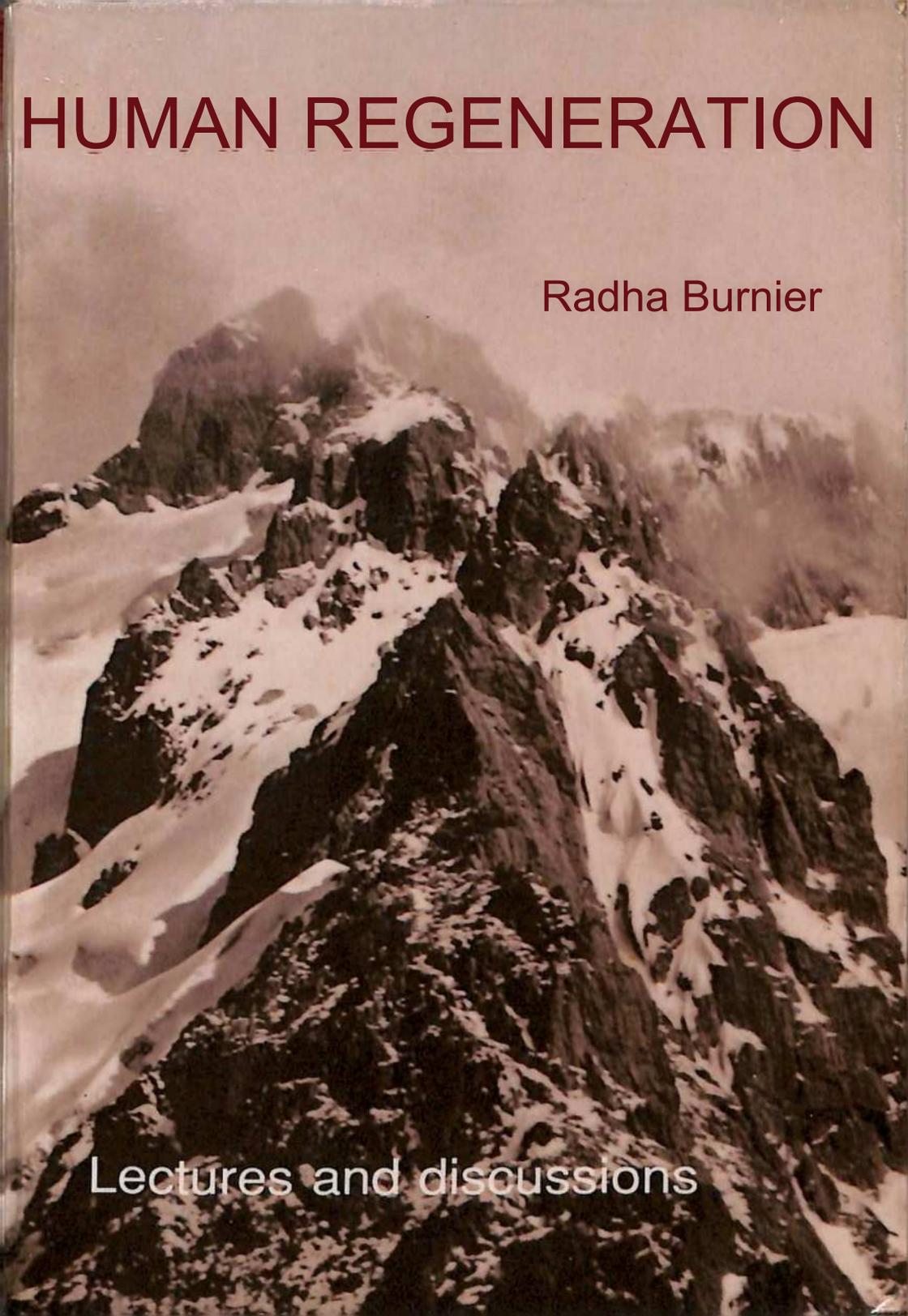


HUMAN REGENERATION



Radha Burnier

Lectures and discussions

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**NEW PLYMOUTH
BRANCH OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

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Preface

Theosophists and would-be theosophists are all united by a common devotion to the Regeneration of Man. They may differ in their convictions, interests or approach. The teachings of Buddha, Jesus, Blavatsky, Besant, Krishnamurti or some other teacher may inspire some and not others. But there is a strong common bond, namely profound concern for the progress and perfection of humanity, not merely at the material and intellectual levels, but morally and spiritually.

Recognizing regeneration as the kernel of all theosophical work, the International Theosophical Centre at Naarden, The Netherlands, jointly with the Federation of Theosophical Societies in Europe, organized two seminars in July 1990, with a number of office-bearers, workers and members of the Society from different countries as participants. Representatives from other parts of the world — U.S.A., Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Zambia, Israel, India, Australia and so forth—also came.

Every day there were talks and group discussions in order to explore in depth the implications of regeneration and the relation of the three objects of the Theosophical Society to regeneration. These sessions threw up a number of questions which the participants endeavoured to answer jointly, and out of this exchange many aspects of theosophical work were clarified.

An atmosphere of joyous harmony and serious enquiry existed throughout the fortnight. The beautiful woods and elevating atmosphere of the Centre helped to enhance the understanding and perceptions of all present. In order to share with other members of the Theosophical Society who were not present some of the insights obtained during these seminars, this book is being brought out. It is a companion to the previous

booklet on human regeneration, which was circulated prior to the seminar.

Audio and video cassettes have also been prepared, which are available for use in theosophical lodges and groups. It is hoped that as a result of earnest consideration of the subject of regeneration by many more people a new impetus will flow into theosophical work. A theosophist does not seek wisdom to benefit himself. 'Not for himself but for the world he lives'; and the more deeply devoted he is to the regeneration of mankind, the more ardently he seeks to understand himself and the world, and penetrate into the secret of life. His aim is to discover the source of the Goodness and Happiness which is the birthright of all living beings. He lives a life of purity and selflessness in order to make his mind fit to receive light.

The entire world will be better when there are more theosophists in this sense of the term. We trust that these seminars and the material which has emanated out of it will enrich many members of the Society and others, who are interested and transform them into true Theosophists.

The International Theosophical Centre could not have done better to begin a new career of service to the world than by offering a setting for investigation of so important a subject as human regeneration. The Dutch Section of the Theosophical Society is also rendering a valuable service by highlighting this direction.

RADHA BURNIER

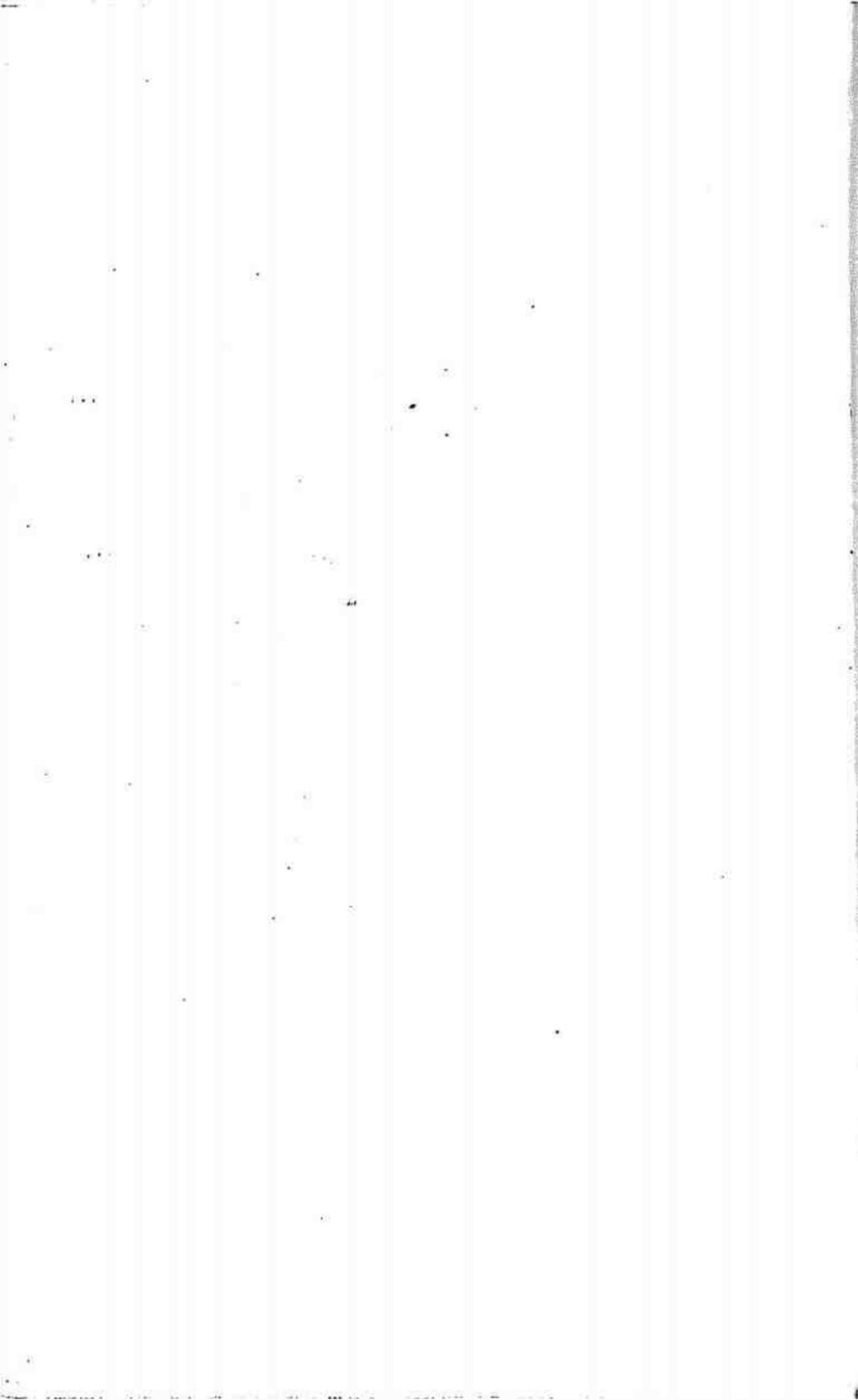
President of the Theosophical Society

Adyar

17 November 1990

I

Lectures



1

T.S. Work and the Fundamental Change in Man and Society

TA Te are meeting in the context of important changes that
1/1 / are taking place at the present moment, particularly in
F V Europe. There were other times in the history of the
world when great changes appeared to take place. But the world
always reverts to a condition of chaos; and degeneration sets in
in all institutions, social or political.

The subject of human regeneration is very important because
a truly momentous change in the history of humanity will occur
only when there is a revolutionary change in the human being.
Probably a sufficient number of human beings must change to
bring about a radical change in the course of human history.
Therefore it is important for us to explore this question.

Every civilization has to meet challenges of various kinds. If
they do not meet the challenge before them adequately, a nation
or a people fail; the civilization begins to disappear. Historians
like Toynbee have put forward a theory of challenge and re-
sponse. Slowly the modern world is becoming conscious of the
enormity of the challenge before our present civilization, if it can
be called a civilization at all. We have had two terrible world
wars, besides a number of other tragic struggles and minor wars
(minor only in comparison to the world wars). The danger is not
over, although there is talk of peace; we cannot eliminate the
possibility of other wars breaking out, merely because Europe is
changing.

There is also the danger of environmental degradation reaching a point where it threatens the whole world. Some experts believe that in another ten or fifteen years we will reach a crisis point which is beyond all present imagination. Whatever that be, it is a very serious threat. The proliferation of arms does not lead only to war. Disarmament may take place in western and eastern Europe, but arms are being distributed to many parts of the world. Violence is on the increase everywhere, in the form of terrorism, violence on the streets and so on.

There is further the problem of overpopulation which is a serious threat, bringing in its wake poverty. Perhaps those who have not been in the really poverty-stricken areas have no conception of what it means. Extreme poverty leads to moral degradation, crime, and hideousness in many forms. The poor people cannot help it because the only thing that matters to them is to stay alive.

So there are these enormous problems in the world, which is the external challenge. Unfortunately there are a number of people who do not want to face squarely even the external challenge. They prefer to ignore some or all of the aspects of that challenge. There are many more who do not realize that the challenges faced by every civilization are not merely external; the external challenge is the reflection of something inside the human being. Today this internal threat is far from clear to humanity; very, very few people realize that the real source of the problem is in the psyche of man. And we never deal adequately with the external challenges because we do not want to look at and deal with the internal challenge.

I think the work of the Theosophical Society is to point to the challenge within, because it is of much greater importance to see it and deal with it than to go on dealing with what is outside. If we do not look at the source of the problem, but only at the effects, then temporary, partial and superficial solutions are found. That is why, although we have reason to feel happy about the changes that are taking place in Europe, we cannot feel assured because we do not know in what way the stability which has been created will be disturbed once again.

If the human mind does not change, can society remain stable? In one of the Mahatma letters there is the remark: 'the origin of every evil whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in Nature.' The challenges outside are our creation, because we divide ourselves into nations, groups, categories of various kinds and identify ourselves only with one group. We feel that the problems are not of our making — that the rest of the world has created the difficulties. But if we take a closer look we may find that basically our nature is not different from that of the rest of the world. The Mahatma continues: 'it is neither Nature nor an imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by *selfishness*. Think well over these few words.' That was his admonishment: think well over these few words.

Should not the T.S. be deeply concerned with a permanent solution — a solution which will transform human society, not merely a little bit, not only in a particular area and for a time, but one which will give it a new direction? Until now, in spite of various revolutions and political changes — from capitalism to socialism, changes in economic structure, new ideologies and theories — in spite of all these attempts to remodel society and improve it, the condition of the world has been more or less the same. We have of course many comforts — central heating etc.; and people can go to the moon. I am not talking about that; but the basic condition of humanity, that is the struggles, the competition, the stress, war — called the 'ultimate folly' — all this is going on. There is exploitation of people by people — slavery, oppression of women, use of child labour — this is all still going on and may yet go on for ages. Concentration camps in Europe or slavery in Mauritania are the same thing. Basically the world has not changed, obviously because we have not gone to the root of the problem and have not met the human challenge fully. We have only looked outside and not seen that the outside has come from the inside.

It is the condition of the mind which is the source of the problem, and this is true for the individual as well as for all of humanity. Each one of us probably has difficulties of some kind to face in life. In the family and profession, there are tussles,

disappointments, desire to have and frustration because of not having. All kinds of disturbances arise in each individual, but he attributes his personal problems more to the environment than to his own mind. Therefore he is always trying to change circumstances, or escape from particular situations, or put responsibility or blame on others. He does not get down to dealing with his own internal condition.

What is true of humanity is true in a small way of the individual and his life. Therefore we have to see that there is no difference between the individual and the society in which he lives, or human society as a whole. What we do with our own small lives is what humanity in the mass is doing. We are a reflection of humanity and humanity is what we are. Mr. Krishnamurti repeatedly pointed out this fact, that the world is not different from ourselves: 'As all human beings are basically the same, one can with reason say that the world is oneself, and one is the world. That is an absolute fact as one can see when one goes into it very deeply.' But perhaps that is just what we do not do; we do not go into it far enough, and therefore we do not see the need for regeneration to take place.

Society cannot be dealt with separately from the individual; the individual can never find himself in happy circumstances if he depends upon society to change. So they have to be dealt with together. The world today faces the challenge of unity or disunity, cooperation or confrontation and conflict. Is it only the world which faces that, or does each one of us have to see whether the elements of that situation are not in his own mind? If there is division in the world today, which makes it so very difficult to find solutions to such questions as we described — poverty, war and disarmament — is it not because we refuse to deal with the divisiveness in our own minds?

I would like to quote one more passage, and this is from HPB. She says: 'Our duty is to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions. To oppose and counteract — after due investigation and proof of its irrational nature — bigotry in every form, religious, scientific or social, and 'cant⁷ above all, whether as religious sectarianism, or as a belief in miracles or anything supernatural.

What we have to do is to seek to obtain knowledge of all the laws of nature and to diffuse it.'

Here HPB touches upon the fact that if there is bigotry, fanaticism, sectarianism, the tendency to compartmentalize in the minds of people, humanity cannot manage to be in a state of cooperation and peace. Solutions have always failed, because we have been dealing only with society, not with ourselves. To me it is clear that the main work of the T.S. is to point to the internal challenge and to help the world to deal radically with its problems. We must not become a group of people who are only interested in altering structures, systems and methods. I am not saying that we should not participate in bringing about changes externally. But that cannot be the fundamental work of the Society, the core of its activities, central to its very existence.

Also, the T.S. stands for bringing about a solution which is for the whole of humanity, not for a section of humanity. Everywhere, people have their own angle to problems, whether it is war or poverty. They are unable to get away from their particular point of view, based on their own interests. The solution is therefore never right. If it is an environmental problem, India might want a solution which suits it, and Europe or Holland or whatever the nation is, may want the solution that is to its advantage. We look at all problems sectionally, directed by some form of self-interest. But the theosophical point of view must be universal, because no problem can be resolved piecemeal, especially in the modern world, where all the nations and peoples of the world are interlocked together. You know the 'Spaceship Earth' idea; if the ship sinks, all of us will sink; if it sails well all of us will be safe. There is no separate solution for anything. Although this seems rather obvious, there are millions of people who cannot bring themselves even to look at this question in its true light. The T.S. has to lead the way by pioneering the global outlook and not the nationalistic or the piecemeal outlook.

For members of the Society it should be clear that the fragmented mind cannot deal with the problems of today; in fact it never could. Today we are in a world where technological changes have interrelated everything. No part of the earth can enjoy security and prosperity without sharing with the rest of

the earth. No fragmentary effort can succeed, no solution brought by such effort can last, because the fragmented mind is the author of the problems. If we did not have broken-up minds, we would not face these enormous difficulties and challenges. If we look carefully we will find that the short-sighted view and limited perspectives are at the base of difficulties.

Therefore the T.S. has the duty and the responsibility of pointing to the need for self-understanding. We do not know what is our own good, because our view is short-sighted. There are people who know that the destruction of vegetation will do great harm. Yet they destroy, for they want immediate profit. Such action exists in many fields. The immediate advantage is sought, for it is far more attractive than a long-term solution. This happens because we have a wrong idea of ourselves, a lack of perspective in respect of our own lives. Theosophy provides the needed perspective. Unless man knows what he is, what his future must be, in what direction he must move, how can he do the right thing?

So it is vital for the human being to be aware of himself, of his true nature, and discern his inner potential. This is not a theoretical question. Even when we do deal with this matter we often tend to make it seem abstract, having little to do with daily life. Some thinkers have said that society is shaped by the image man has of himself. No doubt that is true. We create our particular society according to the concept we have of ourselves.

What do we know of ourselves? Is the image we have of ourselves completely wrong — the image of a small, struggling creature, insecure, grasping? Is this what the human being is meant to be? The theosophical understanding of man is very important from a practical point of view, because if we truly understand what we are, all our relationships will change. If I think of myself as a petty creature, who must grasp at everything that is possible, then my attitude is greedy, utilitarian, competitive. But if I understand what I really am, all that is automatically shed, and my relationships are of a totally different order. This has immense practical value, of which perhaps we are not quite aware.

Our whole idea of what is practical may be wrong, just as our idea of progress is wrong. And as members of the T.S., responsible for carrying out its objects, we need to make clear what progress is. What is truly practical? Surely it is very impractical to know so little of ourselves and yet try to bring about our own happiness and fulfilment, to believe that we are creating something good for ourselves when we do not know what is that good.

To summarize, in the context of the world as it is at present, the T.S. should point out certain things. It must make clear that dealing with external challenges is not enough. The external challenge is a product of the internal one, which arises within the mind, in the psyche. Human society cannot change unless individuals change, and the change must be in the direction of universality of outlook. Solutions have so far failed because they are all fragmentary, arising from a fragmented mind. They are solutions for a time, for a particular people, meant to benefit a certain area. But problems today demand a universal outlook. A limited view of the human being and of human destiny can only lead to further difficulties. A much wider perspective is needed, which theosophy provides. It is important for the human being to know what he is and what he can be. Even if he sees a little bit of this, it alters his relationship with everything, not only with other human beings but with everything in life. If the new outlook changes relationship, it also begins to change society, for what is society but a web of relationships?

So the T.S. has an important responsibility to fulfil, which is to bring about a renewal in one's way of looking at things, which will also be a renewal in relationships and in society. All this must be discussed in detail. Other aspects of the question will come up. Just getting a few ideas about these matters does not amount to understanding. We should try to see the whole question very clearly in the depth of our hearts. We ought to ask ourselves: What is it that humanity needs? What is the fundamental change that has to take place in society? Can that change happen without a radical change in individual human beings? What is the role of the T.S. in bringing about the necessary

change? Is it not to end forever such grave problems as inequality, exploitation, cruelty and insecurity?

If the T.S. is to be a beneficent force in the world, we must see where our work lies. We should be very clear about it, not play about with relatively unimportant things, but get to the core. If we are dear about the central work, subsidiary matters will be resolved easily in accordance with it.

2

The Nature of the Change

As we have already said, there is an unprecedented challenge before the whole of humanity — not just before one particular race or group of people. War, the armaments race, pollution, poverty, the population problem — all these, and perhaps other things too, threaten humanity. Most people do not realize that all these challenges outside reflect what is inside the human mind — your mind, my mind, everybody's mind. The hatred which manifests itself in war is a reflection of the animosity and suspicion in all our minds. Poverty reflects our inability to feel at one with others — to share. Pollution arises out of greed to have more and more, endlessly. What is inside and what is outside are not different. Even when we accept this mentally, we do not make an effort actually to see the relationship, that the root of all problems is in the human psychological condition. Because we do not see this, we try all the time to tinker with the outside. What we imagine are great plans to change the world amount to nothing more than a little superficial, temporary, inadequate patching up.

So the world problem cannot be separated from the condition of the individuals who compose the world, whose mind is unable to look at things as a whole. As we have already said, the problems which exist today in an acute form are the problems of all humanity — not of part of the world, not of one people or nation; the solutions too have to be solutions which deal with the whole, not looked at from the viewpoint of the advantage of one section of humanity. The mind which is accustomed to

divide and break up everything always looks from a particular angle, but the fragmented mind cannot find the true or lasting solution to problems, especially in the present day when all the peoples and nations of the world are interconnected. So it is important to free the mind of its tragic tendency to look at everything piecemeal.

We also said that if man cannot find out more about himself, and understand himself as he is and also what he will be — his own wonderful, boundless potential — he cannot know what is good for him. So he constantly works for what he thinks is good — but he actually creates suffering. Theosophy and the Theosophical Society must and can offer the direction and guidelines in regard to this. We will discuss the objects and the work of the Society later. Today we shall consider the nature of the fundamental change.

Questions have arisen about what is fundamental. Is anything fundamental? Is there a difference between the subsidiary and the basic? We may say that a fundamental change is one which resolves the many different problems with one sweep, so to speak. It is like rooting out a weed. If you cut the branches of the weed, they may sprout again. In Hindu mythology there is the demon or anti-god called Ravana, who has ten heads. He was unconquerable for ages because when a head or two were cut off, they grew again. Finally, the divine incarnation, Rama, struck off all the heads at one stroke and put an end to the evil.

In our personal lives, as well as in the community around us, we find continuing problems. There are countries in which there is little orderliness, people throw rubbish everywhere. This is of course a subsidiary problem, for you may remove the rubbish and the next day they will throw more. Obviously the more basic problem is the mentality. If people realized that what they are doing is unpleasant for themselves as well as for everybody else, if they saw that if everyone behaves exactly as they do, nothing would improve, in other words if their attitude changed, the outside situation would change. So we come to something a little more fundamental than merely removing rubbish. If you go still further, you will find that this attitude is essentially self-centred, and self-centredness may express itself

in many other ways besides throwing rubbish. If you deal with that self-centredness, not only this problem, but many other problems would also be solved.

So the fundamental cause, the source of the problems must be identified and resolved. Only this brings about a fundamental change, with a totally different relationship and way of living.

We have already listened to some words pointing to the basic cause of humanity's problems: It is neither Nature nor an imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by *selfishness*. Selfishness is the cause of all mankind's difficulties. The fundamental change is therefore from selfishness, which is also self-centredness, self-preoccupation and so forth, to a state of sympathy, harmony and unity, where other people's well-being is realized to be of as much, if not of more, importance than one's own. Some may know this theoretically, although millions of people will not even accept it as a valid theoretical proposition. Part of our work as members of the Society is to use all the reasoning, literature, philosophy, devotional methods, discussions, the example of our lives, everything — to show the validity of this fact. When the inner condition changes from self-centredness to a realization of unity the world will change.

Again I would like to quote a brief sentence from the Mahatma letters: The term "Universal Brotherhood" is no idle phrase ... It is the only secure foundation of universal morality.' Let us examine a little what we mean by selfishness. Because we are not aggressively selfish people, we tend to be fairly contented with ourselves. We see that people who are crudely ambitious, cruel, etc. wreak havoc in the world and we look at them as the culprits. We are on the whole nice people — only on the whole — and so we do not regard selfishness as a problem, perhaps even an evil, within us. But let us try to see the selfishness inside without a feeling of guilt. Guilt is unnecessary; all of us are selfish. Not one of us is exempt.

Self-centredness can be very subtle. We must become aware that even in relationships with people who are close to us the — family, children, parents, a friend for whom we have affection — there is still a barrier. That person is always the 'other' and I am

'myself'. This is also selfishness. The other person's body is of course different, but why need the mind regard everything as 'other' — human beings, animals, trees and even the earth. Human relationships are the most complicated. Plants do not cross us. Even the poor animals cannot really set themselves against us. They have no chance. But other human beings do. We cannot wipe them out as we do the animals and plants, unless we go to war.

What is our internal attitude, with regard to comforts? Often life is like a game of musical chairs, with few positions available and many seeking them. Do I feel the comfortable position should be mine? Do I walk a little faster in order to get it first before somebody else? In a lot of little things the self-centre shows itself if one watches. When we are indifferent, and do not feel moved by the pity of the world's condition, it is also selfishness. The Buddha advised that we should realize sorrow as the first truth; it referred to the movement of compassion from within, a release from one's self-centredness.

Let us not be too easily satisfied. Let us not think that there are nice people in this world. Of course there are a lot of nice people, even in this unpleasant world. But being nice is different from being free of self-centredness, self-preoccupation, the self in its varied manifestations. The fundamental change has to do with rooting out the self completely — not necessarily in one day. It means really working for *nirvana*, for *nirvana* is 'putting an end' to the egotistic self.

We make words like 'unity', 'brotherhood', 'harmony', 'compassion' into weak terms. These words have a profound, revolutionary significance, if we understand them rightly. It means seeing the inner nature of everything that exists; to see that everything in Nature has a purpose, value and meaning in itself, not what we attribute to it. Most of us unconsciously tend to think that values are according to our prejudices, wants and ideas. The person one considers to be of value is somebody who pleases us in some way — physically, psychologically, or whatever. As for other people, one may not dislike them, or be against them, but a deep sense of respect, a sense of their ineradicable value may not be felt. Brotherhood means something

different from what we generally think it does. It implies learning to see that the one unitary life everywhere is wonderful beyond our imagination, subtle, profound, sacred. Wherever it is — and there is no place where it is not — there is something to be respected, studied, something with which we have to feel in harmony, because that harmony is the only way of really knowing.

So the fundamental change we are talking about is from selfishness to unity. Selfishness, whether positive or negative, even if it seems to be no more than indifference or laziness, must end utterly. This change to realization of unity is revolutionary, fundamental. If selfishness were eradicated, one would never feel anger or bitterness, or get into frictions; our life would be one of deep respect for others. One would not try to thrust on them what one thinks is right. We would respect their own unique path of unfoldment. We would not respond unkindly when something does not suit us or is not pleasant. These are all expressions of self-centredness. All forms of immorality — greed, anger, corruption, deception in all the small forms in which we practise it—would end. What a great change!

It would also be a change from turmoil and restlessness to profound peace and harmony, because the source of agitation, destructiveness and conflict — one part of the mind wanting something, another part something else — is in the personal desires of the self.

If we say the fundamental change is from wanting to not wanting, there may be some who react 'how is it possible not to want?' If we start thinking that way, we may never change. We must realize that all 'wanting'⁷ is bound to end in frustration, because everything that is needed, and more, is within ourselves. Peace is in our consciousness, because it is the very nature of life and consciousness. Life is beauty, life is goodness and the purity of unity. But because we struggle and do not allow that life to flow from within, we suffer from want and seek elsewhere.

Fundamental change is thus many things. It is change from selfishness to altruism; from strife, inside and outside, to peace;

from ugliness — there is a lot of ugliness inside us — to beauty and harmony. It is a change from a state of ignorance to wisdom.

Strife, the feeling of separateness, is a burden the consciousness carries, yet it wants affection, it craves for relationship. Self-centredness is the epitome of ignorance. We think that ignorance is removed when we have attained what is normally called knowledge. But it is not. What is called knowledge is not knowledge at all. It is merely loading the brain with ideas and much information. The Upanishads, Lao Tzu and other sages declared that he who knows does not know. He who really knows is the one who realizes Unity, which is also supreme beauty, harmony, peace, love, and the wisdom which enables one to act rightly. Knowledge which has no element of love in it, is not knowledge. Wisdom is both intelligence and love, and different from what we ordinarily call knowledge. So we can say the fundamental change is from ignorance to wisdom. It means becoming aware of the true nature of life — its meaning and inherent purpose.

Then should we regard ordinary knowledge as useless? It depends on what that knowledge is. There is knowledge which is really useless, except for practical purposes. You have to know certain things, like your way home. Apart from that, a lot of knowledge we accumulate is useless. But there can also be useful knowledge. In the Indian tradition they say, as the diamond is used to cut the diamond, knowledge may be used to transcend knowledge, and to obtain insight and intuitive awareness of the true nature of life, its unity. Thus there is a breaking out of the prison of the self. It is such knowledge that the T.S. must be concerned with, and provide.

In a theosophical lodge, if a group wants to organize courses in physiology, botany and so on, which is useful, should they be encouraged? We must ask: Useful from what point of view? It is not the work of the T.S. to offer knowledge which is useful for practical things like how to assemble a car or radio. The knowledge we are concerned with is that other kind of knowledge which can point the way to a truth beyond its own range. Humanity now needs to go beyond the analytical, fragmented mind, always dissecting, comparing, evaluating, to another

kind of perception, for which we can use the word intuition, although it is too often used in a wrong sense. The word *buddhi* is better, because it means waking up — from the false reality in which the mind is caught.

Most of the things with which we are occupied, fights, hopes, what somebody said yesterday, what we want to do tomorrow, all seem important at the time. Yet only a small part of our concerns has importance, and even that only of a relative order. Is there a waking up out of this to see what life is really like, its meaning, deep significance, and beauty? Is there a way of thinking, of looking at things which can help all human beings, not just ourselves, to break out of the prison-house of the self into a realization of the shared nature of life, our common destiny? If we think in these terms we see how very vital is the first object of the T.S.: universal brotherhood without distinctions. If the mind can realize brotherhood without any distinctions, be free of duality, the 'other' and myself, my well-being versus somebody else's, is that not a dimensional change, a religious journey? Transformation has a truly religious meaning.

We have created divisions by our thinking, we have been conditioned into it. If we could free ourselves from that conditioning, we would be radiating peace and harmony. So universal brotherhood without distinctions is not an idle phrase, a commonplace thing. It is the main work of the Theosophical Society. When we convert it into something ordinary, we feel that we must go around finding other things to do. But there is no difference between such brotherhood and regeneration, for it calls for a totally new mind, a mind without divisions, distinctions, comparisons, and evaluations.

What a wonderful pioneering activity it is to try and create a nucleus of universal brotherhood! Some people ask why only a nucleus? It is obvious that we can only start with a small group which realizes the importance of universal brotherhood and takes it seriously enough to try and make that brotherhood without distinctions a reality. But a nucleus is a living thing, so it will grow; other people will come into the brotherhood, because they see what a glorious change it is. How else can we begin? What a marvellous object we have, and what inspiration we

would get, if we understood the fundamental change this involves. We get accustomed to words, that is the trouble. We do not go sufficiently into the richness of the meaning of brotherhood, take the trouble to realize that when universal brotherhood without distinctions becomes a reality, there would be a mind in which there is delight, love, strength, wisdom, everything. So this is no ordinary task.

Sri Sankaracharya says in a work called 'Self-knowledge': 'Who is there more foolish than he who madly strives for his own benefit?' Whether it is in a small way in a little circle, or in an aggressive form in a large arena, who is there more foolish than he who strives for his own benefit? It is utter ignorance which makes one live and work for himself. On the contrary, as indicated by the Buddha: Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so let us cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.'

So, let us not take as an already known thing such a truth as brotherhood. What we know about being selfish or unselfish is very superficial. We have to examine these matters many times in great depth to realize all that it implies. If we do that, then we might be strong in carrying out the work of the T.S. which is to bring about a change in human society.

3

Regeneration and the Objects of the T.S.

Although the Theosophical Society has three objects, it surely has only a single purpose, which is to uplift humanity from the moral and spiritual point of view. This is not identical with what most people call progress. But moral and spiritual regeneration will be the strongest force in bringing about even material progress. Everywhere we see attempts that are retarded because of selfishness, tensions, and indifference. Therefore progress must centre around a new outlook, new attitudes.

The objects of the Society cannot be unrelated to each other, for they are all related to the question of human progress and perfection, to regeneration. If we think of them as separate, each one having its own independent purpose, they may not help to fulfil the goal of the T.S. It is probably necessary for members of the T.S. throughout the world to enquire into what these objects signify in terms of regeneration, the upliftment of the human mind — whatever one likes to call it.

Universal brotherhood, the realization of a mind in which there is no prejudice whatsoever, no barrier against anything, is regeneration, because such a consciousness is totally different from the ordinary consciousness. It has, as mentioned, a religious quality. The realization of the indivisibility of existence is the aim of true religion. In *Is Theosophy a Religion?* HPB says that religion *per se* is that which unites all men, and all beings into one whole; it is not something which divides. So the experience

of unity is a religious experience, it is a new kind of perception, a new quality of the mind.

This is a marvel, because we are in the midst of incredible diversity, and the evolutionary process implies inequality. Nothing in manifestation is like anything else. This is an absolute fact in Nature. When we think two things are alike, it is because they bear some resemblance to each other, not because they are identical. In the remarkable book published some time ago, *Human Destiny*, the scientist author outlines as the aims of evolution — harmony, freedom and individuality. He argues that as evolution progresses, there is a greater and greater revelation of uniqueness. When we think of perfection, we may make the mistake of imagining that all beings who are perfect must be alike. It is not so. They are all perfect, but each in his own unique way. That uniqueness exists at every level, not a single leaf of a tree being an exact replica of another.

Secondly, as we said, inequality is inherent in evolution. In some creatures the consciousness is more awake and in some it is less awake. Consciousness is many things such as mental activity, intelligence, sympathy. In some there is more; others are apparently duller. Some are clever, they have developed skills and capabilities, others have not. The consciousness of animals and plants is less developed. So we think they have less importance than human beings, and we have a right to suppress the lesser.

So there are these two things in nature: inequality and diversity. Each being is at its own level on the evolutionary ladder and everything is different from everything else. Yet, underlying it is the one being, the one essence. It is a paradox: one essence, one life, one consciousness in the midst of an incredible diversity that reveals a supreme creative energy. And although there is no equality, from the outer point of view, concealed is a supreme value which is the same in everything, because everything is a unit of the same universal being, a drop in the same ocean of consciousness. Perhaps it is a drop at the bottom of the ocean, or one that moves on the surface, but all are part of the ocean of life. This is the meaning of the sacred syllable *Om* which symbolizes different planes, different stages of diversity, integrated into a

wholeness or unity. There is an essential equality in all manifested individual existences for they are all part of one sacred life.

The realization of brotherhood is awareness of something marvellous, and paradoxical when looked at from the lower point of view, but nonetheless real. There is a mystic quality in the realization of brotherhood; it is not an ordinary experience. When some people say that the Theosophical Society's object of universal brotherhood is obsolete, they do not know what they are saying. They look at it in a very ordinary sort of way, not understanding the depth and truth contained in this aim. They think there are many organizations which stand for international relations. The United Nations is meant to bring all the nations together. There are other humanistic movements. The idea has spread everywhere, so this object can be shunted away.

But from the deeper point of view, universal brotherhood is far from realized, and nowhere do we see brotherhood in action. Unless we see that this object implies a deep psychological revolution, we will not be able to carry out the work of the Society with the requisite energy. When human consciousness becomes free of its biases and barriers, if it ceases to separate itself from everything else, a new world of beauty, freedom and goodness will materialize at the physical and subtler levels. Kn̄shnaji states, 'Where the self is, beauty does not exist⁷, the beauty that is goodness, peace and bliss. So, when we reflect well, it should not be difficult to realize that universal brotherhood without distinctions of any kind is a revolution in consciousness. It is the one thing which will change humanity, and bring it to a new level of existence.

Incidentally, the distinctions mentioned in the statement of the first object of the Society are not meant to be complete. They are examples of the many distinctions that arise and exist in the mind. There are other divisions on the basis of social position, economic status, age, intellectual attainments, all sorts of things! This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but what is called 'illustrative'. There would be no point in adding more words. Our minds can invent any number of divisions and even if we add more words, they will be insufficient.

Let us now proceed to the second object, the study of religion, philosophy and science, which HPB tried to relate together in *The Secret Doctrine*, which she called 'a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy'⁷. All three are avenues to truth, valid roads to a single point. Truth is of primary importance to our lives, for what we see conditions what we do. When we do something foolish, discordant, cruel, it is because we fail to see correctly. If we see truth in the ultimate sense of the term — which is the same as realizing unity, and knowing the nature of love — then all our actions and relationships are bound to change qualitatively.

This fact has been emphasized in the orient, where no difference existed between religion and philosophy. In the religious-philosophical schools, teachers pointed out that seeing rightly is essential because of the effect it has on actions. We may recall the well-known illustration of Vedanta, if you see a snake, you are afraid, you become aggressive, you may push others in order to get away quickly. But if you realize the snake is nothing more than a rope, the action becomes different. The emotions and thoughts that arose from seeing the snake cannot arise when it is realized to be a rope.

As mentioned previously, we live in a world of unreality that appears real. We must wake up into another level of reality. Even then it will not be reality from a still deeper point of view, and there must be progressive awakenings. But for the moment, whatever we perceive is experienced as real: the solidity of objects, the separateness of all things. But these are like the reality experienced in a dream. Because of the unreality of our 'reality'⁷ we act as we do. When the possession of objects, of money and so forth, is a reality, and they appear important for our safety and happiness, we act in a particular way. But if we see the unreality or the relative value of it, then actions become different.

The search for truth is a search for a reality which cannot be contradicted at any time. The reality of the dream is contradicted by the reality of the waking state. The reality of the ambition to possess material objects gives place to a different reality if the person becomes more mature, less materialistic. So

every reality makes way for a superior reality. We have to go on negating the lesser realities in life, by the use of *viveka*. But is there a reality which cannot be contradicted by anything else, because it is for ever? It is the eternal truth, which is the aim of religion, philosophy and science. Although their methods and approach are different, they all seek to proceed to truth.

Scientists started with the study of material nature, but they have been pushing further and further, until some of the greatest have come to non-material reality. Sir Alister Hardy has been questioning the force behind evolution, which is no longer considered by leading scientists as a mechanical, haphazard development. Hoyle says that it is statistically impossible for the micro-organism to become man by a series of chance improvements. So what is the force behind it? He says it is intelligence, Hardy says it is love. Dirac says there is order and beauty in the very nature of the universe. So scientists are coming from the study of material manifestation to the greater reality beyond.

The material universe, which seems so real, changes; it may even be destroyed. The earth may one day become like the moon. But the power which moves it always exists, and creativity continues. Religion is the quest for this eternal existence. It is the release from finite existence and fusion with the infinite. We are speaking of religion in the true sense of the term, not of organized religion. We cannot discuss religion here, because it is a vast subject. But at its basis is awareness that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Therefore, the finite — which I call 'my mind' and 'myself' — must break out of its shell, to know truth, which on the religious path is realized as sacred. Philosophy seeks to comprehend the nature and relation of all things, briefly summarized as God, man and universe. Philosophy, like religion and science, is an avenue to truth. They start at different points, have different approaches, but what they seek to reach is the same. So they cannot be unrelated to each other.

The important thing is to realize that truth makes one free from the folly of action based on false conceptions of reality. The truth of seeing a rope as a rope prevents a person from running away in fear or trying to kill. Nothing can be more right than the statement: Truth shall make you free.⁷ *At the Feet of the Master*

puts it differently when it says that anyone who has a glimpse of the Plan, the splendour behind the processes of life, cannot help working for it, standing for the good and resisting evil, working for evolution and not for selfishness.

The second object of the T.S. is not concerned merely with speculative thinking or academic discussions which are unrelated to the problems of the world and ours as individuals. It is directed towards removal of ignorance, lifting the mind out of the unrealities in which it lives. This object too is meant to bring about regeneration.

The third object is investigation of the hidden laws of nature and of the powers latent in man. All natural laws are an expression of the divine intelligence. Those who do not understand them, who do not realize they are unchangeable and intransgressible, come up against an impenetrable wall, so to speak, and hurt themselves. Knowledge of the laws, on the other hand, is power to accelerate progress. If we do not understand how the great stream of evolution proceeds, what the great design is, we are led into foolishness and vanity. All the world is vanity, because man thinks that he can work outside the law, because he does not try to understand it. The law of harmony is perhaps the most important of all, for all other laws may be an expression of the great harmony of the universe.

This object implies study not only of Nature in its outer manifestation but of the relationship of all things, for all law is a statement of relationships. Those relationships are subtle, and many people think they do not exist. But the understanding of ourselves is connected with the understanding of laws, and of the forces at work behind them. There are many such forces and many forms of intelligence at work everywhere. There is a hierarchy of intelligences, we are told, working for the great Plan. What is our own place in all this? Can we claim a place which is not in the Plan, or carve a place for ourselves according to our own notions? Do we have to abandon our ideas and find out how to live according to the Plan? Discovering the answers is the same as trying to understand what our potential powers are, what spiritual faculties are latent in human consciousness and how they can be unfolded.

We mentioned earlier that, unless we see what the human being is potentially, we cannot create an environment helpful to true progress. We are doing the opposite, creating chaotic surroundings that suppress the human potential instead of awakening it. So the study of the human being as he really is, and of his highest possibilities, the depths or heights he can reach, is important for humanity.

It seems to me that, to make tire work of the Society effective, we must see the connection between the three objects of the T.S. and the relation of all the three objects to the unfoldment of the human consciousness and the upliftment of humanity. The history of the Society is clear on this point the one thing for which it is founded is to help the true progress of humanity. How can the Society have objects which are not related to that purpose? Perhaps in our Lodges and groups we have not given sufficient consideration to the meaning of the objects of the Society. We assume them to be unconnected. But if we see the relatedness, then all of us can work together for the same thing, which is the renewal of the human mind.

4

Our Approach to Theosophy

W^{re} have been considering two important things: universal brotherhood without distinctions, which is a state of consciousness with very profound implications, and secondly, the crucial importance of perceiving truth. Awareness of truth makes the whole of one's life, every relationship, different. If we become aware, not only of the form and appearance of things, but of their real, inner nature, then there is love; we care for and look after everything. If you see the meaning and beauty of a flower, you are tender with it. When one does not see, or sees only an object that varies according to momentary desires and conditioning, then one is capable of being destructive, creating chaos. So the quest for truth is not remote and abstract. It is the most practical of endeavours.

The two are of course related: brotherhood without distinctions, universal in its nature, and awareness of the inner nature, the beauty and significance of life. Brotherhood is a reflection in action of right perception. All this is relevant to our study of theosophy. Let us not say: we know all about this, we know about brotherhood — because we do not know. We know in a sort of a way. We have a mental concept about brotherhood, which may be inadequate and incomplete, even as a concept. But even if it is a beautiful concept, the concept is not the same thing as a state of consciousness where universal brotherhood is a reality. There is a world of difference between the two. There are matters which we must examine, ponder over, meditate upon in the depth of our hearts many times. If we do so, then

our approach to theosophy will be fruitful, because theosophy is divine wisdom. Our work is to come to that wisdom.

The theosophical life is based on wisdom, not merely on conceptual knowledge. If we want evidence of the sterility of knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term, we have only to look at our twentieth century world, where knowledge is increasing every day, every minute. Yet it is a world of extraordinary cruelty, and ignorance from the spiritual point of view. Perhaps no century has seen as much cruelty as the twentieth. Think of the huge populations which have been forcibly displaced from their homes. That alone would make it a cruel age. But there are many other happenings which we need not go into.

Knowledge has not helped human beings to be more happy, peaceful, or loving. Therefore there is no point in our seeking another form of knowledge, which we call theosophical. Theosophy must not be made into a theory, a set of concepts. It must be the truth which transforms, makes us loving, caring, tender in our relationships, as we are when we look at the hidden beauty of the flower. A flower is not a good illustration because it is too easy to feel the beauty of a flower, at least at the superficial level. It is much more difficult to see the beauty that is everywhere else — in the maimed, in the deprived, in all kinds of people, and all the things which we treat with callousness or indifference. Our concern is with the truth that transforms, frees the mind of its self-centredness, and not with sterile knowledge.

So how do we come to the truth which is theosophy? We should first of all understand that our thoughts and opinions are not truth. When we study a book, if all that we acquire are opinions and conclusions, what does it amount to? There are two kinds of literature. One which offers knowledge that has little or nothing to do with the way to wisdom, such as knowledge about how an aeroplane functions, or what mountains look like on the astral plane. How does this make one wiser? It does not. People who have that kind of knowledge, or claim to have it are generally just like anybody else. There is an anecdote in the Upanishads about someone who goes to a sage and says: I have studied everything, not only science, art and grammar,

but also the scriptures, religion and philosophy, yet I lack wisdom. Theosophy may also be added to that list if we wish! We can study all the theosophical books, know what is quoted where, say HPB said this but Annie Besant said something else, indulge in vain arguments and disputes, and after all that, what happens to us? Nothing! We are exactly where we were. This kind of approach does not really help.

Truly theosophical literature, if approached correctly can, however, aid the aspirant in his search for wisdom and in his life. This involves not taking what is said as material to be learnt by rote and repeated. A statement like 'The mind is the slayer of the real' is familiar to all of us. We know intellectually that it is an important statement, and we can have discussions about it. But it is not truth for us unless we actually begin to see the limitation of the mind, its proneness to deception, its insensitivity. We must understand the mind as it works within us, and pass from appearances to perceiving the essential nature of things; until then we have not really discovered the truth of the statement. It is futile to be satisfied with mere statements, with fine essays or talks. Our approach must be one which leads us to *realize* the truth.

To do that, we must first see that the words and the concept are not the truth, however fine they may be. Printed books are not the truth. If they are the right kind of words or books, they can be one of the means to help us to come to the truth. One of the functions that the right type of books can perform is to help to free the mind from preoccupation with unimportant, personal concerns. It is important to learn to raise the mind from the personal to the broader human level.

As we said, books we study can help us, if we use them rightly and if they are the right books, to rise above the personal and petty to larger concerns. Books can also spark the mind to examine in depth what we would normally gloss over. When we say a book or talk is inspiring, what do we mean? It means that it has touched something deep within ourselves. But often after that little moment of inspiration, we drop the matter. When we are concerned with wisdom, we should not drop the theme, but let it stay within; we must dwell upon it from time to time, look

at it from different angles, view different aspects, see whether there is greater depth than we had perceived earlier. Then perhaps, little by little, we will begin to know the real content of what was said.

There may be a whole teaching in a single word. Every spiritual teacher has spoken about love. A lifetime of contemplation may be needed to find the meaning of the word love. For this, our approach must be exploratory and serious, and not an approach which says: yes I know all about it. The question must remain pending, asking for an answer. We should look at it, try to find the answer. But no answer must be final, a conclusion, if the subject has spiritual importance. We know what love is only when it has become a reality within us, when it is invariable, totally unselfish, without choice. We know that the nun is the slayer of the real only when the mind does not erect any more barriers and allows direct contact between our inner being and the inner being of all else. Only then is there real knowing, without the thought 'I know'. So we have to approach theosophical knowledge as learners, in a serious investigatory spirit.

Often people believe that respect for a spiritual teacher means accepting the authority of that person, or pedestal. Whenever there is a discussion, if the a quoted, it must become the final word. This may be a approach. The greatest respect we can pay to words is to take them to heart, dwell upon them, investigate them with them, try to translate them in action and validity until we know for ourselves. The Buddha accept anything because it is scripture or a other people believe it, not even because I say it myself. 'Be a lamp unto yourself.' We may even use words as an authoritative quotation, instead of theosophical studies. Real understanding or knowing has to do with regeneration because the more we perceive and realize the great transformation which reflects truth, the more our lives are transformed. When there is no impact on the quality of our actions and relationships, the truth has not been touched.

nt al the e d the e b emg an al knowing, ch theo- putting him on a pedestal if u, itv is b wrong ds of wisdom d test their dha said: Do not tradition, because n use th se very them d f lying app, theosophical studies. Real eration because t d th of any state- ment which reflects truth, the more our lives are transformed

The T.S. is not meant to consist of a group of believers in a new theology, a new philosophy called theosophy. If it is, it will do great damage. HPB says in *The Key to Theosophy* in reply to a question about the future of the T.S., that if it becomes another sect it will die. It may continue as a shell, but it cannot be a useful living body. She declared that the future of the Society depends on the earnestness, devotion, and selflessness of its members, and also on theosophy being a living wisdom. The T.S. does not ask people to believe in anything, in karma, reincarnation, or anything else. Karma and reincarnation may be facts in the scheme of things. However, we have to study, to try to understand, to see in what way they are logical and offer reasonable explanations, until a time comes when we directly know them as real, which we do not at present.

It is important to know what is true for ourselves and what is not. There are many possibilities of self-deception. The neurotic thinks that what he sees is reality, the dreamer too has his own reality. Our visions could be expressions of hidden ambitions and desires, and become our reality. Devout Christians have visions of the Virgin Mary, while Buddhists see Kwan Yin in a particular form, and devout Hindus see none other than Krishna with flute in hand. Why does not the Hindu see Kwan Ym, the Chinese the Virgin Mary, and so on? Simply because the vision corresponds to what is already in the mind. Faith and deep devotion may evoke certain forces — we need not go into that. Pure devotion is a force and it must evoke something. But the form it takes is according to the conditioning of a person. This would also explain how somebody may be genuinely clairvoyant and yet make mistakes. So one must not take one's knowledge or perceptions for granted. There is need for continual questioning and alertness.

An official resolution of the General Council of the T.S. declares that there is no authority in the Society, not even HPB, none whose statements or writings are to be accepted as final by members of the T.S. In the name of cooperation, friendship, or unity, we must not set up an authority, because that is against the character of the T.S. We may revere HPB and be grateful to her, but neither HPB nor the Buddha nor Jesus can be made into

an authority in the T.S. There are no dogmas to be accepted without question, without using one's intelligence. Neither is there a scripture to follow. I personally do not even accept that there are 'classic books', because when we label some works as 'classic', others are put in a different class. There are books with a rich content, especially valued for the insights they provide or the stimulation they give. However, one must grant that if some people are inspired by certain things at a particular time, other people are inspired by other things at that moment. There cannot be one source of inspiration for all people at all times. The T.S. does not say to anybody, 'these are the books that you must study.'

When we have understood theosophical concepts, we know that evolution is not merely biological. Through the growing complexity and perfection of the physical organism, the brain etc., an instrument is created for the blossoming of consciousness in all its glory. All the possibilities within it, the faculties embedded in it, open up. As consciousness unfolds, what Krishnaji called the awakening of intelligence takes place. So the progress of evolution is not essentially biological; it has to do with the inner being, whose nature is intelligence, love and bliss. It is not helpful for the development of intelligence to conform, to say *T.* believe this because so and so has said if. That would be an abdication of intelligence. It is tantamount to declaring: I do not want to think, the other person has thought everything out, he is wiser than I, so I will accept his ideas and be lazy! That is not what the T.S. seeks. Intelligence requires that one should use such faculties as observation, intellect and intuition. If a person does not use the muscles of his physical body, they atrophy. Similarly, if he does not try to use his discrimination and discover the truth, he sinks into a form of dullness which is not desirable from the point of view of spiritual advancement

The true teacher is one who tries to evoke, as the Buddha did, the spiritual intelligence of the student. He says 'You should find out things for yourself. I will give suggestions, point out the direction. But you must tread the way.' Such teachers, whether they are members of the T.S. or not, belong to the theosophical 'community'. From a theosophical point of view, only the

pseudo-gurus say, 'You do not have to change yourself, all that you have to do is to believe me', or even worse, I will touch your forehead and you will be transported to a transcendental sphere'.

If we do not understand this, we might have the wrong kind of programmes in our Lodges. We may not know what type of lecturers should be invited, and what sort of books should be brought to the attention of people. We do not tell people that they must read or accept them. But there is such a thing as encouraging or discouraging certain types of literature. And this should be on the basis of helping people to understand for themselves and unfold their spiritual discrimination and intelligence. The development of wisdom is what we should encourage, not blind belief.

As we said earlier there are two kinds of literature: that which is irrelevant to the quest for wisdom, and the literature we may call theosophical (not necessarily published by Theosophical Publishing Houses), which contains knowledge that is useful for finding wisdom, provided the means are not taken to be the end. This kind of knowledge must be used like a map to learn about the country. The map is not the country, of course. HPB said *The Secret Doctrine can lead to the truth*; but it is not the truth, for words are not truth.

We should also discriminate within the theosophical literature itself between what is essential and what is not. In the Mahatma Letters we find many passages about contemporary events in the T.S. If we master such details, we may become proficient in T.S. history, but not necessarily wiser. Since time is limited, we must learn how to pick out the essentials. That is true not only of every book, but of every chapter or passage that we study. There are important principles, guidelines and hints about the real nature of life, and ethical instructions which are important. We must make use of them, and dwell on them. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna, who represents the universal divine spirit, both manifest and unmanifest, says there is no end to details in Nature. That is true. There really is no end! Those who wish to learn all the details will never succeed, for the creative energy is so great that there will be more forms, more changes. So through

study we should attempt to come to what is important. Although it is interesting to study the phenomena and processes of Nature, and to have knowledge of facts, it is not the same as perception of the underlying truth, which is wisdom. What is important is the significance of the phenomena and the processes. There is the phenomenon of suffering, millennia old, ubiquitous suffering. What is its import? We cannot grasp the meaning of suffering by becoming familiar with the details of suffering by people all over the world. Even though we may keep in touch with news about the manifold sufferings of man and beast, it is far more important to go deeply into what suffering is, and whether there is a way out of it. We must plumb the fundamentals, I think, in our study of theosophy. If study does not open our minds to essentials — and that has a transforming effect — it may bring about a little change, but not a radical and lasting one.

There is much to consider on this subject, and you will no doubt do it. Let us now think over one more point: relating studies to the actuality of our daily existence. Subjects studied by us must not become abstractions with no bearing on human problems or our own individual problems. If we study karma and reincarnation, what is the message it brings to daily relationships, thoughts and conduct? The test of our understanding is in daily life. Are we growing steadily, without ambition, and if so, how? We can all observe ourselves and find out if something is wrong in the nature of our study or in our approach. If it is right, we should be growing in affection, in the understanding even of people who are 'difficult'. All spiritually great persons have given an example of how understanding can embrace the so-called sinner. Nobody sins unless he is spiritually ignorant, and the more ignorant a person is, the more he needs the understanding of others. This does not mean that we should do whatever he wants, or say he is right, for one can grow simultaneously in discrimination and in understanding. If we do not know what another person's inner difficulties are, how can we help him? We must therefore not pretend that the difficulties do not exist.

The proof of theosophical learning is thus in the growth of understanding, affection, serenity, sensitivity and openness, not only towards other human beings, but towards all life — the little blade of grass, the bird on the wing, creatures of every kind. There is goodness everywhere. The precious quality of life exists wherever life is. Are we growing into a sense of the beauty and truth of it all? This is the process of coming to maturity. Let us honestly look at what is happening, whether we are really becoming more theosophical or not, whether our way of studying and learning theosophy is right, the test being in daily conduct and relationship.

5

Individual and Group Work for Regeneration

Several people have asked: how do we put all this into effect, what is the practical outcome in terms of lodge and group work?

Firstly it is important to realize what we are working for. There has not been much clarity on this point. There is no quick or easy way to regeneration. If we could say, go through steps such and such and everything will be accomplished, the whole world would be regenerated at once, but it does not work that way.

We can more or less see that the mind has to become new, and learn to look at everything from the point of view of unity. It should not merely have an intellectual concept of unity, but a growing awareness of unity. Probably we are all one in feeling that this is the nature of the work we must do, and that the objects of the Society are related to this. They indicate different aspects of the same main work. Can we communicate this perception through our lodges? It must be a perception, not a concept or a theory, that what humanity needs is this new awareness, a state of mind in which there is no division. If we can communicate this, we have started working for regeneration. Regeneration has not taken place in us, but just seeing that this is what we and humanity need is the beginning, and is important.

Krishnaji said "the first step is the last step", and the direction taken with the first step is what matters. If we think that the work of the Society is less profound, less far-reaching, we yield to distractions in carrying out the work. So this awareness is the first part of the work. Some people may think that several days or a week are unnecessary to communicate an awareness of the work to be done, but that view is not correct. It takes very much longer, for to say mentally 'regeneration is necessary' is very different from realizing it in one's heart, feeling deeply that this is the most vital thing. But when we begin to think about it carefully, explore it, try to find out the whole content of regeneration, we are setting in motion a current at the mental or psychological level. We are then putting good seeds into the human mind.

If the 35,000 members of the Theosophical Society all over the world felt wholeheartedly that regeneration is the real need of humanity, imagine what it would do at the invisible psychological level. The change would be very real because most things begin at the mental level. Ideas rule the world' said one of the Adepts. If this is more than an idea, a force arising out of a deep conviction and awareness, it will be even stronger than mere ideas. It would be the basis for all activities we initiate or try to encourage.

What should be the nature of the main activities of any theosophical group? People who travel all over the world cannot help noticing how work goes off at a tangent because the purpose is not dear. People are preoccupied with peripheral things, or engaged merely in pleasant occupations like meeting others over a cup of tea in a friendly spirit, which is good so far as it goes. But is it enough to fulfil the aims of the Society? We only too often reduce the aims of the Society to a mundane and superficial level. So with patience and perseverance all of us must try to share our awareness of the need to carry out the real aim of the T.S. This would be the first step.

If we are aware that the nature of the change is in the direction of an undivided consciousness, then we can proceed further.

Many of us continue, in spite of long membership of the Society and the devotion we have shown during many years, to think

unconsciously in terms of 'my⁷ group and 'the other' group. At the purely practical level, the 'my⁷ and the 'your' may have meaning. We do not want to use other people's combs and brushes or lend them ours. But there is the psychological condition, so deeply entrenched, that although we are aware now and again, the rest of the time we function in terms of division. Perhaps this happens because we have not really explored the nature of the change. We merely talk about brotherhood, and our brotherhood often fails miserably. Therefore, within the T.S., in the lodges and other groups there is friction, factions, tussles to gain office.

Some other societies have eliminated such problems by having no membership. A small invisible group of people runs everything: they own the properties, they organize everything. Others merely participate in meetings, use the premises for study, and go their own way. That is so much easier. But then these people are not put to the test. We are. The work in our Society is not merely to talk about universal brotherhood, but to demonstrate to the world that it can be a reality. This is important. It means not being superficial, and examining all the implications of universal brotherhood without distinctions. We must find out what is the nature of a mind without any barrier or prejudice, any sense of the 'other'. We cannot become enlightened immediately, but we must be earnest about journeying in that direction.

Can we bring greater clarity through what we discuss in groups, and relate theosophical studies to this question? Perhaps we need to keep regeneration in the background of our minds in order to make our study fruitful for, as the Upanishads state, this is the truth of truths, the unity of life.

I am only offering suggestions. This is the most difficult of subjects and everyone must give thought to it. How can we communicate the need for regeneration as the most urgent necessity of humanity, of ourselves as individuals — not as a far-away, abstract, metaphysical question, reserved for a few people who adopt what is called a religious life, but for all humanity?

Secondly, what is the nature of that change? Just as trees shed their leaves in winter and renew themselves, the mind can shed its opinions, prejudices, barriers and renew itself. Can we go into the implications of that? Can we try wholeheartedly to create inspiring examples of cooperation, affection, a meeting of hearts, in all the little groups of the Society? There is nothing more convincing than example. There are many people who think that it is impossible to be unselfish and to love everybody. If they were to come into contact with a loving, spiritual person, most of them would begin to realize that it is possible, for they see that it has happened.

The T.S. can demonstrate to the world that a deep sense of brotherhood, a realization of spiritual kinship with each other, is a reality, in a group of ten or a group of two hundred — it does not matter what the size is. The whole of the T.S. could also become an example. Whenever a group is in discord, it does great damage to the work of the Society because its credibility is lost. The opposite can also take place. When the group puts into practice the objects and brings about the necessary change, it can draw people to it and inspire confidence. There are a number of groups and lodges where the members do not really know each other, because there is competition to become president or secretary. This can also be avoided by forming study groups where there are no officers. Yet an escape of this kind does not seem to be the way out. If instead of having lodges, you have only unattached members it would be even easier. A computer will keep track of them and print out reminders about dues. They can all remain where they are, unrelated to each other, and receive literature. They may study seriously, but this does not fulfil our object. The T.S. is meant to bring people together — people who earnestly try to realize on this physical plane the supreme truth of unity, which is forever a reality at the spiritual level.

Thirdly, since regeneration is the purpose of the Society, the nature of the work must encourage awareness of what we are doing and thinking, of our prejudices, our hidden dislikes and desires. The mind must become more sensitive, perceptive and intelligent, and sense the inner nature of life, its meaning and

beauty. Regeneration involves this qualitative change of consciousness, so we should make a serious effort not to turn theosophy into a subject like any other taught in a college. If a student has a good memory, he makes good in physiology or similar subjects. Another student who has memorized the contents of books may say 'In chapter so and so of such and such a book you will find this information'; if he readily quotes from this or that source he may be considered a better theosophist. In many of our lodges the programmes consist of lectures by a few able speakers. Everybody cannot lecture, of course. But if the program is exclusively one of lectures by a few competent persons, the others do not work. The lecture is generally at the mental level. Often the speaker is merely picking up what other people have said, and stringing the information together in a more or less impressive manner.

How can we make theosophy a living wisdom? How can the knowledge which is theosophy be the means to living wisdom? It cannot be that if people only come to hear a 'nice lecture', or an 'exciting' or 'inspiring' lecture. Can it be a more real experience for others, offering a basis for them to investigate, ponder and know for themselves?

Discussion also should not be a matter of venting opinions. Opinions are not truth. Can we succeed in discussing vital questions without being anxious to present our opinions, but seriously trying to learn more about the subject discussed, its depth of meaning and all the implications? What does it tell us about how to live, how to be related? What application does it have in life? Many questions have to be examined whenever we talk about anything worth while. We need to encourage exploration, the spirit of looking for truth and never saying 'I know'. Can theosophical groups attract people who really feel there is no religion higher than truth — not even the religion of their own opinions and concepts?

Perhaps the 'new age' which people talk about will not be an age of mental concepts that are, like the present ones, misleading and divisive, but an age of more sensitive awareness. Jinarajadasa spoke about the new humanity of intuition. 'Intuition' is a word which means many things to many people, and we

must be careful about the meaning. But the point is: can discussion lead to looking at underlying meanings, not only at obvious concepts? It must make the participants more sensitive, enhance their intuitive perception. If the subject of unity is discussed, many points will come up. But there is something more important than new points. In the course of the discussion, can the participants begin to have some kind of glimpse or realization of that unity? 'Realization' means that it becomes real. Unity must eventually become real in a deep way, but even if it becomes only a little more real each time there is discussion, it has value.

In our work it is also important not to encourage mere belief. The greatest respect we can pay to any wise person is to consider seriously and carefully what he says, until the truth he speaks becomes a truth for us. As we have said, we should not set up infallible authorities in the T.S., nor abandon common sense and reasoning. Our reasoning may lead us astray for the time being, and we may be unable to see the truth. Still it is important to try to use our own faculties, *viveka*, reasoning, and common sense.

We should neither reject nor accept everything a person says, because we dislike someone and make an authority of another. At a certain council meeting, a member held the view that the books of C.W. Leadbeater should be banned in the Theosophical Society. The T.S. is not the Roman Catholic Church to ban books. The point made was about CWL saying that in some places the magnetism or atmosphere is not conducive to treading the spiritual path. So he advises against going to such places. This was held to be very 'unbrotherly'; CWL should not be allowed to say such things, the member declared. If someone's idea of brotherhood is to associate with all types of people and go even to unsavoury places, he is of course free to do so. But CWL's advice may also have a point, and there is no reason why others should not have the opportunity to consider that point. The refusal to consider all matters on their merit, and the basing of one's repudiation or acceptance on prejudice or authority, is not the right way if we care about regeneration. There should be, on the other hand, an attitude of open-minded, serious enquiry, particularly into important questions. But if we are not open-

nuded with regard to small questions, we may not be open-minded in respect of bigger questions.

It is also necessary to see if we are theoretical. Is the way we speak about things, perhaps even look at them, abstract, or does it have relevance to what we are actually doing, how we are living? One of the Adepts stated that if religion is true, it should provide the answer to all problems. Theosophy is the Wisdom-Religion. As HPB said, theosophy must be a living power in one's life, and applied in all relationships, whether business, social or personal. That is the case for the individual; but group studies that are effective should also bring understanding of the various fields of human activity, whether education, social reconstruction, or any other field. Perhaps we do not pay sufficient attention to the relevance of our study to human activities. Is it not important that, while we discuss and study, we should bear in mind that it is all a means to a different relationship, society being a structure of relationship? It must effect change in our lives, professionally, socially, in the home and so on. Theosophy must have a practical bearing. The Mahatmas said that their teaching is at the same time profound and practical. What is that practical element? How do the truths we try to understand relate to the problems of present-day humanity, individual, national and global?

There is another point: the language we use. Truth is ageless, but the idiom in which it is presented must be suitable for the time. We must try to find what idiom is meaningful to the present generation and will be so to the coming generation. What are the problems with which this and the immediate future generation are confronted? Most people are not interested in improvement of the condition of humanity. They are concerned with the problems that affect them personally. They want some kind of help and understanding. How do our discussions and research enable us to find an answer to these problems? We may not find final answers, but it is important to give our attention to this. If we merely talk about some abstraction, then they wonder what use it is for them to come to the T.S. The Buddha, tradition reports, was asked metaphysical questions which he refused to answer. When he was questioned further as

to his silence, he said: Suppose an arrow has pierced your flesh, what would you do? Discuss from what wood it is made, with what velocity it flew? Or would you be interested in how to remove it and heal the wound? This healing is our concern.

Perhaps all this seems impractical, but I do not think it is. If we know what we are doing in the lodge, what is our concern as a group, what is important to touch upon from time to time even in an informal meeting over a cup of tea, much will change, for our orientation will be different. One view of the work of the T.S. is to start from the outside: let us try to increase the membership, engage in high-level publicity. It is worth recalling what Sri Ram said: Suppose publicity brings a million members who are self-interested, it will do more harm than good. A million people organized together will be much worse than if they were on their own. It is better to start from within. If we are clear about the work and follow the right methods, then the other things will take their proper place. We will find right means, in proper proportion, of letting people know about this work. Krishnamurti remarked: If the honey is there, the bees will come/ The question is, do we have the honey?

6

The Source of Spiritual Energy

It is important to discover the real source of energy. Some of you may have read the following from the writings of N. Sri Ram: 'There are so many members who expect the "leaders" of the Society to keep up their enthusiasm. They will speak of the sad decline of the Lodge, and say that in the old days when so-and-so was the leader, there used to be so much vitality and enthusiasm. But in such a remark, their own personal responsibility is overlooked. It is a question of what each individual member is doing here and now to create enthusiasm. Merely to look to somebody else, however high his position, or to the Masters to transform the conditions that obtain, or even to look to God in prayer to produce the change which apparently He wants ourselves to produce is really a course of futility.'

Even now there are many lodges, and quite a number of members, waiting for somebody to come and inspire them. I am not saying that it is not useful to receive a visiting lecturer or member. It is always good to have contacts with each other, but it is not good to wait for other people to provide inspiration, or feel that the Section has not done enough, that the international Society is not sending instructions and so on.

There is a source of energy and inspiration which is more constant, readily available, and which never fades away. That source of energy which never diminishes with the passage of time or aging of body, but on the contrary flows more freely and abundantly when we learn to let it do so, is within. Every one of us must discover that source, that perennial spring. Otherwise

we become dependent on others to stimulate or lead us, or to organize seminars every now and again. After a time all activities become stale. There are people who are addicted to attending meetings or lectures, or to the lectures of a particular person, following him throughout the world, listening to him all the time, in the end, they are not much better than before, or at least there is no visible difference.

Where can we discover an unfailing source of inspiration and vitality except in ourselves, for we are always with ourselves? We cannot go away from ourselves. This source is there — only in the hidden light, energy and inspira-

A scholar was asked the question: 'Who is the Buddha?' His reply was 'The awakened consciousness', the Buddha is not necessarily a historical figure, or somebody in a far-away world of cosmic consciousness. The Buddha may be there, but he is also here 'nearer than hands and feet'. The literal meaning of the word *buddha* is 'the awakened one' and that principle which must awaken is the source of inspiration and energy. It is the Christ within.

Cleist has been called 'the only wise counsellor'. This is an absolute truth, for within is the consciousness, potentially or actually awake, and that is the only wise counsellor. Let us look at this more carefully. We may say there is inspiration elsewhere. I feel inspired when I walk in the woods, when I am with Nature. True, but you feel inspired only when your consciousness is receptive to the woods, to the presence of the trees, not merely to the substance of the trees. Another day you may be anxious, afraid, self-preoccupied and the woods offer no inspiration. There are people who do not find any use for the woods except to cut them. Similarly, when a teacher speaks, or a lecturer speaks, we derive inspiration — but only when we are open to what the lecturer says, to what the teacher teaches. In other words, when the consciousness is receptive.

What is the difference between a state of receptiveness and one of non-receptiveness? Receptivity implies that the consciousness, or a particular area in it, has opened up in some way. Then it seems to derive inspiration or wisdom from elsewhere.

If it is not open, the teacher may speak, the lecturer may say something very good, but it makes no impact. If people believe that the words are from a spiritually important person, they may say 'yes, we accept this', and then convert the teachings to suit their own opinions and preconceived ideas. This is what happens in every religion. We all hear, see and understand only what we make ourselves capable of receiving. So if our own consciousness does not come to the point where it can be inspired, there cannot be inspiration outside. We are all from time to time receptive to something, which is good. We receive inspiration from a walk in a beautiful place, from contact with another person, from reflecting over the truth stated in a book, from sitting in a lovely church or temple for a while. The inspiration is temporary, then passes away. One cannot sit in a church all the time. If one becomes dependent, it is bad. If things become 'familiar' they lose their charm after a while. But if we are open not only to some things, to the moments in the church or the woods, or to a particular person, if there is a state of openness, it is an awakening in our own consciousness. The degree may vary, but to whatever degree the consciousness is open, energy flows. One may expend that energy, but since it is flowing from oneself, it is always renewed.

Let us consider some of Krishnamurti's words. 'Most of us have very little energy; we spend it in conflict, in struggle, we waste it in various manners — not only sexually, but also a great deal of it is wasted in contradictions and in the fragmentation of ourselves which brings about conflict. Conflict is definitely a great waste of energy — the "voltage" decreases. Not only is physical energy necessary, but so also is psychological energy, with a mind that is immensely clear, logical, healthy, undistorted, and a heart that has no sentiment whatsoever, no emotion, but the quality of abundance of love, of compassion. All this gives a great intensity, passion. You need that, otherwise you cannot take a journey into this thing called meditation. You may sit cross-legged, breathe, do fantastic things, but you will never come to it.'

We do spend much energy on all kinds of trivial things. Conflict of course is a waste of energy, but apart from conflict, there

are numerous distractions which wear us out: the trifling we talk about, unimportant events which imprison our thoughts, and soon. If we examine our daily lives we can see all this expenditure of energy. The small desires, wanting to be president of something or seeking appreciation and thanks, perhaps wanting to get more recognition than somebody else, the little things and possessions — there are many superficial, trivial things which draw our attention. It is all wasted energy.

As for dislikes, even the small frictions, misunderstandings, dislike of other people, intolerance, anxiety, worry, of unspiritual, if we can classify energy because it is productive of what may generally be called pain. It does not leave us peaceful and happy. Spiritual energy, on the other hand, brings with it the gifts of the spirit, a sense of harmony, affection for all, beauty and wisdom.

How can the boundless energy of the spiritual nature within ourselves be hindered, open up and flow unimpeded? One must start by disengaging from the body and its sensations. We are ourselves. We should be aware of this. It is the brain-mind which drives us to a quietude, and prejudices. When all unnecessary memories and prejudices are removed, a new birth takes place. Every little child has innocence and joy, because the load of the brain-mind has been removed. Obviously that is not the real source of spiritual energy. Yet we are so wrapped up in it, and identified with it. Can we disengage?

HPB warned that sensual or even mental self-gratification involves the immediate loss of the power of discernment. It is often a combination of the two. When there is sensual pleasure the mind works upon it, and says "I want it again, I will not let somebody else have more than I have." Or we want thanks, we feel hurt if others do not appreciate what we have done. As an exercise, can we live for a time without thanking each other and see what happens? Is it not natural to be helpful? So why not take it as a natural act? Why feed ourselves on what others say, or make sure that they recognize our merit?

Everyone sees during moments of reflection the unreality of self-gratification. Yet we revert to the same reflexes. *Viveka* is the constant examination and putting aside of the unreal and the relatively real. It is clarity about our wants, emotions, sensory pleasures, mental gratifications, and therefore understanding of relationships, speech, experience of every kind.

The beautiful little *Isha Upanishad* begins with a verse, saying that all 'this' — that is, the world of manifestation, Nature, everything that moves or does not move, the rocks, the earth, minerals, the apparently inanimate, as well as that which appears animate and mobile, you, me, the insect, everything — all this universe is the dwelling place of a Divine Power or Energy. It is everywhere, without frontiers. The Upanishad says, 'Experience with restraint. Don't go about grasping at things, not only physically, but mentally. It is not yours. It is the dwelling place of that other thing, the great Reality. Let us not be greedy or utilitarian, in small or big ways, then we might be in contact with that Energy. Although in the modern world many people do not like such advice, they think it deprives them of their freedom, there must be a quality of restraint in one's behaviour.

HPB wrote, 'Meditation, abstinence, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as good will to all and entire oblivion of self, are the most efficacious means of attaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom/ The ethical life cannot be ignored if one aspires to find this endless Energy, a constant source of inspiration. The unethical life is the expression of the brain-mind, the superficial consciousness of the outer self with its memories, knowledge, desires and distractions, its arrogance, fears and hopes. I-ness must die, and yield place to the vastness of life. According to Krishnamurti there is no meditation without righteousness. One can use what word one likes: restraint, righteousness, ethical life, discipline, self-discipline. The word is not important, but the fact it connotes is.

Why has every true religious school spoken about morality? Not conventional morality, because the morality of a particular people, age, or society, may be a form of immorality. It is often a compromise, based on the expediency of the moment. Laws too

are made in that way. We are concerned with true morality. What is really ethical? This is surely connected with the unity of life, experiencing non-separateness from all the forms of life. Yoga-teaching holds ethics to be the basis of meditation, and hence the practices called *yama* and *niyama* are prescribed. The path according to Buddhism calls for right means of livelihood, means which do no harm to others, right thought, right speech, and so on. We can find the same in other teachings.

Without watching oneself and learning to live a truly righteous or ethical life, it is impossible to reach the deeper spiritual nature.. If we believe meditation to be apart from daily living, failure can be predicted right from the beginning. That is what many do. They give a little time to 'meditation', repeat formulas **to quieten the mind** for a while, and then that activity ends, and the daily life goes on a course that is quite different. But meditation is the touching of that deeper source of energy which belongs to the spiritual nature. Can it be done if we are dominated by the outer personality? We must remember that the unethical, superficial life of the brain-mind is the cause of disturbances. We do not deal with that cause, the 'me'. The 'me' can disturb anything! When meeting a great spiritual teacher, it is still in conflict, as symbolized by the acts of Judas or Devadatta, who set himself against the Buddha. So the 'me' can make a problem of everything, create a dispute where there is none. If we do not deal with that, but wish through 'meditation' to find peace and silence, we attempt the impossible. The 'me' and silence cannot co-exist. Without morality, meditation, meaning the way to that deeper real energy, is not possible.

In the modern utilitarian world the whole idea of restraint and self-discipline is at a discount. If we always do what the world around us does, we are sure to be misled. Of course, we must find out what self-discipline means. It is not suppression, which is simply hiding the problem. The 'self', in theosophical terminology the 'lower self', cannot be dismissed. Only when the time comes, when we have made ourselves fit for that, we will be released from the lower personality; but meanwhile the point is to bring order and harmony into it.

The word "discipline", like the word "disciple", is said to be connected with learning. If there is disorder within, the contradiction of different or opposed desires, how can we live in a healthy, wise way? There is the desire to eat what is not good and also the desire to keep healthy — a contradiction from which many people suffer. But there are similar and subtler forms of disorder inside, which we never resolve.

It is necessary to bring about a condition of inward harmony in every part of ourselves, the body, the emotions, thoughts, to enable the consciousness to become spiritually awake, dear, subtle, profound, sensitive. To do that, a quality of mindfulness, of attention is needed.

Both in ancient as well as in more recent teaching, the importance of attention has been brought to our notice. Attention grows with quiet observation of what passes within as well as without. It is not a matter of always observing oneself. If we do that, we may become deplorably self-preoccupied. Not thinking of anything except self-improvement is a very sorry state. One must not lose the capacity for relaxation, joy and harmony. Therefore, one must observe in general, both the within and the without. Human nature can be studied not only by seeing ourselves face to face, but by looking at human nature in general. One can learn a great deal, provided one watches impersonally, objectively, not in order to say: "look at that person; he is jealous". Let us just look to see how jealousy works. If it works out there in that way, it may work in a similar manner in me also. For the moment it may not be active, but when I am in another situation or in another incarnation, as long as "I-ness" is inside, it may come out. All personal passions and traits are only different branches of the single tree of "I-ness". Today, I may not be greedy because I happen to be in a fortunate position; I have everything I want. Another time I may prove myself to be greedy. So when we look at others, it should not be to point the finger at them, but to learn what can happen, how the mind works, how easily it deceives itself. Along with this, there is also quiet observation of the sunlight, the shadows, the grass, everything outside and inside. Observation makes the mind more awake.

Listening, too, is important, for it is a way of being receptive and purging the mind of its contents. We should not say I am listening to music; listening to music is fairly easy. One must learn just to listen — to anything that may be there, to life in the tree, to the glory in your friend, or even in one who is not so much a friend. Attention includes listening. In the school of Pythagoras neophytes learned to listen, and also in the Vedanta it was taught. Quiet listening empties the mind. Listening with attention is also listening to something deep within yourself. For this one must listen from the heart, not with the ear or the mind.

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, in the course of an anecdote, questions are asked: How can the hidden Reality, the inmost self of all, the *Atman*, be discovered? The wise teacher says: It is realized by seeing, listening, pondering, and meditating. By living thus, slowly, silence comes within. You may speak to a friend, but still in the background you live more silently. Your periods of silence become easier, more natural. The silence of the tongue then reflects the silence of the brain-mind; it is the silencing of the separative self. That is the true silence, sometimes called the 'grand silence'.

Pondering on the deeper questions of life is part of the work leading to meditation. Deeper questions have universal import, and contemplating them gives a different tone to the mind. Most of us are only concerned with immediate personal problems. When we appear to think of a group problem, or even a world problem, it is generally from the personal point of view. There is much difference between 'how can I escape sorrow and turmoil?', and 'what is the way out of suffering?' If it is the real way, it is the way for everybody, but our approach to the question must be truly reflective not personally involved. If it is, it is not real reflection.

When a young woman went to the Buddha and pleaded with him to restore the life of her dead child, the Buddha, in his compassion, said: Bring me a handful of mustard from a house where there has been no death. After a futile search, she came back. He was not hard-hearted. He was telling her to look at the problem as a universal problem, not as her problem. The problem of death is that of parting from things to which we have

become attached, which is universal. If we live with greater depth of awareness, sensitivity and clarity, a certain richness, an unending energy and inspiration will be there, because these are qualities of the new mind. Regeneration is a wonderful thing. When the mind becomes different, it is full of vitality; it has virtue and goodness.

Let us not be satisfied to remain at a comparatively shallow level in the Theosophical Society. Many people want meditation; perhaps there are people eager for the spiritual life. But what do we mean by meditation? As Krishnamurti said, it is not simply sitting cross-legged, breathing, or practising some formula. It is a way to a radical change in ourselves, bringing abundant energy, inspiration and understanding.

7 ■

Conclusion

We have been pondering the subject of regeneration for several days. We shall also obtain copies of talks, questions and answers. These will help us remember to give our attention to this subject for a long time to come. The ending of the seminar will not be the ending of the subject, because of its vital nature. Since we know how essential it is, we should not fall back into a routine approach.

Though we think we see the importance of regeneration, we do not really see. We see a bit of it. In a small way, we know that human beings must become less selfish, or else the world will be in great danger. But we do not see it as a whole, feel the full weight of the problem. Therefore the need to bring about a radical change does not become imperative in our lives. So the vitality of the problem should be felt. How can we do this? When we go back to our household work, office, daily preoccupations, will it fade away? If that happens nothing will change. Shall we give thought to keeping the subject alive until it evokes the passion for bringing about regeneration?

The story is told of a person who asked his teacher: 'How can I become liberated?' The teacher dunked him in water and held him down until he was panting for breath. Then he explained that he who longs for liberation as one longs for air when under water, will find it. This is the meaning of *mumukshutva*, a qualification on the spiritual path. It really means wholeheartedness, singlemindedness.

HPB suggests that if we read for five minutes, we should meditate over what has been read for many hours — not necessarily at a continuous stretch. I think it means we must keep the subject in the background of the mind, keep it alive. An important text on the spiritual life compares this to a person in love, who may be occupied in many ways, cooking, washing, or ploughing. But all the time there is a song in the heart, the inner feeling of relationship with the lover, experiencing the beauty of love. It is in the background all the time. So the awareness must remain within, to guide us to further understanding.

Regeneration does not normally take place all of a sudden. Such immediate transformation cannot be ruled out as a theoretical possibility, but normally it must be preceded by persevering work. Krishnamurti spoke of immediate and total change, but he also said that this cannot be done in one dramatic act. Every time we see a thought arise from the unregenerate mind, we must wipe it off. This means sustained attention, self-knowledge. On another occasion he compared the work to a garden you tend. If you prepare the ground, plant the seeds and then take a vacation, there will be no garden. The seeds may be fine seeds, but the garden will be full of weeds. Tending a garden means preparing the soil, sowing the seeds, watching and removing weeds, watering the seedlings, and so on — continual care, attention, and labour.

The regeneration process is like that. It is not enough to come to the seminar, become enthusiastic and then go on vacation. The garden must be looked after, the song must remain in the heart, deeply affecting us by its harmony. If we dwell with the urge for regeneration within ourselves, more and more light will come with regard to what we must do, how we can pass on something, share with others what we have received.

One of the best ways of receiving more understanding, is by hying to share. When we share, we receive. But this sharing is a very delicate matter. We cannot go around trying to convert people. The missionary spirit must be completely absent in the Theosophical Society! We must not imagine that we know about it. It is a matter of finding out together with others who have not been here what regeneration is. Is there any other way for

humanity to break out of its problems? Is it enough to find superficial ways of solving problems? These questions can be shared with others. It cannot be a once-and-for-ever activity, of course. . .

As we said, delicacy is needed. When we have received something of value, we must share and communicate, but with tentativeness and humility. Throughout our lives understanding must grow about how the impure, unregenerate mind works. Self-knowledge is very important.

We may try various experiments. For a few months, one could try never to refer to oneself. Much of our conversation is about ourselves and our feelings. Suppose we try not to talk about any personal experiences, about what we have eaten or done, and why we did it. Is it of great importance? Why should everybody else know about it? Everybody is not longing to know about it, but we are so full of ourselves that everything about ourselves seems important: the clothes we wear, the colour we like and so on. Why not put a stop to that, not speak a word about oneself, except when strictly necessary at a practical level? This practice could make us notice how seemingly innocently the T sustains itself. There are a number of interesting experiments one could try.

Bringing about a new mind need not only be based on observing or pondering. It could be experimental. The important thing is to keep going in this direction. If regeneration is alive for ourselves, it will become alive in the theosophical lodge or in the group with which we work. We cannot keep it alive if it is only a mental concept. It must be a reality, a growing reality.

II

Discussions

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I

T.S. Work and the Fundamental Change in Man and Society

RB: The purpose of organizing these two seminars here is a practical one; we hope that as a result of the discussions we will all have a clearer idea about the work of the Society. There are representatives here from many countries in Europe and also from other continents. In many parts of the world there are sections, lodges and groups of the T.S.; some of them lack clarity about the aims of the Society and the universal brotherhood without distinctions which is our aim. Many here hold responsible offices in the sections and we must be dear about the thrust the T.S. should give to human thinking, understanding, and perspectives. If we are, it may dynamize the Society. That is what we hope. If we are not, vague activities may go on in the different branches without really promoting the work of the Society.

But the central purpose of the Society must be fulfilled by all the different units of the Society. So we hope that these discussions will bring about a clear understanding of the subjects chosen for the different days, and that we can take back to our countries and areas a new comprehension of what needs to be done.

[The questions and discussions which follow are not in chronological order. They have been rearranged according to the themes of the lectures]

What is the fundamental change necessary for the T.S. to be a really useful organization for human regeneration?

DG: There is no T.S. without its members. The T.S. is all of us, and in the measure we regenerate ourselves, the T.S. will be regenerated. We always think that the other has to change, but we have to start with ourselves.

PO: In the early days of the Society, there was an insistence upon being 'a true theosophist'. And there is a depth of meaning in it, which incorporates many things relevant to our discussions, like *viveka*, *vichara*, and compassion. Perhaps we can help in making the T.S. a useful channel for human progress, as we ourselves endeavour to become 'true theosophists' — a lifetime task.

WV: It seems to me that this question and many other questions, can all be answered in the same way. We have to give so much (divine) energy to the question that as a result something entirely new comes about, which might be called an evolutionary step or regeneration.

GG: If any institution forgets to pay attention to unintended phenomena, there is damage. People must be aware of the processes taking place inside in the here and now, and feed this back meaningfully into the institutional life. That, I think, would be the best way of regenerating the institution.

How should we view karma and reincarnation with respect to human regeneration?

RB: There are two different approaches to such concepts. One is concerned with the mechanics and not with the inner content or purpose of the processes of karma and reincarnation; this may not be sufficient for regeneration. It is helpful to know something about the process of karma and reincarnation; people who are unaware of it are so afraid of what will happen after the body dies. They become victims of priests, their promises and

threats. When they know something about karma, they realize that their destiny is in their own hands, and not in the hands of an arbitrary power on earth or in the heavens.

These subjects can be presented in some detail, but knowing the details does not help in gaining wisdom. Suppose we acquire concepts about how many reincarnations are necessary before liberation, how many years pass between one incarnation and another, what are the karmic consequences of a certain deed, and so forth. Does it really bring about a new understanding?

The second approach reveals the whole process of reincarnation and karma as a movement in the course of which the human consciousness wakes up to the deep significance of life. So it is related to regeneration. If we understand karma and reincarnation properly, we see what is happening at a deeper level in the process. Everything which karma brings contains within itself the opportunity for awakening. Madame Blavatsky says: Karma brings about the good. Karma implies not only disasters and crises. Karma is everything. If we are here together, it is part of our karma and it is an opportunity. Every pain is an opportunity to respond in the right way. The whole process is a movement. Experiences face us so that we may learn to respond to challenges adequately. Something happens, even though unconsciously through karma and an assimilation takes place between one incarnation and another. We cannot consider this subject in detail, but we have said enough to realize that if the study of karma and reincarnation brings some comprehension of what is being inwardly achieved by this process, it has much to do with regeneration, but not if we get lost in little details.

EA: I think it is important to see how such things relate to our daily life. Let us take karma for example. We see that something happens to us and we cannot control what happens. But we can control our response, what we *do* with karma, with what we encounter, and that is our future karma. We are free to react to what happens.

RH: If we know that we have many lives before us, that we can improve from life to life and this improvement is in our own hands, then we realize how fruitful will be any effort to be better more perfect human beings, what help we can bring to others in the future, once we have improved. We have to become the leaven that enables the human dough to rise, give inspiration to others so that humanity as a whole can improve through the effort which we make. Then every effort is worth while.

RB: Krishnamurti sometimes said to Indian audiences: You do not believe in karma, you only say you believe in karma. If you believed in it, you would be very careful what you think, what you do, what your motives are... This is a lesson for all of us. Is the law of karma apart from our daily lives, or intimately connected with the movement of progress?

Should we accept any guidelines?

RB: There are guidelines in theosophy. One such guideline is that we should not become dependent, acquire crutches. Is that not clear? Do not cling to a teacher and hope that he will regenerate you. Do not depend on some scripture. If we cast the responsibility outside, there will be no regeneration. The test of a true teacher is that he will not make people dependent. The Buddha said: Do not believe anything because I say it; find out for yourself. 'Be a lamp unto yourself.' Is that not a clear guideline? There are other theosophical guidelines. Such guidelines do not bind us, but make us freer. We should not only avoid becoming dependent, but refrain from merely repeating what somebody else says, and believing or accepting blindly. We should be enquiring, as this starts the process of regeneration.

What does enquiry mean? It means reflection, questioning, looking, digging deeper, probing. In the 'Golden Stairs' of HPB, she ends with the words: 'These are the golden stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the temple of divine wisdom.' Unfortunately in some languages the word 'learner' has been converted into something which does not mean the same thing. Learning means 'continual enquiry', going deeper

and deeper, seeing more and more of the inwardness of everything in life. Regeneration takes place through enquiry, reflection, meditation, silent observation.

How important are guidelines?

RB: Does it not depend on what sort of guidelines? For us who seek wisdom there may be some fundamental guidelines which are important. We can say that one of the guideline's is unity. If you keep this guideline, the principle of unity, in mind you know what ideas are right. If they divide, create barriers, something is wrong. If they promote unity, universal love, then there is good in them. Is my action right or wrong? Think whether it is 'on the side of love', as Annie Besant called it, or the contrary. This is a useful and even important guideline. Another guideline is in the statement 'Illumination comes from within.' When you hear music to which you are not accustomed, in the beginning you hear the sounds, not music. But if you go on listening, the sound conveys music, because receptivity has increased within. We can only see what we make ourselves capable of seeing. We can only hear the truth for which we make ourselves ready. This is an important guideline in theosophy. We do not need to search for gurus. We must mistrust the gurus who offer rewards.

From a certain point of view, it is difficult to say what the T.S. is. Theosophy is a wisdom which is not possible to define, and which is the source of inspiration. The openness of the Society is at the same time its weakness and its strength. It is remarkable that after a hundred years of existence the T.S. is still alive and functioning. Could you comment on this?

CB: The openness of the T.S. is in a way a weakness, because when people come there is nothing very definite to tell them. But in fact it is a strength, because we can meet people and discuss what is of interest to them. We should listen carefully to others to find out what are their questions, their problems, and not immediately come up with this or that teaching. Something

we have integrated into our own lives, which is part of our deeper understanding, is what can appeal to the person we listen to. This openness must be maintained and we must give people what is part of our own life, in our own hearts.

RB: The T.S. is a worldwide, non-sectarian brotherhood of people who are earnestly seeking the way for all humanity to reach a truly happy state. The elements of many different things are involved in finding that way. A philosophical perspective is necessary which theosophical literature presents. A way of life that is essentially religious is also important. The T.S. is not a religious Society. HPB said theosophy is not *a* religion but it is religion per se, it is the wisdom religion. We realize that with the present limitations in our perception, we cannot find the way to **true** well-being. We have to cleanse our minds and shatter our **limitations**. In this religious element are included what is called **culture and** plication. Educating oneself about life, cultivating **a.. th** faculties, including intuition, bringing out what is deeply **hidden** within ourselves, and developing awareness — all this is part of the religious life.

There is also a scientific element in the T.S., because our view of the universe is not irrational. We recognize there are depths which transcend the rational, but we do not despise the rational. The rational mind has its own role in understanding. One must learn to examine everything without pre-conclusions, for only such a mind is fit for spiritual investigation. The T.S. is also philanthropical in a large sense of the term.

A balance between all these elements gives the T.S. its character. If only one element were stressed, the T.S. would not be itself. It is not meant to be a philosophical society. It is not a religion with a church, priests, or ceremonies. It is not a scientific body, or it can not limit itself to the field which science has chosen as its province. It is not a philanthropical body in the narrow sense, practising outer charity. It is not a psychical research society. The special characteristic of the T.S. stems from a recognition that the human being is a complex entity who functions at different levels: the physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. The whole human being must be

understood in order to bring about regeneration. We must not confine ourselves only to man's physical well-being, or to advancement in the intellectual area.

The rather subtle character of the Society, is also in a way a problem. If it had a more easily definable character, it would be easy to understand and explain what the Society is. Because it has a rather complex and comprehensive work, it is more difficult to help people to understand what its work is.

T.S. membership is very open. Practically anybody can fill an application form, subscribe to the objects, pay a very small amount, and become a member. Often a new member does not understand what he is entering, has only some vague ideas. If there are many members with vague ideas, the lodge itself becomes vague. Sometimes new members have definite ideas, but they are different from what the Society stands for. When people with definite and contradictory ideas join a lodge it creates problems; because they want to convert the lodge into a body that suits them. However, there may be an advantage in not closing the door even to people who have only a superficial interest in the real objects of the Society. HPB said that it creates a karmic link; something moved them to find out what the Society is, and that impulse may influence them later on. A large number of members float in and then drop out. Perhaps it does not matter; they are touched in some way. In this sense the Society is open.

There is the other kind of openness. We do not try to impose any dogmas or tenets on members. We believe in enquiry, in finding the way to experience of truth. There is an apparent weakness in this approach, but actually it gives strength. This is why the T.S. has survived so long in spite of crisis after crisis. It is meant to go on as long as it maintains its essential character. Its openness gives it moral and spiritual strength. It would be easier to say: this is theosophy; accept it, and being a good student who has learnt his lesson, repeat it to others. But that is not our way.

Another point is important. As you know, there is no authority in the Society. The structure of the Society is democratic. The President does not have the constitutional power to tell the

sections what they should do. Both they and the lodges are autonomous, they have their own rules, and managing bodies. Nobody from 'above' interferes, nor does one section tell another what it should do. They are all independent, but they are not autonomous in the sense of having the freedom to change their character. Every lodge is a representative of the Society in its own place and it must continue to be so. A lodge is not free to convert itself into a Hebrew temple or a Sai Baba shrine. As long as it maintains the character of the Society it has freedom to function as it wants, to elect its own officers, and so on.

It would be easier not to have a democratic structure, to have no membership, no properties, no elections, no officers. This is the way some other theosophical societies are organized. There is a central committee which arranges meetings, owns the properties, etc. People come to meetings, use the library, but they have no rights, no responsibilities and no problems.

In our T.S. we give responsibility to every unit, and member. It is important to learn, to take responsibility, to cooperate, without being ambitious or greedy. That is an education in itself. We must learn to work together. There is both weakness and strength in our Society. It is truly remarkable that it has so far not collapsed. What holds the society together? As we said, the international president and officers have no direct power. Each section is separate, yet we have all had a feeling of togetherness for more than a hundred years. It is not the organization which has created this feeling. It is some living quality, which we sense.

ER: Ilya Prigogine said that each living system has four qualities. The T.S. is a living system, and ought to have these four qualities. The first is complete openness; the second, vulnerability; the third, flexibility; and the fourth is to dare to give yourself up outwardly. Then you receive more inner strength.

Krishnamurti abolished all organizations. Some theosophists seem to think that the T.S. is 'the' instrument for the Hierarchy. Others say — and it seems there is more truth in this statement — that theosophy is higher than the T.S. How long will the T.S. remain important, supposing it is important?

RB: Krishnamurti did not abolish all organizations; there are innumerable organizations in the world. The T.S. will remain important as long as we do the right kind of work. It depends on what we do and what future generations of members will do. HPB said in *The Key to Theosophy* that the future of the T.S. will depend entirely upon the degree of selflessness, earnestness, and devotion of the members, and last but not least, on the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by those members on whom it will fall to carry on the work. We may not have wisdom, but at least we must be seekers for the wisdom. The T.S. will be important if it consists of selfless people who are seeking wisdom in order that the world may be better, not for their own satisfaction. The search for wisdom must not be a new form of egotism. If the T.S. really consists of altruistic seekers for wisdom, it surely will remain important. If we make it into something trivial — a social club, an academic institution etc. — then it will cease to fulfil its purpose. HPB said that unless we ensure there is a living wisdom in it, the T.S. will become like a corpse which will be washed ashore somewhere. And there will be no living wisdom, if we do not try to discover the truth of life, translate it into our lives, and try to share with others new points of view. In other words, if the T.S. is an instrument for bringing about regeneration, a new human mind, it will remain important. But if it becomes a new sect, a body of people addicted to their own theories, it may survive outwardly, but it will be a lifeless thing.

Would we as theosophists worldwide be more effectively serving humanity, if every one at a certain time, every day tuned in on a specific theme concerning human regeneration?

RH: It is not good to give a negative reaction first. Once again there is the suggestion that we should all meditate every morning on a specific theme. There would be no end to the good thoughts we could all spread on the world every day at a regular time together. But that seems to become a burden.

RB: If all the members worldwide agreed to meditate at a certain time, some people would have to be up in the middle of the night! To do it at the same local time would be more practical. At other times too an appeal has been made for sending such thoughts. I remember, Riki took the lead in making an appeal for a more humane way of living, a universal campaign for goodness, with Geoffrey Hodson supporting it. But the effort petered out as these things always do. If many of us send out our thoughts on a particular theme, it is bound to have an effect, even if we do not fix the time. If all the members of the T.S., thought every day about the regeneration of humanity and sent out their goodwill, I am sure it would do good.

There is increasing environmental damage and pollution. Do we, as theosophists, have time enough to solve these problems before it is too late?

DG: I think that when we are really enthusiastic about something, we always have the time to do it. In my opinion, as members of the T.S., we can choose two paths: one is working among members, the other is towards the world. We should be willing to learn from those outside the T.S. who know more about technical matters, such as pollution, while we should try to inspire them with the theosophical guidelines of unity, wholeness, and oneness.

LR: All environmental damage is caused by us humans. Consequently, it can be corrected only by human beings who have

started on the path of regeneration. The regeneration of our planet can take place only if we regenerate ourselves. Whether we have enough time depends on all of us.

FF: Isn't there a divine power which helps Mother Earth restore herself and keep in balance?

RB: Are these fundamental problems or secondary ones? Can we put an end to environmental damage if we continue to be as greedy as we are? The human population is constantly increasing; we now have power to destroy all other species. New human beings will occupy the area vacated by their annihilation and join the race to acquire, enjoy, etc. Can the environmental problem be resolved without dealing with this insatiable greed, which is the characteristic of our modern consumer society? How far are we, as theosophists, containing our own greed? Are we buying things which are unnecessary? Are we changing the objects we have, simply because we like to be more modern, have something brighter looking, etc.? How much paper do we waste? Have we changed our attitude towards the plunder of Nature's resources, or are we also unwittingly or wilfully participating in it?

We may be talking of pollution on one hand, while being part of a wasteful society. One who comes from deprived countries cannot help feeling horrified by the waste here. Of course, people in other countries are not better; if they had what people have here, they would probably also be equally wasteful. As theosophists, we must go to the root of the problem, which is the thirst for material things, for novelties, for excitement, for possessions. Perhaps if we seriously enquire into that, we will affect the psychic atmosphere of the world. Thought spreads fast. In the days when slavery was almost universally accepted as a necessary part of the economic system, there were a few extraordinarily courageous people, who were maligned or threatened because they were subverting the established system. Yet, the intensity of their conviction made more and more people feel that slavery was an abomination. Thus, if we have a clear conviction about the degradation of the environment, and we

act accordingly, the mental atmosphere will change. All depends on our earnestness, and utter conviction. Whether it will be in good time, who knows? Maybe Nature's intelligence will right the situation in some way.

Why do we ask the Theosophical Society to help solve the problems of the world?

RH: The V** ^iaS h^{ee} ^ f^{und}ed for the purpose of helping mankind to solve its problems.

GG: I do not think it is a question of the T.S., but of the human being. If I do not seek a solution, I am part of the problem. Whether one is a theosophist or not, one is still a human being, and the problems of mankind are our problems.

AR: I wonder whether the Theosophical Society should be an organization to help solve the problems of the world. As an organization it cannot do anything. It can only provide a forum for people who are really searching for truth.

WV: Theosophy implies oneness, wholeness, holiness. The word theosophy is beyond comprehension, beyond explanation. To me, a theosophist is a person who feels the urge to consider life in the world of manifestation, the lower life, from a higher point of view, a higher consciousness; let us say from the buddhic consciousness, which is the consciousness of oneness, holiness. The T.S. is a nucleus of people who most sincerely want to consider the problems of the lower world in the light of the higher, which they try to unravel through the age-old path of study, meditation and practice. If we really try to do that, as theosophists we have something unique to contribute to the solution of the problems of the lower world. As a Society and as theosophists we really have the opportunity to solve problems by seeing them in the light of the highest, of the holy One.

RB: What is the Theosophical Society? Is it not ourselves? There is a Theosophical Society which has rules, and is registered with

the government in various countries, but the T.S. as such cannot solve problems.

The T.S. is a means for bringing together people who are aware that there are serious problems, and are earnest about solving them.

2

The Nature of the Change

Regeneration was described as a movement from self-centredness to altruism. But Krishnamurti said there is no psychological evolution. How can we understand the difference?

RB: Is there a progression from self-centredness to altruism? Is there anything to be done about it? Is there no difference between one who is more self-centred, and one who is less? Krishnamurti seemed to say that you are either self-centred or not, which indicates a jump, and not progression.

GW: Krishnamurti repudiated techniques to reach goals, and said that when you really understand the problem, change takes place. But to me, an ordinary student, this seems impossible. We need time. We begin by studying, then there is some awakening. We confront life, make some progress, fall back some steps, and we go on again. As a simple person, I feel I need time.

AR: When a man stands in front of a house on fire and hears a child inside, all of a sudden his consciousness changes totally. He runs inside, ignoring all danger to himself, and saves the child. The moment he comes out of the house his consciousness returns to normal. What Krishnaji said is right for everyone at a certain moment. At certain moments, we have the courage to do something which never happened before. But the consciousness goes back to normal. It is seldom that it continues to function in that special way.

RB: Could it be something like a fruit on a tree? It ripens gradually and at the right time it drops. An unripe fruit does not fall. The consciousness of the liberated person who has no self in him is in a different dimension. So one cannot progress towards it. The consciousness of an animal is dimensionally different from the human. The little dog which is often here sees us sitting together for more than an hour and talking, but he cannot understand the subject we are talking about. Similarly, the dimension of freedom in which the consciousness of the liberated individual dwells is totally different from ours. In this sense, either you are there or you are not. There is a joke about somebody being 'a little bit pregnant'. One who is a little bit selfish is selfish. He who feels a little bit separate is separate. So either a person is selfish or he is not. Krishnaji's way of putting things is expressed in the title of one of his books, *The Urgency of Change*. We are all contented with small improvements, and like going slowly. Even if we notice selfishness, we say, 'I am not too bad; after all I have changed somewhat in the last twenty years.' But this is not enough. The little bit of selfishness may flare up when provoked. That is why the path of occultism is full of wrecks. The Upanishads mention the 'razor-edged path'. The Bible says 'straight is the road and narrow the gate'. Because as long as a speck of selfishness remains it can flare up and become like a wild fire. Though the danger remains, we are unaware.

Let us try to understand Krishnaji in the spirit of his words, see the truth of what he says. Many times he said: 'Throw away all your books'. Then, why were his talks printed even during his lifetime? Does he make an exception of his own books? No. He strongly urged people not to become dependent on books. It is not enough to repeat, 'The Upanishads say that, so it must be true.' We must not make a creed out of books, or just read more and more books and acquire concepts. It is essential to meditate on what is said, look into oneself, realize for oneself the truth of what is said.

Talking to some teachers, Krishnamurti said that the self cannot be abolished in one dramatic act. As *The Voice of the Silence* says, whenever there is dust on the mirror of the mind, it must

be wiped away. In relationship with everything, the self must be watched, and the wiping, or negating, must take place.

I think that there is truth in both statements. By constant negation, the use of *viveka*, purification takes place. By listening, observing, learning, clarity and maturity come to the mind. Then, at a certain time, there is the stepping from the sphere of time into timelessness, that is the dimensional change. This is not giving an argument to go slowly. But I think one should not ignore the necessity of living the right kind of life. Krishnamurti himself says: 'Without righteousness there is no meditation'. If there is no question of any other change except that major one, then what does it matter if you lead a righteous life or not? But it matters immensely, because it prepares the mind.

What is the difference between regeneration and transformation?

AV: I think we can go from having to being, and from being to non-being. The only question is: Are we willing to give up our having? I think when we do so, that means transformation. When we come near to being, we come near to regeneration.

LR: The difference may be in the words themselves. Transformation means forms are changed. Regeneration is a new creation from inside, maybe even transcending form. Transformation and regeneration are connected with each other but they point to two different ways of change.

RB: In a loose sense, the two words are used as synonyms. But a 'complete transformation' does not mean that the form is changed; it refers to a total change. In a more literal sense, as said, transformation means change to a different form, while regeneration means a new birth. This new birth is not reincarnation, coming into a new body. It is a new birth within.

Many religious traditions speak about a new birth. In ancient India, the word 'Brahman' meant one who lives the kind of life that leads to Brahman, the ultimate Reality. The Brahman was also called the twice-born; he had to die to something and be

bom in consciousness again. The Christian world is familiar with the statement: 'He who loseth his life, finds it unto life eternal.' It also suggests a new birth. Krishnaji also talked about dying, in this inner sense.

MD: In the Tibetan tradition, with which of course Madame Blavatsky was extremely familiar, you have the two levels. There is the ordinary human birth, which we all have when we are in some kind of human body. This does not necessarily mean that we have human intelligence. Someone might for instance be bom as a Mongol child. This is called the ordinary human birth. But the second birth — which is beyond the edge, where there is a kind of borderline between animal and man — is what is called 'this precious human birth'. That is the twice-born one. Inside all of us there is no soul (Buddhists do not believe in souls) but an inner self which has no permanence either. That is the *vajra-sattva*. HPB mentions in *The Voice of the Silence*, the diamond-soul (*vajra-sattva*). This may seem no help to us in our work, but it would be if we got an inkling of what that is and knew that that is not permanent either, but a stepping-stone to understanding Brahman, which is very difficult for us. Perhaps making friends with that aspect inside might help us towards regeneration.

EA: I think regeneration is an ongoing thing. It is not only a new birth. Re-generation is constantly going on.

WV: Regeneration cannot be put into words although it is spoken of in all religions. Real regeneration, real transcendence, or birth to something perfectly new, may become clearer to the Christians among us if we follow the important events in the life of Christ. Then we see what a moment of supreme experience we have to go through before we can talk of regeneration.

There is a satori-experience in Zen Buddhism related as follows: 'Before I got *satori*, a tree was a tree, a river was a river and a house was a house. Now, a tree is a tree, a river is a river and a house is a house. And yet, everything is new.' Regeneration points to an experience with a real spiritual meaning, which is

difficult to understand and explain in words. This experience has to be lived, which implies total change from the old level to a new level of being, of consciousness. In any case it implies much suffering.

RH: To me regeneration means coming to one's own real nature and essence again. Our body, emotions, and thoughts are not our real self. But when we no longer identify ourselves with that, when the little self, the personality is forgotten, then we can come to our true self, and this is the one universal life in all. When we are consciously one with this universal life, when we are this universal life, we have realized our true nature, which we knew before we began our pilgrimage. This spark of divine life at the core of our being, was one with the One Life before it began its pilgrimage into incarnation. Then it got a feeling of separateness, and its destiny is to come again to the feeling of oneness, but in a much deeper, richer and more intense way than at the beginning.

RB: Is Nature not a great teacher? Perhaps, natural processes can teach us what regeneration is. Before we die in the ordinary sense of the term, over years we acquire various ideas and prejudices. When we look at something, we look with the memory of the past. We see the rose. How do we know it is a rose? Because the image of previous roses is in the mind. We are unable to see the rose without the past images. Naming implies the weight of all the past. Recognition is re-cognition, memory of the past experience, and also all the past prejudices, likes, dislikes, etc. After the body dies, there is a new birth in the ordinary sense of the term. The child is innocent; it looks at a butterfly with new eyes, full of wonder. Everything is new and fresh. So Nature teaches what a new birth can be. Regeneration is this awareness without the accumulated burdens of the mind. And we do not have to wait until the body dies. In fact that is not complete regeneration, because a child is born with latent tendencies and it gets conditioned very soon. Can there be a new awareness with no latent tendency, no burden of the past, seeing with eyes that are completely new? Then everything might con-

vey the glory that life actually is. Blake wrote of the world in a grain of sand, and eternity in each hour. Our minds have become stale, with accumulations. If we become aware that we accumulate, and stop accumulating, the mind will be fresher. We must not think of regeneration as a far away goal. Day by day, we can drop the useless stuff of our minds, and proceed like Jesus who could say, 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

We are taught to remember. The person who remembers is appreciated. We remember our own words and our own past ideas and we give them great importance. It is much more important to give attention to the present. The Bhagavad Gita repeatedly speaks about acting without concern for the result of the action. Acting is speaking, feeling, thinking, even being. Normally we give very little attention to the moment in which action takes place, the moment when thought arises. We may analyze afterwards, but we are not aware of the present action. While acting, we do not know how we are acting, but we want our action to have results in the future. The mind moves away from the 'now', which is the only real moment, to a future which is only a projection of the mind. Both the past and the future are images in the mind. The past cannot exist because it is gone. It exists only in the mind as memory, images, impressions, tendencies. Similarly, the future. Can there be an action, a living, in the present, not through the veil of the past? Then a regenerative process begins, the mind becomes clearer, fresher.

In winter, trees lose their leaves. Then one fine morning, spring arrives and the trees have delicate, new leaves. It is an extraordinary sight. It seems as if all of a sudden the change has taken place, but actually the tree has been gathering its resources. Changes were taking place in it unseen, and then spring arrives as a new burgeoning. So it is in our life. There is regeneration in the sense of a total change, a new mind. But for that new mind to come we should allow the energies within us to be gathered, and that cannot happen if we continue to accumulate all sorts of things from the past within the mind.

BO: In Australia all the forests have to die or be burnt completely away for them to regenerate. In fact, an Australian forest

regenerates when it is completely destroyed. It is a miraculous event.

Can one say that 'viveka' is the consequence of 'vichara'?

RB: *Viveka* means spiritual discernment, discrimination between good and bad, right and wrong, real and unreal. It implies real intelligence. *Vichara* means reflection, going below the surface, understanding the real nature of everything, a problem, a relationship, etc.

CB: I think that deep reflection brings us nearer to true discernment. Reflection is for most people a movement of thought. But real discernment is beyond thought. Deep reflection is the preparation for the spiritual discernment that is beyond it.

RB: *Vichara* comes from the root *vi-char*, 'to move around'. This means looking at a question from every side, thoroughly, wholly.

RH: True discrimination comes from deep sight, and pondering and reflecting is not enough. To see clearly, we need deep attention and awareness of wholeness, of the context of the thing we are examining in relation to the whole. If we look at things separately, rather than in relation to the totality, we may not see clearly the nature, the import, and the relation to the rest of the world.

EA: I wonder if anyone of us looks thoroughly at things, from all angles, in a quiet state of mind. I wonder if discernment is not a fact, the ^{is} ^{sta} ^e ^o understanding. If you look thoroughly at some problem or ^{3 n y^oU un<^erstanc^g/} which is not merely understood, but which is a state of mind, of consciousness.

GS: By developing attention, you start to see things more clearly as a whole. You have developed a deeper kind of perception.

RB: To me it seems as if the two are part of one life.

Is any preparation necessary for correct perception of truth?

MD: I think the preparation must essentially be purification and getting 'oneself' out of the way. Because 'this one' [pointing to herself] and 'that one' [pointing to the ceiling] cannot mix.

RB: Can you say something more about the impossibility of mixing? How do you get 'this' out of the way?

MD: I think only by finding useful practices and by what seems to work at the time. One useful practice I found is to try always to remember that 'this one' is neither more nor less important than 'that one' and that whenever there is any derogation of 'this one', (e.g. 'Oh, I am stupid!'), try to remember that 'this one' is no more stupid than anybody else. Then gradually the differences can become less and the points of contact may increase. Anything at which one works steadily seems to become stale after a time. We have to keep giving ourselves little exercises to purify us from this greed that makes 'this one' the most important thing in the world.

AB: Purification is essential, but we also need a balanced personality because without balance, nothing can be done. Balance means an equal development of thinking power, feeling and action. You cannot be one-sided and penetrate into truth. You should not neglect the personality. Nothing is lost, of all the things that you develop inside yourself—thinking, knowledge, refining of the feelings, purification of the character, unselfish action — all this is essential. With a more balanced and better developed personality you live more happily and are more useful to your fellow man. So there is much work to do in the different areas of your personality.

RB: There are many instructions about the preparation for correct perception of truth, not only at the outer level, but also of the essential nature within. If that essential nature is not seen, there is no perception of the truth, because then we do not see the whole of what is.

Muriel has answered very simply: 'This' must give way to the other. But what are the aspects of 'this' and how does it display itself? One part of the preparation is obviously to watch for symptoms. If we do not help when help is needed, is it because we do not want to be inconvenienced? Then that is the self, unwilling to sacrifice its comfort. The positive side may be to train oneself to observe where help may be needed and be ready to offer it. Dr. Besant said that, between the person who sees what needs to be done and says 'let somebody else do it'⁷ and he who goes forth to do it, there are incarnations of difference.

There are other aspects. We may see in a shop-window something which is not really necessary. But a quick thought arises, a desire to have it; it may be something new, it may look attractive, or our neighbour has it. This reaction is almost automatic. It is greed, and we should not say: 'It is harmless; after all, nobody is hurt because I feel a little greedy at the moment'⁷, because then we neglect ourselves. Our desire for comfort, little acts of greed — all these things cloud the mind, preventing perception.

Everything which creates greater harmony makes perception easier. Perhaps we should adopt a way of life in which there is more harmony. What we think is a fault in somebody else may not be a fault at all. Even so, why not think kindly of that person and say: 'That is his temporal nature, the real person in him is pure, as it is in everybody else'? Do not give too much importance to the fault, be too critical and tell other people about it. Look at the person with understanding, as if you were in his place; help him inwardly if not outwardly. We are not our brother's keepers, but we can be sympathetic, help with our responses, thoughts and kindness.

There are small practices which can be helpful. Suppose there is a desire, a weakness, let us say, for sweets. Can we quietly, without struggling, abstain from that particular attachment? Do not eat sweets for a few months. A few days ago I suggested something else. People who have heard Krishnaji speak will know that he never referred to himself. We say: 'I am hungry, I am tired, I want something', etc. We say so many things about ourselves. We are not doing any harm, but can we try to abstain from this? We are not conscious of it. Can we be aware?

All sorts of trivialities come up, expressions of the self, which obscure perception. The mind runs away with us. It has been compared to a monkey, to a wild horse, etc. There is the habit of worry. The worry is mostly about utterly useless things. The train is late. You keep looking at your watch, you pace up and down. All this is not going to bring the train earlier. Do we fret because we do not pay attention? Thought has the habit of creating agitation about nothing.

One way is reflection on higher things, uplifting the mind to a noble level. Books can help. Do not become a bookworm, but read a little passage and allow yourself intervals to ponder, to see for yourself. So a study can help us to lift the mind from personal, trivial questions to universally important matters. Communion with Nature, in silence, can also help to purify the mind.

Instructions are not lacking: *Light on the Path*, *At the Feet of the Master*, the 'Golden Stairs' — these are well-known. But there are many variations of those instructions. They appear too familiar and so we do not see the necessity either to put them into practice or to go into their implications. Take for instance the 'open mind'. It is a mind which is open not only to other ideas, but open in a more sensitive way. It is difficult even to be open to ideas, because usually we do not listen to what another person is really trying to say, either in spoken words or through a book. If ideas are somewhat different from ours, we react. We may say at once: 'It is useless, it is rubbish.' Can we be really open, without preconclusions and prejudices? Bradlaugh taught Dr. Besant to read everything which was contrary to her own thoughts, to see whether there was some defect in her own ideas, something she had missed. We must not be afraid of anything which does not agree with what we think. Most of us are either afraid and we immediately reject ideas which deviate from our own. Even if an idea is not very valid, there may be some point in it which may help to widen our understanding.

Further, can we be open to what is said between the lines, to the underlying truth? The open mind is a receptive, sensitive mind. It is always learning. An open mind does not exist when

RB: I wonder what we mean by 'ourselves'. How can *one* perceive oneself and forget oneself? Who is the one who perceives, the one to be perceived, and the one to be forgotten? Perhaps we have to examine the whole question rather than answer it here.

This enquiry must be experimental, and it may have to go on from time to time. Questions like 'How can we give attention all the time?' come up often. If you start with the idea that you must give attention all the time, it will not be attention but a form of ambition that undermines the possibility of attention. So we observe, to start with, from time to time.

How can there be observation of oneself? We do not even know the existence of this self unless something happens, for instance when a thought arises, and I say 'that is my thought' A reaction arises, and I say that is 'my reaction'. The body goes somewhere, but behind it there is the impulse that directs it. So I say 'I am going.'

If we observe carefully, we wonder what is oneself. There is one part which says 'I am going to the next room/' another part says 'The body is going there.' Most of us realize from time to time 'The body is not myself.' One can then put aside the idea of the body's being oneself, at least in theory. We realize that things like hunger and pain belong to the body. Then we perceive that there are emotions and thoughts, but they fluctuate. One day there is elation, another day there is dejection. Is the elation myself, or is the dejection myself, or is the 'myself' a fluctuating thing? Perhaps we will get a feeling that this changing psychological condition is not myself. Then what is the self that one is observing? If one goes on quietly looking and looking, then one may see that 'oneself' does not amount to anything at all.

Then what is myself? It is a kind of non-existent entity, but we have got accustomed to thinking that it actually exists. We have imagined that there is myself, from which the fluctuations and the distractions come, to which knowledge and enjoyment belong. But the more you look, the less you find. Words are wrong, but there is no other way of communicating. When one says 'the more you look', who is the 'you' who looks? So, the more looking there is, the less there is to find, and it becomes dear that there is really nothing there. That is the self which has been

forgotten, because what we imagined to be 'myself', the centre, is discovered not to exist.

Perhaps this sounds a little metaphysical. But it may be simple and practical in daily life to watch and see the self in action. We can see it only when it moves; if there are even a few moments when the mind does not move, and there is absolute quietness, there is no self to see. The self is seen to exist only in relation to the 'other'. I say: 'I like the rose'; this means I observe the rose, become conscious of myself and the rose. This happens also in relation to images in the mind. We observe all this and realize that from a centre inside, movements of struggling, grasping, liking etc. take place. Reflection shows that a lot of it is futile, unnecessary, harmful, and then it quietsens down.

If we are looking or listening attentively, in the moment of attention there is no self. When there is a deep sense of beauty, a real sense of love, not what we usually call love, the self does not exist, it is 'forgotten'. The perceiving and the forgetting may not take place all the time, simultaneously. As we move along, sometimes we may be perceiving, and little by little erasing the self, sometimes we may be watching and listening quietly, and there are the moments when we are not so aware of ourself, and there is peace. But to perceive the self as nothing — it^{was} only imagined to exist — which is not exactly forgetting it, is really to transcend it. None of us has done it, so there is nobody who can give a really good answer.

Why is it that we cannot or will not take the last step, and let go of everything?

WE: We must first take the first step, every day, every minute. A time may come when we can say: there is also a last step. I don't know. For us, taking the first step now is important.

RB: We should start with the first step, and not with the last. If we imagine ourselves as taking the last step, it seems grand. We picture ourselves as heroes who accomplish something extraordinary. Why don't we begin to let go of all the things to which

we are attached? It does not mean that one should throw away one's things, or anything like that.

The Yoga-Vasistha is an ancient text held to contain profound truths, although much is presented in the form of stories. The Indian Section has published a special issue of its journal containing some teachings found in the book. There it is told that a certain king sought the way to liberation. He meditated for long periods, but nothing happened. Then he gave up his vast possessions, and went to the forest. There he meditated again for years, but nothing happened. Then he discarded the few things that hermits are allowed to have. Still nothing happened. Finally a holy brahmin appeared before him, and the king realized that he was attached to the idea of liberation. Only then did he become free. He returned to his kingdom and lived happily ever after.

This story teaches that letting go is not a question of just giving up material objects. Acquisition can be a symptom of attachment, but the main thing is to see the attitude of mind. Is it inwardly attached? If the letting go is painful, it means it is attached. We may be attached to ideas, to our own image, and so on. We must find out how we are attached, to what we are attached, and what is the nature of attachment.

Why do we cling to things which we know to be temporal? Death at one stroke removes everything from us, and tells us that this is what must happen. But we do not learn to let go, to prepare for death as Socrates and others have advised. We cannot hold on to anything. In one of his books, CWL says that if there is one thing of which every person can be certain in life, that is death. Our own death and everybody else's death is certain, but we behave as if it is the most unexpected and unfortunate of things. Why don't we see that we have to part all the time, and learn to part wisely and cheerfully? If we begin to let go, become less and less attached, then the last step may come.

When we talk about a fundamental change, do we imply an immediate, total change, or is it a process?

RB: None of us can give an authoritative answer on this or any such subject. Let us explore. Are there many different changes culminating in a fundamental change? Is there a process in the sense that whenever the self expresses itself, one is aware of it? To use the imagery of *The Voice of the Silence*, whenever dust falls on the mirror, it is wiped away. When there is no dust at all, it may be a totally different kind of change. Perhaps there are dimensional changes, like the leap from animal consciousness to the self-consciousness of man. There may be a similar fundamental change, which takes the human being, into quite a different sphere. There may not be a contradiction, for the dimensional change as well as the process consisting of many little changes might be part of the scheme.

CB: As I see it, what happens in a process and in a greater change is the same thing. We see something, we eliminate it and free the way for something that comes from within. That may happen in small things continuously, or it may happen in a much more spectacular or bigger way. What happens in the process, is that we suddenly become aware of what we are doing, how we are; that is itself a change which comes from within, because something is eliminated. If it is a small thing coming now and then, we call it a process; if it comes very suddenly and to a very great extent, we may call it a big change.

RB: There is another element. Even if a big change is experienced for a time, it may not be a total change if the consciousness reverts to its previous condition. Quite a number of people have now and again, or at least once in a lifetime, experienced what is called an altered state of consciousness. They step out of the normal consciousness and the whole world seems different, full of love and light. But this does not remain; the consciousness comes back to the humdrum world. Wordsworth and other poets have written about this. The total change is not reversible; it is a new awareness of the whole nature of life, and its unity.

There is a qualitative difference which cannot be obscured any more.

MH: When that total change takes place, perhaps one is a Mahatma and perfection is attained.

RB: It is important to realize that potentially everybody is a Mahatma. Mahatma literally means 'great spirit. A Mahatma does not have a limited mind but an unlimited consciousness. The door to freedom is open for everybody, in fact every being. That is why the Buddhists say 'The Buddha nature is in everything', which is also the theosophical view. Perfection is not reserved for any privileged people; everyone will come to it If we think of fundamental change as a far-away event, there is a danger of putting it out of our minds.

BA: There is another aspect which we should not pass by. Beyond or maybe parallel to spiritual transformation, a physical or some other transformation has to take place. We can see this in Krishnamurti's life. It can also be found in the scriptures. There must be a transformation of the physical body, perhaps of all the bodies, if we hold to the theosophical ideas, so that the spiritual transformation can be stabilized and the energy can flow freely into this world. I do not know if it is a process, but I should like to point this out.

RB: From the scientific point of view, function alters form, the organism. If the consciousness functions in a different way, there will be transformation at the physical and other levels. The transformation may not mean that we get three eyes or four ears, but the vibrations of the physical body, its sensitiveness, its capacity to respond to the consciousness, the brain capacity, all that may change. We see people changing as a result of the life they lead. When a person is young he is attractive, innocent-looking, but as he ages he may look hardened and unattractive. The opposite may also happen. A young person who looks quite ordinary, later on shows light and grace in the face. There are people who become beautiful in old age because of the life they

have lived. Because the inner makes an impression on the body, a Mahatma looks beautiful.

Why do fundamental changes take place only in some people and not in all?

CB-W: We could also ask ourselves why some people are miserable and others are not.

GW: It may have to do with the stage of evolution a person has reached. Some have not reached the stage of fundamental change and must go through more experience and suffering to obtain an understanding of the causes.

AH: Geoffrey Farthing once said in a lecture: Imagine I have a case here with Nirvana in it, and if you really want it you can take it. Do you really want Nirvana now? Do we want to give up all those little things which we know are of no importance and can have no place in a regenerated mind, but to which we still hold on? Do we really want to give them up, our little greeds, our little acts of selfishness? Probably some people are really hungry for liberation, but most of us are not.

MD: The answers to the two questions appear to be exact opposites. 'Why are we unhappy in this world?' must have as an answer 'because I am a personality and suffer from my own karma. Only when the personality is empty, void, making room for whatever is, then the real change may take place.

CB: If we are content with our thought-patterns, and we do not feel that there is something beyond that, we are far from fundamental change, because it is beyond the limit of thought-patterns. If we add to the thought-patterns by trying to improve them, it makes change more difficult. We must reach a point where we sense something beyond all thought.

RH: The fundamental change is from selfishness to selflessness, the ripening of the human soul and the awareness that happi-

ness is not to be found in the pursuit of happiness, that one unfolds by seeking the happiness and the good of all beings, human and non-human. When one begins to live for the happiness of others, the petty self still comes back. It is shed slowly, and after some time it will not dare to show itself any more.

RB: In an interesting book about animals, the author tries to answer the question: 'What is an animal?' It is a difficult question, because the borderline between one kingdom and another is not always clear. There are animals so primitive that they are like plants, and yet they have some features which entitle them to be called animals. When considering the borderline between animal and human there is a problem that does not exist elsewhere. The evolutionary process has gone on through the millenma, from mineral to plant, to animal, to human being, accompanied by the awakening of consciousness. A Sufi poet referred to this by saying that life sleeps in the mineral, stirs in the plant, dreams in the animal, and awakens in the human being. For long ages, both the physical evolution and the awakening of consciousness take place by themselves; the evolutionary force pushes on. Minerals, plants, and animals do not need to do anything about bringing about change. They change slowly of course, very slowly. The colour of an animal may change only after a millennium.

AU animals and birds teach their young to do certain things. The eagle builds its nest in little crevices on high cliffs and teaches its young to leave the nest when the time comes. The young ones do not want to try, but the parents show them and nudge them, and finally they take off. If the parents do it a little too soon, the young ones would fall down. How do they know the right moment to give them the impetus? Obviously there is knowledge in them which comes by itself. They do not try to get it or read books about raising their young. There is no educational theory at this level, and yet there is education. Evolution finally pushes all creatures into the human stage, which means first a human body, but does not necessarily imply a truly human consciousness. The borderline is still very vague, and there is much of the animal in the human being. He is strongly

conditioned (HPB called it the 'animal man') into self-preservation, to dominating the herd, and so on. This conditioning is part of the human brain which has evolved through millennia to its present condition.

But there is one great and clear difference between the human being and the animal: it consists in the potentiality of self-awareness. HPB says man is the only free agent in nature. He can judge between right and wrong. For human beings it is necessary to think about what is progress, because we are self-conscious.

People have various ideas of progress, based on the conditioning of the animal brain. So, progress is taken to mean subjugation of other people, ensuring one's own security, acquiring all that is possible, etc. It is an atavistic urge into which man's brain has put other meanings than in Nature. From this point of view, humanity has not advanced much, it is still near the borderline of the animal kingdom, and the animal urges are strong. The truly human capacity for using freedom with maturity and intelligence has not unfolded very much. But the evolutionary process is at work to make the human being exercise his heritage. Nature takes care of that in an extraordinary way, through the process of karma. He experiences disappointments, pain, and so on, incarnation after incarnation, and realizes there is something wrong in what he is trying to do or aim at. He begins to understand that dominating others does not bring fulfilment, getting money does not make one happy. A person pursues money life after life. In one life a child dies, in another he loses his reputation, in a third his wife deserts him, all sorts of things happen, and he asks himself: 'What is this money worth? It does not bring me the happiness I need.' Then he begins to enquire: 'What is real happiness?' Thus, the evolutionary power pushes him until he begins to use rightly the freedom which is his birthright, not physical freedom, but the freedom to become aware and act in accordance with that awareness. That freedom is inseparable from intelligence.

We think we have freedom, but it is illusory. Only when we start using our powers of perception and intelligence to understand what life is about, when we glimpse what is real progress,

the change begins to take place. And the more we learn to use our capacity for awareness, the more quickly change takes place. Presumably we are all to some extent aware that a fundamental change must take place, but we are not deeply aware. We are quite willing not to exercise awareness or intelligence when something offers an immediate advantage, when the long habit of self-preservation or sexuality urges the mind to unintelligent and uncontrolled behaviour. But if we really begin to act as free agents, then we have to look into the meaning and implications of our acts and attitudes. Human beings are not under compulsion to go through all experiences in order to understand them. We can watch others and learn quickly.

We know that selfishness must end, but we are unable to sustain interest in this question. We are too apt to say: I am like that, I cannot do anything or, it is human nature to be selfish or, human beings cannot change, so war is inevitable. We often hear this. It means we are still very conditioned by animal reflexes, but we are human enough to rationalize and justify them. But when we really apply our intelligence, then change begins. In the few people in whom a fundamental change has taken place, the animal nature is not at work. They have gone ahead of us because the human consciousness is fully awake in them and they are truly free. Though most of humanity is still too much conditioned, the possibility of total change is in front of every one. If only we could apply ourselves and give our energy to basic questions, we might start changing, not if we drop the matter for the next three or four years, till we come to another seminar. In yoga teaching, in the Bhagavad Gita and elsewhere it is said that there are two things necessary for spiritual progress: to wake up, that is to use discrimination and intelligence; and to be persevering.

RH: We should not despair that only so few are able to make this fundamental change. We should hope and believe, on the basis of logical induction, that when there are enough intelligent people at the crest-wave of civilization who are altruistic and set an example, other people will follow in the new way, because altruism and generosity are such radiant qualities.

3

Regeneration and the Objects of the T.S.

Where does brotherhood begin, and where does it end, if ever?

AV: It has always been there and always will be there.

RB: Brotherhood is said to be a fact of Nature. In that sense, it has always existed and always will remain. But if we are talking about the realization of brotherhood by human beings, it is a different question.

JA: Can brotherhood ever end? How do we react to people who do not have the same opinions as we do? Should brotherhood end in respect of prisoners, or on the battlefield? Do we really practise it in our everyday lives?

CB: Looking at this from a practical point of view, for most people brotherhood starts in the family. In a good family, everybody has value, all members are equal, all have the right to develop their own qualities, and that is accepted as something natural. For some people, this kind of brotherhood ends with the family. For others it extends outward a little, to other relatives for instance. Still others are able to extend the feeling to very wide circles.

RB: Perhaps both selfishness and brotherhood originated when the One expressed itself as two, the positive and the negative. Selfishness and self-preservation are of the very nature of bio-

logical life. At the human stage, they get transferred to the psychological level. The instinct of self-preservation is the darkness side. But darkness cannot exist without light. Even in simple creatures there is brotherhood. If a crow is attacked, other crows come to drive away the enemy, to divert his attention, and save the one who is attacked. Elephants are known to come to each other's help. Whales have a great sense of brotherhood; they become victims of human cruelty, because if one whale is injured, others rush to the spot to help, and all are killed. So it seems as if this instinct is also primordial. Both streams co-exist. Ultimately there has to be a transcending of the darkness.

From a practical point of view: does not brotherhood begin with simple things? Just being ordinarily kind, beginning to think in terms of another person, instead of only of ourselves. We like to enjoy ourselves, but somebody else has to work. Are we prepared to sacrifice a little of our enjoyment to help the person who is working? Brotherhood begins like that. But when we are brotherly and kind in the ordinary sense of the word, still the feeling of difference from others does not go — one remains in a world of duality. So we must continue practising brotherhood, until the tendency of the mind to see in terms of duality disappears. Even the word 'brotherhood' suggests that there is a brother and 'myself'. C.W. Leadbeater says that in the buddhic consciousness there is experience of being one with everything else. But there is a stage beyond that, where there is no T to be one with the others. Every thing is known as the one. When there is such oneness, perhaps we may say brotherhood ends.

Did the third object refer in the past to study of the siddhis and to phenomena? Or was it never intended to be that? How can we approach the third object differently?

RH: The study of theosophy shows that the powers latent in man are not only the powers in the lower worlds — physical, astral and mental — but also the powers in the higher states of consciousness, expressing themselves in our daily life, in our consciousness on the various planes. The spiritual powers of

man, which arise in the unitary consciousness, are the strongest. They are the main powers to be used because they are completely beneficent and never selfish.

RB: We are so accustomed to power as a means of exercising our will, and dominating the environment or our neighbours. Power is used to get what we want. People seek siddhis in order to have more control over circumstances or people. In books on black magic, methods are prescribed to develop powers in order to obtain various things. The fourth Veda includes mantras for controlling others. This concept of power is one-sided and distorted. Every faculty is a power. Take the faculty of vision, which enables us to see all the wonderful things around us, these magnificent trees, the qualities in our fellow human beings and so on. Where would we be if we could not see? Such faculties when developed, represent an expansion of awareness. When we see the tree, it is awareness. If we sense the beauty and dignity of the tree, the faculty of awareness has expanded and there is greater power. The development of our interior perceptions is power in a different sense of the term. As the consciousness unfolds and blossoms forth, it becomes more fully aware of beauty, joy, peace, the essential nature of life. So the powers latent in man are, as Riki mentioned, spiritual powers. There is no difference between awareness of beauty and love, and actually loving and being inwardly beautiful. Thinking about love is not love, but if love is a form of awareness, then there is no gap between the consciousness and what it is aware of. So the powers latent in man unfold only with the unfoldment of consciousness, which means the development of awareness. Awareness is the essential nature of consciousness; it is knowing. Knowing includes knowing all the aspects of absolute value, such as beauty, truth, and bliss.

In 'Practical Occultism', HPB writes of some basic ideas of theosophy. The second article is on 'Occultism versus the Occult Arts'. The occult arts are sometimes confused with theosophy. Could we go into this problem?

RB: The occult arts are basically concerned with the siddhis. The hindu books have classified them, for the people of India, Tibet and some of the oriental nations are very fond of classifying everything. The siddhis include the ability to become very small or large, very light or heavy, control over others, clairvoyance and so on. The word 'siddhi' means basically: perfection, accomplishment. If you use the plural, siddhis, it means all these things. It can also be used in the singular to mean attainment, attainment of perfection. A Siddha is a perfected man; it is then a synonym for Mahatma or Mukta, a liberated man. Thus the word 'siddhi' refers to spiritual realization. Now let us go back to occultism and the occult arts.

RH: Occultism is the knowledge of all that is not perceptible to the usual physical senses. It is the perception of the realities of a subtler world than the physical. As for occult arts, you have to consider every art separately.

EA: Perhaps it is the difference between self-centred action and action which is not self-centred.

IH: Occultism is the science of the hidden side of Nature. What we perceive is very, very little of the totality of Nature and so treading the occult path is the pursuit of the reality that lies beyond the superficial form or the forms which our senses and our every day mind are able to perceive. The simplest definition of occultism is: The science of the hidden side of nature.

With regard to the occult arts, I would refer you to HPB's essay on occultism and the occult arts. The term 'occult arts' is usually applied to the use, or the abuse, of power for selfish ends. It does not mean that one has to use it like that, but that is how the word 'occultism' in the West has taken a pejorative meaning. It has a bad flavour, a bad connotation. Occultism is

often confused with occult arts. It is neither good nor bad; it is the science of the unseen. Just as with the study of the seen side of nature, e.g. chemistry, once you have discovered the elements of a chemical, you can use it to poison people or heal them. Occultism is neutral; it is the science of the hidden side. What you do with results of your study can be either good or bad, helpful or harmful to humanity.

RB: Would you explain why HPB used the phrase 'the great renunciation of the self' in connection with this?'

IH: I can tell you something about that, because of the way in which the word 'self' is written. You have 'self' written in small letters, you have 'Self' written with a capital S, and you have 'SELF' written with four capital letters. What is the self that has to be renounced? At the beginning of the Path, where most of us are, we have to renounce the small self. At a later stage on the Path, we have to renounce even what we like to call the higher Self, because we have to lose all sense of separateness at every level. So there must be a renunciation also of that, otherwise we cling to the thought that, when the universe is wound up and put away at the end of time or the end of its cycle, somewhere there will be a little spark of light which is 'me'. As long as that remains we are making a terrible mistake, it is only a temporary construction. It may last a great many millennia but, at the very end, that also must go.

RB: There is a series of questions about the Masters. We shall take the whole lot together.

In the outer work of the T.S. the Masters are seldom spoken of, and if at all, mostly through the Leadbeater-Hodson tradition — devotional testimonial. Is this approach still relevant? Should we find a new way to present the Masters and their work in the T.S.? Should we see the Masters as sources of energy or as physical human beings?

RB: There is a statement of HPB's (which you can find in the *Collected Writings*) to the effect that those who say that they want to see the Masters do not know what they mean. And she said if it is the body of the Master people want to see, it is a mere shell or mask they ask for. Even our bodies are part of the personality, which is a mask. When we see each other's physical features, we do not see the real inner being. We do not know a person by knowing his appearance. That is even truer of the Masters. HPB mentions the Master is essentially his higher principles. His consciousness is everywhere, unlimited by space. If we merely see physical forms, we miss the real Master. We may see a dignified form, but the essential would be missed. It is like seeing a flower, and not responding to the beauty of the flower, but only seeing something material. This has no particular significance.

It is true that in the outer work of the T.S. the Masters are seldom spoken about. Belief in the Masters is not a condition for T.S. membership. So the Masters are not officially proclaimed by the Society. The only thing that the Society stands for are its objects.

It is important to realize that the state of consciousness, the inner being which is the real Master, is very holy. When we feel the sacredness, we cannot purvey it, talk much about it. If a person feels a certain sense of sacredness in relationship with anyone, wife or husband or somebody else, he does not like to wear his feelings on his sleeve, and tell everybody what he feels. Even at that level, it would not be right. But the Master is very sacred, and not to be talked about and advertised. One can speak generally about the evolutionary process which does not stop at the stage of man as he is today. There is the future possibility of becoming a liberated man. Certain people are

ahead of us, examples can be found in certain historical figures, like the Buddha. But I feel that we should not speak of the Masters freely, and cheapen the whole thing. Then we miss the essence, and the possibility of really understanding that stage of progress when all that is crude and selfish in the human being has been totally left behind and there is a new flowering, the truly regenerated person.

A further question is: *Are they sources of energy?* Of course! That state of pure consciousness is one of high energy. But it is not of the kind we know. Compassion, love that is utterly selfless, universal, impartial, abundantly pouring itself forth, wisdom that is all-seeing — it is all energy. There is nothing more powerful than that. So the enlightened person, the Master is a source of wonderful energy.

I do not quite understand this question: *The Masters are seldom spoken of, and if so, mostly through the Leadbeater-Hodson tradition, devotional testimonial...* If at all we know what they are, how can we think of them in any way except with devotion and aspiration? If we think of a Master only as riding a horse or living in Tibet, it is image-making, and we miss the real quality. But if we obtain a sense of the quality of a perfect consciousness — wisdom, compassion, spotless purity, peace — the qualities which are those of the pure consciousness, what can we do except aspire towards it? I don't understand what other approach there is.

CB: The main approach to this, the question of the Masters who play a great role in the history of the T.S., is that of trying to understand the level of consciousness from which they function. We can do that in different ways, trying to understand what is compassion, what is love, what is real understanding. There is one book which can help us, and that is *Light on the Path*. It starts with four sentences, one of them being: 'Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Master, it must have lost the power to wound.' If we can go into this and understand what is the state of consciousness which never wounds, we shall touch something of the state of consciousness which the Masters rep-

resent. I think that is the main way to understand what they represent and to approach this whole question.

RB: I wonder if there has not been too much talk about the Masters in the T.S. and too little about the Path and how to tread it. Apart from *Light on the Path*, we can get glimpses of the higher consciousness which is that of the Masters by reading *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and *Letters from the Masters of Wisdom*. There is Clara Codd's *Theosophy as the Masters See It* which may be helpful. From such books we can glimpse their ideas, how they think, and what they consider to be the Path. It is much more worth while to try and follow that way than talk about them. HPB said to her pupils to reverence them in their hearts and rise in aspiration towards them, because that is the only way of contacting them. We cannot bring them down to our level. One of them wrote in a letter that affinity alone can put a person in touch with them. How can we attune ourselves, like the strings of a musical instrument which respond when finely tuned? In the T.S. we should emphasize more the way of living which will open communication with the spiritual dimension of being and less the personalities of Masters, how they look, what they do, etc.

AR: If we want to study the deeper significance of the T.S., we come to the words of the Masters. We can let those words speak to us and then we ourselves are responsible. We are the researchers, and we are the seekers after truth. Truth at a certain moment transcends words and I think if we work in the spirit of the Masters, we may even transcend the Masters. They are not concerned about themselves and we think too much, not only of the Masters as personalities, but also of ourselves as personalities. But we should try more and more to focus on the subject. Two years ago Ianthe gave us a short course, where she gave a guideline: Take simple keywords and proceed in your own way, and try to develop deeply your own way of study.

Is the T.S. the only way to come to 'theosophia', or is it also the basis for other schools? Is the T.S. the only right channel for 'theosophia', are all other lines of spirituality not the right ones?

RH: Various groups and individuals in the world may possess real wisdom and we can recognize that they have *theosophia*. They may even have a great deal of the real wisdom which we do not. As the T.S. has been founded by great Adepts who had a wide view of the divine wisdom and wished to bring it to the world through this movement, it is probable that they have given to the T.S. as much as it was possible to give to the world at that time. But there are also many societies, groups and organizations, which have spurious teaching and knowledge, which are narrow-minded or dogmatic in different ways, and of course we cannot say that all these other spiritual movements have the right to claim wisdom to the same degree as the T.S.

KS: As members of the T.S. we should be very modest. We are seekers for truth, so we must never claim we are the only right channel. We are searching. We should not say we are better than others.

AH: The task of the T.S. is to uplift humanity. There is the danger of turning the T.S. into a fortress of thought, of beauty and importance, with all the magic about Masters, etc. That may be a hindrance to love and direct contact with the outer world, with which we are and must be in direct contact. We should indeed be very modest and not build fortifications of thought around the T.S.

EA: I do not think the T.S. has any wisdom. It does not even have an opinion. Wisdom is a personal thing. You cannot say that the Masters have given wisdom to the Society.

RB: No, the question is, is it the only way to wisdom?

EA: Is it a way? It is said somewhere that the seeker himself is the way. We are the way to wisdom.

RB: We should be modest, not pretend that this is the one and only instrument for human salvation. There have been many schools, and I am sure there still are, which are unknown to people. When the founders came to Madras, they came into touch with swami T. Subba Rao, and HPB recognized him as a deep student of theosophy. I believe she said he was her equal in occultism. He knew much, and belonged to a Vedantic school. There have been wise people in the mountain vastnesses of Tibet, in the forests where the Upanishads were realized. All over the world, there must have been, and perhaps still are, people who know theosophy. We cannot say that we are the only people to have it.

This does not mean that the T.S. has no value, that it does not have a certain function of its own. One of its functions is to bring the world together through the wisdom of theosophy. Through the T.S. an attempt has been made to present that wisdom, in a language which is not that of any particular religion, to all the people of the world, and to knit together an international group of seekers concerned with the welfare of all beings.

We cannot say that no other lines of spirituality are not all right. But so-called spiritual schools are proliferating at present, and therefore the question of guidelines is important. We must have some clarity about what is true and what is not true. For instance, if the teaching of a spiritual school becomes a means of material gain, can it be a true school? Is material profit compatible with spiritual realization? Can a school in which people are taught to become devout slaves, blind followers, be a real school? Somebody claims the status of a god or a demi-god, and his words are thought to be infallible. People believe that if he looks into their eyes they will become enlightened. Are such ideas real?

Theosophy and theosophical literature provide criteria to distinguish between the authentic and the heretical.

There are other groups — Alice Bailey, Rosicrucians, Anthroposophists, Sai Baba, etc. — working along spiritual lines parallel to the Theosophical Society. Our second object aims at comparative studies. The study of what the Masters have given through HPB and Sinnett is a lifetime study, but as Annie Besant, CWL, Hodson, Mead and others have also studied deeply the hidden side of things, so have De Purucker, Alice Bailey, Steiner and others. How can we work with their ideas without losing our own method of working? What is our own, really theosophical method of study? What is the essential distinction between the T.S. (Adyar) and other groups?

IH: The difference is in the first object. Only our Society is committed to the principle of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. As far as I know, no other organization has that object, and that is the only condition of membership in the Society. That makes all the difference between organizations. There may be similarities in the teaching but that is in one sense secondary. Our work is the first object.

RB: What about the other angles to the question?

IH: Well, this answers them all.

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wisdom to discover. The word 'philosophies' means the wisdom of great philosophers and scientists. However we are not necessarily supposed to study the ideas of any special person like Sai Baba. Before knowing whether the teachings given by a new movement are authentic, we will have to spend time in studying them and maybe discovering that they are spurious. Then we will have wasted our time. If we want to know whether the books of Alice Bailey are worth while, we should for instance try looking into a book the subject of which we know very well. If I look at the book: *Esoteric Medicine*, or *Esoteric Healing*, then as a doctor I can easily see whether the contents are worth while and when I look at the introduction, I can easily see if the one who is called the Tibetan, is an adept. If we take the time, we can find out whether any particular movement is disseminating worth while teaching.

IJ: In the Mexican section, when we study different lines, we create confusion in the members. Now I am not saying that it is not interesting to know about different kinds of material, but we create confusion if we try to teach about many things and we do not go into the essence of theosophy. This is one of the points that we discuss in the groups. We need to know what to present to the members in the section, but not as a means to attract members. If we are afraid to lose members, we make a show in the section or the lodge to attract people. That is not right. The work of the Society is serious work and we should try to discover the best in theosophy and present it.

IH: I made a mistake in saying that there is no theosophical method of study. There is, and you will find it in the Bowen notes [*Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy*]. All the time, in all one's study, one has to keep in mind the whole, the unity. In these notes HPB says that if you lose the idea of the unity, then separateness intervenes and the study loses its value. In whatever we are studying, whether it is a point of view of a teacher or planes of nature, we must always think in terms of the whole. Perhaps that is the difference between the theosophical method of study and other methods. Do read the Bowen notes.

RB: If I remember correctly, there are four things she says which must be kept in mind. You have mentioned one of them.

IH: The unity of all existence.

RB: She also says that it is necessary to keep in mind that there is no dead matter or inert substance. Everything is life and consciousness, which is a truth that clarifies many things.

FI: What Ianthe just said is very important. I realize that the principles of theosophy provide clarity. When you are a seeker, and you encounter various movements, let us say Zen or Bailey, you find a unique clarity in the literature and teachings of the T.S. It is not that we should not be mindful of it, ~~but we~~ **should recognize this. If you sell theosophical literature, as I do, and if you have the privilege of handing it over to people, you know that you are handing over something that will give them clarity. I have been doing this for ten years and it has never had any other effect. We should recognize this, and not say too easily that we are like other groups.**

RB: As Ianthe pointed out, our Society stands for universal brotherhood without distinctions. A mind without distinctions is a regenerated mind. So what the Society stands for basically is regeneration, not just providing volumes of knowledge to people. Knowledge is provided, but with a view to bringing about this change from an unregenerate condition to a new mind that feels no division or difference.

We cannot say that we are the only group which can provide clarity. First of all we do not know what all the groups are doing. But let us take the groups which are mentioned by the questioner. The followers of Sai Baba believe in an authority, in fact in a god upon earth. Sai Baba himself says, 'I am god.' In the T.S., there is no god. There is no authority whom we worship and obey. There may be some things Sai Baba says which we also say, although he may say them differently. When he says you must be kind, helpful and so on, we can agree with that. But there is much we do not have in common. The large majority of mem-

bers of the T.S. do not accept Sai Baba as god. If he said that everybody and everything is god, we could accept it, but he says he is god, which is quite unacceptable.

It has been made very dear offidally that there is no authority in the T.S. Neither HPB nor Annie Besant, nor anybody else is an authority in the Sodety, for the simple reason that conforming to an authority is damaging to human intelligence. The whole process of evolution is what has been called the awakening of intelligence. It is the unfoldment of consdousness. Consdousness is essentially intelligence. Consdousness without intelligence would be nothing. Our destiny is to become much more intelligent, to obtain subtler spiritual forms of intelligence. If we accept an authority and repeat what that authority says — it doesn't matter whether it is Sai Baba, HPB, Annie Besant, Krishnamurti or anybody else — we renounce our intelligence. The policy of the T.S. is not to prodaim dogmas, create beliefs and set up an authority in the form of books or persons. This gives the Sodety a certain character. But when another group does have authority, how can we say that we are the same? We may have something in common on certain points, but we cannot say we are the same as that group.

Take the example of the Rosicrudans. They give initiations and offer courses. People who follow those courses receive many initiations. An artifidal label is attached to the person. Unfortunately this also happened in the T.S. at a certain time, but that is history. A person does not grow spiritually because somebody pins a label on him. The way is within. We are the way. It is only when we change, when we become pure, loving etc., that we develop spiritually. It has nothing to do with what somebody else says. The Rosicrudans may be giving some theosophical teachings. I believe they do. They have probably borrowed a good deal from the T.S. Yet we are not the same as the Rosicrucians.

If you examine these groups, you will find there are points of agreement, not with all groups, but with some. There are also major points in their teachings that we cannot accept.

There is also a difference among theosophical groups; they have many things in common, but differ in some things. Some

theosophical groups say that HPB and one or two others are the authorities, that only what they said is theosophy. If anybody disagrees on any point, he is not a theosophist. They accept an authority, they have a scripture more or less in the writings of particular people. We have many perspectives in common with them. But in the major point we mentioned, there is a serious difference. I would refuse to be in a society where there is an authority and where specific writings are treated as scriptures. If the T.S. took that position, I would not care to remain a member. In our Society, freedom is given to every individual to enquire, to see what is acceptable to him for the time being. He can follow any course which to him is inspiring for the present. That freedom within our Society is very precious. It is limited only by the principle of brotherhood. Brotherhood and freedom are the two pillars at the entrance of the Theosophical Society.

There can be confusion if, in a theosophical lodge or any unit of the T.S., people propagate any of the other schools. Not because we say we are better, or that we are the only people who know. We do not condemn them. We have no official opinion about any of them. The individual member has complete freedom. He can become a Sai Baba worshipper, take initiations and so forth, and be a member of the T.S. Unless he violates the principle of brotherhood seriously and consistently, he can remain in the Society and be free. He can be a Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian, go to a church or mosque. There are some people who are intolerant of this, and question why other people should go to church. If they do not want religion, they are free not to have it, but other people are equally free to have the religion they want.

That is the position of the T.S. Though the individual is free, if a theosophical lodge or any other unit, federation or section begins to propagate Sai Baba or some such, this will create confusion. The public will believe that we accept him as god. If we allow Rosicrucianism an important role in a lodge, people will associate their labels with the work of the T.S. Therefore a lodge or section is in a different position from a member. The lodge represents the T.S. where it is, in its own town or village. It

must maintain the character of the Society, and not present an image which makes people mix it up with other things.

Can occultism be of use in the process of regeneration?

IH: By the study of the reality in Nature, 'the nature of Nature itself', by the discovery of that, we do undergo a process of regeneration, we come to know the truth of Nature and of our nature. All study can be made of use and the study of occultism means the study of what we really are, of what the individual really is, of what life is. That cannot be other than helpful in the process of regeneration.

RB: The study and understanding of what is hidden can help regeneration because our blindness makes it impossible for us to act properly. How can we understand the consequences of what we do, which may spread beyond the limits of our present vision, if our perspectives are very narrow? A practical example is that of thought. We cannot see thought or the effect of thought, but if we could understand more about it through study of the literature on the subject, our actions and relationships might become different. Suppose we could actually see what happens if we have a cruel or unkind or a self-centred thought. We would probably begin to act differently, because it would become a reality. If we could actually see the karmic consequences of what we do, perhaps we would begin to behave differently. But we don't. We only talk about karma, but have not studied it enough to have conviction. *If we actually began to know something about it, after studying it, we might be quite different.*

RH: My spontaneous answer to this question is that regeneration should come first, occultism can come later. Because regeneration means the attainment of selflessness, the disappearance of the 'me'. I would like to see that first before the development of the possibility of occult knowledge, which comes by itself.

RB: I feel that it cannot be categorized in that way. Perception and purification go together, purification being regeneration and perception being awareness of what was not previously visible or known. As long as the mind is impure, filled with its desires, etc., it is unable to see. If there is desire, we see according to desire. If we are jealous, we evaluate things according to our jealousy. If we are envious of somebody, that man seems to be an unworthy person. So we see according to what is within us. If we want to see more, the clouds within the mind have to be dispersed. The mind must be dearer, purer. When we see more, it helps us to clarify our consciousness more. It may not be possible to become a completely new person, a perfect individual, and then see. It is perhaps a question of seeing a little more, and thereby understanding oneself a little more, and so it proceeds.

4

Our Approach to Theosophy

What is theosophy?

GW-. It is the art of living.

RB: That is a very good and brief description. The word 'art' conveys the idea of beauty, harmony, sense of proportion — many things.

HG: In my lodge the consensus was that it is a belief in the oneness of all life.

LR: Perhaps it is divine and human cooperation, or spiritual and human cooperation.

EA: We should not make a concept of theosophy, or define it. It is a method of approaching life that implies questioning; a theosophical mind is a questioning mind.

CB: A meaningful answer to this question can only come in dialogue between a person who asks with genuine interest and someone to whom the question can be asked.

RB: Did Helen's lodge mean belief in the unity of life, or realization of the unity of life? If we only believe, it does not amount to much. The unity must manifest itself in daily life.

As Einar said, this will always remain a question. Even when we feel we understand what theosophy is, the same question should arise again, for we need to understand theosophy in a deeper way, and get to the heart of things.

Is it necessary to go through suffering, in order to arrive at truth? What place have suffering and sorrow, as far as a fundamental change is concerned?

LR: We can understand suffering if we also try to understand happiness. We are happy when we expand, when we understand more truth. We suffer when we decrease, when we are under pressure. In approaching truth, first we have a vision of some true idea. If we really understand it, then we try to put it into practice, which causes difficulty, because our personality and our surroundings create obstacles. But this force is pushing us. It is like what artists may feel when they have a vision, an experience and want to create something to express it. They always suffer when they try to express it, because it is difficult to deal with matter. The idea and the experience are there, but to express them in the material world means suffering. One is never really successful in expressing the experience, but one can approach it. So we suffer mostly when we try to understand or approach truth. We can approach truth but in reality-we rarely reach it or succeed in putting it into practice. This is a kind of suffering.

NJ: First we see personal suffering in the world, e.g. poverty, illness, pain. Yet there is another kind of suffering. You can suffer from ignorance or from not being in a natural state of bliss. All the misery that we see in the world is a reflection of our inner turmoil. Do we suffer because we see ourselves as individual beings, as separate? To have true perception, to see the truth, we have to dissolve this sense of separateness, this ego, the thing I call 'myself'. That is a very painful process. There is also joy in it but, to destroy yourself, you have to suffer. I don't think there is any other way.

SL: Suffering is the result of resistance. Maybe ending resistance is the only way to be free of suffering.

CB-W: Is the lower self or the higher self suffering? The higher self must often suffer when it sees the lower self stumble and fail. When you try to be in harmony with all things, you can be happy and still grow towards fundamental change.

FI: In all Greek traditions, as in the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism and in the philosophy of the *kleshas* in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, it is said that we suffer because we attach ourselves to the personality, to what we think is the 'me'. So perhaps suffering is necessary for us to find out what we are and what we are not.

RB: Nicky suggested that suffering is within ourselves, suffering is the egotism which is the 'me'. We think suffering comes from outside and we say: 'Can it help me to bring about change or not?' But does it come from outside? There may be difficulties outside, such as earthquakes. That is different from the psychological problems we have, that is the suffering through loneliness, frustrated ambition, anxiety about security, etc. Ultimately all suffering can be reduced to the desire of the ego and its frustrations over not obtaining that desire. So we should not separate the 'me' from the suffering. The 'me' is suffering. If the 'me' did not exist, there would be no suffering.

In the same situation, it is possible to suffer or not to suffer. Suffering poverty is resisting it, saying 'Another has deprived me of what I ought to have.' I become bitter and unkind, I do not give anything to the poor. All kinds of things happen to the person who experiences poverty. But it can also be the opposite. Annie Besant went through very hard times but it did not make her bitter, resentful, envious. On the contrary, she was one for whom all those who had difficulties, who were hungry, who were downtrodden, were like her own children. So the experience of poverty in one case may produce a bitter individual, in another case an outstandingly loving person. Bitterness and envy are suffering.

So is it necessary? Suffering is not necessary in order for me to undergo a fundamental change, because the 'me' is the suffering. The fundamental change comes when the 'me' dies. Then there is no suffering. Perhaps we can also say suffering is necessary because egoism seems to be a necessary part of the involutory process. We all seem to be bom with it. Certain philosophical schools say egoism and suffering have no beginning but they will end. When the ego sense ends, suffering ends.

What is the difference between spontaneous action and impulsive or reactive action? Is there a relationship between intuition and impulses and hunches?

CB: I do not think there is any relation between impulses or hunches and spontaneous action.

RB: A reaction appears spontaneous because it can be quick. If somebody hits you, you react immediately. In what way is this different from spontaneous action?

CB: Impulse or reaction comes from the content of the mind. Spontaneous action is the action of a consciousness free from the impulses and influences of the mind. It is beyond thought. It comes from a fresh fountain within.

LR: Reactive action is connected with the vehicles of our personality, and their consciousness built by habit and heritage into the nervous system, the psyche and the sub-conscious. Spontaneous action differs from such reaction, because it comes from deep inside ourselves, without premeditation. Spontaneous action can be sometimes very creative.

MD: There is another class of action which we have not really considered. There is action which takes place out of habit. Every time it deepens the groove of habit within and it reinforces itself. There is the kind of action which takes place because I am in the centre and I like it or do not like it. The next kind of action would seem to be an act of will, accepting events, thinking,

creating, a deliberate karma-forming action, either good or bad. Finally there is the spontaneous kind which occurs because 'this' [meaning oneself] is out of the way altogether. It has simply to do with what is needed, what is drawing forth the action.

PO: The mind may be very active, but there may be a lack of awareness in a very active mind. The mind, having as its basis the brain, is bound to be reactive. As long as a state of attentiveness or perception is absent, reactions take place, and never spontaneous action arising from a deeper source within.

RB: Attention or awareness must bring to light that separative self which reacts. Someone feels hurt He may not react outwardly but if he nurses the hurt, that is also reaction. Why does one feel hurt, dishonoured? The Bhagavad Gita declares there is a state in which there is no honour or dishonour, no feeling of gain or loss. We are not aware that what is hurt is the self-image. If a person does not have a self-image, a preconception that the other person ought to regard him with respect, and so on, he does not feel hurt at any time. So awareness is necessary to see the existence of the self-image. Then there is the power 'to be as nothing', mentioned in *Light on the Path*.

In the way in which we approach theosophy now, it seems there is no more need for the study of classic theosophical works such as 'The Secret Doctrine', or the Letters of the Masters or for the use of Sanskrit words. Is this correct?

CB: We definitely need the early literature of the T.S. like *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Mahatma Letters*. The question is how do we approach these books. There is one point to which attention was drawn by Blavatsky as recorded in the Bowen notes. She said that you do not come to *The Secret Doctrine* to get a complete picture of the universe. Then you will only become confused. *The Secret Doctrine* can only lead towards the truth. It does not provide a picture of the universe through the mind or intellect; it awakens something that is deep within us, a seed that grows and which we begin to feel from within when we look at life, our

own life, life around us, the universe. That quality in the literature is very precious and we must not lose it.

GW: Each kind of literature has its place in one's development. And everyone cannot start with *The Secret Doctrine*. At first a person reads a lot, or he may start with reading about spiritualism, and just get used to the idea that there is something more than the physical earth. Afterwards, the books of Leadbeater are very attractive because he describes the laws of nature in an easy way. When you have accepted that these laws work, you try to investigate them. Then you may end up with Taimni who points out the path which leads to self-realization. In his *Talks on At the Feet of the Master* Leadbeater explains the same thing as Taimni does in *Self-Culture*. Then we are at the point of fundamental change. Although we may read a lot of literature, to have this fundamental change take place inside us is really difficult. This fundamental change is of a different quality at each level of development and for each person. A change like getting rid of your cigarettes is fundamental for a certain period, but five years later you may have other priorities. So it is a difficult way, and each time you are in a certain phase, you take a different kind of literature to motivate your own development.

PO: In letter 59 of *The Mahatma Letters* there is a passage, relevant to our discussion: 'You share with all beginners the tendency to draw too absolutely strong *inferences from partly caught hints, and to dogmatize thereupon as though the last word had been spoken. You will correct this in due time. You may misunderstand us, are more than likely to do so, for our language must always be more or less that of parable and suggestion, when treading upon forbidden ground; we have our own peculiar modes of expression and what lies behind the fence of words is even more important than what you read. But still: TRY.'

RB: What is the use of books if they do not lead to an awakening, or to wisdom? And if you are awake and wise, what need have you of books? This is true of any book, whether *The Secret Doctrine* or *The Mahatma Letters* or any other books. I think the

denomination 'classic' may be dropped. Why put a label on any book, and say: this is where we will get wisdom. It depends, as Curt said, on our approach to the literature. What is our purpose? Is it to seek, or some kind of ideology? If we only want a theosophical or spiritual ideology, then we can say: These are the sources from which you derive the ideology. Every communist derives his ideology from Marx. But theosophists should have no ideology. Our motto is: 'There is no religion higher than Truth'. So if we study *The Mahatma Letters* or *The Secret Doctrine* it should be with an open mind, trying to see where the truth lies, which, as mentioned just now, may be behind the lines, not in the lines. *The Secret Doctrine* only leads towards the truth, for words are not truth. The word 'Tove' is not the experience of love. That is why in one of the Mahatma letters, it is said: 'Most, if not all, of our secrets are incommunicable. Illumination must come from within.' Otherwise, all that They would have to do is to print what they know, like a grammar book, and distribute it to the world. Then everyone would be wise! *Light on the Path* and similar books of wisdom have been given to the world, but we have not become wise because we do not know how to distill the truth from them, how to penetrate within the words, we have not made ourselves sensitive to truth.

We cannot say we do not need the classic books any more. As far as our discrimination allows, we should try to see what books are worth while. There is a limited time at our disposal every day and during this life. There is no time to waste. We should see what is worth while and try to reach nearer to real experience.

Our approach is not one of saying: We do not need any books, throw them away, but: with what view are we taking up books? Do we want to become dependent on what a book says in order to come to conclusions about truth? Are we going to repeat parrot-like what is said? Or is the aim to come to a wonderful, direct, new awareness of truth?

Let us not worry whether the words are Sanskrit, Latin, or some other language. The important thing is: What is the content of the word, of what is said? Sanskrit is used only because it has a rich philosophical and religious vocabulary. Take for

example a word like *tattva*, which means 'truth'. The word 'truth' does not immediately convey what *tattva* does, for *tattva* means 'what a thing actually is', 'that-ness'. The rose, the rose-plant, that tree, you, me, what are we actually? Not only what our senses tell us, not what our prejudiced minds say we are. What we actually are, not only at the outer physical level, but inwardly, wholly, is the truth. What is the depth in you, the totality of you? That is *tattva*. The word immediately conveys that-ness, such-ness, is-ness. There are many words like this in Sanskrit, and so it has been used. But it may be a burden to people who do not know it. Then let them do away with all the Sanskrit words. We are not concerned with words or books but with truth.

We do need the 'classic' books. But no book should become a substitute for the experience of truth. There is no 'word of God', for it must be heard in the depth of one's heart, not read in print.

We must not become dependent on other people's words, but books can be useful. A book is like a map. It gives you some kind of understanding. How accurate the map is is a matter of enquiry. HPB wrote in a letter that there are mistakes in the Mahatma letters because they were transmitted through others, impressed on their minds. Where do the mistakes lie? We must not take things literally and argue over points which we cannot know for the moment. If we are really interested in the truth we must go to essentials and one day, when we become omniscient, many other things will be known.

How do we view the literature of Besant and Leadbeater in the light of this modern and direct approach?

RB: The question should be: how do we view *any* literature in the light of regeneration? Why question only the literature of Besant and Leadbeater? If we simply accept what is in any literature, conform mentally, or repudiate immediately, it does not help. Either we become believers or, because we are believers in something else, we reject this particular literature. This approach might be wrong. If our concern is with truth, we should examine any of the literature with an open mind. Even if

we understand something, we should not come to the conclusion that we have understood everything.

The Buddha said: Don't accept anything because it is tradition, it is in the scriptures, it is accepted in the Society in which you live, don't accept even what I say. Enquire into it! He was pointing to something of extraordinary value from the point of view of that renewal or transformation we are talking about. Should that not be our attitude? In the little booklet on regeneration, that everybody has received, there is a beautiful quotation from Krishnamurti: 'The beggar may be saying something which you miss, because you will not listen to him. And the guru may be saying something which is faulty.' Because there may be gurus who are wise but who are not infallible, we miss what is good and we accept what may be fallacious.

The motto of the T.S. 'There is no Religion higher than Truth' is of primary importance in approaching any literature, teaching, or idea. Everything should be considered on its merits. We must not reject something out of prejudice, criticize as a matter of habit, condemn a person for ever because he made some mistakes, or put somebody else on a pedestal because we like to depend on an authority. That would not be wisdom on our part. When we do not understand, in regard to matters which we cannot decide, let us keep our judgement in suspense. Later on, we may know.

RH: I have studied a series of books by Leadbeater and Annie Besant and there is no book of theirs which has not to do with the regeneration of mankind, whose teachings are not relevant to understanding the progress and self-regeneration of mankind. I do not say that there is no place where they might not have erred in some detail or in some interpretation, but on the whole, and even in every particular part, they are worth studying and they make our vision more beautiful.

RB: What gives a little forward movement, a new insight to an individual, may depend on what he needs. He is not in anybody else's shoes. We cannot decide for another what is good for him and what is not. Even if he is foolishly pursuing something, if

that is what he really wants for a time, he will have to go through the experience. I do not mean that we should mislead people or put forward things which are against the basic theosophical principles. But this is something we must keep in mind—Regeneration takes place at different times by the many little awakenings that HPB mentions in *The Secret Doctrine*. When you look at a tree, at the moment there may be a flash, the consciousness unfolds a little. Even in a book which is not of special value there may be some thoughts which convey what is needed by a particular person at the time.

H: We are all workers here in the T.S. and we must realize that our working days can be full of difficulties. What I appreciate in the literature of Besant and Leadbeater is that it is so typically a literature of workers who had their own difficulties in their time. They did then what we are doing now. Is that not enough?

Should we continue to study 'The Secret Doctrine' and/or other original literature or rather study modern theosophical books, in case we have limited time for study and we have to make choices?

RB: I denounce what we have more or less dealt with this question. It all has to do with the person concerned. A simple book may be a passage from *The Secret Doctrine* to another? How can we be helpful to another? I started reading theosophical literature I was in high school somebody had insisted that I must read *The Secret Doctrine*. I have been off for ever from studying it. I am interested in it most at that time were we not given freedom to the individual? What appeals to him may be neither *The Secret Doctrine* nor Leadbeater's books, but the Book of Tao. He may find theosophy through literature not published by us.

MH: You are a book, and a sudden a page cries out at you. With theosophical books sometimes you find you are drawn to an author and you read a number of his books at one

time. And those books work for you, do something to you inside. You feel a rapport with the person who has written them. It is a living experience. I have felt almost as if the person who has written it was in the room with me. I feel it *a very* personal thing. As Radha said, I think you feel drawn from an inner level to a particular author or book and if you let that happen, the book that you read is right for you at your level.

RB: Perhaps in a friendly way we can suggest books to people but we must not thrust them on others.

GG: Perhaps one should also read the Book of Life, which opens before us every day.

Is there a way to come to wisdom, without knowledge? 'What is essential knowledge?'

RB: A seeker is said to have approached a sage and asked, 'What is the nature of the Ultimate Reality, Brahman?' The teacher did not reply. The seeker asked a second time 'What is that Reality?' The sage did not reply. The third time he was asked, the teacher replied, 'I have answered but you have not understood. Brahman is silence.' When this question was asked everybody was so silent...

What is wisdom? Perhaps you cannot answer that question in words. Is there a way to wisdom without knowledge? It seems to me there is such a way and that is total self-surrender. The word devotion, like every other word, becomes corrupt. Devotion is not sitting in front of an image, physical or mental, offering prayers, requesting blessings, saying 'I am yours'. Devotion lets go of the 'I' totally; it does not ask for anything, blessing, knowledge, grace, anything. To the devotee, whatever the Supreme wills is good. Everything in manifestation is good, because everything is part of the one Reality. The Bhagavad Gita mentions different kinds of devotees: Those who want to be relieved from their suffering, those who want knowledge and those who want other things. But the real devotee is one who does not want anything. He surrenders the self totally. This is a

way to wisdom, spoken of in several traditions. Self-surrender means the idea of the separate self must be completely given up. Then there is the realization of something more infinitely wonderful, beauty, truth, a universal divine presence.

WV: Knowledge may be useful for some people to attain wisdom. For others knowledge may destroy wisdom. Upon admission of new members in the lodge where I have the privilege to work we give them *At the Feet of the Master*. There is not much knowledge in it. New members can read it in a quarter of an hour, but you can also give your whole life to its study. It depends on whether your study leads to the truth hidden in the words, or whether you read the book in a quarter of an hour and never look at it again.

RB: Knowledge can create difficulties, but so can devotion. If one does not understand it rightly it becomes mere sentimentality and emotionalism. It is not an easy thing to give up all desire, all wants, the entirety of 'me'. To come to wisdom is not easy, because we have built up the ego-sense during many incarnations. Egotism may be passive for a time, and the person appears wiser. But he may change when he is faced with more complex conditions, or with temptation. Temptation is not outside. It is inside. Only when there is wanting inside do circumstances appear to tempt. It is really the Haring up of what already exists.

5

Individual and Group Work for Regeneration

Can a lodge regenerate as a group?

RB: No group can become regenerated as a group because transformation has to take place within each individual, in its own way, at its own pace. But lodge activities can help individuals who come to it to realize the necessity for regeneration, clarify what it means, and what way of life should be adopted. These are questions which can be discussed by members in the lodge.

We do not really know the nature of the change that the word 'regeneration' signifies. We know with a part of our mind, but we do not really know what is freedom from selfishness, the quality of a completely unselfish mind. Work must be done to feel what it is, not merely think what it is. A lodge can help to create the atmosphere needed for this. Meeting together in the lodge could be a continual reminder to the members, preventing them from forgetting the goal. However, the actual change has to take place within the consciousness of every individual, it cannot happen in a group.

AH: The question could be put thus: 'What can I, as an individual, do to help the lodge or the members of the lodge in this process? In every lodge there should be an atmosphere in which the participants know each other better. A friendly atmosphere must grow, not at a superficial level, but really listening to each

other, creating the feeling of mutual trust. If we do not trust each other, it will be very difficult to go together deeper. For many of us that has been the experience here this week.

Once there is mutual trust, the atmosphere has been created for really enquiring together. Providing answers, or making declarations about truth is not a help. By posing simple questions, the other members of the lodge are given the chance to think things over. Let each one ask: why do I say such and such a thing, what do I mean by it, did I understand correctly that you mean this and not that? Perhaps in this way we can summarize in the lodge what was gone into here. If we want a lodge to work on regeneration, we should prepare the ground and create the right atmosphere. Then gradually the different aspects will be clear.

RB: Being friendly, coming to know each other, and trusting each other is important. Somebody said that when she first went to a lodge, nobody took notice of her. Such indifference is not the way to create a good atmosphere for this work.

AV: Attention should also be given to a new member in a study group. Sometimes, a study group can be overwhelming to a newcomer. It may be difficult to satisfy both the new members and old members. Yet it is important to make the link.

Why do so many members of the Society belong to the senior age-group? Can we do more for the younger people?

HG: I started as a young theosophist, and in some places I am still treated as a young theosophist! Everybody must be getting old; I am now drawing an old age pension. Attracting young people has been a problem for the T.S. as long as I can remember. In my early days I had to take part in a seminar about young people, and I said then that we should stop worrying about young and old. We are supposed to be theosophists, practise brotherhood, bring all brothers together without distinction, and there should not be a distinction of age. A lot of young and slightly older people in their middle twenties, thirties, forties,

are far too busy raising their family, earning their living, finding their way in the world etc. They have no time to think about spiritual things, unless they are naturally so inclined.

I myself came into the T.S. at the age of fourteen. I was at school, and I am sure that if I had not come in two years before I started taking exams, I would not have come in for another ten or fifteen years. Once you start working for exams, you haven't any time for these things. But because I got hooked (I wasn't pushed by my parents) I can assure you I willingly came in. Having once come in, I stayed because it was my family. There is too much worrying about how we can attract young people.

Something else happened. When I was about thirty-five I was thrilled because I managed to get my next-door neighbour to join. She was only thirty-four, so I was no longer the youngest member of my group! By this time, I had moved around the country and I had been in various groups, but everywhere I had been the youngest member. In this particular group they were all white-haired ladies, no men. Then a couple became interested in the Society and they joined as a couple. So we had one man, and because he was happy to come with his wife, other men came the next week. Previously they had come in, seen all these women and did not come again. You have to have a certain something to attract.

I am probably contradicting myself because the next thing that happened was that a girl of twenty came along. Now we had had other young people come along but they had seen all these elderly people and gone away and not come back again. But this girl who was twenty was already a member of the Society. She came because she was already 'part of the family'. And she came and she stayed. Then we got another young person who joined. Within a very short time we had four people under the age of thirty.

We need young people to attract young people, but we should not worry too much. We have to make things lively and interesting. I remember my father telling me that in the lodge he joined, one person had been president for years and years. He was taken there by a colleague at work with a number of young people; he was in his early twenties. After a while the younger

people in that lodge managed to persuade the person who was president to stand down and let one of the young people become president. The first thing they did was to make a new rule — that nobody must be president or secretary for more than two years. Old people think that they can do it ever so much better and that young people will not do it well enough, they will not be quite as efficient. But we have to allow for the inefficiency, because people are not going to learn unless they actually do the job and if somebody has done the job for too long, nobody will want to do it because they do not want to do it for so long. If your General Secretary always stays for seven years, even though there is an election every year, nobody who is wanting to do it only for two years will be persuaded to do the job.

MH: We have always believed that people live for three score years and ten. Young people nowadays are in a sense on the path of forthgoing until they are about thirty or thirty-five and then something happens. They begin to think inwardly, they get disillusioned with life in general, with going to parties etc., and then they start seeking. That explains why there are not so many younger people coming forward. When Jesus was on earth, he was thirty before anything really happened through his body. That may be the answer.

AR: In the T.S. I have been very happy to be in contact with older people. I have learned more from old people than from young people. But we need young people, otherwise in thirty more years we shall have no members at all. I think there is a simple solution. If we organize lively, participative activities like study groups, we will have young people. If we organize passive activities like lectures, we will get old people.

JB: I have been a young theosophist and I still feel like one. I lived for many years in Seattle, U.S.A., and my nearest relative was 1400 miles away. The lodge was my family. My children became involved in it, not because of the lodge, but because of the camps we had. We had a beautiful camp on Orcas Island. All

of us who had children went there, and our children became friends and became interested in theosophy. They worked together, they played together. They saw each other also outside of the camp activities. The same thing happened with the Round Table. Now many of those young people are active members of the Society, because they learned to work together and be friends together.

HS: I joined the T.S. at twenty-five and all the members seemed to be twice my age. The sections of the T.S. that have the largest number of young people are the ones that are most dominated by old people. I have wondered if there is a tendency for old people to hold on to the Society as it were, and to say to the young people 'You go off and have a camp or sing songs or dance around the campfire. I came into touch with the World Federation of Young Theosophists, went to camps and sang around campfires, and I thought they were awful. I did not want to do those things at all. I wanted to pursue theosophy and the activities of the T.S. We may add to the first object'... without distinction of... or age'. We should change our attitudes towards people of other age groups, try to understand them better, refrain from treating them as different from ourselves. If we were less self-conscious about the age groups the problem would be solved.

BM: This is not a problem only in the T.S. In Scandinavia young people are turning away from idealistic societies, political and religious activities. They seem to be very busy with the outer life of distractions and temptations. But those who really join the Society are worthwhile people. We should try to attract those people who are not young in soul though young in body.

RB: Sometimes people say 'Young people want this, so it must be done'. If you say 'which young people?' they point to somebody who is forty-five or fifty years old. They are middle aged, no longer young. We need old souls to contribute their wisdom. Young souls need something like the T.S. We need people of various age groups.

Young people may not be attracted to the T.S. while they are too sure of themselves. As one grows older one becomes less sure of oneself, less confident about one's own knowledge, and more ready to learn.

We should have more participatory activities as was suggested. When there is vitality in a lodge it is more attractive to people of all ages. There should be a friendship among the members which is alive. If there is a warm atmosphere, as in a family, when meetings are lively and young people are allowed to participate, people will be more interested. Young people like to be active and the T.S. would benefit by letting them do some practical work, like the Theosophical Order of Service, or doing something else useful, which gives scope for their energy.

When I was very young, and in the Round Table, our work was not only ceremonial. We did many things together, we collected and remade clothes for poor children; we made and sold chocolate fudge for the benefit of the poor. We thought we were doing something wonderful, but we also had fun. The amount of money we gave was minute, but the incentive to take part was great.

One of the preliminary documents about these seminars proposes the creation of a European Federation of Young Theosophists. Is there any intention in the President's mind to promote such a division?

RB: The intention was not in the President's mind, because the President knew nothing about it.

CB: Perhaps we should not try to form a federation or to organize the work of the young; let them come and be with us. They will find their own activities which we need not organize.

IH: I would disapprove heartily of any attempt to organize younger people as a separate group with their own meetings. I see no reason for it at all and regard it as divisive. As we have had some autobiographical discourses, I will add to them. I also began to read theosophical books at fifteen and on my sixteenth

birthday I was given *Life in Freedom*, by Krishnamurti. During the following year, I, of my own sweet will became a vegetarian. This was very useful for the improvement of my French, because in my senior class at school we had a French lady who persuaded us to converse in French. So I seized the opportunity. I was a militant vegetarian and a militant reincarnationist and so I learnt to express myself on these subjects in French. I made no converts, but I continued in this way during my university years. Every meal became a debate about the virtues of vegetarianism. When I began to go to theosophical meetings, my mother was not too happy, not because I was officially a Roman Catholic, but simply because of the clothes that some of the old ladies wore! You may have seen some pictures of Dr. Besant, wearing what seems a hybrid between a sari and a nightgown! During the last twelve months, I have been able to admit to the Society two schoolboys. One was only fifteen when he first wrote. He had read a great many books on theosophy and kindred subjects. More recently I admitted another schoolboy. Now we exchange letters as equals interested in the same things. To separate people just on grounds of age is just as wrong in my view as to separate them on grounds of race, creed, sex, caste or colour and thus we should add age to our first object. Let there be no discrimination on any ground at all.

The theosophical teachings are not all very simple. Often, in addition to being profound, they are complicated. Also they are often presented in a way that might seem dull or abstract, perhaps more as material for theology students than for young people in general, even for those who are searching for the deeper meaning of life. What are the inspiring thoughts in theosophical teachings for young people?

DG: Young people are very much interested in the problems that the world family is facing, like ecology, prevention of cruelty to animals and environmental problems. The challenge before students of theosophy may be to widen the scope of study and include a theosophical approach to all these problems. At our public meetings in Montevideo, people participate in the pro-

ceedings, with a good coordinator of course. The subjects dealt with refer to problems which touch the soul of man, no matter what his age is. More young people come than older people. Older people have often obtained what they wanted. Young people are still searching. They are asking for cooperation, for warmth, for kindness; they are worried about what is really happening in the world. Sometimes our studies are at too mental a level, and they don't appeal to the young, not being sufficiently practical. We may have to review the approach to our studies and deal with the real problems which we are all facing/problems like drug abuse. If we were to organize meetings on such topics with experienced people with a theosophical approach behind the table, pointing out the real causes, this would be a success and would attract young people.

KE: In Finland, a few times we have organized seminars for the public on topics like 'Through the forest nature into the spiritual life.' Several scientists gave lectures. Hundreds of people, including many young people came. We realized that that kind of work is really very good.

RB: **Mary** read to 'bo'^S"H^e j e W e n t t o , i s t e n t o K r i s h n a m u r t i a n d t h e y o f i n s e c u r i t y , o f a w o r l d i n w h i c h t h e r e i s c o n s t a n t s t r u g g l e , a n d s o o n . T h e s e a r e m a t t e r s i n w h i c h p e o p l e a r e i n t e r e s t e d .

X" x d d y o ~ s a t e r a c t t ^ V : b e c a u s e u r e o l e a r o t h e r m e d i t a t i o n g r o u n d s T h S ? P e g O l n g l o " s o r t s o f P e r h a p s g u i d e d m e d i t a t i o n s h o u l d b e d o n e i n t h e l o d g e s . S u r e t h a t m a n y y o u n g p e o p l e w o u l d j o i n b e c a u s e o f M s .

AH: **Although we should not make an age distinction in the T.S. we must also be aware that younger people have different questions, ways of expressing themselves. They like to come together with friends of their own age to discuss what is relevant to them.** Contacts made at an early age can last a lifetime. For me that was one of the big advantages of camps for

young people. When you are young, perhaps it is also easier to make mistakes. If younger and older people get together, they can help each other.

Is it possible to know about fundamental change if one is ambitious, greedy and so forth? Is it possible to bring about fundamental change by will-power?

RB: What do we mean by knowing about fundamental change? We are all greedy, ambitious, envious, conceited and so forth — the so forth may be very long! In one person one of these forms of self may be strong and in another person a different one. If I am ambitious but not proud, I think the other person is selfish, because he is proud. He sees I am ambitious, but he is not; so he thinks I am selfish. We both think that the other is selfish. The fact is we are both selfish, for these are facets of the same thing; one form of self is not better than another. The mixture in each of us is slightly different, but it makes the same kind of soup! So here we are — ambitious, greedy, etc. Can we know about fundamental change? If by the word 'know' we mean 'experience' fundamental change, obviously not, for as long as there is ambition etc., there is no change. But by observing that this is the source of our problems, we can give an impetus to change.

In other words, clearly by being aware of the existence of the challenge within and meeting it, we begin to negate it, and put an end to it. When we say we negate, who is the 'we', or rather the T? There is no we, because it has to happen in everyone individually. But when T negate, who negates? Is it the ambitious 'me'? To my many ambitions, do I add this one? I imagine myself becoming a beautiful person whom everybody will admire. 'Who am I?' is the question to which Ramana Maharshi again and again drew attention. Who is thinking, wanting, doing, and so forth? Krishnamurti pointed out: 'The observer is the observed.' The person who wants to negate may be the person who is ambitious.

The question of self-will amounts to this: Can the self *will* away ambition? Awareness shows that the observer who wishes to end ambition is the ambition that is observed. Such awareness

is a shift to a level of consciousness not associated with the thing called myself. This may be *buddhi*. Only clear sight, not seeking to achieve or do anything, can quieten the mind and put an end to its activity. This may not be self-will. Dr. Besant pointed out that a problem — let us say ambition — often increases, if a person struggles against it, because he who struggles is the same as the person who is ambitious. Because the self is full of contradictions, it wants both to remain as it is and to end. Dr. Besant advised meditation on the opposite quality. If you tend to be angry, meditate on peace. If it is a real meditation, the consciousness begins to feel peace. A shift of level, plane or dimension is a qualitative change.

AB: When someone really wants a change, he is at a point when he is ready for it. It is because he is very unhappy either with a bad situation or with himself; then his inner feeling tells him it is time to change. When he really ready, he needs will-power to change. I believe change has to do with will-power.

GS: Krishnamurti **that** would try to watch with care what is happening. With care means with carefulness and love; it is not an analytical way of watching. But you need a certain kind of will-power.

HS: The *Bhagavad Gita* seems to be that in all that k... **Here is a deep problem — the interrelationship of the one and the many.** Could Radha cast any light on that?

AR: If you really use **will, * * *** using the muscles of **as long as** happens. You must get rid of **know** really is.

LR: We must distinguish between making an effort and forcing something. If we use will-power when we do not know exactly what it is, we may be forcing something, with negative results.

Continuous effort can bring about the right result and an inner change.

WV: We should try to compare the evolution of the universe and that of the individual. What is the real life and force behind the evolution of the universe? Perhaps we might call that the will of the One, the divine Will. In the evolution of the individual, there are various aspects of will — his own egoistic will that has little to do with the universal Will, the one Will. Once we succeed in finding and living according to the will of the One, the Holy Will, then change takes place because we act and live according to that tremendous Will which has nothing to do with our egoistic self, but with our divine Self.

RB: The universal Will may not be different from universal Intelligence and universal Goodness. The Bhagavad Gita refers to the 'actor' — who is also the enjoyer, the experiencer, the thinker — and freedom from such identification. When the mind is free, there is no feeling 'I am the actor, the enjoyer, the knower, the person using will.' Self-identification can be very subtle. We may not consciously think 'I am the actor', but at the back of the mind there could be the feeling 'I am acting, I am the person who knows; knowledge is mine, experience is mine/' which is a way of maintaining the self-centre, which is a psychologically created centre.

The Bhagavad Gita points to the fact that this is a projection of thought, a kind of fiction we have created, labels we have attached. There is a different kind of action, action without the person who says 'I am the actor', knowing without the centre which says 'It is my knowledge.' The crux of the problem is: does the self-centre continue to exist, or has it died? If one says 'I have put an end to ambition, I know/' one has not put an end to the self, for it continues in the form of 'myself, the knower'.

Sometimes T.S. members with their own views, who do not follow the prevalent line, are regarded as not theosophical. What are the criteria in this? Can personal views, however irritating they may be, harm the T.S.? Or can they even help to keep the T.S. alert and alive, free of dogmatism?

EA: The T.S. is a very special institution, a strong institution. The President can dose down a lodge or a section, if it does not work. It is a strong building, but has no dogma. Politicians use ideals to hold together their organization, but it is difficult to be a good theosophist if we do not have clear guidelines. We must be very alert about our aims, so that we do not become dog-made.

CB: We should be very tolerant, very liberal in accepting all sorts of personal views, for they are essential to the life of the T.S. There is one point to which we must pay attention; that is, if someone talks against brotherhood or in radst terms. Even then **we should be tolerant to quite a great extent. Only if it is very persistent and serious should some action be taken. We should, first of all, have a dialogue and discuss things, before anything is done. Personal views should normally be very welcome.**

WK: It would be very nice if everybody in the lodges agreed with each other, but agreeing may make us fall asleep. Therefore it might be good to regularly encounter people with different views.

AR: There are several criteria to guide the work. Brotherhood is important, but as individuals we should try to understand life. Everything that adds to the deepening of consciousness is acceptable. And I think these two things — brotherhood and working for unity, and also the development of individual intelligence and working together 'as **people with S ~** responsibility--are important, and should be the basis of our life. They provide the criteria in that sense .

AB: In principle we have to consider the ideas of other people. But when we have members in lodges whose behaviour contradicts brotherhood, we should draw their attention to the fact that they should try and change their behaviour, at least during the meetings of the lodge. We may succeed in doing it without telling them directly, for otherwise we cause a lot of disharmony in the lodge. We should find some means to make these people realize that we have to practise our principles. The aims should not be somewhere up in the air, or down in the books.

LR: We must always accept different opinions and try to be tolerant; in this we agree. But if consistently and repeatedly we find that one or more people become irrational, simply in order to be considered interesting or special, then we have to be careful, for this can become destructive and create disharmony. Nevertheless, different approaches to the same problem are positive. They become harmful if they go too far. Then we should draw attention to brotherhood and to the theosophical principles.

IJ: Many lodges and sections rapidly get into problems when their presidents or general secretaries are too tolerant. In our section we have many problems, although we try to be tolerant. But the problems continually increase. It is difficult to know what approach to take towards tolerance. We need to take some action to reduce the divisions that some members create, or else they will destroy the section or the lodge. The general secretary or the president of the lodge should define the limits of tolerance, the balance between tolerance and the action necessary to end the problems.

HS: Most of those who have spoken about this have spoken in general terms. But the individual case can be very illuminating. An individual was brought by a friend to a meeting, and he fought his way into the T.S. You could not refer him to a book, because he was blind. We had dialectical battles which lasted an hour at a time. He forced people to define what they were trying to say, and the people gave him long, stumbling explanations.

He would reply: I do not believe a word of it/ He did much good to that lodge and finally became its president. He died a couple of years ago, surrounded by the affections of all. If you deal with these individual cases in the right way, if you respond honourably to what they demand of you, often they do much good. I have noticed that when somebody comes to the T.S. and makes trouble of some sort, people will say: 'That is disturbing the group and the atmosphere/ There is far more disturbance from the disapproval which people direct at that individual than from the individual himself. When an individual keeps asking questions or attacking something, he wants to be convinced. I have come to lodges and people take me aside and say: 'There is a man who generally sits in the back row, and he always asks the same question/ Usually he is not really a nuisance, he is trying to get the answer. Often the reason why he does not get it is because the answer cannot be given in words.

RB: Generally everyone here sees the need to be tolerant, to allow freedom to other people to have their own views. Even if their views go somewhat against the principle of brotherhood, we must accept them as members unless there is a consistent racial or personal hostility, a continuous attitude of unbrotherliness. ^Y ^{mi} st ^{el} ^p such persons and with patience we may enable them to see that it is not right to be unbrotherly.

The General Council once discussed at great length the case of a lady who had suffered much in a concentration camp and all of whose family had been killed under horrible circumstances. She said that she could not like Germans. So the presidential agent in that place removed her from T.S. membership, which madentaHy he did not have the constitutional right to do. The General Council decided that her feelings of unbrotherliness were understandable in the circumstances. Time should be given for feelings to die down in such a case. We must not quickly conclude that somebody is not a good member. At the same time, every one of us must exercise discrimination to see what is theosophical and what is not in ourselves as well as everywhere. Slander is untheosophical.

We cannot abandon our discriminatory powers and say that everything is all right. Certain views are definitely untheosophical. If somebody tries to set up an authority in die T.S. we are bound to say that it is not in accordance with the theosophical way of working. Similarly, when a thought arises in the mind, one must see whether it is theosophical or not.

Discrimination is essential in the work of the Society. A member who is a devotee of Sai Baba is at liberty to have his pictures at home and sing his praises. But we cannot allow that in a T.S. lodge. It would be still less appropriate to appoint that person a lecturer in the section. So when it comes to the work of the Society, we have to discriminate between what creates confusion and what will help to retain the character of the Society. The T.S. stands for universal brotherhood; it has a policy of maintaining the principle of freedom. There is no authority within the Society to say 'This is the truth and you shall believe if; there are no dogmas to be followed. It is important that this character should be maintained everywhere. We cannot have anyone in a position where what he says and thinks might mislead others about the Society, which does not mean that we disapprove of him. From the individual point of view there might be something in the experience that a person needs at a particular time. So we must not condemn anyone. Every person goes through experiences in order to mature. Who are we to say what is necessary for another? But carrying on the work of the T.S. in the right way is a different matter.

6

The Source of Spiritual Energy

Could you speak about the purpose of the Esoteric School?

RB: It is a school started by H.P. Blavatsky in 1888. Originally it consisted of a few people who were especially in earnest to learn of her wisdom and follow instructions about the inner life. It was then called the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society. Later the name was changed to the Esoteric School of Theosophy. ^{hy. S} ^a ^{meed} ^{that} ^{the} School has grown. Now there are about four thousand members all over the world. From the beginning, its purpose has been to help and encourage its members to live theosophy, live the spiritual life.

Members of the T.S. are not obligated to live in any particular way and each follows the mode of living which pleases him. The Esoteric School is meant for those who are committed to transforming themselves and tread what is called the Tath'. It is, of course, a school of theosophy. Whatever advice or instructions are given is according to theosophical principles. The word 'esoteric' does not mean that it is a secret society. 'Esoteric' means what is within, within ourselves. So it is for inner unfoldment or development. But its meetings and work are private, confined to its members.

• **The School**, as other schools do, follows the theosophical principle that illumination comes from within. It is not the quantity of instruction and material that a person receives which changes him. Everything depends on his own capacity for assimilation of truths and his unselfishness of motive. So what the E.S. tries to

do — success depending on the individual, rather than on the school — is to encourage and assist its members to go deeply into theosophical principles and truths, and to try to live them wholeheartedly.

The School has certain rules, for instance, abstention from the consumption of meat, alcohol and tobacco. The members must adopt an orderly and responsible way of living. Sometimes the question is asked: Why should any rules be imposed on a person? The School does not 'impose' rules, but it admits to its membership only those who have realized that this is what they want to do.

The question of abstention from flesh-eating is one of sensing the unity of life. Unity implies not sacrificing the life of another creature in order to eat its flesh; this is not necessary for survival, for there are millions of healthy vegetarians. In this context, the question is asked: If killing is objectionable, vegetarians are also killing plants. It is not the same thing, because in the plant kingdom there is no nervous system, no brain, and the reactions of the plant are very different from those of the animal.

The principle in the School is that the hurt one causes must be reduced to the absolute minimum. Therefore members of the School are also concerned with not using products which are the result of cruelty, such as fur, and cosmetics which are tested on the eyes of animals. Abstention from alcohol and tobacco are necessary to maintain the sensitivity of the body.

The E.S. is a worldwide body meant to create a channel of spiritual influence. Its work in this respect depends on the earnestness with which the members endeavour to tread the path, and aspire to serve the Masters of the Wisdom. Such a channel can be created by those who are united in their aspiration, selfless of motive, and ready to be of service.

The E.S. is open to any person who has been an active member of the T.S. for at least two years and is willing to abide by the rules of the School. Every applicant must know theosophy at least to some extent before entering the School. The theosophical principles which should guide his life and inner development must be clear to him. As we already said, he should have already adopted a way of life that conforms to the rules of the E.S. by

being a vegetarian, abstaining from alcohol and tobacco, refraining from an undisciplined sex life, and so on.

In the materially rich countries, where there is no war, hunger and suppression, suffering is usually seen on the emotional level of human existence. This emotional suffering is mostly caused by the male-female relationship. If this is so, would you say something about this enormous cause of suffering?

JA: I think it is in the innate nature of the human being to love and to be loved. Many people are materially privileged but they lack love. Brotherhood and love come from inside oneself. I believe the problem of the man-women relationship is in our heads. There is no superior, no inferior. Man and woman complement each other.

SL: For me there are no external facts in suffering. Suffering is the result of egoism. If you see differences between male and female, you will see differences everywhere.

AP: A friend of mine who suffered on the breakup of a relationship received good advice from a Chinese woman. She told him that he would heal when he became a whole person, when he no longer had the need for the 'other half' he thought he had found.

AL: To lead a simple life we need only to sleep, eat and have some love. Suffering comes because of wanting ever more things, and inventing problems, things to do or to be.

RB: Can we really say that most of the suffering in the rich countries is emotional? There is a tremendous amount of physical suffering, if we take into account drug addicts, battered wives and children, and so forth. Statistics are available about the increasing number of women and children who are assaulted every day. Violence on the streets and broken homes are also among the many symptoms of the misery in rich countries.

The problem of suffering in male-female relationship arises because people like possessions. The love of possession is a

great problem. Possessiveness can be seen in different kinds of relationships. A mother can be possessive of her son. In many countries the relationship between a daughter in-law and the mother in-law is almost always a failure; both want to possess. When friends are possessive, tensions and jealousies occur, and there is 'suffering'. Sex relationships intensify this problem. It is a good test, because it puts people in the worst possible position, where they can either pass the test well, or fail badly. In the sex relationship there is a stronger sense of possession, because much physical and psychological pleasure is associated with it. The source of the pleasure, that is, the man or woman from whom pleasure is derived, is identified with the pleasure. So, there is strong attachment. Sex is also a way of forgetting oneself. People give importance to sex, partly because it is the one time when they experience self-forgetfulness. Attachment and possessiveness often grow where there is sex-relationships. That is why jealousy becomes intense, and the so-called suffering from separation is more keenly felt in these relationships.

A holy man in India said that people do not exist for us to possess; they exist only for us to serve. People are attached to families, but the relationships are temporary. In this incarnation someone is a son, a father, or mother; in the next there will be a different group. We are brought into relationship with a particular group in order to learn responsibility, and to serve in the best possible manner, and also to help them unfold their own potentiality, not in order to possess them, to hold them, to make them act according to our desires. This is true of every relationship, whether in a family, with a close friend, or with husband or wife. Only in the latter case it is more difficult to be balanced, for the reasons given.

Suffering ceases completely when attachment and possessiveness are absent. Even separation will not matter when there is no attachment. If you really love a person, when the person dies, love does not die, nor the joy of love. Distance does not matter, if you really love a person. You will allow him freedom to go away. The suffering is not caused by the other person. Every person you are linked with gives you the opportunity to learn to be non-possessive and to learn what real love is.

When considering this, begin with the family. Most people feel attached to the family, even more to a husband or wife. Begin to be unattached but loving. Attachment and love, in the real sense, cannot co-exist. Life is for understanding what is love that does not hold on.

Life is a process. So is there a fundamental change at all?

RB: There are of course changes in life all the time; many of them are imperceptible. Every one of us undergoes change during different incarnations. If there were no changes, there would be no evolutionary process. The process implies not only change, but in the long run, perfection. The perfection of physical organisms comes about through a slow process of change and improvement, until the stage of the complex human body, with an incredibly complex brain, much of it still unused. Complexity implies increasing sensitivity, etc. From the theosophical viewpoint, through biological evolution, there is the unfoldment of consciousness. The ability to perceive more and respond more is developed, through long periods of time. So should we do anything at all, or should we leave it to the evolutionary process to thrust us into perfection and relieve us of our problems?

Apparently it does not work like that. HPB states in *The Secret Doctrine*: 'Man is the only free agent in Nature.' In Sri Shankarācharya's *Viveka Chudamani* ('The Crest-jewel of Wisdom') and in the *Dhammapada*, said to contain the Buddha's words, there are statements pointing to a special position for the human being. The human stage is special. Perhaps even the prevalent homocentric point of view is a misinterpretation of the Bible, and a distortion of the truth that there is something special in human life. The human consciousness is capable of awareness of its own position in relation to everything else. It can question the rights and wrongs of things. It wants to know the why of things and seeks to act according to its own perceptions, impulses and concepts. These may be in contradiction to the forward movement for the time being, because of lack of sufficient understanding. But the beauty is that man is *capable* of understanding and he has to exert himself to understand. He can and must

know what the Divine Plan is, and participate in great movement towards perfection, in full awareness and freedom. The other kingdoms act from the unconscious intelligence provided them by Nature, their rightness simply being part of Nature. But the human being cannot do that.

HPB also remarks that every creature or being is incipient man or has already been man. Each must pass through this stage of conscious cooperation with the divine will. So for the human being it may not be possible to say that all life is a process, and the question of fundamental change or conscious change does not arise. We all strive consciously for change; that is ambition, desire. If there were no conscious desire for change, we would not have hopes or disappointments. Obviously we want change, but we do not try to understand whether it is in accordance with the laws of Nature, and whether it will bring true progress. We want change that will immediately satisfy. But fundamental change means growing in awareness and intelligence, realizing the beauty of the whole divine process, and cooperating with it freely because it is so wonderful to do so. Fundamental change or change in the right direction must be understood by every human being sooner or later and he must accomplish it himself.

RH: What Radha has said is beautiful and requires no comment. There is the possibility in the normal process of evolution of sudden, fundamental change, or rather of fundamental changes which have to be actualized at some points in evolution. The concrete mind has been fully developed; the abstract mind is well on the way to development and expression; and intuition, the feeling of oneness and direct perception of truth, has developed in many souls. The time has come to provide a higher aspect of consciousness with the possibility of expression and consciously to further such expression. To be conscious of this, and give all opportunity to it to awaken, would be quite a fundamental change within a normal process of slow evolution. Then the moment comes for the flower to open, and the opening can sometimes be aided by allowing more sunshine in at the right moment.

What is your view of the International Theosophical Centre at Naarden? What is its task for the T.S. and for Europe? What is its relation with the Liberal Catholic Church? Should the Centre expand its facilities?

RB: This Centre has the possibility of becoming a real centre for theosophical work. The very name of the Centre suggests that its work is theosophical. People who are interested in the work of the T.S. and in finding the wisdom that is theosophy can meet here, and have discussions and different kinds of programmes to stimulate enquiry. It can even be an administrative centre for the theosophical work in Europe.

Every spiritual centre should be a place not only for meeting, discussing, talking, organizing activities, but also a place where it is possible to be quiet, to go inward, to spend time in meditation. If this is such a centre, it will help both the T.S. and Europe and perhaps the whole world, because what we put into the atmosphere spreads. Just as steam is less easily contained than solid objects, in the subtler worlds things are restricted less easily than in the grosser worlds. What is put into the psychic atmosphere spreads, and if we send out right thoughts, if we have the aspiration to find wisdom and aid humanity, the earnestness in our hearts, the purity of our motives, the meditative forces of a centre like this, will help the whole world, not only Europe. Every spiritual centre has that possibility.

Our Elders have said that in places where nature is not spoiled, invisible entities, angels and nature spirits of various kinds, gather. Anyone who is sensitive can feel that the atmosphere of places of natural beauty is different from that of human habitations and crowded cities, not only because there are beautiful trees, but because there are presences. Such presences do not like to gather where discordant thoughts and emotions, passions and rivalries, cloud the atmosphere as they do in urban areas. But in a centre such as this, where people meet in a joint spiritual quest, their motive being the welfare of all creatures, the quality of the thoughts can be such that it attracts not only other human beings but also fine invisible influences. Together we can create a wonderful channel. The more we succeed in

creating such a centre and as people from different areas, even if they are physically far away, link themselves in sympathy with this endeavour, the more is added to the strength of the Centre.

An international spiritual centre has a large and lofty purpose, and we must try to see it fulfilled. Facilities are obviously somewhat inadequate at present and should be expanded. This should be done without marring the atmosphere, or the beauty of nature. That is what we have attempted to do in Adyar. We have been planting more trees, linking ourselves more closely with the other kingdoms of nature.

What is the relationship of this centre to the Liberal Catholic Church? I don't think it can or should be an L.C.C. centre, although it may have the name of St. Michael. St. Michael stands for a certain type of intelligence or a power, and the Centre is named after that. Certain activities inspire people into a greater sense of dedication to human regeneration. These can have a place here in the Centre, the Round Table, the L.C.C. and similar activities. But I think the Centre should not be identified with the L.C.C., because the L.C.C. strikes the Christian note, and the Centre must transcend any particular denomination or image. It must be truly international and universal.

It is very fortunate that we have begun with the subject of human regeneration. There will be in the future many activities, and gatherings of this kind, I hope, with discussion, thinking and meditation about questions of a serious nature, matters of importance for the spiritual progress of the human family.

Appendix A

List of questions discussed in part II:

1 T.S. Work and the Fundamental Change in Man and Society

- What is the fundamental change necessary for the T.S. to be a really useful organization for human regeneration? 58
- How should we view karma and reincarnation with respect to human regeneration? 58
- Should we accept any guidelines? 60
- How important are guidelines? 61
- From a certain point of view, it is difficult to say what the T.S. is. Theosophy is a wisdom which is not possible to define, and which is the source of inspiration. The openness of the Society is at the same time its weakness and its strength. It is remarkable that after a hundred years of existence the T.S. is still alive and functioning. Could you comment on this? 62
- Krishnamurti abolished all organizations. Some theosophists seem to think that the T.S. is 'the' instrument for the Hierarchy. Others say — and it seems there is more truth in this statement — that theosophy is higher than the T.S. How long will the T.S. remain important, supposing it is important? 65
- Would we as theosophists worldwide be more effectively serving humanity, if every one at a certain time, every day tuned in on a specific theme concerning human regeneration? 66

There is increasing environmental damage and pollution. Do we, as theosophists, have time enough to solve these problems before it is too late?	66
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 2 The Nature of the Change	
Regeneration was described as a movement from self-centredness to altruism. But Krishnamurti said there is no psychological evolution. How can we understand the difference?	7A 7u
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Is any preparation necessary for correct perception of truth?	77
How can one simultaneously perceive oneself and forget oneself?	80
Why is it that we cannot or will not take the last step, and let go of everything?	82
When we talk about a fundamental change, do we imply an immediate, total change, or is it a process?	84
Why do fundamental changes take place only in some people and not in all?	86
 3 Regeneration and the Objects of the T.S.	
Where does brotherhood begin, and where does it end, if ever?	90
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In <i>Practical Occultism</i> , HPB writes of some basic ideas of theosophy. The second article is on 'Occultism versus the Occult Arts'. The occult arts are sometimes confused with theosophy. Could we go into this problem?	93

In the outer work of the T.S. the Masters are seldom spoken of, and if at all, mostly through the Leadbeater-Hodson tradition — devotional testimonial. Is this approach still relevant? Should we find a new way to present the Masters and their work in the T.S.? Should we see the Masters as sources of energy or as physical human beings? 95

Is the T.S. the only way to come to *theosophia*, or is it also the basis for other schools? Is the T.S. the only right channel for *theosophia*, are all other lines of spirituality not the right ones? 98

There are other groups — Alice Bailey, Rosicrucians, Anthroposophists, Sai Baba, etc. — working along spiritual lines parallel to the Theosophical Society. Our second object aims at comparative studies. The study of what the Masters have given through HPB and Sinnett is a lifetime study, but as Annie Besant, CWL, Hodson, Mead and others have also studied deeply the hidden side of things, so have De Purucker, Alice Bailey, Steiner and others. How can we work with their ideas without losing our own method of working? What is our own, really theosophical method of study? What is the essential distinction between the T.S. (Adyar) and other groups? 100

Can occultism be of use in the process of regeneration? 105

4 Our Approach to Theosophy

What is theosophy? 107

Is it necessary to go through suffering, in order to arrive at truth? What place have suffering and sorrow, as far as a fundamental change is concerned? 108

What is the difference between spontaneous action and impulsive or reactive action? Is there a relationship between intuition and impulses and hunches? 110

In the way in which we approach theosophy now, it seems there is no more need for the study of classic theosophical works such as *The Secret Doctrine*, or the Letters of the Masters or for the use of Sanskrit words. Is this correct? III

- How do we view the literature of Besant and Leadbeater in the light of this modern and direct approach? 114
- Should we continue to study *The Secret Doctrine* and/or other original literature or rather study modern theosophical books, in case we have limited time for study and we have to make choices? 116
- Is there a way to come to wisdom, without knowledge? What is essential knowledge? 117

5 Individual and Group Work for Regeneration

- Can a lodge regenerate as a group? 119
- Why do so many members of the Society belong to the senior age-group? Can we do more for the younger people? 120
- One of the preliminary documents about these seminars proposes the creation of a European Federation of Young Theosophists. Is there any intention in the President's mind to promote such a division? 124
- The theosophical teachings are not all very simple. Often, in addition to being profound, they are complicated. Also they are often presented in a way that might seem dull or abstract, perhaps more as material for theology students than for young people in general, even for those who are searching for the deeper meaning of life. What are the inspiring thoughts in theosophical teachings for young people? 125
- Is it possible to know about fundamental change if one is ambitious, greedy and so forth? Is it possible to bring about fundamental change by will-power? 127
- Sometimes T.S. members with their own views, who do not follow the prevalent line, are regarded as not theosophical. What are the criteria in this? Can personal views, however irritating they may be, harm the T.S.? Or can they even help to keep the T.S. alert and alive, free of dogmatism? 130

6 The Source of Spiritual Energy

Could you speak about the purpose of the Esoteric School? 134

In the materially rich countries, where there is no war, hunger and suppression, suffering is usually seen on the emotional level of human existence. This emotional suffering is mostly caused by the male-female relationship. If this is so, would you say something about this enormous cause of suffering? 136

Life is a process. So is there a fundamental change at all? 138

What is your view of the International Theosophical Centre at Naarden? What is its task for the T.S. and for Europe? What is its relation with the Liberal Catholic Church? Should the Centre expand its facilities? 140

Appendix B

Questions for study groups:

T.S. ^{TMor k} and the Fundamental Change in Man and Society

- a. How does one distinguish between fundamental and subsidiary issues, both in relation to individuals and to human society as a whole?
- b. What constitutes fundamental change?
- c. What is the impact of fundamental change on relationship?
- d. How does the T.S. aim of universal brotherhood resolve problems? Racial and ethnic conflict? Cruelty to animals? Pollution and environmental damage? Personal conflicts?

The Nature of the Change

- a. Is universal brotherhood synonymous with regeneration? Why did the Mahatmas insist on it as the basis of T.S. work?
- b. Is self-discipline related to obtaining a correct perception and freedom from self-centredness?
- c. What is the process that leads from ignorance to wisdom, from selfishness to altruistic action?
- d. What are the theosophical guidelines to bring about a radical internal change?

Regeneration and the Objects of the T.S.

- «. Is universal brotherhood an affirmation of equality? If so, in what sense, since inequality is visible everywhere and cannot be eradicated as long as there is a process of evolution?
- b.* How is truth meaningful for the development of the human being?
- c.* Can a new direction of progress be discovered through the perception of truth derived from religious, philosophical and scientific studies?
- d.* Every religion has become a means of conflict and exploitation. All the same religion is an intrinsic human need. Therefore should there not be a theosophical definition of religion?
- e.* Does probing into the intelligence and order underlying Nature play a role in transforming man's nature?
- f.* How can a human being transcend his ignorance of himself, which severely conditions his life and pursuits?

Our Approach to Theosophy?

- a.* In what way is theosophy different from philosophy, theology and religion in the ordinary sense?
- b.* Head-learning and soul-wisdom are differentiated. In what does the difference lie?
- c.* How can the study of theosophy have an impact on daily life and be an aid to regeneration? : "
- d.* What are the tests of our understanding of theosophy and our effectiveness in presenting it?

Individual and Group Work for Regeneration

- a.* What kind of group activity is relevant to regeneration and how?
- b.* Are high-voltage publicity and modern advertising techniques of persuading people into beliefs relevant to T.S. work?
- c.* Are we in a position to teach, or is our work to share and learn together?
- d.* What kind of lectures, etc., forming part of lodge programmes are relevant to the central aim of transformation?

The Source of Spiritual Energy

- a.* Why is there a strong urge to seek outside?
- b.* Can the worldly life and its compulsions be reconciled with the need to become spiritually awake?
- c.* What are the ways of bringing harmony and order within oneself? Is that discipline?
- d.* Are meditation and daily life related? How?

**NEW PLYMOUTH
BRANCH OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Theosophists and would-be theosophists are all united by a common devotion to the Regeneration of Man. They may differ in their convictions, interests or approach. The teachings of Buddha, Jesus, Blavatsky, Besant, Krishnamurti or some other teacher may inspire some and not others. But there is a strong common bond, namely profound concern for the progress and perfection of humanity, not merely at the material and intellectual levels, but morally and spiritually.

A theosophist does not seek wisdom to benefit himself. 'Not for himself but for the world he lives'; and the more deeply devoted he is to the regeneration of mankind, the more ardently he seeks to understand himself and the world, and penetrate into the secret of life. His aim is to discover the source of the Goodness and Happiness which is the birthright of all living beings.

Mrs Radha Bumier, who is President of the Theosophical Society since 1980, conducted two seminars on the subject of human regeneration in July 1990. This book contains a compilation of the lectures and discussions.

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HUMAN REGENERATION

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