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Course on the Secret Doctrine -- Joy Mills

Course given at Gol, Norway, August 1985.

Excerpt:

But let me, at least this morning, give some introductory comments about the SD.

First of all, to describe what is in the SD is relatively easy. To describe its authorship is far more complex and difficult. And I think that every student should ultimately investigate that area, the authorship. But that is not my intent in these four sessions with you. It is of course attributed to H.P. Blavatsky, but the big question is - Who was H. P. Blavatsky? She was a complex individual, and in addition there is evidence that there was another authorship involved as well, that her teachers very much assisted in the actual writing of the SD. So there is much to be explored in that whole area which I call the authorship of the SD.

Now, first and foremost, the SD undertakes to describe the principles and sequences by which the periodical perishable phenomenal universe came to be from and within the unmanifested, ultimate Reality. Consequently, it also expounds the essential and cosmic origin of mankind. In brief, therefore, we can say the SD supplies the metaphysics of Theosophy. Now, this purpose governs the method employed in writing and it is the purpose and the method together that provide the directive to the theosophical student. From this point of view, we must read in the spirit of the work itself. To understand a rational, orderly manifested universe is NOT the final object. The ultimate intent is that the reader, the student, the SERIOUS student shall appreciate the causal, intelligible, real source of the apparent or visible universe.

Now, two immediate problems are inherent in the customary mode of western thinking. And I think these must be faced in order to understand how the SD may be looked at, may be studied. First of all, because attention in western thought is given to OBJECTIVE phenomena, we have become incapable of analysing SUBJECTIVE movements. We are so accustomed to analysing that which can be seen, that we are unaware of the process of seeing. Now, as a consequence of this, we have learned to define categories to such an extent that we assign "THINGNESS" to process. And so we are all the time, as it were, fitting everything into rigid little packages, and everything is a THING, and by "thing" we mean something that is stable, lasting, enduring. But the SD points to another realm of knowing. Indeed to overcome these two problems, the SD employs a method of exposition characteristic of all genuine esoteric or occult texts. In the east, that method is called the "Sutra technique" - the use of an aphoristic text with commentaries thereon, the understanding of which is in direct accordance with the growth or expansion of consciousness itself.

The message which is embedded in this method of exposition is a very strange one for western rational thought. Very briefly, it is: Live the life, if you would come to the Wisdom. Again and again, HPB makes this statement. So it is not so much the content of either the Stanzas of Dzyan on which the SD is based or the commentary that poses a problem for us. The real problem is that we must accustom ourselves to a different mode of knowing. It is my belief that what makes the Doctrine secret is simply that until we have awakened within ourselves that mode of knowing we cannot really contact the Doctrine. Elsewhere, HPB has called that mode of knowing "Spiritual Perception". It is what I referred to last night in other terms used by HPB, a "direct beholding". I am

carefully avoiding the use of the word "Intuition", and I am doing so very much on purpose because I think there is no more misunderstood word in our vocabulary. What HPB aims at is indeed the awakening of true spiritual perception.

Now, it is not that the teachings presented to us are either irrational: or illogical. Certainly the esoteric philosophy involves rationality and logic. But the knowing transcends both rationality and logic. Both in the SD and in those magnificent letters from HPB's own Mahatmic teachers, emphasis is placed on the fact that there is a life to be lived. This is very clearly set forth in one of the Mahatma Letters in which the Master replies to Mr. Hume; in the letter in which the Master very clearly says: "Yes, it would be easy if there could be produced a manual of occultism," the Master continues with the statement that unless and until the student is prepared to receive the insights available, he is blind. And therefore the illumination must come from within. This is not easy to grasp. We must put ourselves in a certain condition if we would really comprehend the Wisdom. Now, this is a view to which we are totally unaccustomed in our normal educational systems and in all of our western training. One can be a brilliant engineer, e.g., a genius at mathematics or any such - and be at the same time an alcoholic, a sexual pervert and cruel to his family and to all living things. There is no relation necessary between one's mode of life and one's knowing. But, according to the esoteric tradition, on the other hand, one MUST lead a certain life if one would attain to understanding. The rules are not easy, but, as someone has said, no-one ever promised us a rose-garden! No-one ever said that it would be easy. Now, this does not mean it is not simple! (Laughter) - because, in essence, it is utterly simple, simple with that elegance of beauty which shines through when there IS spiritual perception. For the most part, it is we who make it terribly, terribly complicate. We can really only approximate understanding or comprehension, so we have to continually work at both areas of our being, i.e. we have to work on OURSELVES in order to develop our own knowing, and we are not used to that. We want to know without changing anything about ourselves, and in this area of study, that is impossible.

There is another factor to which I would call your attention. And this is simply the problem of language. And I do not mean language in terms of whether it is English, Norwegian, German, Sanskrit or any other SPOKEN language, because in the languages we use, WORDS usually stand for THINGS. But in the esoteric philosophy, one has to tolerate both paradox and metaphor. We are dealing less with things than with processes, and all words are ultimately inadequate for that task. This is a problem increasingly recognized in contemporary physics. Incidentally, it is dealt with superbly in a comparatively recent book by two scientists I do not know if it is available in any other language than English, but it is a book by two physicists, Drs. Briggs and Peat, called "The Looking-Glass Universe" - and this is a survey of the contemporary ideas being presented by some frontier thinkers in a number of fields.

Consequently, then, I return to the question of method. It really does not matter, from this point of view, where one begins in the SD. And that is why all approaches lead ultimately to what one may call the "centre of the wheel". Sometimes we argue over the approaches to be taken. But it is as though the entire process of bringing into manifestation a universe, a phenomenal universe, is a process of simultaneity.

It is an all-at-onceness, if you like! It is perhaps best expressed in the Buddhist concept of the theory of dependent origination, in which one factor does NOT arise BECAUSE of another, but "this arising, that arises". The fact that one factor is present, ALL factors are present, and, paradoxically, on the other hand, consciousness grows to the appreciation of ALL factors. Now, as a result of the method of exposition, the SD maintains therefore an intrinsic vitality. In fact, I think one can return to it again and again and every time find some new insight, gain some clearer understanding, and yet always become aware that there is more concealed than is revealed. It is also

because of this that the work sometimes appears confused and confusing. Indeed, as Commander Bowen reports, HPB herself said on one occasion: “If one imagines that one is going to get a satisfactory picture of the constitution of the universe from the SD, one will get only confusion from its study.” She is reported by Commander Bowen to have added: “It is not meant to give any such FINAL verdict on existence, but to LEAD towards the Truth. Truth, in other words, is not something that anyone possesses. It is not a neat little package inserted into the mind. Truth is a condition of consciousness itself, i.e. when consciousness itself is divested of all that pollutes it, when the field of the mind is cleared of all weeds that are cluttering it, it is in its own natural state, which is a condition of truthfulness. Hence again the injunction: “Live the life, if you would come to the Wisdom!”