

## Conversations on Theosophy

**Friend:** Tell me, what is Theosophy?

**Student:** It is not a belief or dogma formulated or invented by man, but is a knowledge of the laws which govern the evolution of the physical, astral, psychical and intellectual constituents of nature and of man. Embracing both the scientific and the religious, Theosophy is a scientific religion and a religious science. It is the Science of life, the Art of living.

**Friend:** Will you point out your reasons for saying Theosophy is a scientific religion and a religious science?

**Student:** True religion will find the basic ideas common to all philosophies and religions. True science leaves out no department of nature, whether visible or invisible. Theosophy reconciles all religions and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion. Modern science, failing to admit the existence of inner faculties of perception in man, is cut off from the immense field of experience which lies within the visible and tangible worlds. Theosophy grasps the facts of nature, both without and within.

**Friend:** But religions believe in miracles and mysteries and science believes in law. How do you reconcile *that*!

**Student:** The fundamental tenet of Theosophy is that there is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law - eternal, immutable, ever active. Deity *is* law, and *vice versa*. Theosophy sees no unsolvable mystery anywhere, and hails the reign of law in everything and every circumstance. Apparent miracle is but the operation of hidden forces.

**Friend:** But does not Theosophy deny God?

**Student:** It denies Deity no more than it does the sun. Theosophy has never rejected God *in Nature*, nor Deity as the Absolute and Abstract Causeless *Cause*. It only refuses to accept any of the gods of religions, gods created by man in his own image and likeness. Theosophy teaches no Atheism, except in the sense underlying the Sanskrit word *Nastika*, a rejection of idols, including every anthropomorphic God. In this sense every Theosophist is a *Nastika*.

**Friend:** Our churches would call all this irreligion.

**Student:** The religions of the day are but a series of dogmas man-made and with no scientific foundation for promulgated ethics. That religion which, depending solely on an assumed revelation, turns away from things and the laws which govern them is but a delusion, a foe to progress, an obstacle in the way of man's advancement. Dogmatic theologians would enslave both history and science.

Theosophical teachings contain not one word against the pure teachings of Jesus, but unsparingly denounce their debasement into ecclesiastical systems.

**Friend:** Then you do believe that man possesses an immortal soul?

**Student:** That man possesses an immortal soul is the common belief of humanity; to this Theosophy adds that he *is* a soul, and further that all nature is sentient, that the vast array of objects and men are not mere collections of atoms fortuitously thrown together and thus without law evolving law, but down to the smallest atom all is soul and spirit ever evolving under the rule of law *inherent* in the whole. And just as the ancients taught, so does Theosophy; that the course of evolution is the drama of the soul, and that nature exists for no other purpose than the soul's experience.

**Friend:** What do you mean by spirit and soul?

**Student:** That there is but one indivisible and absolute Omniscience and Intelligence in the Universe and this thrills throughout every atom and infinitesimal point of the whole Kosmos, which has no bounds, and which people call Space, considered independently of anything contained in it. In short, the Spiritual Soul is one, universal, boundless and impartite, and manifests periodically, for purposes of the collective progress of the countless Lives, the outbreathings of the One Life. *All is Life*, and every atom of even mineral dust is a *Life*, though beyond our comprehension and perception, because it is outside the range of our modern thought. The expression employed by science, "inorganic substance," means simply that the latent life, slumbering in the molecules of so-called "inert matter," is incognizable. "The very atoms," says Tyndall, "seem instinct with a desire for life." Whence then, we would ask, comes the tendency "to run into organic form?" There is no such thing as either "dead" or "blind" matter, as there is no "blind" or "unconscious Law." The whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life.

**Friend:** Do you mean to say that there is no difference between an atom and a man?

**Student:** The essential difference is in degree of intelligence. Theosophy declares the Spiritual Identity of all beings. Life, or the spiritual Monad, has locked within it the potentiality of divinity. Every atom is endowed with life, moved by intelligence, and is conscious in its own degree, on its own plane of development. It is essentially and potentially the same in the lowest vegetable organism, up through all forms and gradations of animal life to man, *and beyond*.

Man has not one principle more than the tiniest insect; he is, however, a Monad that has gathered to itself innumerable experiences through aeons of time, slowly unfolding its potencies through plane after plane of "matter". Man is a Soul, and as such stands among material things. This Soul is not only on its way upward for itself, but is compelled at the same time to draw up, refine, purge and perfect the gross matter - so-called - in which it is compelled to live. For though we call the

less fine stages of substance by the name "matter", it is, however, made up of lives which have in them the potentiality of becoming Souls in the enormously distant future; and the Soul, being itself a life made up of many smaller ones, is under the brotherly necessity of waiting in the bonds of matter long enough to give the latter the right impetus along the path of perfection.

**Friend:** But what is the Soul's purpose?

**Student:** No purely spiritual divine Soul *can* have an *independent conscious existence* before it has passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world, and *acquired individuality*, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts, thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest. This obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul proceeds through the Cycle of Incarnation, or "Necessity", in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law. Thus, the Soul itself is called the "Eternal Pilgrim", who precedes and survives innumerable physical forms in its quest for Wisdom.

**Friend:** This looks to me like inscrutable Fate or Destiny.

**Student:** The ways of Karma would not be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of these ways, which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate, while another sees in them the action of blind Fatalism, and a third, simple chance, with neither Gods nor Devils to guide them, would surely disappear, if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. Every man weaves thread by thread 'round himself, as a spider his web, his *ruling* Destiny, When the last strand is woven, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* Destiny - this is Karma. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. If one breaks the Law of Life, one must be prepared to fall into the chaos oneself has produced. Therefore, if any one is helpless before these immutable laws it is because they are their own avengers. Karma-Nemesis is no more than the spiritual dynamical effect of causes produced, and forces awakened into activity, by our own actions. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence". We cut these numerous windings in our destinies daily with our own hands, while we imagine that we are pursuing a track on the royal highroad of respectability and duty, and then we complain because these windings are so intricate and dark. We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making, and the riddles of life that *we will not* solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. This condition of things will last till man's spiritual intuitions are fully opened, and this will not be until we begin acting from *within*, instead of ever following the impulses from *without*, impulses produced by our physical senses and gross selfish body. Until then the only palliatives for the evils of life are union and harmony - a Brotherhood in *fact*, and Altruism not simply in name. The suppression of one single bad *cause* will suppress not one, but many bad effects. If virtue in distress, and vice in triumph make

atheists of mankind, it is only because mankind has ever shut its eyes to the great truth that man is himself his own saviour and his own destroyer.

**Friend:** What good can Theosophy accomplish!

**Student:** None, unless Theosophists take to heart Madame Blavatsky's words, "*Be Theosophists. Work for Theosophy.* For its *practical* realization alone can save world civilization from that selfish and unbrotherly feeling that now divides race from race, one nation from the other; and from that hatred of class and social considerations that are the curse and disgrace of so-called religious people. Theosophy alone can save it from sinking entirely into that mere luxurious materialism in which it will decay and putrefy as civilizations have done". And she added, "In your hands, brothers, is placed in trust the welfare of the coming century; and great as is the trust, so great also is the responsibility". And her fellow-teacher, William Q. Judge, wrote again and again, "The fundamental principles of Theosophy are of no value unless they are *applied in daily life*".

**Friend:** What do you call a Theosophist?

**Student:** A person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbor than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness, and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer — is a Theosophist. Theosophist is, who Theosophy does.

**Friend:** You spoke of "Fundamental Principles" of Theosophy. What are they.

**Student:** There are three fundamental conceptions upon which the Secret Doctrine (Theosophy) rests. They stand - as all truth stands - upon their inherent reasonableness. They are, in fact, contained - though too often under a misleading guise - in every system of thought or philosophy worthy of the name. Once the reader has gained a clear comprehension of them and realized the light which they throw on every problem of life, they will need no further justification in his eyes, because their truth will be to him as evident as the sun in heaven.

The first Fundamental Proposition is as follows :

**"An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought - in the words of Mandukya - 'unthinkable and unspeakable'".**

This first Proposition covers all that every race, people and religion have attempted to define as Deity. All peoples have had, and have their own conceptions of Deity, and these conceptions have varied in accordance with the nature of their

intelligence. What is true of the past, is also true of the present; Christianity has its own peculiar conception; other religions theirs. The fact to be observed is that all these are but conceptions, finite mental idols, to whom attributes are accredited, and that none can be a Reality.

To render the idea clearer, let us consider Space. Space is the one thing which always is; all things and beings exist in space; space cannot be conceived as having a beginning or ending, for no matter how far we extend our conception of it, there is boundless space beyond. No human mind can exclude space from any conception, or conceive of it by itself. The Infinite and Eternal Cause, the rootless root of all that was, is or ever shall be, is not less than Space.

All that a man can know of the Supreme is what he knows in himself, through himself, by himself; in the East the realization of this is called "The Awakening to the Self", the Self: of all creatures. Jesus did not teach an outside God, but the "Father within". The *Bhagavad-Gita* says, "As a single sun illuminateth the whole world, even so doth the One Spirit illumine every body". In every thing IT is the power to perceive, however small or great the perceptions may be which constitute the being.

The second Fundamental Proposition is as follows:

**"The Eternity of the Universe *in toto* as a boundless plane; periodically 'the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing,' called the 'manifesting stars,' and 'the sparks of Eternity'.**

**"This second assertion of the Secret Doctrine is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all departments of nature. An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so common, so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental laws of the universe".**

"Eternity of the Universe as a boundless plane", refers to what we call "space", which we know cannot be conceived of as having beginning or end. "It" always is, whether there are universes, worlds, men, things, or none. In this boundlessness is found prevailing one great law of Periodicity. Just as there are Day and Night, Waking and Sleeping, Summer and Winter, continually alternating, succeeding each other, so there are worlds and solar systems doing likewise, each a continuation of that which preceded it. It is under this Law of Periodicity that all growth goes on; it is the process of evolution. Applying it still further we may see that as Morning, Noon and Night are succeeded by Morning again, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, succeeded by Spring again, so under the same self-evident law, Birth, Youth, Manhood, Death, are succeeded by Birth again.

The law of universal operation points directly to Reincarnation as the process of human development. Applying the same law in a wider sense, we may see first that boundless space contains numberless universes; that as beings differ in degree of attainment, so universes, or solar systems differ. Further, that each existing solar system is a continuation of others that preceded it, just as our days, or lives, are continuations. The more we apply this law, the more we see its absolutely universal application, and the more we gain an insight into the meaning of life. Under this process all growth is governed by the law of laws called Karma; action and its consequent reaction; or as ethically stated. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap".

A concise statement of Karma is that it is an unerring and undeviating tendency in the universe to restore equilibrium, and it operates incessantly; rigid justice rules the world. It is a Universe of Law, not chance, nor the caprice of any being whatever.

The third Fundamental Proposition is as follows:

**"The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul - a spark of the former - through the Cycle of Incarnation (or 'Necessity') in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term. In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi (divine Soul) can have an independent (conscious) existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth principle - or the OVER-SOUL - has (a) passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts (checked by its Karma), thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, up to the holiest archangel (Dhyani-Buddha). The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnation".**

This indicates that every form in every kingdom of nature is an expression of a degree of consciousness, and that form changes in accordance with the demands of the consciousness under the law of action and reaction. The higher degrees of consciousness work in, through and upon the lower, thus impelling them in the direction of the higher; the chain is complete from lowest to highest being, the whole purpose of the Universe being the evolution of Soul.

**Friend:** I see that the subject is so vast, so deep and intricate, that it cannot be learned in a "few easy lessons". Are there any books on Theosophy?

**Student:** There are many, but it must always be borne in mind that with *very* few exceptions all books on these subjects are the works of students, not of Masters. All *theories* should be tested by the reason and not accepted *en bloc* as revelation.

**Friend:** But I have understood that Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Judge claimed to be inspired and to speak with authority.

**Student:** Practically every word in this pamphlet has been taken verbatim from their writings. In the Introduction to her great work, *The Secret Doctrine*, Madame Blavatsky uses the following words: "It is above everything important to keep in mind that no theosophical book acquires the least additional value from pretended authority. ... The writer transmits that which she has received and learnt herself, to all those who will receive it....'I have here made only a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them'". And in the Preface to *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge writes, "No originality is claimed for this book. The writer invented none of it, discovered none of it, but has simply written that which he has been taught and which has been proved to him. It therefore is only a handing on of what has been known before." And in commenting on *The Secret Doctrine*, Mr. Judge wrote, "If any authority pertains to *The Secret Doctrine*, it must be sought inside, not outside. It must rest on its comprehensiveness, its completeness, its continuity and reasonableness; in other words, on its *philosophical synthesis*, a thing missed alike by the superficial and the contentious, by the indolent, the superstitious and the dogmatic." H.P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge, were *transmitters*, not original teachers. There never was a religious founder who *invented* a new truth. They were the authors of new forms and interpretations, while the truths upon which their teachings were based were as old as mankind. Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Judge followed in the footsteps of their predecessors. The mission of every Teacher, whether he stands at the top, or at the foot of the ladder of knowledge, is precisely the same: To strike the keynote of truth. The teacher cannot do the student's thinking for him, nor would the latter be any the better off if such vicarious thought were possible. To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts.

**Friend:** What books have you found most helpful in the study of Theosophy?

**Student:** *The Ocean of Theosophy* by Mr. Judge is an ideal book to begin with. Then, study *The Key to Theosophy* by H. P. Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine* is best used as a reference book in connection with these two. *The Bhagavad-Gita* and *The Voice of the Silence* give light on the problems of daily life. Mr. Judge's *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* is a key to many questions. These books, and a few others, are the tools of Theosophical study. Understanding of the teaching is always the result of slow assimilation, gained by working in cooperation with other students for the general help and benefit of the race.