

THEOSOPHICAL EDUCATION AND RAJA YOGA

All That Lives

So shalt thou be in full accord with all that lives; bear love to men as though they were thy brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.

The Voice of the Silence, p. 54

H.P. Blavatsky

The Seeds of Wisdom

The seeds of Wisdom cannot sprout and grow in airless space. To live and reap experience the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul. Seek not those points in Maya's realm; but soar beyond illusions, search the eternal and the changeless SAT, mistrusting fancy's false suggestions.

For mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions. Seek, O Beginner, to blend thy Mind and Soul.

The Voice of the Silence, p. 28

H.P. Blavatsky

Theosophy and Education

ENQUIRER. One of your strongest arguments for the inadequacy of the existing forms of religion in the West, as also to some extent the materialistic philosophy which is now so popular, but which you seem to consider as an abomination of desolation, is the large amount of misery and wretchedness which undeniably exists, especially in our great cities. But surely you must recognise how much has been, and is being done to remedy this state of things by the spread of education and the diffusion of intelligence.

THEOSOPHIST. The future generations will hardly thank you for such a "diffusion of intelligence," nor will your present education do much good to the poor starving masses.

ENQUIRER. Ah! but you must give us time. It is only a few years since we began to educate the people.

THEOSOPHIST. And what, pray, has your Christian religion been doing ever since the fifteenth century, once you acknowledge that the education of the masses has not been attempted till now—the very work, if ever there could be one, which a Christian, i. e., a Christ-following church and people, ought to perform?

ENQUIRER. Well, you may be right; but now—

THEOSOPHIST. Just let us consider this question of education from a broad standpoint, and I will prove to you that you are doing harm not good, with many of your boasted improvements. The schools for the poorer children, though far less useful than they ought to be, are good in contrast with the vile surroundings to which they are doomed by your modern Society. The infusion of a little practical Theosophy would help a hundred times more in life the poor suffering masses than all this infusion of (useless) intelligence.

ENQUIRER. But, really—

THEOSOPHIST. Let me finish, please. You have opened a subject on which we Theosophists feel deeply, and I must have my say. I quite agree that there is a great advantage to a small child bred in the slums, having the gutter for playground, and living amid continued coarseness of gesture and word, in being placed daily in a bright, clean school-room hung with pictures, and often gay with flowers. There it is taught to be clean, gentle, orderly; there it learns to sing and to play; has toys that awaken its intelligence; learns to use its fingers deftly; is spoken to with a smile instead of a frown; is gently rebuked or coaxed instead of cursed. All this humanises the children, arouses their brains, and renders them susceptible to intellectual and moral influences. The schools are not all they might be and ought to be; but, compared with the homes, they are paradises; and they slowly are re-acting on the homes. But while this is true of many of the Board schools, your system deserves the worst one can say of it.

ENQUIRER. So be it; go on.

THEOSOPHIST. What is the real object of modern education? Is it to cultivate and develop the mind in the right direction; to teach the disinherited and hapless people to carry with fortitude the burden of life (allotted them by Karma); to strengthen their will; to inculcate in them the love of one's neighbour and the feeling of mutual interdependence and brotherhood; and thus to train and form the character for practical life? Not a bit of it. And yet, these are undeniably the objects of all true education. No one denies it; all your educationalists admit it, and talk very big indeed on the subject. But what is the practical result of their action? Every young man and boy, nay, every one of the younger generation of schoolmasters will answer: "The object of modern education is to pass examinations," a system not to develop right emulation, but to generate and breed jealousy, envy, hatred almost, in young people for one another, and thus train them for a life of ferocious selfishness and struggle for honours and emoluments instead of kindly feeling.

ENQUIRER. I must admit you are right there.

THEOSOPHIST. And what are these examinations— the terror of modern boyhood and youth? They are simply a method of classification by which the results of your school teaching are tabulated. In other words, they form the practical application of the modern

science method to the genus homo, qua intellection. Now “science” teaches that intellect is a result of the mechanical interaction of the brain-stuff; therefore it is only logical that modern education should be almost entirely mechanical — a sort of automatic machine for the fabrication of intellect by the ton. Very little experience of examinations is enough to show that the education they produce is simply a training of the physical memory, and, sooner or later, all your schools will sink to this level. As to any real, sound cultivation of the thinking and reasoning power, it is simply impossible while everything has to be judged by the results as tested by competitive examinations. Again, school training is of the very greatest importance in forming character, especially in its moral bearing. Now, from first to last, your modern system is based on the so-called scientific revelations: “The struggle for existence” and the “survival of the fittest.” All through his early life, every man has these driven into him by practical example and experience, as well as by direct teaching, till it is impossible to eradicate from his mind the idea that “self,” the lower, personal, animal self, is the end-all, and be-all, of life. Here you get the great source of all the after-misery, crime, and heartless selfishness, which you admit as much as I do. Selfishness, as said over and over again, is the curse of humanity, and the prolific parent of all the evils and crimes in this life; and it is your schools which are the hot-beds of such selfishness.

ENQUIRER. That is all very fine as generalities, but I should like a few facts, and to learn also how this can be remedied.

THEOSOPHIST. Very well, I will try and satisfy you. There are three great divisions of scholastic establishments, board, middle-class and public schools, running up the scale from the most grossly commercial to the idealistic classical, with many permutations and combinations. The practical commercial begets the modern side, and the ancient and orthodox classical reflects its heavy respectability even as far as the School Board pupil teacher’s establishments. Here we plainly see the scientific and material commercial supplanting the effete orthodox and classical. Neither is the reason very far to seek. The objects of this branch of education are, then, pounds, shillings, and pence, the summum bonum of the XIXth century. Thus, the energies generated by the brain molecules of its adherents are all concentrated on one point, and are, therefore, to some extent, an organized army of educated and speculative intellects of the minority of men, trained against the hosts of the ignorant, simple-minded masses doomed to be vampirised, lived and sat upon by their intellectually stronger brethren. Such training is not only untheosophical, it is simply UNCHRISTIAN. Result: The direct outcome of this branch of education is an overflowing of the market with money-making machines, with heartless selfish men— animals—who have been most carefully trained to prey on their fellows and take advantage of the ignorance of their weaker brethren!

ENQUIRER. Well, but you cannot assert that of our great public schools, at any rate?

THEOSOPHIST. Not exactly, it is true. But though the form is different, the animating spirit is the same: untheosophical and unchristian, whether Eton and Harrow turn out scientists or divines and theologians.

ENQUIRER. Surely you don't mean to call Eton and Harrow "commercial"?

THEOSOPHIST. No. Of course the Classical system is above all things respectable, and in the present day is productive of some good. It does still remain the favourite at our great public schools, where not only an intellectual, but also a social education is obtainable. It is, therefore, of prime importance that the dull boys of aristocratic and wealthy parents should go to such schools to meet the rest of the young life of the "blood" and money classes. But unfortunately there is a huge competition even for entrance; for the moneyed classes are increasing, and poor but clever boys seek to enter the public schools by the rich scholarships, both at the schools themselves and from them to the Universities.

ENQUIRER. According to this view, the wealthier "dullards" have to work even harder than their poorer fellows?

THEOSOPHIST. It is so. But, strange to say, the faithful of the cult of the "Survival of the fittest" do not practice their creed; for their whole exertion is to make the naturally unfit supplant the fit. Thus, by bribes of large sums of money, they allure the best teachers from their natural pupils to mechanicalise their naturally unfit progeny into professions which they uselessly overcrowd.

ENQUIRER. And you attribute all this to what?

THEOSOPHIST. All this is owing to the perniciousness of a system which turns out goods to order, irrespective of the natural proclivities and talents of the youth. The poor little candidate for this progressive paradise of learning, comes almost straight from the nursery to the treadmill of a preparatory school for sons of gentlemen. Here he is immediately seized upon by the workmen of the materio-intellectual factory, and crammed with Latin, French and Greek Accidence, Dates and Tables, so that if he have any natural genius it is rapidly squeezed out of him by the rollers of what Carlyle has so well called "dead vocables."

ENQUIRER. But surely he is taught something besides "dead vocables," and much of that which may lead him direct to Theosophy, if not entirely into the Theosophical Society?

THEOSOPHIST. Not much. For of history, he will attain only sufficient knowledge of his own particular nation to fit him with a steel armour of prejudice against all other peoples, and be steeped in the foul cess-pools of chronicled national hate and blood-thirstiness; and surely, you would not call that— Theosophy?

ENQUIRER. What are your further objections?

THEOSOPHIST. Added to this is a smattering of selected, so-called, Biblical facts, from the study of which all intellect is eliminated. It is simply a memory lesson, the "Why" of the teacher being a "Why" of circumstances and not of reason.

ENQUIRER. Yes; but I have heard you congratulate yourself at the ever-increasing number of the Agnostics and Atheists in our day, so that it appears that even people trained in the system you abuse so heartily do learn to think and reason for themselves.

THEOSOPHIST. Yes; but it is rather owing to a healthy reaction from that system than due to it. We prefer immeasurably more in our Society Agnostics, and even rank Atheists, to bigots of whatever religion. An Agnostic's mind is ever opened to the truth; whereas the latter blinds the bigot like the sun does an owl. The best — *i.e.*, the most truth-loving, philanthropic, and honest — of our Fellows were, and are, Agnostics and Atheists (disbelievers in a personal God). But there are no free-thinking boys and girls, and generally early training will leave its mark behind in the shape of a cramped and distorted mind. A proper and sane system of education should produce the most vigorous and liberal mind, strictly trained in logical and accurate thought, and not in blind faith. How can you ever expect good results, while you pervert the reasoning faculty of your children by bidding them believe in the miracles of the Bible on Sunday, while for the six other days of the week you teach them that such things are scientifically impossible?

ENQUIRER. What would you have, then?

THEOSOPHIST. If we had money, we would found schools, which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities. We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. We should aim at creating free men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, unselfish. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by proper and truly theosophical education.

The Key to Theosophy, p. 263–271

H.P. Blavatsky

Practical, Clear Exposition of Theosophy

What we most need is such a Theosophical education as will give us the ability to expound Theosophy in a way to be understood by the ordinary person. This practical, clear exposition is entirely possible. That it is of the highest importance there can be no doubt whatever. It relates to and affects ethics, every day life, every thought, and consequently every act. The most learned, astute, and successful church, the Roman Catholic, proceeds on this basis. Should we refrain from a good practise because a bigot takes the same method? The priests of Rome do not explain, nor attempt to explain or expound, the highly metaphysical and obscure, though important, basis of their various

doctrines. They touch the people in their daily life, a knowledge of their own system in all its details enabling them to put deep doctrine into every man's language, although the learning of the preacher may be temporarily concealed. With them the appeal is to fear; with us it is to reason and experience. So we have a natural advantage which ought not to be overlooked.

High scholarship and a knowledge of metaphysics are good things to have, but the mass of the people are neither scholars nor metaphysicians. If our doctrines are of any such use as to command the efforts of sages in helping on to their promulgation, then it must be that those sages - our Masters - desire the doctrines to be placed before as many of the mass as we can reach. This our Theosophical scholars and metaphysicians can do by a little effort. It is indeed a little difficult, because slightly disagreeable, for a member who is naturally metaphysical to come down to the ordinary level of human minds in general, but it can be done. And when one does do this, the reward is great from the evident relief and satisfaction of the enquirer.

Selections from "What Our Society Needs Most"
Path, September, 1892

William Q. Judge

The Power to Know

The power to know does not come from book-study nor from mere philosophy, but mostly from the actual practice of altruism in deed, word, and thought; for that practice purifies the covers of the soul and permits that light to shine down into the brain mind. As the brain-mind is the receiver in the waking state, it has to be purified from sense-perception, and the truest way to do this is by combining philosophy with the highest outward and inward virtue.

Excerpt from "The Power to Know" *Path* 1894

William Q. Judge

Our Spiritual Faculty

Q. Apparently, then, the whole basis of occultism lies in this, that there is latent within every man a power which can give him true knowledge, a power of perception of truth, which enables him to deal first hand with universals if he will be strictly logical and face the facts. Thus we can proceed from universals to particulars by this innate spiritual force which is in every man.

A. Quite so: this power is inherent in all, but paralyzed by our methods of education, and especially by the Aristotelian and Baconian methods. Hypothesis now reigns triumphant.

Q. It is curious to read Schopenhauer and Hartmann and mark how, step by step, by strict logic and pure reason, they have arrived at the same bases of thought that had been centuries ago adopted in India, especially by the Vedantin System. It may, however, be objected that they have arrived at this by the inductive method. But in Schopenhauer's

case at any rate it was not so. He acknowledges himself that the idea came to him like a flash; having thus got his fundamental idea he set to work to arrange his facts, so that the reader imagines that what was in reality an intuitive idea, is a logical deduction drawn from the facts.

A. This is not only true of the Schopenhauerian philosophy, but also of all the great discoveries of modern times. How, for instance, did Newton discover the law of gravity? Was it not by the simple fall of an apple, and not by an elaborate series of experiments. The time will come when the Platonic method will not be so entirely ignored and men will look with favor on methods of education which will enable them to develop this most spiritual faculty.

Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge, p. 58

H.P. Blavatsky

Soul Understanding

The Self of Matter and the SELF of Spirit can never meet. One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both.

Ere thy Soul's mind can understand, the bud of personality must be crushed out, the worm of sense destroyed past resurrection.

The Voice of the Silence, p. 13

H.P. Blavatsky