

# *Theosophist and Theosopher*



# Theosophist and Theosopher, who is who?<sup>1</sup>

**Two or three Theosophists, full of unselfish love and charity and ready to work for all that suffers and needs help, are worth ten thousand Theosophers who talk instead of acting, and sermonize instead of teaching.<sup>2</sup>**

## The meaning of suffix **-ist**

Denotes a person in a well-defined profession or occupation, *e.g.*, dentist, cardiologist, pianist; also, -ist indicates an adherent of a political party or religious doctrine, *e.g.*, nationalist, elitist, fundamentalist.

Philosophy is commonly understood to mean “love of wisdom.”<sup>3</sup> *Philosophism*, however, is faulty or fallacious philosophy that comes from *sophistry*, *i.e.* the development of an argument intended to deceive or mislead. Hence, orthodox philosophers never called themselves philosophists and even today’s salaried thinkers are known as philosophers. Pythagoras allowed himself to be called philosopher-φιλόσοφος but never wise-σοφός. Etymologically speaking, theo-sophist is an expert in, as well as a practitioner of, theosophy: -sophist here has been coined as a suffix to theos-θεος or god. Sophist-σοφιστής proper, on the other hand, comes from sophistry-σοφιστεία,<sup>4</sup> an intentionally fallacious reasoning, a false philosophy, the antonym of sophia-wisdom, in fact. Although originally sophist was a master of one’s own craft, an adept, an expert, a wise, a prudent and statesman-like individual (in which the Seven Sages were called σοφισταί), its meaning progressively changed from practitioner of true wisdom to practitioner of false wisdom. In modern English, sophist, (*i.e.*, Shakespeare’s sophister), sophistic, and sophisticated, are all linked with sophistry-σοφιστεία.

## The meaning of suffix **-er / -or**

Describes the action of a person who customarily, but not professionally, does something. It is normally added to verbal roots, *e.g.*, a drummer *drums*, a ringer *rings bells*, a smoker *smokes*, a climber *climbs*, a singer *sings*, a teacher *teaches*, an advisor *advises*, a philosopher *philosophises*.

In Ancient Greece, *philosopher* was commonly rendered as one who loves wisdom, who speculates on truth and reality, who reduces the principles of philosophy to practice, who lives according to the rules of wisdom in everyday life. By analogy, then, *theosopher* is a thinker who, by reflecting upon the eternal verities, works to

<sup>1</sup> Frontispiece by James C. Christensen.

<sup>2</sup> *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR OUR FELLOW-MEN?) XI p. 478

<sup>3</sup> Degraded to “Wisdom of Love” by the profane. Consult pp. 59, 143, 144, in: C.A. Bartzokas (*Comp. & Ed.*). *Compassion: The Spirit of Truth*, Gwernymynydd: Philaletheians UK, 2021; 3<sup>rd</sup> electronic edition, v. 05.88.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. derivatives of σοφισ(-τεία), *i.e.*, -τέον, -τεύω, -τεύμα, -τήριον, -τής, -τικός, -τιώ, -τικός.

realise celestial ideals here on earth. As Theosophist is one who Theosophy does, so Theosopher is a false Theosophist.



**Woe to those who try to convert a noble philosophy into a den for disgusting immorality, greed for selfish power and money-making under the cloak of Theosophy. Karma reaches them when least expected.**

Definitions excerpted from a compilation of three articles published in 2014 under the holding title “Open Letters to American Conventions” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.

- Theosophy is the philosophy of the rational explanation of things, not of hollow tenets. It is the Beacon-light of Hope guiding humanity on its true path.
- Its mission is to unite men of all nations in brotherly love and noblest acts of charity, beyond kith and kin, to all that lives, and feels, and needs help and kindness.
- Theosophy seeks to develop the higher nature in man in addition to the animal, and at the sacrifice of the superfluous animality which modern life and materialistic teachings have developed to a degree which is abnormal for the human being at this stage of his progress.
- Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the conditions of mankind.
- Their function is to open men’s hearts and understandings to charity, justice, and generosity — attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being worthy of the name.
- Theosophy teaches the animal-man to be a human-man; and when people have learnt to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think, they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice, and generosity will be done spontaneously by all.
- On the day when Theosophy will have accomplished its most holy and most important mission — namely, to unite firmly a body of men of all nations in brotherly love and bent on a pure altruistic work, not on a labour with selfish motives — on that day only will Theosophy become higher than any nominal brotherhood of man.

SERIES EDITOR



## Suggested reading for students.



### More commonly confusing words.

- ADULTERY, LUST, MALICE
- ADYTUM AND ASYLUM
- AETHER AND ETHER
- AGNOSTICISM, ATHEISM, MONISM
- AION, ETERNITY, DURATION
- APPREHENSION AND COMPREHENSION
- ASTRAL LIGHT IS A TERM VERY LITTLE UNDERSTOOD
- AURA AND MAGNETISM
- BUDDHA AND PRINCE SIDDHARTHA BUDDHA
- BUDHISM IS INNER WISDOM
- CELIBACY, CONTINENCE, MONASTICISM
- CHEMIST AND ALCHEMIST
- CHILIASTS, MILLENNIUMISTS, MILLENARIANS
- DARKNESS IS INNER LIGHT
- DEVOTION, WORSHIP, LOYALTY
- EMANATION AND RADIATION
- EMBLEM AND SYMBOL
- GRAIKOS, HELLENE, HELLAS
- HIGHER SELF AND HIGHER EGO
- IMAGINATION AND IMITATION
- JIVA AND JIVATMAN
- JNANA AND YAJNA
- KAMIC VERSUS MANASIC ACTION
- KARMA AND KRIYA
- KARMA, NEMESIS, ADRASTEIA, THEMIS
- KOSMOS AND COSMOS

**CONFUSING WORDS SERIES**  
**SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS**

- KRONOS AND CHRONOS
- LAUGHTER, SMILES, TEARS
- LIGHT AND HEAT
- LUST, JEALOUSY, PHYSICAL LOVE
- MAGNETISM, MESMERISM, HYPNOTISM
- MATERIALISM, SPIRITUALISM, MONISM
- MUZIRIS, MNIZURIN, MNOUZIRIS
- NIRVANA AND PARINIRVANA
- PANTACLE AND PENTACLE
- RAJA AND RISHI
- REMEMBRANCE, RECOLLECTION, REMINISCENCE
- SKANDHA, SHLOKA, STANZA, SUTRA
- SPIRIT, SPIRITS, SPIRITUALISM
- SPIRITUALISM IS A PHILOSOPHY OF YESTERDAY
- SVABHAVA AND SVAYAMBHU
- TELETE, MYESIS, EPOPTeia
- THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL OCCULTISM
- TRANSMIGRATION, REINCARNATION, GILGULIM
- TRIRATNA AND TRISHARANA
- TRUE AND FALSE PERSONALITY
- UNITY AND DUALITY
- VACH IS NOT MERE SPEECH
- VEDANTA, BUDDHISM, THEOSOPHY
- VRIL AND BOVRIL
- WILL AND DESIRE
- YOGIS AND MAHATMAS

