

*Theosophical Movement, the
great moral but silent force*



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Human life, devoid of all its world-ideals and beliefs, becomes deprived of its higher sense and meaning. But the world-ideals can never completely die out. Exiled by the fathers, they will be received with open arms by the children.

Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves
of change.

— TENNYSON, *Locksley Hall*, line 182

The goal of yesterday will be the starting point of tomorrow.

— CARLYLE

The great mystic of the eighteenth century, the ardent disciple of Jacob Boehme — Louis Claude de Saint-Martin — used to say in the last years of his life: “I would have loved to meet more with those who guess at truths, for such alone are living men.”

This remark implies that, outside the limited circle of mystics which has existed in every age, people endowed with correct psychic intuition were still fewer at the end of the last century than they are now. These were, indeed, years of complete soul-blindness and spiritual drought. It is during that century that the chaotic darkness and Babylonish confusion with regard to spiritual things, which have ever reigned in brains too crammed with mere scientific learning had fully asserted their sway over the masses. The lack of soul perception was not confined to the “Forty Immortals” of the French Academy, nor to their less pretentious colleagues of Europe in general, but had infected almost all the classes of Society, settling down as a chronic disease called Scepticism and the denial of all but matter. The messengers sent out westward periodically in the last quarter of every century — ever since the mysteries which alone had the key to the secrets of nature had been crushed out of existence in Europe by heathen and Christian conquerors — had appeared that time in vain. Saint-Germain and Cagliostro are credited with real phenomenal powers only in fashionable novels, to remain inscribed in encyclopaedias — to purblind the better, we suppose, the minds of forthcoming generations — as merely clever charlatans. The only man whose powers and knowledge could have been easily tested by exact science, thus forming a firm link between physics and metaphysics — Friedrich Anton Mesmer — had been hooted from the scientific arena by the greatest “scholar-ignoramus” in things spiritual, of Europe. For almost a century, namely from 1770 down to 1870, a heavy spiritual darkness descending on the Western hemisphere, settled, as if it meant to stay, among *cultured* societies.

But an undercurrent appeared about the middle of our century in America, crossing the Atlantic between 1850 and 1860. Then came in its trail the marvellous medium for physical manifestations, D.D. Home. After he had taken by storm the Tuileries and the Winter Palace, light was no longer allowed to shine under a bushel. Already, some years before his advent, “a change” had come “o’er the spirit of the dream” of almost every civilized community in the two worlds, and a great reactive force was now at work.

What was it? Simply this. Amidst the greatest glow of the self-sufficiency of exact science, and the reckless triumphant crowing of victory over the ruins of the very foundations — as some Darwinists had fondly hoped — of old superstitions and creeds; in the midst of the deadliest calm of wholesale negations, there arose a breeze from a wholly unexpected quarter. At first the significant afflatus was like a hardly perceptible stir, puffs of wind in the rigging of a proud vessel — the ship called “Materialism,” whose crew was merrily leading its passengers toward the Maelstrom of annihilation. But very soon the breeze freshened and finally blew a gale. It fell with every hour more ominously on the ears of the iconoclasts, and ended by raging loud enough to be heard by everyone who had ears to hear, eyes to see, and an intellect to discern. It was the inner voice of the masses, their spiritual intuition — that traditional enemy of cold intellectual reasoning, the legitimate progenitor of Materialism — that had awakened from its long cataleptic sleep. And, as a result, all those ideals of the human soul which had been so long trampled under the feet of the would-be conquerors of the world-superstitions, the self-constituted guides of a new humanity — appeared suddenly in the midst of all these raging elements of human thought, and, like Lazarus rising out of his tomb, lifted their voice and loudly demanded recognition.

This was brought on by the invasion of “Spirit” manifestations, when mediumistic phenomena had broken out like an influenza all over Europe. However unsatisfactory their philosophical interpretation, these phenomena being genuine and true as truth itself in their being and their reality, they were undeniable; and being in their very nature beyond denial, they came to be regarded as evident proofs of a life beyond — opening, moreover, a wide range for the admission of every metaphysical possibility. This once the efforts of materialistic science to disprove them availed it nothing. Beliefs such as man’s survival after death, and the immortality of Spirit, were no longer to be pooh-poohed as figments of imagination; for, prove once the genuineness of such transcendental phenomena to be beyond the realm of matter, and beyond investigation by means of *physical* science, and — whether these phenomena contain *per se* or not the *proof of immortality*, demonstrating as they do the existence of invisible and spiritual regions where other forces than those known to exact science are at work — they are shown to lie beyond the realm of materialism. Cross, by one step only, the line of matter and the area of Spirit becomes infinite. Therefore, believers in them were no longer to be browbeaten by threats of social contumacy and ostracism; this, also, for the simple reason that in the beginning of these manifestations almost the whole of the European higher classes became ardent “Spiritualists.” To oppose the strong tidal wave of the cycle there remained at one time but a handful, in comparison with the number of believers, of grumbling and all-denying fogies.

Thus was once more demonstrated that human life, devoid of all its world-ideals and beliefs — in which the whole of philosophical and cultured antiquity, headed in historical time by Socrates and Plato, by Pythagoras and the Alexandrian Neo-Platonists, believed — becomes deprived of its higher sense and meaning. The world-ideals can never completely die out. Exiled by the fathers, they will be received with open arms by the children.

Let us recall to mind how all this came to pass.

It was, as said, between the third and fourth quarters of the present century that reaction set in Europe — as still earlier in the United States. The days of a determined psychic rebellion against the cold dogmatism of science and the still more chilling teachings of the schools of Büchner and Darwin, had come in their preordained and pre-appointed time of cyclic law. Our older readers may easily recollect the suggestive march of events. Let them remember how the wave of mysticism, arrested in its free course during its first twelve or fifteen years in America by public, and especially by religious prejudices, finally broke through every artificial dam and over-flooded Europe, beginning with France and Russia and ending with England — the slowest of all countries to accept new ideas, though these may bring us truths as old as the world.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding every opposition, “Spiritualism,” as it was soon called, got its rights of citizenship in Great Britain. For several years it reigned undivided. Yet in truth, its phenomena, its psychic and mesmeric manifestations, were but the cyclic pioneers of the revival of prehistoric Theosophy, and the occult Gnosticism of the antediluvian mysteries. These are facts which no intelligent Spiritualist will deny; as, in truth, modern Spiritualism is but an earlier revival of crude Theosophy, and modern Theosophy a *renaissance* of ancient Spiritualism.

Thus, the waters of the great “Spiritual” flood were neither primordial nor pure. When, owing to cyclic law, they had first appeared, manifesting at Rochester, they were left to the mercies and mischievous devices of two little girls to give them a name and an interpretation. Therefore when, breaking the dam, these waters penetrated into Europe, they bore with them scum and dross, flotsam and jetsam,¹ from the old wrecks of hypotheses and hazily outlined aspirations, based upon the dicta of the said little girls. Yet the eagerness with which “Spiritualism” and its twin sister Spiritism were received, all their inanities notwithstanding, by almost all the cultured people of Europe, contains a splendid lesson. In this passionate aspiration of the human Soul — this irrepressible flight of the higher elements in man toward their forgotten Gods and the God within him — one heard the voice of the public conscience. It was an undeniable and not to be misunderstood answer of the inner na-

¹ [Specific nautical terms, with legal consequences in the law of admiralty and marine salvage:

Flotsam is floating wreckage of a ship or its cargo.

Jetsam is part of a ship, its equipment, or its cargo that is purposely cast overboard or jettisoned to lighten the load in time of distress and that sinks or is washed ashore.

There is also:

Lagan, cargo that is lying on the bottom of the ocean, sometimes marked by a buoy, which can be reclaimed, and;

Derelict, cargo that is also on the bottom of the ocean, but which no one has any hope of reclaiming (in other maritime contexts, derelict may also refer to a drifting abandoned ship). — Wikipedia]

ture of man to the then revelling, gloating Materialism of the age, as an escape from which there was but another form of evil — adherence to the dogmatic, ecclesiastical conventionalism of State religions. It was a loud, passionate protest against both, a drifting towards a middle way between the two extremes — namely, between the enforcement for long centuries of a *personal* God of infinite love and mercy by the diabolical means of sword, fire, and inquisitional tortures; and, on the other hand, the reign, as a natural reaction, of complete denial of such a God, and along with him of an infinite Spirit, a Universal Principle manifesting as immutable LAW. True science had wisely endeavoured to make away along with the mental slavery of mankind, with its orthodox paradoxical God; *pseudo-science* had devised by means of sophistry to do away with every belief save in matter. The haters of the Spirit of the world, denying God in Nature as much as an extra-cosmic Deity, had been preparing for long years to create an artificial, soulless humanity; and it was only just that their Karma should send a host of *pseudo*-”Spirits” or Souls to thwart their efforts. Shall anyone deny that the highest and the best among the representatives of Materialistic science have succumbed to the fascination of the will-o’-the-wisps which looked at first sight as the most palpable proof of *an immortal Soul in man*¹ — *i.e.*, the alleged *communion between the dead and living*?² Yet, such as they were, these abnormal manifestations, being in their bulk genuine and spontaneous, carried away and won all those who had in their souls the sacred spark of intuition. Some clung to them because, owing to the death of ideals, of the crumbling of the Gods and faith in every civilized centre, they were dying themselves of spiritual starvation; others because, living amidst sophistical perversion of every noble truth, they preferred even a feeble approximation to truth to no truth whatever.

But, whether they placed belief in and followed “Spiritualism” or not, many were those on whom the spiritual and psychic evolution of the cycle wrought an indelible impression; and such ex-materialists could never return again to their iconoclastic ideas. The enormous and ever-growing numbers of mystics at the present time show better than anything else the undeniably occult working of the cycle. Thousands of men and women who belong to no church, sect, or society, who are neither Theosophists nor Spiritualists, are yet virtually members of that Silent Brotherhood the units of which often do not know each other, belonging as they do to nations far and wide apart, yet each of whom carries on his brow the mark of the mysterious Karmic seal — the seal that makes of him or her a member of the Brotherhood of the Elect of Thought. Having failed to satisfy their aspirations in their respective *orthodox* faiths they have severed themselves from their Churches in soul when not in body, and are

¹ Let our readers recall the names of the several most eminent men in literature and science who had become openly Spiritualists. We have but to name Professor Hare, Epes Sarjent, Robert Dale Owen, Judge Edmonds, *etc.*, in America; Professors Butleroff, Wagner, and, greater than they, the late Dr. Pirogoff (see his posthumous “Memoirs,” published in *Ruskaya Starina*, 1884-86), in Russia; Zöllner, in Germany; Camille Flammarion, the Astronomer, in France; and last but not least, Messrs. Alfred Russel Wallace, W. Crookes, Balfour Stewart, *etc.*, in England, followed by a number of scientific stars of the second magnitude

² We hope that the few friends we have left in the ranks of the Spiritualists may not misunderstand us. We denounce the bogus “spirits” of *séances* held by professional mediums, and deny the possibility of such manifestations of spirits on the physical plane. But we believe thoroughly in Spiritualistic phenomena, and in the intercourse between Spirits or *Egos* — of embodied and disembodied entities; only adding that, since the latter cannot manifest on our plane, it is the Ego of the living man which meets the Ego of the dead personality, by ascending to the Devachanic plane, which may be accomplished in trance, during sleep in dreams, and by other subjective means.

devoting the rest of their lives to the worship of loftier and purer ideals than any intellectual speculation can give them. How few, in comparison to their numbers, and how rarely one meets with such, and yet their name is legion, if they only chose to reveal themselves. Under the influence of that same passionate search for “life in spirit” and “life in truth,” which compels every earnest Theosophist onward through years of moral obloquy and public ostracism; moved by the same dissatisfaction with the principles of pure conventionality of modern society, and scorn for the still triumphant, fashionable thought, which, appropriating to itself unblushingly the honoured epithets of “scientific” and “foremost,” of “pioneer” and “liberal,” uses these prerogatives but to domineer over the fainthearted and selfish — these earnest men and women prefer to tread alone and unaided the narrow and thorny path that lies before him who will neither recognize authorities nor bow before cant.¹ They may leave “Sir Oracles” of modern thought, as well as the Pecksniffs² of time-dishonoured and dogma-soiled lay figures of Church-conventionality, without protest; yet, carrying in the silent shrine of their soul the same grand ideals as all mystics do, they are in truth Theosophists *de facto* if not *de jure*. We meet such in every circle of society, in every class of life. They are found among artists and novelists, in the aristocracy and commerce, among the highest and the richest, as among the lowest and the poorest. Among the most prominent in this century is Count L. Tolstoy, a living example, and one of the signs of the times in this period, of the occult working of the ever moving cycle. Listen to a few lines of the history of the psycho-spiritual evolution of this aristocrat, the greatest writer of modern Russia, by one of the best *feuilletonistes*³ in St. Petersburg.

. . . The most famous of our Russian authors, the “word-painter,” a writer of Shakespearean realism, a heathen poet, one who in a certain sense worshipped in his literary productions life for the sake of life, *an sich und für sich*⁴ — as the Hegelians used to say — collapses suddenly over his fairy palette, lost in tormenting thought; and forth-with he commences to offer to himself and the world the most abstruse and insoluble problems . . . The author of the *Cossacks* and *Family Happiness*, clad in peasant’s garb and bast shoes,⁵ starts as a pilgrim on foot in search of divine truth. He goes to the solitary forest *skits*⁶ of the *Raskolniki*,⁷ visits the monks of the Desert of *Optima*, passes his time in fasting and prayer. For his *belles lettres* and philosophy he substitutes the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers; and, as a sequel to *Anna Karenina* he creates his *Confessions* and *Explanations of the New Testament*.

¹ [Singing in a whining way, from the Latin *cantāre*, to sing. Cant was at first a beggar’s whine, hence hypocrisy. Cf. W.W. Skeat’s *Etymological Dictionary of English*, 1835-1912. — ED. PHIL.]

² [An extreme hypocrite, after Seth Pecksniff, a character in Charles Dickens “Martin Chuzzlewit.”]

³ [Part of a European newspaper devoted to light literature, fiction, criticism, *etc.*]

⁴ [Hegel’s “in itself and for itself,” referring to the Idea (*die Idee*) which, by its inherent power and light, reveals itself to itself.]

⁵ [Shoes made bast, a fibre taken from the bark of trees such as linden or birch.]

⁶ *Skits* is a religious hermitage.

⁷ *Raskolniki*, Dissenters; hitherto persecuted and forbidden sect in Russia.

The fact that Count Tolstoy, all his passionate earnestness notwithstanding, did not become an orthodox Christian, nor has succumbed to the wiles of Spiritualism (as his latest satire on mediums and “spirits” proves), prevents him in no way from being a full-fledged mystic. What is the mysterious influence which has suddenly forced him into that weird current without almost any transition period? What unexpected idea or vision led him into that new groove of thought? Who knoweth save himself, or those real “Spirits,” who are not likely to gossip it out in a modern séance-room?

And yet Count Tolstoy is by no means a solitary example of the work of that mysterious cycle of psychic and spiritual evolution now in its full activity — a work which, silently and unperceived, will grind to dust the most grand and magnificent structures of materialistic speculations, and reduce to nought in a few days the intellectual work of years. What is that moral and invisible Force? Eastern philosophy alone can explain.

The Theosophical Movement was reborn in 1875.

In 1875 the Theosophical Society came into existence. It was ushered into the world with the distinct intention of becoming an ally to, a supplement and a helper of, the Spiritualistic movement — of course, in its higher and more philosophical aspect. It succeeded, however, only in making of the Spiritualists its bitterest enemies, its most untiring persecutors and denunciators. Perchance the chief reason for it may be found in the fact that many of the best and most intellectual of their representatives passed body and soul into the Theosophical Society. Theosophy was, indeed, the only system that gave a philosophical *rationale* of mediumistic phenomena, a logical *raison d'être* for them. Incomplete and unsatisfactory some of its teachings certainly are, which is only owing to the imperfections of the human nature of its exponents, not to any fault in the system itself or its teachings. Based as these are upon philosophies hoary with age, the experience of men and races nearer than we are to the source of things, and the records of sages who have questioned successfully and for numberless generations the Sphinx of Nature, who now holds her lips sealed as to the secrets of life and death — these teachings have to be held certainly as a little more reliable than the dicta of certain “intelligences.” Whether the intellect and consciousness of the latter be *induced* and artificial — as we hold — or emanate from a personal source and entity, it matters not. Even the *exoteric* philosophies of the Eastern sages — systems of thought whose grandeur and logic few will deny — agree in every fundamental doctrine with our Theosophical teachings. As to those creatures which are called and accepted as “Spirits of the Dead” — because, forsooth, they themselves say so — their true nature is as unknown to the Spiritualists as to their mediums. With the most intellectual of the former the question remains to this day *sub judice*. Nor is it the Theosophists who would differ from them in their higher view of Spirits.

As it is not the object of this article, however, to contrast the two most significant movements of our century, nor to discuss their relative merits or superiority, we say at once that our only aim in bringing them forward is to draw attention to the wonderful progress of late of this occult cycle. While the enormous numbers of adherents to both Theosophy and Spiritualism, within or outside of our respective societies, show that both movements were but the necessary and, so to say, Karmically preor-

dained work of the age, and that each of them was born at its proper hour and fulfilled its proper mission at the right time, there are other and still more significant signs of the times.

A few years ago we predicted in print that after a short cycle of abuse and persecution, many of our enemies would come round, while others would, *en desespoir de cause*, follow our example and found mystic Societies. As Egypt in the prophecy of Hermes, theosophy was accused by “impious foreigners” (in our case, those outside its fold) of adoring monsters and chimaeras, and teaching “enigmas incredible to posterity.” If our “sacred scribes and hierophants” are not wanderers upon the face of the earth, it was through no fault of good Christian priests and clergymen; and no less than the Egyptians in the early centuries of the new faith and era, had we, from fear of a still worse profanation of sacred things and names, to bury deeper than ever the little of the esoteric knowledge that had been permitted to be given out to the world.

But, during the last three years all this has rapidly changed, and the demand for mystic information became so great, that the Theosophical Publishing Society could not find workers enough to supply the demand. Even *The Secret Doctrine*, the most abstruse of our publications — notwithstanding its forbidding price, the conspiracy of silence, and the nasty, contemptuous flings at it by some daily papers — has proved financially a success. See the change. That which Theosophists hardly dared speak about with bated breath for fear of being called lunatics but for a few years ago, is now being given out by lecturers, publicly advocated by mystical clergymen. While the orthodox hasten to make away with the old hell and sapphire-paved New Jerusalem, the more liberal accept now under Christian veils and biblical nomenclature our Doctrine of Karma, Reincarnation, and God as an abstract Principle.

Thus the Church is slowly drifting into philosophy and pantheism. Daily, we recognize some of our teachings creeping out as speculations — religious, poetical, and even scientific: and these noticed with respect by the same papers which will neither admit their theosophical origin nor abstain from vilipending the very granary of such mystic ideas — the Theosophical Society. About a year ago a wise criticaster¹ exclaimed in a paper we need not advertise:

To show the utterly *unscientific* ideas with which the work (*The Secret Doctrine*) is crammed, it may be sufficient to point out that its author refuses belief in the existence of *inorganic matter* and endows atoms with intelligence.

And today we find Edison’s conception of matter quoted with approval and sympathy by London magazines, from *Harper’s*, in which we read:

I do not believe that matter is inert, acted upon by an outside force. To me it seems that every atom is possessed by a certain amount of primitive intelligence: look at the thousand ways in which atoms of hydrogen combine with those of other elements . . . Do you mean to say they do this without intelligence? . . .

¹ [a petty critic]

Mr. Edison is a Theosophist, though not a very active one. Still, the very fact of his holding a diploma seems to inspire him with Theosophical truths.

“Theosophists believe in reincarnation!” say contemptuously our Christian enemies. “We do not find one word ever said by our Saviour that *could be interpreted against the modern belief in reincarnation . . .*” preaches the Rev. Mr. Bullard, thus half-opening, and very wisely too, a back door for the day when this Buddhistical and Brāhmanical “inane belief” will have become general.

Theosophists believe that the earliest races of men were as ethereal as are now their astral doubles, and call them *chhāyās* (shadows). And now hear the English poet laureate singing in his last book, *Demeter, and other Poems*:

The *Ghost in Man*, the *Ghost that once was Man*,
But cannot wholly free itself from Man,
Are calling to each other thro’ a dawn.
Stranger than earth has ever seen; *the veil*
Is rending, and the Voices of the day
Are heard across the Voices of the dark.
No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for man,
But thro’ the Will of One who knows and rules —
And utter knowledge is but utter love —
Aeonian Evolution, swift or slow,
Thro’ all the spheres — an ever opening height,
And ever lessening earth — . . . ¹

This looks as if Lord Tennyson had read Theosophical books, or is inspired by the same grand truths as we are.

And so the cyclic evolution of theosophical ideals continues.

“Oh!” we hear some sceptics exclaiming, “but there are poetical licences. The writer does not believe a word of it.” How do you know this? But even if it were so, here is one more proof of the cyclic evolution of our Theosophical ideas, which, I hope, will not be dubbed, to match, as “clerical licences.” One of the most esteemed and sympathetic of London clergymen, the Rev. G.W. Allen, has just stepped into our Theosophical shoes and followed our good example by founding a “Christo-Theosophical Society.” As its double title shows, its platform and programme have to be necessarily more restricted and limited than our own, for in the words of its circular “it is (only) intended to cover ground which the (original or ‘Parent’) Society at present does not cover.” However much our esteemed friend and co-worker in Theosophy may be mistaken in believing that the teachings of the Theosophical Society do not cover *esoteric* Christianity as they do the *esoteric* aspect of all other world-religions, yet his new Society is sure to do good work. For, if the name chosen means anything at all, it means that the work and study of the members must of necessity be Theosophical. The above is again proven by what the circular of the “Christo-Theosophical Society” states in the following words:

¹ [*The Ring*, lines 32-43. Italics are H.P. Blavatsky’s. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

It is believed that at the present day there are many persons who are dissatisfied with the crude and unphilosophic enunciation of Christianity put forward so often in sermons and theological writings. Some of these persons are impelled to give up all faith in Christianity, but many of them do this reluctantly, and would gladly welcome a presentation of the old truths which should show them to be in harmony with the conclusions of reason and the testimony of undeniable intuition. There are many others, also, whose only feeling is that the truths of their religion mean so very little to them practically, and have such very little power to influence and ennoble their daily life and character. To such persons the Christo-Theosophical Society makes its appeal, inviting them to join together in a common effort to discover that apprehension of Christian Truth, and to attain that Power, which must be able to satisfy the deep yearnings of the human heart, and give strength for self-mastery and a life lived for others.

This is admirable, and shows plainly its purpose of counteracting the very pernicious influences of exoteric and dogmatic theology, and it is just what we have been trying to do all along. All similarity, however, stops here, as it has nothing to do, as it appears, with *universal* but only sectarian Theosophy. We fear greatly that the “C.–T.S.” — by inviting

. . . to its membership those persons who, while desirous of apprehending ever more and more clearly the mysteries of Divine Truth, *yet wish to retain as the foundation of their philosophy the Christian doctrines of God as the Father of all men, and Christ as His revelation of Himself to mankind.*

— limits thereby “the Mysteries of the Divine Truth” to one single and the youngest of all religions, and *avatāras* to one man. We hope sincerely that the members of the Christo-Theosophical Society may be able to avoid this Charybdis without falling into Scylla.

There is one more difficulty in our way, and we would humbly ask to have it explained to us. “The Society,” states the circular, “is not made of Teachers and Learners. We are all learners.” This, with the hope distinctly expressed a few lines higher, that the members will “gladly welcome a presentation of the old truths . . . in harmony with the conclusions of reason,” *etc.*, leads to a natural query: Which of the “learners” is to present the said truths to the other learners? Then comes the unavoidable reasoning that whosoever the “learner” may be, no sooner he will begin his “presentation” than he will become *nolens volens* a “teacher.”

But this is after all, a trifle. We feel too proud and too satisfied with the homage thus paid to Theosophy, and with the sight of a representative of the Anglican clergy following in our track, to find fault with details, or wish anything but good luck to the Christo-Theosophical Association.

