

*Stand ready to abandon all
you have learned with the head*



Abstract and train of thoughts

In order to reach the wider public, the theosophical literature should be couched in simple, unpretentious language, that anyone can understand.

If you thirst after spiritual truths, you should first learn how to read between the lines. 3

More! You should not believe what you read or heard, regardless of the authority of your teachers, but to believe only when the writing or saying is corroborated by your own reason and consciousness. Thenceforth, act accordingly and abundantly. 3

The true disciple is humble and self-effacing, unnoticed by the man in the street.

What may seem to others as mere ethics, to the true disciple such precepts of duty are instructions for boundless devotion to humanity at large and all creatures, whether great and small. 4

1. Seek Darkness with the lamp of Faith.

Faith is an aspiration and a desire. Hope and Charity are her sisters. True Faith can only blossom from the realisation that All is One. 5

Let us then approach the Majesty of Truth for her own sake, and not to confirm our preconceptions and speculations of what Truth might be. 5

2. Stand ready to abandon all you have learned with the head, so that you can tell apart the real from the false, the everlasting from the everfleeting.

Head-learning is false learning, and as perishable as the body. Soul-Wisdom alone is true knowledge, immortal and eternal. 5

As the disciple continues deciphering the arcane doctrine, at every new period of his inner life a new self rises within him. He is now increasingly permeated with Divine Intelligence, and immersed in Spiritual Light that radiates from his own Logos. 6

When the last sheath of the heart bursts open there is a silence, the silence of the mystic death; and from that death springs up the first tender growth of Life triumphant in Spirit. 6

The Brotherhood of Man has been forged in the fires of unspeakable anguish, and riveted by a dauntless purpose called forth by its mighty fiat.

At the threshold of the two paths.

Suggested reading for students.

From our Higher Ethics and Devotion Series. 11



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Seeking for freedom, I go to that God who is the light of his own thoughts. A man who knows him truly passes over death; there is no other path to go.

— UPANISHADS

From William Quan Judge, *Letters that have Helped me*. New York: Quarterly Book Dept., 1891-1918. Compiled by Jasper Niemand, nom de plume of Julia Wharton Keightley.¹ Preface to Book I, also by Julia Wharton Keightley.

The well known series of letters known as the *Letters that have Helped me*, began to be published in *The Path*, Vol. III, December 1888, and continued through Vol. IV, March 1890. They were signed “Z,” which letter stands for William Quan Judge, who wrote these Letters to Julia Ver Planck, or “Jasper Niemand,” at the express wish of H.P. Blavatsky. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

In the *Path* for May 1886, we find these words:

We need a literature, not solely for highly intellectual persons, but of a more simple character, which attempts to appeal to ordinary common- sense minds who are really fainting for such moral and mental assistance as is not reached by the more pretentious works.

The experience of one student is, on the whole, the experience of all. Details differ, however. Some are made more instantly rich than others: they are those who put forth more vigorous and generous effort; or they have a Karmic store which brings aid. What Theosophists know as Karma, or the law of spiritual action and reaction, decides this, as it works on all the planes, physical, moral, mental, psychical, and spiritual alike. Our Karma may be worked out on any one of these planes when our life is chiefly concentrated upon it, no matter upon what other plane any special initiative impulse or branch of it originated.

If you thirst after spiritual truths, you should first learn how to read between the lines.

More! You should not believe what you read or heard, regardless of the authority of your teachers, but to believe only when the writing or saying is corroborated by your own reason and consciousness. Thenceforth, act accordingly and abundantly.²

The writer, when first he became a Theosophical student, had the aid of an advanced occultist in his studies. This friend sent him, among others, the letters which, in the hope that they may assist others as they have the original recipient, are here published. They are not exhaustive treatises; they are hints given by one who knew that the first need of a student is to learn *how to think*. The true direction is pointed out, and the student is left to clarify his own perceptions, to draw upon and enlarge his own intuitions, and to develop, as every created thing must at last develop, by his

¹ [For biographical notes, consult “Three eminent Theosophists,” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Cf. *Kalama Sutta* of the *Anguttaranikāya*, quoted by H.S. Olcott, President of the Theosophical Society, in his *Buddhist Catechism*, pp. 55, 56, Colombo, Ceylon 1881 ed., in: *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE DOCTRINE OF AVATĀRAS) XIV p. 417]

own inward exertions. Such students have passed the point where their external environment can affect their growth favourably. They may learn from it, but the time has also come to resist it and turn to the internal adjustment¹ to higher relations only.

The brevity of these letters should not mislead the reader. Every statement in them is a statement of law. They point to causes of which life is an effect; that life arising from the action of Spirit in Nature, and which we must understand as it is manifested within us before we can advance on the Path. There is a scientific meaning within all these devotional or ethical injunctions, for the Wisdom- Religion never relaxes her hold upon Science nor attempts to dissever an effect from its cause. Most of these admonitions have their base in the constitution of the Archæus or World-Soul, and the correlation of its energies; others, still, adhere in the Eternal.

The true disciple is humble² and self-effacing, unnoticed by the man in the street.

No less should the reader guard himself against a slight estimate arising from the exquisite modesty of Z.³ An occultist is never so truly a man of power as when he has wholly learned and exhibits this truth:

And the power the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing *in the eyes of men*.⁴

The inner eye, the *power of seeing*, looks deeper into the source of a man's knowledge and takes it at its true value. Those men who are sharers in the Divine, whose first office is to give, are often protected from the demands and curiosity of the careless by a simple exterior which deceives the worldly sense. Some men are great because of the Power which stands behind them, the divine energies which flow through them; they are great through having learned how to receive this celestial influx from higher spheres of Being; they are the appointed ministrants, the true servants of the Law and pupils of Masters whose office is humanitarian and universal.

What may seem to others as mere ethics, to the true disciple such precepts of duty are instructions for boundless devotion to humanity at large and all creatures, whether great and small.⁵

Such aid is never volunteered; it follows the Karmic behest, and, when given, leaves the student free to follow it or not, as his intuitions may direct. There is not a shadow or vestige of authority in the matter, as the world understands the word *authority*. Those who travel the unknown way send messages back, and he who can, receives them. Only a few of the first steps are here recorded and the first impediments sur-

¹ [Or rather, a mental and attitudinal U-turn. This is what is meant by *μετανοια* (metanoia) in the Bible, not "repentance" as this pivotal concept is commonly interpreted. See R. Ravindra (Ed. P. Murray). *Yoga and the Teaching of Krishna: Essays on the Indian Spiritual Traditions*. Chennai: Theosophical Publishing House, 1998; pp. 58, 316. Also cf. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (VIEWS OF THE THEOSOPHISTS) I p. 293. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Consult "Humility is no virtue," in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. — ED. PHIL.]

³ [William Quan Judge]

⁴ [Quoting *Light on the Path*, 16]

⁵ [Consult *Compassion: The Spirit of Truth*, in our Major Works Series. — ED. PHIL.]

mounted. No hints of magic lore are to be found; no formulas of creed or occult powers; the questions of an awakening soul are answered, and the pilgrim is shown where lies the entrance to the Path. The world at large seeks the facts of occult science, but the student who has resolved to attain desires to find the true road. What may seem to others as mere ethics is to him practical instruction, for as he follows it he soon perceives its relation to facts and laws which he is enabled to verify, and what seemed to him the language of devotion merely, is found to be that of science; but the science is spiritual, for the Great Cause is pure Spirit.

1. Seek Darkness with the lamp of Faith.

Faith is an aspiration and a desire. Hope and Charity are her sisters. True Faith can only blossom from the realisation that All is One.

Let us then approach the Majesty of Truth for her own sake, and not to confirm our preconceptions and speculations of what Truth might be.

Many students must at some time stand where the writer then stood, at the beginning of the way. For all these this correspondence is made public, and they are urged to look within the printed words for their imperishable meaning. They may be cheered to find the foot-prints of a comrade upon the rugged Path, above which the light of Truth ever shines. Yet even this light is not always a clear splendour. It may seem “in the day-time a cloud, and by night a pillar of fire.”¹ We must question every external aspect, even that of Faith itself, for the secret and germ of things lies at their core. Let us purify even our Faith;² let us seek Truth herself, and not our preconceptions of Truth. In her mirror we shall never see our own familiar face: that which we see is still ourselves, because our real self is truth.

2. Stand ready to abandon all you have learned with the head, so that you can tell apart the real from the false, the everlasting from the everfleeting.

Head-learning is false learning, and as perishable as the body. Soul-Wisdom alone is true knowledge, immortal and eternal.

As the Theosophical movement gathers new momentum, fresh recruits may be aided by those letters which so greatly sustained me, or encouraged by some co-partnership of thought, and that, too, in the real issue confronting them. We first take this issue to be the acquirement of occult knowledge. Soon we find that the meaning of all really informed occult writers eludes us. We find that books only serve to remind us of what we knew in the long past, perhaps when “journeying with Deity,” and the echoes awakened within us are so faint that they are rarely to be caught. Whether we study philosophies, metaphysics, physics, ethics, harmony, astrology,

¹ [Exodus xiii, 21]

² [Consult *Compassion: The Spirit of Truth*, “Chapter 8. Tips for Pilgrim Souls,” in our Major Works Series. — ED. PHIL.]

natural sciences, astralism, magnetism, or what not, we meet with endless contradiction and differentiation; we for ever require to strike the balance of our own intuition. We discover that the final word has not yet been *written down* upon any of the higher subjects (unless it be on mathematics, and scarcely on that), and that all our learning is but a finger-post to that supreme knowledge of Truth which is only found and closely guarded within the human heart. Thrown back upon our inner perceptions for continual readjustment, on every side of experience this warning confronts us: *Stand ready to abandon all thou hast learned!* Not knowing the One centre, we cannot thoroughly know any sub-centre. The cause unknown, effects mislead us. Then we turn to that mysterious centre whereby the One is manifest in man, and we begin the study of the heart, both in itself and in the life it has instituted about us.

As the disciple continues deciphering the arcane doctrine, at every new period of his inner life a new self rises within him. He is now increasingly permeated with Divine Intelligence, and immersed in Spiritual Light that radiates from his own Logos.¹

To be put into more direct communication with the world of cause is now the student's most pressing need. One thing alone prevents this — himself. He is of such gross fibre that he cannot be “porous to thought, bibulous of the sea of light.”² To the refinement and dispersal of this lower self — of the man he now takes himself to be — he then directs his will. Each man has a different mode of doing this, but each who advances at all finds that with every new period of his inner life a new self rises before him. Looking back over a group of weeks or months, he is amazed to see what manner of man he was then, and smiles that pitying smile which we bestow upon the faded letters of our youth.

Yet some there be who ossify there in their rut; let them struggle mightily to break up the mass which has resisted all environment, all change, all the conditions of progressive life. They have done for themselves what the enemy strives to do for others; they are the rock in their own path.

When the last sheath of the heart bursts open there is a silence, the silence of the mystic death; and from that death springs up the first tender growth of Life triumphant in Spirit.³

What our Eastern brothers call “the sheaths of the heart” fall away one by one: when the last bursts open there is a silence, the silence of the mystic death.⁴ But “the dead shall arise,” and from that death springs up the first tender growth of eternal life.



¹ [or Nous]

² [Quoting Emerson, “The Over-Soul”]

³ [*i.e.*, Chrēstos transmuted into Christos. — ED. PHIL.]

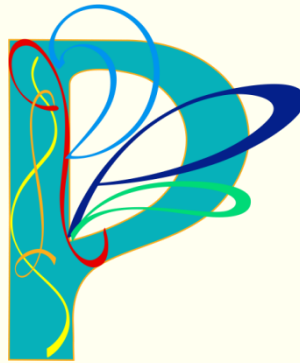
⁴ [Consult “The Voice of the Silence,” in the same Series. — ED. PHIL.]

The Brotherhood of Man has been forged in the fires of unspeakable anguish, and riveted by a dauntless purpose called forth by its mighty fiat.

Up to this point we shall not travel in the ensuing pages. Yet having realized the real issues so forcibly that his whole strength was at the start directed towards self-knowledge and the right use of Thought, the writer offers a part of his first instructions to those of his comrades who, single-hearted and of royal Faith, hold Truth to be dearer than all material life and seek it on the hidden way. There is no tie in the universe equal to that which binds such comrades together. It has been forged in the fires of unspeakable anguish; it has been riveted by a dauntless purpose and a unique, because Divine, Love.¹ The fierce hatred of seen and unseen worlds cannot tamper with it so long as a man remains true to himself, for this larger life is himself, and as he grows towards it his self-imposed fetters fall away and he stands, at last, a free soul, in the celestial Light which is Freedom itself, obedient only to the Law of its own divine Being. To reach it, let us obey the law of our own Being, for, truly, *Being is One*.

My comrades, wherever you are, I salute you.

JASPER NIEMAND, F.T.S.²



¹ [Consult "Narada Bhakti Sutra," in the same Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Fellow of the Theosophical Society]

At the threshold of the two paths.

From C.A. Bartzokas (Comp. & Ed.). *Compassion: The Spirit of Truth*, Gwernymynydd: Philaletheians UK, 2005; v. 05.88.2021, Appendix C. Modified after *The Voice of the Silence*, Golden Jubilee edition, pp. 92-95. Superscripted numbers correspond to the paragraph numbering of that edition.

1

¹⁸² First path

^{111, 119, 127, 147} Eye Doctrine

^{143, 180, 181, 186} Open path

^{106, 111, 113, 115} Head [mind] learning

^{119, 122} False learning

¹¹⁹ Behold I know

²⁹⁸ Dhyana path

¹⁹⁹ Rugged path

^{198, 199} Fourfold Dhyana

^{143, 194} Path of bliss

¹²⁸ External, non-existing [fleeting]

²²² Personal

^{143, 191} Selfish bliss

¹⁷⁹ Bliss immediate

²⁹⁸ Haven of the yogins

¹⁴² Destruction

[Personal Buddha]

[Solitary Buddha]

¹⁹¹ Pratyeka Buddha

¹¹⁹ Pride

2

Second path ¹⁸³

Heart Doctrine ^{111, 119, 120, 128, 147}

Secret path ^{143, 146, 147, 180, 184, 187}

Soul [heart] wisdom ^{106, 111, 113, 115}

True knowledge ¹²²

Thus have I heard ¹¹⁹

Arahatta path ²⁹⁹

Steeper path ²⁰⁰

Paramita Heights ²⁰⁰

Path of woe ^{183, 184, 194}

Permanent, everlasting ¹²⁸

Impersonal ²²²

Self-immolation ¹⁸⁰

Bliss deferred ¹⁷⁹

Arya path ^{302, 307}

Compassion ^{142, 191, 301}

Buddha of Perfection ^{146, 302}

Buddha of Compassion ^{143, 306}

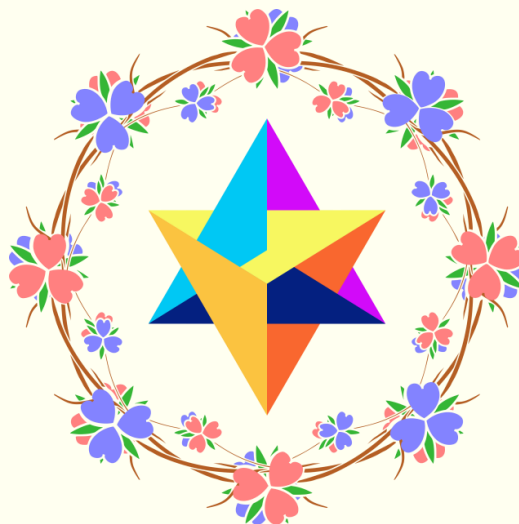
Samyak Sambuddha ¹⁸⁸

Humbleness ¹¹⁹

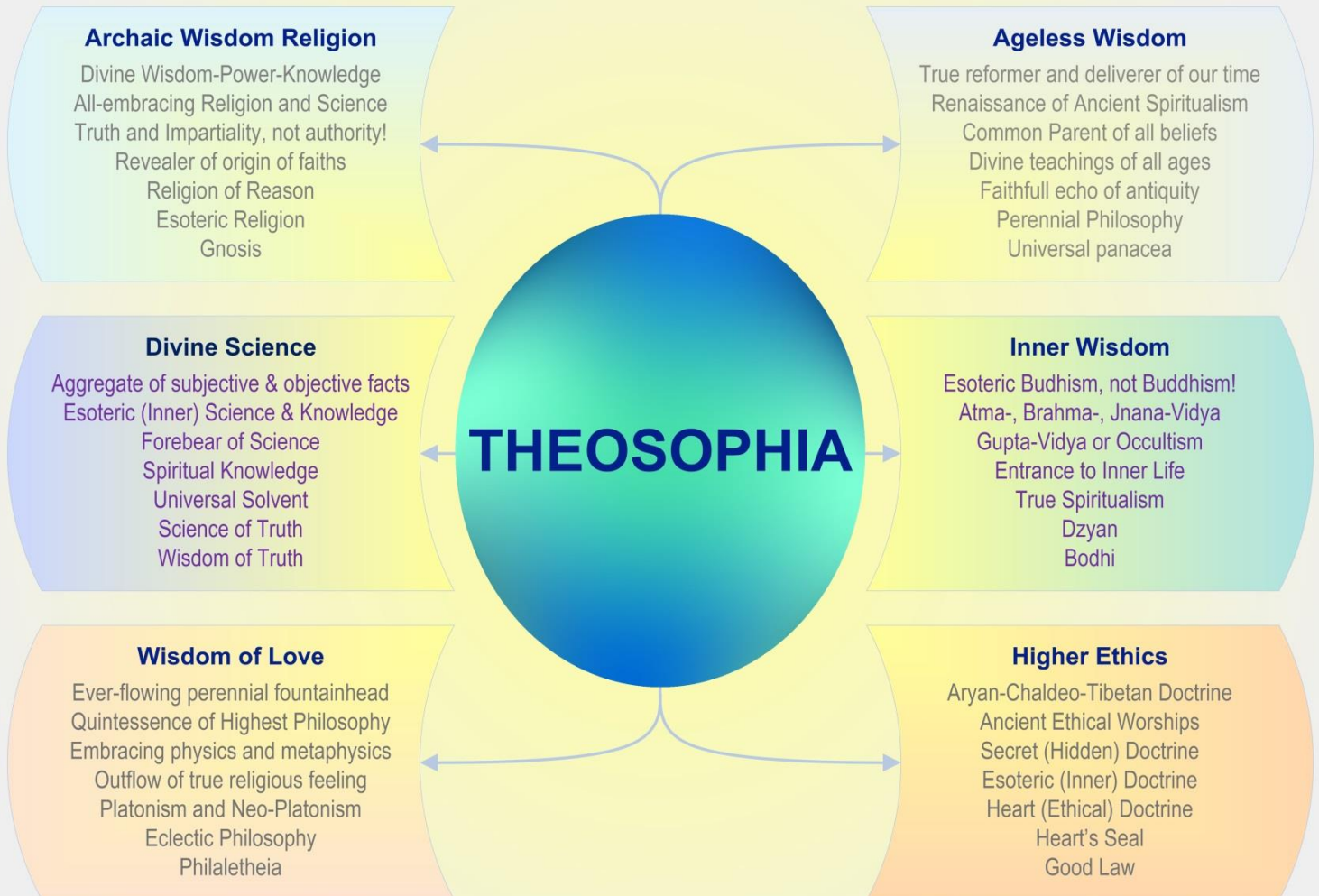
[Continued overleaf.]

APPENDIX C
AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE TWO PATHS

| 1 | 2 |
|---|--|
| ¹¹⁹ The crowd | The Elect ¹¹⁹ |
| [Hoi Polloi] | The Few |
| [Escape from the world] | Save the world ¹⁹³ |
| ¹⁹⁰ Sweet rest | Bitter duty ¹⁹⁰ |
| ¹⁸⁶ Oblivion of the world of men | Pity for the world of mortals ¹⁸⁷ |
| ^{142, 186, 306} Sana (Dharmakaya) Robe | Nirmanakaya Robe ^{145, 306} |
| ^{296-298, 306} Srotapanna | Bodhisattva ^{306, 307} |
| ³⁰⁵ Nirvana Dharma | Arhan [Buddha] Dharma ^{314, 315} |
| ^{182, 190} Liberation | Renunciation [of Liberation] ^{145, 183, 190, 192} |
| ¹⁴² Selves sacrificed to self | Self sacrificed to selves ¹⁴⁶ |
| ¹⁴² Sacrifice mankind to self | Live to benefit mankind ¹⁴⁴ |
| [Open Eye] | Secret Heart ¹⁴³ |



Irrigated by Compassion and Charity Immortal, there is a constant outpouring of Spiritual Knowledge, Love, and Guidance for the Great Orphan. It emanates from the Highest Noëtic Realms of the Universe, from Regents of Rounds and Races, Higher and Lower Avatars, Gautama Buddha and his Incarnations, Rishis and Mahatmas.



Practical Theosophia is far more important than Esoteric Knowledge.

BEHOLD THE TRUTH BEFORE YOU: A CLEAN LIFE, AN OPEN MIND, A PURE HEART, AN EAGER INTELLECT, AN UNVEILED SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION, A BROTHERLINESS FOR ONE'S CO-DISCIPLE, A READINESS TO GIVE AND RECEIVE ADVICE AND INSTRUCTION, A LOYAL SENSE OF DUTY TO THE TEACHER, A WILLING OBEDIENCE TO THE BEHESTS OF TRUTH, ONCE WE HAVE PLACED OUR CONFIDENCE IN, AND BELIEVE THAT TEACHER TO BE IN POSSESSION OF IT; A COURAGEOUS ENDURANCE OF PERSONAL INJUSTICE, A BRAVE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, A VALIANT DEFENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE UNJUSTLY ATTACKED, AND A CONSTANT EYE TO THE IDEAL OF HUMAN PROGRESSION AND PERFECTION WHICH THE SECRET SCIENCE (GUPTA-VIDYĀ) DEPICTS — THESE ARE THE GOLDEN STAIRS UP THE STEPS OF WHICH THE LEARNER MAY CLIMB TO THE TEMPLE OF DIVINE WISDOM.

Blavatsky Collected Writings XII, (E.S. INTRODUCTION) p. 503; [quoting from a Master of Wisdom's Letter.]



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- EYE VS. HEART DOCTRINE
- HARMONY IS THE ONE LAW IN NATURE
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- LIGHT ON THE PATH
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- PROCLUS ON THE TEACHER-DISCIPLE BOND OF LOVE
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- TRUE PRAYER IS MENTAL UTTERANCE IN SECRET
- WARNINGS TO WOULD-BE OCCULTISTS
- WHEN THE SUN MOVES NORTHWARD

