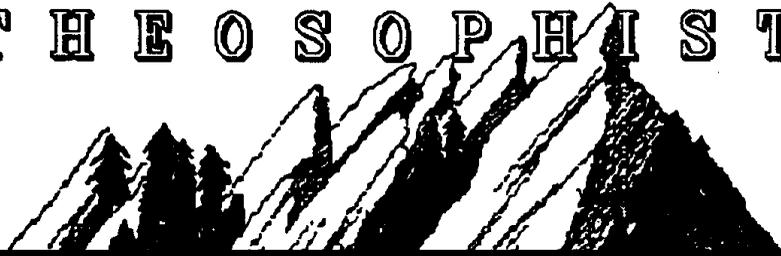


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KNOWLEDGE - ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE

by B.P. Wadia

Outside of initiation, the ideals of contemporary religious thought must always have their wings clipped and remain unable to soar higher; for idealistic as well as realistic thinkers, and even free-thinkers, are but the outcome and the natural product of their respective environments and periods. The ideals of both are only the necessary results of their temperaments, and the outcome of that phase of intellectual progress to which a nation, in its collectivity, has attained. Hence, as already remarked, the highest flights of modern (Western) metaphysics have fallen far short of the truth. (*S.D., I. 326-327*)

A quiet reflection on the above brings the earnest student to these questions: Are there two types of psycho-mental evolution? What is the difference between the thinker who is the outcome and the natural product of his environment and period and the knower of Truth "initiated into perceptive mysteries," referred to in the text which precedes the above quotation?

Are there two fundamental classes of knowledge? What is the difference between that which exists and is



discovered, and that which the evolving intelligence of man invents in ever-renewed attempt which implies abandonment of that which was previously found and accepted?

Outside such initiation -for every thinker there will be a “Thus far shalt thou go and no farther,” mapped out by his intellectual capacity, as clearly and as unmistakably as there is for the progress of any nation or race in its cycle by the law of Karma. (*S.D., I, 326*)

Are we to infer from the above that our very intellectual capacity is also a Karmic limitation? And if philosophers are limited and metaphysics fall “far short of the truth” what fate must befall the poor and humble seeker of the Wisdom - he who earnestly desires to pass on from this dungeon of ignorance into the light of knowledge?

Let the reader meditate on this whole passage; let him read and re-read and then brood over the ideas as they emanate from between the lines and within the words. It is one of those passages in *The Secret Doctrine* which yields regular seasonal harvests in terms of the mental sowing done.

It throws new light on the very intricate maze of human evolution, individual as well as racial, especially in reference to the development of the lower mind.

It also brings some illumination on the problems of Karma, how it grows, how it weaves its fine web of life, imprisoning, and setting free to imprison again, the human soul.

It affords opportunities, not only to conjecture but to understand, how ideas come to birth and die, how ideals live and decay, how knowledge, in its aspect of growth through perpetual change, comes to be regarded as ever-evolving.

On the other hand, it most emphatically unveils that other and higher existence of Knowledge in its aspect of profound stability, wherein ideals and ideas are immortal and change not and which the human soul can discover, when it is “initiated into perceptive mysteries.”

Ours is the era of mind; this Aryan fifth root-race of ours is related to the fifth principle of our human constitution, the mind; intellectual achievements, therefore, dominate all other achievements, Knowledge grows from day to day.

Ours is the age of materialism. This growing and evolving knowledge ever abandoning the old of yesterday forges ahead to fresh fields and pastures new. Tremendous is the power of fecundation of the human mind; the productivity of matter is amazing, and these two beget branches of science, schools of philosophy, artistic expressions and religious sects, in such numbers as take our thoughts to that prodigious breeder -the queen of the white ants.

Intellectual materialism is the source of our economic and industrial materialism; our materialistic politics are rooted in our materialistic philosophy; our materialistic sociology arises from our materialistic religions. The individuals of today who believe

themselves to be beings of matter are “the outcome and the natural product of their environment and period.”

Ours is the epoch of experts. Mental materialism has produced the phenomenon where each class of scientist and scholar works for his own particular branch of science or subject. Physics and physiology, chemistry and psychology, embryology and astronomy, zoology and botany, philology and theology, are unrelated.

We have experts ranging from embryologists, who deal with our bodies before they are born, to “mortologists” who deal with corpses. We have ophthalmologists, otologists, rhinologists, laryngologists and other experts, innumerable.

Our age of mental materialism and its experts can be assigned their proper place in the scheme of things if we apply the teachings of the sentence in the above-quoted passage:

“The ideals of both are only the necessary results of their temperaments, and the outcome of that phase of intellectual progress to which a nation, in its collectivity, has attained.”

But is there no way out of these ever-expanding and ever-deepening divisions of matter where knowledge continuously becomes ignorance and has to be set aside?

The above extract from *The Secret Doctrine* opens a new vista for the thoughtful. Therein we find more than a hint of the

existence of the Immortal Knowledge- ancient and unchanging, constant and consistent. This broad but very vital hint is like unto the illumination which must have been Galileo’s when the light dawned on him that the Earth was not at the centre of the Universe and that it had a diurnal rotation.

Let us pursue the hint which, for the intellectually faithful, the first Volume opens at pages 611-12:-

The exact extent, depth, breadth, and length of the mysteries of Nature are to be found only in Eastern esoteric sciences. So vast and so profound are these that hardly a few, a very few of the highest initiates - those *whose very existence is known but to a small number of Adepts* - are capable of assimilating the knowledge. Yet it is all there....

It is all there. That knowledge is “to be found only in Eastern esoteric sciences.” Who can find it? How can it be obtained?

Eager, hasty, enthusiastic is the student as the great light dawns on him, and with what Joy and deep contentment he continues reading: “. . . mysterious help is given to rare individuals in unraveling its arcana” (p. 612).

At the first reading he even fails to take note of limiting provisos. Yes, “it is all there”, but “one by one facts and processes in Nature’s workshops are *permitted* to find their way into the exact Sciences” (p. 612); yes, “mysterious help is given to rare individuals,” but it is added, “it is at the close of great Cycles, in connection

with racial development, that such events generally take place” (p. 612).

Thus a change of feeling swiftly takes place and our mind flashes the signal “are we then doomed?”

But depression gives place to elation as we read further: “We are at the very close of the cycle of 5,000 years of the present Aryan Kaliyuga; and between this time and 1897 there will be a large rent made in the Veil of Nature, and materialistic science will receive a death-blow.” Has that happened?

Let us avoid the pitfall into which so many students of *The Secret Doctrine* fall. When we are endeavouring to grasp a particular subject treated in this great book we are continuously tempted by other topics, equally important as and even more fascinating than the one we are pursuing.

Our enquiry has been about the Imperishable Knowledge, not if we can have it for ourselves in this day and generation, not to whom and when and how it is given.

We have yet to gain a clear perception of its very existence -what it is. In what form it exists and how it came to be there, are subjects of enquiry which should precede that other search: how can we obtain possession of it in this day and generation?

Here is a profound thought expressed in language which sounds not only assertive but dogmatic; and yet when we read the passages we feel like exclaiming - “Thou speakest as one

having authority.”

The growth of knowledge is generally accepted as a fact, and not without good reasons. We constantly speak of the evolution of ideas, of the advance of science, of the progress of culture. This is very natural indeed, for such expressions are the legitimate result of everyday observation and experience as we contact the achievements of the human mind.

We must not forget, however, that Western philosophers and metaphysicians are not all in agreement about the nature of the issues involved in and raised by the above extracts of *The Secret Doctrine* and other similar ones, some of which we will quote as we proceed with our study.

“Absoluteness” of knowledge as against relativity of knowledge is a persistent subject of enquiry and debate, and Western philosophy has not solved the problem, in fact, is far from it. In the hoary East the case may be found to be somewhat different.

Through the advent of Cartesian propositions in Western philosophy the relativity of knowledge became a subject of keen debate, though the factors involved therein were matters of lively discussion even among the Greeks, and antedating them, among the Asiatics.

It was Immanuel Kant who put into modern currency the Greek term *Noumenon* and expounded the old doctrine of the *Thing-in-itself*; he did so in a limited sense, for he was circumscribed by his environment and

period and could go so far and no further for reasons advanced in the above-quoted sentences.

Kant's world of the Noumena and Plato's world of Ideas have much in common, but Plato, like Pythagoras and unlike Kant, was "initiated into perceptive mysteries" as H.P.B. informs us. Pythagoras also taught "absoluteness" of Knowledge; as a fundamental proposition he put forward the fact of a permanent principle of unity beneath and behind the changing forms and phenomena of the universe.

To this world of archetypal unity belong the Ideas of Plato and the *Things-in-Themselves* of Kant. The evolution(!) of European philosophy can be studied in the evolution of this very word "idea" from the days of Plato to those of Stout and Baldwin.

In the Pythagorean philosophy absolute knowledge may be described as belonging to the unity underlying all forms; in the Platonic, as being composed of the Idea of Knowledge; in the Kantian, it may be regarded as the Knowledge of *Things-in-Themselves*. These concepts, however, should not be taken to mean that an acceptance of or a belief in the "absoluteness" of knowledge destroys the possibility of our accepting at the same time the concept of the relativity of knowledge.

Modern science and Western philosophy have concerned themselves so much with phenomena that the world of Noumena - Archetype - Idea is not only forgotten but abolished from the Universe of discourse.

The Secret Doctrine maintains that the two are not incompatible; that they do exist simultaneously.

One of the services rendered by *The Secret Doctrine* to modern thought is the reintroduction of this concept of the world of archetypes, implying "absoluteness" of knowledge in that sphere of Ideas, as an eternally existing Reality "laid up in the mind of God" as it is said, -of which the knowledge by the senses, the knowledge by feelings, the knowledge by mind, are but reflections, which can and do bear resemblance to the Reality but which also can and do get corrupted.

Knowledge in modern times is defined differently. To fully grasp the proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* that "the exact extent, depth, breadth and length of the mysteries of Nature are ... there" (I. 611-612), it is necessary for us to see what the term knowledge implies in modern culture.

Hobbes says that there are two kinds of knowledge; the one, knowledge original and remembrance of the same; the other, science or knowledge of the truth of proposition, derived from understanding.

It is deduced that a blind man who cannot know light in the first sense can know about light in the second if he studies a treatise on optics.

William James 'however, would insist on feeling being part and parcel of understanding if the latter is to be complete, for he says:

"A blind man may know all about

the sky's blueness, and I may *know* all about your toothache, conceptually; tracing their causes from primeval chaos, and their consequence to the crack of doom. But so long as he has not felt the blueness, nor I the toothache, our knowledge, wide as it is, of these realities will be hollow and inadequate."

Sense impression, and its assimilation by thought and feeling which constitutes understanding, are the two factors which make up knowledge as understood by the modern scholar.

In reference to these two categories of knowledge: (1) recognition and assimilation of impressions and (2) the result of intellectual comparison (in one-or the other or both of which William James's "feeling" must be respected), we encounter another difficulty.

It was Reid who propounded that "when ten men look at the sun or the moon they all see the same individual object," and thus in a way emphasized the value of the first category.

Hamilton answered Reid that "each of these persons sees a different object.... It is not by perception but by a process of reasoning that we connect the objects of sense with the sphere of immediate knowledge."

Thus we come to the sphere of immediate knowledge to be perceived and assimilated by the senses, and the sphere of understanding to be contacted by intellectual reasoning - the world of senses and the world of mind.

Locke furnishes the view that the conscious experience of the individual is the result of interaction between the individual mind and the universe of things, but he holds, as does Hume, that the work of the mind was unreal because it was "made by" man and not "given to" man. The work of mind thus represents "a subjective creation, not an objective fact."

The logical deductions from the teachings of Locke and Hume drawn by a writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* are of more than passing interest for us.

He refers to the universally recognized distinction "between the real and 'mere ideas'" and adds that "This (obviously valid) distinction logically involves the consequence that the object, or content, of knowledge, viz., reality' is an intelligible ideal reality, a system of thought relations, a spiritual cosmos.

How is the existence of this ideal whole to be accounted for? Only by the existence of some 'principle which renders all relations possible and is itself determined by none of them'; an eternal self-consciousness which knows in whole what we know in part.

To God the world is, to man the world *becomes*. Human experience is God gradually made manifest."

From *Studies in The Secret Doctrine*, (Book-I) by B.P. Wadia, Theosophy Company (India), 40 New Marine Lines, Bombay 400020

SECRET DOCTRINE QUESTION
AND ANSWER SECTION

CONDUCTED By
GEOFFREY A. BARBORKA

Readers of The Canadian Theosophist are invited to participate in this feature by sending their questions clo The Editors to be forwarded to Mr. Barborka.

Question. A Chhaya is called a Shadow and a Kama-rupa is often termed a Shade. Are these terms synonymous?

Answer. Not in Sanskrit, because each word has a specific meaning.

However, in English both shadow and shade are synonymous, because both are derived from the Anglo-Saxon *sceadu*, and both have the same dictionary definitions, namely, a definite area of shade cast upon a surface by a body intercepting the light rays.

Listed under the seventh meaning of shadow is the definition: ghost, phantom. Listed under the eighth meaning of shade is: phantom, ghost, specter, spirit. In Sanskrit, chhaya signifies shadow or shade; but the meaning of kama-rupa is entirely different: kama, desire; rupa, form; literally the desire-form -which resides in the "Desire-world" or Kama-loka.

The term chhaya is applied to the first human shapes or bodies, because they represented the shadows of their progenitors, the

Lunar Pitris, which were produced at the commencement of the Fourth Round on the Fourth Globe (or Globe D, our Earth).

After undergoing seven cycles of evolution, the First Root-Race -- called the Chhaya Race -- became assimilated in the Second Root-Race.

The Second Root-Race still did not have a bony structure and after seven cyclic phases it became assimilated in the Third Root-Race. By that time the Chhaya-Race no longer appeared on earth.

It was not until the era of the Third Root-Race that the Kama-rupa became a necessary phase in the developmental processes of the human race -- especially so in connection with the awakening of the Manas-Principle.

It should be borne in mind that the Kama-rupa does not come into being, or does not become manifest on the astral plane, until after the death of the physical vehicle. Therefore, while the Kama-rupa may be termed a shade (or phantom, or eidolon, or spook, or ghost, or specter, or spirit) for lack of a specific term in English, the two Sanskrit words are explicit and convey a precise meaning.

Question. Please explain the meaning of the word *Sishta*.

Answer. *Sishta* (pronounced *Shishta*) is a term infrequently met with, yet an understand-

ing of its significance is of great importance in comprehending the Doctrine of the Rounds.

Sishta is a Sanskrit word, derived from the verbal root sish, meaning to be left, to remain; hence the word literally means “the remainders”. Thus, the word conveys a key thought, which may be explained in this manner.

In connection with the Doctrine of the Rounds the idea is presented that the hosts of monads pursuing the Circle of Necessity must accomplish seven cycles on each one of the seven globes of a planetary chain.

With specific reference to the Human Kingdom, the accomplishment of seven cycles on one globe of the chain is the equivalent of the completion of seven Root-Races, or fulfilling one Globe Round.

Seven cycles on each one of the seven Globes are equivalent to one Planetary Round. When one Globe Round has been completed the monadic host pertaining to the Human Kingdom leaves that globe and passes on to the next globe of the chain in order to accomplish seven cycles on the next sphere.

However, while the main host has advanced to its next stage on the cyclic journey, in order to continue its cycle of evolution of the Round activity, a select few, referred to as the Great Elect, or the divine mortals, are left behind on the globe that has been vacated.

Because of thus having remained behind,

they are termed Sishtas. Their function consists in maintaining the human form and characteristics which have been evolved during the seven cycles of activity, which are referred to as Root-Races. Meanwhile, “night” settles over the vacated globe and a period of dormancy ensues. This rest period was called a period of obscurity by A. P. Sinnett.

Referring now to our present sphere, which is the fourth globe of the Earth-Chain, and termed Globe D, the human host of monads is undergoing its fifth cycle in the series of seven, or is evolving in the Fifth Root-Race. Furthermore, the human host is engaged in accomplishing its Fourth Planetary Round.

This signifies that the Sishtas who were left as remainders when the prior globe was vacated, called Globe C, still remain on that sphere. They will continue to remain on Globe C until the host of human monads return to Globe C during the cycle of the fifth planetary round.

It should be borne in mind that the “Great Elect” are likewise stationed on Globe A and Globe B. Similarly on the globes pertaining to the Ascending Arc, namely Globes E, F and G, appropriate representative Sishtas are maintaining their vigil.

The Sishtas are regarded as divine mortals, who will be the future seed of humanity when the time arrives for the human host to transfer to the globe on which the Sishtas are stationed. (S.D. II, 6, or and 3rd

eds.; III, 20 6 vol. ed.)

Question. Can you give any additional information in regard to the phrase “a Day of the Great Breath”?

Answer. The phrase occurs in a citation from one of the Commentaries on the Stanzas of Dzyan: “the pole-star has its watchful eye upon it [the sacred land], from the dawn to the close of the twilight of ‘a day’ of the GREAT BREATH.” (S.D. II, 6, or and 3rd eds.; III, 20 6 vol. ed.)

A footnote was added stating that in India this was called a Day of Brahma. The Day of Brahma is further defined as equivalent to 1,000 Maha-yugas.

The computation of a Maha-yuga is found by adding the period covered by the four yugas: namely,

the Kali-yuga-	432,000 years;
the Dvapara-yuga	864,000 years;
the Treta-yuga	1,296,000 years;
the Krita-yuga	1,728,000 years.

The sum of the four yugas is 4,320,000 years.

Thus the length of a Day of Brahma is 4,320,000,000 years

Attention has been directed to the “Day” of the Great Breath. In order to understand the latter term one must become familiar with some of the mystical ideas presented in *The Secret Doctrine*. For instance, an Occult Catechism is cited:

“What is it that ever is? Space, the eternal Anupadaka [parentless].

What is it that ever was? The Germ in the Root.

What is it that is ever coming and going? The Great Breath.

Then, there are three Eternals?

No, the three are one.

That which ever is is one, that which ever was is one, that which is ever being and becoming is also one: and this is Space.”

(S.D. I, 11; I, 39-40 3rd ed.; I, 77 6 vol. ed.)

An explanation is provided in the subsequent pages, but the following passage will clarify the concept in regard to the Great Breath:

“The appearance and disappearance of the Universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of the ‘Great Breath,’ which is eternal, and which, being Motion, is one of the three aspects of the Absolute -- Abstract Space and Duration being the other two. When the ‘Great Breath’ is projected, it is called the Divine Breath, and is regarded as the breathing of the Unknowable Deity -- the One Existence -- which breathes out a thought, as it were, which becomes the Kosmos. So also is it when the Divine Breath is inspired again the Universe disappears into the bosom of ‘the Great Mother,’ who then sleeps ‘wrapped in her invisible robes.’” (S.D. I, 43; I 74 3rd ed.; I, 115-6 6 vol. ed.)

From *The Canadian Theosophist* Vol. 47, No. 2, June 1966

Ethics: For Wimps only?
A Video from Bill Moyers'
World of Ideas series.

Bill Moyers and Michael Josephson consider ethics from the viewpoint of how various problems in contemporary social and business life confront us with questions of discriminating "right action," in situations where the ethical choices are not so clear-cut.

As the video began, Moyers asked Josephson whether he thought that in view of the assassinations of the Kennedys and widespread corruption in high places, America had lost its moral bearings.

In reply, Josephson suggested that we, as a people, have had cycles in which we have been less idealistic than in previous times, and expressed optimism that we would eventually return to higher ethical standards.

To say that history repeats itself, is to acknowledge the law of cycles. I am reminded of the powerful passage in Mahatma Letter 38 in which Master Morya says, with reference to the decline of Indian civilization:

There was a time, when from sea to sea, from the mountains and deserts of the north to the grand woods and downs of Ceylon, there was but one faith, one rallying cry - to save humanity from the miseries of ignorance in the name of Him [Lord Buddha] who first taught the solidarity of all men.

How is it now? Where is the

grandeur of our people and of the one Truth? These, you may say, are beautiful visions which were once realities on earth, but have flitted away like the light of a summer's evening.

Yes; and now we are in the midst of a conflicting people, of an obstinate, ignorant people seeking to know the truth yet not able to find it, for each seeks it only for his own private benefit and gratification, without giving one thought to others.

Will you, or rather they, never see the true meaning and explanation of that great wreck and desolation which has come to our land and threatens all lands - yours [England] first of all? It is *selfishness* and *exclusiveness* that killed ours, and it is selfishness and exclusiveness that will kill yours - which has in addition some other defects which I will not name.

The world has clouded the light of true knowledge, and *selfishness* will not allow its resurrection, for it excludes and will not recognize the whole fellowship of all those who were born under the same immutable natural law. [*Mahatma Letters* 3rd. ed., pp. 248-49]

They then discussed and sought to arrive at the rationale underlying ethical behavior - i.e., "why behave ethically?"

Josephson related how, as a student in law school, he learned that "an attorney doesn't lie

- not because lying is unethical but because it is unprofessional.” This leads, he said; “to a sort of ‘legal minimalism’ in which anything that is lawful is ethical. ... If good ethics is good business - then it is business and not ethics.”

When Moyers asked Josephson; “Why be ethical?,” the latter replied; “Because it is the right thing to do; Every enlightened culture, every civilization has had a sense of right and wrong. [Historically], there has always been agreement that [ethics] is based on the values of compassion, honesty, fairness and accountability.” “These values,” he said, “were recognized by Greek and Chinese philosophers long before the beginnings of Christianity.”

It is interesting to note here that in arguing that ethics has a secular basis - apart from religion - Josephson is, in effect, claiming the existence of “innate ideas” in the collective unconsciousness of the race. Listen to what theosophy has to say about these “innate ideas” in Mahatma Letter 9:

These, [the highest Planetary Spirits; those who can no longer err], appear on Earth but at the origin of every new human kind; at the junction of, and the close of the two ends of the great cycle. And, they remain with man no longer than the time required for the eternal truths they teach to be impressed so forcibly upon the plastic minds of the new races as to warrant them from being lost or entirely forgotten in ages hereafter, by the forthcoming generations. The mission of the Planetary Spirit is to strike the KEY NOTE OF TRUTH. Once he

has directed the vibration of the latter to run its course uninterrupted along the catenation of that race and to the end of the cycle - the denizen of the highest inhabited sphere disappears from the surface of the planet - till the following “resurrection of flesh.” The vibrations of Primitive Truth are what your philosophers term “innate ideas.” [pp., 40-41]

Later, Josephson taught a course in Ethics in law school; what the minimum legal requirements were, and how to circumvent them, etc. Then his son was born and his attitude changed when he reflected on the inconsistency between the cynical approach he took in his class and the better world that he hoped his son would grow up into. He began requiring his students to examine all possible alternatives in problem situations until a completely ethical choice was found.

But what about situations where the choices are not clearly ethical or non ethical - what about the gray areas? “There are two levels of ethical decision making,” Josephson says; “first distinguish the clearly unethical decisions from the ethical ones - which rules out lying, stealing and injuring others.”

“Then there is the more subtle level where one must choose between ethical values, i.e., between truth and fairness - truth and loyalty, etc. You have to be sensitive to what your values are.”

“The great danger,” he says, “is when one begins a rationalizing process in saying for instance; ‘well this is really for my family’ ...”

This kind of selective rationalization can clearly be seen to be false in the light of theosophical ethics because it seeks to serve the preferred group of people - "us" - to the neglect of "them," the outsiders. Whenever considerations are based on "us versus them," there will be selfishness and a failure to acknowledge the principle of Universal Brotherhood and the oneness of all life.

As H.P. Blavatsky said;

"With right knowledge, or at any rate, the conviction that our neighbors would no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, two thirds of the world's evil would vanish into thin air. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to work through. It is the constant presence on our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, societies, tribes and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of 'the ways of Providence.' [*Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 644]

"But for many people - the gangs, the chronically unemployed, the underclass, it's not an ethical society," Moyers pointed out, "and while not excusing them - they are in the condition they are in because of the way that society is run, regulated and ruled."

"Yet the solution they have made has only made the problem worse," replied Josephson.

So how does the "ethical" person look at and deal with the problem of those "outside the system" who, through unscrupulous methods, seem to be "winning" - at least in material terms?

"Perhaps," offered Josephson, "we will have to look at the problem from the other side and acknowledge that are some people who, because of the unfortunate circumstances they are in, we can't expect to be as ethical as we'd like them to be - and it's our responsibility to fix that ... to make conditions fairer and more open ... this is our responsibility as ethical people. But each person is accountable [for their own actions], and I'm not going to buy into their excuses."

"But," he reflected, "with caring and generosity, fairness and honesty will come. There will always be rogues - let's have a few more heroes."

The case of Oliver North, it seems, is in a rather unique class. Here is a man, a career military officer who, for supposedly "patriotic" motives, admitted shredding documents, lying to Congress, to his peers and perhaps to the President and yet is considered a hero by many Americans!

For Josephson, this is one of the toughest ethical issues - for this is not the case of a person acting out of the usual motives of self-indulgence or self-protection - he was acting out of a "noble motive."

[At least it has been considered "noble," without deeper examination. We consider this

from a theosophical viewpoint below.]

In Josephson's view, in violating the law and lying, he imposed his view of the world on everyone else and therefore denied to the people and to the Congress their right [to know the truth.] This is a most valuable observation; for the telling of a lie is a violation of another person's right to the truth! Lies are a form of coercion.

But what of Oliver North's so called "Noble and Patriotic" motives, from the viewpoint we might expect of the Masters of Wisdom? His objective, we have been told, was to find ways and means to keep the Nicaraguan Contras funded and supplied at a time when the Congress had voted to cut off and had expressly forbidden such funding and support.

Beyond the fact that in so doing, he violated the law; from the standpoint of Occultism and theosophical principles, in making weapons available to Iran, he promoted Iran's ability to make war on Iraq and by funneling the proceeds of the sales to the Contras, promoted another war in Nicaragua - both nations with which the U.S. was officially at peace.

Theosophically speaking, the promoting of war is not a "noble motive," whether as an end or as a means to an end. It is only considered to be so by those who, caught up in the illusions of fear and selfishness, place nationalistic interests above the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity and are thereby willing to harm others.

The final issue considered in the video is the larger issue that these things are allowed to go on without public outrage and yet the congressmen are re-elected to office while a large percentage of the public is apparently too disillusioned to vote.

Josephson sees this as an indication that we as a people are not demanding enough of our elected officials, and because of the apathy of those who could make a difference, selfish special interest groups are electing candidates who will serve those selfish interests at the expense of the common good.

What then, can an ethical person do when there seems little choice between the candidates of the two major political parties? It seems to this editor that the ethical choices are made in the primaries and therefore in order to have a voice in the democratic process, one must get involved in the party primaries where the candidates of those parties are chosen.

Too often, one feels compelled to vote for the candidate who seems the lesser of two evils, lest -the worse should win.

Another course of action is write letters to Congressmen, Senators and the President expressing our opinion on ethical issues. We can join with local "grassroots" citizen organizations working to promote an end to the arms race and other peace initiatives. These are our responsibilities as ethical citizens and practical Theosophists.

Reprinted from *The High Country Newsletter*, October 1988

Plenty Report

Dear Friends of Plenty,

On Tuesday, October 22, in the town of Punta Gorda, southern Belize, on the coast of the normally tranquil Caribbean, Plenty soy technician, Gomier Longville and I were nailing plywood over the windows of our office and soy center, 75 feet from the gently lapping surf. We had been hearing about a monster hurricane, with another of those disarmingly unthreatening names, “Mitch.”

Shouldn't they start calling these things Adolph, Genghis, or Jack the Ripper? Somehow, “Mitch,” “Fifi,” “Gilbert,” and “Georges” don't carry enough sense of impending disaster.

But we were on the alert, as was the entire country of Belize. Hurricane watchers, studying their computer models predicted that Mitch was headed right for us and would be landing in our face sometime the next day. By now shelters were being identified in town, but advisories cautioned against staying on the coast. “You have a 90% better chance of surviving a hurricane of this magnitude if you move inland.”

Rahul and Erika, two Plenty volunteers were renting an apartment in a massive concrete building, 25 feet above sea level, which is where we moved all our computers, files and books.

While we put soy center appliances up on

blocks, we were well aware that if this hurricane hit us with category 5 winds and sea surge, our office and soy center would end up somewhere out beyond the cayes with the barracuda and conch.

As I drove through town that afternoon, I thought there might not be much left of Punta Gorda in a couple days. Most houses are low and made of wood. Most people were not planning to go anywhere. They would wait it out.

Poor people tend to be more fatalistic about death than people of means. Maybe because they live closer to the edge. “If it's my time, then there's little I can do about it,” they will say.

I remember when we had a Plenty office in Washington, DC and Three Mile Island was having meltdown of unknown proportions. We were close enough to Harrisburg that we were aware that if she blew, we would be in radiation soup. We had all our vehicles' gas tanks topped off, ready to flee.

Our neighbors, on the other hand, mostly African Americans and Mexican immigrants, ignored the excitement and went about their business as usual. If anything, they seemed to party a bit louder and later into the night, but otherwise, they ignored the information that kept us tuned in to the radio on the edge of our seats.

Northern Belize was a bit more responsive to impending Mitch than Punta Gorda. Seventy-five thousand people evacuated the coastal towns and villages and Belize

City and moved into the center of the country, crowded into shelters with pets and a few belongings. Many of them were there for four days before the all clear was sounded.

Meanwhile, Mitch sat on the coast of Honduras like a murderous, ill-tempered intruder who refuses to leave and then, unpredictably, with winds slowing to tropical storm levels, moved into Honduras to dump its cargo of torrential rain, enormous amounts of water that had been brought all the way from Africa.

If you saw satellite photos of this storm, you realize what a monstrous beast it was. Thousands of people lost their lives in floods and mudslides. The cost in crops and agricultural land is yet to be determined, but after the immediate emergencies are tended to, food shortages will be among the problems for years to come.

When an earthquake ravaged Guatemala in 1976, killing 23,000 people and leaving a million homeless, the disaster was made personal for us because of the first-hand reports we were getting from the scene over our ham radio. This time, the disaster was made personal because we had family and friends in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala who were directly affected.

While calamities like hurricanes and earthquakes are “acts of God,” and beyond our human abilities to prevent, grinding poverty is centuries old and not immune to human intervention.

One of the things that you will be hearing more about in the aftermath of Mitch is how

many of the deaths were preventable, because many of the floods and mudslides were made far worse by the deforestation that, in recent years, is costing Honduras and Nicaragua hundreds of thousands of acres of forest cover every year.

The culprits are mainly logging and the export banana industry and, increasingly, slash and burn agriculture and the cutting of trees for firewood.

Driving these culprits is the underlying destructive force we can identify simply as poverty. These are countries with post-colonial economies and backbreaking mountains of debt to international lenders forced to cough up their natural resources just to survive. They have little to offer the industrial pipers other than their land and trees which, besides being essential to their self-sufficiency and environmental health, also happen to be some of the only defenses against floods and mudslides.

In the beginning, Plenty described itself as a “relief and development agency.” Since the Guatemala earthquake, Plenty’s work is more accurately described as “development,” usually preceded by the adjective “alternative” to differentiate from, say, a corporation draining wetlands to build condos, or the World Bank laying down roads across the Amazon rainforest. “Relief” is what the Red Cross and the US Army do better than most.

I still remember the Chinook helicopters in Guatemala ferrying food and potable water to remote villages cut off from vehicle traffic because roads or bridges were destroyed. In fact, one could make a compelling argument for

turning the US military into the world's most effective emergency relief organization (right after nations give up war as a means of solving disputes).

We have endless admiration for the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders and the Army Corps of Engineers working heroically on the frontlines of the most dreadful natural and man-made disasters that occur.

We should spare no expense to make sure they have the tools and resources to do this work. Plenty, on the other hand, is not equipped for relief work.

Our role is to help mitigate the disasters before they happen. We can do this if we contribute to creating alternatives to selling the forests for survival and turning the land into chemical-drenched, erosion-prone banana plantations.

This is the focus of our work in Central America and, although Mitch has made that work more difficult, we can only hope that governments and corporations pick up on this absolutely essential lesson: the wise bird doesn't cut the branch its nest is sitting on.

In the short term, however, Plenty cannot ignore some of the immediate needs in the wake of the hurricane. We will focus our response on efforts directly supporting the communities and organizations we have already been working with.

Casta Calderon is the Nicaraguan wife of Plenty Board Member and Soy Technician. Chuck Haren. They will be traveling to Guatemala

and Nicaragua in December to assess the situation and help guide Plenty's response.

We have set up a fund within Plenty for those who would like to contribute to this response. Most likely, it will be focused on helping rebuild the food supply by assisting farmers to reclaim their fields for planting.

There will be an urgent need for seed and equipment that was lost to the flooding. The agricultural base of Honduras and Nicaragua will take years to recover, and we would recommend that these nations seriously consider phasing out two industries that they can no longer afford if they want to guard against more and worse disasters in the future, specifically, the banana export industry and foreign-controlled logging.

Plenty will continue to encourage and support the efforts of farmers to move away from slash and burn agriculture to more organic, environmentally-friendly methods of growing food.

And we will continue to assist the development of more sustainable, local, community-based economies.

I want to take a minute to thank you, our donors and supporters, friends, partners and volunteers. Some of you are all of those, but every one of you is essential to keeping Plenty alive, engaged and effective. When we count our blessings, we start with you.

Peter Schweitzer
Executive Director

Community Health Care in Southern Belize. By Erika Schroeder, EMT

In Belize automobile horns are used as a form of communication that can mean anything from “just so you know that I am behind you” to “I am selling some thing you don’t want to miss.” As we drove through San Marcos Sister Marion announced our arrival by blaring the horn and in our wake the inhabitants of the thatch houses rushed toward the road to investigate. I couldn’t help laughing as she informed everyone within outing range that “the doctor is here.”

Although San Marcos is very close to Punta Gorda Town, it is well known as the Toledo District village with the most severe health problems. Similar to many of the villages in Toledo District, the people of San Marcos have not conformed to the western practice of using latrines. San Marcos is especially bad and thus the nickname for the village refers to the human feces that litter the ground.

Ironically enough, the sanitation problems within the village discourage many of the local public health workers from visiting the village. This “house call” was probably the first time a doctor had visited the village since the Cholera epidemic struck three years prior.

An appointment with one of the three doctors in Toledo usually requires a trip to PG and an all day wait in the crowded halls of the hospital. Needless to say, people materialized out of the woodwork to see the doctor. After our procession through town, we stopped the car at the village health post - a small cement

building containing nothing more than the local insect population. Before we could open the doors to unload our medical paraphernalia, the car was surrounded Mayan school children who had recently finished classes for the day, their big brown eyes watching our every move.

As the line formed out the door, we started to examine patients as efficiently as possible.

Our posse consisted of: Dr. Raymond Ford, a pediatrician from Charlottesville; Sister Marion Joseph, a nurse practitioner who maintains a clinic in the neighboring village of Big Falls; Dominga Choco, a Kek’chi Mayan woman who has worked with Sister Marion for 13 years. She functions as a nurse and an invaluable translator; and myself, an EMT.

Chicken Pox had recently swept the village and thus many of the children had severe secondary skin infections. Other common ailments included Otitis, parasites, fever, lesions and malnutrition. Luckily, the doctor traveled with a supply of vitamins, a luxury most families cannot afford.

Although the people of San Marcos were fortunate to have a doctor visit that day, on most days they are not so lucky. Four villages within the Toledo District of Belize are staffed by a nurse - the remaining 32 villages receive very little continuous care.

A few of the villages have midwives and skilled bush doctors who are adept at treating certain ailments such as snakebites. There are also Community Health Care Workers who were trained to care for minor ailments working in 18 of the villages, however they have not had

any refresher training since 1991 and have consequently lost their confidence to administer treatment. Despite the hard work of the various health care workers, many villagers who are sick or injured, such as the ones we saw in San Marcos, are left with no one to turn to.

Rather than being discouraged by what I have found here, most of my work has been very encouraging. Primary care is one of the principal initiatives of the government recently voted into power and Toledo has been identified as an area of concern.

The man who coordinates the Community Health Care Workers was recently asked by the Minister of Health to outline what is necessary to revamp the program, including training 10 new health care workers. I am assisting him with this proposal as well as helping him to prepare a workshop for the existing health care workers.

Most importantly, I have had several discussions with the new District Medical Officer for Toledo regarding his perspective on the District's needs and how we could help. He is very excited by the prospect of Plenty International taking an active role in improving health conditions in southern Belize.

Plenty International

is a nongovernmental alternative development organization. Donations to PLENTY are tax deductible.

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Editor's Note

Please accept my apology for the November issue being a month late. Your HCT editor recently passed his 73rd birthday, a non-observance, also in the 14th year of dealing with Parkinson's disease which slows down the simplest of tasks, like tying one's shoes. And yet, I'm still here. As Richard Bach says in *Illusions*: "If you're wondering if your work on earth is finished -- if you're still alive isn't."

Yesterday afternoon, just as I was trying to fill this issue out to 20 pages, the mail arrived with a small brown envelope bearing postage stamps featuring Queen Elizabeth. The envelope contained the booklet, *Trilogy* and the following letter, which we print verbatim, from Geoffery Farthing of England.

We plan to print *Trilogy* serially, in installments because of the importance we attribute to it.

This will probably take eight months or so. Other theosophical publications are welcome to reprint the following letter and the installments of *Trilogy*, giving source credit to the HCT.

A local publication, *Planetary Connections*, emanating from Ft. Collins Colorado, carried a most interesting article on the occult phenomena of "Crop Circles," in Southern England, which we will reprint in the January 1999 HCT when the photo-graphics have arrived from the author. Stay tuned!

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26 November 1998

To all General Councillors and others
concerned

Dear Fellow Member,

For the last two years I have communicated with you by way of a Manifesto and a Supplement to it. Both of these had no other motive than to promote the welfare of the Society into the future and to emphasize the responsibility that was placed upon it to promote a knowledge of Theosophy.

Both the Manifesto and the Supplement were written against a background of a complete belief and faith in the Masters of the Wisdom who were responsible for the founding of the Theosophical Society, and a recognition of their intentions for it. Also in mind was their selection of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky to carry out not only the launching of the Society into the world in 1875 but through her writings the dissemination of so much of the Ancient Wisdom as they felt prepared to make available to mankind at that time.

This was done through the books written by H.P.B., much Influenced by the

Masters, and her numerous other writings. These were the source of present-day Theosophy; we have no other.

What came later was largely commentary on the original. Some was of high quality based on the classics; some derived from psychic sources and was very much personalized.

The authors of these works did not have the intimate and continuous connection with the Masters to the same extent that H.P.B. had. It was this close relationship with her Masters that give her writings their authenticity.

It is said in *The Secret Doctrine* that some of the Information then being given out was for the first time in the world's history. It is very important that this statement be given its full value. This was the advent in the world of a teaching which had not been made public before. It was an epoch-making event of a magnitude at least as great as the advent of Jesus and his teaching.

No religious teachers prior to the two Masters responsible for the founding of our Society had ever before made available information about the nature of the Universe and mankind, as a justification of their teachings and the following scriptural writings.

Until the advent of Theosophy all that had been made available of the Ancient Wisdom was in glyph, symbol or parable. The Masters'

writings were in plain language. They did state, however, quite clearly, that only a small portion of their vast esoteric lore was then being given out. Nevertheless, as H.P.B. said in the introduction to the S.D., it was a comprehensive, whole doctrine.

If one believes implicitly in the Masters and their wisdom and powers, one has to accept that they knew what they were doing in making this information available and in the form they did it. They knew the present state of humanity; they knew the general levels of comprehension of mankind in the world. They foresaw that English was going to be the most commonly spoken language for generations to come.

It is not that they addressed their message wholly to the western world. What they had to say was fresh information, given to the western peoples; to the eastern peoples it constituted material explanatory of many of their old time-honoured writings.

They also knew the level of intelligence of the people to whom their works were addressed, and who would learn and hopefully assimilate the truths that they contained. A common complaint since then is that their message was couched in terms too difficult for the ordinary person to understand, or even to read.

The message was, however, obviously for those who could understand in the same way Jesus gave his message to his disciples, to

a chosen few:

“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”

Similarly when Jesus was facing the prospect of crucifixion he said to his disciples that he would .. give you another Counsellor.... even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive”.

H.P.B. tells us that in this context ‘the world’ is the generality of people who have in no way concerned themselves with the deep problems of existence and have not yet developed the faculties for ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ in the sense of the words used by Jesus.

Surely within our Theosophical Society there are those with the necessary powers of comprehension to read our massive literature, who can ‘hear’ and ‘see’ what is contained in it.

It would appear that few of those who wrote what has become known as the ‘second generation’ theosophical literature did, in fact, so ‘hear’ and ‘see’. They conveyed the message in the terms with which they were familiar, those of the old time philosophies and religions but Theosophy is not a reiteration of these. It is NEW.

Herewith is a small booklet entitled ‘A

Trilogy' written for those who have not familiarized themselves with either the stories behind the writing of our original literature, or its contents, or the intentions behind the founding of the Theosophical Society.

The booklet describes some of the very extraordinary happenings behind the writing of *Isis Unveiled* and also the very great sacrifice demanded of H.P.B., for many years, in the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*. So far, neither of these has seemingly been fully appreciated, particularly by those members of the Society who have joined in the last few decades or so.

These stories in themselves give a background to the birth of this new world teaching. They also indicate something of what is demanded of us if we would carry on the work which was then begun. At the very least we must first acquaint ourselves with the teachings contained in those massive literary works.

It is not suggested that this is a responsibility placed on every member of the Theosophical Society. The Society can be regarded as one for seekers after truth at any level at which they may be operating. He or she is under no obligation to do any study, or even to promote the well-being of the Society.

The only obligation such people undertake is to further the idea of universal brotherhood and to subscribe to the three objects.

These objects do not require anyone to study the Theosophy as given us by the Masters. But it is surely expected that every one of us in the Society who is helping to promote the epoch-making message uttered by the Masters is acquainted with it. No one can possibly hand on to future generations a message they do not themselves adequately possess. There is in our literature a sufficiency of indications to us that this is what was intended.

This is not a personal message, it is a reiteration of what anyone who reads the original literature of the Society, in the writings of H.P.B. and of the Masters will find stated over and over again.

The charge laid upon us is abundantly clear; the dissemination of these teachings is the prime responsibility of those who have access to them, can understand them and appreciate their immense value to humanity.

The Society was not founded for us to substitute anything for these teachings and call it Theosophy.

The Maha Chohan, the then Master of Masters, indicated that the Society was to be Corner Stone of the future religions of humanity. This is an assignment of the utmost importance and magnitude.

How is our Society to be established to be effectively such a Corner Stone? A discussion of a question of this magnitude is

surely worth the time of the General Council. It is surely an obligation upon its members, and all concerned members of the Society as a whole.

Yours fraternally,
G A Farthing Ex-General Secretary of
the English Section

AN EXPLANATORY NOTE

Some of the principal differences between the original Master/H.P.B. literature and that which came later are:

1. The constitution of the Earth Chain of Globes (Mars and Mercury?).
2. The numbering and classification of the cosmic planes and the human principles. (The introduction of the etheric double).
3. The descriptions of the various planes, particularly the Astral (corresponding to the 4th H.P.B. plane, Kama).
4. The after-death states (per C.W.L., not A.B.).
5. The Inconsistency of data etc. with those given in the Tables of Correspondences in the Instructions to H.P.B's Inner Group, e.g. Adi and Anupadaka are tattvas whereas in second generation literature they are

cosmic planes. In spite of these discrepancies, books containing them continue to be produced and their sale promoted by the Society.

The Masters account of the after death states given in the Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett is written up in my book *When We Die*; further, all the information given about these and matters pertaining thereto in the whole of the H.P.B./Masters literature is given in my book *After Death Consciousness and Processes*.

The idea of the Corner Stone as the intended role of the T.S. in the future is of the utmost importance. In *The Secret Doctrine* there is a recurrent theme that man's destiny is to become free of the limitations of the personality, and to unfold his consciousness into that of the Ego, or immortal Individuality. This is of course the ultimate religious aim. An indication of this is to be seen in what is said about Maya in both the *Collected Writings* and *The Secret Doctrine*. I have extracted the relevant passages, together with references; a copy of this material is available on application to me c/o The Theosophical Society in London, 50 Gloucester Place, London W1H 4EA.

G.A. Farthing
November 1998

Rules of Conduct

THE way to become like unto the Great Ones is by beginning to become like unto them. Just that. Would you like a few rules? I will give them to you; but as soon as the brain-mind begins to think about rules, it begins to ask questions and make objections and exceptions.

Nevertheless, here they are. Is your conduct in your daily life such that when you lie down to sleep at night, you can review the events of the day just closing and say to yourself: this I have done well; that I might have done better; that was not well done?

And take your discoveries to yourself so to heart that when the next day dawns, and you may be faced with the same temptations, the end of the second day will find you reclining on your couch more at peace with yourself?

Tell the truth always, except when telling the truth will bring injury and suffering to others. Then be compassionate and suffer yourself in silence.

In attaining what you desire, is there danger that you can obtain it, get it, procure it, achieve it, only at the cost of suffering or loss to others; and even then that you can get it, attain it, achieve it, procure it, only by double dealing, what in the west is called the double-cross?

Are you large enough to refuse to take that step downwards, it may be the first, towards the Pit?

Do you realize that the next step, if you take that first step downwards, will be followed by an attempt to cover what you yourself are

ashamed to tell? You become thereafter not merely a double-crosser, but a hypocrite; and the third step is easy, when discovery threatens to tempt you to cover your tracks by pleading charity, forgiveness, pity for others, and you acted thus for so-and-so because your heart ached to say aught.

Three steps: and have you noticed that each one of these steps is a distortion of your character, a twisting of your mind, and of the natural human impulses of your heart? That you thereby have, made a definite mark upon your character which will perdure, it may be for aeons?

How much better and simpler is it to do one's best to avoid having the feet mired in wrong doing. Or if one is caught, to break free and ally yourself with the gods at any cost

How many more rules might I not give. They are the simplest things in the world, these rules. They are so wonderfully occult, so simple and plain, that people won't believe in their efficacy half the time, and yet they are the rules made by the world's greatest sages and seers: Live uprightly, speak the truth, let your life be clean, cleanly, so that you can look man or woman in the face without shame.

Do unto others - I will put it in the other form -do not do unto others what you yourself object to having others do unto you. It is in this way that in due course of time the Buddhas are born, the holiest men on earth.

From *Wind of the Spirit* by G. de Purucker Theosophical University Press, Covina, 1944

Submission Guidelines

By floppy disk

3.5 or 5.25 inch (DOS format),
WordPerfect or MS Word
in ASCII format preferable.

By hard copy

Laser printer preferable,
NLQ Dot matrix OK
Good Quality Xerox OK

Unacceptable

Draft mode Dot matrix
Faint printouts
Strike-overs
handwriting on printed sheet

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EDITORIAL

THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST is an *independent* Journal and has the following editorial objectives:

(1) To serve the greater Theosophical Movement as a forum for the free interchange of ideas and commentary in the pursuit of Truth and to facilitate various projects in furtherance of Theosophical principles.

(2) To present articles and essays consistent with source theosophy, otherwise known as the Ancient Wisdom as given by The Masters and H.P. Blavatsky, and other theosophical writers consistent with this tradition.

(3) To examine contemporary ethical,

OBJECTIVES

religious, metaphysical, scientific and philosophical issues from the viewpoint of the source theosophical teachings.

(4) To impartially examine significant events and issues in the history of the theosophical movement which have affected and shaped its present-day realities.

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