

Is the Theosophia Authentic and Reliable?

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This tape is designed for the evening meeting of the Convention to be held on August 12, 1979. It will be entitled, is the Theosophia, or the Wisdom Religion, as represented in *The Secret Doctrine*, *Isis Unveiled*, and *The Mahatma Letters*, authentic and reliable? The question has arisen because this reliability has been questioned in certain tape discussions that I have held with another individual.

This is not the first time that this problem has been presented to me. Some years ago one of the students of this subject matter wrote me a letter in which he stated that he had come to the conclusion that all of this material was in the nature of a kind of fraud—that it was essentially the creation of the imagination of H. P. Blavatsky. That led me to produce a tape on the subject “Is Theosophy Authentic?”¹ Now the question has arisen in a new and in a more sophisticated form.

It is stated in the literature just referred to that there exists in this world, or associated with this world, a body of entities, essentially human, who are custodians of a system of knowledge which is essentially esoteric in the sense that this knowledge is not generally available to all men directly, and that this body of knowledge has been so acquired that with respect to any particular subject matter contained within it, there were not two different opinions among this group of associates. In other words, that this knowledge was so determined, so carefully determined, that it was an essentially objective knowledge in which all those who are initiated into a knowledge of it agree with each other with respect to any detail in that body of knowledge. The validity of this statement was challenged in the discussions on the ground that there are differences of perspective and differences in individual psychology that would render such an agreement impossible.

I may illustrate the problem presented here by something stated by Albert Einstein himself. Consider a train moving at some velocity, and also imagine an object that is moving at the same rate of progress in the space. Now, consider two systems of coordinates, one that was fixed with respect to the train and one that was fixed with respect to the earth, and the problem presented is that of determining the velocity of the object. From the perspective of the system of coordinates stationary with respect to the train, the object would be determined as stationary; but, from the perspective of the system of coordinates fixed with respect to the earth, the object would have a speed or velocity of the same order as that of the train. In one case the object is moving; in the other case it is stationary. We have two different determinations, therefore. This is fundamental conception in the theory of relativity that is given to us by Einstein.

¹ This may be a reference to Wolff's essay, “Is Theosophy Authentic?” written under the name of “Yogagnani.”

And then there is also the fact that with a certain psychological condition in one individual and another condition in another individual, in the sense of individual psychology, the quality of perception may be altered. A defect in vision, or a distortion in vision, in one case, could produce a different effect from that of a vision which we would call ordinarily “normal”; although, in this case, ‘normal’ is only defined as that which is usual. From a still larger point of view, the so-called distorted vision might even be more precise.

Here then, is a real problem: the judgment that complete agreement could be achieved is, thus, on the surface apparently unsound. In the light of our ordinary experience, the criticism that was raised does have a considerable order of validity. The question that might be raised in answer to this is as follows: is there a way whereby the distortion produced by the principle of relativity, or the distortion produced by differences in individual psychology, can be corrected? Now, in the case of Einstein’s work, is it a fact that what Einstein sought was the invariant in the midst of a changing situation—something that was definitely constant and thus rendering possible mathematical transformations that would correct the distortion. Now, in the field of psychological distortion, a similar question arises. Have those who are the custodians of this body of knowledge achieved a means of correcting such distortion? Not being, in this life at least, an initiated adept, I cannot give a determinate answer to this question. Furthermore, in all the literature with which I am familiar, I have not found what I would regard as a determinate answer. However, though we do not have certain answers, there are probable answers, and it is on the level of probable truth that we shall have to move.

Now this is not such a shocking thing. Bertrand Russell, for instance, who was one of the superlative minds of the recent past, and was a specialist in the logic of mathematics, finally made the conclusion that all the knowledge we have is probable knowledge, though the degree of probability varies quite widely. We move in this plane as non-initiates in a domain of uncertainty, but the uncertainty may be more or less. What I shall have to say will be on the basis of probable determination, not certain determination, and this is the basis upon which we as non-initiates really live here.

Look at our science, for instance. I have a volume entitled *The History of Science*, so organized that it is possible to take a cross-section of the state of science at various stages in time. One is impressed with the fact that there is development, not in the sense of growth in a given direction, but of repeated overturns of the knowledge that had gone before. Thus, in 1895 a certain scientist, the one who founded the California Institute of Technology, Dr. Milliken, heard a lecture by a famous German scientist of his day in which the latter developed all of the unfoldments in the story of physics up to that time, and said that everything important had been discovered and that all the remaining work consisted in refinement of determination. This was in 1895, but one year later Roentgen discovered the x-ray, often known as Roentgen rays, and there was the discovery of the capacity of uranium to photograph itself in a dark room, the development and isolation of radium, and so on. Here began a development that was totally unexplainable in terms of the physics as known before 1895, and from that time on, the growth of this science has been positively phenomenal, virtually a revolution after revolution—and the same has been true in the biological field—so that, if we were

to take a cross-section of our present state of knowledge, if we had learned the lesson, we'd have no certainty that it was secure knowledge.

This however is not so true in the field of the normative sciences, namely, logic and pure mathematics. Here there is substantial agreement in the proximate subject matter, although there may be discussions and disagreements as to the ultimate subject matter. In general, all mathematicians agree when a demonstration is made, that it is a demonstration. We feel here a far greater degree of security than in the case of the empiric sciences. But even in the normative sciences, in the borderline areas, there is still some disagreement. The result is that we do not seem to find certainty in our exoteric knowledge, and that builds a strong support for the contention of the one who said that the absence of difference of opinion on any subject matter was impossible. There is a strong point here.

Now, I will present some of the evidence concerning an esoteric science or body of knowledge that may have this character. The question before us is, "Have the bearers, or producers, of *The Secret Doctrine* answered this question of uncertainty successfully?" I shall quote from *The Secret Doctrine* a passage which bears upon this point. This is to be found in the first volume of the third edition on p. 293, and the quotation is as follows:

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 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, 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.²

This statement, if true, implies a much greater endowment of functional equipment upon the investigators than is required by those who have worked in our exoteric science. And it implies also, a much more careful methodology in the process of checking from evidence drawn from independent sources. Therefore, if true, it implies a body of knowledge of supreme worth and supreme worthiness for our consideration, if true.

The all-important question is thus: “Is this statement true?” Actually I can present it to you only as a “thus I have heard” statement. I am unable to vouch for its truth; but, one thing I was able to do, and that was to assume it as true, as though true, and see what consequences followed from that assumption. I spent many years before I decided to give a fundamental assumption of validity to this body of knowledge, and, ultimately, I took the fatal step, at the price of losing a career that was opening up to me. And for a period of twenty-two years, I groped to find an answer. But *The Secret Doctrine* took me to a great sage known as Shankara. In that body of knowledge it is stated that Shankara was the “Adept of Adepts,” that he was the great successor of Buddha, that he was the greatest initiate in historic times.³ I therefore turned to Shankara, and from him I acquired the key that rendered the breakthrough of August 7, 1936, possible; and it resulted in a lifework for me. And I have no regrets for having taken this course.

I have seen nowhere, I have heard nowhere, any evidence pointing in a contrary direction that carries the weight of presumption that is presented in these volumes. All of the exoteric scriptures that have come down to us carry a degree of very considerable uncertainty, and the story of our own science, as I pointed out earlier, also carries a great degree of uncertainty. And both of these fail to suggest a possibility for the answering of our most profound questions. *The Secret Doctrine* and the related material, I have found as offering the best prospect that such questions may answered. For me it is “thus I have heard” for the main body of it, but I have found certain verifications that have meant a great deal in this life, and have justified the course of action that I’ve taken in directing the labors of this life. I am happy with the consequences. This is no proof, but I offer it as a presumption favoring the validity of the statement quoted a little while ago.

You will have noted that the preparation required of the researchers is much more exacting than that required of our scientists. And the principle of checking and rechecking is employed. Since the knowledge is empiric, it may be argued very well that it is not absolute certainty. But knowledge so acquired would attain a degree of certainty far out-reaching any knowledge from any other source of which I have any information whatsoever.

² H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Press, 1893), 293-294.

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 3 (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Press, 1910), 385:

Still it is maintained that this Adept of Adepts lives to this day in his spiritual entity as a mysterious, unseen, yet overpowering presence among the Brotherhood of Shamballa, beyond, far beyond, the snowy-capped Himalayas.

The preceding statement is intended to apply to knowledge of the empiric type, that is, knowledge from experience. The normative knowledge such as we have in pure mathematics is another matter altogether. This has something of that degree of certainty which is maintained as true of this esoteric knowledge. All this implies that a truly objective knowledge is possible, that it is in principle possible for man to achieve a knowledge which is not conditioned by subjective factors—knowledge thus that is truly objective. And this means to me, a certain validation of the hope that real knowledge is possible that transcends the relativity of subjectivity.

Another question which was taken up in the taped discussions was that of the validity of maintaining the body of the knowledge secured by the Brothers in an esoteric form rather than presenting it openly to all mankind. It is contended by the one who brought up this issue that such knowledge was automatically self-protecting, that one who was able to grasp it would be oriented to a proper use of it. This, I think, involves a greater faith in the moral level of humanity as a whole than can be objectively justified. We have witnessed in at least the lifetime of some of the older of us, a breakthrough in knowledge on the part of our scientists that has rendered the continuation of life in this world quite questionable. I refer to the scientific breakthrough which rendered theoretically possible the release of a massive energy on the subatomic level that was of a vastly different order than of any other form of energy that was available to us. Now, the first thing that was thought of by the military community was the use of this energy as a factor in war, and in point of fact, its first in employment was as an act of warfare. The order of energy here is of such a nature, that if an atomic war ever broke out, the existence of a humanity upon this world, and perhaps even of all other forms of life, would be impossible. It is, thus, not simply a great power; it is also something that carries a threat to the continued existence of humanity in this world. I think it would have been much better for the humanity of this world at its present stage of moral evolution, which is rather low, to have remained ignorant of this resource.

I bought this question up before one whom I knew as Senior. I'd had many conversations with this one, and I was convinced in the light of those conversations that he was one of the Brothers. And I asked him why humanity was permitted to make this breakthrough at its present level of very limited sense of moral responsibility. And he told me that uninitiated scientific man had won a right to this knowledge and to the application of this knowledge, and that therefore it could not be prevented. Now, this illustrates the problem. We are given to understand that there is in this body of esoteric knowledge material that could be used in a destructive way as well as in a constructive way, and that, therefore, the release of it generally would be disastrous for this humanity. Only those who can meet the testing of very superior moral possibility could possibly have the right to initiation into this body of knowledge. I think the instance of atomic energy provides us with a very good argument for the retaining of this kind of knowledge in esoteric form. Furthermore, it is said, that some of this body of knowledge is of such a sort that it would not serve humanity in a favorable way until certain cycles of development have rolled around, and that, therefore, it is retained for humanity at the appropriate time and when that humanity has sufficiently evolved to make proper use of it. I feel that in the light of our experience with the atom bomb that this argument becomes very trenchant—that it is far better to remain esoteric until the proper time.

Otherwise some of it could produce a worldwide holocaust, just as that potential lies in the subatomic knowledge that we now have. Suppose, for instance, that this subatomic knowledge had been at the command of a man like Joseph Stalin or Adolph Hitler.

We are given to understand that this esoteric knowledge, which is known by the trusted few, is held by them in trust for the benefit of the human whole—nay more, even for the benefit of all creatures, however far they may be evolved on the path of evolutionary development—that it is a trust in their hands, and that when the cycles roll around when humanity may be trusted with this knowledge, then it will be made available to them. In fact, specifically in the instance of the knowledge revealed through *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, and *The Mahatma Letters*, there was here given an open expression of a portion of it to all mankind within this world; although, it is not in a form that is easily available to the ordinary mind. One must work diligently to unlock the knowledge that has been rendered available to us. There is evidence in it of a conceptuality not like the conceptuality which even the most advanced entities have attained who are still in the exoteric domain. There are points of view that need to be unfolded before this conceptuality can be unlocked.

And in support of this, consider our present stage of physical knowledge as contrasted to the stage in the 1880s, for instance. If a physicist of the 1880s were suddenly transplanted from that level of conceptuality into the present level of conceptuality attained by the modern physicist, he would be lost. He would have to go through a process of training, of elucidation, of a way of thinking that was quite foreign to the thinking of the 1880s. It would require a major educational effort. I, myself, have lived sufficiently long to know something of what a strain is involved in moving from a relatively simple kind of thinking to the present complex thinking in our present physical state of knowledge. It's useless, therefore, to present a knowledge that transcends the broken out capacity of conceptuality that exists at a given time in the world. There must be development to attain understanding at the higher, more complex, level.

Svabhavat, a concept that occurs in the literature, is not at all like the meaning of the word 'matter' as we now understand it. I quite realize I do not really understand *Svabhavat*. There is a certain breakthrough in the consciousness required, a movement into another dimension of cognition, that is alien to our present stage of development. On the whole, there are many reasons why I can see that a body of advanced knowledge should remain esoteric until the right stage of evolution has been attained by humanity, in general, both in terms of conceptual capacity and in terms of moral responsibility, before they are ready and fit to deal with it.