

# On Categorical Teaching and Writing

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We have recently received a book called *The Impending Golden Age*<sup>1</sup> authored by one named as Sanctilean and also a tape giving a discussion of material related to this book. I have been requested to give my own personal evaluation.

The book is a statement of material that is completely strange. It uses terminology which I found nowhere else, and while in a back portion of the book there is something of a glossary that gives some explanation of part of this terminology, namely, that portion which may be called proper concepts, there are verb and adjective concepts used not explained in the glossary and not to be found in the dictionary, and one has to infer their meaning from their usage. The form of expression is wholly categorical. It provides no context in which this material was derived. It supplies no argument in support of it, no discussion of adverse considerations, no presentation of the conditions under which it may have been attained. One is, thus, not provided with the essential material for evaluating either the process or the logic of the position. It comes as a statement out of the blue completely categorical. One is in no position to apply any discriminative judgment as to whether it is true or false. Let us assume for the sake of argument that it is wholly true; nonetheless, I would judge it by reason of its method as an injurious work. It demands of him who reads it either blind acceptance or blind rejection. It is therefore completely contrary to the spirit of *The Secret Doctrine* and of Theosophical literature generally. This I will make clear from certain quotations in the mass of a fundamental Theosophic literature. There is for instance, this quotation from *The Secret Doctrine*. This is on p. 293 of the first volume of the third edition:

The Secret Doctrine is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, and its cosmogony alone is the most stupendous and elaborate of all systems, even as veiled in the exotericism of the *Puranas*. But such is the mysterious power of Occult symbolism, that the facts which have actually occupied countless generations of initiated seers and prophets to marshal, set down and explain, in the bewildering series of evolutionary progress, are all recorded on a few pages of geometrical signs and glyphs. The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated into the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things there, where an ordinary profane observer, however learned, would have perceived but the external work of form. But Modern Science believes not in the "soul of things," and hence will reject the whole system of ancient cosmogony. It is useless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or several isolated individuals; that it is an uninterrupted record, covering

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<sup>1</sup> Sanctilean, *The Impending Golden Age: A Critical Analysis of the World Sickness and Its Cure* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: J. F. Rowny Press, 1948).

thousands of generations of seers, whose respective experiences were made to test and verify the traditions, passed on orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted Beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity; that for long ages, the “Wise Men” of the Fifth Race, of the stock saved and rescued from the last cataclysm and the shifting of continents, passed their lives *in learning, not teaching*. How did they do so? It is answered: by checking, testing, and verifying, [let me repeat: checking, testing, and verifying] in every department of Nature, the traditions of old, by the independent visions of great Adepts; that is to say, men who have developed and perfected their physical, mental, psychic, and spiritual organizations, to the utmost possible degree. No vision of one Adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions—so obtained as to stand as independent evidence—of other Adepts, and by centuries of experience.<sup>2</sup>

This is something that any scientist could understand and appreciate in principle. It defines an attitude of the true researcher. It also implies that error is recognized as a possibility. If error were not a possibility, there would be no point in checking. The evidence of one highly evolved intelligence was not enough. It was checked by others, wholly independently, so that there would not be any force of suggestion involved. This is crucial and is the main reason why long ago, in fact sixty years ago, I so far took *The Secret Doctrine* seriously as to abandon a promise of an academic career to make the search for a possible third organ of cognition that would render possible the determination of a truth that is not available to sense perception or conceptual cognition alone. If *The Secret Doctrine* had been exclusively a categorical presentation, purely arbitrary, without any basis for judging it or discriminating, it would not have justified that act on my part. This spirit is totally lacking in the book called *The Impending Golden Age*.

Another reference—this is from a small book called *Letters from the Masters of [the] Wisdom*. The one in question from which I shall read is said to have come from the Maha-Chohan and was the only letter received from him. But whether, in fact, it was from the Maha-Chohan or from anyone else, it confirms the spirit of which I wholly approve. Only two sentences will be quoted:

The doctrine we promulgate being the only true one, must—supported by such evidence as we are preparing to give—become ultimately triumphant as every other truth. Yet, [and note this] it is absolutely necessary to inculcate it gradually enforcing its theories—unimpeachable facts for those who know—with direct inferences deduced from and corroborated by the evidence furnished by modern exact science.<sup>3</sup>

Now, however much this body of truth can be known by those who are adequately equipped as unequivocally true, nonetheless, it is not imposed upon the reader in the form

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<sup>2</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Press, 1893), 293-294.

<sup>3</sup> C. Jinarajadasa, ed., *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1919), 3.

of pure categorical statement. Statements are made and then long diversions are made through literature to show confirming features. References are made to science again and again showing how this is possibly true. There are long arguments with respect to opposing positions, the appeal being to one's discriminative judgment.

Another reference is to be found in *The Mahatma Letters*, and this is a letter by one of the principle authors of *The Secret Doctrine*, as we know though it was written down by H. P. Blavatsky. She was only in part an author, and says that explicitly in the book. The principle authors were two other entities of which this one is probably the major one. A friend, the one that was known as Sinnett, to which this letter is sent had suggested that if a copy of the *London Times* were made to appear in India on the day of its publication, an act which would have been impossible at that time, or a copy of his own journal in India called the *Pioneer* could be made to appear in London on the day of its publication, this could be proof of certain occult powers. He suggested this idea and this was the answer:

Esteemed Brother and Friend,

Precisely because the test of the London newspaper would close the mouths of the skeptics—it is unthinkable. See it in what light you will—the world is yet in its first *stage* of disenfranchisement if not development, hence—unprepared. Very true, we work by natural not supernatural means and laws. But, as on the one hand Science would find itself unable (in its present *state*) [this was in 1880s] to account for the wonders given in its name, and on the other the ignorant masses would still be left to view the phenomenon in the light of a miracle, everyone who would thus be made a witness to the occurrence would be thrown off his balance and the results would be deplorable. Believe me, it would be so—especially for yourself who originated the idea, and the devoted woman who so foolishly rushes into the wide open door leading to notoriety. This door, though opened by so friendly a hand as yours, would prove very soon a trap—and a fatal one indeed for her. And such is not surely your object?

Madmen are they, who, speculating but upon the present, willfully shut their eyes to the past when made already to remain naturally blind to the future! Far be it for me, to number you with the latter—therefore, [I] will I endeavor to explain. Were we to accede to your desires know you really what consequences would follow in the trail of success? The inexorable shadow which follows all human innovations moves on, yet few are they who are ever conscious of its approach and dangers. What are then to expect they who would offer the world an innovation which, owing to human ignorance, if believed in, will surely be attributed to those dark agencies the two-thirds of humanity believe in and dread as yet? You say—half London would be converted if you could deliver them a *Pioneer* on [the] its day of [its] publication. I beg to say that if the people believed the thing true they would kill you before you could make the round of Hyde Park; if it were not

believed true, the least that could happen would be the loss of your reputation and good name,—for propagating such ideas.<sup>4</sup>

Now those quotations illustrate the spirit in which *The Secret Doctrine* was written. In fact, I know many times you may read in that book a paragraph that is part of the presented doctrine, and then you may be annoyed that for many pages other material is brought in bearing upon it, tending to build a presumption for it, until you're weary to death perhaps; nonetheless, the point is that the book seeks to convince reasonably and not to compel by the lash of categorical assertion.

Now, on this question I feel very strongly. I have faced the lash of categorical assertion. I was brought up in one form of the traditional Christian churches, and there I met this force of categorical assertion as in the Apostles Creed and other forms of dogma. It was not considered good form to question it. It was not considered good form to ask how it could be justified. You were supposed to accept blindly, even ideas that were most utterly absurd such as the notion that in the day of resurrection people would come out of their graves even though their bodies were skeletons—literally, grossly, physically; one of the most objectionable forms of malicious materialism, a thing that was totally anathema to a responsible, rational intelligence. It incarnated the spirit of Tertullian who said, “And God died, which is absurd and therefore believable; and God rose again from the dead, which is impossible and therefore certain.”<sup>5</sup> That spirit runs through traditional Christianity, and so far as I'm concerned damns it. I broke from the church for just those reasons. I accepted *The Secret Doctrine* because it negated that spirit. That spirit of categorical assertion without any justification, without any explanation of how it is found, how it is determined, or logical development so that you can find a reasonable presumption of acquiescence and acceptance. The absence of all that is, again, present in this book *The Impending Golden Age*. Categoricalism enslaves the mind. Reasonable discussion, argumentation, as was done by the Great Buddha and by his following incarnation of Shankara even more thoroughly, where dialectic is carried out as thoroughly as perhaps than any philosophical system, represents the true spirit, the sound spirit of exegesis.

Now, in *The Secret Doctrine* no persons are given a higher place than are Shankara and Buddha. In fact, the very ones who wrote *The Mahatma Letters* have said that the Great Buddha is the patron of all adepts in the world, and that two-thirds of the adepts orient to him, and that they bow with reverence before him. And it was the Great Buddha who said do not assert anything as true because you heard it, even though it was said by a god, even though it was said by me. Always say, “Thus I have heard,” unless you also have proved it to be true. This is the spirit of *The Secret Doctrine*. This is the spirit of the authentic portion of the Theosophical movement. There are pseudo Theosophical branches that do not follow this spirit. I have tried to read some of their literature, but it nauseated me. Again, it was using the method of categorical assertion

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<sup>4</sup> A. T. Barker, ed., *The Mahatma Letters* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1923), 52.

<sup>5</sup> See Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*:

And the Son of God died; it is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd. And he was buried and rose again; the fact is certain because it is impossible.

without a logical justification, without explaining how the organs of cognition by which the material was obtained were developed and how they functioned so that you could come to some discriminative appreciation of the material.

For the sake of argument, I may assume that *The Impending Golden Age* is wholly true, but because of its method of presentation, radically contradicting the method of the authentic Theosophical movement, I'd say it is a dangerous and bad book. One could write in similar language something that's wholly false; and if the two, the wholly false and the wholly true position, were presented to one, there would be no basis for judging between them. All literature of that type, I say, therefore is not good. It's injurious to man. It tends towards intellectual suicide and the autonomy of the individual.

Now, I admit this, that a person who has opened certain faculties, has penetrated in research into certain realms that are hidden to the ordinary consciousness where these faculties are not awakened, might very well be able to judge this book and say, yes it is true. But that would be a judgment valid only for that individual. If made to others, all these others who did not have those faculties awakened could only accept or reject on the say so of a personality, not upon the personal, direct examination and forming of a competent discriminative judgment. That I submit is not the spirit of authentic Theosophy. As for example, the quotation that was said to come from a letter sent by the Maha-Chohan I accept, not because it was written by the Maha-Chohan, but because I heartily approve of the sentiment expressed in those two sentences that I quoted. It could have come from a *Chandala*,<sup>6</sup> I would approve of it just as much. However, I believe that it has the earmarks of the Maha-Chohan. These points are matters of extreme importance. In my own work in trying to establish the reality of a third organ of cognition based upon certain Realizations reported in *Pathways*, I argue at great length to build the presumption for them. I'd be willing to write a whole book for building up such a presumption that would eventuate in the justifying of a principle that could be formulated in one sentence. What I'm saying implies this, that discriminative judgment in any question of truth determination is primary.

Now, what about the office of intuition? Here we come into a very complex problem. I'm acquainted with intuition in my own person as well as in others. I have studied it. I have the instincts of the pioneer on physical, mental, and spiritual levels—inclined to go it alone. All of which, as Dr. Jung has shown in his *Psychological Types*, indicates the presence of the intuitive function. I know how it strikes one with a force of overwhelming assurance. As a simple illustration in its manifestation on a physical level, I have walked in pitch dark on mountain trails that I'd never been on before, and turned off at the right point, and came out at the right place—a phase of intuition or geographical sense. I know this can happen, but I know also that intuition can lead you into egregious error, and also with the same assurance. It can open doors that cannot be opened any other way. It can let you down in a most ridiculous and humiliating way also. I lived for over forty years associated with one in whom this principle was highly developed. I knew that she could sometimes breakthrough to that which was impossible from any ordinary rational point of view. But I know also she could be ridiculously wrong.

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<sup>6</sup> The untouchables excluded from the caste system.

Keyserling, who was an intuitive philosopher, was conscious of this double character of the intuitive function, and he noted the point that when intuition leads you into a wrong position it leaves you without any way of knowing how you got there or how to get out of it. Aurobindo, who rates intuition very highly, also recognizes the problem. He points out that the rational mind in dealing with this is inclined to take hints from the intuitive function, but not to place its full confidence in it. He says that is not the true way of effecting the correction of intuitive error. He says wait, and in time an aspect of the intuitive function which corresponds to the logical function in the field of reason, will come out and will integrate the elements that by themselves seemed quite irrational. This may be, but it's a gamble. And I'd be inclined to do that gambling if I were away in a solitary hermit's retreat where I spoke not at all to anybody until the completed rounding out of the function had taken place.

Most of my life since academic years has been in association with people in whom the intuitive function occupies an important place. I've seen over and over again this characteristic strength and weakness; and, therefore, while I regard intuition as a magnificent and important scout, I would say it makes a poor general. It can scout out new possibilities. It can find hidden ways out of the room of consciousness which seems closed on all sides and where the pure reason finds no outlet, but it can lead you into most ridiculous and undignified positions that are wholly untenable. I've seen this happen over and over again, and to the rational mind it is extremely annoying; however, I fully recognize its importance, but assert that it must be used in conjunction with the function of discrimination, precisely that which Shankara called the "crest-jewel." And by discrimination I mean the combination of discernment, judgment, and reason. Checking, careful checking is an important part of truth determination which is affirmed in the quotation I took from *The Secret Doctrine* where men more evolved in their capacities than our scientists and philosophers, nonetheless, checked, and checked more thoroughly than our scientists ever do—the spirit of science, but carried on in more advanced form than our scientists are capable of doing. That spirit being wholly lacking in *The Impending Golden Age* is the reason why I give the book a poor mark.

Let me illustrate, suppose I take a certain mathematical truth, namely,  $e^{\pi i} = -1$ , which has been proven logically. I have gone through the proof. I know, therefore, that it is true, though I don't pretend to understand it. Now, suppose I were to take this as an arbitrary dictum to the natives of Australia. It would be totally impossible to prove the truth of this to their consciousness. Their relationship to it would have to be either a blind acceptance in which they might form a religious cult that would place them in a state of gross illusion, or they'd have to reject absolutely and equally blindly, perhaps killing the one who brought it to them. They have not reached the consciousness where this theorem could be accepted intelligently. I hold that it is of premier importance to speak in the language of the most sophisticated members of the milieu of the culture in which one lives. To them and to them alone can you speak intelligently, and to build a presumption in the terms of their philosophic and psychological understanding that is acceptable in those terms. Truth must have reasonable support before it can be accepted intelligently.

The categorical principle, though it has a valid place, can be the most malicious of things. Categoricalism is characteristic of the military order—valid in so far as it is a determination of a course of action. But in the military, as I experienced, they use it

further than that and seek to determine questions of fact and truth by pure categorical pronouncement, in which case they're guilty of a wholly unjustified trespass upon the mind of their superiors. It is a principle affirmed by Mussolini and Adolph Hitler explicitly in their statements. I read *Mien Kamph* so I know what I'm talking about. They made a virtue of categoricalism, of non-discursive or critical investigation, something which was wholly discouraged. Now, look what resulted in the case of Hitler. He was an intuitive, no doubt about it; and although as a soldier he was no more than a corporal, he told his generals to act in a way that was totally contrary to their discriminative judgment, and he was successful in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, and France—much of this against the judgment of his trained generals. But he led Germany into absolute disaster, a veritable Gotterdammerung, in his gross failure to understand the United States and Russia. Because of following this “categoricalist,” Germany today lives in her Gotterdammerung. That shows the danger of categoricalism. By categoricalism, I mean just the arbitrary assertion “so-and-so” is true without any supporting ground being given. It is the method used by the hypnotist. If you've ever been through the hypnotic process or witnessed it, they always assert and thereby enslave the mind.

Now, there is a valid place for the categorical statement or order. This place is not in the field of determination of truth or of communication of truth, but at the time when an individual has become reasonably convinced that so and so is true or probably true, he may be, unlike Socrates and more like St Paul, inclined to do other than what he knows. Socrates as you remember said, to know the truth inevitably implies that you do it. Some temperaments are like, but probably more are like St. Paul who said, I do that which I would not do. In this step from being convinced as to the soundness of a truth or the truth of a position to action in conformity with it, the categorical imperative or order may be the only effective agent for making the transfer from idea to action. But, I hold that should only be done where one is already reasonably convinced of the truth, and that there's nothing more serious than enslaving the mind in the exercising of its functions in the field of truth determination.

Now, going into the question of whether the Golden Age is impending. This book says it is near, that it will last for 888 years—a multiple if you'll notice of the prime number 37. He arbitrarily says that 37 is the period of a generation. *The Secret Doctrine* also refers to the Golden Age as one of the *yugas*, namely, *Satya Yuga*—in our terms the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, or *Kali Yuga*. It says that we are in *Kali Yuga*; that the period of *Kali Yuga* is 432,000 years; that the first 5,000 years of it covering the period from Krishna to about 1898 was finished; that the period that follows will be brighter but still *Kali Yuga*, except for an overlapping period of cycles in which we are now moving which will be worse. That is in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Now, in contrast, the Golden Age is 1,728,000 year long. If this book called *The Impending Golden Age* is speaking about the same thing that *The Secret Doctrine* is speaking about, then it would seem that there's a radical contradiction. Of course, they may be using the words in a different sense, but if so, it's highly important that the author should clarify it. He's fallen down on his moral obligations in not so clarifying.

There is also the question of how *The Secret Doctrine* uses numbers. Are these years solar years or are they symbolic numbers that carry a hidden meaning? That question hasn't been clearly resolved. But assuming that it means what it apparently says,

in the ordinary explicit common sense meaning of the words, the discrepancy between the statement in *The Impending Golden Age* and *The Secret Doctrine* is on this order—a period of 888 years versus 1,728,000 years.

And now just incidentally in closing, because I've spoken about numbers and their possible use in a sense different from our cardinal and ordinal understanding of them, I'll refer to the puzzle of the 777 incarnations—a puzzle presented by one of the authors of the letters in the book called *The Mahatma Letters*, and he said no one had come up with a resolution. Many years ago, one whom I knew as one of the Illuminati gave me a key that may be the solution. He said, the first 7 refers to one incarnation in each Root-Race in a Globe, the second 7 refers to one incarnation in each sub-race of that Root-Race, and the third 7 refers to one incarnation in each sub-sub-race of each sub-race.<sup>7</sup> Now, assuming the truth of that, number would be used in a sense that doesn't correspond to our cardinal use of numbers or our ordinal use of numbers, which of course is perfectly legitimate. One could for instance write down the combinations of a safe in a series of numbers written like three or four or five numbers in a row that would appear, therefore, to be like our ordinary cardinal numbers, but it wouldn't mean what a cardinal number means; and it's a perfectly legitimate way to use numbers. But one suspects that numbers in *The Secret Doctrine* may be at times, at least, so used, and that we're thrown off the track if we take them in the cardinal sense. That's just a suggestion.

And now I think I've said enough on this subject so we will close.

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<sup>7</sup> Wolff probably meant to say “. . . each Root-Race.”