of matter (resurrection) on the ever-rising spirals of the ascending arc. Then starts the regeneration, the redemption, of matter when it can the better act as a vehicle for the ever-growing spirit of man during the cycles of his tremendous journey, cycling in the Rounds, through Globes E, F or G of the ascending arc, until the culmination of his life span on this Earthly Chain, at the end of Round Seven, before he moves on to higher ones on a superior succeeding Chain.

The verities of Theosophy relate to the manifest universe and all that comprises it. These verities tell us of the origins of “matter”, the essential constituent of forms, the generation of which is from pre-existent patterns. They tell of universal memory and the living processes of expanding consciousness. They give us details of the after-death states and the vast evolutionary process. They tell of a working constitution of man at all levels of being, and the full reincarnation story. We are told of endless cycles of existence, with their greater and lesser cycles, of the Law by which everything is self-governed, and where man fits into the whole grand scheme.

All these constitute the very ‘verities’ of existence. Change is inherent in everything, but for practical purposes for us here and now these verities as such are in principle unchangeable. It is upon them that Theosophy bases its ideas on religion. They are ‘truths’, not opinions or beliefs, and about them H. P. B. has the following to say:

It is perhaps necessary first of all, to say, that the assertion that “Theosophy is not a Religion,” by no means excludes the fact that Theosophy *is* Religion itself. A religion in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together - not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Now Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only *all* MEN, but also *all* BEINGS and *all* things in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our theosophical definition of religion; [C. W. X, 161]



She gave us many other illuminating passages on religion. An often quoted one is:

The ever unknowable and incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless* Cause of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart - invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through “the still small voice” of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*. [S.D.I, 280]

Potentiality Seven: THE AFTER-DEATH STATES, SPIRITUALISM

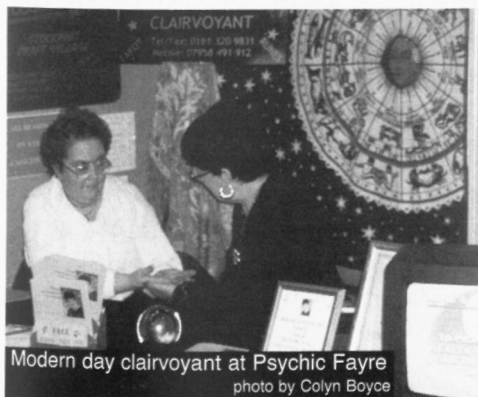
A background knowledge of the natural processes involved in these fields is not only of inestimable value to mankind but essential to our understanding of them. Present beliefs about the after-death states are vague and misleading. Probably the most damaging is the idea that nothing is actually known about them, hence widespread ignorance and superstition and often apprehension, fear of the unknown.

Interest in spiritualism and psychic phenomena comes and goes in cycles. Spiritualists commonly hold the view that their phenomena are due to the 'spirits' of the dead. Theosophy opposes this view; it defines 'spirit' precisely and in its terms it says that neither spiritualistic happenings nor psychic phenomena can properly be the result of the activities of 'spirits', but it does not deny the phenomena. It has its own explanations which involve a knowledge of the principles of man's constitution and of the corresponding planes of Nature.



Complete levitation of a table
in Professor Flammarion's salon (1906)
through mediumship of Eusapia Paladino

In certain psychic phenomena 'Spirits' are not involved, for example, in psychokinesis, thought transference, clairvoyance or clairaudience. These are explicable in terms of a knowledge of human principles and their characteristics. This knowledge is also essential to an understanding of what goes on after death.



In the *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* the after-death processes are described in some detail. Nowhere else are these facts available in such detail and in plain language. Their importance is that they remove the doubts and profitless speculation surrounding this subject. Our earthly personalities obviously do not survive death, neither do our mortal souls, i.e. our mento-emotional principles. Our spiritual Individuality (Ego), does survive and is virtually immortal. It gains experience, growing accordingly, from the spiritual experience of its many successive personal lives. At birth each personal life is conditioned according to its immediate predecessor and probably its more remote ones. Every new person gets his just desserts by way of inbuilt characteristics, tendencies and potentialities, determined by the doings of past lives.

The teachings tell us that spiritualistic phenomena through mediums are predominantly due to the psychic (mento-emotional) reliquia of the deceased which continue for a period, sometimes some tens of years, after the death of the physical body. They enjoy a declining life, and retain memories and attributes of the past personality for as long as they persist. They persist as living simulacra of the dead, but they are devoid of their spiritual Egos. These shades, as they are sometimes called, are the direct agents for the majority of spiritualistic phenomena, messages, etc. In the meantime the real spirits of the deceased have, after a period of sloughing off their ex-personal principles, entered into a state of unalloyed bliss where they normally remain for a number of centuries of earth life. This is a state of uninterrupted recuperation, rest and happiness during which the truly spiritual experience of the last life is assimilated into the Ego.

Psychic paranormal phenomena occur whilst personalities are still alive. They depend on activities at their various levels of the astral, the emotional and mental principles of a person who can operate in these subjective realms, consciously or unconsciously. The modus operandi of these phenomena varies with the phenomena but this is a subject of its own.

Potentiality Eight: ECOLOGY

The student of Theosophy soon learns that the grand processes of Cosmos, or Nature, are all expressions of One Life manifesting in numberless forms. This Life is also his life: he cannot therefore be separate from his universe.

To the extent that this is realized, he is in direct contact with Nature. All things and creatures are sharing his life. They express it each in its own way, and to the degree that its form is developed to express it. Forms become more and more complex as they rise through the kingdoms of Nature. As they do so, their inherent sentience, which to start with may be a mere response to environment, expands, giving rise to instinct in the animal kingdom. This response is without any mental modification but it motivates action appropriate to the entity and its environment.

Man's reactions to his environment, etc., are on the contrary modified by mind. He has the capacity to think about and originate action against a background of a whole variety of criteria from innate unconscious promptings or experience gained from upbringing, schooling, relationships, work, etc. All these can amplify, or even justify, but interfere with, the otherwise automatic unconscious promptings of instinct.

With this recognition of the 'livingness' of all things a caring for them can arise, an urge to nurture them, a feeling of responsibility for the environment and all that comprises it is engendered.

Further, the beneficence of this Potentiality Eight is that in acquainting us with the ongoing progressive march of Nature, which must necessarily involve us all, we see where we fit into the grand scheme. We not only learn of the scheme but we are inevitable participators in it. As we learn of this inescapable relationship we become worthy cooperators with Nature to both her benefit and our own.

Man's perception of his intimate kinship with Nature is, however, almost totally eclipsed by his intense preoccupation with his material well-being, motivated by insistent self-gratification at almost any cost, hence his unfeeling, ruthless exploitation of Nature.

Everything we have and everything we are, including not only our bodies but even our internal psychological and mental make-up, stems from Nature. There is no other source. Latterly when nearly all the processes of man's life have become mechanised and he lives in a self-created, superstructured environment virtually isolated from Nature in her natural state, he feels himself apart from her instead of a part of her.

Theosophy considerably enlarges the above picture of the world we live in by reason of its teachings on cosmology and anthropology. It helps us thereby the better to understand our intimate relationship. Our planet earth is a living entity. By analogy the same processes apply to it as they do to us. In its economy and all its functions it is self-regulating. It has healing and recuperative abilities, but as in the case of our bodies, any adjustments it has to make take time. If therefore we make demands on our earth's resources at a rate faster than they can be regenerated, they must run out.

Scientists tell us that we are polluting our atmosphere to such an extent that we are even affecting the earth's temperature. Naturally a compensating restorative process will be set going but it takes time for what it can do to become effective. The natural economy is finely tuned. It is very much in our interests to become sensitive to this. Men have used the phrase that Nature is to be conquered or tamed, but Nature is our mother and sustainer, not our enemy. Our arrogant enmity towards her conditions the attitude of the elemental kingdom towards us. Caring friendliness towards Nature will work much more to our benefit than unfeeling indifference or even cruelty.



Black skies over Britain
the view in recent years
photo by Greenpeace

A similar argument arises over cosmetics. We inflict misery and suffering on animals to test our products for safety. When we see what dire consequences these experiments have on some of the test animals, then the karmic effects on the human race must be seen as an inevitable consequence.



Rabbits are subject to some of the most horrendous experiments in laboratories
photo: Colyn Boyce



The salamander -
a fire nature spirit
from *The Kingdom of the Gods*
by Geoffrey Hodson

The elemental kingdom plays a large and vital role in the workings of the global economy. We are not given many details of the way Elementals work but we are told that nothing happens without them. This includes even the awful catastrophes like earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, droughts, or just the weather, all result from the activities of the Elementals. They are the proximate, the immediate cause of all that happens on earth. As the forces of Nature they are the agents of Karma. But man can harmonise his relations to them. They are only quasi intelligent, doing just what they have to do in the scheme of things. They are, however subservient to the great post-human beings above man in the hierarchical echelon, being subject to their will.

Hear H. P. B.:

There is not a single thing going on about us, no matter what, that elementals are not concerned in, because they constitute a necessary part of nature, just as important as the nerve currents in your body . . . [C. W. X, 271]

Potentiality Nine: THE ORDERING OF SOCIETY

Human society is a collectivity of individual human beings and any characteristic or quality it may have reflects an average of the qualities of its members. The collectivity is also a karmic entity formed not only of its present activities but those of its past. Any section of Society also has its individual Karma affecting all its members.

The degree of governance of any society will reflect its spiritual development and its overall character. The more developed the society the greater the freedom it can enjoy. What laws are necessary will be those relating to the common economy, tax raising for public services, etc.

What has just been said reflects into the rules of how wealth is generated. For example, there is the straight forward earning a living for one's self and family. There are certain aspects to the acquiring of money (purely as such) in our modern way of life where little or no such contribution is made, e.g., gambling on the stock exchange in exchange rates and in land speculation. All these are non-productive and for every winner there is a loser; they are immoral and quite unacceptable in a sane world. Further, there is as yet no public conscience about the inequitable distribution of wealth, however it is generated. There is a saying that money makes money, justifying usury. In spite of our enormously complicated and extensive system of loan and interest, sustaining an ever-expanding economy, the saying is not true. The ever-expanding economy, with its attendant waste, and a growing realization that an abundance of 'things' beyond all reasonable need does not buy happiness, may prove disastrous to the system, especially when repayments (capital and interest) become too burdensome.

Money as such is sterile, it does not make real wealth. Only man's ingenuity and work does that. More and more money finds its way into the hands of fewer and fewer people. Moreover, the means of production of wealth can overstretch the capabilities of Nature's resources to supply them.

Theosophy demonstrates a prime need for altruism. All selfish acts, particularly those which adversely affect our fellow men, incur adverse Karma.

Theosophy teaches us of a hierarchical structure in the ordering of Cosmos. *The Secret Doctrine*, in telling us of the origins of the Universe says that there is the eternally unmanifest 'THAT' from which the Manifest One periodically emanates. This One differentiates into Seven Great Beings who characterise seven rays of development which in turn permeate all Nature with their qualities and attributes. Below them are an ever-descending series of Beings which constitute Architects, Builders, etc., down to three grades of Elementals representing the ultimate workers. They are the forces of Nature, each grade of which has its characteristic. A proper structure of society would reflect this model, the wisest, the most experienced heading a cone of authority over those lower in the scale who are of lesser development. Nature is not a democracy but those 'in authority' have fitted themselves by Nature's processes to fulfill their exalted roles. This fitting has regard to their slow development in their series of personal lives according to the process of reincarnation.

In India the laws of Manu reflected this process in the caste system. Against the caste system, however, is the fact that it became rigid. One could not change caste irrespective of merit or demerit. It is noteworthy that the Master K. H. commended Damodar who renounced his caste at considerable cost to his social standing. The system is also divisive.



Mavalankar Damodar

We in the West have now become 'democratic'. The aristocratic 'nobles' (members of the ruling class) by and large became unfit or just ceased to fulfil their traditional role. Whereas the hierarchical system has obvious advantages, there is the difficulty of choosing and electing persons of high integrity and motivated by altruism able to fill the senior positions in a modern hierarchy. The very process of election, or choosing, nowadays presents practical difficulties. Our present democratic system could provide a working compromise if Theosophy were to become a significant factor in our lives. Any system of government can work satisfactorily if those working it make it do so.

Theosophy tells us of the differences between sections of humanity by way of Root Races, sub-Races, families and so on. Each of these groups has an historic background and each of them is developing its own aspect of man's constitution. The main races of humanity develop their respective principles in due season. At this time in the 4th Round the 5th Root Race is developing the mental aspects of Kama (the 4th principle). Each Sub-Race of each Root Race is developing or has developed one or other of these aspects but the Races and Sub-Races overlap. Later ones start before older ones have run their course. In this way we are all at different stages. Our cultures manifest this. Seeing that we must all live in the planet together, tolerant allowances are essential if misunderstandings between the groups are to be avoided.

The occult view of human progress is that it is cyclical. The development and progress of human societies, in whatever units we may be thinking, from large national ones to small individual family groups, proceed by cycles. There is a birth, a period of prospering, a decline, and a natural death. This rise and fall is analogous to the life of an individual man. The length of these cycles is variable depending upon the operations of the law of Karma. For example, if a group of people or a nation misuses its powers the karmic consequence is inevitable sooner or later in terms of time in the life of the community. Greedy exploitation would certainly have its effects; maybe it would shorten the life of one group, remove one nation's dominance over another, and so on. Wrong practices and habits of living tend to generate diseases, sometimes on a large scale, inevitably shortening the life of the community.

The beneficent potentiality of a well-ordered social society ensures the spiritual development of the members of that society. Every member of it would have enough free time to do 'his own thing'. This proper ordering of daily life would reflect not only into the opportunity of individuals having time consciously to undertake some personal development but into the betterment of group health, with an attendant increased happiness.

Under the beneficent potentiality of Theosophy the whole complexion of human society could and would change if it were but generally known. . . . from the depths of the dark, muddy waters of materialism . . . a mystic force is rising . . . At most it is but the first gentle rustling, but it is a *superhuman* rustling - "supernatural" only for the superstitious and the ignorant. The spirit of truth is passing now over the face of the dark waters, and in parting them, is compelling them to disgorge their spiritual treasures. This spirit is a force that can neither be hindered nor stopped. Those who recognize it and feel that this is the supreme moment of their salvation will be uplifted by it and carried beyond the illusions of the great astral serpent. The joy they will experience will be so poignant and intense, that if they were not mentally isolated from their bodies of flesh, the beatitude would pierce them like sharp steel. It is not pleasure that they will experience, but a bliss which is a foretaste of the knowledge of the gods, the knowledge of good and evil, and of the fruits of the tree of life. [C. W. XI, 131/2]

Potentiality Ten: EDUCATION

Theosophy would not have much to say about the content of secular education but it would about the development in young people of character, unselfishness, helpfulness, self control, truthfulness and competence. It would tend to discourage all nationalistic propaganda and any religious education of a particular denominational character. It would be concerned, however, to teach the laws of Karma and reincarnation and their effects in our lives. It would also teach the 'Humanities.' It would enlighten pupils as to their inherent spiritual nature, making them aware that they share their spirituality with everybody else, with all living things and even the earth itself, the solar system and the outer universe. They thereby have a direct relationship with everything in Cosmos. By it they are under an obligation to seek to further the happiness and well-being of all their fellow creatures. Here we enter into the basics of a common ethic of caring, cooperation and sharing; all out of real regard for others and with mutual respect and even affection for them.

In *The Key to Theosophy* H. P. B. stresses the importance of cooperation as against competition, of which the system of competitive examinations is an example. It is an easy step to extend this regard for other individuals to other groups, to other nationalities and members of other races, to inculcate ideas of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness towards all. Whereas regard for local traditions, habits and customs, and even patriotism, are worthy, belligerent nationalism, religious intolerance and exclusiveness are certainly not.



Pestalozzi and his adoring students. Pestalozzi was the father of modern European education. from Pictorial History of Philosophy, by Dagobert Runes

In expounding the Law of Karma to children, its aspect of “do as you would be done by” is understandable. The Law in its other aspects of cause and effect and the maintenance of equilibrium and harmony is something to which every child can respond. It might be a truism to say that a good teacher is better than many books, or even a computer! A living communication makes learning an exciting process. Talent of every sort whether it be physical by way of manual ability or artistic, emotional or mental skills, is obviously recognized and encouraged.

In this age of computing virtually all basic data are available at the touch of a button, so too are many aspects of calculation. These are tools perhaps useful in modern ultra-dollar efficient society but they do not develop mental faculty, memory, sound logic and judgment. They demand no initiative, encourage no real adventure or courage, so much in demand in the ‘real’ world. Ideas on the progressive evolution of all things give purpose to existence. Apart from the absorbing immediate concerns of school life children would then acquire ideas about the long-term purpose of being in incarnation.

Parents and teachers, brothers and sisters, playmates: all are worthy of respect for what they are in their particular relationships to each child. They are factors in their upbringing, forming a background, each in his or her own way, to the child’s life, having repercussions by way of conditioning for years to come. The inculcation of the need for effort is an educational necessity. Very few children are so gifted that they can perform their scholastic tasks or exercises without effort. The truth is that it is by effort that they develop their faculties or even the strength for doing anything. The making of effort can also be enjoyable and stimulating; it is not necessarily wearisome or a drudgery.

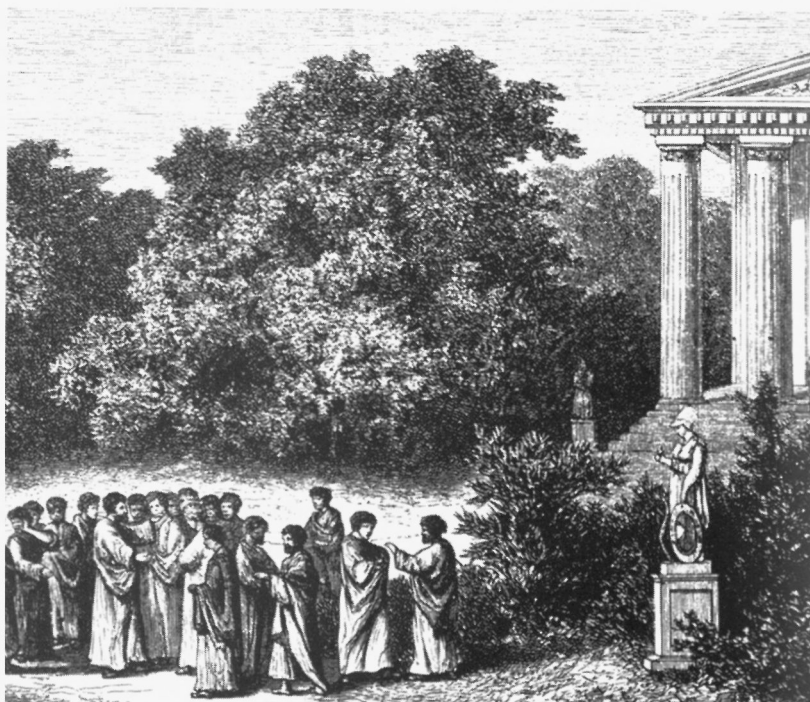
In *The Key to Theosophy*, amongst much else on education, H. P. B. has this to say:

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. [*Key*, 270, Original Edition].

She also said,

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.



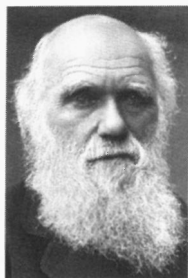
A MORE CLASSIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Plato and his students in the Garden at the Academy in ancient Greece
from *Pictorial History of Philosophy*, by Dagobert Runes

Potentiality Eleven: SCIENCE

The word Science is derived from the Latin *sciens*, present participle of *scire*, to know. It has latterly become applied to a specific aspect of 'knowing', a particular discipline or way of knowing, but properly it is unspecific. Theosophy has been referred to as the Science of Sciences; it includes all knowledge of a 'real' nature.

One of the Masters of the Wisdom said that "Modern science is our best ally . . ." (*M. L. II*, chron. 65). He said this at the end of the 19th century when science was establishing itself as the fearless enquirer into all natural phenomena. It was making rapid progress in exploring outer space, in discovering the nature of matter, the composition and function of living cells and the part they play in living organisms, and so on. Darwin had just propounded his *Origin of the Species* and his theory of the survival of the fittest. This growing understanding of the natural world was challenging the views of religion on Divine Creation. Science encouraged the asking of many questions about dogmatic assertions previously believed to be unquestionable. The Masters were encouraging this liberalisation of thought and fearless enquiry into the actualities of existence regardless of the many existing longstanding accepted views.



Charles Darwin

Science may not nowadays be quite so sure of itself as it was at the end of the 19th century. Its views are more lightly held, its foundations are not so secure as they were only a few years ago. Discoveries and theories are rapidly and continuously changing. Science has consequently become more flexible, and willing to look into areas which were previously 'no-go' areas, principally those of subjectivity as opposed to the accustomed pure objectivity. Quantum physics with its ideas of non-locality has opened up new fields. Some scientists are beginning to pose questions which suggest the possibility of non-physical realms of being. Near-death experiences, for example, have forced attention away from the strictly material. Now there is also an increasing view that paranormal phenomena like thought reading

or transference, psychokinesis, materialisations at spiritualistic seances, distant healing and so on, ought to be acknowledged and investigated. Current models of scientific thought cannot accommodate such happenings.

Theosophy provides ready-made models to explain many of these phenomena but so far they have been ignored. These answers include explanatory material on the nature of space and time, the existence and characteristics of various non-physical planes of existence. As an example, the one next to the physical, the formative plane (the Astral), has several functions. To a theosophist these correspond to the various sub-planes of that plane. It is where memory resides; where vitality, the universal life force, is stored for suffusion into the physical. From this plane 'subjective' forms are projected into physical, objective existence.

H. P. B. makes an important statement in *The Secret Doctrine*:

Now the Occultists, who trace every atom in the small universe, whether an aggregate or single, to One Unity, or Universal Life; who do not recognise that anything in Nature can be inorganic; who know of no such thing as dead matter - the Occultists are consistent with their doctrine of Spirit and Soul when speaking of memory in every atom, of will and sensation.¹ [*S. D. II, 672*]

The relatively recent idea in the scientific world that the observer affects the results of experiments at the sub-atomic levels is beginning to suggest that the observer is a participator in the experimental process. According to Theosophy, this is so because of the nature of the inner subjective planes, particularly the mental plane wherein incidentally, it is said, space has no dimension (in the physical sense) and time as ordinarily understood does not apply. In subjective space therefore the square law relating to affects and distance does not apply.

There is another current scientific speculation on non-locality. Sub-atomic particles can affect one another at distances such that changes in one in any given place affect immediately another in another place. So far there is no scientific explanation for this but in the matter of non-locality, students are reminded of "the Point which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere", supplemented by the part of the Hermetic Axiom

¹ Here 'sensation' can be regarded as a degree of consciousness

“Nothing is great, nothing is small”. Similarly, the Occultist could ask, “Where is a thought?” The scientist might answer, “In the brain”, but a thought is immaterial and the brain is something material. How does the material give rise to the immaterial? Again the answer to this can be by way of the inner nature of matter, which has its subjective principles and sub-principles. The theosophist also sees that, as any particle of matter is a living entity, its own inherent energy is life, the One Universal Life.

A comprehensive metaphysical view of non-locality becomes very complex. The interweaving of causes and effects in these non-physical fields becomes extraordinarily complicated, especially because what happens in them can be reflected into, and therefore affect, the physical plane. In Occultism the existence of Elemental beings, has some relevance to this. They constitute a *modus operandi* for most phenomena. The Elementals are regarded as semi-intelligent entities and act as the forces of Nature.

Modern science still lacks a model of the structured universe such as that provided by Theosophy with its seven planes of being, each with its own main characteristics. It also lacks the idea, and all that stems from it, that there is no such thing as ‘dead’ matter. The two concomitants of consciousness and memory, and matter as living, reflect into an understanding of the grand process of evolution. Everything is building on what went before. This is the basis for Rupert Sheldrake’s considerable work *The Presence of the Past*.



Rupert Sheldrake

Science has sub-disciplines. One is biology, the science of living things. Theosophy extends this by its notion that there is no dead matter, nothing is inorganic, and by furthering the idea that everything manifests an aspect of the One Life. This One Life shows two inseparable aspects: form (matter) on the one hand, and energy as dynamism (life or spirit) on the other. Consciousness, memory and will are inherent in the combination. ‘Volition’ is therefore an attribute in all things. These are elements of basic data not yet fully appreciated by science but clearly enunciated by Theosophy.

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. [C. W. VIII, 76]

Potentiality Twelve: ART, HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGY and PARAPSYCHOLOGY

With the advent of Theosophy a whole set of new concepts arise in the field of art, primarily from the occult view of the nature of the artist. Theosophy teaches that every human being is a microscopic but unique reflection of the macrocosm, the universal whole. Each of his faculties derives ultimately from great Beings who have progressed in the aeons of evolutionary time far above him in the scale of being. These are collective entities, aggregates of many lesser living beings, each with its intelligence and memories. These together constitute a vast accumulated experience acquired by multitudes of 'Lives' as they have moved up the evolutionary ladder. Life in this context, known as the Monad, has passed through all the kingdoms of Nature and thence into the human kingdom where it becomes individualised and proceeds through the sub-Races and Races, in which it sequentially develops human faculties. Ultimately its vehicles are fitted to proceed as entities into the super-human kingdoms.

Nature provides all that constitutes not only the physical being of man but his non-physical principles. Each cell, even of his body, has its own inner principles, through which that cell is in touch with the corresponding cosmic plane. It thereby reflects something of that plane's characteristics. All the time the whole man is resonating in the various aspects of his being to what takes place in the universe, to the extent that they have been developed and attuned.

The artist responds to the harmonies in Nature whether by sound, colour, form or feeling. He sees something of the grand cosmic pattern in symmetrical patterns, facial expressions, in movement, in rhythm and the lilt of language and sound. Musicians hear with their inner ears the celestial music; they can set it down in writing, and with the instruments and techniques at their disposal, can express what they hear of the melody and harmony. The dancer and the singer too in their way interpret and bring forth something of these unheard rhythms and harmonies. Their responsive souls can speak to us but we have to be able to respond. We need eyes to

see and ears to hear. Without these we cannot respond and without our response any art form is a mere shadow, a presentation without meaning. A response to any art form, by vision or sight, involves our soul; but further, insofar as it responds, it is itself quickened.

There is a sanctity and a holiness in this appreciation, leading us into the spiritual realms. Our characters are modified. The highest emotions of devotion, courage, perseverance, sympathy, love and compassion are all evoked. Real art will do this for us if we give it our attention and can see and hear. We all have the necessary internal instrument but maybe it needs tuning.

Quoting the Master K. H., “the *melomaniac* knows of no *higher* state of bliss and happiness than music - the most divine and *spiritual* of arts . Whereas this is specific to one art form we have the expression that Divinity is expressed in, “goodness, truth and beauty”. There is also the expression that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. Without that ‘eye’ there is no beauty. It could also be said that Theosophy is in the eye - or soul response - of the student; without that it does not exist for him or her.



British prodigy
Jeremy Dinan

We dealt with some aspects of spiritualistic phenomena and psychism in Potentiality Seven. The main criterion in the theosophical explanation of them is the planes of Nature and the occult constitution of man by principles (see Appendix). In either case there is a significant division in them - at the mid point in the 5th plane or 5th principle of Manas of mind. The dividing line is referred to as a barrier or bridge, the Antahkarana. Nature above this line is regarded as ‘formless’ and subjective, and below it objective. In terms of planes, in terms of principles it is spiritual (Egoic) at high levels, or manifestly material, personal at lower levels (but matter can be non-physical). This information is essential to an understanding of psychology and parapsychology.

Some psychologists have recognised a distinction between the personal ego (id) and a super-ego. Their ego has been relatively well

studied and much therapeutic practice developed from clinical experience. The super-ego, however, - the theosophical spiritual Ego or Individuality - so rarely manifests that very little is known of its true nature, its real potentialities. It is still largely a postulate but there is evidence of its existence by way of its reflection into the upper three sub-principles of the kamic or emotional main (4th) principle. Even those reflections, although still coloured by egotism, demonstrate some of the higher spiritual aspects of the personality.

Parapsychology was mentioned briefly in Potentiality Seven. Theosophy enriches this field of activity again by way of the characteristics and qualities of the planes and principles. The mental plane and mind play a large part in 'spirit' messages, 'automatic' writing and obviously in thought transference. In other phenomena the astral (3rd) plane and the Astral Body are involved, sometimes with the aid of Elementals, e.g. materialisations, apports, precipitation of pictures and letters.

Psychological phenomena include split personality, obsession and possession. Again a knowledge of the after-death processes helps towards an understanding of what is happening. A man is his spiritual Ego, or Individuality, but associated with a personality during earth life. In cases of obsession the personality can be taken over by one or more powerful Elementals, often but not always of its own creation, by prolonged habits for example. Possession proper occurs when the personal principles are taken over completely, or partly and temporarily, by an 'Elementary'. An Elementary is the persisting psychic reliquiae of a deceased person, from which the spiritual Ego has been separated during the normal death process. The 'Elementary' as long as it persists can remain powerful. It can seek 'life' to fulfil its urges in the physical body of a living person. It is motivated by intense craving for carnal satisfaction, such as sexual perversions, drunkenness, often fiendish cruelty, etc. It is completely without conscience or decent restraint because of its separation from its spiritual soul.¹

¹ Regarding examples of and cures for obsession etc, see C. W. Index and Volume II, 399

Theosophy has something significant to say about health. The following quotation may appear superficial but it has wide repercussions:

Every individual is making Karma either good or bad in each action and thought of his daily round, and is at the same time working out in this life the Karma brought about by the acts and desires of the last. When we see people afflicted by congenital ailments, it may be safely assumed that these ailments are the inevitable results of causes started by themselves in a previous birth. It may be argued that, as these afflictions are hereditary, they can have nothing to do with a past incarnation; but it must be remembered that the Ego, the real man, the individuality, has no spiritual origin in the parentage by which it is re-embodied, but is drawn by the affinities which its previous mode of life attracted round it into the current that carries it, when the time comes for rebirth, to the home best fitted for the development of those tendencies . . . [Key, 212]



Treatments for modern day maladies
photo by Colyn Boyce

CONCLUSION

The potentialities of Theosophy can only become actualities and their benefit to humanity felt as they are known. It is over one hundred years since they were made available in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and her Initiate Masters. For various reasons however, notably opposition by self-interested parties, they have been suppressed or ignored. It was envisaged that the Theosophical Society, as it was originally founded, would be the means of letting it be known that all these potentialities were available to the world in general. It is our duty, as members of that Society, to familiarize ourselves with all aspects of the theosophical teachings, particularly these potentialities, so that we can broadcast them, making them available widely as was originally intended.

The advent of Theosophy was a unique world event, ranking even above that of Christianity. The founders of the great religions in history have been Initiates of high order in the occult Hierarchy (with its several branches). The Masters of the Wisdom who inspired the founding of the Theosophical Society were members of that Brotherhood. They not only made available to the world in general the expansive and very deep theosophical teachings but committed them, via H. P. Blavatsky and to some extent directly themselves, into writing. No other Teacher previously had done that. Even though now we do not have the Masters with us, we do have that incomparably valuable literature - and that for all time, or for as long as it shall be preserved.

We have to acknowledge H. P. B.'s great self-sacrificing work in this, with all the sincere appreciation it deserves. We owe her an immense debt of gratitude not only for this 'actualising' of the potentiality of Theosophy as far as she could in writing, but for her direct association with some of the Masters, and the evidence of their existence that this provided. They became 'realities' and thereby an inspiration to many. As witness we have what she said about them in her account of the writing of *Isis Unveiled* and what they themselves said about their part in the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*.



THE ULTIMATE POTENTIALITY

Practical Theosophy is not one Science, but embraces every science in life, moral and physical. It may, in short, be justly regarded as the universal coach, a tutor of world-wide knowledge and experience, and of an erudition which not only assists and guides his pupils toward a successful examination for every scientific or moral service in earthly life, but fits them for the lives to come, if those pupils will only study the universe and its mysteries within themselves . . .

[C. W. X, 165]

Appendix

THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

SANSKRIT TERMS	ESOTERIC MEANING	EXPLANATORY
<u>The Lower (personal) Quaternary:-</u>		
(a) Rupa, or Sthula-sarira.	(a) Physical body.	(a) Is the vehicle of all the other "principles" during life.
(b) Prana.	(b) Life, or Vital principle.	(b) Necessary only to a, c, d, and the functions of the lower <i>Manas</i> , which embrace all those limited to the (physical) brain.
(c) Linga-sarira.	(c) Astral body.	(c) The <i>Double</i> , the phantom body.
(d) Kama-rupa.	(d) The seat of animal desires and passions.	(d) This is the centre of the animal man, where lies the line of demarcation which separates the mortal man from the immortal entity.

The Upper Imperishable Triad:-

(e) <i>Manas</i> - a dual principle in its functions.	(e) Mind, Intelligence: which is the higher human mind, whose light, or radiation links the MONAD, for the life-time, to the mortal man.	(e) The future state and the Karmic destiny of man depend on whether <i>Manas</i> gravitates more downward to <i>Kama rupa</i> , the seat of the animal passions, or upwards to <i>Buddhi</i> , the Spiritual Ego. In the latter case, the higher consciousness of the individual Spiritual aspirations of <i>mind</i> (<i>Manas</i>), assimilating <i>Buddhi</i> , are absorbed by it and form the <i>Ego</i> , which goes into Devachanic bliss.
(f) Buddhi.	(f) The Spiritual Soul.	(f) The vehicle of pure universal spirit.
(g) Atma.	(g) Spirit.	(g) One with the Absolute, as its radiation.

[The Key to Theosophy, pp 91/2 Original Edition.]

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Personal principles (b) and (c) are shown in reverse order in the text. This inconsistent change of order is frequent in the literature. It is not of significance in the teaching.

I. *Atma*, the “*Higher Self*”, is neither your Spirit nor mine, but like sunlight shines on all. It is the universally diffused “*divine principle*”, and is inseparable from its one and absolute *Meta-Spirit*, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

II. *Buddhi* (the spiritual soul) is only its vehicle. Neither each separately, nor the two collectively, are of any more use to the body of man, than sunlight and its beams are for a mass of granite buried in the earth, *unless the divine Duad is assimilated by, and reflected in, some consciousness . . .* This consciousness or mind is.

III. *Manas . . .* It is, therefore, when inseparably united to the first two, called the SPIRITUAL EGO . . . This is the real Individuality, or the divine man . . . It is that Ego, that “Causal Body,” which overshadows every personality Karma forces it to incarnate into . . .

[The Key to Theosophy, p135, Original Edition]

THE HIGHER SELF is	<i>Atma</i> , the inseparable ray of the Universal and ONE SELF. It is the God <i>above</i> , more than within, us. Happy the man who succeeds in saturating his <i>inner Ego</i> with it!
--------------------	--

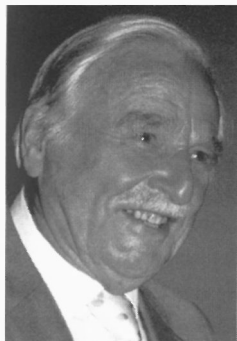
THE SPIRITUAL <i>divine</i> Ego, is	the Spiritual soul or <i>Buddhi</i> , in close union with <i>Manas</i> , the mind-principle, without which it is no EGO at all, but only the <i>Atmic Vehicle</i> .
-------------------------------------	---

THE INNER, OR HIGHER Ego is	<i>Manas</i> , the “Fifth Principle”, so called, independently of <i>Buddhi</i> . The Mind-Principle is only the Spiritual Ego when merged <i>into one</i> with <i>Buddhi</i> - no materialist being supposed to have in him <i>such</i> an Ego, however great his intellectual capacities. It is the permanent <i>Individuality</i> or the “Reincarnating Ego.”
-----------------------------	--

THE LOWER, or PERSONAL Ego is	the physical man in conjunction with his <i>lower</i> Self, <i>i.e.</i> , animal instincts, passions, desires, etc. It is called the “false personality,” and consists of the <i>lower Manas</i> combined with <i>Kama-rupa</i> , and operating through the Physical body and its phantom or “double”.
-------------------------------	--

[The Key to Theosophy, pp175/6 Original Edition]

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



Geoffrey Farthing was born in England on 10 December 1909; educated conventionally at two boarding schools; matriculated London University, but became apprenticed into engineering, attended night school at Manchester College of Technology of which he became an Associate; served six years in the Army in the Royal Signals, leaving the service as Major.

Geoffrey joined Leeds Lodge of The Theosophical Society in England (Adyar) in 1945. With his background of reading it was soon discovered by the Lodge members that he was knowledgeable enough to start giving lectures, and this he did almost as soon as he joined. Since then he has lectured in many countries around the world and held most positions in the Theosophical Society in England, including a spell as General Secretary (1969 - 72). He served a term as a member of the Society's General Council at Adyar, India, and was a member of the Executive Committee of the European Federation for several years.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Geoffrey was a regular course leader at annual residential weekends exploring The Secret Doctrine, held at Tekels Park, Camberley, Surrey. He has taken an active part in the Theosophy/Science weekends held each year within the English Section and continues as a tutor in the European School of Theosophy, of which he is a founding member. In the 1970s, Geoffrey set up a sister organization - Blavatsky Trust - whose aim is to disseminate knowledge of the writings of H. P. Blavatsky

Mr Farthing has written a number of theosophical books: After-Death States and Consciousness; Deity, Cosmos and Man; Theosophy, What's It All About?; When We Die; and Exploring the Great Beyond. In 1974, he gave the prestigious Blavatsky Lecture at the Annual Convention of the English Theosophical Society on Life, Death and Dreams, and in 1996, he was awarded the Subba Row Medal for his significant contribution to theosophical literature.

