

*No. 150*

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# Theosophical & Digest

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VOLUME 38 NO. 2

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## *In this Issue*

|                                                                         |                          |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
| The Rainbow Body: How the Western<br>Chakra System Came to Be . . . . . | KURT LELAND              | 3   |
| Important Words:<br>'I Don't Know' . . . . .                            | THEOSOPHY NORTHWEST VIEW | 11  |
| Meditative Mindfulness . . . . .                                        | CECIL MESSER             | 14  |
| Original Vision: On the Choice<br>of a New Life. . . . .                | JANET MACRAE             | 17  |
| Artificial Intelligence and<br>Spiritual Research . . . . .             | ANTONIO GIRARDI          | 24  |
| Christspiracy . . . . .                                                 | KEITH AKERS              | 32  |
| David Bohm and the Implicate Order . . . . .                            | DAVID PRATT              | 38  |
| The God Within. . . . .                                                 | MADELEINE CLARK          | 45  |
| The Hidden Lives of Fish . . . . .                                      | PETA                     | 48  |
| The Unique Challenges of Stepfamilies . . . . .                         | AWAKE!                   | 51  |
| Open to the Unknown: The Teachings<br>of Jean Klein . . . . .           | JUDITH SUGG              | 57  |
| Forgiveness . . . . .                                                   | RICHARD SMOLEY           | 65  |
| Ancient Wisdom, Timeless Truths . . . . .                               | SALLY DOUGHERTY          | 68  |
| The Expansion of Communication . . . . .                                | TIM BOYD                 | 71  |
| Competence: A Crucial Quality<br>of a Young Adult. . . . .              | VICENTE HAO CHIN JR.     | 76  |
| Seeing Things With Beginner's Mind . . . . .                            | DR. IAN ELLIS-JONES      | 81  |
| A Modest Gift, a Larger Calling . . . . .                               | CHIRANJIVI               | 87  |
| Family Duties . . . . .                                                 | MICHELLE SENDER          | 91  |
| Light a Single Candle . . . . .                                         | ANDREW ROOKE             | 94  |
| <br>Book Section:                                                       |                          |     |
| Helena Petrovna Blavatsky . . . . .                                     | DARA EKLUND              | 102 |
| Quotes and Thoughts, 31                                                 | Ponder on These, 79      |     |
| Wisdom Overheard, 55                                                    | Worldwatch, 100          |     |





# The Rainbow Body: How the Western Chakra System Came to Be

*Condensed from QUEST*  
KURT LELAND

ON a summer day in 2014, while browsing among the bulk bins of the local food co-op, I came across a small advertising brochure that someone had abandoned. The cover showed a 20-something white female dressed in a sheer white tunic and seated in a yogic meditation pose. Superimposed on her torso were seven colored medallions, each containing a letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. They ranged from red at her seat to purple at the crown of her head, following the order of the spectrum. Closer inspection revealed that each medallion had a different number of petal-like rays.

These medallions were representations of the seven chakras (Sanskrit for “wheels”), a schema that originated centuries ago in India in connection with a type of yoga that has become a staple of contemporary yoga classes and New Age metaphysics. The chakras are said to appear to clairvoyant vision as whirling disks or vortices of light, hence their name. Ancient texts taught that their activation through strenuous meditative and ritual practice would result in a seven-step process of consciousness expansion leading to enhanced spiritual powers, enlightenment, and liberation from the karmic law of rebirth.



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***Ancient texts taught that (chakra) activation through strenuous meditative and ritual practice would result in a seven-step process of consciousness expansion.***

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The product in the brochure was called “Organic Chakra Balancing Aromatherapy Roll-Ons.” It was made by Aura Cacia, an American company that markets scented essential oils manufactured from herbs and flowers for healing purposes — hence aromatherapy. The brochure opened into a vertical table of color-coded correspondences identifying the locations, qualities, and effects on emotion, mind, and spirit of chakras that have been “balanced” through the use of these aromatherapy roll-ons — one for each chakra, each compounded of a different formula of essential oils.

Several half-amused questions came to mind: Could a scent really “open the floodgates of compassion and understanding” associated with the heart chakra? Why was the “empowering” third chakra associated with a “delicate citrus blend”? How would a fully enlightened being smell

when wearing all seven scents at once?

The predominant question was, how did we get here from there? The list of chakra qualities was familiar from dozens of New Age books on the subject: grounding in the first chakra, sensuality or sexuality in the second, empowerment in the third, compassion in the fourth, communication in the fifth, intuitive insight in the sixth, and enlightenment in the seventh. Yet anyone who looks into the origins of the chakra system in India may be astonished to find that the chakras have colors, but there is no rainbow; they have qualities and spiritual powers, but not those on this list. No scents are involved. The idea of chakra balancing is never mentioned in the scriptures. The chakras are to be pierced, dissolved, and transcended to achieve a state of “liberation within life” rather than an emotionally and spiritually balanced lifestyle (whatever that might mean).

I first heard of the chakras in the late 1970s from a friend who was a disciple of an Indian yogi. I learned their locations and how to breathe to purify them. Through the metaphysical grapevine, I learned of a list of chakra qualities similar to the one in the Aura Cacia brochure. A few books on the subject were available in metaphysical book-



stores, but I did not buy or read them.

Fast forward to 2002. I was asked to write a book on the spiritual effects of music. I considered using the chakra system as a framework for describing mystical or peak experiences associated with composing, performing, and listening to music. Dozens of books on the chakras were now available, with many variations in listing the colors and qualities. I wanted to work with the most authentic list of qualities I could find. But research into ancient Indian systems confused me — some had as few as four chakras, and others as many as 49. Several questions drove me, though they were still unresolved when the book was published in 2005:

When did the term chakra first come into the English language? When did the rainbow color scheme originate, and who was responsible for it? Where did the ubiquitous New Age list of chakra qualities come from, and how long has it been around?

In the summer of 2012, Quest Books, a publishing imprint of the Theosophical Society (TS) in America, approached me about annotating a new edition of *The Chakras*, published in 1927 by Charles W. Leadbeater, a clairvoyant who worked within the TS. This book had been in print continuously for nearly a century. Though considered a clas-

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*I considered using the chakra system as a framework for describing mystical or peak experiences associated with composing, performing, and listening to music.*

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sic in the field of New Age chakra studies, it was not an easy read. Leadbeater used obscure terminology, assuming his Theosophical readership would understand it without explanation. Furthermore, there were several ways in which his clairvoyant perceptions of the chakras differed not only from ancient Indian texts, but also from recent New Age books. I tried to create an “authoritative,” stand-alone text, with notes explaining all the terms and an afterword that placed the book in context within the evolution of the New Age version of the chakra system.

This project allowed me to solve the problem of where the rainbow color scheme came from. Being under a tight deadline, I was unable to pursue the other questions. However, in the summer of 2014, I received a request to give a talk on the chakra system at the Theosophical Society in Milwaukee later that year. That op-

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“ancient” chakra system of  
the West is barely 40  
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information.*

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portunity allowed me to further my research. I was able to trace the first references to the chakra system in English. I was also able to track the century-long evolution of what I call the Western chakra system. This evolution began in the 1880s, in the writings of H.P. Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society, and was more or less complete by 1990, when actress Shirley MacLaine appeared on the *Tonight Show* and amused a TV audience of millions by affixing colored circles representing the chakra system onto talk-show host Johnny Carson’s clothing and head. I have concluded that the evolution of the Western chakra system was an unintentional collaboration among the following:

- Esotericists and clairvoyants (many with a Theosophical background)

- Scholars of Indology (the study of Indian culture, including religious beliefs)
- Mythologist Joseph Campbell
- Psychologists (Carl Jung and the originators of the human potential movement at Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California)
- Indian yogis (some of whose “ancient” teachings made use of Leadbeater’s color system)
- Energy healers (Barbara Brennan, author of *Hands of Light*, a best-selling manual of energy healing, and others)

Surprisingly, the two primary strands of this evolutionary sequence — the rainbow color scheme and the list of qualities — did not come together in print until 1977. Thus, the much-vaunted “ancient” chakra system of the West is barely 40 years old, its history obscured by the habit of New Age writers, both in print and on the Internet, of failing to include notes and sources for their information — a habit that Olav Hammer, a Swedish professor of the history of religion, calls source amnesia.

I wrote *Rainbow Body: A History of the Western Chakra System from Blavatsky to Brennan* for people who want to know about the real history of the Western chakra system — a wild and wacky story that somehow

produced a body of spiritual and alternative healing practices that have profoundly influenced the lives of millions. But what is the Western chakra system? To my knowledge, the term has not previously been used, except informally, to differentiate versions of the chakras evolved in metaphysical circles in the West from their Hindu forebears. Here are the salient features, listed in the chronological order in which the Western chakra system's components were recognized, schematized, and adopted:

- A seven-chakra base (1880s)
- Association of each chakra with a nerve plexus (1880s)
- A list of vernacular (non-Sanskrit) names (1920s)
- Association of each chakra with a gland of the endocrine system, with minor variations from system to system, especially with regard to the pituitary and pineal glands (1920s)
- Single colors attributed to each chakra in order of the spectrum — either seven colors, including indigo, or six colors plus white (1930s)

An evolutionary scale of psychological and spiritual attributes, functions, or qualities assigned to each chakra, eventually becomes the familiar single-word list given earlier.

To make sense of how the Western chakra system evolved, I had

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*The real history of the Western chakra system (is) a wild and wacky story that somehow produced a body of spiritual and alternative healing practices that have profoundly influenced the lives of millions.*

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to deal with the early evolution of the system in India, from the first to the 16th century CE. Then I had to trace the movement of this Eastern chakra system to the West. It turns out that Mme. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society played a key role in transmitting these teachings from 1879, when she arrived in India, until her death in 1891. Blavatsky and subsequent generations of Theosophical clairvoyants, including Leadbeater, Annie Besant, Rudolf Steiner, and Alice Bailey, significantly altered these ancient teachings.

During the 50 years from Blavatsky's arrival in India to the publication of Leadbeater's *The Chakras*, several components of the Western chakra system fell into place: the seven-chakra base, the locations in association

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***Esalen produced the human potential movement, a loose-knit band of psychologists, philosophers, and bodyworkers, including Abraham Maslow and Ram Dass.***

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with nerve plexuses, and the non-Sanskrit names. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the Western chakra system gradually acquired its association with the rainbow colors and the endocrine glands. The key players during this period were not only well-known psychics, such as Alice Bailey and Edgar Cayce, but also several who are mostly unknown: Ivah Bergh Whitten, an early color therapist working in the United States (her teachings were disseminated through the writings of her primary student, Roland Hunt, author of *The Seven Keys of Color Healing*, a standard manual for over 40 years); S.G.J. Ouseley, a British color therapist; and the mysterious American yogini Cajzoran Ali. The latter was born in Iowa under the name Amber Steen, got married to a dark-skinned Indian swami who turned out to be a confidence man from Trinidad, and worked as a yoga

teacher in the United States and France under numerous aliases. Though she was the first to bring the chakra system and the endocrine glands together in a book published in 1928, her previously untold story, as these details suggest, turns out to be the wackiest of all.

From the 1930s to the 1970s, a parallel strand of development in the Western chakra system involved German Indologists Heinrich Zimmer and Frederic Spiegelberg (both had been forced out of Nazi Germany and worked in American universities), the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, and the American mythologist Joseph Campbell. Each interacted with the others under the inspiration of *The Serpent Power*, a book published in 1919 by an Indian High Court judge, Sir John Woodroffe, using the pseudonym Arthur Avalon. Woodroffe's was the first scholarly publication in English of one version of the Western chakra system — the same one that influenced Blavatsky when she became aware of it 40 years before.

Zimmer inspired Campbell to investigate the chakra teachings of the late 19th-century Indian saint Sri Ramakrishna. Spiegelberg inspired Michael Murphy, the founder of Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, to investigate those of the early 20th-century yoga master Sri Aurobindo. Esalen produced the human po-

tential movement, a loose-knit band of psychologists, philosophers, and bodyworkers, including Abraham Maslow and Ram Dass. This movement was an important influence on the hippie counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It was at Esalen that the list of chakra qualities with which we are now familiar emerged from a fusion of Ramakrishna's and Aurobindo's teachings. Furthermore, Ken Dychtwald, one of the bodyworkers who lived at Esalen during this time, became the father of the Western chakra system when he inadvertently brought together the color healers' list of rainbow colors and endocrine glands and the human potential movement's list of chakra qualities in a book and article published in the summer of 1977. The book, *Bodymind: A Synthesis of Eastern and Western Approaches to Self-Awareness, Health, and Personal Growth*, was published in June 1977, and a related article, "Bodymind and the Evolution to Cosmic Consciousness," was published in the July-August 1977 issue of *Yoga Journal*. That article contains a list of chakra qualities very similar to the one I saw in the Aura Cacia brochure four decades later. Thus, 2017 represents the 40th anniversary of the birth of the Western chakra system, reverently referred to

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*It was at Esalen that the list of chakra qualities with which we are now familiar emerged from a fusion of Ramakrishna's and Aurobindo's teachings.*

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in yoga classes and New Age books as "ancient."

In the 1980s, writers such as Anodea Judith (*Wheels of Life*) began consolidating information from various chakra systems to resolve such controversies and reinforce the hegemony of the system we now consider traditional. This was also the decade when innovative practitioners in the developing field of energy medicine began applying the chakra system to various forms of bodywork, including acupuncture, Polarity Therapy, and Reiki. Toward the end of the decade, best-selling author and actress Shirley MacLaine was offering public workshops on the chakras — and her October 4, 1990, appearance on the *Tonight Show* could be called the Western chakra system's coming-out party. It was no longer an esoteric yoga teaching but an aspect of popular culture.

In the 1990s, books, workshops, websites, and music based on the

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***2017 represents the 40th anniversary of the birth of the Western chakra system, reverently referred to in yoga classes and New Age books as “ancient.”***

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chakras proliferated, touching on many forms of spiritual and healing practice — though often repeating what had gone before. However, there was one further, ongoing stage in the development of the Western chakra system: the codifying of esoteric teachings on chakras, subtle bodies, and planes and their use in astral projection. Speculations on such topics accompanied the development of the Western chakra system like a shadowy secondary rainbow during much of the 20th century and emerged into their clearest presentation in the energy healing work of Barbara Brennan. Her immensely popular book *Hands of Light*, which correlates the chakras with seven subtle bodies, planes, and layers of the human aura, was first published in 1988 and remains in print today.

Contemporary historians of South Asian religions who specialize in fields in which the chakras play a part sometimes

rail against Western New Age appropriation of these teachings. Nevertheless, the unintentional collaboration of esotericists, clairvoyants, scholars, psychologists, yogis, and energy healers that produced the Western chakra system probably mirrors the spread of Tantric teachings throughout East Asia over many centuries. In both cases, a constant selection and recombination of details determined what was left out and what was passed on. If that spreading fulfilled ancient cultural and spiritual needs, the same thing could be said of the modern West — even if the result has been commodified in ways unimaginable in the India of a thousand years ago (as in the case of aromatherapy roll-ons).

I see the development of the Western chakra system as the embodiment of a deeply meaningful archetype of enlightenment, common to East and West — that of the spiritually perfected being, graphically represented by the image seen so often on covers of books on the chakras: a resplendent, meditating human form, shining with the rainbow-colored light of having fully realized our spiritual potential, each chakra representing an evolutionary stage on this sacred developmental journey.

QUEST MAGAZINE, FALL 2025.. PUBLISHED BY THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA, PO BOX 270, WHEATON, IL 60187-0270 USA

A call for open-minded, civil inquiry into paranormal mysteries beyond the extremes of belief and skepticism



## Important Words: 'I Don't Know'

*Condensed from* THEOSOPHY NORTHWEST VIEW  
EDITORIAL TEAM

This is not a world of binary opposites. We just live that way . . . there is more to this world than we know. And then, it seems, the most rational response might be to explore it – to see if the events . . . described could really be so.

STEVE VOLK

**P**UBLIC debate is uncompromising in many fields today, including that perennial area of controversy, the paranormal. As is the norm, media focus is on the extremes: true believers and die-hard skeptics. In *Fringeology* (2011), journalist Steve Volk makes the case for an open-

minded investigation of the mysteries that surround us, neither dismissing them out of hand nor embracing them without evidence. Examining such subjects as near-death experiences, telepathy, UFO sightings, lucid dreaming, quantum consciousness, and meditation, he advocates for acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty, states difficult for people to tolerate.

The problem is . . . when a claim carries the whiff of hoo ha, too much of the intelligentsia goes running for the hills. And on the opposite pole, when a scientific finding seems to undercut our spiritual belief, we dismiss it – that is,



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*“For millennia, contemplatives have known that ordinary people can divest themselves of the feeling that they call “I” and thereby relinquish the sense that they are separate from the rest of the universe.” – Steve Volk*

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if we even bother to read it . . . the truth seems to lie, tantalizing and undiscovered, somewhere between two self-serving accounts. And among the most strident of believers and atheists, there is no balance at all – only right and wrong, the heretics and the saved, the intelligent and the foolish (pp. 262-3) The remedy, he holds, is more willingness to own up to our own ignorance, to be able to admit “I don’t know” instead of jumping to certainty.

Why is it so hard to be open minded or change our minds? Volk finds a clue in modern research:

It is the finding of neuroscience, in fact, that belief is at least in part a matter of emotion. Whatever we believe to be true lights up areas of our brain responsible for self-identification and the processing of feelings and sentiments. If we be-

lieve something, then, the object of our belief becomes an emotionally potent aspect of our own self-image. . . . This emotion, this self-identification, rather than our faculty for logical reasoning, is why so many interpret . . . agnostic data as confirmation of their own worldviews” (p. 186-7).

Moreover, as researcher Andrew Newberg remarks:

The brain has a propensity to dismiss ideas that conflict with the way we see the world. If someone disagrees with us, our brain starts sending anxiety messages. Because our brain wants to preserve this view of the world it’s constructed, and in order to do that, the easiest thing to do is reject this person or their ideas (p. 203).

One of the things the author regrets most is the way disrespect for those with different views creates conflict and deep divisions. Such hostility is a choice we don’t have to make, even if it’s encouraged by popular culture. While discussing unexplained sightings in the sky over Stephenville, Texas (emphasizing that UFO means “unidentified flying object” not alien spacecraft), Volk observes:

The truth is, we don’t have to treat the so-called paranormal the way we do. We don’t need to bathe in it with the believers, or strenuously deny its existence, like the skeptics. And we don’t have to turn the whole thing into a fight. The people of Stephenville seem to have struck up a bargain among themselves, in which the believers go on

believing, and the skeptics go on being skeptical. Either way, on Friday night, just the same, they all go watch the Yellow Jackets play football. I talked to dozens of people in Stephenville, if not a hundred – random people in stores and on the street. . . . when they did offer me their opinions, I never heard a whisper of judgment creep into their voices. I never heard anyone called a name, never heard anyone else's point of view dismissed outright. (p. 137)

Volk is also heartened by atheist Sam Harris's empirical take on the mysterious:

For millennia, contemplatives have known that ordinary people can divest themselves of the feeling that they call "I" and thereby relinquish the sense that they are separate from the rest of the universe. This phenomenon, which has been reported by practitioners in many spiritual traditions, is supported by a wealth of evidence – neuroscientific, philosophical, and introspective. Such experiences are "spiritual" or "mystical," for want of better words, in that they are relatively rare (unnecessarily so), significant (in that they uncover genuine facts about the world), and personally transformative. They also reveal a far deeper connection between ourselves and

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*"This phenomenon, which has been reported by practitioners in many spiritual traditions, is supported by a wealth of evidence – neuroscientific, philosophical, and introspective."* – Volk

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the rest of the universe than is suggested by the ordinary confines of our subjectivity. . . . A truly rational approach to this dimension of our lives would allow us to explore the heights of our subjectivity with an open mind, while shedding the provincialism and dogmatism of our religious traditions in favor of free and rigorous inquiry." (*The End of Faith*, pp. 40-41)

It is just such a curious, clear-eyed, civil and unprejudiced attitude toward the mysterious that Volk hopes to encourage by his book.

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If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is: infinite.

WILLIAM BLAKE

The soul is like a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal in which there are many rooms.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Mindfulness, right motivation, and the path to  
enlightened compassion



## Meditative Mindfulness

*Condensed from* THE THEOSOPHIST  
CECIL MESSER

**I**N the fifth century BCE, at dawn in Bodhgaya as the third watch was ending, a man named Siddhartha Gautama attained full enlightenment. His first words upon awakening as a Buddha were:

The nectar-like truth is revealed, profound, serene, unfabricated, luminous, timeless, self-secret, non-conceptual, unconditioned.

These words point to the fruition of the process of becoming enlightened. While dwelling on Vulture Peak Mountain, the Buddha taught the primary qualities that awaken one to true enlightenment: the impartial attitude towards all beings; the altruistic frame of mind; the attitude of non-aggression; and the open mind that is receptive and holds no prejudice. The facts of our

existential situation are that we are hardly awake and our minds are not normally quiet. To attain meditative serenity, the mind must be radically tamed by undertaking diligent training. Beginning with mindfulness practice as a method and subsequently conjoining it with insight meditation practice allows innate wisdom to unfold.

Meditative mindfulness (Skt., *amatha*) is the practice of the fifth perfection (*pāramitā*), mindfulness, of the Buddha's basic qualities or great perfections teaching. The Dalai Lama teaches that mindfulness arises as the result of continuous attentive-

ness to an object of meditation until the mind stabilizes naturally. Samatha practice is a dualistic fixation on an object by a subject and is not contingent upon understanding the object's reality nor its status. Our state of meditative concentration becomes samatha when our body and mind become pliable and at ease and rest in serenity. The full attainment of samatha is characterized by the integrated feeling of well-being, clarity, and non-thought.

Mindfulness or meditative serenity is not a trance nor is it being spaced out. It is not an induced dull state of mind; it is an alert and undisturbed state of mind. It is not a mood of laxity and cannot be brought on by the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, or the euphoria of success. Mindfulness practice conditions our mind to receive wisdom, the sixth pāramitā, and is like the preparation of a tea service: the cup must first be clean and empty, and then paired to a fine saucer with napkin and spoon. It must be receptive but not too eager, anticipative yet unexcited — entirely ready for service. Gathering the service ensemble is like the meditation practice; the experience of the tea is the meditation.

Attaining enlightenment is primarily a matter of transforming obstacles into opportunities and shedding our skin of delusion.

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*Mindfulness practice conditions our mind to receive wisdom . . . (to) be receptive but not too eager, anticipative yet unexcited — entirely ready for service.*

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We masquerade as a unique self but are actually a Buddha in disguise. Mindfulness practice is an integral part of the process of realizing our potential. If our coffee cup is soiled, there is no need to toss it in the trash or buy a new one, simply wash it to remove the dirt and stains. This works because the cup itself is inherently clean, the dirt and stains are temporary add-ons.

Right meditation practice also produces secondary benefits such as relaxation skills, calmness, improved relationships, and refreshing sleep. Many in-vogue mindfulness systems run counter to enlightenment because of their motivation to focus on self-interests. Athletes use mindfulness techniques to enhance their performance. CEOs and hedge-fund managers take mindfulness training sabbaticals to inflate their already excessive bank accounts. These are certainly effective in a materialistic sense but they also

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***The Sanskrit word  
bodhichitta refers to the  
awakened mind of  
compassion.***

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enhance ego clinging. For some, it may be more efficient and beneficial to take a day off and visit the beach, get a massage, have coffee with a friend, or enjoy a hot sauna. Results of our actions depend on our goal and motivation. Right motivation is the altruistic aspiration for liberation from delusion, both for ourselves and others. The heart of the Buddha's teaching, the result of his insight, is the dharma of bodhichitta. In this context, the Sanskrit word "dharma" means both truth and duty.

The Sanskrit word *bodhichitta* refers to the awakened mind of compassion. Thus, the dharma of bodhichitta is seeing the truth of the necessity for altruism in a world where all beings and actions are interconnected.

By closely observing the operation of the mind, we may notice thoughts and emotions flitting around like birds trapped in a closed room. During the meditation practice session in which we use our breath as the meditation object, if we try to extend it too long, it is common to be-

distracted by a profusion of thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, noticing these distractions and returning to observing the breath is a sign of success and progress in our practice. All distractions may be viewed as friends of the practice.

The predominant habit pattern of our mind is entanglement with a cacophony of confused thoughts and emotions. Results of this entanglement range from the gross — explosive anger or terror, to the subtle — background noisiness or dullness. Within is a spectrum of attachment, anxiety, worry, hubris, bigotry, and ignorance. Meditation is seeing into this chaos of disorder. The meditative mind is quiet and reflective, like the limpid pool of a mountain lake, neither muddy below nor ripply above.

Enjoying the state of calm abiding is one of the skillful means for reflecting on reality and attaining wisdom. Prompted by the right motivation, serenity is attained through steady and moderate mindfulness practice. There is no danger associated with meditation practices that apply a common sense approach and employ mindfulness as a guardian.?

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# Original Vision: On the Choice of a New Life

*Condensed from* THEOSOPHIA

JANET MACRAE

MANY years ago, in a seminar at the New York Theosophical Society, a woman told about a spontaneous memory from the time before she was born. “I saw a vision of what I had to accomplish and what the difficulties would be. I remember saying, ‘Yes, I agree to this.’”

What prompted her to share this experience was the seminar topic: “Plato’s Myths and Metaphors,” given by Dr. Renee Weber. In the myth of Er, at the end of *The Republic*, Plato explained how a new life is a product of both chance and self-determination. In this story, Er, a soldier who had returned from the realm of the dead, reported that

every individual in the group he observed was required to draw a lot. Then, one by one, each chose a life from among many lying on the ground. There were many more choices than individuals present, so that even the last one could probably have found a satisfactory life.

From Plato’s perspective, a satisfactory life is one that will make the soul more just. As the choice is critical for the soul’s development, it must not be made in an impulsive manner. It is essential to have a knowledge of one’s character and how it could be influenced by various experiences. An individual should know what the effect of beauty is

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*The remembrance of former lives is not encouraged, for the new incarnation must be approached freely, as much as possible, as a fresh start.*

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when combined with poverty or wealth in a particular soul, and what are the good and evil consequences of noble and humble birth, of private and public station, of strength and weakness, of cleverness and dullness, and of all the natural and acquired gifts of the soul, and the operation of them when conjoined; he will then look at the nature of the soul, and from the consideration of all these qualities, he will be able to determine which is the better and which is the worse. (Plato, 300)

After choosing their lives, the group of souls walked in a scorching heat through the plain of Forgetfulness. Arriving at the river Lethe ("Oblivion"), they were all obliged to drink a certain quantity of the water. "And each one as he drank forgot all things" (Plato, 302). But those who were not saved by wisdom drank more than was needed or necessary.

Some striking similarities to Plato's account can be found in the work of Dr. Michael Newton, a psychotherapist and master hypnotist who has devoted his career to the study of the period between death and rebirth. Newton's hypnotized subjects remember seeing samples of lives in a location resembling a multi-dimensional movie theater. These viewings only occur, however, after much consultation with guides and members of peer groups, during which they analyze the successes and mistakes of the past as well as their desires for the future. The critical issue is the growth of the soul: what things need to be learned and what kind of life will provide the best opportunities to learn them. When asked under hypnosis about his reaction to the movie experience, one individual replied:

Oh, it's stimulating — that's for sure — but we can't frolic around, because there are serious decisions to be made for the next life. I'll have to accept the consequences for any mistakes in my choices . . . if I am not able to handle a life well. (Newton, 212)

Each life thus has a blueprint or overall plan, and we are ultimately evaluated on the degree to which we fulfill it. Fortunately, the hypnotized subjects remember various "coaching sessions." Certain thoughts are impressed on their minds as clues



to help them complete their next incarnations successfully. At this point, the remembrance of former lives is not encouraged, for the new incarnation must be approached freely, as much as possible, as a fresh start. Far more important is the memory of the original vision, the spiritual blueprint for the coming life.

The work of the “sleeping prophet” Edgar Cayce (1877–1945) is also consistent with the story of Er, for he believed that each incarnation is consciously chosen for a particular purpose. Cayce is best known for his medical readings. Putting himself in a deep hypnotic trance, he was able to accurately diagnose and prescribe natural remedies for the illnesses of people whom he had never met. All he needed to know was the individual’s name. Less well known are Cayce’s life readings, in which he elaborated upon the individual’s inner conflicts, many of which had their origins in previous lifetimes.

In *Many Mansions*, a detailed study of Cayce’s life readings, Dr. Gina Cerminara clarified the difference between the original plan of the soul, or the superconscious life goal, and the consciously planned goals of the personal self.

The superconscious life goal, or spiritual intent, is the basic purpose for which the soul has taken incarnation. It is the central and unifying principle of a life, and

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*Far more important is the memory of the original vision, the spiritual blueprint for the coming life.*

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thus it never changes. The original plan of the soul can include learning spiritual lessons, strengthening finer qualities such as wisdom and compassion, and neutralizing undesirable characteristics carried over from former lives.

The consciously formed life goals of a personality can include pursuing a higher education, developing talents and skills, raising a family, having a successful career, and being respected in one’s community. These, of course, can change as life progresses. Cerminara wrote that if the personality can become aware of the purpose for which it took incarnation and can consciously make its life goals identical to or in harmony with these superconscious goals, then progress can be made more quickly and with less struggle.

It is therefore up to the personal self to try to remember the vision of the inner spirit. But Plato wrote that unless we are saved by wisdom, we will drink too much from the river of Lethe.

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***The superconscious life goal, or spiritual intent, is the basic purpose for which the soul has taken incarnation.***

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Being saved by wisdom involves being attuned to the intuition, the source of our most profound dreams. Intuition speaks through synchronistic events, through subtle hunches and feelings of recognition, through spontaneous symbolic images that arise sometimes in meditation and contemplative prayer, or through our daydreams in moments of stillness. As Virginia Woolf observed: "It is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top" (Woolf, 31-32).

The life of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) is an interesting example of one in which the personal goals were brought into alignment with the spiritual vision — but not without conflict. Nightingale is best known as the "Lady with the Lamp," the superintendent of nurses for the British army during the Crimean War (1855-56). She was a brilliant administrator and a pioneer in using statistics to implement public health reforms. Born into a life of wealth and

privilege, Nightingale received a classical education from her father, making her one of the most highly educated women of her day.

As an adolescent, she experienced a sudden inner "knowing" that God had called her to a life of service. It was a brief shift of consciousness to a higher level, in which she apprehended her deep inner purpose. During this experience she was given no details; the specific mission would be her personal choice.

Although only the soul and its advisors can know the actual spiritual plan for its incarnation, we can uncover clues in Nightingale's writings and in various biographies. Her original vision might well have included:

1. Using her great intelligence and administrative abilities for the betterment of humanity rather than for personal gain.

2. Learning patience and tolerance towards individuals who did not share her progressive vision, particularly those who tried to obstruct her reform efforts.

3. Learning to work at a task for its own sake rather than for recognition or specific results. In her copy of *The Song Celestial*, Edwin Arnold's translation of the Bhagavad Gita, Nightingale marked the following passage:

Abstaining from rewardment in the work,

While yet one doeth it full faithfully,

Saying "Tis right to do!" — that is true act and abstinence! (quoted in Cook 2:242)

Since childhood, Nightingale was drawn to nursing and public health and was determined to make these interests the focus of her life. She was well aware of the difficulties. As a woman, she could not hold public office to influence health policies; moreover, nursing in the public hospitals of the time was considered a disreputable occupation. But she moved forward to actualize her personal goals. These included:

- Improving her mind through a study of comparative religion, philosophy, and statistical science. Two of her main interests were Plato's dialogues and the writings of the medieval mystics. Thus she was familiar with the myth of Er.
- Becoming a nurse; helping to establish nursing as a respected occupation; developing nursing principles.
- Working to improve government policies regarding public health, especially hospital design and sanitation, through her personal contacts and influence.

Nightingale's personal goals did not include engaging in the lifestyle of a typical upper-class Victorian woman, for she felt that only through working in

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*In the myth of Er, Plato explained that conflict is not necessarily detrimental, because it can strengthen the soul.*

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nursing and public health could she actualize her spiritual vision. Unfortunately, this created a serious conflict with her mother and older sister, whose plans for her were quite different: a good marriage, an elegant home, a family, relationships in high society. Although history tells us that Nightingale was true to her vision, her peace of mind was disturbed by feelings of guilt for disappointing those she loved.

In the myth of Er, Plato explained that conflict is not necessarily detrimental, because it can strengthen the soul. He described an individual who had lived in a peaceful, well-ordered state; his virtue, however, was only a matter of conformity, and he had not internalized any strong values. Left to himself, he made an impulsive choice for a new life. Er reported that those who had been "schooled by trial" and who had developed a sound philosophy were the most careful in choosing their lives. Perhaps Florence Nightingale chose to be

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***Aligning or synchronizing one's personal plan with the spiritual vision allows one to tap into spiritual resources, such as moral strength, resilience, wisdom, and courage.***

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a woman in Victorian times to strengthen her character and her inner resolve.

Dr. Victor Frankl, who developed logotherapy (meaning-centered psychotherapy), wrote that “everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated” (Frankl, 113). Struggle and conflict are not unhealthy and may even be necessary for the fulfillment of one's purpose. What is unhealthy is an existential vacuum or lack of meaning, characterized by an inner emptiness and boredom. Indeed, Nightingale might very well have suffered from this if her personal plan had deviated from her spiritual vision.

Aligning or synchronizing one's personal plan with the spiritual vision allows one to tap into spiritual resources, such as moral

strength, resilience, wisdom, and courage. Frankl, for example, felt that knowing his life's purpose, which was to develop his method of logotherapy and write his book about it, gave him the strength to survive three years in Nazi concentration camps. Knowing her life's purpose gave Nightingale the strength to devote her life to the public good in spite of a debilitating chronic brucellosis infection.

The reports of modern individuals who, like Er, traveled to the realms of the dead and returned, often emphasize a sense of purpose. For example, one individual told near-death expert Raymond Moody:

I say God surely was good to me, because I was dead, and he let the doctors bring me back, for a purpose. The purpose was to help my wife, I think, because she had a drinking problem, and I know that she just couldn't have made it without me. She is better now, though, and I really think it had a lot to do with what I went through. (Moody, 73)

Kenneth Ring and Evelyn Valarino, in *Lessons from the Light*, write that a sense of purpose is either clarified during the near-death experience or the individuals express a deep desire to discover their mission and actualize it. Fortunately, most people do not have to go through the trauma of a near-death experience to remember the deeper purpose of their lives. According

to these researchers, there is accumulating evidence, based on informal questionnaires and interviews, that studying the reports of the near-death experiencers can have a profound effect on an individual's attitudes and behavior. The following statement came from a Swiss woman with a university degree who read Moody's *Life after Life*:

I don't want to sound pompous, but it was a revelation to me. Not Moody's comments or analysis, but the testimonies of the experiencers. I read, cried a lot and knew it was true! I was profoundly touched at a level other than the intellectual, rational one. The experiencers' words went straight to my heart, my soul, the essence of my being — whatever you want to call it. I immediately knew it was true. . . I had the impression that this was a truth I had always known but had simply forgotten. (Ring and Valarino, 211)

As a renewed sense of purpose is characteristic of the near-death experiencers, perhaps a

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*As a renewed sense of purpose is characteristic of the near-death experiencers, perhaps a study of their reports could help us remember the original visions for our own lives.*

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study of their reports could help us remember the original visions for our own lives. This could also be true with respect to a study of the memories of Newton's hypnotized subjects. Part of the power of these testimonies is that they come from modern individuals with whom we can identify. May we all benefit from the profound inner experiences they have so generously shared.

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According to his deeds, according to his knowledge, so does he become. He becomes virtuous by virtuous actions, evil by evil action.

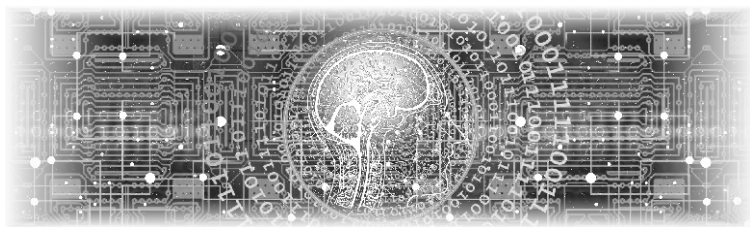
UPANISHADS

Each soul enters the material realm for growth, for disciple, for development, until it remembers its oneness with God. EDGAR CAYCE

You are not enclosed within your bodies, nor confined to houses or fields. That which is you dwells above the mountain and roams with the wind.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

## AI, ethics, and the unity of life: a theosophical response to emerging technology



# Artificial Intelligence and Spiritual Research

*Condensed from* THE THEOSOPHIST  
ANTONIO GIRARDI

**I**T is important for spiritual researchers to investigate the relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and spirituality, without expecting to be able to establish anything for certain. They simply observe and pay attention to a topic that has been influencing our lives for some time, attracting the attention of institutions within national governments.

**Using the Right Terminology.** When it comes to AI, it is important to be fully aware of what it means and how things stand. Artificial intelligence involves machines that can show human capabilities, such as reasoning, learning and planning. More specifically, AI today

might be considered the basic technology that enables human intelligence processes to be mimicked through the creation and application of algorithms built into a dynamic computing environment. Meanwhile, generative artificial intelligence means using this technology to create new content, such as texts, pictures, music, audio, and videos.

While statistical data processing forms the foundation, human input can be found upstream from the digital side of things. It is worth remembering that discoveries regarding neural networks were made as long ago as the 1940s; the first practical applications came just over 10 years later. This look at termi-

nology would not be complete without a mention of the meaning of augmented reality (AR), which adds digital content to live views of real surroundings, often using a smartphone camera. In contrast, with virtual reality (VR), users experience a simulated environment instead of a real one.

Finally, according to Google, the term “spirituality” refers to a “search for a more profound meaning of life and a connection with something transcendent or superior.”

### **Historical and Cultural References with a Few Reflections**

For decades, human beings have contemplated the possibility of “autonomy,” first in machines and now in digital systems. In a paper published in the journal *Mind* of October 1950, scientist Alan Turing asked: “Can machines think?” Turing’s automatic machines helped to break the cypher of the “Enigma” communication system used by the Nazis during the Second World War. This brilliant yet tragic figure (he committed suicide) was recently commemorated in an outstanding article by Massimo Sideri for the science and technological innovation newsletters of the *Corriere della Sera* website. It, too, ends by asking a question that sums up the most important aspect of the use of artificial intelligence: “Will humans be able to resist

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*As long as the algorithms are controlled by human beings or based on statistical data processing, all considerations will revolve around the aims and goals of humans themselves, with ethical matters at the heart of it all.*

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the temptation of getting machines to think?”

As long as the algorithms are controlled by human beings or based on statistical data processing, all considerations will revolve around the aims and goals of humans themselves, with ethical matters at the heart of it all. If machines become capable of independent thought, the matter will become much more significant.

Prof. Giuseppe Remuzzi masterfully discussed this topic in depth in an article published on 18 August 2024 in *La Lettura*, a *Corriere della Sera* Sunday supplement. Remuzzi highlighted that — just like the workings of the human brain — much remains unknown about how neural networks work in AI. He then asked:



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***Remuzzi highlighted that — just like the workings of the human brain — much remains unknown about how neural networks work in AI.***

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Who will take responsibility for the consequences of the use of artificial intelligence? It will be important to establish who is responsible for what and for science that produces things, including when science creates tools to help science. It is a vicious circle and a tough nut to crack, but when innovation is so far-reaching that it has a substantial impact on many parts of our lives, someone must step up and take responsibility for it. In short, AI will transform science and perhaps also our way of life. It will bring enormous benefits, as long as we understand it well enough to avoid the risks associated with unrestrained development of these forms of expression.

Going back to historical and cultural references, the film world began contemplating these matters long ago. For example, take the 1968 Stanley Kubrick film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Kubrick wrote it with Arthur C. Clarke, who created the story and also wrote the novel of the same name. The latter was

based on the film and published the same year.

At the heart of the film is the story and meaning of a “monolith,” which appears from time to time and is the real protagonist. The fact that the motion picture was made 56 years ago shows just how important a role, culture, and research play in properly framing a topic that we want to investigate. In the movie, an electronic brain develops a degree of autonomy associated with a sort of “delusion of omnipotence” and comes to want to replace human beings.

Another example from the film world is *Bicentennial Man*, which was released in 1999 and was directed by Chris Columbus. It was based on Isaac Asimov’s story of the same name, and the novel *The Positronic Man*, which Asimov wrote with Robert Silverberg. The film tells the story of Andrew Martin, one of the first psychotropic robots. Thanks in part to the family environment in which he finds himself, there are a number of surprising developments as he acquires emotions, abilities, and skills.

Andrew Martin pleads for freedom, forges relationships, falls in love, and petitions the World Congress to recognize him as a human. After going through various experiences, he decides to become a mortal human and is finally recognized as such. He is

able to marry his beloved Portia and die with her. The film tells a story of love inspiring anthropomorphic machines to evolve to become more like humans. This roundup of movies fondly remembered by film buffs would not be complete without a mention of the famous Blade Runner, in which a replicant gives a lesson in humanity to the hunter tracking him. There have been various versions of Ridley Scott's film, which was originally released in 1982.

**Reflections and Theosophical “Bridges” That Can Connect Science and Spirituality.** In the theosophical world, there have been two important recent reflections on AI that are worth noting. The first is Gaetano Mollo's article entitled, “Artificial Intelligence — Strengths and Limitations,” which was published in the May-June 2024 issue of *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia*. He stated: “Artificial intelligence is a tool that can be used for collecting and processing data, but it cannot and must not replace the cognitive, emotional, and moral intelligence of human beings.”

The second reflection is by Graziella Ricci in the article, “Artificial Intelligence and the Ecology of the Planet,” (*Rivista Italiana di Teosofia*, July-August 2024). She highlights the dangers of AI and the imbalance it can bring on various fronts, in-

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*The concept of the Unity of Life is the key to interpreting reality, because it enables us to gain awareness of various things . . .*

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cluding ecologically, environmentally and socially. She also invites everyone to reflect on what they can do as individuals to help the environment, in accordance with the principle of Universal Brotherhood without distinctions. Graziella concludes by encouraging people to use artificial intelligence tools in moderation.

Through the concept of *antahkarana*, Theosophy reminds us that human beings can become aware of the bridge between aspects relating to personality and the lower “ego” (the “lower quaternary”) and those relating to the higher mind, the world of archetypes, insight, and a spiritual principle that is ineffable, meaning it cannot be defined in words. Becoming aware of this bridge opens up the path to consciousness of the real dimension of human beings.

Another aspect to consider is the way in which we strive to compare the connections between spirituality and science,

inspired by the Second Object of the Theosophical Society. We do this not to become fixed in one religion, ideology, or scientific school of thought, but to understand the dynamic contents of reality. In a recent book entitled *Where Science and Spirituality Meet*, the scientist and thinker Federico Faggin reminds us that “science and spirituality can produce something immeasurably more powerful than the sum of their parts, just like the combination of an electron and a proton creates a hydrogen atom.”

On the theosophical front, remember how the One Life manifests itself. The concept of the Unity of Life is the key to interpreting reality, because it enables us to gain awareness of various things that are clearly indicated in the works of H. P. Blavatsky. These are:

1. *An unknowable Principle* that cannot be defined with words (which is why we must always espouse the Socratic view of “knowing that we know nothing”).

2. *Pralaya and manvantara*, the breathing of the Universe (and the Universes).

3. *The identity of all individual souls with the universal soul* — As above, so below.

4. *Fohat*, the fiery energy that pervades and animates everything (both spirit and matter).

5. The fact that *life precedes form*.

6. *Karma, reincarnation, and evolution*.

Now let us take a quick look at a few scientific notions, mainly from the sphere of quantum physics, which can pave the way to significant connections with the theosophical ideas mentioned above:

- *Quantum entanglement* is a term used to describe a fundamental connection between the particles in a quantum system. Once they are entangled, a change in the quantum state of one particle in a system will instantly influence all of the others. This connection is an inherent part of the system's wave function. It remains intact even when particles are extremely far apart.
- *Morphogenetic fields*: Rupert Sheldrake developed a theory about morphic resonance, according to which memory is inherent in Nature, and natural systems have a collective memory that they get from “all previous similar systems.” Sheldrake claims that this memory is also behind telepathy-type interconnections between organisms.
- *Panpsychism* (promoted by figures such as Roger Penrose) where everything has consciousness. The brain is in resonance with the cosmos and it can be demonstrated

by applying the statistical rules of quantum physics to the microscopic spaces between the neurons in the brain.

- Astrophysicist Bernard Haisch's theory which states that the quantum fields in empty space transmit consciousness through energy.
- Also worth noting is the FIRE research project completed in 2017 at Northwestern University in Evanston (Illinois, USA), which developed the thesis that approximately 50% of the elements behind life on Earth have extraterrestrial origins. Just think of the possible connections with The Stanzas of Dzyan, a true "cornerstone" of theosophical literature.

**Dangers of Artificial Intelligence in the Present Day.** Focusing more closely on AI once again, I believe it is important to define the critical issues. We can start by taking the concept of "technofeudalism," as described by Greek economist Yanis Varoufakis in the book of the same name. The author divides the transition taking place into four phases, with figures representing each of them:

1. *Don Draper* (a character from the television series *Mad Men*) is an eccentric individual with a talent for making any product universally desirable to consumers.

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*Along the ways of the heart, artificial intelligence is cut down to size and founders in the ocean of Maya.*

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2. The *Minotaur* represents what has happened in the USA, where goods and services produced elsewhere hold growing appeal and Wall Street is increasingly fuelled by foreign capital. The amount invested in the stock market now adds up to an absolutely insane \$750 trillion.

3. *Alexa* (the faithful digital assistant) symbolizes the power of the cloud, search engines, and apps, which learn using algorithms that are constantly fed with information.

4. The "*cloudalists*" are the owners of new cloud networks such as Amazon, Google, and Alibaba. According to Varoufakis, "like the old feudal lords, they have seized common land — the internet — and divided it into various virtual spaces (the new fiefs), from which they extract huge rents."

**Experience-Based Theosophy as an Antidote for Manipulation.** It is worth recalling the elements of the theosophical method that can play a part in experience-based Theosophy, es-

pecially if they are steeped in beauty, love, and creativity in interaction. They are:

1. *Neutral observation*, which is open to reality and not conditioned by our projections.

2. *Study*, which aids the metabolism of knowledge, making it an intrinsic part of us.

3. *Maieutics* [literally, teaching by question and answer], that is, being together and sharing.

4. *Meditation*, not as a technique, but as a state of consciousness.

5. *Service*, which enables us to go beyond the lower “ego” of personality and open up to action that benefits all beings.

**Along the Way of the Heart.** In order to reach awareness of the ways of the heart, it is necessary to overcome thinking based on (1) a fragmented outlook and (2) discriminating choice.

Regarding the former, Jiddu Krishnamurti stated:

A problem only arises when life is seen fragmentarily. Do see the beauty of that. When you see life as a whole then there is no problem whatsoever. It is only a mind and a heart that is broken up in fragments that creates problems. The center of the fragment is the “me.” The “me” is brought about through thought; it has no reality by itself.

As for the latter:

Choice exists when there is confusion. A mind that sees clearly has

no choice — it is doing. I think this is where we have got into rather trouble,

When we say we are free to choose. Choice implies freedom. I say, on the contrary, choice implies a mind that is confused, and therefore not free.

Finally, Krishnamurti reminds us that “beauty is not an abstract thing, but it goes with goodness — goodness in behavior, goodness in conduct, goodness in action.”

The ways of the heart lead us to the dreams that life has given us as unadulterated expressions of our being. The mind and emotions are used to develop reason and feelings, giving balance to the ways of the heart.

The ways are also open to the essential triumvirate of meditation, maieutics, and service. They enable you to move past a vision of the world based on opposition between the subject and the object, and realize that relationships with others play a crucial part in the process of gaining awareness and expanding consciousness, thanks to an existence that aims to benefit all beings.

Along the ways of the heart, artificial intelligence is cut down to size and founders in the ocean of *Maya* (illusion).

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# Quotes and Thoughts

The soul grows not by comfort,  
but by remaining present to difficulty.

CARL JUNG

I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than in attempting to satisfy them.

JOHN STUART MILL

Truth never damages a cause that is just.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

MARK TWAIN

Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

To heal is to touch with love that which we previously touched with fear.

STEPHEN LEVINE

Where there is ruin, there is hope of a treasure.

RUMI

Trying to protect children from pain often guarantees deeper pain later.

GABOR MATE

True education is concerned not only with practical goals but with values.

J. KRISHNAMURTI

Inner peace begins the moment you choose not to allow another person or event to control your emotions.

PEMA CHODRON

Character is what you are in the dark.

DWIGHT L. MOODY

The goal of spiritual life is Self-realization.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Purity of heart is the key to the temple of wisdom.

SWAMI SIVANANDA

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.

C. S. LEWIS

Children are not things to be molded, but people to be unfolded.

JESS LAIR

There is really only one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in yourself.

ETTY HILLESUM

The Earth is not just our environment. The Earth is us.

THICH NHAT HANH

He who knows he has enough is rich.

LAO TZU



Reexamining Jesus, ritual  
slaughter, and the ethics of  
killing animals

## Christspiracy

*Condensed from* COMPASSIONATE  
SPIRIT  
KEITH AKERS

THERE is one scene from *Christspiracy*, about three-quarters of the way through, that stands out for me. It's from the Gadhimai Festival in Nepal, a Hindu festival which features a mass slaughter of animals "sacrificed" to the Hindu goddess Gadhimai. The mass slaughter cannot begin until the first animals are killed. We see large crowds of festival celebrants everywhere. After the knife descends on the first victim (the act of slaughter itself is mercifully hidden from the camera), the crowd erupts in blood-curdling cheers. They are happy — indeed, delighted — to see the slaughter begin.



Wait a minute. “Christspiracy”: isn’t this about, like, Christ? What are Hindus doing in the movie at all? And besides, we all associate Hinduism with *ahimsa* (non-injury), Gandhi, vegetarianism, and things like that, so what’s with this mass slaughter of animals?

The movie is about coming up with an answer to the questions that Kameron Waters asks Kip Andersen at the beginning: Is there a spiritual way to kill an animal? How would Jesus kill an animal? As *Christspiracy* examines these questions, it branches out in many different directions — different in time, place, and religion — to explore the many psychological, historical, and ethical ramifications of trying to kill an animal “ethically.” So the movie does not just pile on about the atrocities against animals. *Christspiracy* makes you think.

And hang on to your hat: the movie doesn’t stop until we’ve visited four continents and examined five different religions over thousands of years.

It is this criss-cross of viewpoints that makes *Christspiracy* unique. It’s quite different from co-filmmaker Kip Andersen’s other exposés (*Cowspiracy*, *Seaspiracy*, and *What the Health*), which are all firmly rooted in the present-day in the milieu of modern science. It is different, also, from other reli-

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*Is there a spiritual way to kill an animal? How would Jesus kill an animal?*

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gious critiques of animal slaughter.

Let’s cut to the chase. The tagline of *Christspiracy* is: “The biggest cover-up in 2,000 years. Revealed.” From the figure of “2000 years,” the title “Christspiracy,” and Kip’s original question, we can surmise that the answer will have something to do with Christianity and something to do with animals. Well, it does, but the movie quickly deviates from what you might expect.

What you might expect would be: reasons for Christians to be vegetarians; discussion of health issues, citing Genesis 1:29 and the example of the Seventh-day Adventists; appeals for compassion towards animals, trotting out various Bible verses; and pictures of cute animals.

We do see some of this, but the film makes major detours — including an actual chase scene! These detours eventually become the main preoccupation of the movie. The final key events in Jesus’ life — his protest in the temple, and his crucifixion as a direct consequence after that — can only be understood because

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*The Romans wanted  
Jesus dead because he . . .  
disrupted the animal  
sacrifice business in the  
temple.*

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Jesus was protesting against animal sacrifice. And the closest modern analogue to what Jesus was protesting is the animal sacrifices at Gadhimai. Once seizing on the theme of animal sacrifice, the film never releases it until it has been thoroughly turned over in a hundred different ways.

Animal sacrifice seems like an obscure topic today. Do they even do that anymore? We haven't really seen substantial animal sacrifice in the West since the pagan festivals in the Roman Empire and the Jewish festivals at their temple in Jerusalem. After the Jewish temple was destroyed in 70 CE — an outcome of the Romans crushing the great Jewish revolt — animal sacrifice disappears as a major theme for either Christians or Jews. But by the end of the movie, we see the logic involved.

The ancient temple in Jerusalem was nothing like a modern synagogue or church. It was more like a slaughterhouse or a butcher shop; it was here that the ancient Israelites brought

huge numbers of their animals to be offered in sacrifice. In the ancient temple, we see the answer given by the ancient Israelites to how one could find a spiritual way to kill an animal: to offer the animal as a sacrifice in the temple. And the closest modern analogue to ancient Jewish ritual slaughter is — you guessed it — the Hindu festival at Gadhimai.

There's an instinctive modern revulsion against Gadhimai, but what is the origin of that revulsion? It's not just that lots of animals were killed. Imagine, for a moment, that all these goats, water buffalo, and roosters were simply packed off to a slaughterhouse, behind closed doors, and the "festival" consisted just of three days of feasting on the meat. That would be barely noticeable by the American public. We'd just think of it as a kind of Hindu equivalent for Thanksgiving. Indeed, the slaughter of millions of turkeys at Thanksgiving completely dwarfs anything that happens once every five years at Gadhimai.

Christians don't offer this kind of "spiritual" sanction for killing animals. (Well, mostly: the film shows Christian hunting clubs with prayers before killing.) Christians don't usually offer a spiritual excuse because, well, they don't have to. Slaughterhouse activities are kept hidden from the public. Out of sight, out of mind — at least, until animal

activists started filming factory farms and slaughterhouses. Americans now have a proliferation of “ag-gag” laws prohibiting such filming.

No one seems to have noticed an interesting reality which this reveals: both sides in the “ag-gag” controversies acknowledge that there is an instinctive human revulsion against violence. It is both a reason for animal activists to expose the activity, and for the industry to want to conceal it. Without this revulsion, ag-gag laws and Christian hunting clubs would be unnecessary. Slaughterhouses would be no more consequential than tractors plowing fields.

This revulsion is not unique to hypocritical Americans. And that takes us into other times and places. *Christspiracy* uncovers these connections, looking at least briefly at most of the world’s major religions — not just Christianity, but also Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and even yoga.

It’s an issue central to the historical Jesus, who was disgusted with the ancient temple’s sacrifice of countless animals. In the film’s denouement, we find the real reason for Jesus’ death. The Romans wanted Jesus dead because he was a threat to public order. And he is a threat to public order because he disrupted the animal sacrifice business in the temple. It’s not just because of

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*In the early Church,  
Paul’s views — which  
rejected vegetarianism —  
eventually won out.*

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the “dishonest moneychangers,” but because of the killing of animals. This protest was what got Jesus killed.

Most Christians don’t want to hear about this, and mostly they don’t hear about it. In the early church, Paul’s views — which rejected vegetarianism — eventually won out. Paul (in his letters) says, “The weak man [weak in faith, that is] eats only vegetables.” “Eat anything sold in the meat-market without raising questions of conscience.” And there you have the biggest cover-up in 2000 years — a time bomb ticking away at the heart of Christianity, threatening to call Christians back to the original teachings of Jesus, before Paul and later theologians got hold of them.

This guilty conscience (and the accompanying denial that we have anything to feel guilty about) seems to be everywhere. We need a “spiritual way to kill an animal,” and this need for self-deception extends across sectarian and religious lines.

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***Buddhists have as their very first precept the principle not to take the life of any sentient creature.***

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Hindus honor the cow as a sacred animal, but have little compunction about killing goats. The Buddhists have as their very first precept the principle not to take the life of any sentient creature. One of the Buddhists interviewed in the film says that while he will not personally kill an animal, he has no compunction against eating an animal that someone else killed. To most of us, this will sound like a rationalization. And on and on it goes.

Why the guilty conscience? Why aren't animals slaughtered for food just as casually as someone might pick an apple? And why is this guilty conscience so pervasive, regardless of religious belief? And why the need to deny that we have anything to feel guilty about in the first place?

Hypocrisy is an equal-opportunity employer, crossing all religious lines. But so is compassion. We find that the head rabbi of Israel has become vegetarian. We find Matthieu Ri-

card, a French Buddhist monk, who has become a vegan. We find Andrew Linzey, an Anglican priest, one of the foremost Christian scholars, who defends animals and advocates vegetarianism.

I will add a few things about the content. I would rate the movie "PG-13" for violence; there are some disturbing scenes, but there are no graphic depictions of the act of slaughter itself. I was very much impressed by how well-researched the movie was in its historical detail. I am glad that the filmmakers chose to interview Charles Vaclavik — a self-published author — who really initiated the modern conversation about the historical Jesus and vegetarianism in English.

At the time that I wrote *The Lost Religion of Jesus and Disciples*, I could only fantasize that some enterprising filmmaker would turn this sort of information into a full-length documentary. (Full disclosure: I have a minor part in *Christspiracy*.) Despite having studied and written about the subject of the historical Jesus for many decades, I actually learned a few things about the subject from the movie. Thank you, Deborah Rooke!

Doubtless there are a few things that people will quibble about. While arguably the injunction not to kill is the most important moral precept of the world's major religions, it is not always listed at the

beginning. The Jewish “10 commandments” put not making any graven images and honoring the Sabbath ahead of not killing. In Islam, the first creedal affirmation is that there is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet, and it takes a while before we get to Islamic moral commands.

There are other places where things are not fully explained. It’s not obvious that the Gadhimai Hindu festival is in Nepal, not India. (Nice chase sequence, though, as they head for the border!) Plus, why is the Hebrew translation of the word “robbers” significant to our understanding of the New Testament, when the New Testament is written in Greek? Who is Epiphanius, anyway? And who, or what, are the Ebionites?

It’s a bit surprising, in considering the Buddhists, that most (possibly all) of the Buddhists cited were followers of some version of Tibetan Buddhism. What happened to Vipassana, Zen, and Plum Village Buddhism? All of these schools are quite prominent in American Buddhism, and they include notable vegetarians: Tara Brach, Konda Mason, Bob Isaacson (of Dharma Voices for Animals), and the late Thich Nhat Hanh.

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*Our civilization is perched on the precipice of self-destruction . . . This film calls us to reflect on how we got here and where we need to go now.*

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The movie is long enough, I think, that the filmmakers could justly plead editorial necessity for such omissions. They don’t want the movie to go on for six hours. The movie is not just a lecture, but an invitation to learn more.

*Christspiracy* is a brilliant, thought-provoking, and very different type of documentary. It is sure to excite both controversy and discussion. Our civilization is perched on the precipice of self-destruction, seemingly intent on the destruction not only of animals, but also the climate, the wilderness, the rainforests, and the biosphere, as well as ourselves. This film calls us to reflect on how we got here and where we need to go now.

[HTTPS://COMPASSIONATESPIRIT.COM.WPBLOG/2024/03/05/CHRISTSPIRACY-REVIEW/](https://compassionatespirit.com/wpblog/2024/03/05/christspiracy-review/)



Unless ye cease from sacrifice and eating of flesh and blood, the wrath of God shall not cease upon you. GOSPEL OF THE HOLY TWELVE

A famous theoretical physicist explores the unseen wholeness behind matter, mind, and the universe



## David Bohm and the Implicate Order

*Condensed from* EXPLORING THEOSOPHY  
DAVID PRATT

**T**HE death of David Bohm on 27 October 1992 is a great loss not only for the physics community but for all those interested in the philosophical implications of modern science. David Bohm was one of the most distinguished theoretical physicists of his generation, and a fearless challenger of scientific orthodoxy. His interests and influence extended far beyond physics and embraced biology, psychology, philosophy, religion, art, and the future of society. Underlying his innovative approach to many different issues was the fundamental idea that beyond the visible, tangible world there lies a deeper, impli-

cate order of undivided wholeness.

David Bohm was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in 1917. He became interested in science at an early age; as a young boy, he invented a dripless teapot, and his father, a successful businessman, urged him to try to make a profit on the idea. But after learning that the first step was to conduct a door-to-door survey to test market demand, his interest in business waned and he decided to become a theoretical physicist instead.

In the 1930s, he attended Pennsylvania State College where he became deeply interested in quantum physics, the physics of the subatomic realm. After grad-

uating, he attended the University of California, Berkeley. While there he worked at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory where, after receiving his doctorate in 1943, he began what was to become his landmark work on plasmas (a plasma is a gas containing a high density of electrons and positive ions). Bohm was surprised to find that once electrons were in a plasma, they stopped behaving like individuals and started behaving as if they were part of a larger and interconnected whole. He later remarked that he frequently had the impression that the sea of electrons was in some sense alive.

In 1947, Bohm took up the post of assistant professor at Princeton University, where he extended his research to the study of electrons in metals. Once again the seemingly haphazard movements of individual electrons managed to produce highly organized overall effects. Bohm's innovative work in this area established his reputation as a theoretical physicist.

In 1951, Bohm wrote a classic textbook entitled *Quantum Theory*, in which he presented a clear account of the orthodox, Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics. The Copenhagen interpretation was formulated mainly by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg in the 1920s and is still highly influential to-

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*David Bohm was one of the most distinguished theoretical physicists of his generation, and a fearless challenger of scientific orthodoxy.*

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day. But even before the book was published, Bohm began to have doubts about the assumptions underlying the conventional approach. He had difficulty accepting that subatomic particles had no objective existence and took on definite properties only when physicists tried to observe and measure them. He also had difficulty believing that the quantum world was characterized by absolute indeterminism and chance, and that things just happened for no reason whatsoever. He began to suspect that there might be deeper causes behind the apparently random and crazy nature of the subatomic world.

Bohm sent copies of his textbook to Bohr and Einstein. Bohr did not respond, but Einstein phoned him to say that he wanted to discuss it with him. In the first of what was to turn into a six-month series of spirited conversations, Einstein enthusiastically told Bohm that he had never seen quantum theory pre-



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***The causal interpretation, says Bohm, “opens the door for the creative operation of underlying, and yet subtler, levels of reality.”***

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sented so clearly, and admitted that he was just as dissatisfied with the orthodox approach as Bohm was. They both admired quantum theory's ability to predict phenomena, but could not accept that it was complete and that it was impossible to arrive at any clearer understanding of what was going on in the quantum realm.

It was while writing *Quantum Theory* that Bohm came into conflict with McCarthyism. He was called upon to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee in order to testify against colleagues and associates. Ever a man of principle, he refused. The result was that when his contract at Princeton expired, he was unable to obtain a job in the USA. He moved first to Brazil, then to Israel, and finally to Britain in 1957, where he worked first at Bristol University and later as Professor of Theoretical Physics at Birkbeck College, University of London, until his retirement in 1987. Bohm will be

remembered above all for two radical scientific theories: the causal interpretation of quantum physics, and the theory of the implicate order and undivided wholeness.

In 1952, the year after his discussions with Einstein, Bohm published two papers sketching what later came to be called the causal interpretation of quantum theory, and he continued to elaborate and refine his ideas until the end of his life. The causal interpretation, says Bohm, “opens the door for the creative operation of underlying, and yet subtler, levels of reality.” In his view, subatomic particles such as electrons are not simple, structureless particles, but highly complex, dynamic entities. He rejected the view that their motion is fundamentally uncertain or ambiguous; they follow a precise path, but one which is determined not only by conventional physical forces but also by a subtler force which he calls the quantum potential. The quantum potential guides the motion of particles by providing “active information” about the whole environment. Bohm gives the analogy of a ship being guided by radar signals: the radar carries information from all around and guides the ship by giving form to the movement produced by the much greater but unformed power of its engines.

The quantum potential pervades all space and provides direct connections between quantum systems. In 1959, Bohm and a young research student Yakir Aharonov discovered an important example of quantum interconnectedness. They found that in certain circumstances electrons are able to “feel” the presence of a nearby magnetic field even though they are traveling in regions of space where the field strength is zero. This phenomenon is now known as the Aharonov-Bohm (AB) effect, and when the discovery was first announced many physicists reacted with disbelief. Even today, despite confirmation of the effect in numerous experiments, papers still occasionally appear arguing that it does not exist.

In 1982, a remarkable experiment to test quantum interconnectedness was performed by a research team led by physicist Alain Aspect in Paris. The original idea was contained in a thought experiment (also known as the “EPR paradox”) proposed in 1935 by Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen, but much of the later theoretical groundwork was laid by David Bohm and one of his enthusiastic supporters, John Bell of CERN, the physics research center near Geneva. The results of the experiment are said to have shown that subatomic particles that are far apart are able to communi-

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*In Bohm's view, all the separate objects, entities, structures, and events in the visible or explicate world around us are relatively autonomous, stable, and temporary “subtotalities” derived from a deeper, implicate order of unbroken wholeness.*

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cate in ways that cannot be explained by the transfer of physical signals traveling at or slower than the speed of light. Many physicists regard these “nonlocal” connections as absolutely instantaneous. An alternative view is that they involve subtler, nonphysical energies traveling faster than light, but this view has few adherents since most physicists still believe that nothing can exceed the speed of light.

The causal interpretation of quantum theory initially met with indifference or hostility from other physicists, who did not take kindly to Bohm’s powerful challenge to the common consensus. In recent years, however, the theory has been gaining increasing “respectability.” Bohm’s approach is capable of

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***Bohm suggests that the whole universe can be thought of as a kind of giant, flowing hologram, or holomovement, in which a total order is contained, in some implicit sense, in each region of space and time.***

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being developed in different directions. For instance, a number of physicists, including Jean-Pierre Vigiér and several other physicists at the Institut Henri Poincaré in France, explain the quantum potential in terms of fluctuations in an underlying ether.

In the 1960s, Bohm began to take a closer look at the notion of order. One day, he saw a device on a television program that immediately fired his imagination. It consisted of two concentric glass cylinders, the space between them being filled with glycerin, a highly viscous fluid. If a droplet of ink is placed in the fluid and the outer cylinder is turned, the droplet is drawn out into a thread that eventually becomes so thin that it disappears from view; the ink particles are enfolded into the glycerin. But if the cylinder is then turned in the

opposite direction, the thread-form reappears and rebecomes a droplet; the droplet is unfolded again. Bohm realized that when the ink was diffused through the glycerin it was not in a state of 'disorder' but possessed a hidden, or nonmanifest, order.

In Bohm's view, all the separate objects, entities, structures, and events in the visible or explicate world around us are relatively autonomous, stable, and temporary "subtotalities" derived from a deeper, implicate order of unbroken wholeness. Bohm gives the analogy of a flowing stream:

On this stream, one may see an ever-changing pattern of vortices, ripples, waves, splashes, etc., which evidently have no independent existence as such. Rather, they are abstracted from the flowing movement, arising and vanishing in the total process of the flow. Such transitory subsistence as may be possessed by these abstracted forms implies only a relative independence or autonomy of behavior, rather than absolutely independent existence as ultimate substances.

We must learn to view everything as part of "Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement."

Another metaphor Bohm uses to illustrate the implicate order is that of the hologram. To make a hologram, a laser light is split into two beams, one of which is reflected off an object onto a photographic plate where it inter-

feres with the second beam. The complex swirls of the interference pattern recorded on the photographic plate appear meaningless and disordered to the naked eye. But like the ink drop dispersed in the glycerin, the pattern possesses a hidden or enfolded order, for when illuminated with laser light it produces a three-dimensional image of the original object, which can be viewed from any angle. A remarkable feature of a hologram is that if a holographic film is cut into pieces, each piece produces an image of the whole object, though the smaller the piece the hazier the image. Clearly, the form and structure of the entire object are encoded within each region of the photographic record.

Bohm suggests that the whole universe can be thought of as a kind of giant, flowing hologram, or holomovement, in which a total order is contained, in some implicit sense, in each region of space and time. The explicate order is a projection from higher dimensional levels of reality, and the apparent stability and solidity of the objects and entities composing it are generated and sustained by a ceaseless process of enfoldment and unfoldment, for subatomic particles are constantly dissolving into the implicate order and then recrystallizing.

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*It was his hope that one day people would come to recognize the essential interrelatedness of all things and would join together to build a more holistic and harmonious world.*

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The quantum potential postulated in the causal interpretation corresponds to the implicate order. But Bohm suggests that the quantum potential is itself organized and guided by a superquantum potential, representing a second implicate order, or superimplicate order. Indeed, he proposes that there may be an infinite series, and perhaps hierarchies, of implicate (or “generative”) orders, some of which form relatively closed loops and some of which do not. Higher implicate orders organize the lower ones, which in turn influence the higher.

Bohm believed that life and consciousness are enfolded deep in the generative order and are therefore present in varying degrees of unfoldment in all matter, including supposedly “inanimate” matter such as electrons or plasmas. He suggests that there is a “protointelligence” in

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*What better tribute to David Bohm's life and work than to take this message to heart and make the ideal of universal brotherhood the keynote of our lives.*

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matter, so that new evolutionary developments do not emerge in a random fashion but creatively as relatively integrated wholes from implicate levels of reality. The mystical connotations of Bohm's ideas are underlined by his remark that the implicate domain "could equally well be called idealism, spirit, consciousness. The separation of the two — matter and spirit — is an abstraction. The ground is always one."

As with all truly great thinkers, David Bohm's philosophical ideas found expression in his

character and way of life. His students and colleagues describe him as totally unselfish and non-competitive, always ready to share his latest thoughts with others, always open to fresh ideas, and single-mindedly devoted to a calm but passionate search into the nature of reality. In the words of one of his former students, "He can only be characterized as a secular saint."

Bohm believed that the general tendency for individuals, nations, races, social groups, etc., to see one another as fundamentally different and separate was a major source of conflict in the world. It was his hope that one day people would come to recognize the essential interrelatedness of all things and would join together to build a more holistic and harmonious world. What better tribute to David Bohm's life and work than to take this message to heart and make the ideal of universal brotherhood the keynote of our lives.

[HTTPS://WWW.DAVIDPRATT.BOHM.INFO/](https://www.davidpratt.bohm.info/)



The total number of minds in the universe is one.

ERWIN SCHRODINGER

The world is no longer seen as a machine, but as an interconnected, inseparable whole.

FRITJOF CAPRA

Brahman alone is real; the world is appearance; the individual self is not different from Brahman.

ADISHANKARA

How the poet's verse reveals the Divine within,  
portraying life, evolution, and the cosmos as infused with  
eternal love and compassion



## The God Within

*Condensed from* THEOSOPHY NORTHWEST VIEW  
MADELEINE CLARK

EVERY generation of humanity has its mystics. They are not to be described as a type, for each one is an original, individual, if not actually unique. But one factor they have in common, broadly speaking: they have glimpses behind the veil into the world of causes. They dwell nearer the heart of things where Truth abides. Jakob Boehme and William Blake come to mind, universally loved and revered.

One of the most interesting and appealing of these rare souls was a young woman whose early death leaves her among the ever-young. A girl who grew up in her father's parsonage on the edge of the Yorkshire Moors: Emily Bronte, who wrote the still

popular *Wuthering Heights*. The wide, wild, windswept moors, brooding in mystery, no better place to nurture such a soul.

Emily has left us a precious volume of verse, stamped with her own peculiar quality, and the most famous of the poems is the one beginning

No coward soul is mine,

No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere

This poem has been pronounced one of "the greatest in the language," and it is apparent that something came straight through to her in a moment of inspired insight. It was the last she ever wrote, and it could well be that already she was beginning to experience that clear vision

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*(Mystics) dwell nearer the  
heart of things where  
Truth abides.*

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into Realities that is said by old philosophers to come to those just passing through into "the world of light."

Those familiar with certain ancient but always recognizable teachings that have come to us over the many ages will be electrified to find Emily's glorious lines echoing thoughts they have loved for so long. They are the perfect tribute to the Divine, which she invokes with

O God within my breast,

Almighty, ever-present Deity!

Life — that in me has rest,

As I — undying Life — have power  
in Thee!

The sacred presence of the Divine is within every sentient being, is coexistent with life itself, and is the wing-lifting energy through which we share in the universal pageant of experience. It is to her infinity, immortality, for later lines are

With wide-embracing love

Thy Spirit animates eternal years,

Pervades and broods above,

Changes, sustains, dissolves, Creates, and rears.

Here, she has touched upon the compassion that is the life-giving force guiding all evolution. It is interwoven with our destiny.

Many will recognize this as a most important truth, for a coldly mechanistic universe would have no incentive to evolve, and would be, I feel, unthinkable. But compassion animates indeed, and raises the great concourse of beings ever closer to the Divine. That last line sets forth in few words the way that Nature works to bring about the universal transformation: "Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears," a perfect description of cyclic evolution, with the coming into being of worlds, their continuance for a period, then their dissolution, only to be re-created and built up once more.

But through all change there is yet  
the Changeless:

Though earth and man were gone,  
And suns and universes ceased to  
be,

And Thou were left alone,

Every existence would exist in  
Thee.

We are left with the deep consciousness of everlastingness, the reassurance that the Divine is always with us — is in fact our inmost.

In this connection, to go back to 1846, the year in which the poem was written: who talked then of suns and universes in this sense?



The universe, perhaps, but universes! Immediately, the concept becomes stupendous; and here was a frail young woman with little knowledge of the world daring to conceive of Space itself and of the august hierarchies that people it. As she says,

There is not room for Death,  
Nor atom that his might could render void:

A highly scientific, and at the same time metaphysical pronouncement. Then to close:

Thou — Thou art Being and Breath,

And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

She has brought us to the very heart of all Being and left us with mighty confidence and a mighty trust.

So this is one of the great poems because genius has caught a great truth and set it down in

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*There are books of philosophy in which all this is set forth, but a flash of the poetic insight can be the lightning that brings not only illumination but Realization.*

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words of fire. It has the sure touch, no hint of the common search for the right word. There are books of philosophy in which all this is set forth, but a flash of the poetic insight can be the lightning that brings not only illumination but Realization.

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The language that God hears is silence, and the best poetry is born there.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Poetry is the saying of things beyond words. RAINER MARIA RILKE

Why are you so busy with this, or good or bad; you are the Soul, and the Soul is beyond all division. RUMI

Between the two breaths, the entire universe is contained. KABIR

The One is all things and no one of them; the source of all things is not itself all the things. PLOTINUS



# The Hidden Lives of Fish

*Condensed from* PETA.ORG

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

**D**R. Sylvia Earle, one of the world's leading marine biologists, said this:

I never eat anyone I know personally. I wouldn't deliberately eat a grouper any more than I'd eat a cocker spaniel. They're so good-natured, so curious. You know, fish are sensitive, they have personalities, they hurt when they're wounded.

Scientists are learning more and more about our finned friends, and their discoveries are fascinating.

Hundreds of scientific papers about fish intelligence show that these animals are smart, that they can use tools, and that they have impressive long-term mem-

ories and sophisticated social structures. A paper published in the journal *Fish and Fisheries* said that they're "steeped in social intelligence . . . exhibiting stable cultural traditions, and cooperating to inspect predators and catch food."

Dr. Culum Brown, a Macquarie University biologist who is studying the evolution of cognition in fish, says this:

Fish are more intelligent than they appear. In many areas, such as memory, their cognitive powers match or exceed those of 'higher' vertebrates including non-human primates.

Fish's long-term memories help them keep track of complex so-

cial relationships. Their spatial memory allows them to create cognitive maps that guide them through their watery homes, using cues such as polarized light, sounds, odors, and visual landmarks. Brown says that “fish perception and cognitive abilities often match or exceed other vertebrates.”

Dr. Theresa Burt de Perera of Oxford University says this:

We’re now finding that [fish] are very capable of learning and remembering, and possess a range of cognitive skills that would surprise many people.

An article about fish intelligence in the UK’s *Telegraph* supports this claim. It reports that Brown has found the following:

Australian crimson spotted rain-bowfish, which learnt to escape from a net in their tank, remembered how they did it 11 months later. This is equivalent to a human recalling a lesson learnt 40 years ago.

Furthermore, a scientific review presented to the Australian Veterinary Association disproved the myth that goldfish have three-second memories — instead, veterinarians found that they have impressive memories and problem-solving abilities. One of the researchers said that after conducting the review, “We’re wanting to get [the] message out to the broader veterinary community to start looking more closely at fish and consider-

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*Hundreds of scientific papers about fish intelligence show that these animals are smart, that they can use tools, and that they have impressive long-term memories and sophisticated social structures.*

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ing their welfare like they do other animals.”

**More Fascinating Facts About Fish.** Here are more fascinating facts about fish:

Fish talk to each other using squeaks, squeals, and other low-frequency sounds that humans can hear only with special instruments.

They also communicate through “sign language” or “Morse code.” Lionfish wave the row of fins on their backs in a specific way to signal other fish to join them in a hunt. Large coral groupers alert smaller, more slender fish, like moray eels, to prey fish concealed in a crevice by pointing their noses toward the concealed fish and shaking their bodies from side to side — the obliging eel then flushes out the prey.

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***Fish are interesting and intelligent animals who deserve the same respect that we give to “cute” and cuddly animals such as dogs and cats.***

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They like physical contact with other fish and often gently rub against one another—in the same way that a cat weaves in and out of your legs.

Phil Gee, a psychologist at the University of Plymouth in the UK, trained fish to collect food by pressing a lever at specific times, demonstrating their ability to tell time.

Some tend well-kept gardens, encouraging the growth of tasty algae and weeding out the types that they don't prefer.

Like birds, many fish build nests in which they can raise their babies, while others collect little rocks off the sea floor to make hiding places where they can rest. Catfish and cichlids have been observed gluing their eggs to leaves and small rocks so that they can carry the precious cargo to safety.

Some fish woo potential partners by singing to them or creating art for them, but male sand

gobies — tiny fish who live along the European coast — play “Mr. Mom,” building and guarding nests and fanning the eggs with their fins in order to create a current of fresh, oxygenated water.

Scientists documented that cichlids would play with a bottom-weighted thermometer, intentionally knocking it over just so that they could watch it bounce back up again.

When cleaner fish — who nibble parasites and dead tissue off larger, predator fish — accidentally bite their “clients,” they make amends by giving the larger fish back rubs.

Fish even use tools. The blackspot tuskfish, for example, has been photographed smashing a clam on a rock until the shell breaks open. Pearlfish use oyster shells as speakers to help amplify the volume of their communications.

Goldfish have longer “sustained attention” spans than humans, according to a study by Microsoft, which found that the small fish can concentrate for nine seconds compared to eight for humans.

Fish are interesting and intelligent animals who deserve the same respect that we give to “cute” and cuddly animals such as dogs and cats.

[HTTPS://WWW.PETA.ORG/ISSUES/ANIMALS-USED-FOR-FOOD/FACTORY-FARMING/FISH/HIDDEN-LIVES-FISH](https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/fish/hidden-lives-fish)

Stepfamilies thrive when patience, empathy,  
and respect guide relationships



## The Unique Challenges of Stepfamilies

*Condensed from* EDITORIAL TEAM

AWAKE!

**A**CCORDING to stepfamily expert Dr. Patricia Papernow, trying to address stepfamily issues using a first-time family as a model is like “trying to navigate the streets of New York City using a map of Boston.”

The fact is, stepfamily challenges are not only unique but also greater than those faced by first-time families. In fact, psychologist William Merkel describes the stepfamily as “the most complex, unnatural and difficult set of relationships known to humankind.”

If it is that hard, how can a stepfamily ever succeed? The relationships in a stepfamily can

be likened to the seams in a patchwork quilt. Even though the seams are weak when the stitching begins, when completed they can be as strong as the original fabric — if they are sewn carefully.

Let us consider some common challenges that stepfamilies face and the steps that have helped many to “stitch” their lives together. Then, we will meet four stepfamilies who have found success.

### CHALLENGE 1: FAILED EXPECTATIONS

“I expected to win my stepchildren’s approval with lots of love and attention, but after eight

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*The fact is, stepfamily challenges are not only unique but also greater than those faced by first-time families.*

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years I'm still waiting." — Gloria.

Stepfamily marriages often begin with high expectations. Parents hope to avoid or to fix the mistakes made in a previous marriage and to find the love or security that has been missing. Some hopes may be little more than fantasies, but any that go unfulfilled cause stress. What if unmet expectations are making you heartsick?

**What You Can Do.** Do not bottle up your feelings, hoping that the disappointment will go away. Instead, identify an unmet expectation that frustrates you. Next, determine why you hope for this, so you can understand why you cling to it. Finally, try to find a more realistic expectation for now. Here are some examples:

1. *From the start, I will love my stepchildren and they will love me.* Why? I've always dreamed of being in a warm, close family.

More realistic: In time, our love for one another can grow. What

matters now is that we can feel safe and respected in our family.

2. *Everyone in the new family will adjust quickly.* Why? We're ready for a fresh start.

More realistic: Stepfamilies usually take between four and seven years to stabilize. Our issues are completely normal.

3. *We won't argue about money.* Why? Our love will help us to avoid petty disputes.

More realistic: Financial issues related to our previous marriages are complex. We may not yet be ready to pool together all our money.

## CHALLENGE 2: HOW TO UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER

"We adjusted quickly — everyone in the new stepfamily was comfortable right away." — Yoshito.

"It took about 10 years before I was fully committed to the success of our stepfamily." — Tatsuki, stepson of Yoshito.

Like Yoshito and Tatsuki, stepfamily members may not really understand each other. Why is this significant? As problems arise, you may want to act quickly to solve them. But to act effectively, you must first understand your family.

It is important to consider how you communicate, since speech can tear down as well as build up. How can you use your tongue to build understanding rather than stifle it?

**What You Can Do.** Here are some things you can do:

*Be curious and empathetic about one another's feelings rather than judgmental.* For example: If your son says, "I miss Dad," acknowledge his loss. Instead of saying, "But your stepdad loves you and is better to you than your father," try this: "It really must be hard. Tell me, what do you miss the most about your dad?"

Instead of accusing your new spouse by saying, "Your son wouldn't be so rude if you had been a better parent," share how you feel. Try this: "Could you please remind Luke to say hello to me when he comes home? It would really help me."

*Use time together for meals, recreation, and worship to learn about one another.* For example, have regular family meetings with everyone present. Allow each member to speak without interruptions, starting with something good about the new family, followed by a concern. Show respect even if you disagree, and let anyone offer a solution.

### CHALLENGE 3: HOW TO BRING 'OUTSIDERS' IN

"My wife and her children huddle together and then gang up on me. I'm the outsider, an intruder." — Walt.

The fear of being an outsider in your own family can be at the

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*As problems arise, you may want to act quickly to solve them. But to act effectively, you must first understand your family.*

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root of seemingly unrelated problems. For example: Children who got along fine with a prospective stepparent before the marriage tend to struggle afterward. A stepparent feels jealous of a six-year-old child. Big arguments erupt about apparently trivial household matters.

This issue affects biological parents too, since they can feel pressured if the stepfamily appears to be coming apart at the seams. As Carmen put it, "Being stuck in the middle between my husband and my two children is very hard."

The Golden Rule provides the key to meeting this challenge. Jesus said: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." How can stepfamilies bring everyone inside without pushing anyone out?

**What You Can Do.** Here are some things you can do:

*Put your marriage first.* Spend time with your new spouse, and make his or her status in the family clear to your children. For



instance, fathers could say something like this to their children even before they remarry: "I love Anna, and she will be my wife. I know you will be polite to her."

*Schedule time alone with each of your children.* Setting aside a specific time shows how important they are to you and will reassure them of your love.

*Spend time alone with each stepchild so you can build your relationship without the parent serving as a referee.*

*Allow children to "join" the family without renouncing their previous family.* It is usually best not to require stepchildren to use terms of endearment such as "Mom" or "Dad." Older children may at first be uncomfortable using words like "family" or "we" for the stepfamily.

*Give each child household chores, a seat at the table, and a space of their own in the home.* This includes those who stay with you only part-time.

*Consider either moving into a new residence or adjusting the existing home,* so that new members do not feel like intruders.

#### CHALLENGE 4: DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN

"When I try to discipline Carmen's children, she consoles them instead of supporting me." — Pablo.

"I feel cut to the heart when Pablo treats my children harshly." — Carmen

Why might childrearing cause conflict in a stepfamily? Discipline may have become lax in a single-parent family. When a stepparent joins the family, the emotional attachment to the children may not be fully formed. The result? The stepparent may think the parent is too soft on the children, while the biological parent thinks the stepparent is too hard on them.

Make sure of balance in rearing children. The focus here is on training your child's thinking rather than on merely controlling his behavior. At the same time, parents are encouraged to be kind and loving so that their discipline does not become a source of irritation.

**What You Can Do.** Here are some things you can do:

*Establish house rules, starting with those you already have.* Clarity replaces confusion with agreed house rules.

*Avoid creating many rules or changing routines too quickly.* What seems like a simple request to a stepparent can be a burden to a child who feels that his entire world has already been turned upside down.

*Discuss disagreements in private, not in front of the children.* Focus on the child's specific behavior rather than on some supposed flaw in earlier training.

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# Wisdom Overheard

We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things do not really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen — room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy. When we stop demanding resolution, we begin to discover compassion. PEMACHODRON

People think freedom is the absence of rules, but true freedom is freedom from fear, anger, and despair. When we look deeply, we see that our suffering comes from misunderstanding and lack of awareness. Mindfulness helps us touch life deeply in the present moment. From that contact, understanding and compassion naturally arise.

THICH NHAT HANH

People think that being present means being calm, peaceful, and loving all the time. But being present actually means being

aware of what is happening without resisting it. When you argue with reality, you lose — but only 100% of the time. Acceptance does not mean approval; it means understanding that this is what is happening now. From that clarity, freedom becomes possible. BYRON KATIE

Most humans live with a mind that is constantly judging, comparing, and projecting into the future. This creates a sense of lack and dissatisfaction that never ends. The present moment, however, contains everything you need to be fully alive. When you step out of compulsive thinking, you discover a deeper intelligence already at work within you. ECKHART TOLLE

Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate. The shadow is not something evil; it is simply that which we have not yet acknowledged. When we deny it, it controls us from behind the scenes. When we face it with honesty, it be-

comes a source of strength and wholeness. CARL JUNG

All real living is meeting. When we treat others as objects, we cut ourselves off from the depth of existence. In genuine encounter, we meet not roles or functions but presence. Through relationship, life becomes whole.

MARTIN BUBER

The fundamental problem of our time is not technological, political, or even ecological — it is spiritual. We suffer because we experience ourselves as separate, isolated selves in a world that feels alien or hostile. This delusion of separation drives endless craving, anxiety, and violence. Awakening is not an escape from the world, but a realization of our profound interconnection with it. DAVID LOY

We are already one, but we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are. This does not mean withdrawal from the world, but a deeper presence within it. Peace begins when we stop pretending to be something else. THOMAS MERTON

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy. Wisdom is not found in escape from life but in giving

oneself fully to it. What we offer with love returns to us as meaning. RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The splitting of the atom has changed everything except our way of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe. A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive. Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Character is built not in moments of triumph but in the quiet decisions of daily life. Every time we choose honesty over deceit, patience over anger, or kindness over indifference, we strengthen the invisible fabric of the soul. Virtue is not taught by words but proven by deeds. The smallest act of integrity is a greater victory than any conquest of others.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Every tradition points to the same truth: that the universe is not outside of us but within us. The stars we gaze upon are mirrored in our own consciousness. When we look inward with clarity and love, we find the cosmos reflected in the heart. To know oneself deeply is to know the whole of creation.

JALLALUDIN RUMI



# Open to the Unknown: The Teachings of Jean Klein

*Condensed from QUEST*  
JUDITH SUGG

**W**HILE in a bookstore 30 years ago, I purchased a pamphlet containing Jean Klein's 1989 lectures. I must have been intrigued enough to buy it then, but the booklet languished on a shelf for decades. I picked it up again only a couple of years ago, and it became my morning reading.

There are many beautiful and inspiring books, yet rarely have I had the experience of reading a work that bypassed my thinking mind and landed somewhere more arcane. Later, I read Klein's advice not to try to hold on to the words but instead let the writing dissolve inside.

As a psychologist, I have pondered the meaning of personality and ego. Psychologically, our

patterns of thought and behavior, often established very early in life, build on themselves over time. Humans are creatures of habits, predictable and stubborn, and these habits extend to interactions with others and patterns of thought and feeling. Our personality requires energy to maintain and even more to change. Our ego is a defense of who we view ourselves to be in the world, helping us navigate the stresses of life and buffering our self-image. What we call a strong ego shows up in a person's resilience and confidence in their conviction of right and good.

Yet many spiritual texts abjure the primacy of the ego and personality. The ego obscures our understanding of our true na-

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*Spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle said it well: "All the misery on the planet arises due to a personalized sense of me or us. That covers up the essence of who you are."*

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ture and directs us toward the survival of the body and personality. In the language of yoga, the ego creates *avidya*: confusion about who we really are. We are deluded and trapped into thinking we are this creature of habits that needs protection, cultivation, and stroking. Spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle said it well: "All the misery on the planet arises due to a personalized sense of me or us. That covers up the essence of who you are. When you are unaware of that inner essence, in the end you always create misery. It's as simple as that" (Tolle, 52).

If we see truth in this characterization, how do we unlock this trap? It is impossible to think our way through the confusion, since thinking itself is the core of the problem. Klein's dialogues slice through this dilemma. Personality habits are body-mind contractions — a "defense against being nobody" (Klein, *Transmission*, xxvi).

The influence of Advaita Vedanta flows through Klein's work, and many fundamental truths of Advaita have found a home in Theosophy. This article highlights some of his teachings using his phrases and themes, including Presence, thought, subject-object orientation, and integration through bodywork.

**Jean Klein.** Klein's personal biography is sparse. A European medical doctor born around 1912, he had a lively intellect, spoke at least four languages, and played the violin throughout his life. He read René Guénon, Krishnamurti, and Sri Aurobindo and was introduced to Theosophy early on. His spiritual search led him to India in the 1950s, where a teacher guided him in understanding Advaita Vedanta, the nondual tradition of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He died in 1998.

According to Klein, Advaita is neither religion nor philosophy, but simply the truth. After leaving India, he began teaching the direct approach to Realization, focusing on self-inquiry and immediate experience, in both Europe and America.

The books attributed to him are transcripts of his teaching. Klein resolutely avoided taking on the mantle or attributes of a guru. What is teachable, he said, belongs to the personality, the mind. He had no technique to

sell or approach for others to master.

Klein did not necessarily intend to have listeners remember his words but rather would receive their taste or flavor and note how they stimulated wakefulness. He spoke directly from his experience and rarely used religious or philosophical terminology. Students described a joyful, loving, peaceful Presence without expectations or agenda, living in the moment and unbound by personality.

**Presence.** Klein uses the word “Presence” to express the ultimate reality. We may access Presence through self-inquiry, but we can never know it through our everyday minds. We know ourselves as Presence by identifying what we are not, much like a sculptor removing the excess marble that hides the artistic creation. Under inquiry, the mind will eventually halt, igniting transformation. Liberation is freedom from personality and self-image. Many of us have had a foretaste of this experience that orients us and inspires us to continue.

When the personality/ego dissolves, one is entirely in Presence, in silence. A mind tuned to truth is alert, aware, and subtle. Thought and action happen, but they are tools to be used and put away when done. This is Klein’s definition of right action: clear action and functional knowledge

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arising from the silence of Presence, creating no thought or memory. A person retains functional knowledge and skill, but personal memory is disengaged. We act according to the circumstance; there is no continuing internal dialogue. In other words, life is viewed without the personality’s projection. Actions are clean and natural.

It can be helpful to consider the opposite: When we are self-conscious — meaning there are layers of self-talk about our safety, status, and image — we incessantly judge our own actions. This endless self-judgment generates fear, anxiety, and more cycles of mental activity.

Each breath offers the opportunity to approach Presence. If we wait, there is a pause at the end of the exhalation before the in-hale begins naturally. During this pause, if we pay attention, the mechanics of the mind are quieter. Yoga teachers sometimes call this pause a look into eternity.

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**Subject-Object Orientation.**

In our personality and psychology, we are subjects perceiving objects — people, things, thoughts, aspirations, goals, memories. We are fascinated by desire, yet when we attain our goal, the relief and joy are brief. We may wish to be admired, so we focus our desire on a fancy car, an award, or some other indication of status. In doing so, we become bound to this object. We might even desire a state of peace or tranquility, but these states are still temporary and still objects of desire. In response, Klein poses the question: don't we really want to be without longing or striving — to exist in desirelessness?

Achieving our desire, be it a new car or a calm state, brings a moment of respite. It is a moment of relaxation and satiation mirroring openness and Presence. However, it doesn't last; something else glitters and attracts our attention. Klein suggests that we make note of these

brief respites as a way of witnessing our patterns.

The opposite of the ego cycle is nondirectional openness, where the mind and body are profoundly relaxed and free of grasping. This comes through understanding the cycle of desire, which stops the mind from its looping. Energy is dispersed, no longer focused on the desired object, and we find ourselves in openness and spaciousness.

Is this attention the same as mindfulness? No, since mindfulness is mindful of an object or environment. Pure consciousness has no object and is free from intention. Attention is free from direction and location; it is open and welcoming.

**Thought.** In its proper place, thought is a tool to be used and put away when done. Our essence is Silence, and what arises from Silence is real. Whatever surfaces from everyday thought is ego-based. This stream of words and images combines comparison, judgment, habitual reactions, and memory. It is defensive, defending the ego, and aggressive. “The mind is incessantly looking not only for food for thought; it is looking for food for its identity, its sense of self” (Tolle, 27).

Thought arises from memory, and memory creates our understanding of time. Yet in actuality, a memory is not in the past. The memory is happening now



as we think or experience it. Reactions are automatic, based on similarities from the past. We are built from habits; thus we rarely experience present time.

One theory of aging says that we stop truly experiencing the moment and only recall our conclusions or judgments of a similar time or experience. For example, we mindlessly eat a food we “know” we like without really tasting it. Our thoughts are rarely grounded in current perception — they’re grounded in habit.

Thought is mainly about judgment, what Klein calls qualification. It begins with naming and instantaneously moves to evaluation. We like or don’t like. We criticize or praise. We compare and compete. What is left without analysis, judgment, ego-boosting comparisons, or criticism? William James, the early American psychologist and philosopher, coined the term “stream of consciousness” to describe how we link our behavior patterns to form our sense of self. Removing judgment, comparisons, competition, and criticism leaves little in the stream! “When you are free from thinking, you find the seed of love” (Klein, *Book of Listening*, 251).

Klein avoids techniques. Instead, he speaks of self-inquiry and understandings or insights that cause the mind to halt its production. As we observe our

reactions, we see how the mind jumps from sensation to naming, then to judgments, comparisons, and criticisms. Evaluations are frequent and often consistent — I like this, I don’t like this; that’s better or worse; that is right or wrong; they should have or not

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*Each breath offers the  
opportunity to approach  
Presence.*

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have. Some of these thoughts are overt, but many are subtle, especially those about one’s own behavior. In observing what we are not — the thinking, the contractions, and the judgment—we remove the false coverings of the mind.

The witness is an intermediary that assists in dissolving habits. I have found that when I observe the mind in its judgment, I can say, “Not this.” If I start to judge myself for judging, it is “not this.” If I begin to resist because the appeal for judging is strong, it is “not this.” The mind eventually fatigues, and attention becomes more spacious.

Many meditation techniques aim to quiet the mind through focus or concentration. For Klein, this is neither meditation nor enlightenment. Meditation is being in Presence or silence, not prac-

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*The opposite of the ego cycle is nondirectional openness, where the mind and body are profoundly relaxed and free of grasping.*

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ting and creating an object of meditation states. In one conversation, he explains that “when we find out that the meditator, the one who looks for God, for beauty, for peace, is only a product of the brain that there is nothing to find, there is a giving up. What remains is a current of silence. You can never come to this silence through practice, through achievement. Enlightenment — being understanding — is instantaneous” (Bodian, 4).

The Yoga Sutras tell us that the purpose of yoga is the stilling of the fluctuations of the mind. Is this the same as stopping the mind? I think not. Klein might note that we are already back in the ego when we set a goal to stop the thought stream. The direct approach is not progressive; there is no hierarchy or ladder to climb. When we are in silence, the mind-body structure will think and then return to silence. When we are in ego, stopping the mind is like building a dam; when meditation stops, the

thoughts come rushing back. Haven’t most of us had the experience of a deep meditation where the experience of peace fades five minutes after the bell rings?

Psychology has several techniques for effectively clearing intrusive thoughts, and these bring a modicum of peace. Yet the mind is always looking for the next shiny object, and if we are still patterned in thought and action, the silence is momentary. I have found that, psychologically, letting go is positive and valuable but insufficient.

Thoughts impact the body. When we think, there is some subtle reaction or contraction in the body. Deep relaxation assists in dissolving automatic responses. Klein suggests that we can even learn to relax the brain. Thinking primarily stems from the front of the brain, the frontal lobes. Moving thoughts to the back of the head changes and drastically reduces their production. What happens when you experiment with relaxing the face, scalp, and head and allow thoughts to move to the back of the mind?

**Bodywork.** Klein taught a subtle bodywork process based on Kashmiri yoga, emphasizing the sensations and feelings in the body without naming or evaluating them. The awakening of subtle energies purifies the body. This process reveals the

tensions and holdings — the mind-body structure of personality.

The contractions and patterns of our body-mind complex give us little access to the pure sensations of the body. In subtle ways, our body memory reminds us of our lacks, hurts, and wants. As a yoga teacher, I find that beginning students often have simple scales of sensation: this is bad, this feels good. Discovering the connections and patterns and learning to release these energies can result in subtle exploration, deep relaxation, and insight.

The body is a warehouse of memories, tensions, and contractions. If you relax your body and then think of a minor negative interaction, do you feel a contraction somewhere in your body? Klein says that we have to know the body — understand these contractions — before we can understand who we are not. “One could say that the I-image is a contraction of the body. Feeling the expansion of your body in space eliminates the hold of the I” (Klein, *Invitation to Silence*, 5).

Try this experiment: Notice a part of you that hurts or aches. Notice a part that feels good or neutral. Focus on that sensation — the feeling of health or neutrality — and transfer that sensation to the part of you that hurts. I recently broke my wrist,

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*In its proper place,  
thought is a tool to be  
used and put away when  
done. Our essence is  
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from Silence is real.*

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and when I read this suggestion, I immediately transferred the sensation of the left arm (neutral, alive) to the sensation of the right (achy and stiff). Try your own version!

**Endgaming.** Endgaming encompasses mental movements toward a goal or desire. Psychologically, this might include overt goals such as “I want a new job,” yet even something as complex as a new job can have layers of desire. I want a new job to feed my family, gain status, or avoid a bad boss. The layers of what we want or don’t want, and our approaches to quenching the desire, result in a labyrinth of thoughts and behaviors. I may want a new car, but that car is often more than transportation. It involves how I feel about my worth, safety, and self-worth. “Searching and wanting to achieve something are the fuel for the entity you believe yourself to be” (Klein, *Invitation to Silence*, 14).

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*Spiritual search itself can  
be a form of endgaming.  
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Endgaming takes up much of our mental activity. When I think about what I wear, I hope (endgame) for a particular response from others. In a way, I'm trying to influence other people's reactions or responses, build self-image, or avoid negative judgment — all of that in just picking the shirt to wear! We endgame in relationships, direct or manipulate conversation, and position ourselves to be noticed or avoided — the list is endless.

Psychologically, these convoluted and unconscious paths of thought and behavior are old patterns and habits. We long for attention, safety, and love and

have found strategies to help us achieve those goals. Klein often asks, "Who wants this? Who is bored? Who is scared?"

Spiritual search itself can be a form of endgaming. We believe if we do enough, learn enough, and achieve enough, we will earn our freedom. This strikes me as one of my own deeply embedded beliefs. Yet it is still all about ego and mind, and is still psychology, not freedom.

**Personal Impact.** Things have changed over the two years of reading Klein's work daily. I have sensed peace and openness in my daily life, and I'm amused by my own reactivity. Really, who is that person who just said or did that? As a planner by inclination, I have observed the layers of endgaming that accompany even small actions. In noticing, it is easier to detach, and I find a sense of spaciousness and love. There is more just being here.

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To be full of things is to be empty of God. To be empty of things is to be full of God.

MEISTER ECKHART

To come to what you do not know, you must go by a way in which you do not know. To come to what you are not, you must go by a way in which you are not.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

We must give up our imaginary position as the center. SIMONE WEIL

Releasing grievances is the first step  
to inner freedom

# Forgiveness

*Condensed from THEOSOPHIA*  
RICHARD SMOLEY

SPIRITUAL struggle takes many forms; the Dark Night of the Soul, the confrontation with the Shadow, the battle on the field of Kurukshetra, and so forth. Most people on a spiritual path have faced such confrontations. Nevertheless, I believe, you can realize that in many of these cases, you are merely making problems for yourself. Indeed, the more grandiose forms of struggle often consist of elaborate means of avoiding this truth.

Life often seems to constitute a string of problems. One is solved, only to be rapidly replaced by another. This list is never-ending and self-perpetuating. Many of the practical problems of life are unavoidable. But what about the ones we create for ourselves?



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***Holding grievances is useless and harmful – like drinking poison and expecting it to kill someone else, according to a Buddhist proverb.***

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Grievances are perhaps the most common form of self-created problems. Holding grievances is useless and harmful – like drinking poison and expecting it to kill someone else, according to a Buddhist proverb. Yet, it is frequently the hardest habit to break. Why? Because of the unconscious belief that holding grievances is somehow of benefit. Usually, this is an attempt at defense: some level of the mind believes that grievances are armor; without them, we would be at the mercy of a cruel world.

Of course, this is ridiculous. In fact, our grievances are our greatest points of vulnerability. (Look at the history of any nation; if you have any doubts about this matter.) To overcome them, the first step, is insight: you have to recognize the damage that you are suffering from your grievances. You cannot merely pretend that you understand this fact or indulge in empty moralizing about forgiveness.

The second step is to see when you are holding grievances (in the moment, of course). This can be difficult. If you are quitting smoking, you can easily know when you have a cigaret in your hand and when you don't. With internal matters, it is not so simple. It requires a rigorous inner attention and honesty.

Such honesty is even more important than forgiveness. It is no good to tell yourself you have let go of a grievance when you have done nothing of the kind. Better to face the truth; you are still holding on to your grudge, even if you realize that it is doing you no good.

For many people, grievances against others are the easiest to release, especially if they have to do with the past or with people with whom you have no more contact. If the issue is a serious one – involving, say, abuse by family members – it may require psychotherapy to fully resolve. It is somewhat harder to release grievances against oneself. Most of us tend somewhat toward self-punishment; moreover, at some level we mistakenly believe that holding these past failures over our heads will save us from future ones. There is a word for holding grievances against oneself: *regret*. But a Uighur (Chinese Muslim) proverb is that a man with regrets is not a real man. There is a huge gulf between learning from mistakes of

the past and punishing yourself for them.

The third type of grievance may be the most insidious one: holding grudges about the state of the world. G.I. Gurdieff noted the tendency of modern humans “vainly-to-become sincerely-indignant” (to use his idiosyncratic punctuation). Its cause? The absence of the “instinctive-sensing-of-reality-in-its-own-right.”

There is a blurry line here. It is between genuine compassion for the suffering of others and the belief (yet again hidden from consciousness) that one has to feel indignation as a moral responsibility. Much of this belief is nothing more than the ego trying to convince itself that it is a good person.

How can you tell the difference between these two impulses? Genuine compassion manifests itself in some form, even if only as an ephemeral and unnoticed gesture of kindness. “Vainly-to-become-sincerely-indignant” is the stuff of Facebook posts and Twitter rants.

Releasing grievances can be a long and arduous process, requiring the “searching and fearless moral inventory” of the Twelve-Step program, although it need not be. What will make the difference is the strength of the insight. If you truly realize that your grudges are pointless and harmful, many of them will

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*If you truly realize that your grudges are pointless and harmful, many of them will vanish overnight.*

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vanish overnight. But if parts of your character hesitate and doubt this truth, the process will be longer and more painful.

I wrote about this issue in a short book, published several years ago, called *The Deal: A Guide to Radical and Complete Forgiveness*, which sets out a simple process for releasing grievances. I would urge you to read and work with this book if you feel this issue has had any hold on your life.

By the way, I did not dream up *The Deal* because it would be nice to write a book about forgiveness. It was a process that I had to go through myself beforehand; only afterward did it occur to me to turn it into a book. Of all of the spiritual work I have done and the struggles I have gone through, I would say that this process of releasing grievances has been among the most important and has by far given me the greatest benefits.

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270, WHEATON, IL 60187-0270 USA



How ancient wisdom speaks across time, guiding us to  
discover truth and insight within ourselves



## Ancient Wisdom, Timeless Truths

*Condensed from* SUNRISE  
SALLY DOUGHERTY

Who knows the secret? Who proclaimed it here?

Whence this manifold creation sprang?

The Gods themselves came later into being —

Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?

That, whence all this great creation came,

Whether Its will created or was mute,

The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,

He knows it — or perchance even He knows not.

**T**HESE words are from the Rig Veda, the oldest Hindu scripture originating thou-

sands of years ago. When we look into what has come down to us, even from the most remote times, we are struck by how similar people everywhere seem in their strengths and weaknesses, their hopes, desires, and fears, their sense of self, their wonder in nature and the cosmos. They asked the same key questions we do: Who am I? How do I relate to other people and nature? What makes life worthwhile? How can I control what happens to me and others? What happens after we die? What is real, and how can I discover it?

Modern knowledge is so wide-ranging and constantly increasing that we may question the value of exploring older

views. Many of their metaphors and attitudes conflict with the world revealed by science and with modern principles of equality and human rights. Some of their “wisdom” seems not just inaccurate but wrongheaded. This can make the ancients hard to relate to, even if we’ve grown up in a religion with ancient roots. However, other traditions, such as Buddhism, seem very up to date and are having considerable impact on contemporary thought.

In some ways, we can benefit greatly from investigating unfamiliar religions, philosophies, myths, and lore, especially since each tradition develops certain concepts more clearly, directly, or deeply and different presentations speak to different people. Few things are more stimulating than finding customary thoughts expressed in a way that stretches your mind and makes you look at them creatively, perhaps overturning habitual notions or reactions. We probably won’t understand ancient thoughts as the original person or people did – sometimes we may even interpret an idea or symbol in an opposite way. But myths and traditions often act as intellectual Rorschach tests, where we gain insights that have a particular value to us.

Once we look into various traditions, we find the same concepts and values expressed again and again in different forms; and cer-

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*Wisdom is something we each have to find in ourselves and for ourselves, distilling it from our experiences and living it in our lives.*

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tain ones among these have been referred to as the perennial philosophy, theosophy, or the wisdom-tradition of mankind. Of course, universality itself is no token of truth or merit, since selfish, violent, hurtful, and limiting concepts and values appear in human thought as regularly as do the altruistic, uplifting, loving, and inclusive. We can only examine each statement for ourselves and decide whether it conforms to the reality underlying nature and would be beneficial to adopt into our minds and hearts. Putting concepts we accept into practice in our lives generally shows us in time whether their “fruit is good.”

From another viewpoint no tradition, belief, or “truth” can offer us wisdom. Wisdom is something we each have to find in ourselves and for ourselves, distilling it from our experiences and living it in our lives. Ideas dealing with the physical world are difficult to express; those dealing with what is beyond our senses are almost

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*Those who are enlightened have rebecome one with this principle which is beyond duality, beyond human distinctions and values, and unintelligible to the mind.*

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impossible, reducing us to metaphor, symbol, and stating what it is not. Chinese sage Lao-tzu, in discussing the Tao (Way) or unknowable principle underlying all, began: "the Tao that can be expressed or named is not the true Tao." Those who are enlightened have rebecome one with this principle which is beyond duality, beyond human distinctions and values, and unintelligible to the mind. Such sages spontaneously conform to the flow of nature rather than set

their consciousness and will in opposition to it. It is when we separate ourselves from the Way that ideas and values arise: "When the Way is forgotten, duty and justice appear; then knowledge and wisdom are born along with hypocrisy. When harmonious relationships dissolve then respect and devotion arise; when a nation falls to chaos then loyalty and patriotism are born." Through such unexpected statements Lao-tzu sought to disarm the mind and inspire intuitive insight.

In the end, we have little choice but to trust our inner sense of what is true and wise, realizing that as we learn through experience, our ability to recognize and understand will grow. Studying a variety of traditions helps us remain flexible and promotes a healthy discontent with our present store of knowledge and truth.

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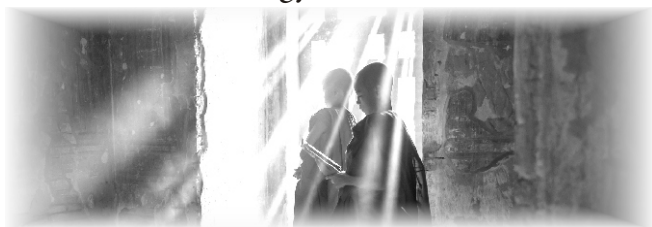
There is a perennial philosophy, a common set of truths that lies at the heart of all the world's spiritual traditions, pointing to the divine ground of being and the eternal nature of the human spirit.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Sages from all of the world's wisdom traditions tell us that such experiences of True Nature are expressions of our essential inborn humanity . . . Aligning with True Nature allows freedom to move into alignment with larger currents of wisdom.

JOAN BORYSENKO

How sacred spaces and human intention shape  
the energy of the world



## The Expansion of Communication

*Condensed from* THEOSOPHY IN AUSTRALIA  
TIM BOYD

**B**ECAUSE I'm president of an organization which focuses on the spiritual and spirituality, I am necessarily in touch with people all around the world who are involved in the spiritual endeavor. I have to say that some of those people couldn't always be described as "grounded." Perhaps that's an understatement. At any given time, there are a minimum of two or three different "Lord Maitreyas" who are in touch with me about the need to promote their vision of the coming world; it's just the nature of my position. But just as the connecting mind spiritualizes matter, it equally has the potential to stabilize spiritual expression. It's in this to-and-fro motion that this

mind becomes developed and becomes really serviceable. This is the point of studying: to elevate the mind.

The point of meditation is to quiet the mind.

The point of service, or what I prefer to speak of as conscious compassionate activity, or to help relieve the sufferings of others, is another way the action of mind unfolds.

Then there is the often-overlooked tool of the power of place, the power of the environment and its effects on our lives, health and consciousness. There are sacred places all around the world; in every community, there are spaces that we can describe as "sacred, holy, health-

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giving spaces” where just being present has an effect on us. These places come into being in two ways: one of them relates to what’s sometimes spoken of as the ley lines or the energy systems, the pattern of chi energy as it expresses itself in the earth. You find that where these places are identified, there are great temples or other structures such as stone circles.

I traveled in Peru for a while. I wish I could say that it was for some spiritual journey but actually, I was with my father and he wanted to be an Alpaca Rancher. Alpaca is a very harmless industry, I have to say – there’s no meat involved. We went down there for the alpaca but along the way I found myself exposed to the temples of the Incas where they very consciously positioned them on energy grids.

With the colonial conquest of the Spaniards many temples were torn down. Some were built so massively it was impossible to tear them down, but in their places they would build a

church. The gods changed but the energy was the same. The more astute among them knew this and would draw on that. You find this pattern echoed across the world.

I was in Tibet maybe 15 years ago. Lhasa, the capital city, is a sacred place to Tibetans and the center of it there’s the Jokhang Temple. There exists a practice of circumambulation, walking around the temple saying prayers and doing prostrations, known as Kora. Some engage in very elaborate versions of it where, after every few steps, they bow down and touch their head to the ground and get up and do it again after a few more steps, making it a very time-consuming ritual. Some go even further, laying their bodies flat out on the ground with each prostration. It gets to the point where you can recognize the people who have been doing this thing for a long time, not by sensing their third eye but by seeing the calloused forehead that had touched the ground so many times. But it is an expression of devotion. It is an expression of the sacredness that this place had exhibited to these people over millennia. This is how we can be affected by recognized sacred places.

There really is no such thing as “empty space.” Even as you sit there, you’re quite aware of the various sorts of energy waves

that relate to your cell phone filling the room.

And from other perspectives, there is the idea that there are different orders of intelligence that are continually surrounding us, and that we are continually interacting with, so that every thought has its attraction to these beings of an unseen nature.

Many people feel these interactions, but there are those who also see these things. These interactions are much more evident in nature: where there's a flower it attracts a certain type of insect, for example. Bees flock to flowers following who knows what patterns and impulses? And if you have a pile of garbage there are all kinds of different things that flock to that.

In the *Mahatma Letters*, there's an idea that: "From moment to moment, each one of us is continually peopling our current in space."

I love that expression. We are continually, through our thoughts, through the emotions that we allow to run rampant through us, "peopling." We are populating our current in space and this current surrounds us. It goes out from us and it's something we're aware of.

I'm sure that, for example, being in the presence of someone who is down, who is perhaps

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depressed will leave you walking away feeling somehow depleted. No physical thing has happened but it's just the nature of things — the "population" that surrounds each and every one of us affects us.

I remember a good friend, a lady by the name of Dora. Many of you may know her as she was president of the Theosophical Society in America but she was also a world-renowned clairvoyant who did a lot of interesting work. She had the ability to see the human aura but she also studied healers and she developed a whole form of healing that's been followed around the world. I remember her saying that she attended a large gathering with two people who had auras the likes of which she had never seen before. One of them was a woman by the name of Katherine Kouman, who was a fundamentalist Christian preacher.

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*We try to hold on to parks, but the connection with the orderly patterns of nature becomes supplanted by human patterns that have really changed our whole approach to living.*

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Kouman was a healer, a remarkable one who could fill these big stadiums, echoing with music and sermons. A point would always come where she would call out someone from the crowd and perform a remarkable healing, which was later medically confirmed. I remember Dora describing what was happening from her clairvoyant point of view. She described seeing Kouman's aura — her gigantic energetic field would just spread throughout the stadium. The normal person, as viewed from a clairvoyant perspective, has a limited aura that can only be sensed when they are in close proximity to another person. But there are people whose Natural State tends to be much more expansive. The example Dora gave was his Holiness the Dalai Lama. She said, "His aura was really beyond any and all others. His embrace of the entire thou-

sands of audience was just remarkable."

Places also come into being not just by lines of force but also from the uses that we as humans apply to them. These spaces that become sacred, that become holy, become meaningful to self, and community bring this sacred energy into being.

Drawing on Buddhism, there's a very popular form of meditation that many people employ called "Metta Meditation." This is basically a meditation that's based on loving kindness. You sit and cultivate a thought of security or safety or blessing or kindness for others — ultimately for all beings.

Back in the time of the Buddha, he had a bunch of monks who followed him. When the rainy season and monsoons would come they would cease from their constant travel from place to place and settle down in the forest and do their meditation. A group of them found a very nice spot where there was a little stream and some forests. When they started to try to do their meditation they found that they were constantly being disturbed.

In the Buddhist cosmology, there is the idea that there are meddlesome sorts of beings that exist on different planes as well as visiting our own. These monks had unknowingly settled in one of those spaces filled with these little interfering creatures. They



came to tell the Buddha that they needed to move because in this spot they could never experience quiet. The Buddha refused, instead instructing them to sit daily and send out the thought:

“May all of you beings be happy. May you all be free from suffering. May you all be secure, may you all have joy. May you all dwell in equanimity, free from attachment, free from aversion.”

He told them to do it every day, and quickly the interference died down and the place became one of blessing where others would come to experience the sacred signs. Through human activity, this space became hallowed and ultimately useful. What we find now that this is one of those facts that has been forgotten. We like to think that we’re kind of up on all the latest news. We know when people land on the moon for the first time. I can remember when the first satellite orbited the Earth — I’m that old. Sputnik. We went out into the field to watch it because it had a pattern where it would circle around every day. There was a moving star in the sky and it was so beautiful and the first time something like this had ever happened.

Another particular first that I find fascinating.

It occurred, probably without any of your notice certainly without mine.

In 2008, for whatever reason, in some place in some city in the

world, somebody who had previously lived in a village in a rural setting walked into the outer suburbs of some city and the planet Earth became, for the very first time, predominantly urban.

Now, because of this person, more than 50% of the people in the planet live in cities such as Perth, Melbourne, Chicago and Mumbai. One of the side-effects of this new population reality is that natural spaces become lost. We try to hold on to parks, but the connection with the orderly patterns of nature becomes supplanted by human patterns that have really changed our whole approach to living.

With high concentrations of people living right next to each other, you find people who are alone and isolated — lonely in the midst of millions. This was rarely the case in the small rural areas where everybody was necessarily interacting with everybody else.

Even though most of us now live in cities, we still crave human interaction and, paradoxically, a yearning for places where they can find some sort of place, of quiet, of peace. These competing yearnings offer us a space of possibility, and a potential for us to create.

It’s a creative opportunity.

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The two kinds of competencies in our youth that parents and schools need to look at



## Competence: A Crucial Quality of a Young Adult

*Condensed from* INSIGHTS ON LIFE

VICENTE HAO CHIN JR.

PEOPLE get stressed when they are faced with a problem that is quite beyond their competency to solve, but which they are expected to solve. They know that they have to solve it, but they are unsure on how to go about it. As unsolved problems mount, the greater is the stress and unhappiness of the person.

Stress levels rise proportionately to the magnitude of the gap between expected competence and actual competence. A graduate of a good university is expected to perform well in a job that they applied for, while an employee who did not even finish college will not be expected to

meet such standards. Farmers can live a happy life even if they did not go to school. No one expects them to know more than farming. But if even in farming, they don't seem to do the job well, then they will feel the pressure of their wives and the criticism of their neighbors. Stress and distress begin.

There are two kinds of competency: *technical competency* and *personal competency*. It is the second one that is more important.

Technical competency means that an electrical engineer knows the job of an electrical engineer and possesses the requisite knowledge of the profession.

An accountant knows how to complete financial statements and do all the ledgers, accrual basis, bank reconciliation and other things an accountant should know. When one is an accountant and has inadequate knowledge and skills about accounting, the person will feel stressed because he or she knows that the expectation is valid, but he or she is unable to deliver that which he implicitly promised to deliver.

Young people therefore must realize at a young age what it means to be professionally competent and to have the initiative to attain this regardless of the educational standard of the school they find themselves in. With Youtube, Khan Academy, Wikipedia, and a host of free resources in the internet, anyone can learn practically anything on a sufficiently high level.

But it is the second competency that is truly important — personal competency. This covers a host of qualities that are truly valuable in a person: self-confidence, self-esteem, initiative, curiosity, willingness to learn, stick-to-it-iveness, resourcefulness, perseverance, result-orientedness, emotional intelligence, leadership, unselfishness, trustworthiness, volunteerism and similar qualities. If it is overlaid with cheerfulness, optimism, and compassion, then you have someone who is des-

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***Young people therefore must realize at a young age what it means to be professionally competent and to have the initiative to attain this regardless of the educational standard of the school they find themselves in.***

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tinued for success in any field that they get into. A person who has these qualities can learn almost any skill or technical competency.

Personal competency is a quality that is nurtured from early childhood. When children are not put down (“idiot,” “dumb,” “useless”), frequently criticized or humiliated, then they do not develop low self-esteem, a factor that drags personal competency down to a very low level even if they are actually intelligent. On the other hand, when they feel accepted as they are, receive sincere praises when deserving, and feel that they are loved, then they are developing a personal-ity foundation that will be solid and stable, and which can sustain them even during times of trial, adversity and setback. They will grow up not fearing failure or making mistakes.

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*Personal competency . . . covers a host of qualities that are truly valuable in a person: self-confidence, self-esteem, initiative, curiosity, willingness to learn, stick-to-it-iveness, resourcefulness, perseverance . . .*

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They are willing to take measured risks. They are ready to apologize when it is due. The world to them will not be a hell-

ish or oppressive place, and life will be a positive adventure and a happy experience.

It is unfortunate that many schools do not teach this second kind of competency as systematically as they teach mathematics and grammar. Unfortunate too is the fact that many parents are the primary demolisher of such personal competency.

These then are what parents and schools should look at: the development of technical competency and personal competency, and to remember that the second one is more important than the first.

[HTTPS://INSIGHTSONLIFE.NET/PAGE/2/](https://insightsonlife.net/page/2/)



For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them. ARISTOTLE

The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, "The children are now working as if I did not exist." MARIAMONTESSORI

Too much protection is one of the greatest hindrances to development. RUDOLFDREIKURS

If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence. DOROTHY LAW NOLTE

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change. CARL ROGERS

Enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare. ANGELA DUCKWORTH



# Ponder on These

Nations go to war not because they are strong, but because they are afraid. THICH NHAT HANH

If your spirituality does not disturb your certainties, it is probably decoration. RICHARD ROHR

The health of a community is measured by how it treats its most difficult members. JEAN VANIER

Children suffer less from strict parents than from unconscious ones. CARL JUNG

The ego calls it failure; the soul calls it initiation. MICHAEL MEADE

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless. MOTHER TERESA

Much of schooling trains obedience, not intelligence. JOHN TAYLOR GATTO

What you seek is seeking you. RUMI

Silence is not empty; it is full of answers. LAO TZU

Any spirituality that ignores the body is incomplete. J. FINLEY

Growth is painful. Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as staying stuck. N. R. NARAYANA MURTHY

Healing does not mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls your life. AKSHAY DUBEY

The planet does not need saving; our way of life does. DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

Power does not corrupt; it reveals. ROBERT CARO

Love without boundaries is not kindness; it is confusion. BRENE BROWN

## *Theosophical Digest*

All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.

BLAISE PASCAL

You do not "come into" this world. You come out of it, as a wave from the ocean.

ALAN WATTS

Your own Self-realization is the greatest service you can render the world.

RAMANA MAHARSHI

One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.

MARK TWAIN

The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

MAHATMA GANDHI

When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.

WAYNE DYER

No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.

THE BUDDHA

In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; we will understand only what we are taught.

BABADIUM

If you want to awaken all of humanity, awaken all of yourself.

LAO TZU

To understand everything is to forgive everything.

LEO TOLSTOY

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.

MEISTER ECKHART

Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It is a relationship between equals.

PEMA CHODRON

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

NELSON MANDELA

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.

PETER DRUCKER

What you resist persists.

CARL JUNG

How dropping the thinking self lets us  
see things as they really are



## Seeing Things With Beginner's Mind

*Condensed from* THEOSOPHY IN AUSTRALIA  
DR. IAN ELLIS-JONES

ONE of the best books ever written on meditation from a Buddhist perspective is *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Zen monk and teacher Shunryu Suzuki, who founded the San Francisco Zen Centre, the first Zen Buddhist monastery outside Asia. Suzuki wrote:

To do something, to live in each moment, means to be the temporal activity of Buddha. To sit in this way [zazen (Zen meditation)] is to be Buddha himself, to be as the historical Buddha was. The same thing applies to everything we do. Everything is Buddha's activity. So whatever you do, or even if you keep from doing something, Buddha is that activity.

**Being Buddha.** Suzuki refers to this way of living as 'being Buddha.' He writes:

Without trying to be Buddha you are Buddha. This is how we attain enlightenment. To attain enlightenment is to be always with Buddha.

Suzuki quotes the historical Buddha's statement, "See Buddha nature in various beings, and in every one of us." We are all buddhas, both in essence and in potentiality.

What is a buddha? A person who is enlightened, that is, awake. That is Zen, for Zen is a way of — waking up! It is said in Zen that only the empty mind can see the Buddha, that is, achieve enlightenment. We can easily rephrase those words to this — only the empty mind can see



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*It is said in Zen that only the empty mind can see the Buddha, that is, achieve enlightenment.*

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reality, know truth, and experience life as it really is.

**Seeing Things as They Really Are.** To see things with a beginner's mind is to see each moment for what it is — a new moment. The major obstacle to our seeing things afresh with a beginner's mind is the idea in our mind that there is some "thinker" or "thinking self" within our mind. There is no such thinker or thinking self apart or separate from our thoughts. There are only thoughts and thinking. It is the thinking that creates the mental construct, so to speak, of a notional but entirely illusory thinker.

When I say that the thinker is "illusory," I am saying that the so-called thinker has no separate, independent and permanent existence apart from our thoughts or the person we are. It is the thoughts, or more exactly the process of thinking, that creates the construct of the thinker. Actually, the "thinking self" in our mind and the thinking itself are a "joint phenomenon" as J. Krishnamurti used to say. They

are not two separate processes or entities.

Now, if the thinker is created by the process of thinking in our mind, a separation has taken place in our mind. We have the thinker — note, I'm not talking about you, the person, being the thinker but rather "something" supposedly existent in your mind — and the thinking or thoughts. Yes, a separation has taken place in the mind, and it is an entirely artificial one.

First, the division is perhaps the major cause of our losing immediacy and directness in our moment-to-moment experience of life. Secondly, the division is a cause of our developing what can only be described as a false or artificial personality, that is, a personality that prevents us from seeing ourselves as we really are, and others as they really are.

Although what I've described above may seem counter-intuitive to some of us, the reality is that there is no "thinking self" or "thinker" in our mind. When we come to understand this, it helps to free us from the bondage of separation or duality in our cognitive processes. We are then able to see-thing-as-they-really-are with directness and immediacy.

We are then able to penetrate the core of reality. Krishnamurti wrote:

When you look at a flower, when you just see it, at that moment is

there an entity who sees? Or is there only seeing? Seeing the flower makes you say [i.e. think], How nice it is! I want it.' So the "I" comes into being through desire, fear, ambition [all thought], which follow in the wake of seeing. It is these that create the "I" and the "I" is non-existent without them.

In truth, there are only the following three 'relational' elements in order for a stimulus to be perceived: first, the sense-object (or simply the object in question); secondly, a sense organ; and thirdly, attention or consciousness. It is more-or-less the same with our thoughts and thinking, except we have no sense-object and sense-organ involved as such. In order for there to be an immediacy and directness about our moment-to-moment experience of life, those three occurrences need to occur more-or-less simultaneously, that is, there should be no separation between them.

If those three events are not simultaneously experienced — and that happens when we engage in thinking, analysis, comparison, interpretation and judgment in connection with the object in question, be it external or internal — then the chances are that what will be experienced will be nothing but the past. The reality of the immediate experience will subside. Indeed, it dies. Any consciousness of the former immediate experience will be only as an af-

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*To see things with a beginner's mind is to see each moment for what it is — a new moment.*

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ter-thought or as memory, as we glance back to re-experience and evaluate what is now a past experience.

**Choiceless Awareness.** Experiencing life with a beginner's mind means seeing things with choiceless awareness. The latter is something we "bring," effortlessly and continuously, to each moment of the day.

Choiceless awareness is also something "in" which we "live," in the sense of living in awareness of the present moment. We are talking about an awareness of all that the present moment "contains" (thoughts, perceptions, assumptions, tendencies, memories, feelings, bodily sensations, sounds, etc). We are choicelessly aware when we are aware of whatever is, when we objectively see and experience things-as-theyare — things both inner and outer—without becoming attached to anything.

Just as importantly, there is no choosing to be aware of one thing but not another. In other words, there is no discriminating, that is, no decisions, no choices, no exercise of the will, and no de-

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*Bare attention is a way of looking at experience, adding nothing to it, and taking nothing away from the raw experience it.*

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mands, not even preferences. We are simply aware of whatever presents itself from one moment to the next as our experience. We simply look, watch and observe without identifying too closely with any elements of the experience, and without judging anything that arises as good or bad.

Thus, there is no “I like this,” or “I don’t like that,” sort of thing.

There is no analysis, comment, judgment, evaluation or condemnation. There is no ‘abiding of thought’ anywhere on anything.

There is just a constant, continuous, pliable, effortless and ever-present (and thus unconditioned) state of impartial, objective experience.

**Bare Attention.** Experiencing life with a beginner’s mind also requires that we see things with bare attention, that is, with passive detachment, perceiving each moment exactly as it is as opposed to through some filter of our thoughts, ideas and feelings. There is a Zen saying, “Do not

search for truth, just stop having opinions.”

Bare attention is a way of looking at experience, adding nothing to it, and taking nothing away from the raw experience itself. There is no attempt to change things in any way. We interfere with nothing. Bare attention notices what is being noticed, and how the noticing is taking place, but involves no comment, attitude, judgment or deliberation. We simply see and ‘note’ what is, without any attachment or identification. Thus, we say, “There is anger in this body,” as opposed to “I am angry,” and “There is thinking taking place,” as opposed to “I am thinking.” Such a mind is detached, as if we were watching ourselves from the

“inside,” so to speak. We’re simply aware of what is happening from one moment to the next, without “feeling” involved in what is happening.

**Curiosity and Spontaneity.** A beginner’s mind is also a curious one, that is, one that is neither dull or bored but open-ended, receptive and interested in whatever be the experience of the moment. It is also a mind that responds effortlessly and spontaneously, resisting the temptation to respond unthinkingly, that is, mindlessly.

**Delusion and Liberation.** There is, of course, a time for thinking, introspection, analy-

sis, comparison, interpretation, and judgment. I certainly affirm the need for rationality. The trouble is, we think far too much, and we end up forfeiting our otherwise direct and immediate connection with the flow of life. Zen teaches us that using the mind to look for reality is delusion; not using the mind to look for reality is awareness; and freeing ourselves from our minds is total liberation.

How do we free ourselves from our minds? Never ask how. When we ask how, we are asking for a method, a technique. Krishnamurti often pointed out that all so-called methods and techniques are forms of brainwashing by some other person. They are means of control and subjugation. Avoid them. Eschew them.

If a pupil asks a "How do I do it?" question of their Zen master, the pupil can expect to be whacked with the *keisaku* [a wooden stick or similar device used to wake up a sleeping meditator – Ed.]. To free ourselves from our minds, we must — just do it. Observe. Watch. See things coming and going. Don't associate the so-called "me" or "I" of us with any of those things.

This is what Krishnamurti means when he says there needs to be observation without the observer, for where there is an observer there is a conditioned mind and a conditioned point of

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*Living mindfully with a beginner's mind requires no method or technique as such. . . . We just drop our attachments and look and observe choicelessly.*

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view, which is the past, and where there is the past there can be no living in the now.

Suzuki, in his book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, writes:

All that we should do is just do something as it comes. Do something! Whatever it is, we should do it, even if it is not-doing something. We should live in this moment.

Go out there and look — really look, and just look, doing nothing but look — at a rose or some other flower. Don't start thinking about the flower. Don't start comparing the flower with other flowers you have seen. Don't judge or otherwise assess the beauty of the flower. Just look at it without there being any separation. Perceive the flower here and now as if you were seeing it for the very first time. In a very profound sense, you are seeing it for the very first time. See it as it really is, as a new moment.

That moment will never come again.

Yes, this presence — indeed, omnipresence — of life is the

whole of reality. It is all here and now, and it is all there is. Life, you see, is not cumulative. It is from moment to moment — both being as well as becoming. Don't let your experience of life die on you — not even for a moment.

“Accept the offer of newness in the now,” to borrow a wonderful line from the American spiritual teacher Vernon Howard.

**The Ultimate.** In Western religion, the Ultimate creates by making. In Eastern religion, the Ultimate creates — that's not quite the right word here — by “not-making.” The Dao, the very essence of life, is not something static. It is something growing and evolving. It is dynamic, not static. The Dao is to found in the everyday things of life, in the here and now.

What is sometimes referred to as the Ultimate is in Chinese *wu-wei*. The word *wu* (*mu* in Japanese) means “not” or “non-,” with the word *wei* meaning action, doing, striving, making, and busyness. So, *wu-wei* refers to a state of mind that is characterised by non-graspingness, non-strivingness and non-clinging. *Wu-wei* is not so much non-action, non-doing or not-doing but the action of non-action.

It is a mindset that is totally and openly accepting of what is, of what unfolds from one moment to the next.

This is the beginner's mind referred to by Shunryu Suzuki. It is a mindset which is constantly moving, spontaneously and effortlessly, with and in response to changes occurring both inside and outside the mind. It is a mindset that is not fixed on any particular object. It's a state of mind in which the mind abides paradoxically in a state of nonabiding.

Both Zen and mindfulness have each been described as the “method of no method.” Each is the “technique of no technique.” Living mindfully with a beginner's mind requires no method or technique as such. We just do “it” whatever the “it” may be, mindfully. We just drop our attachments and look and observe choicelessly.

It is not easy to maintain a beginner's mind. Our intellect, education and conditioning all militate against our seeing things, and experiencing life, with a beginner's mind. Our education, our religious conditioning and many other things have taught us to interpret, compare and judge.

When we do those things in our moment-to-moment experience of daily life, we experience only the past.

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A simple donation blossoms to a life devoted  
to interspiritual service



## A Modest Gift, a Larger Calling

*Condensed from* THE PHILIPPINE THEOSOPHIST  
CHIRANJIVI

THE Miguel de Benavides Library in the University of Santo Tomas (UST) felt both familiar and foreign as I stepped into its quiet halls again after so many years a long time ago. The light fell the same way across the marble floors, and the air still carried that unmistakable scent of old books and wood. I had come with a short folder envelope under my arm: several issues of *Peace Ideas*, the modest eight-page publication of the Peace Center of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines (TSP). I hoped the issues I planned to donate

could be part of the library's collection, for UST was my alma mater. Moreover, this pontifical academe in the Philippines is the largest Roman Catholic university in the world in terms of student population in a single campus — making it an ideal academic setting for the dissemination of Ageless Wisdom teachings.

The gifts and exchange librarian, Mr. Edward Puzon — a young gentleman with a charming smile — explained that not all donations were accepted because the head librarian, who is a clergyman, along with other

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*It affirmed for me that even the simplest offerings — if born of a longing for peace and love in our world — can find their way into the right hands, and even into the right hearts and souls.*

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school administrators, exercised a strict discretion. To illustrate the fact, he pointed to a box of foreign-made hardbound volumes, each exquisitely printed, but rejected for one reason or another. Seeing them lying there, unloved, I braced myself for the likelihood that *Peace Ideas* would share the same fate.

To my surprise, and perhaps even Mr. Puzon's, the issues were not only accepted but warmly welcomed, replete with an inspiring acknowledgement letter. He handled them with an attentiveness that seemed disproportionate to their simple appearance: plain newsprint pages, minimal design, no graphics at all save for the peace dove logo. Then he told me that the head librarian, a clergyman, had found them "worthy" — their unassuming format overshadowed by the sincerity and depth of their purpose. That small joy, nearly 20 years ago,

was like a seed planted in my heart. It affirmed for me that even the simplest offerings — if born of a longing for peace and love in our world — can find their way into the right hands, and even into the right hearts and souls.

It was this memorable moment that would eventually guide me toward deeper service. In the years that followed, I found myself writing, editing, and designing publications for two inter-spiritual communities, recognizing that the work of peace is not only in dialogues or conferences but in the stories, teachings, and reminders we place before one another. These communities, diverse in their spiritual traditions yet united in their compassion-centered purpose, became my avenues for sharing the perennial wisdom — whose *raison d'être* is to help us awaken to our unitive True Nature, our True Self.

Throughout my seeker's journey, I had long admired the mystics, sages, and saints who embodied the synthesis of inner realization and outward service. Many of them became more than contemplatives; they became peacemakers and compassionate activists who carried the fruits of their spiritual practice into the world's suffering places. I wanted to emulate the way they served even though I wasn't worthy.



I found inspiration in figures like St. Francis of Assisi, whose radical simplicity and love for all creatures challenged the culture of violence in his time, and Mahatma Gandhi, who drew from the Gita, Jain ethics, and Christian teachings to forge a path of nonviolent resistance. There is Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr. because he believed that “praying with the feet” was as sacred as any liturgy. And Thich Nhat Hanh, the gentle Vietnamese Zen monk whose teachings on mindfulness, and “interbeing” played a pivotal role in global peace movements.

There were also lesser-known figures whose interspiritual instincts shaped their activism — Vandana Shiva, whose ecological work draws deeply from both Hindu philosophical traditions and global spiritual ecology; Sr. Chan Khong, whose engaged Buddhist service blended activism, humanitarian work, and contemplative grounding; and Bede Griffiths, who lived at the confluence of Christian monasticism and Hindu wisdom to promote an inner ecumenism.

These individuals, along with countless nameless peace-workers, showed me that spirituality divorced from compassionate service becomes incomplete. Their lives revealed an essential truth: that inner transformation

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*Their lives revealed an essential truth: that inner transformation naturally seeks expression in outer works of love.*

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naturally seeks expression in outer works of love.

It is also through them that I came to understand why peace cannot be legislated into existence. Treaties, decrees, and political agreements may prevent temporary conflict, but they rarely touch the roots of violence that lie deep within the human heart and mind. Lasting peace springs not from legal documents but from a transformed consciousness — one that sees itself in others, honors the unity beneath diversity, and acts from love rather than fear.

Interspiritual work — whether in meditation halls, classrooms, or elsewhere, or even the pages of a small community publication — can plant these seeds. By teaching unitive values, by sharing stories that remind us of our interconnectedness, and by nurturing the inner lives of our youth, we cultivate a different future. Education becomes sacred when it forms not only informed minds but awakened hearts. Publications become in-

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*Lasting peace springs not from legal documents but from a transformed consciousness — one that sees itself in others, honors the unity beneath diversity, and acts from love rather than fear.*

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struments of peace when they illuminate the pathways to compassion. And communities become catalysts of harmony when they model the unity they preach.

Witnessing what has been, the acceptance of *Peace Ideas* at the UST central library seems al-

most symbolic. It was as if life affirmed a direction I was already quietly walking toward — a path of peacework expressed through interspiritual service. In offering small gifts to the world, I found myself joined to a wider web of seekers and servers who believe that peace begins within, but must ultimately blossom into compassionate action — if mind and body are able.

Humbled by the company of my fellow servers, I honor the heart of our work: not only to raise awareness of, but to awaken to our unitive True Nature and to live its truth, so that Divine Love may flow through us into the world.

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I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy. RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The fruit of love is service, which is compassion in action.

MOTHER TERESA

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught . . . The soul must grow through its own experience. SRI AUROBINDO

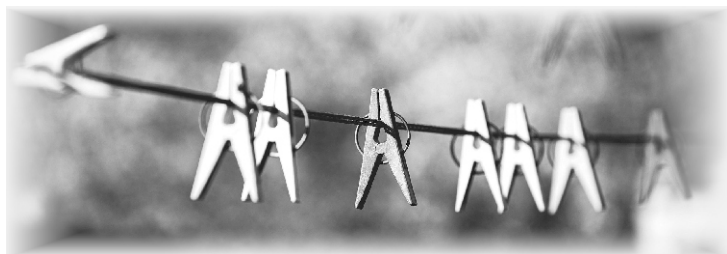
They alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

The spiritual life unfolds in the faithful performance  
of everyday duties



## Family Duties

*Condensed from* THEOSOPHY FORWARD  
MICHELE SENDER

Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your “family duties”? Nay, but what better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty? Believe me my “pupil,” the man or woman who is placed by karma in the midst of small plain duties and sacrifices and loving-kindness, will through these faithfully fulfilled rise to the larger measure of Duty, Sacrifice and Charity to all Humanity — what better path towards the enlightenment you are striving after than the daily conquest of Self, the perseverance in spite of want of visible psychic progress, the bearing of ill-fortune with that serene fortitude which turns it to spiritual advantage — since good and evil are not to be measured by events on the lower or physical plane.

MASTER K.H.

**D**OES it ever feel like life is taking the ability to live spiritually out of everyday existence? That there is very little time to spend on our “spiritual duties”? This has been on my mind as I write this message from Michigan, where I am helping family usher in new opportunities while Pablo is in California unfolding new ideas to share the living power of Theosophy. I have spent very little time on meditation, study, or service to humanity. If this were an isolated event, I would just do my duty and return to my practice as soon as I can.

But the truth is, this is my spiritual practice right now.

I often imagine spiritual life as something separate from ordinary life — a sanctuary to re-

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*What if the spiritual life isn't something we do in addition to our regular life, but something we discover within it?*

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treat to when mundane duties finally release me. I picture the dedicated hours of meditation, the uninterrupted study, the organized service projects. And when circumstances pull me away from these forms, it feels like somehow, I have failed or fallen behind.

Yet, the Master M. suggests something different. In the quote, he points to the faithful performance of whatever duty karma has placed before us as genuine spiritual discipline. Not as a consolation prize when “real” practice isn’t possible, but as the actual path itself. The daily conquest of self doesn’t happen only on the meditation cushion — it happens in the patience we bring to repetitive tasks, in choosing kindness when we’re exhausted, in remaining steady when plans collapse.

What if the spiritual life isn’t something we do in addition to our regular life, but something we discover within it? What if these very circumstances that seem to interrupt our practice

are, in fact, the practice karma has assigned?

**Microdosing the Spiritual Life.** Still, meditation, study, and service remain essential. They’re not luxuries we abandon when life gets busy — they’re the vitamins that sustain us through demanding seasons. The key is adapting their form without abandoning their essence. Science is discovering the value of micro-practice. An article recently published in the *New Scientist*, December 8, 2025 (1) says, “Too busy to meditate? Microdosing mindfulness has big health benefits.”

*Meditation in moments:* A single conscious breath while waiting at a red light. Ten seconds of heart-centered awareness before opening an email. The brief pause between one task and another to simply notice you’re alive and present. These micro-meditations don’t replace deeper practice, but they keep the thread alive. They remind us throughout the day that consciousness itself is always available.

*Study in fragments:* One paragraph from theosophical text with your morning coffee. A single aphorism carried in your pocket to revisit throughout the day. Even rereading a passage you’ve highlighted before plants seeds. The mind continues working on these fragments in the background, often revealing insights during unrelated activi-

ties. Quality matters more than quantity — one sentence genuinely absorbed can transform a day.

*Service in small gestures:* Listening fully when someone speaks instead of planning your response. Choosing patience when everything in you wants to react. Offering genuine encouragement to someone struggling. Service to humanity doesn't always mean organized volunteering — sometimes it means bringing a bit more light to each interaction karma places before you. The checkout clerk, the frustrated family member, the stranger in need of directions — each is humanity in miniature.

These practices aren't compromises. They're how we train ourselves to recognize that the spiritual life is always present, always available, part of life itself,

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*The spiritual life is always present, always available, part of life itself, rather than separated from it.*

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rather than separated from it. When dedicated time for practice returns, we'll find these micro-moments have kept the path alive.

Let us honor the ordinary duties that fill our days as one year's lessons yield to next year's opportunities and may grace and grit be our companions in the faithful performance of each moment.

[HTTPS://WWW.THEOSOPHYFORWARD.COM/OC-CULT-LIFE-IN-ORDINARY-MOMENTS-%E2%80%93-LETTER-1-FAMILY-DUTIES](https://www.theosophyforward.com/oc-cult-life-in-ordinary-moments-%E2%80%93-letter-1-family-duties)



The spiritual life is not lived in monasteries alone; it is lived in the street, the office, the home, and the crowd.

EVELYN UNDERHILL

God is found in the soul, not only in the cloister, but in the marketplace.

MEISTER ECKHART

Zen is not something special. It is simply living your life, moment by moment, as it is.

ZENKEI SHIBAYAMA

The family is the first essential cell of human society; it is the place where we learn responsibility and solidarity.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

The light of spirituality shines brightest when it illumines ordinary life: how we speak, how we care, how we live together in our homes.

DALAI LAMA

Small acts of kindness and positive thought light the way through difficult times



## Light a Single Candle

*Condensed from* SUNRISE

ANDREW ROOKE

**D**EPRESSION and anxiety are very common in modern Western society. We all feel sad and on edge sometimes, but for many people these feelings can be overwhelming and return periodically to cloud their lives. Job restructuring and insecurity, heavy workloads, rapid change, unstable international conditions, balancing home and work commitments, time constraints, new technology, high divorce rates – what practical suggestions can we offer those suffering from the stresses of modern life?

Of course, not all stress is negative. It can be a means to stimu-

late growth. As a potter friend once put it, “A clay pot sitting in the sun will always be a clay pot. It has to go through the white heat of the furnace to become porcelain.” We need to be under some degree of strain to force us to move forward from our comfort zone. Stress seems to be an inevitable part of life in the present cycle when humanity is challenged collectively to make such progress. Hindu traditions teach that we are 5,000 years into a cycle of 432,000 years, called the kali or “black” age, where the forces of materialism have great strength. The Vishnu Purana tells us that in

the kali age experiences crowd in on us rapidly, life is short compared to other cycles, and the ethical standards expressed by the majority may be low. Should we despair in such a situation? No! – for this is the cycle with the greatest opportunity, where opposition to spiritual values is intense and, therefore, students of life's mysteries can learn the most. "You cannot build your spiritual muscles by pushing against the air," as the same friend told me – but how do we approach life's stresses positively?

We live in a dualistic universe. Wherever there are negatives, there must also be a positive aspect. Wherever we can, let's try to learn the lessons from harsh experiences and try to work harmoniously with the evolutionary forces of nature. Sometimes, this might be as simple as making a positive start rather than being overwhelmed with the darkness of the moment – lighting a single candle rather than cursing the darkness. When our higher nature sends us forth on life's journey, it never projects us into situations which are beyond our capacity to handle, and a few kind words at the right moment may encourage a suffering person to search for inner strength in the face of life's challenges.

Katherine Tingley's meeting with H. P. Blavatsky's spiritual teacher in the foothills of

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*Wherever we can, let's try to learn the lessons from harsh experiences and try to work harmoniously with the evolutionary forces of nature.*

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Darjeeling, India, has much to teach us about coping with the stresses of life. As they spoke together on a hillside overlooking a farmer's field, he suggested the following, among other ideas:

*Purity of thought:* We may surround ourselves with contemplation on spiritual matters even when our hands are busy with everyday tasks. One of the teacher's students or chelas was plowing a field, and the Master said that the team of normally unruly oxen were always calm for the chela because they were immersed in the atmosphere of his concentration and contemplations. Further, we should not live in dread of life's experiences, but go cheerfully on our way coping with the tasks at hand rather than being overwhelmed by distant goals.

*Try not to worry:* We should fight the tendency to let worries and anxieties of our everyday consciousness weigh us down. Blavatsky's teacher said that hopelessness and anxiety can



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***When our higher nature sends us forth on life's journey, it never projects us into situations which are beyond our capacity to handle.***

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bring our body's atoms "down halfway to death. But they can be quickened to a kind of immortality by the fire of the divine life and attuned into universal harmony. Men anywhere could get rid of all that burden of un necessities, and carry themselves like that young chela does, if they had the mental balance.

*Live in the now:* Think of the immediate moments and seconds of which the path of our lives is composed. Don't exhaust spiritual energy by worrying about what might be somewhere far along the path. Rather, we "should let the beaming thought pour itself into each arriving moment and be indifferent to the morrow. One can find in every instant of time, if one has the desire, the door into worlds of golden opportunity, the gateway to a glorious path stretching out into the limitless eternal."

*Prepare for the day's challenges:* In the early and sacred morning hours, we should take a little time to connect with the

higher self through holding a beautiful thought in our minds, reminding ourselves of our mission to help others, and pondering on overcoming our most difficult challenges for the day ahead. In this way, we may bask in the sunlight of the soul before moving on to worldly duties. In particular, the teacher remarked that the first three hours of daylight provide a valuable opportunity in this regard, as he who is ready to step out with the sunrise and work with the sun "has the cooperation of a force he little knows of — the vibrant blue light behind the sun."

*Spend time in natural surroundings:* Nature is the great healer when the distractions and stresses of daily life crowd in. If we walk into the silence of the forest, listen to the symphony of the wind in the leaves, gaze in wonder at the stars, listen to the music of the birds, or walk by the rhythmic wash of the seashore we may free ourselves there "from old trying memories and from all anticipations of trouble," making ourselves "at one with that light in nature."

The Buddhist tradition speaks of the value of positive thought to neutralize negative energy. If we adopt the habit of thinking beautiful thoughts when negative thoughts creep into our minds, such thoughts will be to some extent altered for the better when they inevitably return to us. Wil-

liam Quan Judge called this process the “cyclic impression and return of thought.” He once wrote offering advice about a friend suffering from recurrent bouts of unexplained depression:

We can only have these good results by producing opposite impressions to bad ones. . . . So, take this occasion of despondency. What he should have done was, that being the return of an old impression, to have compelled himself to feel joyous, even against his will, and . . . he would have implanted in himself another impression, that is of joy, so that when this thing returned once more, instead of being of the same quality and extension, it would have been changed by the impression of joy or elation and the two things coming together would have counteracted each other, just as two billiard balls coming together tend to counteract each other’s movements. . . . You cannot rub it out if it has been coming, but when it comes start up something else, start up cheerfulness, be good to someone, then try to relieve some other person who is despondent, and you will have started another impression, which will return at the same time. It does not make any difference if you wait a day or two to do this. The next day, or a few days after will do, for when the old cyclic impression returns, it will have dragged up the new one, because it is related to it by association. (*Echoes of the Orient*, 1:500)

This sage advice is similar in many ways to the recommendations of contemporary stress

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*In the early and sacred morning hours, we should take a little time to connect with the higher self through holding a beautiful thought in our minds, reminding ourselves of our mission to help others, and pondering on overcoming our most difficult challenges for the day ahead.*

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counselors, including such luminaries as American clown-doctor Patch Adams, who uses humor and cheerfulness to help treat his patients. In his autobiography as well as in the film starring Robin Williams, Patch describes how he evolved his use of humor to help cure illness, first dressing as a clown on his hospital rounds with children, and later also with adults. For many years, he worked in the poor parts of American cities from his own hospital/home providing free medical care to anybody in need. His proud boast was that he had never taken any fee in 30 years of practice, yet had never gone hungry! He has evolved an

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*If we adopt the habit of thinking beautiful thoughts when negative thoughts creep into our minds, such thoughts will be to some extent altered for the better when they inevitably return to us.*

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unusual mixture of good humor, conventional and alternative medical treatments, and selfless service to others that has attracted the attention of physicians throughout the world. Patch and his team of “clown-doctors” have extended their work to troubled areas of the world such as Russia, former Eastern Block countries, and war-ravaged Afghanistan, bringing the healing medicine of laughter into the lives of thousands.

Dr. Shane Yates and Patricia Cameron-Hill, two of Australia’s leading management and personal improvement educators, offer some sound practical advice on positive approaches to handling stress based on modern medical research and the work of Patch Adams. They see good humor and positive attitudes as the most powerful weapons in our armory against negative stress

and give some commonsense advice: (1) Access humor by developing the habit of seeing the funny side of every situation so that you can acquire a light-hearted attitude to conditions likely to bring you down. Watching funny videos/DVDs, listening to comedians, and being around good-humored people can help. (2) Make friends and make time for other people: call them, listen to them, share interests, develop the habit of living outside yourself. Supporting and giving to others are great healers. (3) Be happy – publicly! Put on a bright, cheerful exterior if you can. Commit random acts of kindness and be ready to lend a hand, perhaps volunteering for a couple of hours per week. (4) Change patterns of thinking: instead of talking negatively to yourself, look at your positive achievements at the end of each day. Events in themselves are not always stressful, but the way we think about our experiences can be. (5) Stay physically fit: there is no doubt that we can handle stress better, enjoy life, and have a more positive attitude if we feel fit. This may involve a walk with the dog, playing with the kids, or a formal fitness program for 20 minutes three times per week. Physical fitness also promotes a sound night’s sleep, another essential aspect of handling stress and depression.

## Light a Single Candle

Good humor, positive attitudes, thinking about others – stress and burnout don't seem to affect people who have these attitudes towards their work and relationships, where others may feel crushed by similar levels of stress. Patch Adams exemplifies this approach in his own life, which has had its fair share of tragedy and challenges privately and professionally. He continues his work today towards the establishment of hospitals in the USA and elsewhere based on his philosophy of good cheer combined with medical treatments from many traditions. Let all of us, then, who have been touched by these ideas, try in our own

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*Be happy – publicly! Put on a bright, cheerful exterior if you can. Commit random acts of kindness and be ready to lend a hand, perhaps volunteering for a couple of hours per week.*

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small ways to bring a little more kindness, humor, courage, and light into the lives of others.

SUNRISE, DECEMBER 1999/JANUARY 2020. COPYRIGHT © 1980 BY THEOSOPHICAL UNIVERSITY PRESS, POST OFFICE BOX C, PASADENA, CALIFORNIA, 91109-7107 USA



Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

THE BUDDHA

When you light a candle, you also light your own path.

THICH NHAT HANH

The Self is like a candle that illumines other objects but itself needs no other light.

KABIR

Try not to resist the changes that come your way; instead, let life through you. And do not worry that your life is turning upside down. How do you know that the side you are used to is better than the one to come?

RUMI

From the darkness of the heart, the light of wisdom suddenly shines.

HAKUIN

The obstacle is the path.

ZEN SAYING



# WORLDWATCH

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## World's First Flying-Car Factory Trial Production

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China's XPENG AEROHT has launched trial production at what it calls the world's first intelligent factory for mass-produced flying cars. Unlike previous one-off prototypes, this facility is designed for scaled manufacturing, bringing the era of personal aerial mobility closer to reality. The company plans to roll out thousands of detachable eVTOL-equipped flying vehicles this year, signaling a major step toward commercial availability. Each vehicle combines road-driving capability with vertical takeoff and landing. This milestone highlights how technology, manufacturing, and urban air transport infrastructure are converging, making flying cars a tangible part of the transportation landscape. While regulatory and safety challenges remain, XPENG's factory represents the first real effort to move beyond prototypes toward mass-market flying vehicles. (*China Daily*)

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## Renewables Overtake Coal Globally

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For the first time in history, renewable energy sources have generated more electricity globally than coal, signaling a pivotal moment in the transition toward cleaner power; solar, wind, hydropower, and modern bio-energy have surged ahead, driven by technological advances, falling costs, and global commitments to reduce carbon emissions. Coal, which once dominated electricity generation for decades, has been steadily declining as aging plants close and governments shift policies toward low-carbon alternatives. The crossover reflects a structural change in how the world produces energy, demonstrating that renewables can meet a growing share of global demand. Despite this achievement, challenges remain. Expanding energy storage, modernizing electrical grids, and ensuring access to clean power for developing nations will be crucial to sustain this momentum. (*The Guardian*)

## World's First Global Pandemic Agreement Adopted at WHO

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In a landmark shift for international public health, member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) formally adopted the first-ever global Pandemic Agreement recently at Geneva, Switzerland. This historic accord follows more than three years of negotiations sparked by the COVID-19 crisis and aims to make the world safer and more equitable in responding to future pandemics. The agreement establishes a comprehensive international framework for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, promoting stronger disease surveillance, equitable access to vaccines and treatments, and coordinated global action. It includes commitments to a One Health approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. Officials say the pact underscores renewed multilateral cooperation and solidarity, seeking to close gaps exposed by COVID-19 and ensure countries are better equipped to protect communities worldwide. Next steps include finalizing a Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing system to open the agreement for signature and formal ratification. (*Reuters*)

## World's First Declaration on Global AI Governance

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At the 17th BRICS Summit, leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) recently issued the bloc's first Statement on the Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence — a landmark consensus document aimed at shaping how countries steward AI in the years ahead. The declaration, adopted under the summit theme “Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance,” calls for a more equitable, representative global framework for AI governance that includes the voices and needs of developing nations rather than letting AI policy be dominated solely by wealthier states or private sector interests. Among its priorities, the statement urges: strengthening national AI capacities and infrastructure across all countries; collaborative innovation and education to prepare workforces for AI's impacts; fair access to AI technologies without barriers that disadvantage smaller or less wealthy economies; and UN-led multilateral cooperation as the central mechanism for global AI norms and standards. (*Reuters*)

Special Feature:



# Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

*Condensed from Theosophia*

DARA EKLUND



# Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

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**H**ELENA Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) was a prolific writer on comparative religion, mythology, and esoteric subjects, and the primary founder of the Theosophical Society (TS). As part of a larger movement to reinstate the ageless wisdom of countless seers and sages, Blavatsky has been called the greatest esotericist in the history of Western civilization and a “direct agent of the Trans-Himâlayan Brotherhood of Adepts,” by the editor of her *Collected Writings*, Boris de Zirkoff. HPB, as she later became known by her students, was born August 12 (July 31 O.S.) 1831 at Ekaterinoslav, Russia (now Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine). She was daughter of Col. Peter Alexeyevich von Hahn (1798-1873) and Helena Andreyevna de Fadeyev (1814- 1842), a renowned novelist. When christened as a babe, the officiating priest’s robe caught fire from a candle, a seeming token of that fervent opposition to sectarian and priestly religion she was to champion. As a child, Blavatsky was endowed with remarkable psychic sensitivity, and a bril-

liant mind. The latter was cultivated by a keen pursuit of the metaphysical books in her grandfather’s library. Her psychic powers were later brought under control with aid from her Oriental teachers. To those surrounding her in youth, her behavior seemed odd, but to the street urchins she preferred to play with, she was intriguing. The family moved to Saratov after her mother died, traveling partly by camel and meeting some Kalmuck Buddhists. The old mansion they settled in had subterranean passages the children loved to explore. HPB’s sister recounted how Helena could be found reading a book known as “Solomon’s Wisdom,” hidden amidst a tower of piled-up chairs in the old country mansion. She loved to immerse herself in the folk and fairy tales told by an elderly servant. She would regale her playmates with stories of antediluvian creatures, psychometrized from petrified relics found in a sand tract near the governor’s villa. Her gift for descriptive narrative surfaces in her adult fiction, such as ‘*The Ensouled Violin*’ and other

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*Nightmare Tales.* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892; reprinted in The Tell-Tale Picture Gallery, Los Angeles: Theosophy Company, n.d.). She became a gifted linguist, talented pianist and artist.

In 1849, to defy her governess, she married 40 year-old Nikifor Vassilyevich Blavatsky (1809-?). Within a few months she left him to travel in Turkey, Greece, Egypt and France, fulfilling her ardent yearnings for the secrets and underlying causes of the Universe. She was seeking to answer two recurring questions: "Where, WHO, WHAT is GOD?" and "Whoever saw the IMMORTAL SPIRIT of man, so as to be able to assure himself of man's immortality?" (IU I:vi).

**H. P. Blavatsky in 1884.** Early in 1851, HPB underwent a deep depression, despairing if she would ever grasp the "philosopher's stone." At a critical moment, on a bridge overlooking the Thames River, her Master's reassuring voice promised triumph in her quest (*H. P. B. Speaks*, edited by C. Jinarâja-

dâsa, Vol. II. Adyar: T.P.H., 1951, 66-67).

A number of months following this prophetic encounter, Blavatsky stated that in 1851, on her 20th birthday, she met her Master in London. He was traveling with a delegation of Indian princes. Recognizing in him the pinnacle of human perfection, and the one who had guarded her since childhood, she conversed several hours with him in Hyde Park. According to Countess Wachtmeister, his stately Rajput initiate outlined a great work of worldwide scope for her to do, "on account of her great intellectual and mental powers, and because of her partly Eastern and partly Western birth," as well as her psychical powers. Master Morya, as he later became known, forewarned her of a position fraught with great trial, even persecution, connected with the Society he asked her to form (see *The Irish Theosophist*, June 15, 1894, Vol. II, p. 128).

She continued her travels throughout America, Ceylon and India, in search for the truth about the universe and man. Alfred Percy Sinnet's *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky* (London: Redway 1886; p. 62) portrays her disillusionment with a tribe of Indians in Quebec, whose medicine men she had conversed with in 1851. When they stole her possessions and prized boots, she felt they had

been corrupted by Christian missionaries. From Canada she wended her way south to New Orleans, to study the practice of Voodoo. Warned of its dangers in a vision, she continued onward, via Texas to Mexico. Sinnett writes:

Thus by hook or by crook, Madame always managed to scramble along unscathed; though it seems miraculous in the retrospect that she should have been able — young woman at that time as she was — to lead the wild life on which she was embarked without actually incurring disasters. . . . She passed through rough communities of all kinds, savage as well as civilized, and seems to have been guarded from harm, as assuredly she was guarded, by the sheer force of her own fearlessness, and her fierce scorn for all considerations however remotely associated with the “magnetism of sex.” (op. cit., p. 64)

**Personal Seal of H. P. Blavatsky.** In 1852, after extensive travels throughout Central and South America, she met at Copán, Honduras, a Hindu who was to accompany her to India, along with an English gentleman who joined them in the West Indies. Unfortunately, the names of her fellow travelers are unknown. For a time she traveled in India dressed as a man. Dr. Albert Leighton Rawson is an important witness to her travels. HPB had met him in Cairo, Egypt. In 1878, Rawson published a letter citing several

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friends of his who had met her in India: “[Some] of my acquaintances have met Madame Blavatsky in the far east; others have heard of her residence there; for instance, the eminent physician and surgeon, David E. Dudley, M.D. of Manila; Mr. Frank A. Hill of Boston, Mass., who was in India some years since . . .” (*The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky*, by Sylvia Cranston. New York: Putnam’s, 1993, p. 51).

Her first attempt to reach Tibet failed. Major General C. Murray told Henry Steel Olcott on March 3, 1893, that he himself had thwarted her plans on her second effort to cross over the border in 1854 (“Traces of H. P. Blavatsky,” *The Theosophist*, April 1893, pp. 4-9).

Of her vast travels, HPB later wrote to Prince Dondoukov, “I have lived with the whirling Dervishes, with the Druzes of Mt. Lebanon, with the Bedouin Arabs and the Marabouts of Damascus . . .” (*H. P. B. Speaks*, Vol. 2, p. 65). After crossing the Rocky

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Mountains of America via covered wagon in 1854, she again left for India by late 1855. Journeying via Kashmir and Ladakh, she finally reached Tibet, to undergo training in the ancient mysteries with her Master (see Cranston, Pt. III, pp. 58-9 et seq.). Many incidents about her second trip to India and Tibet were recorded in *Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975). Originally appearing under HPB's pen name Radda Bai in the *Moskovskiya Vedomosty* (*Moscow Chronicle*) between 1879-1882, they were republished in *Russkiy Vestnik* (Russian Messenger) by the same editor, Mihail N. Katkov. Blavatsky's teacher is known as Thâkur Gulâb-Lal-Singh in these fictionalized tales. Accompanied by a Tartar Shaman during 1856-57, her travels led her throughout India, Kashmir, portions of Tibet, Burma, Siam and Assam. Later in Burma, she was

cured of severe fever by a Rangoon native.

Returning to Europe via Java in 1858, she eventually arrived in her native Russia in late fall of 1858. During the following years, she exhibited to her family many of her inner powers, drawing numerous visitors interested in her psychic abilities. She was cautioned by the Metropolitan of Kiev to use these powers with discrimination, for if wisely used she could do much good. During the years 1860 to 1865, she lived and traveled in the Caucasus, studying with native Kudyani (magicians), and learning to heal. It was during this time that she underwent a mysterious illness and began to bring her powers under control. She herself stated that "Between the Blavatsky of 1845-65 and . . . 1865-82, there is an unbridgeable gulf" (*H. P. B. Speaks*, II, p. 58).

Leaving Russia in the autumn of 1865, HPB traveled extensively throughout the Balkans, Greece, Egypt, Syria and Italy. Joining the cause of Giuseppe Garibaldi, she was wounded amidst the revolutionaries at the battle of Mentana, Italy, on November 3, 1867. HPB went via India back to Tibet, meeting Master Koot Hoomi for the first time in late 1868, and staying in his house in Little Tibet (now Western Kashmir). After a visit to Cyprus and Greece where she

met Master Hilarion, she embarked for Egypt, and traveling on the SS Eunomia, was shipwrecked near Spetsai Island on July 4, 1871. Settling in Cairo (1871-72), her attempt to form a Société Spirite aborted. She had hoped to investigate mediums and psychic phenomena, testing Allan Kardec's theories about Spiritism, but drew on amateur mediums who absconded with the Society's money. Undaunted, her training in the hidden laws of nature continued via travels throughout the Mid-East and Eastern Europe.

It was recognized by her adept teachers that HPB was not perfect, but the best vehicle they could find for awakening the West to the truths of Eastern philosophy. She had the courage to challenge both the dogmas of theology and science, and to oppose materialism in an industrial age. Although at times quick to explode, she had a large, forgiving heart, total loyalty to her Teachers, and a wide-ranging knowledge despite lack of formal education. In mid-19th century Russia, women did not receive the same education as men, but were tutored at home by their governesses.

She often suffered betrayal by trusted friends and associates. At times, she recognized a potential enemy, but knew karmically the individuals deserved a chance to collaborate in her

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work. She knew that the final judge would prove to be Time itself and the laws of the universe would balance all effects in the grand scheme of things.

In Paris by spring of 1873, she received orders from her Master to go to New York. Exchanging her 1st class ticket for 3rd class tickets, she enabled an indigent mother and her two children, who had been swindled, to reach America. She traveled with them via steerage in a crowded hold. Upon reaching New York, alone in a foreign city, HPB crafted ties and decorated calling cards for a living.

On October 14, 1874, she met Col. Henry Steel Olcott at the Eddy farmhouse in Vermont, where he was investigating Spiritualism for *The Daily Graphic*. Spiritualism was rampant in America in those days, attracting even high officials from other countries. Olcott stated in *People from the Other World*, (Hartford,

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Connecticut: American Publishing Co., 1875; p. 453) that Blavatsky's "mediumship is totally different from that of any other person I ever met; for, instead of being controlled by spirits to do their will, it is she who seems to control them to do her bidding."

Her literary career began in late 1874 with defending genuine Spiritualistic manifestations, while opposing the theory of "spirits" as their source, proposed by Spiritualism. In New York, around August of 1875, H. P. B. also met a young lawyer, William Quan Judge, who became one of her closest students and eventually president of the American Theosophical Society. Together with Col. Olcott, William Quan Judge and several others, HPB founded The Theosophical Society, on November 17, 1875. The Inaugural Address was given by President Henry S. Olcott. The chief objects of the Society were, as given in the ap-

pendix (p. 308) to *The Key to Theosophy*:

First — To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color. Second — To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions and sciences. Third — A third object — pursued by a portion only of the members of the Society — is to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers of man.

HPB's first major work, *Isis Unveiled*, (New York: J. W. Bouton) was published in the fall of 1877 in New York, producing a tremendous impact, with 1,000 copies sold within 10 days. There were rave reviews by the *N.Y. Herald Tribune*, as well as other major newspapers and journals. In London the critical journal *Public Opinion* (December 29, 1877) called it "one of the most extraordinary works of the Nineteenth Century." Observing HPB at work on *Isis*, Olcott marveled at her newly-found learning. He wrote a long letter to her aunt inquiring about her education. Nadya replied with a compact character sketch in a letter dated October 8, 1877:

... She was well brought up, but was not at all learned. ... But the unusual richness of her intellectual nature, the delicacy and swiftness of her thought, her marvelous facility in understanding, grasping and assimilating the most diffi-

cult subjects, such as would require from anybody else years of laborious study; . . . these gave her such an unusual superiority, . . . that she could never avoid attracting general attention, and the consequent envy and animosity of all those who, in their trivial inferiority, felt wounded by the splendor of the faculties and talents of this really marvelous woman. (Cranston, p. 151)

HPB wrote to her family about the change which came over her in writing *Isis*, mentioning the presence of a Hindu supervising her conduct and her writing, along with her struggles to cope with a double identity during this period. In Volume I of *Isis*, entitled "Science," Blavatsky examined the ancient systems of philosophy and cryptic science, thus unearthing their true foundations. By the close of Volume II ("Theology"), she traced the hidden traditions of ancient religions pre-dating the Vedas and early Jain, Buddhist, Egyptian and Chaldean teachings; finding the same Esoteric stream in the later Gnostic, Platonic, Kabbalistic and Judeo-Christian systems. Blavatsky established that "MAGIC is spiritual WISDOM" and that "One common vital principle pervades all things, and this is controllable by the perfected human will" (IU II:590).

In May of 1878, according to Josephine Ransom (*A Short History of the Theosophical Society*:

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1875-1937. Adyar: T.P.H., 1938, p. 106), HPB received orders from her Masters to begin preparations for eventual departure to India. Apparently, the co-founders believed the move to be exploratory. She never returned to the US, but did become an American citizen on July 8, 1878, before leaving. Blavatsky later explained that it was the intention of her teachers to vitalize three centers of Theosophy in the world: America, India, and Europe.

While Judge remained in New York, HPB sailed for India with Olcott on December 17, 1878, settling first in Bombay, and editing her first journal *The Theosophist*. Prominent Hindu and Buddhist figures, including Mahâtma Gandhi and Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka, have attributed India and Ceylon's restored faith in their respective Aryan and Buddhist



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cultures to the influence of the TS in India. (A special stamp issued by the Indian government in 1975, commemorated the 100th celebration of the founding of the TS.) On May 25, 1880, HPB and Olcott became Buddhists, assisting the Ceylonese reformers Megethuvatte Gunananda and Anagārika Dharma-pāla in their struggles against the missionaries, as well as stimulating a revival of Buddhism.

HPB transferred headquarters from Bombay to Adyar, Madras (Chennai) in 1883. The Indian membership grew rapidly, although some Brahmins were reluctant to support an organization revealing the existence of their revered Masters. Alfred Percy Sinnett, editor of the British colonial newspaper *The Pioneer*, ardently begged contact with these august beings and eventually began a correspondence with them. Thus began

the series of epistles spanning the years 1880-84, eventually edited by A. Trevor Barker, as *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923). These letters, in which the Master Morya and Koot Hoomi address numerous questions on theosophical teaching and current affairs, are now housed in London at the British Museum. The earliest letters became the foundation of Sinnett's books *The Occult World* (London: Trübner, 1881) and *Esoteric Buddhism* (Trübner, 1883). Allan Octavian Hume (1829- 1912), an ornithologist and British civil servant who fathered the Indian National Congress, sought the same privilege. With Sinnett, he founded the Eclectic Branch of the TS at Simla, where HPB was a frequent visitor. His arrogance, insistence on scientific proof of their secret teachings and disdain for Blavatsky, led the Mahātmās to discontinue the correspondence. In their totality these letters gave the West an insight into the more recondite teachings of the Occult (i.e., hidden) Brotherhood and the purpose for presenting them to the Occident at this time. Readers learned that "Masters" were not Gods but advanced humans, having achieved a state of evolution open to all. They were not solely Hindus, or Buddhists, but members of a Trans-Himalayan Brotherhood seeking to uplift humanity throughout the world.

Numerous phenomena were produced by HPB in those early days in India. Although the Masters K. H. and Morya rarely appeared to anyone in person, many seekers came to Adyar to witness the phenomena occurring in the presence of their messenger. A portrait called "The Messenger" by famous Russian painter Nicholas Roerich, symbolizes the door to the East HPB opened for humanity. It now hangs at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, Adyar.

While Olcott became increasingly absorbed with Buddhism and healing, HPB influenced a number of Hindu disciples such as Damodar K. Mavalankar and S. Ramaswamier. Damodar, after reading *Isis* and joining the TS wrote . . . "this study makes every man respect his religion the more." ("The Path in India," *The Theosophist*, May 1880, pp. 196-7.) Well into the 20th century we find HPB's work acclaimed by Indian figures such as Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and S. Radhakrishnan. The Theosophical Society's influence on Indian Society is widely recognized in India.

However, a shadow fell upon HPB's work between 1884 and 1885, which created a disruption for a time. This was partly due to betrayal by Emma and Alexis Coulomb. Emma Coulomb had helped Blavatsky when HPB

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was in dire straits on her earlier trip through Cairo. Later the Coulombs showed up at Adyar begging for employment. As household aides at Adyar they had access to the shrine where the Masters letters were materialized. Having been expelled for slander and extortion of TS funds while the founders were in England, the Coulombs refused to leave immediately. They became willing pawns of Christian missionaries by accepting money and forging letters in HPB's handwriting. Those letters were reproduced in the *Madras Christian College Magazine* of Sept. 11, 1884, under the title "The Collapse of Koot Hoomi." Emma Coulomb claimed that the shrine cabinet was accessed from Blavatsky's room by secret sliding panels in its back. (Some Accounts of *My Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884*. Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1884.) An inept and bi-

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ased investigation of her psychic powers was conducted by Richard Hodgson of the Society for Psychical Research. Although claiming at the outset that he was favorably disposed toward Blavatsky and the theosophists, he privately held the opinion that Blavatsky was a Russian spy. According to Judge, sent there to investigate the charges, the shrine's panels had recently been added by Alexis Coulomb, a skilled carpenter. The implicating report of the Society for Psychical Research was repudiated by Adlai Waterman in his Obituary: The "Hodgson Report" on Madame Blavatsky, 1885-1960 (Adyar: TPH, 1963). In 1986, Vernon Harrison of the SPR pointed out many flaws in the Hodgson Report ("J'Accuse," Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, April 1986, Vol. 53, pp. 286-310).

With regard to accusations that HPB had written the Mahatmas' letters, Harrison's findings paralleled earlier conclusions regarding disparities in their writing styles by Dr. Ernst Shütze in

1886, and Dr. Paul L. Kirk of the University of California criminological department in 1964. Dr. Charles Marshall used a computer analysis of HPB, Master K. H. and M.'s syntax and writing style to prove she was not the author ("The Mahatma Letters — A Syntactic Investigation into the Possibility of Forgery by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a 19th Century Occultist," *Viewpoint Aquarius*, London, England, October 1980).

In 1885 HPB left India disgusted, disheartened and ill, because Olcott and other theosophists refused to pursue legal action. Her remarks on this period are from "Why I Do Not Return to India," (Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, p. 162):

If, I say, at that critical moment, the members of the Society, and especially its leaders at Adyar, Hindu and European, had stood together as one man, firm in their conviction of the reality and power of the Masters, Theosophy would have come out more triumphantly than ever, and none of their fears would have ever been realised, however cunning the legal traps set for me, and whatever mistakes and errors of judgment I, their humble representative, might have made in the executive conduct of the matter.

But the loyalty and courage of the Adyar Authorities, and of the few Europeans who had trusted in the Masters, were not equal to the trial when it came. In spite of my protests, I was hurried away from

Headquarters. Ill as I was, almost dying in truth, as the physicians said, yet I protested, and would have battled for Theosophy in India to my last breath, had I found loyal support. But some feared legal entanglements, some the Government, while my best friends believed in the doctors' threats that I must die if I remained in India.

In Würzburg, Germany, Blavatsky was nursed back to health by Constance Wachtmeister, who then helped her transcribe her greatest work. (See Wachtmeister's *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and 'The Secret Doctrine,'* London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893.) Later, HPB spent the summer of 1886 in Ostend, with numerous visits from English students as she prolonged her stay there into autumn. That fall the printing of Sinnett's *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky* did much to restore confidence, overcoming adverse reaction to the SPR report. His book portrayed HPB as an exceedingly humane and dedicated individual. In that very year Blavatsky donated title to her ink factory to an impoverished woman at her door. The ink factory venture was evoked by the poor quality of ink available in Ostend that summer. So HPB arranged to have her own produced. Meanwhile, students from London repeatedly begged her to come and form a center for true workers there. The existent

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London Lodge appealed only to the upper classes and had grown stagnant. Archibald and Bertrand Keightley arranged for accommodation in England and assisted her transfer during this time of HPB's grave illness.

It is stated by Blavatsky that several times she was saved from death by her Master Morya. This was attested by several doctors who presided at her bedside during those crises. At one such episode Dr. Ashton Ellis came from London to Ostend, Belgium at the request of Countess Wachtmeister to attend to HPB. There, even a lawyer and an American Consul, who had been summoned to draw up her will, witnessed her remarkable recovery. (See Cranston, pp. 320-1.) Several days later she was fit enough for the voyage to London.

Shortly after HPB's arrival in London, on May 19, 1887, the Blavatsky Lodge was formed. On May 25th a publishing house was formed to help with *The Secret Doctrine's* production, and a new magazine *Lucifer* was

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launched. Its emphasis was to be on theosophical philosophy and ethics, rather than on occult phenomena. Mabel Collins was originally co-editor, replaced later by Annie Besant. The HPB Press handled all the printing.

Inaugurated in Europe, *The Secret Doctrine* (SD) was published in London in 1888, by the Theosophical Publishing Company. Later in 1889, Keightley described to *New York Times* reporter that HPB had had few books to consult in writing the SD. The many quotes HPB had seen astrally, he himself checked in the British Museum and found them to be accurate. This monumental work was to influence many scientists and scholars, including William Crookes, Dr. Hubre-Schleiden, editor of *The Sphinx*, and Kabbalist J. Ralston Skinner, whose MS and correspondence Blavatsky often quoted from. The SD also drew a number of admirers from the

Irish Literary Renaissance, including George W. Russell (AE), Charles Johnston, William B. Yeats, W. K. Magee (John Eglington) and Charles Weekes. Comprising the Dublin Lodge of the TS, this Celtic group proclaimed Universal Brotherhood and the esoteric tradition of the inner divinity of man as its objective, gathering impulse from the "Perennial Philosophy" of HPB. Prominent English reformer, Annie Besant, reviewed Blavatsky's two-volume compendium on Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis for London's *Pall Mall Gazette* (April 25, 1889), and became closely associated with HPB until the end of her life. In 1890/91 Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge was published by the Theosophical Publishing Society, providing HPB's direct answers to students questions relating to *The Secret Doctrine*.

*The Secret Doctrine* was not intended for HPB's day alone, but for generations to come. Its vast scope encompasses the cosmic origin and divine ancestry of man. Enormous cycles of development throughout the kingdoms of nature grant the possibility of reaching an exalted state similar to those Adepts she drew her teachings from. Blavatsky demonstrated that the whole system of ancient cosmogony" was not the "fancy of one or several isolated individuals" but the "uninterrupted re-

cord covering thousands of generations of Seers. . . . No vision of one adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions . . . of other adepts, and by centuries of experiences" (SD I:272-73).

A student of these volumes can witness modern scientists verifying a number of her prophetic statements today. Several, such as Dr. Freeman Dyson, Dr. David Bohm, Rupert Sheldrake, even Stephen Hawking, express ideas akin to the proposition that this is a multi-leveled universe of order, not chance! Albert Einstein was reported to have *The Secret Doctrine* upon his desk. Most physicists and astronomers assert that our origin is indeed the starry vault, comprising states of matter and energy (or interacting fields) beyond our physical perceptions, but registered with the advanced technology of 20th-century astrophysics and radio astronomy.

In October of 1888, HPB invited all theosophists so inclined to join an Esoteric School. It was to be organized on the "Original Lines" of the TS, to promote the "deeper study of esoteric philosophy." The Esoteric Section was to be solely under the direction of Madame Blavatsky, with no official or corporate connection with the exoteric Theosophical Society. Because W. Q. Judge had appealed for guidelines and had urged HPB to "make public the

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***"For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth." — Blavatsky***

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Inner Section," she asked him to come to England. He was to help found the E.S. along the lines of his handwritten draft for a Preliminary Memorandum and Rules he had sent her earlier. Many in the U.S. wished to more directly serve the cause of the Masters by becoming lay chelas. Judge was appointed as HPB's only representative in America.

During these last years when her health was rapidly failing, she not only founded *Lucifer* magazine but continued to write articles for *The Theosophist*, as well as letters to prominent worldwide journals and newspapers. In *Lucifer* (Vol. IV, p. 188; CW XI:202) HPB wrote:

For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth.

Her devotional gem *The Voice of the Silence* was published in 1889, preceded in the same year by *The Key to Theosophy*. *The*



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***The Voice of the Silence,  
wrote the 14th Dalai  
Lama in April, 1989,  
“has strongly influenced  
many sincere seekers and  
aspirants to the wisdom  
and compassion of the  
Bodhisattva Path.”***

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Voice, most theosophists agree, expresses the heart doctrine of theosophy. It was acclaimed by Dr. D. T. Suzuki as “real Mahâyâna Buddhism” in *Buddhist News* of August 1965 (p. 90). HPB wrote it at Fontainebleau, near Paris, where she went to recuperate upon her physician’s demand. There amidst the reviving forest air she penned her most poetic work. Based on *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, HPB had learned 39 of the 90 treatises by heart, probably on an earlier trip to Tibet. She dedicated them to the “few real mystics of the Theosophical Society.” Since then many poets, including Alfred Lord Tennyson and Edwin Arnold, have acclaimed their worth. Tennyson was reading *The Voice* shortly before his death according to Cranston (p. 390). William James, a TS member, quotes several passages in *The Varieties of Religious Expe-*

rience, stating, “There is a verge of the mind which these things haunt; and whispers therefrom mingle with the operations of our understanding, even as the waters of the infinite ocean send their waves to break among the pebbles that lie upon our shores.” (N.Y.: Longmans Green, 1925, pp. 421-2)

*The Voice of the Silence*, wrote the 14th Dalai Lama in April, 1989, “has strongly influenced many sincere seekers and aspirants to the wisdom and compassion of the Bodhisattva Path.” Written in dialogue format, *The Key to Theosophy* (London: T.P.H., 1889) was considered her clearest outline of theosophical teachings. Her preface states that it is not to be considered an exhaustive text book of theosophy, “but only a key to unlock the door that leads to the deeper study.” It affords today’s students practical means to help alleviate social evils still plaguing us today. HPB writes on p. 229: “Duty is that which is due to Humanity, to our fellow men, neighbors, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we ourselves.” Blavatsky’s Letters to the American Conventions instill the same humanitarian concerns. In a letter to Judge which HPB asked him to read at the second annual convention of the American Section of the TS (April 22, 1888), she



states "Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the conditions of mankind. We are the friends of all those who fight against drunkenness, against cruelty to animals, against injustice to women, against corruption in society or in government, although we do not meddle in politics" (CW IX:246). Blavatsky herself funded the opening of a residence for underpaid working girls in August of 1890, insisting this "Women's Club" be open to all.

Passing away on May 8, 1891, HPB's body was cremated in Surrey, England. The news of her death was reported worldwide. *The Indian Mirror* of May 15th stated: "She was not of this nation or that. The wide earth was her home, and all mankind were her brothers . . ." (Cranston, p. 412). For her courage HPB has been called "lion-hearted." Who else could have had the zeal to start an altruistic society amidst a materialistic culture, in a foreign land whose language she barely knew? William Q. Judge stated that she dealt with the mind of the century as she found it, able to "inject into the thought of the day the ideas, the doctrines, the nomenclature of the Wisdom-Religion . . ." (*The Path*, New York, June 1891, Vol. VI, p.

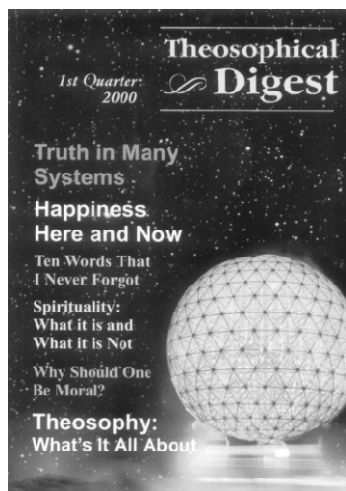
68). An editorial tribute in the *New York Tribune* of May 10, 1891, saw beyond all the vilification she had received at the hands of the press:

Few women in our time have been more persistently misrepresented, slandered, and defamed, than Madame Blavatsky, but though malice and ignorance did their worst upon her, there are abundant indications that her life-work will vindicate itself, that it will endure, and that it will operate for good. . . . The life of Madame Blavatsky was a remarkable one, but this is not the place or time to speak of its vicissitudes. It must suffice to say that for nearly twenty years she had devoted herself to the dissemination of doctrines the fundamental principles of which are of the loftiest ethical character. . . . Madame Blavatsky held that the regeneration of mankind must be based upon the development of altruism. In this she was at one with the greatest thinkers, not alone of the present day, but of all time. . . . This alone would entitle her teachings to the candid and serious consideration of all who respect the influences that make for righteousness . . . and someday, if not at once, the loftiness and purity of her aims, the wisdom and scope of her teachings, will be recognized more fully, and her memory will be accorded the honor to which it is justly entitled.

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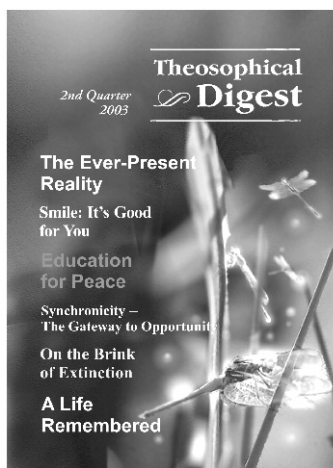
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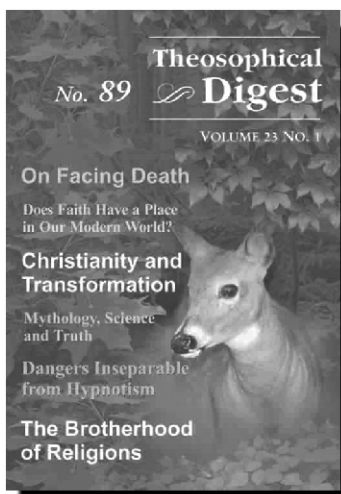
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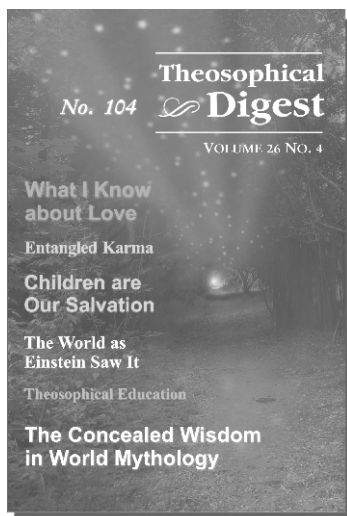
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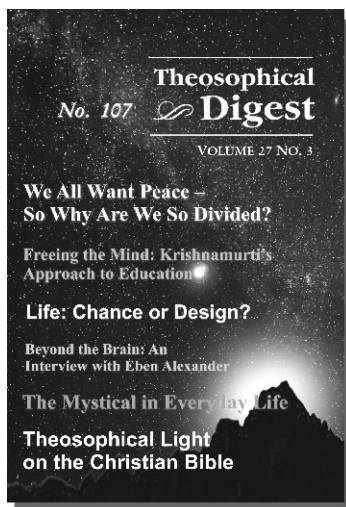
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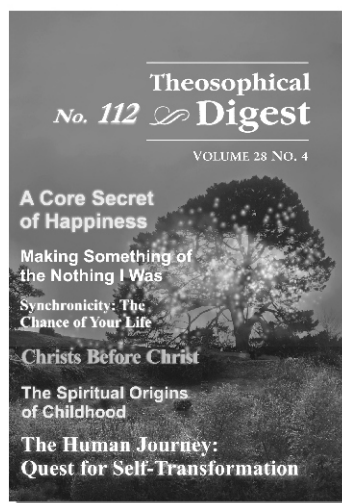
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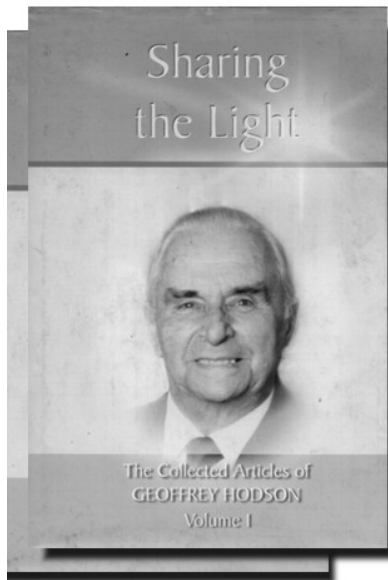
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