



WHY STUDY THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY?

A Dialogue on the Evolution of a Sangha

Student A. Perhaps one should forget about the history of the theosophical movement altogether. Of course, in February 2008 the ULT gets 99 years old and approaches its first centenary, to be completed in 2009. There might be some real occult importance in the 100 year cycle, for the life-rhythm of the theosophical effort is largely based on it. Besides, in the article "The Hundred Year Cycle"¹ one can see the occult link between the sun-spots cycle, the one hundred years cycle and the number nine. It so happens that one century equals nine times the cycle of sun-spots (11.2 years each). The ULT was founded in a year which has two "9s" in it (1909), and in 18th February, the "18" is also twice nine. All of this may be interesting from the occult point of view, as we know of the esoteric meaning of numbers – and nine means "the end of a cycle". But there is problem which

Student B. Yes?

A. The difficulty is that, as one discovers Theosophy, it seems one has more than enough for a lifetime task in calmly studying, understanding and living the wisdom present in works like "Isis Unveiled", "The Secret Doctrine", the Gita and many books by HPB, Judge and Crosbie. Not to mention countless classical

thinkers in different countries and cultures. Why should one then also study the history of the theosophical movement? Would it not be a diversion and a loss of time?

B. Only apparently so. To serve mankind and thus play an active, intelligent role in our planetary evolution is an essential part of Occult learning; and the theosophical movement is the main vehicle or instrument Theosophists can use as they do that. Obviously, one can only know the theosophical movement – one's practical tool to serve mankind – if one knows and studies its purpose and its history.

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¹ ("Theosophy", August 1931, pp. 449-452),

Besides, we should consider that the idea of "three jewels" or "three refuges" (*Triratna* in Sanskrit) is central both to exoteric and esoteric Buddhism. And esoteric Buddhism is broadly the same as Esoteric Philosophy, Theosophy, *Gupta Vidya* or Occultism.

A. What are the three refuges, the "*Triratna*"?

B. There is a Law of Impermanence which applies to every transitory aspect of life. The truth-seeker searches for refuge from all transient things – including his own lower self – in that which is permanent. This is a long-term learning and might be called "lay discipleship". The soul of the learner will thus say, in these or other words:

- 1) I take refuge in the Teachers of Divine Wisdom (or *Buddhas*);
- 2) I take refuge in the Teaching and the Law (or *Dharma*); and
- 3) I take refuge in the mutual-help process of co-discipleship (or *Sangha*).

These are the refuges. But in order for anyone to take refuge in the theosophical *sangha*, which is really located not in any physical place but in some subtle patterns or 'way of life', one needs to understand the history or accumulated karma of the movement in the world, so that one can truly understand it, see in what level of consciousness it really exists and understand its present and future opportunities at various levels of reality. Theosophy teaches that it is not worthwhile to make a *separate* individual search for truth, for independence must be compensated by mutual help and solidarity. It cannot be correct, therefore, to wash our hands Pilate-like with regard to the destiny of the theosophical movement. It is by the second refuge, in the teaching, and the third refuge, in the *sangha*, that we can be better able to take the first refuge, in the inner guidance or the teacher. The three elements are interdependent. One must know what is and what is not the real teaching, so that one can know what is, and what is not, the real *sangha*; and how to find the true guidance or inner Master.

A. I can see that. Most of the so-called theosophical movement may still be deluded as

to how do Masters work, what exactly is their teaching and how should one work in the *sangha*. Yet what is the particular importance of the United Lodge of Theosophists in the history of the theosophical movement? Is it not "institutionalism" to think too much of ULT?

B. Since 1909, the ULT has had a decisive – if not obvious – influence on the trajectory of the theosophical movement as a whole. The movement had deeply lost almost any sense of direction when in 18th February 1909 Robert Crosbie and others founded the United Lodge in Los Angeles. That was the historical starting point for the whole movement to walk its way back to the true source of inspiration. And the journey is far from over by now, since there are still plenty of "theosophical structures" based on wild clairvoyant fancies.

A. Yes, I see what you mean. It's a house of cards. Yet, what's the theosophical importance of History, as a science?

B. History is the science or study of accumulated experience. And accumulated experience is the same as *Karma*. In the first paragraph of the famous Letter 10, in "Mahatma Letters", an Adept-Teacher defines Occult Science as the study of the causes by their consequences, and of the consequences by their causes. History itself can be well defined in exactly the same words as these. The study of History is therefore but the study of the Karma Law as it works along time. On the other hand, historical knowledge also helps people to prepare a better future. Knowing one's past trajectory enables one to perceive one's highest dharma, both individually and collectively as a movement.

A. What exactly do you mean by that?

B. There is nothing entirely new, or entirely old, under the Sun. Everything that was, will be, says Ecclesiastes, 1. In order to know more about the future, one must study all of the past and present from the viewpoint of our higher potentialities – both individual and collective. Our future is therefore far from being an "empty page". If one studies the law of the cycles, one sees that the past history or accumulated experience contains the seeds of every future progress. It also contains the seeds of future mistakes, which one must try to avoid from now. Past, present

and future are but one continuous, living process in the eyes of the Occultist. As a result of this, if we intend to try being real Theosophists, we must grow beyond the shallow attitude of simple denial of past events.

A. You may be right. Yet most attempts to understand the collective evolution of the international theosophical "sangha" or "nucleus" may well lead to a clash of "political" viewpoints and to a discussion on bureaucracy and external "power mechanisms". In what way can this be really useful? As you know, the ULT was created to liberate Theosophy from power politics, not to get more people entangled in it.

B. As one studies History, one finds a long series of illusions and disillusionments, of search for truth and collective deceptions. History allows us to understand the wide, multidimensional process of probation and test through which the movement has grown since its inception in September 1875, and since the creation of the ULT in 1909. The movement is a magnetic field of collective learning and effort against both collective and individual self-delusion. There are of course conflicting viewpoints as to the history of the movement, and no one is the sole proprietor of truth. But the Theosophy of HPB, Judge and the Masters has never recommended to abandon truth in order to avoid discussion. One should not argue for the sake of argument or out of personality motives. One must be clear about that. In Occultism, everything depends on the altruism and generosity of intentions and motives. But H.P.B. described thus the right attitude of a committed and whole-hearted theosophist:

"Ready to lay down our life any day for THEOSOPHY – that great cause of the Universal Brotherhood for which we live and breath – and willing to shield if need be, every theosophist with our own body, we yet denounce as openly and as virulently the distortion of the original lines upon which the Theosophical Society was primarily built, and the gradual loosening and the undermining of the original system by the sophistry of many of its highest officers." (1)

A. Right. At the same time, you should consider that HPB and Judge were very special people, to say the least. This is rather something for initiates to do, and we must not be too arrogant

about that. Let's be honest: we are but common people. Why should we try to follow the examples set by HPB, Judge, Crosbie and others who challenged the great "theosophical" empires of power-politics? Why should we not see Theosophy as something cozy, nice and comfortable?

B. (Growing impatient) Cozy and comfortable? If you really think you should not follow the practical example given by great theosophists, perhaps you might consider joining the Roman Catholic Church. After all, Romish and Popish institutions may be ideal places for those who would rather build a mental abyss between themselves and the teachers, preferring to "adore" wise men instead of learning from them. If you don't actually practice the teaching or follow the example of great teachers as much as you can, you will need an external theological "Saviour", and this is the source and essence of pseudo-theosophy or Jesuitism. But I don't mean to hurt your feelings with harsh words. What I mean is but that "Theosophist is him who Theosophy does". He who limits himself to talking and memorizing books, words and grand ideas – he is no theosophist. He will not see why one should discuss the movement and its History, unless someone takes the time to discuss these things with him.

A. (Looking uncomfortable) But discuss it in what manner and style?

B. You have my humble apologies. I hope the foci of our individual consciousness are beyond personality feelings about this and other questions. Let's keep then to the substance of the matter, if you please, instead of discussing the fortunate or unfortunate way things are put. Once ideas are clear, let's keep "personality feelings" apart. Diplomacy and sophistry are not our priorities, are they?

A. Certainly not.

B. That is truly a blessing – of the pedagogical kind – for it enables us to learn. Politics is often a plague. People who sacrifice sincerity or actual facts for the sake of "political correctness" are actually renouncing Theosophy. They are ready to abandon the real teaching so that they can better possess its outer and empty shell. They follow the opposite of the lesson given in

Matthew 13: 24-30, as they carefully burn the wheat and put the weeds in their barn.

A. Agreed. I guess this is the difference between esoteric and exoteric views. Yet many think we must not discuss the theosophical movement or its history. They say it is better to concentrate in beautiful, abstract things. Why do practical things have to be so full of difficulties?

B. Those who believe in some "God" can always ask their own "Lord" about the reason for their difficulties. Theosophists, on the other hand, have common sense. They recognize that every "difficulty" is but a lesson to be understood and learned. Obstacles are teachings which Life kindly puts before us lest we forget to study them. The theosophical movement and its History are not beyond criticism. We all have much to learn from its accumulated experience, which includes many mistakes. In order to have the much needed moral authority to criticize dogmatic religions – an important task – we must first do our homework. This previous condition can't be left aside, and HPB wrote:

"We bear our Karma for our lack of humility during the early days of the Theosophical Society; for our favourite aphorism: 'See, how Christians love one another' has now to be paraphrased daily and almost hourly, into: 'Behold, how our Theosophists love each other.' And we tremble at the thought that, unless many of our ways and customs, at the Theosophical Society at large, are amended or done away with, LUCIFER will one day have to expose many a blot on our own escutcheon – e.g., worship of Self, uncharitableness, and sacrificing to one's personal vanity the welfare of other Theosophists – more "fiercely" than it has ever denounced the various shams and abuses of power in state Churches and Modern Society." (2)

A. But there is still the danger of getting too "political" or "institutional" as we study and discuss the History of the movement. Do you have other evidences that the original programme of the movement included the honest study and frank discussion of its own work, its own mistakes, and the lessons it must learn decade after decade, century after century?

B. There is plenty of evidence about that. H.P.B. was entirely devoted to the building of the theosophical movement, which meant (and of course still means) a lot of organizational work. See her letters to A.P.Sinnett. Take a look at her texts in "Theosophical Articles" (Theosophy Company, three volumes). The movement was also intensely discussed in "The Key to Theosophy". By her actions, H.P.B. taught the direct interdependence of the three elements of the Triratna which we have seen before. It is not hard to see that H.P.B. had the whole history of the movement (though a brief one by then) in her heart and before her mind. And the human and planetary history, of course. As to W.Q. Judge, he was far from ignoring historical matters. His organizational skills were extraordinary. His "Path" magazine discusses at almost every page the daily life of the theosophical movement, alongside with the most abstract philosophy and wisdom of theosophy. In his direct style, Judge wrote many insightful texts on the theosophical work and how it can be best organized.

A. Is that all?

B. No. Everywhere in the "Mahatma Letters to A.P.Sinnett" one finds an impressively frank discussion of the most difficult challenges to the theosophical movement. There is no reason, then, why theosophists living in any century should be ever able to be efficient, unless they have a clear notion of the karmic or historical process by which an 'outer', open Nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood is being built since September 1875. The history of the movement is the story of the conflicting relationship between the Eye Doctrine and the Heart Doctrine within the theosophical "sangha". It is no short term action. It is part of the preparation for the sixth sub-race of the fifth race. The seed was planted in 1875-1900 period, but in the twentieth century it had to start germinating by its own merits. In the present century, a renewed effort is needed. The ULT's own first cycle of one hundred years (1909-2009) marks the way the seedling movement reacts by its own inner merit during the so-called "hard cycle of the century".

The real movement has, as H.P.B. wrote of every individual student, to "continuously burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain,

not physical but mental and intellectual" ("Spiritual Progress", in "Theosophical Articles", vol. II, p. 110.) The inner theosophical seedling must make the heart doctrine burst through the eye-doctrine or pseudo-theosophical shell, in order to come out into fresh air and establish a direct contact with the inspiring energy sent by the Sun.

A. Perhaps you are right but, you see, the ULT seems to be much more concerned with studying the philosophy itself than thinking about the movement or its history.

B. Such a focus is perfectly right and it shouldn't be otherwise. But it does not mean one must ignore History; just the opposite. It was the ULT which first gave the theosophical movement a correct account of its history, when it published in 1925 the first edition of book "The Theosophical Movement". With 705 pp., the book was in part written by Robert Crosbie himself, although it was finished and published by other associates. That is a long and thoroughly documented book. It has a clear, detailed institutional discussion of the movement's history, including both Adyar TS and Point Loma TS. It is a superb portrait of organizational and even inter-personality levels of activity in the movement.

The shorter, 1951 version of "The Theosophical Movement" covers the period 1875-1950 and is also more than enough to show why every theosophist must care for the movement's History. In the complete collection of "Theosophy" magazine, one cannot avoid bumping into dozens of most frank articles discussing the history of the movement and also ULT's history. One should pay special attention to the series of articles entitled "Aftermath" and published in "Theosophy" magazine from January 1935.

There is a remarkable lesson on the occult aspect of the movement's history in the article which announces the publication of the book "The Friendly Philosopher", in "Theosophy", December 1934. At the end of it (p. 55), we see a note signed by "The Editors" and addressed "To All Theosophists". It underlines the importance of understanding history. Interestingly enough, it refers to the theosophical movement as "the field of battle", which seems

to imply that, as W.Q. Judge wrote, "we are all Arjunas".

This is the note:

'The Theosophical Movement' was published in book form in 1925. Since that time great changes have taken place in the theosophical world. The first generation of Theosophists have passed away, the second is passing, the third is coming actively into the field of battle. Beginning next month, therefore, this Magazine will publish a survey of theosophical history as made since 1925, with such citations as will, it is hoped, make clear the issues of the present and the near future. Readers of this Magazine are requested to call the attention of as many as possible to this Series... .

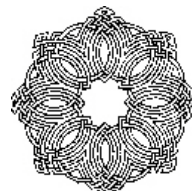
A. This is really something to ponder upon. Perhaps the amount of lucid historical consciousness that the movement has at any given time is rather linked to its amount of inner vitality. Thank you very much, and *Namaste*.

B. Thank you, and peace to all beings.

NOTES:

(1) "Is Denunciation a Duty?", in "Theosophical Articles", H. P. Blavatsky, Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, 1981, volume I, p. 201.

(2) "Is Denunciation a Duty?", see same volume and page.



MAHATMA KH ON ATMOSPHERIC WARMING

Is it CO₂... or meteoric iron dust?

"Earth's magnetic attraction of meteoric dust, and the direct influence of the latter upon the sudden changes of temperature, especially in the matter of heat and cold, is not a settled question to the present day, I believe.¹ It was doubted whether the fact of our earth passing through a region of space in which there are more or less of **meteoric masses** has any bearing upon the height of our atmosphere being increased or decreased, or even **upon the state of weather.**

But we think we could easily prove it; and since they accept the fact that the relative distribution and proportion of land and water on our globe *may be due* to the great accumulation upon it of meteoric dust, snow — **especially in our northern regions — being full of meteoric iron and magnetic particles;** and deposits of the latter being found even at the bottom of seas and oceans, I wonder how Science has not hitherto understood that every atmospheric change and disturbance was due to the combined magnetism of the two great masses between which our atmosphere is compressed!

I call this meteoric dust a "mass" for it is really one. High above our earth's surface **the air is impregnated and space filled with magnetic, or meteoric dust,** which does not even belong to our solar system. Science having luckily discovered that, as our earth with all the other planets is carried along through space, it receives a greater proportion of that dust matter on its northern than on its southern hemisphere, knows that to this are due the preponderating number of the continents in the former hemisphere, and the greater abundance of snow and moisture. **Millions of such meteors and even of the finest particles reach us yearly and daily,** and all our temple knives are made of this "heavenly" iron,

¹ Dr. Phipson in 1867 and Cowper Ranyard in 1879 both urged the theory but it was rejected then.

which reaches us without having undergone any change — the magnetism of the earth keeping them in cohesion. Gaseous matter is continually added to our atmosphere from the **never ceasing fall of meteoric strongly magnetic matter,** and yet it seems with them still an open question whether magnetic conditions *have* anything to do with the precipitation of rain or not!

I do not know of any "set of motions established by pressures, expansions, etc., *due in the first instance to solar energy.*" Science makes too much and too little at the same time of "solar energy" and even of the Sun itself; and **the Sun has nothing to do whatever with rain and very little with heat.** I was under the impression that science was aware that the glacial periods as well as those periods when temperature is "like that of the carboniferous age," are due to the decrease and increase or rather to the expansion of our atmosphere, which expansion is itself due to the same meteoric presence? **At any rate, we all know, that the heat that the earth receives by radiation from the sun is at the utmost one third if not less of the amount received by her directly from the meteors...**

We know of no phenomenon in nature entirely unconnected with either magnetism or electricity... All the phenomena of earth currents, terrestrial magnetism and atmospheric electricity are due to the fact that the earth is an electrified conductor, whose potential is ever changing owing to its rotation and its annual orbital motion, the successive cooling and heating of the air, the formation of clouds and rain, storms and winds, etc..."

(We believe these extracts from 'The Mahatma Letters to A.P.Sinnett' are highly germane to the current debate about the cause of atmospheric global warming. Taken from the 1948 Rider edition, Letter 23b, p 161. Eds)



SPHERE OF JOY

BIRTHDAYS OF THE DHYANIS

In *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol II, p. 179 Mme. Blavatsky refers to certain dates which she calls the "birthdays of the Dhyanis."

The reference to the "Birthdays of the Dhyanis" is on p. 179 of SD II, and on S D I, p. 470, we have a reference to the mysterious "birthday of the World," which later on, in one of her articles HPB, identifies with the **4th of January**, 14 days after the Winter equinox--the "birthday" of the Sun. (HPB Articles II 502.) **Midnight between February 17th and 18th** is said by HPB to mark the commencement of the Kali Yuga, in the year 3,102 B.C. (SD II 435), and earlier in the book she identified this date right down to the second (SD I 662). It is the one date which could probably serve as a basis for true astrological calculations in this the Kali Yuga age. Many of the dates and astrological observations used and preserved by the Hindu Brahmins may belong to that earlier era.

HPB states in the *Secret Doctrine* that the Sun in its vast orbit is dragging the whole system, our Earth included, into new and different spatial conditions, where there are changes in the properties and nature of the material elements. One might suppose that only the Mahatmas, who are fully "awake" know and perceive those differences. Does this foreshadow a change? Is she warning us that the records of the past may not always give us the exact conditions physically that we are now experiencing or are going to experience ?

Astrology is very interesting to those who wish to peer, however dimly, into the future of this incarnation¹, whether theirs, or that of others now alive. This does not seem to have as much value, as the search for meaning and understanding in the philosophical and the moral tenets offered to us. It is quite possible that some of the Brahmins are in possession of those corrections, and use them in their calculations, and of course make them available annually through their almanacs

¹ See following article *The Book of the Moon*, as an example of predictions made by Brahmin astrologers in India.

(panchangams). Those who are wise, use such references when initiating a new activity. In 1909 the ULT was started on the **18th of February**. The T S was inaugurated on **November 17th** in 1875.

One may wonder if under Karma, this is the reason why the ancient libraries of Babylon, Egypt, etc. have been "destroyed" insofar as the general public and scholars are concerned, (or the important MSS withdrawn), so that any confusion of times and dates would be removed from the prying eyes and the fevered imagination of those who would profit and mislead people if they used those figures. In Isis and the *Secret Doctrine* HPB has given hints from history on the antiquity of the records seen by historians in Egypt (Herodotus, Josephus), and in Babylon and Ur (Aristotle, Berosus). **These go back almost 50-100,000 years or more.** Those dates are still held to be incredible by modern archaeologists and paleontologists. Herodotus was dubbed (until recently) "The Father of Lies." Aristotle (Alexander's tutor, who accompanied him on his march of conquest to the East) held discussions with Berosus in Babylon and Chaldea -- but, those are not given much publicity.

The Dhyanis - the Wise

The Dhyanis, the Wise, the "Great Souls," are the Rishis and the Mahatmas of antiquity and of the present. Being immortals They cannot have a "birthday" in the ordinary sense, since it is posited that all beings, in their essence, and we, ourselves, as immortals, are faced with the same quandary. Do we have a birthday? The answer is both "yes," and "no." "Yes," for this period of manifestation on our Earth. "No," for the "Eternal Pilgrim" that we are essentially. (SD I 175 268, and 570-575; II 79-80 93-4 103 109-10 167.) It could be surmised that the "Ray of the One Spirit" which is the human MONAD (Atma-Buddhi) would have its special "birthday" in the sequence of Cosmic development in the dim and formative past of the earlier Rounds.

So, neither They--who are alive, nor we, can have a "birthday" in the eternal sense--only in the temporal sense when a "personality" is used for expression on this material plane, and, as a gift of service to those who need that help. Our Karma is focused in every such event.

In the *Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 131, Mr. Judge defines the use of the word Dhyanis (also

spelled Dzyanis, Gnyanis, Gnansis, etc.) calling them "creators, guides, Great Spirits." One may surmise that these special days, "birthdays," "festivals," etc...are used by the wise at the junction of specific solar and lunar (perhaps also planetary) cycles for the edification (and the reinforcing) in the masses of their sensitivity to reverberations of ancient and innate truths. Perhaps as a result of their attending such ceremonies (those conducted by the Mahatmas who were those actual historical personages!) -- the minds and hearts of the masses being touched by that influence, if ready, may then in part, awake from their lethargy, and started seeking for the "Wisdom." (Mr. Judge narrated an interesting anecdote to J. Neimand for the book "In a Borrowed Body" -- it's about the consecration of the great temple in ancient Conjeevaram (Kanchipuram) in South India, about 50 miles from Madras (WQJ Letters, p. 256). (see also Theos. Movement, Vol. 45, p. 121-2, Echoes, p. 31-2.) In Theos. Mvt., Vol. 11, pp 4-5 the names of the Holy Cities for pilgrimage in India are given; also Theos. Mvt., Vol. 7, pp. 98; Vol. 9, pp. 69, 110 makes reference to these.

Cyclic Return of Impressions

Several days in each year mark the cyclic return of the impressions of those early beginnings in this Manvantara. The **17th of November**, midnight between the **17th and 18th of February**, and HPB states that these, and the **7th day of March** are three of the "birthdays" of the Dhyanis. In this connection, we may recall the verse in Voice, p. 72,

**"Know if Amitabha, the "Boundless Age,"
thou would'st become co-worker, then
must thou shed the light acquired, like to
the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all
three worlds."**

Does this statement give a clue as to why the three "birthdays" are referred to: these may be those of "Amitabha, and the two "Bodhisattvas." It is said that two of the Masters saw that it was possible to make an effort to re-establish the Theosophical Movement in the world. We are indebted to them and to HPB who agreed to act as their "Messenger." They also refer to their superior, the Maha-Chohan before whom they stand in awe and to whose wishes they accede. Before him, they say in one place, the "book of Karma" stands open.

Perhaps the dates of other "birthdays," which may be scattered through the rest of the months of the year, relate to those Dhyanis who are the Regents of, and directors of other great and Universal Principles. It may be useful to consider that in us our three-fold spiritual nature consists of Mind (manas--the power to think), Wisdom (Buddhi--accumulated experience), and Spirit (Atman--the Spiritual Self). These form the Spiritual Man, the "Three-in-One" the "Monad." It is reasonable to conclude that the three Dhyanis whose birthdays we are given, represent the "regents" of those faculties on the spiritual planes of Universal as well as mundane being.

We may also consider our own birthday: is it only a date of birth for the body, then, what about another for the birth of the astral body, the mind, and another for the initiation of the Lower Manas of the personality into the knowledge and wisdom of the individuality its symbiotic "Father?" (see Transactions pp. 66-76) The "birthday" usually is a memory date for the cycle that we (the MONAD) initiated in this present incarnation in this particular (physical) body when we emerged from our Mother's womb. The other birthdays (such as the date of conception, spiritual, mental and physical) are secret ones, and known only to our Higher Self, the Real MONADIC Ego within.

Stronger than woe is will

"If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,
And no way were of breaking from the
chain,

The Heart of boundless Being is a curse,
The Soul of Things fell pain.

Ye are not bound! the Soul of Things is
sweet,

The Heart of Being is celestial rest;

Stronger than woe is will : that which was
Good

Doth pass to Better - Best."

"The Light of Asia" by Sir Edwin Arnold, Book the 8th
p 221, 1976 Bangalore Paperback ed.

The "Book of the Moon"

An informal account of a Brahmin's practical use of astrology, narrated by a well-known past student of Theosophy who spent time in India. Ed

Twice, and independently of each other, two friends of mine, visited Paithan, a village near Surat, 200 miles North of Bombay, where a certain Brahmin family has an astrological library consisting of many hundred volumes, known as the Soma Shastra (the "Book of the Moon") -- there is another of these I am told in Tirupatti -- these friends of mine had gone there (quite independently and at several years interval apart) to find what the "future" had in store for them.

Their shadows, in Sunlight, were measured when they arrived at the time they made their request. Three ancient volumes were brought then out, and they were told that the prefatory paragraphs would be translated and read to them, and if these did not suit, to reject that book, but if one suited, then the Brahmin would read further from it. They told me (independently) that one of the volumes so chosen by them, turned out to state some of the outstanding events in their earlier life. The Brahmin read on, and this reading gave them some highlights -- a view into their "future."

I was told, of these events several years later, when they had actually lived through some of those "future" events and had proved to their satisfaction that the Soma Shastra had a real value and an inherent power.

You can draw any conclusions you wish from this, but these are (even if it is only hearsay) within my own observation. I have also heard others speak of these, and a few more "incidents" that show there is a definite popular knowledge of continuing psychic (spiritual ? lore) and that owners of some of the old manuscripts and their preservers have keys to reading them and understanding them. Elsewhere in India, in the north are said to exist a corresponding library of "Books of the Sun" -- the Surya Shastra, and the facts that can be had from that relate to the facts of realms, countries and the World. This

information is only released guardedly to princes and their ministers at certain times of crisis.

The Hard Problem of Consciousness



News Analysis of Media Coverage of the Debate Over Evolution

Materialist Neuroscience and the 'Hard Problem' of Consciousness

Materialist neurologist Dr. Steven Novella recently took Deepak Chopra to task for Chopra's support for mind-body dualism. Chopra, a respected physician and professor of medicine who has written and lectured extensively on spirituality in medicine, had pointed out the numerous problems raised by a dogmatic materialist understanding of the mind-brain problem. Materialists believe that the mind in a sense doesn't exist as a separate entity; it's merely a state of the brain, caused entirely by neurons and neurochemistry. Novella states:

Deepak ... plays the "false controversy" gambit. He wants us to keep an open mind "until the argument is resolved." But there is actually nothing left unresolved. Deepak has presented no mysteries that cannot comfortably be explained within the completely material paradigm of neuroscience. His "invisible will" is nothing more than a trick of semantics - not an established phenomenon; not a genuine mystery to be solved. He says the material paradigm

is "untenable" but has presented nothing that makes it so. (emphasis mine)

Is there genuinely "nothing left unresolved" in our understanding of the mind-body problem? Are there "no mysteries that cannot comfortably be explained within the completely material paradigm of neuroscience?" The truth is that there remain enormous mysteries, and virtually nothing about these mysteries is resolved. The mind-body problem is perhaps the most active and contentious area of modern philosophy, and there is very little "resolved". Of the many issues raised by philosophers, perhaps the most important is the "hard problem of consciousness" formulated by philosopher David Chalmers.

Chalmers divides the problems of consciousness into the "easy problems" and the "hard problem". The easy problems are the sort treated routinely by neuroscientists. These are problems such as 'what is the neuroanatomical correlate of arousal?' or 'which neurotransmitters are associated with depression?' Of course, these questions are not easy in a scientific sense, but they are tractable by the methods of science, which are, for the most part, methodologically materialistic.

The "hard problem" of consciousness is another matter entirely. The hard problem is this: why are we subjects, and not just objects? Why do we have subjective experiences? Descriptions of neurophysiology are all third-person — neurons do this, serotonin does that. Yet consciousness is experienced in the first person — 'I,' not 'it.' How is the 'third person' matter in our brains related to our actual first person experiences? The easy problems of consciousness relate to objective phenomena — neurotransmitters and action potentials. The hard problem of consciousness is qualitatively different — it's the problem of subjectivity. As Chalmers explains, the hard problem "persist(s) even when the performance of all the relevant functions (e.g. neurochemistry) is explained."

How could physical processes give rise to an inner mental life? What is the scientific link between matter and self-awareness? Materialist neuroscience offers no explanation for the subjectivity of our existence, and it's difficult to see how objective phenomena ever could provide a satisfactory explanation for subjective mental experience. How can subjective

experience be explained completely by investigation of brain tissue and neurochemicals?

Hence dualism. Dualism is and always has been an effort to come to grips with the quite real and most intractable problem in understanding the mind: the fact that we experience it in the first person. Dualism accommodates first person experience as well as the profound differences between mind and matter. It is consistent with many religious traditions, and with the way that the vast majority of people understand themselves. Many of the greatest scientists and philosophers have been dualists, from Plato, Aquinas, and Descartes to pioneering neurophysiologist and Nobel Laureate C.S. Sherrington, pioneering epilepsy neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield, Nobel Prize winning neurophysiologist John Eccles, and philosopher of science Karl Popper.

Indeed, dualism has plenty of problems of its own, and dualists are honest about the problems. For example, how do the mind and brain actually interact? How can mind 'substance' interact with matter 'substance' without violating conservation laws in physics? Dualists acknowledge these problems. Materialists, on the other hand, dismiss the real problems, and, like Dr. Novella, blithely assure us that they have, or will have, all the answers. It's just chemical-meat marinade, so trust them, and don't ask so many questions.

Dr. Novella's silly assertion that "there is nothing left unresolved" is promissory materialism, not real science or even respectable philosophy. It's just materialist dogma. Neuroscience has been an effective method for sorting out some of the easy problems of the mind. Yet unlike dualism, materialist monism fails to even address, let alone solve, the hard problem of the mind: why we are subjects, and not just objects.

Posted by Michael Egnor on Jan 15, 2008 12:00 AM



CORRESPONDENCE

A three-day study 29th May – 1st June 08

Venue Palmyra Beach Hotel, Athens, GR

Dear Friends,

We would like to inform you on the annual meeting "Blavatsky Studies" which will be held for three consecutive days from May 29 to June 1, 2008 and it will be conducted in English.

The subject will be "**The Law of Periodicity**" the second fundamental of the Secret Doctrine.

It will be treated on in respect to various relative topics such as the universal Law, consciousness, cycles, ethics, karma and reincarnation, while participants will share thoughts and questions.

Study is mainly focused on the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and her Masters, as well as on texts presented by subsequent writers who respected and valued the founder's work.

Extensive references will be made to H.P.B.'s "The Key to Theosophy", to W.Judge's "The Ocean of Theosophy" as well as to The Secret Doctrine, Collected Writings and the Voice of the Silence.

We are kindly asking long time students to contribute in the study by 40 minutes introductions related to the above subject. We welcome those interested in participating to let us know until the end of March.

The program will start on Thursday, May 29th at 5.00 pm and will end on Sunday, June 1st, at noon. It will be held in Palmyra Beach Hotel (www.palmyra.gr) Glyfada, Athens. Details for the cost and payment are included in the registration form. A full-fledged program will be announced in the first week of May. There will also be a tour to Acropolis at extra cost.

The hotel is located at a very convenient residential area; public bus and hotel mini-bus available for transfer from/to airport; additionally tramway service links Glyfada to the center of Athens within 30 minutes.

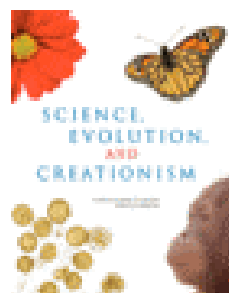
The organizing team of this annual gathering Blavatsky Studies belongs to Athens ULT (United Lodge of Theosophists), while people from other Theosophical groups and T.S. sustain the effort and contribute to it.

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The Facts about Intelligent Design

A Response to the National Academy of Sciences' booklet Science, Evolution, and Creationism



National Academy of Sciences' new anti-ID booklet "Science, Evolution, and Creationism"

I have written an extensive response to the National Academy of Sciences' new anti-ID booklet, Science, Evolution, and Creationism.

Permission is freely granted to reproduce the document for educational use. Below are some excerpts from the rebuttal:

Introduction

A 1982 poll found that only 9% of Americans believed that humans developed through purely natural evolutionary processes. Two years later, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued its first Science and Creationism booklet, stating that science and religion occupy "separate and mutually exclusive realms." Public skepticism of evolution remained high—a 1993 poll found that only 11% of Americans believed that humans developed through purely natural evolutionary processes.

In 1999 the NAS released a second version of *Science and Creationism*, again reassuring the public that "science and religion occupy two separate realms." Still public skepticism remains high—a 2004 poll found that only 13% of Americans believe that humans developed through purely natural evolutionary processes, and a 2006 Zogby Poll found that **about 70% of Americans support including scientific criticism of evolution in public school curricula.**

Fearing the public's unyielding skepticism of evolution, the NAS has now issued another ex cathedra edict promoting misinformation about intelligent design (ID) and bluffs about the scientific status of Darwinian evolution. What follows is a discussion of some of the errors in *Science, Evolution, and Creationism*.

(...)

In contrast to the NAS's assertions, proponents of intelligent design have done experimental tests on the bacterial flagellum showing it is **irreducibly complex**, indicating that it is derived from an intelligent cause:

"In all irreducibly complex systems in which the cause of the system is known by experience or observation, intelligent design or engineering played a role (in) the origin of the system. . . . Although some may argue this is a merely an argument from ignorance, we regard it as an inference to the best explanation . . . given what we know about the powers of intelligence as opposed to strictly natural or material causes."

The flagellum is a self-assembling, irreducibly complex microscopic rotary engine that contains parts known from human technology—such as a rotor, a stator, a propeller, a u-joint, and an engine—yet it functions at a level of efficiency that dwarfs any motor produced by humans. In any other context we would immediately recognize such an information-rich, integrated system as the product of intelligence. The NAS can only dismiss the scientific case for the design of the flagellum by distorting the facts about the structure.

(...)

Conclusion: The NAS dismisses the scientific case for intelligent design.

The NAS claims that "(n)o scientific evidence supports" intelligent design and that intelligent design "reject(s) scientific findings and methods"

because it hopes the public will trust their pronouncements rather than looking at the evidence. On the contrary, each section of this rebuttal has discussed scientific evidence supporting intelligent design and challenging evolution. This evidence—which the NAS largely ignores—comes from fields such as biochemistry, paleontology, genetics, systematics, anthropology, and information theory.

The NAS's new *Science, Evolution, and Creationism* booklet will not reduce public skepticism of evolution because no pronouncements or edicts from the NAS can change the facts of science. For those who are willing to investigate the facts of this issue for themselves and not engage in blind adherence to the pronouncements of scientific authorities, it seems clear that legitimate scientific dissent from Neo-Darwinism is possible. Unfortunately, if science educators follow the NAS's approach, science education will become science indoctrination. Perhaps when it comes to evolution, that's exactly what the NAS wants.

The full response, *The Facts about Intelligent Design: A Response to the National Academy of Sciences' Science, Evolution, and Creationism*, can be read online [here](http://www.discovery.org/a/4405) (<http://www.discovery.org/a/4405>) or downloaded as a PDF at <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/filesDB-download.php?command=download&id=1472>

Thanks to Odin for this sending this article in, Ed.

PUBLISHING NEWS

"Debating Design"

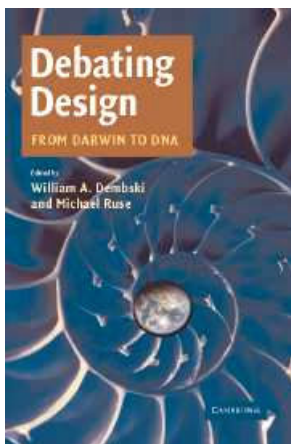
William Dembski, Michael Ruse, and other prominent philosophers provide here a **comprehensive balanced overview** of the debate concerning biological origins - a controversial dialectic since Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859.

Invariably, the source of controversy has been 'design'. Is the appearance of design in organisms (as exhibited in their functional complexity) the result of purely natural forces acting without prevision or teleology?

Or, does the appearance of design signify genuine prevision and teleology, and, if so, is that design empirically detectable and thus open to scientific inquiry?

Four main positions have emerged in response to these questions:

Darwinism, self-organisation, theistic evolution, and intelligent design. The contributors to this volume define their respective positions in an accessible style, inviting readers to draw their own conclusions. Two introductory essays furnish a historical overview of the debate.



- One of the hottest topics in current philosophical thinking
- Only well-balanced, even-handed overview of the debate about intelligent design and biological origins
- Some of the leading contributors to this debate are featured in the volume

'The topic is hot; the editors are superb; the cast of contributors is star-studded.'
Ronald Numbers, The University of Wisconsin

'The editors have done a fine job in amassing the leaders of various fields, all of whom are very well known - theologians, scientists, mathematicians and philosophers.'
Ronald Trigg, University of Warwick

'The two editors have put together an excellent team to discuss a hot topic ... I would expect this to become a standard work of reference on the issue of 'intelligent design'.
John Brooke, University of Oxford

'No other collection offers a comprehensive, balanced, accessible overview like this.'
SirReadaLot.org

'The book is highly recommended.'
Philosophy in Review

Contributors

William Dembski, Michael Ruse, Angus Menuge, Francisco Ayala, Kenneth Miller, Elliott Sober, Stephen Meyer, Robert Pennock, Stuart Kauffman, David Depew, Bruce Weber, Paul Davies, James Barham, John Haught, John Polkinghorne, Keith Ward, Michael Roberts, Richard Swinburne, Walter Bradley, **Michael Behe.**

When the abstract becomes the real

'The Voice of the Silence' introduces us to the idea that Abstractions on one plane become Realities on another.

To some extent we all listen to the One Self and its 'still small voice of conscience', one's higher consciousness, Buddhi. But which of us is brave enough to follow those intuitions and more fully restrain the personal self?

When we do the mind will become free and clear, and rise to that place where it has a true overview, like the mountaineer who looks down onto the planes spread out below.

"Alas, that so few men should profit by the gift, the priceless boon of learning truth, **the right perception of existing things**, the knowledge of non-existent."

(The Voice of the Silence, p 27)

'The right perception of existing things' includes **all** in its aspects, that now cease to be Abstractions to the newly free mind, which begins to sense profound new meanings vis a vis its state of being.

These insights open up vistas of what is possible, inspiring him onward, because "**knowledge gives faith.**"

WISDOM IN ACTION

the astral body, and thoughts on the Supreme

disintegration of the astral body

As to the question about the disintegration of the astral body and the length of time beforehand when it could be seen: My answer was not meant to be definite as to years, except that I gave a period of two years as a long one before the death of the physical body. There are cases—perhaps rare—in which five years before the death of the physical, a clairvoyant has seen the disintegration of the astral beginning. The idea intended to be conveyed is that, regardless of periods of time, if the man is going to die naturally (and that includes by disease), the corruption, disintegrating or breaking up of the astral body may be perceived by those who can see in that way. Hence the question of years is not involved. Violent deaths are not included in this, because the astral in such cases does not disintegrate beforehand. And the way of seeing such a death in advance is by another method altogether. Death from old age—which is the natural close of a cycle—is included in the answer as to death by disease, which might be called the disease of inability to fight off the ordinary breaking-up of the cohesive forces.

thoughts on THAT, the Supreme

You cannot develop the third eye. It is too difficult, and until you have cleared up a good deal more on philosophy it would be useless, and a useless sacrifice is a crime of folly. But here is advice given by many Adepts: every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are THAT, and "THAT" is the Supreme Soul.

For by this practice you will gradually kill the false notion which lurks inside that the false is the true, and the true, the false. By persistence in this, by submitting your daily thoughts each night to the judgment of your Higher Self, you will at last gain light.

on work and 'self denial'

Now as to The Voice of the Silence, and the cycles of woe (undergone by the Arhan who remains to help mankind), it is easy to understand. You must always remember, when reading such things, that terms must be used which the reader will understand. Hence, speaking thus, it must be said that there are such cycles of woe—from our standpoint—just as the fact that I have no amusements, and nothing but work in the T.S., seems a great penance to those who like their pleasures. I, on the contrary, take pleasure and peace in the "self-denial," as they call it.

Therefore, it must follow that he who enters the secret Path finds his peace and pleasure in endless work for ages for Humanity. But, of course, with his added sight and knowledge, he must always be seeing the self-inflicted miseries of men. The mistake you make is to give the person thus "sacrificed" the same small qualities and longings as we now have, whereas the wider sweep and power of soul make what we call sacrifice and woe seem something different. Is not this clear, then? If it were stated otherwise than as the Voice has it, you would find many making the vow and then breaking it: but he who makes the vow with the full idea of its misery will keep it.

from p 115-6 Letters That Have Helped Me,
by W.Q.Judge

Next month:

finding 'the heart, soul and bowels of compassion'