
Introduction to Theosophy

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Objects of the Theosophical Society

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, gender, caste or colour.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

What is Theosophy?

The word is a Greek derivative and means Divine Wisdom and has been in use for centuries.

Within the Theosophical Society it is used to refer to H P Blavatsky's adaptation of the Eastern Esoteric tradition for Western Society. This is presented in The Secret Doctrine and other writings and is based principally on Brahmanical Hinduism and Esoteric Buddhism. H P Blavatsky's knowledge was acquired from members of an inner circle of initiates who are usually referred to as The Masters.

Is Theosophy a Religion?

No. Theosophy requires no faith, has no dogma and everything within it is presented as a hypothesis or ideas for consideration.

How did the Theosophical Society start?

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and her friends William Q Judge and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott founded it in New York in 1875.

The Secret Doctrine

Published in 1888 By Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, this comprehensive work presents for consideration an outline of the divine scheme in operation for the unfoldment of the universe and a view of man's place within that scheme.

Use of Sanskrit Terms

As you will notice, many Theosophical terms are taken from Sanskrit with a few Tibetan ones thrown in. Sanskrit is the ancient religious and philosophical language of India and has the depth to express eastern esoteric concepts and ideas for which there is no equivalent word in any European Language.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THEOSOPHY

These Principles are covered in the Diploma in Theosophy, which the Theosophical Society offers to all. When you first come to Theosophy, you will come across terms you may not have heard before, so below is a basic introduction.

No Dead Matter in the Universe

Theosophy makes no distinction between organic life and mineral. Everything contains life and a level of consciousness although in the case of minerals, not consciousness as we know it,

The Universe is all One Thing

The universe is all one thing and not put together from parts. One single life force animates the universe and all beings and forms are derived from this single source.

A Life Force Seeking Expression

The universal life force is constantly trying to express itself. Eventually this force will develop forms which have the principle of mind, intelligence and self awareness.

What about God?

The concept of God is so far beyond our comprehension that Theosophy just accepts that the principle exists. Some Theosophical writers use the term First Cause or Universal Consciousness.

Spirit and Matter (opposite poles of the same thing)

The act of creation has led to polarization within the universe as it has come into manifestation. This is why pairs of opposites pervade the universe such as Spirit and Matter, light and dark, male and female and positive and negative.

Activity and Rest

Every period of activity has its corresponding period of rest. This is seen in day and night, waking and sleeping, ebb and flow of tides and birth and death. Without this rest and recovery everything in the universe would burn out.

Involution and Evolution

Involution means descending into matter and spirit has to do this to gain experience and evolve. As spiritual beings we have descended into matter by taking physical bodies. We rise out of these bodies when we discard them at the end of our current physical life.

Reincarnation

Following on from the concept of involution, we are engaged in a cycle of death and rebirth, which is known as reincarnation. After a long period in the process we can expect to evolve to a spiritual level where we no longer need to return to physical life.

Karma (Law of Karma)

Often regarded as a system of reward and punishment, but is really a mechanical law of cause and effect, which provides a balancing act to keep the universe in kilter.

The Law of Karma is an inherent law of nature and operates at every level of creation. Under this law every action produces a corresponding effect of equal value.

Karma is important as a teacher and dealing with it is an integral part of our spiritual development. Although we learn through the effects of our actions and think in terms of good and bad karma (pleasant & unpleasant adjustments), the law itself is actually indifferent and mechanical.

Karma & Reincarnation

The effects of our actions can balance out over several lives and therefore karma can only be understood in the context of reincarnation

The Constitution of Man

Man has seven principles, sometime referred to as bodies. These are:

- Atma – The spark of the divine in everybody
- Buddhi – Our individual spiritual identity / soul
- Manas – The Mind principle divided into Higher Mind– spiritual ideals and lower mind– concrete and rational thought.
- Atma, Buddhi and higher Manas form the immortal part of man. The four principles below are dumped at the end of your physical life and you get new ones for next time.
- Kama – The desire principle – emotions
- Prana – The life energy principle - breath
- Linga Sharira – The model body, sometimes called the Astral Body - the template for your physical body
- Sthula Sharira – Physical body – we are all familiar with this one.

After Death States

This is in broadly 2 stages following a review at the point of death of the life just lived. These are:

Kama Loka – where our earth life baggage and attributes are dissolved.

And after another review

Devachan – a state of bliss in which aspirations of the previous life are fulfilled. Unfortunately you can't stay there, you have to come back.

Evolution

Physical forms are the means by which the universal life force or spirit expresses itself and the more complex the form becomes, the greater the potential for the spirit to do find expression. Evolution to a Theosophist is therefore spiritually based and driven.

The Cyclic Nature of Evolution

Theosophy postulates that evolution does not proceed in a linear manner but on a cyclic but ultimately upward spiral. This is true of everything including ourselves and our planet.

Kingdoms of Nature

There are 10 kingdoms of nature each occupying a rung on the evolutionary ladder. From the top these are:-

The 3 Dhyani-Chohan Kingdoms

Dhyani-Chohans (Sanskrit-Tibetan) The Lords of Meditation. There are 3 types with several sub-divisions and they function in a hierarchy. In Christianity they appear as Archangels. They supervise the cosmos and they operate on higher planes than our physical plane.

The Human Kingdom

Theosophy makes a clear distinction between the Human and Animal kingdoms. Humans have acquired a level of consciousness and self-awareness, which gives them a level of self determination in both their own personal evolution and that of the Human race as a whole.

The Animal Kingdom

Plant or Vegetable Kingdom

The Mineral Kingdom

The Mineral is the lowest of the visible kingdoms on the evolutionary scale.

The 3 Elemental Kingdoms

They cannot normally be seen. Elementals work behind the scenes and they directly affect what goes on in the world.

Life of the Universe

In line with the principle of activity and rest, the universe will exist for a given period called a Manvantara and then go into obscurity or rest called a Pralaya. The universe will then return to manifestation. The terms Manvantara and Pralaya are also used in relation to stars and planets. This is like the Big Bang Theory in Science at the beginning of a new period of manifestation (new Universe), followed by the Big Crunch at the end of that period.

Creation of the Universe

The universe effectively wakes up from obscurity (a period of darkness, invisibility) with the latent spirit exerting its influence on matter.

The universe now exists and will run its course

Globes, Chains & Planetary Rounds

Globes

All Globes and stars that we can see in the physical universe are accompanied by six companion Globes of less density which are invisible to us.

Our current Globe and all visible Globes (to us) are the fourth in the Life Impulse's tour of the seven.

Chain (Planetary Chain)

This is a group of seven companion Globes invoking the image of a string of beads.

A Planetary Round

This is the tour by the Life Impulse of all seven Globes.

Root Races

On each Globe of a Planetary Round the human race will appear in seven group reincarnations. In our current form we are the fifth Root Race and there are two more to come. Root Races last several million years.

The principle of Involution or descent into matter applies here. Beginning with the non-physical first Root Race we became more physical and materialistic than we are now by the fourth. We are now on the ascending arc out of matter and the next two Root Races will be less physical and more spiritually developed.

Introductory Reading:

- Tim Wyatt – Cycles of Eternity
- H P Blavatsky – The Key to Theosophy
- Andy Warcup – Cyclic Evolution
- Alcyone (Krishnamurti) – At The Feet of the Master
- Elizabeth Preston and Christmas Humphreys - An Abridgement to the Secret Doctrine
- Adelaide Gardner - Introductory Studies in Theosophy

Websites:

- www.theosophical-society.org.uk

Diploma in Theosophy

- This is a year-long course. It gives you a basic grounding in the main Theosophical Principles.

Higher Diploma in Theosophy

- Students who have completed the Diploma are eligible to apply for the Higher Diploma course.

For further details and an outline of the course modules for either of these courses, please visit the Theosophical Society website above.

Freedom of Thought Resolution

Passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society on December 23, 1924.

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the civilized world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective Faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to apt or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership.

No teacher or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky downwards, has any authority to impose his teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to attach himself to any teacher or to any school of thought which he may choose, but has no right to force his choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office, nor any voter, can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion he may hold, or because of membership in any school of thought to which he may belong. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties.

The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

