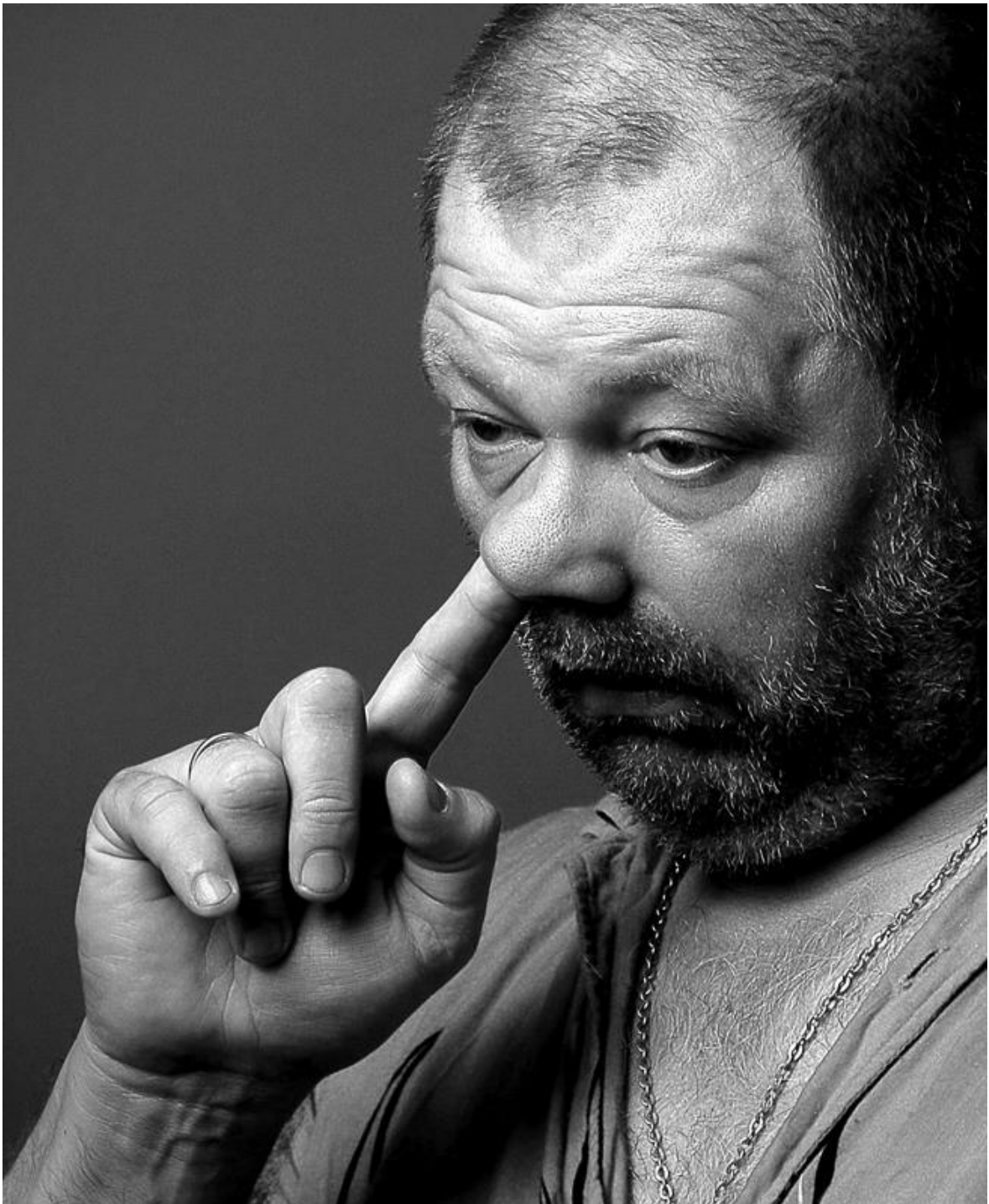


*Philosophers
and philosophicules*



Theosophy is the very synthesis of Philosophy in its widest abstract sense, as in its special qualifications. It is quintessence of the highest transcendental philosophy.

Theosophy is no national property, but only the universal code of science and the most transcendental ethics that was ever known; that it lies at the root of every moral philosophy and religion.

Occultism is one of the Sciences of Theosophy, or the Wisdom-Religion, but by no means the whole of Theosophy.¹

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We shall in vain interpret their words by the notions of our philosophy and the doctrines, in our schools.

— LOCKE

Knowledge of the lowest kind is *un-unified* knowledge; Science is *partially unified* knowledge; Philosophy is *completely unified* knowledge.

— HERBERT SPENCER, *First Principles*

NEW ACCUSATIONS ARE BROUGHT by captious censors against our Society in general and Theosophy, especially. We will summarize them as we proceed along, and notice the “freshest” denunciation.

We are accused of being illogical in the *Constitution and Rules* of the Theosophical Society; and contradictory in the practical application thereof. The accusations are framed in this wise: —

In the published *Constitution and Rules* great stress is laid upon the absolutely non-sectarian character of the Society. It is constantly insisted upon that it has no creed, no philosophy, no religion, no dogmas, and even no special views of its own to advocate, still less to impose on its members. And yet —

Why, bless us! is it not as undeniable a fact that certain very definite views of a philosophic and, strictly speaking, of a religious character are held by the Founders and most prominent members of the Society?

“Verily so,” we answer. “But where is the alleged *contradiction* in this? Neither the Founders, nor the ‘most prominent members’ nor yet the majority thereof, constitute *the* Society, but only a certain portion of it, which, moreover, having no creed as a body, yet allows its members to believe as and what they please.”

¹ [See “Theosophia: Fountain, Perspectives, Practice” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

In answer to this, we are told:

Very true; yet these doctrines are collectively called “Theosophy.” What is your explanation of this?

We reply:

To call them so is a “collective” mistake; one of those loose applications of terms to things that ought to be more carefully defined; and the neglect of members to do so is now bearing its fruits. In fact it is an oversight as harmful as that which followed the confusion of the two terms “buddhism” and “budhism,” leading the Wisdom philosophy to be mistaken for the religion of Buddha.¹

But it is still urged that when these doctrines are examined it becomes very clear that all the work which the Society as a body has done in the East and the West depended upon them. This is obviously true in the case of the doctrine of the underlying unity of all religions and the existence, as claimed by Theosophists, of a common source called the Wisdom-Religion of the secret teaching, from which, according to the same claims, all existing forms of religion are directly or indirectly derived. Admitting this, we are pressed to explain how can the T.S.² as a body be said to have no special views or doctrines to inculcate, no creed and no dogmas, when these are “the back-bone of the Society, its very heart and soul”?

To this we can only answer that it is still another error, That these teachings are most undeniably the “backbone” of the Theosophical Societies *in the West*, but not at all in the East, where such Branch Societies number almost five to one in the West. Were these special doctrines the “heart and soul” of the whole body, then Theosophy and its T.S. would have died out in India and Ceylon since 1885 — and this is surely not the case. For, not only have they been virtually abandoned at Adyar since that year, as there was no one to teach them, but while some Brahman Theosophists were very much opposed to that teaching being made public, others — the more orthodox — positively opposed them as being inimical to their exoteric systems.

These are self-evident facts. And yet if answered that it is not so; that the T.S. as a body teaches no special religion but tolerates and virtually accepts all religions by never interfering with, or even inquiring after the religious views of, its members, our cavillers and even friendly opponents, do not feel satisfied. On the contrary: ten to one they will non-plus you with the following extraordinary objection: —

How can this be, since belief in ‘Esoteric Buddhism’ is a *sine qua non* for acceptance as a Fellow of your Society?

It is vain to protest any longer; useless, to assure our opponents that belief in *Bud-dhism*, whether esoteric or exoteric, is no more expected by, nor obligatory in, our Society than reverence for the monkey-god Hanuman, him of the singed tail, or belief in Mohammed and his canonized mare. It is unprofitable to try and explain that since there are in the T.S. as many Brahmans, Mussulmans, Parsis, Jews and Chris-

¹ [See “Budhism and Buddhism” in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Theosophical Society]

tians as there are Buddhists, and more, all cannot be expected to become followers of Buddha, nor even of Buddhism, howsoever esoteric. Nor can they be made to realize that the Occult doctrines — a few fundamental teachings of which are broadly outlined in Mr. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* — are not the *whole* of Theosophy, nor even the whole of the secret doctrines of the East, but a very small portion of these: Occultism itself being but one of the Sciences of Theosophy, or the WISDOM-Religion, and by no means the whole of THEOSOPHY.

So firmly rooted seem these ideas, however, in the mind of the average Britisher, that it is like telling him that there are Russians who are neither Nihilists nor Panslavists, and that every Frenchman does not make his daily meal of frogs; he will simply refuse to believe you. Prejudice against Theosophy seems to have become part of the national feeling. For almost three years the writer of the present — helped in this by a host of Theosophists — has tried in vain to sweep away from the public brain some of the most fantastic cobwebs with which it is garnished; and now she is on the eve of giving up the attempt in despair! While half of the English people will persist in confusing Theosophy with “esoteric *bud-ism*,” the remainder will keep on pronouncing the world-honoured title of Buddha as they do — *butter*.

It is they also who have started the proposition now generally adopted by the flippant press that “Theosophy is not a philosophy, but a religion,” and “a new sect.”

Theosophy is certainly not a philosophy, simply because it includes every philosophy as every science and religion. But before we prove it once more, it may be pertinent to ask how many of our critics are thoroughly posted about, say, even the true definition of the term coined by Pythagoras, that they should so flippantly deny it to a system of which they seem to know still less than they do about philosophy? Have they acquainted themselves with its best and latest definitions, or even with the views upon it, now regarded as antiquated, of Sir W. Hamilton? The answer would seem to be in the negative, since they fail to see that every such definition shows Theosophy to be the very synthesis of Philosophy in its widest abstract sense, as in its special qualifications. Let us try to give once more a clear and concise definition of Theosophy, and show it to be the very root and essence of all sciences and systems.

Theosophy is “divine” or “god-wisdom.” Therefore, it must be the life-blood of that system (philosophy) which is defined as “the science of things divine and human and the causes in which they are contained,”¹ Theosophy alone possessing the keys to those “causes.” Bearing in mind simply its most elementary division, we find that philosophy is the love of, and search after, wisdom, “the knowledge of phenomena as explained by, and resolved into, causes and reasons, powers and laws.”² When applied to god or gods, it became in every country *theology*; when to material nature, it was called *physics* and *natural history*; concerned with man, it appeared as *anthropology* and *psychology*; and when raised to the higher regions it becomes known as *metaphysics*. Such is philosophy — “the science of effects by their causes” — the very spirit of the doctrine of *Karma*, the most important teaching under various names of every religious philosophy, and a theosophical tenet that belongs to no one religion

¹ Sir W. Hamilton

² Encyclopaedia

but explains them all. Philosophy is also called “the science of things possible, inasmuch as they are possible.” This applies directly to theosophical doctrines, inasmuch as they reject *miracle*; but it can hardly apply to theology or any dogmatic religion, every one of which *enforces belief in things impossible*; nor to the modern philosophical systems of the materialists who reject even the “possible,” whenever the latter contradicts their assertions.

Theosophy claims to explain and to reconcile religion with science. We find G.H. Lewes stating that

Philosophy, detaching its widest conceptions from both [Theology and Science], furnishes a doctrine which contains an *explanation of the world and human destiny*.¹ . . . The office of Philosophy is the systematisation of the conceptions furnished by Science . . . Science furnishes the knowledge, and Philosophy the doctrine.²

The latter can become complete only on condition of having that “knowledge” and that “doctrine” passed through the sieve of Divine Wisdom, or Theosophy.

Ueberweg³ defines Philosophy as “the Science of Principles,” which, as all our members know, is the claim of Theosophy in its branch-sciences of Alchemy, Astrology, and the occult sciences generally.

Hegel regards it as “the contemplation of the self-development of the ABSOLUTE,” or in other words as “the representation of the Idea.”⁴

The whole of the Secret Doctrine — of which the work bearing that name is but an atom — is such a contemplation and record, as far as finite language and limited thought can record the processes of the Infinite.

Thus it becomes evident that Theosophy cannot be a “religion,” still less “a sect,” but it is indeed the quintessence of the highest *philosophy* in all and every one of its aspects. Having shown that it falls under, and answers fully, every description of philosophy, we may add to the above a few more of Sir W. Hamilton’s definitions, and prove our statement by showing the pursuit of the same in Theosophical literature. This is a task easy enough, indeed. For, does not “Theosophy” include “the science of things evidently deduced from first principles” as well as “the sciences of truths sensible and abstract”? Does it not preach “the application of reason to its legitimate objects,” and make it one of its “legitimate objects” — to inquire into “the science of the original form of the Ego, or mental self,” as also to teach the secret of “the absolute indifference of the ideal and real”? All of which proves that according to every definition — old or new — of philosophy, he who studies Theosophy, studies *the highest transcendental philosophy*.

We need not go out of our way to notice at any length such foolish statements about Theosophy and Theosophists as are found almost daily in the public press. Such def-

¹ *The History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, Prolegomena, p. xviii

² *loc. cit.*

³ *A History of Philosophy*

⁴ *Darstellung der Idee*

initions and epithets as “new-fangled religion” and “-ism,” “the system *invented* by the high priestess of Theosophy,” and other remarks as silly, may be left to their own fate. They have been and in most cases will be left unnoticed.

Our age is regarded as being pre-eminently critical: an age which analyses closely, and whose public refuses to accept anything offered for its consideration before it has fully scrutinized the subject. Such is the boast of our century; but such is not quite the opinion of the impartial observer. At all events it is an opinion highly exaggerated since this boasted analytical scrutiny is applied only to that which interferes in no way with national, social, or personal prejudices. On the other hand everything that is malevolent, destructive to reputation, wicked and slanderous, is received with open embrace, accepted joyfully, and made the subject of everlasting public gossip, without any scrutiny or the slightest hesitation, but verily on a blind faith of the most elastic kind. We challenge contradiction on this point. Neither unpopular characters nor their work are judged in our day on their intrinsic value, but merely on their author’s personality and the prejudiced opinion thereon of the masses. In many journals no literary work of a Theosophist can ever hope to be reviewed on its own merits, apart from the gossip about its author. Such papers, oblivious of the rule first laid down by Aristotle, who says that criticism is “a standard of judging well,” refuse point blank to accept any Theosophical book apart from its writer. As a first result, the former is judged by the distorted reflection of the latter created by slander repeated in the daily papers. The personality of the writer hangs like a dark shadow between the opinion of the modern journalist and unvarnished truth; and as a final result there are few editors in all Europe and America who know anything of our Society’s tenets.

How then can Theosophy or even the T.S. be correctly judged? It is nothing new to say that the true critic ought to know something at least of the subject he undertakes to analyse. Nor is it very risky to add that not one of our press Thersites knows in the remotest way what he is talking about — this, from the large fish to the smallest fry;¹ but whenever the word “Theosophy” is printed and catches the reader’s eye, there it will be generally found preceded and followed by abusive epithets and invective against the personalities of certain Theosophists. The modern editor of the Grundy-pandering kind,² is like Byron’s hero,

*And as he knew not what to say, he swore*³

— at that which passeth his comprehension. All such swearing is invariably based upon old gossip, and stale denunciations of those who stand in the moon-struck minds as the “inventors” of Theosophy. Had South Sea islanders a daily press of

¹ From Jupiter Tonans of the *Saturday Review* down to the scurrilous editor of the *Mirror*. The first may be, as claimed, one of the greatest authorities living on *fencing*, and the other as great at “muscular” thought-reading, yet both are equally ignorant of Theosophy and as blind to its real object and purposes as two owls are to daylight.

² [A figurative name for an extremely conventional or priggish person, a personification of the tyranny of conventional propriety. A tendency to be overly fearful of what the respectable might think is also referred to as Grundyism. Although she began life as a minor character in Thomas Morton's play *Speed the Plough* (1798), Mrs. Grundy was eventually so well established in the public imagination that Samuel Butler, in his novel *Erewhon*, could refer to her in the form of an anagram (as the goddess Ydgrun). As a figure of speech she can be found throughout European literature. — Wikipedia]

³ [*The Island*, Canto III, line 132]

their own, they would be as sure to accuse the missionaries of having invented Christianity in order to bring to grief their native fetishism.

How long, O radiant gods of truth, how long shall this terrible mental cecity of the nineteenth century *Philosophists* last? How much longer are they to be told that Theosophy is no national property, no religion, but only the universal code of science and the most transcendental ethics that was ever known; that it lies at the root of every moral philosophy and religion; and that neither Theosophy *per se*, nor yet its humble unworthy vehicle, the Theosophical Society, has anything whatever to do with any personality or personalities! To identify it with these is to show oneself sadly defective in logic and even common sense. To reject the teaching and its philosophy under the pretext that its leaders, or rather one of its Founders, lies under various accusations (so far unproven) is silly, illogical and absurd. It is, in truth, as ridiculous as it would have been in the days of the Alexandrian school of Neo-Platonism, which was in its essence *Theosophy*, to reject its teachings, because it came to Plato from Socrates, and because the sage of Athens, besides his pug-nose and bald head, was accused of “blasphemy and of corrupting the youth.”

Aye, kind and generous critics, who call yourselves Christians, and boast of the civilization and progress of your age; you have only to be scratched skin deep to find in you the same cruel and prejudiced “barbarian” as of old. Were an opportunity offered you to sit in public and legal judgment on a Theosophist, who of you would rise in your nineteenth century of Christianity higher than one of the Athenian *dikastery* with its 50 jurors who condemned Socrates to death? Which of you would scorn to become a Meletus or an Anytus, and have Theosophy and all its adherents condemned on the evidence of false witnesses to a like ignominious death? The hatred manifested in your daily attacks upon the Theosophists is a warrant to us for this. Did Haywood have you in her mind’s eye when she wrote of Society’s censure:

O! that the too censorious world would learn
This wholesome rule, and with each other bear;
But man, as if a foe to his own species,
Takes pleasure to report his neighbour’s faults,
Judging with rigour every small offence,
And prides himself in scandal . . . ¹

Many optimistic writers would fain make of this mercantile century of ours an age of philosophy and call it its *renaissance*. We fail to find outside of our Society any attempt at philosophical revival, unless the word “philosophy” is made to lose its original meaning. For wherever we turn we find a cold sneer at true philosophy. A sceptic can never aspire to that title. He who is capable of imagining the universe with its handmaiden Nature fortuitous, and hatched like the black hen of the fable, out of a self-created egg hanging in space, has neither the power of thinking nor the spiritual faculty of perceiving abstract truths; which power and faculty are the first requisites of a philosophical mind. We see the entire realm of modern Science honeycombed with such materialists, who yet claim to be regarded as philosophers. They either be-

¹ [This passage is from a tragedy by Eliza Haywood (1693?-1756) entitled *Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lunenburgh* (1729), Act IV, scene 1, p. 34. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

lieve in naught as do the Secularists, or doubt according to the manner of the Agnostics. Remembering the two wise aphorisms by Bacon, the modern-day materialist is thus condemned out of the mouth of the Founder of his own inductive method, as contrasted with the deductive philosophy of Plato, accepted in Theosophy. For does not Bacon tell us that “Philosophy *when superficially studied* excites doubt; when thoroughly explored it dispels it”; and again, “a *little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism*; but depth in philosophy bringeth man’s mind about to religion”?

The logical deduction of the above is, undeniably, that none of our present Darwinians and materialists and their admirers, our critics, could have studied philosophy otherwise than very “superficially.” Hence while Theosophists have a legitimate right to the title of *philosophers* — true “lovers of Wisdom” — their critics and slanderers are at best PHILOSOPHICULES — the progeny of modern PHILOSOPHISM.

