

ANCIENT WISDOM



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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF SAINT LOUIS

PRESENTS

BING ESCUDERO

§ § § § § § § § WORKSHOP: MEDITATION AND TRANSFORMATION § § § § § § § § §

Meditation is the application of consciousness on consciousness itself. Our spiritual transformation is accelerated and intensified by meditation. We will look into the essential principles that make for a valid and workable meditative practice. We will suggest a safe and simple approach you can try out every morning. Neither your chakras or kundalini will be tampered with as we go beyond the trappings of psychic phenomena. The realization of the Real is the highest transformation.



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" " " " 7:00 - 9:00 P.M.
SUNDAY, JANUARY 13, 1991 3:00 P.M.

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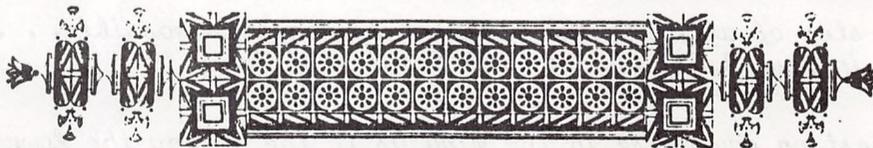
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Bing Escudero has been a national lecturer for the Theosophical Society in America for fourteen years, and has spoken and conducted workshops in branches and study centers throughout the country. He holds a degree in philosophy and psychology from Far Eastern University in Manila, and was formerly national president of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines. He is well known for his ability to explain complicated theosophical concepts in a clear and simple manner, and for his application of principles to daily life.

* * * * *

JESUS SAID: Whoever knows the All but fails to know himself lacks everything.

The Gospel according to St. Thomas



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. The entire edifice which is the Theosophical Society is built upon two strong pillars: one is freedom, the other is brotherhood. These are fundamental to life. As mentioned earlier, if there is not the feeling that we must give, the feeling that there is no possession worth having which is not for the whole, if there is not a sense of harmony with others, a sense of shared destiny, then one cannot really begin to understand that profound wisdom which is Theosophy. So, brotherhood is one pillar and brotherhood implies a great deal. It expresses itself in small actions as well as in big things.

Freedom is the other pillar of our Society. The Society is unique in certain ways. It provides its members, and all who come to it even without becoming members, with a certain picture of the universe and the understanding which some Theosophists have had about life in general. Some of them were very inspiring personages, and what they said may be of great value. However, the Theosophical Society does not impose its literature, the world-view or other thoughts presented, as a belief upon its members. It provides no one with a ready-made revelation; there are not set concepts to which one has to subscribe in the Theosophical Society; there is no dogma, no creed. On the other hand, if a person does not have the spirit of enquiry, which makes him discard creeds, discard ready-made notions, then he is probably not learning to be a Theosophist.

The Society does not provide a creed, but it does present the thoughts of persons who have lived a life of earnest devotion to the welfare of humanity, persons from whom inspiration has been derived by many. Each one of us is left free to study what is available and to come to one's own understanding and realization. In our Society, we do not believe in belief, for belief has divided the world. The Christian believes something and therefore he is against the heathen; the Muslim believes something and he feels that those who do not believe as he does are not his brothers; the Hindu believes and feels that he is superior, that he is the chosen one. Belief in a particular type of god, believe in an exclusive church, belief in dogmas and creeds which are separative, has always troubled and harassed this sorry world. Terrible acts of cruelty have been perpetrated in the name of religious belief, in the name of God, who is often nothing more than a belief, a concept. So, we do not want to perpetrate beliefs which divide.

There is a touchstone by which we can know the validity of anything and that is the touchstone of love, of affection, of sympathy. If any belief, any creed, hardens the heart and makes it less sympathetic, there is something wrong with it, or there is something wrong with our understanding of it. Sympathy is not sentimentality. There are sentimental persons who can be very hard. It is said that the most enlightened of individuals, the Lord Buddha, had a love which radiated like the rays of the sun; it cast warmth and light on all alike, it did not make a choice. When he met a simple man, he spoke simple words of kindness to him, which brought (the man) light at his own level, and yet he spoke of the profoundest truth to those who were capable of receiving it. It was because of supreme love which made no choice, which was incapable of preferring some to others, that ways of expression were found suitable to all. So, real sympathy and affection do not prefer some to others.

The touchstone by which we can find out whether what we are studying, what we are thinking, etc. is really Theosophical or not also tests whether there is an increase of understanding and of wisdom. Wisdom is different from knowledge. Knowledge can be separated from affection. In wisdom, the heart and the mind are united together. The mind has an understanding which is warmed by the sympathies of the heart. The two are not divorced from each other.

(the above taken in part from a *Welcome New Members*,
by Radha Burnier, International President)

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MEDITATIONS - from the works of Annie Besant

To all and each one that we meet we owe a duty. No one who comes within the circle of our life, but we have a duty towards that person. The world is not ruled by chance; no fortuitous happenings come into the lives of men.

* * * *

Nor let us forget that the person who happens to be with us at any moment is the person given to us by the Master to serve at the moment. If by carelessness, by impatience, by indifference, we fail to help him, we have failed in our Master's work.

* * * *

THE CALL TO THE HEIGHTS --- Guidance on the Pathway to Self-Illumination by Geoffrey Hodson, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1976 (continued from the last issue)

Chapter 23 - THE DISCIPLE - WORLD AMBASSADOR

Modern observers are not lacking who proclaim that humanity would seem to be treading a pathway toward self-destruction--sensually, militarily, and ecologically. If this be true--and support visibly exists for the view--the salvation of the race from this suicidal procedure must depend to a considerable extent, if not entirely, upon spiritually illumined human beings arising and appearing. The life of such completely dedicated occultists may justly be described as an ambassadorship. This office is, of course, not related either to any country or to any particular school of religious thought. Rather is such a disciple a world-agent for world spirituality, a messenger on behalf of the heads of the departments in the Great Brotherhood of the directors of spiritual power, and all those who have attained to the rank of adeptship. These are, indeed, the great ones upon earth, and their unity or "Nationhood" is not that of race or creed. They constitute *one community*, and it is they who, throughout the ages, have kept watch upon humanity. They have especially made available to the idealists of every world period, the knowledge, the protection, and the power that, if rightly received and applied, transforms idealists into practicing occultists. These urgently need both guardianship and guidance as they attempt to follow a mode of life which is almost totally at variance with general and popular ways of living. Indeed, this service by the elders to the younger members of the human race is one expression of the fundamental principle which governs the lives of all those without exception who have themselves discovered the interior light.

The earth is passing through the deepest and therefore darkest--from the spiritual point of view--phase of the great involutory and evolutionary journey of the One Life. In consequence, matter--particularly its inertial attribute--is in a position of great power; it overemphasizes materiality in the motives, methods of fulfillment, the modes of life, and the day-by-day waking consciousness of the bodily selves with which the spiritual Monad-Egos of man are associated. However at this time, the earth is emerging from the position of deepest descent of spirit into matter--or involution. In consequence of this emergence, the spirit of man is like wise ascending into a higher level of evolution, following upon the involutory phase. Therefore, the degradation--ugly and repugnant as it is, overcome and transcended as it must be--is not wholly unnatural, though the deep descent into which it has led certain human beings is unnecessary.

Despite the degree of self-degradation--moral, emotional, and sheerly physical--into which so large a proportion of mankind on earth has sunk, increasing numbers of people are responding to the stirring within them of spiritualizing influences. In an increasing number the inner Self has reached the outer man with idealism, and these have responded in their outer lives, even though with but varying degrees of success. These awakening and awakened ones are not only valuable and praiseworthy, but extremely important for the sake of humanity as a whole. Each one, in degree governed by his or her responsiveness, reduces the depth of the degradation into which fellowmen may descend. They also render far easier response to idealism and its effective expression in daily life for all who are awakening or are on the threshold of that experience. Indeed, this is true for every single idealist upon earth. Because of the degradation around them, but also and far more for their own sakes, these awakening ones are therefore ideally the subjects of the most effective ministrations which their seniors can bestow upon them.

Of these, the newly awakened people are often most difficult to discern. The germ-spot in an egg is relatively small, particularly *before* germination, though thereafter, it dominates the whole process of reproduction. Thus, also, within the seeker for light the germ of idealism ultimately dominates his or her whole life, and the concept of the path-life comes to birth in the mind and heart of the idealist. Heretofore, it may have remained asleep, as it were. Gradually awakening, it increases the selflessness of the true servant of his fellowmen. It is at this delicate period in the life of an aspirant--and even at a particular moment in time--that the presence and the aid of an intelligently active ambassador of the Lords of Light can be extremely beneficent. The need for such representatives and agents of these Great Ones who will assist them in the ever effective continuance of their beneficent ministrations is clearly apparent. Every spiritual aspirant is therefore granted an immeasurably important opportunity to discover and to help such newly awakening idealists. They also carry a grave responsibility toward all others who are seeking, have found, and are treading what has not inaptly been called "the razor-edged path." Their watch-

word might be: "Be watchful, be ever on the lookout, ever available, and with wise discrimination ever helpful toward all in whom is shining that interior light that for yourself has become the guiding star."

Wisdom is needed; care must be taken. The character; predominant natural aptitudes or rays; the environmental situation concerning family relationships and responsibilities; even the education and the financial position of a potential recipient of spiritual and occult "germinating" aid--these may all need to be carefully considered. At the same time--and this is where an almost perfect insight and consummate skill are so valuable--the particular manner in which the approach is made becomes all important.

The first indication or sign to be made to a newly awakening seeker for Truth is, in a single word, *interest*, in the fullest and deepest meaning of that word and idea. One thus needs to feel concern for those of one's brethren who are approaching the doorway of the temple of the Mysteries; for they are hoping, however unsurely at first, for true understanding of the meaning and purpose of life. They may also wish to express that concern as helpfulness suited to themselves and other inquirers. All these in their turn--the seekers, the awakening, and the awakened ones--should be helped to discover that they are not alone in their quest and that they have found a friend who will help in the search. In offering such aid, and especially in choosing the method to be employed, knowledge of the seven human temperaments is doubtless the surest guide. The ideas upon this subject suggested earlier in this book may usefully serve in the choice of approach and succession of thoughts that may wisely and at appropriate times be brought to the notice of the person who is judged to be sincerely and truly seeking and likely to follow the guidance given.

The association may, for example, begin by what appears to be almost a chance encounter. If responses so indicate, this meeting may be followed by slight but gradually increasing indications of personal interest and, above all, readiness to give personal help if desired. Books, pamphlets, and magazines may be made available, particularly to those of the third and fifth ray temperaments who are selecting the most suitable means of service. Giving guidance in helping a group or an individual might appeal more especially to those on the second and sixth rays, while the arts may serve as entrance into the minds of those upon the fourth. World affairs and mystical and occult ritual with their corollaries will appeal notably to first and seventh ray people. These suggestions are, however, but broad indications. The utmost care is needed to ensure maximum effectiveness in the approach to a person or a group to whom help is to be offered, however unobtrusively at first.

Another method is needed for those who themselves ask either for guidance in life or in the recovery of good health. Sickness is always a condition of need and therefore one in which wisely offered assistance is likely to be welcomed. Those who have studied health and disease, whether from the point of view of Occult Science or through progress in the medical profession, can follow this approach. Many people, indeed, who might not be in the least susceptible to philosophic guidance while enjoying good health, may prove to be responsive in varying degrees when overtaken by sickness in some form or other. The intuition will nearly always provide guidance, particularly in the early stages of a relationship. In addition both the Master of the would-be helper and the future Master of the recipient are likely to be observant and to render aid. In consequence, the dedicated representative of the Great Brotherhood is hardly likely to make a serious mistake, particularly if all personal claims of superiority and spiritual wisdom are avoided; for such claims might well cause those of certain temperaments either to withdraw or to be lukewarm in response.

The idealist is moved not only from within but is also profoundly disturbed and distressed by the almost total ignorance of mankind concerning the meaning and purpose of human life, and the errors, and so the sufferings, to which that ignorance inevitable leads. The awakened person becomes an ambassador, not only of a Teacher, but of the high ideal of communicating one's own pain-reducing discoveries. At first, the more simple truths are advanced and in the most easily understandable forms. These include: Description of the true or total nature of man, his sevenfold constitution. The processes which are at work in and upon him at every level, namely a "hatching out" of inherent powers. The importance of knowing by direct experience one's true nature as a developing spiritual being which is the real Self. The marked distinction between this inherent Reality or divine Selfhood on the one hand and the vehicles or instruments for its manifestation and growth on the other, or the immortal human Ego and its fourfold, mortal personality. The operation of the law or unalterable process by means of which the evolution of all that exists occurs through cyclic

descent into incarnation in matter and withdrawal therefrom, which in man is the process of rebirth. The law under which all human happiness and sufferings are experienced--cause and appropriate effect or karma--which decrees that at every level of density of substance and concerning all beings, every conscious action will inevitably be succeeded by a completely fitting reaction, implying that every experience is decided by preceding conduct.

In consequence of the operation of nature's systematic methods--particularly repeated births and the law of cause and appropriate effect--the cosmos with its component solar systems, planets, and all spiritual beings associated with them may be thought of as a vast, continually productive *egg*. This cosmic egg contains innumerable germ-spots (Monads) or component ova ever ready for germination, ever being germinated or fructified and proceeding to develop. Unfoldment is thus a law of Being.

The ideal reformer teaches the guiding truths that obedience to the law of unfoldment brings happiness, disobedience brings pain. The discovery, full acceptance of, and application to motives and actions of these truths are of first importance to the human race.

Thus, the world of men is open to those who themselves have become illumined by the light of Truth and are seeking ways of sharing that knowledge, especially with those who exhibit signs of being ready to receive it. Such proffered aid will be more readily accepted if it is characterized throughout by a complete absence of the slightest thought or desire for return in any form whatever. While such truths are generally discovered through revelation by the wise, eventually each person will come to know them by direct experience.

In addition, of course, idealistic movements which have firm foundations offer valuable opportunities for ambassadorship, and in some cases it may be well to join and even ultimately to lead them. What might be described as a retiring disposition is very important as is also the obvious absence of the slightest desire to gain, to interfere, or to rule, which is anathema to many people. Thus moved, the spiritually awakened develop capacity as they serve their fellowmen, and at the same time themselves move forward upon the path of swift unfoldment.

Of what then do the activities of those who have carried out such tasks consist? They have risen through the ranks of the Lesser Mysteries, having progressed therein degree by degree and entered the Greater Mysteries, thus joining the true initiates. The major tasks remain the same. The physical evolution of humanity is under the care and direction of a group of Adepts and initiates who by personal temperament are moved toward the fulfillment of this office. The emigrations and immigrations of large groups of people are inspired and directed to the production by blending of a potentially higher, more culturally and spiritually evolved representation of the human race. Indeed, what might perhaps be regarded as a preordained destiny also plays its part in these movements of the peoples of the world, and this, in its turn, is used by the Adepts to further the achievement of an appointed goal. However, actions of, and interactions between, individuals, groups, and nations must be left entirely to the people concerned--karma playing a large part. All people are, of course, free apart from the pressures of their self-instituted karma. In human responses to adept direction, no person or group is ever subjected to inclinations enforced from without or from "above." Human beings--men and women--although in general totally unaware of the existence and operation of such a plan of racial progress, nevertheless may unconsciously play significant parts, as is recorded in history.

The relatively small number (in this age) of those who by admission to the Mysteries have become aware of this Adept-inspired, racial activity, participate whenever and wherever opportunity permits or their Master or a hierophant directs. One form of such proffered assistance is to bring to the notice of newly forming communities the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom and, especially, their many practical applications to human life. In addition, whether teachers or not, these initiated ones out in the world are examples of the idealism which they themselves practice and follow in their own lives, whether silently or verbally.

The message--if it may be so named--of such people to their fellows may perhaps be described as practical application of ideals and religious beliefs to the processes and problems of human nature and human progress. They insist that unless religion works out through daily life, then its proclaimer is something of a fraud, a pretender, and a practitioner of deceit. These ambassadors of the adept Brotherhood themselves practice what they preach, allowing for human weaknesses. Such, briefly described, is the contribution which those who, according to temperament or ray, make to the more physical progress of the human race and particularly new and developing branch races and nations.

THE ASTRAL BODY

Arthur E. Powell

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Briefly, the astral body of man is a vehicle, to clairvoyant sight not unlike the physical body, surrounded by an aura of flashing colours, composed of matter of an order of fineness higher than that of physical matter, in which feelings, passions, desires and emotions are expressed and which acts as a bridge or medium of transmission between the physical brain and the mind, the latter operating in the still higher vehicle--the mind-body.

While every man possesses and uses an astral body, comparatively few are conscious of its existence or can control and function in it in full consciousness. In the case of large numbers of persons it is scarcely more than an inchoate mass of astral matter, the movements and activities of which are little under the control of the man himself--the Ego (the reincarnating Individuality; not, as in modern psychology, for the evanescent personality). With others, however, the astral body is a well-developed and thoroughly organised vehicle, possessing a life of its own and conferring on its owner many and useful powers.

During the sleep of the physical body, an undeveloped man leads a dreamy, vague existence, in his relatively primitive astral body, remembering little or nothing of his sleep-life when he re-awakens in his physical body.

In the case of a developed man, however, the life in the astral body, whilst the physical body is wrapped in slumber, is active, interesting and useful, and the memory of it may, under certain conditions, be brought down into the physical brain. The life of such a man ceases to be a series of days of consciousness and nights of oblivion, becoming instead a continuous life of unbroken consciousness, alternating between the physical and the astral planes or worlds.

One of the first things a man learns to do in his astral body is to travel in it, it being possible for the astral body to move, with great rapidity, and to great distances from the sleeping physical body. An understanding of this phenomenon throws much light on a large number of so-called "occult" phenomena, such as "apparitions" of many kinds, knowledge of places never visited physically, etc.

The astral body being *par excellence* the vehicle of feelings and emotions, an understanding of its composition and of the ways in which it operates is of considerable value in understanding many aspects of man's psychology, both individual and collective, and also provides a simple explanation of the mechanism of many phenomena revealed by modern psychoanalysis.

A clear understanding of the structure and nature of the astral body, of its possibilities and its limitations, is essential to a comprehension of the life into which men pass after physical death. The many kinds of "heavens," "hells" and purgatorial existences believed in by followers of innumerable religions, all fall naturally into place and become intelligible as soon as we understand the nature of the astral body and of the astral world.

A study of the astral body will be of assistance also in our understanding of many of the phenomena of the *seance* room and of certain psychic or non-physical methods of healing disease. Those who are interested in what is termed the fourth dimension will find also a confirmation of many of the theories which have been formulated by means of geometry and mathematics, in a study of astral world phenomena, as described by those who have observed them.

A study of the astral body of man thus takes us far afield and expands enormously a conception of life based solely on the physical world and the purely physical senses. As we proceed, we shall see that the physical senses, invaluable as they are, by no means represent the limit of what man's vehicles may teach him of the worlds in which he lives. The awakening into functioning activity of astral faculties reveals a new world within the old world and, when a man becomes able to read aright its significance, he will obtain such an expanded view of his own life, and all nature, as will reveal to him the almost limitless possibilities latent in man. From this, sooner or later but inevitably, there will come the impulse, and later the unshakable determination, to master these worlds, and himself, to rise superior to his earthly destiny, and to become an intelligent co-operator with what has been aptly termed the Supreme Will in Evolution.

COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE: In an undeveloped man, the astral body is a cloudy, loosely organised, vaguely outlined mass of astral matter, with a great predominance of substances from the lower grades; it is gross, dark in colour, and dense--often so dense that the outline of the physical body is almost lost in it--and is thus fitted to respond to stimuli connected with the passions and

appetites. In size, it extends in all directions about ten or twelve inches beyond the physical body.

In an average moral and intellectual man the astral body is considerably larger, extending about 18 inches on each side of the body, its materials are more balanced and finer in quality, the presence of the rarer kinds giving a certain luminous quality to the whole, and its outline is clear and definite.

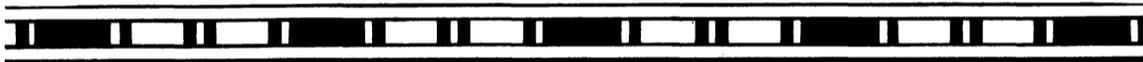
In the case of a spiritually developed man the astral body is still larger in size and is composed of the finest particles of each grade of astral matter, the higher largely predominating.

There is so much to be said regarding the colours of astral bodies that the subject is reserved for a separate chapter. Here, however, it may be stated that in undeveloped types the colours are coarse and muddy, gradually becoming more and more luminous as the man develops emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. The very name "astral," inherited from medieval alchemists, signifies "starry," being intended to allude to the luminous appearance of astral matter.

As already said, the astral body of a man not only permeates the physical body, but also extends around it in every direction like a cloud. That portion of the astral body which extends beyond the limits of the physical body is usually termed the astral "aura." Intense feeling means a large aura. It may here be mentioned that increased size of the aura is a prerequisite for Initiation, and the "Qualifications" should be visible in it. The aura naturally increases with each Initiation. The aura of the Buddha is said to have been three miles in radius.

(Colors will be discussed in the next issue)

The above is taken in part from THE ASTRAL BODY AND OTHER ASTRAL PHENOMENA, by Lieut.-Colonel Arthur E. Powell, Theosophical Publishing House Ltd, London.



DEPENDENCE AND DECAY

One of the principal causes of the present decay of values is the increasing dependence of men and women whose minds are conditioned by consumerist aims. The physical needs of men are, in fact, few--balanced and pure food, simple clothing and shelter. Prior to the advance of technology, clothing was a simple matter for the large majority of people. There were few varieties of textiles and the materials to make them were comparatively near at hand. At present, innumerable kinds of fabrics are on the market, involving a vast organization. Basic materials for their manufacture together with energy resources have to be obtained from distant places. Similarly, complex organizations surround the food industry, created to satisfy the desire for exotic and titillating varieties.

When there is dependence on resources which have to be brought from specific places, the soil of immorality is prepared. All principles are thrown to the wind in the competition between nations to capture raw materials. Individuals, too, conveniently abandon their principles when their own 'needs' have to be satisfied. Thus, otherwise civilized people do not mind consuming *foie gras* in spite of the shocking cruelty inflicted on the geese.

Dependence exists in relation not only to objects, but to ideas, systems, people and so forth. A human relationship which is based on psychological dependence makes one a master and another a slave. Attachment and fear, loneliness and frustration, and a host of other miseries emanate from the Pandora box of dependence.

In any serious consideration of the causes which have led to the decay of morals and values in the present day, one cannot afford to ignore attitudes and modes of conduct which increase psychological dependence. The feverish pursuit of ever higher standards of living and the establishment of personal enjoyment as a primary goal of life are responsible not only for enslaving the mind but also for debasing values and bringing about the decay of society.

The life of simplicity and even of austerity advocated by the religions of the world has great relevance to the construction of a good society in which human beings can unfold their awareness of the higher, indestructible values such as harmony, truth and beauty.

RADHA BURNIER, from *The Theosophist*, April, 1981