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HOW H. P. B. TAUGHT US

Among the adherents of the different religions, philosophies, arts and sciences we find two great divisions: *the realists*, those who look for the life, the inner reality, and the *literalists*, or nominalists, those who stick to the name and outer form and look for nothing else. In our Theosophical Society we have the same broad division: those who try to make Theosophy a real power in their lives, who use its methods for individual study and research, and those who learn by heart its technical terms, who seek personal favors of its more prominent officials, and who answer all questions by nothing else than quotations from ancient or (preferably) modern Theosophical writers.

There is no harm in becoming familiar with the outer form of something, if we do not stop there and go no further. To learn by heart the technical terms of the subject we study is helpful, if we also try to learn what the realities behind the terms are, if we make individual effort to enter into "the Spirit that giveth life" and not stop at "the letter that killeth." It is not harmful to seek introduction to Theosophists prominent either as writers or officials, or both, if we come to them as fellow students and not as cringing sycophants. Neither is it wrong to quote different Theosophical authors, if our attempt is only to point out the opinions of such writers and not to lay down the dogmas of a new orthodoxy, the Infallible Truth that none dare contradict.

When Mme. H. P. Blavatsky appeared among us with her message about a secret Brotherhood of Supermen whose insight and powers were much greater than those of average humanity, it sounded quite familiar to some of us who already knew the reality of clairvoyance, who had seen feats of real magic and who had heard from those with second sight of "invisibles" that could at will become visible.

The writer belongs to that category. I knew that "coming events cast their shadows before them", that they could not only be sensed, but visualised weeks and months ahead of their actual occurrence, in fact, that they had been thus clearly seen and foretold repeatedly; I knew how blood from an open vein of a man or animal could be stopped in an instant by a word and a gesture from a present day magician, and how

pain and disease could be quickly cured by spoken formulas and simple nature remedies (the so-called "sympathy cures"); I knew also many people, among them different members of my own family, that had seen and been spoken to and aided by nature spirits. So when I read Mr. A. P. Sinnett's dedication of his OCCULT WORLD to a member of a Brotherhood of Wise Men, I saw no reason to doubt the existence of such nor of Their Lodge, and I hailed the announcement as a sign-post pointing out for me the path to the Teachers that I needed. Consequently I wrote to Mr. Sinnett, care of his publishers in London, asking for further information about the Brotherhood and the Theosophical Society that, as he told, had been founded to train men in spiritual science and to fight materialism and dogmatism. I got his answer Christmas eve, 1883; I found next summer, through a note in the THEOSOPHIST magazine, the name and address of the at that time only member of the T. S. in Chicago, Mr. Stanley B. Sexton, and we founded together with Dr. and Mrs. Wm. P. Phelon, on November 27th, 1884, the first T. S. Lodge in Chicago, still existing. We got our charter next year in March and began immediately our activity with less than a dozen members.

Bro. Sinnett had in his book told us, that Mme. Blavatsky was a pupil of the Occult Brotherhood, in fact, its mouthpiece and agent, and that the author himself had contacted members of the Great White Lodge through her. By reading her ISIS UNVEILED and her magazine the THEOSOPHIST the desire grew stronger and stronger in me to get into personal touch with this Link in the Occult Chain. And when I heard that she had left India for Europe and there been joined by the Countess Constance Wachmeister, widow of a Swedish minister of foreign affairs, I hoped for an introduction through her to the Russian woman of mystery, the conundrum of two continents, hailed as a Priestess of Isis by some, violently attacked as a charlatan and a fraud by others. My hopes were crowned with success when in the summer of 1885 Mme. Blavatsky made her headquarters in No. 96 Landsdowne Road, London, together with Countess Wachtmeister, who became her private secretary, Bertram and Archibald Keightley and others. From that time on to her death, on May 8th, 1891, I became one of her personal pupils.

Physical training of any kind presupposes proximity of the pupil to the preceptor; to imitate another physically you have to meet your original in the flesh. But for spiritual training spiritual nearness is more helpful than material. The physical vehicles of teacher and pupil are in spiritual training more often barriers than transmitters and receivers. For here it is necessary to prevent the non-essential, the *personal* element, the material part of the teacher, from overshadowing and hiding the essential, the spiritual teaching. Physical overshadowing of the spiritual can lead in two equally wrong directions: to stupid worship and unthinking superstition, or to carping criticism and scornful rejection. Those who fell down and worshipped the golden calf saw the home-made image before them. Those who stoned the prophets and (according to the gospels) crucified the Christ were the people immediately surrounding their victims, those who saw and heard them, but did not contact them spiritually.

Physical proximity is interesting to the curious; but its drawbacks are many. Great generals have found out to their disgust, that "no man is a hero to his valet." "Familiarity breeds contempt" where we let some disagreeable peculiarity of the personal veil the individuality. To many who never met Mme. Blavatsky personally, but who read her books, her articles and her letters, she was a great inspiration, a prophetess, a "Talking Image of Urur," while to others who met her, who saw her smoke cigarettes and heard her use rather strong language—in short, who found her disregard the conventionalities—she was only an irreverent iconoclast, a "Tartarian termagant." Many who met her lost their balance in the whirlpool of her vibrations; a few were crushed against Scylla, the rock of abject adulation; others were swallowed up by Charybdis, the maelstrom of doubt and denial. We, who neither had the good fortune to pay her our homage in person and live with her, nor the misfortune to become her superstitious worshippers or her doubting detractors, took the middle path between these two dangerous extremes. We had at a distance less difficulty in separating what others had sometimes mixed up: the channel and its flow of living water, the teacher and the splendid teaching. We loved H. P. B. for her great kindness and her immense helpfulness; we considered it none of our business either to worship our wonderful but still finite friend, or to turn her critics, demanding infallibility and simultaneously looking for flaws. We wanted spiritual and mental rather than physical proximity to our teacher; we desired her to point out to us not the way to personal fame and glory, but the path which she had herself chosen: the one where the traveler "becomes as nothing in the eyes of men," where he "seeks to know all, but keeps himself unknown." And we were not disappointed.

There were two different ways by which H. P. B. reached us and taught us. One was by letters and articles, the other without such means. Sometimes she herself wrote; at other times, and more frequently, Countess Wachtmeister or Mr. Bertram Keightley acted as amanuenses. Friends who were occasional visitors at Lansdowne Road kept us also advised of what transpired there, of the studies, of the "phenomena", and of many other things of interest.

Many proofs did I get of what could be called the "wireless telegraphy" of H. P. B., her *direct* way of reaching and instructing her students. This is the favorite method of the Occult Brotherhood, as we find by the letter that Master K. H. delivered to Col. Olcott when they met by appointment at Lahore in 1883. The quotation of a few lines of that letter will be sufficient to indicate this method:

"Since the commencement of your probationary term in America, you have had much to do with me, tho' your imperfect development has often made you mistake me for Atrya, and often to fancy your own mind at work when it was mine trying to influence and to talk with you."

In the same way, since the commencement of the probationary term under the Messenger of the Masters, we, her pupils, had much to do with our teacher. Mme. Blavatsky came to us, not as flesh and bones, which are only parts of the physical vehicle and the outer garment, but as *the*

real individual. I used to wake up between two and three o'clock at night and see her lionine head, with the big penetrating eyes looking straight at me in a kind, thoughtful, motherly way. Around her head which seemed to be only a few inches away from my own face, radiated something similar to moonlight. It appeared exactly as if she had looked at me through the porthole of a steamer. The full face was seen in all its details, and it did not fade away suddenly like a flash, but remained unchanged for at least three or four minutes. That I saw the head and face of H. P. B. and of no one else, this was out of question, I had at my writing desk at home her photograph, signed by herself; what I saw was the same face in every particular.

At first I wondered what this vision meant; but I did not have to wait long for the explanation. I was told, that this was the way the Masters—and Their Messenger the Upasika—visited their pupils and looked them over, observing to what extent the chela's aura was brightening up and developing higher qualities.

While many of those who met H. P. B. in the flesh never fully contacted her real Self, hence could have truly said with the poet: "So near, and yet so far", at the same time there is no lack of evidence that her friends and pupils, even those that were thousands of miles away, on other continents, met her more fully and directly, without interference of the physical, and were instructed through her by a system, which seemed quite miraculous at that time, long before the invention of the wireless telegraph, but which now appears quite natural. It was no unusual occurrence, that when we read some of her writings, or anything else for that matter, or were doing our daily work, or were at rest, some new idea struck us like a flash. It seemed to come out of the void and to have no connection whatever with our ordinary trend of thought. It seemed as if a strange bird with gaudily colored plumage suddenly had flashed through the air before our eyes. Usually in a few days, sometimes weeks, we had the pleasure, mixed with wonder to see the same idea expressed by H. P. B. either in the *Theosophist*, in *Lucifer*, in the *Path* or in a private letter. We used to label our experience "thought transference," and we tried to imagine how it had happened. Our teacher explained it thus. *Thoughts are things*, and certainly not "airy nothings." Thought forms that are sent out reach those who have developed the proper receiving apparatus and who are sufficiently wide awake when the thought forms come along. Thoughts properly received, tabulated, classified and carefully connected with other thoughts that we had already made our own, make a structure of immense value for the thinker, a foundation on which he can build further by the aid of analogy and of logic.

A day or two before any letter with important information arrived, I used to see, generally when at my desk in the office or in my home, a few lines of writing, usually no more than two, slowly glide to the right before my eyes on a light background, exactly as in the moving picture shows today, parts of letters are projected on the wall in front of us to read. If the handwriting that I saw was familiar to me, I said to myself: "A letter from this friend is coming." If not disturbed, I could easily read some words and sentences. For the projection was plain. I learned

by experience, that every time this occurred such a letter was sure to come. There was no need of reading all that was projected, for I knew that I would soon have the original letter in my hands and could then read it at leisure.

The fact that under such a training as this an unfoldment of keener faculties takes place is at present, I think, so well known, that little or nothing needs to be added about it. Indeed, visualising the physically absent teacher at different times, and also reading part of letters in transition, with the eyes wide open, must be evidence enough of this. Observation on other planes becomes gradually a fact by the refinement of our higher vehicles, by the change of focus and by concentration. What we thus observe not only strengthens our faith in the occult, but it gives us besides an added and invaluable knowledge. Of this I can here say no more. The teacher warned us: "Do not speak of your experiences to the doubting nor to the jealous. The sceptic will call your visions hallucinations, will try to undermine your faith and drag you back to soul-killing materialism. The jealous will scowl at you and send out dark thought forms to cloud your vision, by the reaction hurting themselves even more than they can hurt you. You do not want to hurt anybody; therefore, be careful. Only those who have similar experiences will believe you. With such be ready to compare notes."

In her teaching H. P. B. used the method by which she herself had been taught: the method of the Masters. She gave us problems to solve, always with some hints of how to solve them. She told repeatedly that there were different methods of solution; in fact, that there were seven different keys to use, each of them leading to a different result, the results being actual facts on their own plane, all of them. Gradually it dawned upon us that such a statement—bewildering as it appeared to those who wanted every truth stated in only one way and expressed by only one formula—really made everything plainer and easier to comprehend. If we look upon the teachings of H. P. B. and her Masters as giving us problems to solve and hints how to solve them, and not as the placing in our hands of ready-made dogmas to accept on faith, the danger of our becoming simply a new sect will pass away.

Mme. Blavatsky warned us against becoming dogmatic, against looking upon any book of instruction as infallible and as the sole truth, by accepting it literally, not symbolically. Of the literal mode of interpretation, or Pashut, as used by the Hebrews, she said "It is the key of the exoteric churches and not worth discussion." (*Secret Doctrine*, vol. I., p. 401.) Mme. Blavatsky wanted us to see the symbolical in everything, to use analogy, to discover and apply the Law of Correspondence. She wanted us to seek the living spirit behind the dead letter, to have faith in fraternal cooperation and to give evidence of our faith, not with fine talk of how beautiful brotherly love is, but with cooperative work; for "faith without works is dead." (James, 2:

What Mme. Blavatsky aimed at was to give us for starting point a working hypothesis in direct opposition to that of the destructive materialistic and literalistic nightmare of her time. A theory founded on constructive faith, hope and charity. But she told us never to stop at the

hypothesis, the mere theory, never to be satisfied by faith alone, which would be superstition, but to verify gradually for ourselves the actual facts. As travelers we have to check up descriptions by visiting in person and seeing for ourselves the places our guide books describe. What before was mere theory thus becomes knowledge. H. P. B. wanted us to do more than theorize. She wanted us *to know* through our own individual effort, guided by the hints of our teachers. For she wanted us, who had been taught and helped, in our turn to help others by teaching them. And none can teach others what he does not know himself.

JACOB BONGGREN.

BACK TO FUNDAMENTALS

If the Theosophical Society, as a group, is to succeed, its individual members must have before them a goal towards which they strive and that goal must be based upon the essentials and the fundamentals of its life and work. The reason and the justification for the existence of the movement is the service which it renders to our fellow-men. The method of service of a Theosophical movement is essentially the presenting of that aspect of Truth to the minds of men, which is best calculated to enable the Race to take the next step forward in its evolutionary progress. The ability to do this work comes from a just comprehension of the fundamentals of Theosophy itself and of right Theosophical group relations.

Achievement does not come by a succession of short dashes of intense activity or by faithful following and allegiance to this or that personality as leader. Theosophy does not revolve around or depend upon any personality. Rather, it goes on triumphant in spite of the personalities which have to be used. Every now and again some sincere and brilliant worker who by his good work and ability has become an important factor in the Society, and whom, therefore, members are following, makes that subtle transition from wanting to save the world to wanting to be the saviour of the world, or from wanting to save the Society to wanting to be the saviour of the Society. And then all those who have been "Following the leader" have to buy their painful experience at the expense of the group which has to suffer from their fervent tho misguided partisanship.

Back of all the troubles, whether E. S. or T. S. in this and other sections, is apparent the creating of situations and circumstances which force the members in spite of themselves to be shaken loose from the form or the person to which they have been pinning their faith and giving their allegiance. The result is temporary chaos, and sometimes considerable mental anguish, but out of this will arise a group of intelligent co-operators who will stand together for disinterested service because they have formed their own decisions based upon their own knowledge and their own intuition, and have comprehended and sought a common goal. If the Society is to fulfill its real mission, it is essential that this result should be achieved. The T. S. must some day soon, step out of the school of self-experience into the field of successful conscious service of the race if it is to live on through the century and be that "numerous and united

body of people ready to welcome the new torch bearer of truth" so inspiringly pictured by its founders. If self-development is to be a healthy symptom of our group life, it must be the natural and inevitable by-product of that service, which is our chief goal.

The result of years of building into the T. S. of an attitude of dependence upon, and blind following of leaders as contrasted with dependence upon the higher self, and of acceptance of statements and teachings in faith as contrasted with growth through personal research and experience, has led to an apathy and an inability to discriminate and has attracted in increasing numbers the astrally polarized type of member. The T. S. thought form is characterized to a considerable extent by these things, and can only be changed by a steady and persistent tapping of a counter-vibration against that thought form.

We have created an organization perilously near crystallization prior to use, for the period of our greatest usefulness on the physical plane lies just ahead, and as a group our thought currents and aspirations have been strikingly confined to those channels marked out for us by our leaders, so much so that there is greater fear of disloyalty to them than of failure to exemplify the truth, and more facility in accepting without due consideration their pronouncements about the Society, its aims and objectives and the channels it should use, than the wise use in service of the truths and faculties possessed by the members themselves.

One of the errors made apparent by the present period of adjustment has been the tendency to attack the leaders of our movement as if by tearing down some person the group were to learn a lesson which can only be learned by cooperative comprehension and exemplification of true Theosophical fundamentals. Attack upon persons is both unbrotherly and unoccult. We may be anti-vice and falsehood, but not anti-the brother exemplifying those errors. H.P.B. has said "Thus teaches us one of the Masters of Wisdom. While enforcing upon such public characters in our ranks as editors, lecturers, etc., the duty of telling fearlessly 'the Truth to the face of Lie' He (the Master) yet condemns the habit of private judgment and criticism in every individual Theosophist." Revolt against persons is the inevitable reaction from allegiance to persons. The primary cause of this trouble comes, therefore, from the building of our cause around a doctrine of allegiance to personalities. While leaders are necessary and leadership is one of the most vital factors in group activity, yet particularly at this juncture of the life of the Theosophical Movement the cure of our ills must come from the changing of the focus from adoration and allegiance to leaders, and the following of leaders, to an understanding of the laws and principles of group activity and a conscious entry into the Theosophical life current which we are attempting to use in the world.

The solution lies in a movement back to Theosophical Fundamentals, for the strength of the Society lies in the body of the membership. The Theosophical movement must stand or fall according to the average consecration and intelligence of the individual member evidenced by service rendered to his fellow-men.

F. B.

EIGHTEEN OUTLINE LESSONS ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA

PREPARED BY

Alice A. Bailey

LESSON III.

Teachings on the Self

The eighth Discourse:—

Arjuna's thought—"What is that Eternal, what Self-knowledge. . . ."

VIII.1

1. The six questions to be answered:—

- a. What is the Self?
b. What is the nature of that Self?
c. What is the cause of Rebirth?
d. What is the use of Form?
e. Who are the Shining Ones?
f. What is the Law of Liberation? VIII.1.2

2. The six questions answered. VIII.3-8

3. The two Paths to be traversed. VIII.9-26

- a. The Path of Light, or of manifestation. The Path of out-going. The Spirit's descent into prison, or into form.
b. The Path of Darkness, the unmanifest. The withdrawing, or abstraction. The liberation of the Spirit from the form.

Topic for Meditation:—

The Blessed Lord said: "Knowledge of the Elements concerns My perishable nature, and knowledge of the Shining Ones concern the life giving energy; the knowledge of Sacrifice tells of ME, as wearing the body. O best of living beings."

Note: The numbers in Roman numerals denote the discourse, the ordinary numerals denote the verse.

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