

*The Divine Essence and  
Principles are Vistas of  
Virtue and Truth*



## ***Abstract***<sup>1</sup>

What the masses call gods, are simply the First Principles of a Divine Essence permeating the creative and intelligent forces of Nature, and being diffused throughout the universe which is infinite. Theosophy is the spiritual as well as the physical science of that Truth, the very essence of deistic and philosophical research.

We point to new intellectual horizons; we outline unexplored routes leading to the amelioration of humanity; and we offer a word of consolation to all the disinherited of the earth, whether suffering from starvation of soul or from lack of physical necessities. If one does not work for others one has no right to be called a Theosophist.

The strife will be terrible between brutal materialism and blind fanaticism on the one hand, and philosophy and mysticism on the other — mysticism, that veil of more or less translucency, which hides Eternal Truth.



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<sup>1</sup> Frontispiece by Kinga Britschgi

## On the New Cycle

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**N**O INITIAL ISSUE OF AN ORTHODOX and official Theosophical Journal should be allowed to appear without giving to our readers some information which we deem to be of absolute necessity.

As a matter of fact, the ideas which people have had until now concerning the Theosophical Society of India, as it is known, are so vague and so varied, that many of our Fellows themselves hold very erroneous opinions on the subject. Nothing could show better the necessity of thoroughly explaining the objective which we strive to attain in a Journal devoted exclusively to Theosophy. Accordingly, before we ask our readers to show any interest in it, or even venture on it, we very definitely owe them certain preliminary explanations.

What is Theosophy? Why this pretentious name, we are asked at the very outset? When we reply that Theosophy is divine wisdom, or the wisdom of the gods (*Theosophia*), rather than of God, another even more extraordinary objection is made: “Are you not Buddhists? We know that the Buddhists believe neither in one God, nor in many Gods . . . ”

Entirely correct. But to begin with we are no more Buddhists than we are Christians, Mohammedans, Jews, Zoroastrians or Brāhmanists. Then again, on the subject of the Gods, we hold to the esoteric method of the *hyponoia* taught by Ammonius Saccas, in other words to the occult meaning of the term. Was it not said by Aristotle:

The divine essence permeating nature and being diffused throughout the universe which is infinite, what the *hoi polloi* call the gods, are simply the First Principles . . . <sup>1</sup>

— in other words, the creative and intelligent forces of Nature. It does not follow from the fact that Buddhist philosophers recognize and know the nature of these forces, as well as anyone else, that the Society, as a Society, is Buddhist. In its capacity of an abstract body, the Society does not believe in anything, does not accept anything, and does not teach anything. The Society *per se* cannot and should not have any one religion. Cults, after all, are merely vehicles, more or less material forms, containing a lesser or greater degree of the essence of Truth, which is One and universal. Theosophy is in principle the spiritual as well as the physical science of that Truth, the very essence of deistic and philosophical research. Visible representative of universal Truth — as all religions and philosophies are contained therein, and as each one of

<sup>1</sup> [*Metaphysics*, Book viii, p. 1074b]

them contains in its turn a portion of that Truth — the Society could be no more sectarian, or have more preference, or partiality, than an anthropological or a geographical society. Are the latter concerned whether their explorers belong to this or the other religion, as long as everyone of their members carries out his duties courageously?

If, then, we are asked, as so many times before, whether we are deists or atheists, spiritualists or materialists, idealists or positivists, royalists, republicans, or socialists, we will answer that every one of these views is represented in the Society. And I have merely to repeat what I said exactly ten years ago in a definitive article in *The Theosophist*,<sup>1</sup> to show how much that which the public thinks about us differs from that which we are in reality. Our Society has been accused at various times of the most singular and the most contradictory errors, and motives and ideas have been ascribed to it, which it has never had. What has not been said of us! One day, we were a society of ignoramuses, believing in miracles; the next day we were proclaimed to be thaumaturgists; our objectives were secret and altogether political, was said in the morning; we were Carbonari and dangerous nihilists; but in the evening, it was discovered that we were spies salaried by monarchical and autocratic Russia. At some other time, and with no transition of any kind, we became Jesuits seeking to ruin Spiritism in France. American Positivists saw in us religious fanatics, while the clergy of every country denounced us as the emissaries of Satan, *etc., etc.* Finally, our brave critics, with a most impartial urbanity, divided Theosophists into two categories: *charlatans* and *ninnies* . . .

But, one slanders only that which one hates or dreads. Why would anyone hate us? As to dreading us, who knows? It is not always wise to tell the Truth, and we tell, perhaps, too many *true* truths. In spite of everything, from the very day of the formation of our Society in the United States, fourteen years ago, our teachings have met with an entirely unforeseen reception. The original program had to be enlarged, and the area of our combined research and exploration at the present moment is lost to view beyond the infinite horizon. This expansion was brought about by the ever increasing number of our adherents, a number which grows every day; the diversity of their races and their religions requires of us more and more profound studies. However, while our program was enlarged, it was not in the least altered as far as its principal objects were concerned, except, unfortunately, in the case of the one which was closest to our heart, namely, the first one, *i.e.*, Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, creed or colour. In spite of all our efforts, this object has been almost constantly ignored, or became a dead letter, especially in India, thanks to the innate haughtiness and the national pride of Englishmen. With that exception, the other two objects, namely the study of Oriental religions, especially of the ancient Vedic and Buddhist cults, and our research in the latent powers of man, have been pursued with a zeal which has had its rewards.

Since 1876, we have been forced to depart more and more from the broad highway of generalities, as outlined at first, in order to venture upon collateral roads which go on widening forever. Thus it happened that in order to satisfy all Theosophists and to

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<sup>1</sup> ["What are the Theosophists," *The Theosophist* Bombay, Vol. I, No. 1, October 1879, pp. 5-7. Also, *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, Vol. II, pp. 98-106. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

trace the evolution of every religion, we had to circle the whole globe, beginning our pilgrimage at the dawn of the cycle of nascent humanity. These researches have led to a synthesis which has just been outlined in *The Secret Doctrine*, some portions of which will be translated in the present Journal. The doctrine is barely sketched in our two volumes, and yet the mysteries unveiled therein concerning the beliefs of prehistoric peoples, cosmogony and anthropology, have never been divulged until now. Certain dogmas, certain theories, clash therein with scientific theories, especially that of Darwin; contrariwise, they explain and clarify that which was to this day incomprehensible, and fill more than one gap which, *nolens volens*, was left void by orthodox science. We had to present these doctrines, such as they are, or else never broach the subject. He who dreads these infinite perspectives and who would try to shorten them by means of the shortcuts and suspension bridges artificially erected by modern science over these thousand and one gaps, would do better not to venture into the Thermopylae of archaic science.

Such has been one of the results of our Society, a very poor result, maybe, but one that will certainly be followed by other revelations, exoteric or purely esoteric. If we speak of this, it is to show that we do not preach any one religion in particular, leaving to every member complete and entire freedom to follow his own particular belief. The principal aim of our organization, which we are labouring to make a real brotherhood, is fully expressed in the motto of The Theosophical Society and all of its official organs:

**There is no religion higher than Truth.**

As an impersonal Society, we must seize the truth wherever we find it, without permitting ourselves more partiality for one belief than for another. This leads directly to a very logical conclusion: if we acclaim and receive with open arms all sincere truth-seekers, there can be no place in our ranks for the vehement sectarian, the bigot, or the hypocrite, enclosed in Chinese Walls of dogma, each stone bearing the words: "No admission!" What place indeed could such fanatics occupy amongst us, fanatics whose religion forbids all inquiry and does not admit any argument possible, when the mother-idea, the very root whence springs the beautiful plant we call Theosophy is known to be — absolute and unfettered liberty to investigate all the mysteries of Nature, human or divine.

With this exception, the Society invites everyone to participate in its activities and discoveries. Whoever feels his heart beat in unison with the great heart of humanity; whoever feels his interests are one with those of every being poorer and less fortunate than himself; every man or woman who is ready to hold out a helping hand to those who suffer; whoever understands the true meaning of the word "Egoism," is a Theosophist by birth and right. He can always be sure of finding sympathetic souls in our midst. Our Society is actually a sort of miniature humanity where, as in the human species at large, one can always find one's counterpart.

If we are told that in our Society the atheist elbows the deist, and the materialist elbows the idealist, we would reply: What does it matter? Be an individual a materialist, *i.e.*, one who would find in matter an infinite potency for creation or rather for the evolution of all terrestrial life; or be he a Spiritualist, endowed with a spiritual



perception which the former does not have — in what way does this prevent the one or the other from being a good Theosophist? Moreover, the worshippers of a personal god or a divine Substance are much more materialistic than the Pantheists who reject the idea of a carnalised god, but who perceive the divine essence in every atom. Everyone knows that Buddhism does not recognize either one god or many gods. Yet the Arhat, for whom every atom of dust is as much replete with Svabhāva (plastic substance, eternal and intelligent, though impersonal) as he himself, and who strives to assimilate that Svabhāva by identifying himself with the All, in order to attain Nirvana, must travel the same painful road of renunciation, of good works and of altruism, and must lead the same saintly life, though less egotistical in its motive, as the beatified Christian. What matters the passing form, if the goal to be attained is the same eternal essence, whether that essence manifests itself to human perception as substance, as an immaterial breath, or as *nothing!* Let us admit the PRESENCE, whether called personal God or universal substance, and recognize a cause if we all see its effects. But these effects being the same for the atheist-Buddhist and for the deist-Christian, and the cause being invisible and inscrutable for the one as for the other, why waste our time in running after a shadow that cannot be grasped? When all is said, the greatest of materialists, as well as the most transcendental of philosophers, admit the omnipresence of an impalpable Proteus, omnipotent in its ubiquity throughout all the kingdoms of nature, including man; Proteus indivisible in its essence, and eluding form, yet appearing under all and every form; who is here and there and everywhere and nowhere; is All and Nothing; ubiquitous yet One; universal Essence binding, bounding, containing everything, contained in all. Where is the theologian who could go any farther? It is sufficient to recognize these truths, to be a Theosophist, for this recognition is tantamount to admitting that not only humanity — composed as it is of thousands of races — but everything that lives and vegetates, in short, everything that is, is made of the same essence and substance, is animated by the same spirit, and that, consequently, everything in nature, whether physical or moral, is bound in solidarity.

We have already said elsewhere, in *The Theosophist*, that “born in the United States of America the Theosophical Society was constituted on the model of its Mother Land.” The latter, as we know, has omitted the name of God from its Constitution, for fear, said the Fathers of the Republic, that the word might one day become the pretext for a State religion; for they desired to grant absolute equality to all religions under the law, so that each form would support the State, which in its turn would protect them all.

The Theosophical Society was founded on that excellent model.

At the present moment, its one hundred and seventy-three (173) Branches are grouped in several Sections. In India, these Sections are self-governing and provide for their expenses. Outside of India, there are two large Sections: one in America and the other in England.<sup>1</sup> Thus, every Branch, like every member, being free to profess whatever religion and to study whatever philosophy or science it prefers, provided all

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<sup>1</sup> *American Section and British Section*

remain united in the tie of Solidarity or Brotherhood, our Society can truly call itself a “Republic of Conscience.”

Though free to pursue whatever intellectual occupation pleases him the best, each member of our Society must, however, furnish some reason for belonging thereto, which amounts to saying that each member must contribute his part, small though it be, in mental or other labour for the benefit of all. If one does not work for others one has no right to be called a Theosophist.<sup>1</sup> All must strive for freedom of human thought, for the elimination of selfish and sectarian superstitions, and for the discovery of all the truths that are within the reach of the human mind. That object cannot be attained with more certainty than by the cultivation of unity in intellectual labours. No honest worker, no earnest seeker can remain empty-handed, and there is hardly a man or woman, busy as they may think themselves to be, incapable of laying their tribute, moral or pecuniary, on the altar of truth. The duty of Branch and Section Presidents will be henceforth to see to it that the Theosophical beehive is kept free from those drones which keep merely buzzing.

One word more. How many times have not the two Founders of The Theosophical Society been accused of ambition and autocracy! How many times have they not been reproached with an alleged desire to impose their will upon the other members! Nothing is more unjust. The Founders of the Society have always been the first and humblest servants of their collaborators and colleagues, always ready to help them with whatever feeble light they may have, and to uphold them in their struggle against the egoists, the indifferent and the sectarians; for such is the foremost struggle for which everyone must prepare himself who enters our Society which is generally misunderstood by the public. Moreover, the Reports published after every annual Convention are there to prove it. At our last anniversary, held at Madras in December 1888, important reforms were proposed and adopted. Anything that savoured of a pecuniary obligation ceased to exist, even the payment of the 25 francs for a diploma having been abolished. From now on, the Fellows are free to give what they like, if they have at heart to help and uphold the Society, or to give nothing at all.

In these circumstances and at the present moment of Theosophical history, it is easy to understand the purpose of a Journal exclusively devoted to the promulgation of our ideas. Therein we wish to point to new intellectual horizons, to outline unexplored routes leading to the amelioration of humanity; to offer a word of consolation to all the disinherited of the earth, whether suffering from starvation of soul or from lack of physical necessities. We invite all great-hearted individuals who desire to respond to this appeal, to join with us in this humanitarian work. Each co-worker, whether a Fellow of the Society or simply a sympathizer, can help us to make of this Journal the only organ of true Theosophy in France. We are face to face with all the glorious possibilities of the future. This is again the hour of the great cyclic return of the rising tide of mystical thought in Europe. On every side we are surrounded by the ocean of universal science — the science of life eternal — bearing on its waves the forgotten and submerged treasures of vanished generations, treasures still unknown to the modern civilized races. The strong current which rises from the watery abyss,

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<sup>1</sup> [See “Theosophist is who Theosophy does” and “Theosophists defined” in the same series. — ED. PHIL.]

from the depths where lie the prehistoric learning and arts swallowed up with the antediluvian Giants — demigods, though but mere outlines of mortal men — that current strikes us in the face and murmurs:

“That which has been still exists; that which has been forgotten, buried for aeons in the depths of the Jurassic strata, may reappear to view once more. Prepare yourselves.”

Happy are those who can interpret the language of the elements. But where are they bound for whom the word element has no other meaning than that given to it by physics or materialistic chemistry? Will it be towards well-known shores that the surge of the great waters will bear them, when they have lost their footing in the deluge which is approaching? Will it be towards the peaks of a new Ararat that they will find themselves carried, towards the heights of light and sunshine, where there is a ledge on which to place the feet in safety, or perchance is it to a fathomless abyss that will swallow them as soon as they try to struggle against the irresistible billows of an unknown element?

We must prepare and study truth under every aspect, endeavouring to ignore nothing, if we do not wish to fall into the abyss of the unknown when the hour shall strike. It is useless to leave it to chance and await the intellectual and psychic crisis which is preparing, with indifference, if not with crass disbelief, saying that at the worst the rising tide will carry us naturally towards the shore; for it is very likely that the tidal wave will cast up nothing but a corpse. The strife will be terrible in any case between brutal materialism and blind fanaticism on the one hand, and philosophy and mysticism on the other — mysticism, that veil of more or less translucency, which hides the eternal Truth.

But it is not materialism which will gain the upper hand. Every fanatic whose ideas isolate him from the universal axiom, “There is no religion higher than Truth” will see himself by that very fact rejected, like an unworthy stone from the new Archway called *Humanity*. Tossed by the waves, driven by the winds, reeling in that element which is so terrible because unknown, he will soon find himself engulfed . . .

Yes, it must be so and it cannot be otherwise, when the artificial and chilly flame of modern materialism is extinguished for lack of fuel. Those who cannot become used to the idea of a spiritual Ego, a living soul and an eternal Spirit within their material shell (which owes its illusory existence to those *principles*); those for whom the great hope of an existence beyond the grave is a vexation, merely the symbol of an unknown quantity, or else the subject of a belief *sui generis*, the result of theological and mediumistic hallucinations — these will do well to prepare for the worst disappointment the future could possibly have in store for them. For from the depths of the dark, muddy waters of materiality which, on every side, hide from them the horizons of the great Beyond, a mystic force is rising during these last years of the century. At most it is but the first gentle rustling, but it is a *superhuman* rustling — “supernatural” only for the superstitious and the ignorant. The spirit of truth is passing now over the face of the dark waters, and in parting them, is compelling them to disgorge their spiritual treasures. This spirit is a force that can neither be hindered nor stopped. Those who recognize it and feel that this is the supreme moment of their



salvation will be uplifted by it and carried beyond the illusions of the great astral serpent. The joy they will experience will be so poignant and intense, that if they were not mentally isolated from their bodies of flesh, the beatitude would pierce them like sharp steel. It is not pleasure that they will experience, but a bliss which is a foretaste of the knowledge of the gods, the knowledge of good and evil, and of the fruits of the tree of life.

### **A message to mystics and a warning to materialists.**

But although the man of today may be a fanatic, a sceptic, or a mystic, he must become thoroughly convinced that it is useless for him to struggle against the two moral forces today unleashed and in supreme contest. He is at the mercy of these two adversaries, and no intermediary force is capable of protecting him. It is but a question of choice, whether to let himself be carried along without a struggle on the wave of mystical evolution, or to writhe against the reaction of moral and psychic evolution, and so find himself engulfed in the Maelström of the new tide. At the present time, the whole world, with its centres of high intelligence and human culture, its focal points of political, artistic, literary, and commercial life, is in a turmoil; everything is shaking and crumbling in its movement towards reform. It is useless to remain blind, it is useless to hope that anyone can remain neutral between the two contending forces; one has to choose either the one or the other, or be crushed between them. The man who imagines that he has chosen freedom, but who, nevertheless, remains submerged in that boiling caldron, foaming with foul matter called social life, most terribly betrays his own divine Self, a betrayal which will blind that Self in the course of a long series of future incarnations. All of you who hesitate on the path of Theosophy and the occult sciences, who are trembling on the golden threshold of truth — the only one within your grasp, for all the others have failed you, one after another — squarely face the great Reality which is offered you. It is to mystics only that these words are addressed, for them alone have they any importance; for those who have already made their choice they are vain and useless. But you, Occultists, Kabbalists and Theosophists, you well know that a Word, old as the world, though new to you, has been sounded at the beginning of this cycle, and the potentiality of which, unperceived by others, lies hidden in the sum of the digits of the years 1 8 8 9; you well know that a note has just been struck which has never been heard by mankind of this era; and that a New Idea is revealed, ripened by the forces of evolution. This Idea differs from everything that has been produced in the nineteenth century; it is identical, however, with the thought that has been the dominant tone and the keynote of every century, especially the last — absolute freedom of thought for humanity.

Why try to strangle and suppress what cannot be destroyed? Why struggle when there is no other choice than allowing yourselves to be raised on the crest of the spiritual wave to the very heavens, beyond the stars and the universes, or to be engulfed in the yawning abyss of an ocean of matter? Vain are your efforts to sound the unfathomable, to reach the ultimate of this wonderful matter so glorified in our century; for its roots grow in the spirit and in the Absolute; they do not exist, though they *are* eternally. This constant contact with flesh, blood and bones, the illusion of differentiated matter, does nothing but blind you; and the more you penetrate into the re-

gion of the impalpable atoms of chemistry, the more you will be convinced that they exist only in your imagination. Do you truly expect to find therein every Truth and every reality of existence? For Death is at everyone's door, waiting to close it behind a beloved soul that escapes from its prison, upon the soul which alone has made the body a reality; how can eternal love associate itself with the molecules of matter which change and disappear?

But you are perhaps indifferent to all such things; how then can affection and the souls of those you love concern you at all, since you do not believe in the very existence of such souls? It must be so. You have made your choice; you have entered upon that path which crosses nothing but the barren deserts of matter. You are self-condemned to vegetate therein through a long series of existences. Henceforth, you will have to be contented with deliriums and fevers in place of spiritual perceptions, with passion instead of love, with the husk instead of the fruit.

But you, friends and readers, you who aspire to something more than the life of the squirrel everlastingly turning the same wheel; you who are not content with the seething of the caldron whose turmoil results in nothing; you who do not mistake the deaf echoes, as old as the world, for the divine voice of truth; prepare yourselves for a future of which but few in your midst have dared to dream, unless they have already entered upon the path. For you have chosen a path that, although thorny at the start, soon widens out and leads you to the divine truth. You are free to doubt while still at the beginning of the way, you are free to decline to accept on hearsay what is taught respecting the source and the cause of that truth, but you are always able to hear what its voice is telling you, and you can always study the effects of the creative force coming from the depths of the unknown. The arid soil upon which the present generation of men is moving, at the close of this age of spiritual dearth and of purely material surfeit, has need of a divine omen above its horizon, a rainbow, as symbol of hope. For of all the past centuries our nineteenth has been the most criminal. It is criminal in its frightful selfishness, in its scepticism which grimaces at the very idea of anything beyond the material; in its idiotic indifference to all that does not pertain to the personal self, more than any of the previous centuries of ignorant barbarism and intellectual darkness. Our century must be saved from itself before its last hour strikes. For all those who see the sterility and folly of an existence blinded by materialism and ferociously indifferent to the fate of their neighbour, this is the moment to act: now is the time for them to devote all their energies, all their courage and all their efforts to a great intellectual reform. This reform can only be accomplished by Theosophy, and, let us add, by Occultism or the wisdom of the Orient. The paths that lead to it are many; but the wisdom is one. Artistic souls envision it, those who suffer dream of it, the pure in heart know it. Those who work for others cannot remain blind to its reality, though they may not always recognize it by its name. Only light and empty minds, egotistical and vain drones, confused by their own buzzing, will remain ignorant of the supreme ideal. They will continue to exist until life becomes a grievous burden to them.

It must be distinctly remembered, however; these pages are not written for the masses. They are neither an appeal for reforms, nor an effort to win over to our views the fortunate in life; they are addressed solely to those who are constitutionally able to

comprehend them, to those who suffer, to those who hunger and thirst after some Reality in this world of Chinese Shadows. As for those, why should they not show themselves courageous enough to abandon their world of frivolous occupations, their pleasures above all and even their personal interests, except when those interests form part of their duties to their families or others? No one is so busy or so poor that he cannot create a noble ideal and follow it. Why then hesitate in clearing a path towards this ideal, through all obstacles, over every stumbling block, every petty hindrance of social life, in order to march straight forward until the goal is reached? Those who would make this effort would soon find that the “strait gate” and the “thorny path” lead to the broad valleys of limitless horizon, to that state where there is no more death, because one feels oneself rebecoming a god! It is true that the first conditions required to reach it are an absolute disinterestedness, a boundless devotion to the welfare of others, and a complete indifference to the world and its opinions. In order to make the first step on that ideal path, the motive must be absolutely pure; not an unworthy thought must attract the eyes from the end in view, not a doubt or hesitation shackle the feet. There do exist men and women thoroughly qualified for this, whose only aim is to dwell under the Aegis of their Divine Nature. Let them, at least, take courage to live the life and not conceal it from the eyes of others! No one else’s opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one’s own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, developed to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on the ideal we have set ourselves, and look *beyond*, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet . . .

Those who are capable of making this effort are the true Theosophists; all others are but members, more or less indifferent, and very often useless.

H.P. BLAVATSKY

