

Living in Harmony with Nature: Universals to Particulars

Introduction

The aim of the meeting is a reflection on the practical implications of the law of Unity and Theosophical ideas on our lives. Theosophy gives Universal ideas but does not concern itself much with the phenomenal transitory world as it is ever changing. Rules of conduct that might be true and relevant for a certain people at a certain time might become irrelevant when the circumstances change, therefore it is wise to avoid the trap of false asceticism, following dogmatic rules and always put these rules or guidance in the context in which they were given; instead the Theosophical approach emphasises universal principles and leaves it up to each individual to decide for themselves, based on the culture of self reliance and thinking for ourselves, experimenting and the development of our intuition. However, we can help one another live more mindfully, more in harmony by encouraging each other to reflect on certain ideas, and pointing to certain dangers. It is essential for the serious student of Theosophy to develop both an awareness of the consequences his thoughts and acts have on his environment (other human beings, animal kingdom, plants, minerals, elementals etc..), and of the need to develop critical, self reliant thinking in order to be able to see the mistakes we and the society of which we are a part makes due to ignorance of the Laws of Nature (“Shila, the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for karmic action”, **Voice of the Silence p52**). This way by raising awareness and setting the right example in our own lives, we can help others around us who might not question things be more mindful of the consequences of their acts, and help others become aware of these universal laws in a language accessible to all, patiently, humbly (see BG ch3 Devotion through the right performance of action). As we gradually purify and transform our thoughts and instruments, we are able to live more in harmony with these universal principles, and gradually become better living reflectors of these higher ideals.

Law of Unity: A Universal basis for living in harmony with Nature in thought and act.

The first Fundamental proposition: "An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought-in the words of Mandukya, "unthinkable and unspeakable."

To render these ideas clearer to the general reader, let 'him set out with the postulate that there is one absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being. This Infinite and Eternal Cause - dimly formulated in the "Unconscious" and "Unknowable" of current European philosophy - is the rootless root of "all that was, is, or ever shall be." (...) Herbert Spencer has. of late so far

modified his Agnosticism, as to assert that the nature of the "First Cause,"¹ which the Occultist more logically derives from the "Causeless Cause," the "Eternal," and the "Unknowable," may be essentially the same as that of - the Consciousness which wells up within us : in short, that the impersonal reality pervading the Kosmos is the pure noumenon of thought. (...) Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter are, however, to be regarded, not as independent realities, but as the two facets or aspects of the Absolute (Parabrahm), which constitute the basis of conditioned Being whether subjective or objective. (...)The "Manifested Universe," therefore, is pervaded by duality, which is, as it were, the very essence of its Existence as "manifestation." But just as the opposite poles of subject and object, spirit and matter, are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized, so, in the manifested Universe; there is "that" which links spirit to matter, subject to object. This something, at present unknown to Western speculation, is called by the occultists Fohat. (...) THE ONE REALITY: its dual aspects in the conditioned Universe." (H.P. Blavatsky, "The Secret Doctrine" Vol. I, p. 14-16)

"For the only decree of Karma — an eternal and immutable decree — is absolute Harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or — break them. " (H.P. Blavatsky, "The Secret Doctrine" Vol. I, p.643)

"The masters have written that we are all bound together in one living whole. Hence the thoughts and acts of one react upon all." (WQJ, "Letters that have helped me" p97)

"ALTRUISM ... This is the keynote of Theosophy and the cure for all ills; this it is which the real Founders of the Theosophical Society promote as its first object — UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD." (HPB, "Second Message from H. P. BLAVATSKY to the American Theosophists 1889")

There cannot be any true progress without a sound ethical basis, but likewise the book knowledge has to be assimilated through the fire of life experience to become wisdom.

Some things students of Theosophy should be mindful of in our modern age and an illustration of an increased awareness arising

- Regarding Food, animal welfare and ecology

"We go a step farther, and prove that when the flesh of animals is assimilated by man as food, it imparts to him, physiologically, some of the characteristics of the animal it came from. Moreover, occult science teaches and proves this to its students by ocular demonstration, showing also that this "coarsening" or "animalizing" effect on man is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, and least of all when he eats only vegetables.(...) If he could live without eating, of course it would. But as the matter stands, he must eat to live, and so we advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and retarding the development of their intuition, their inner faculties and powers. (...)Remember once for all that in all such questions we take a rational, and never a fanatical, view of things. If from illness or long habit a man cannot go without meat, why, by all means let him eat it. It is no crime; it will only retard his progress a little; for after all is said and done, the purely bodily actions and functions are of far less importance than what a man *thinks* and *feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there." (HPB, *The Key to Theosophy*, p260-261)

"The reason for the prohibition [of eating meat as stated in the hindu books], however, is that a man

has no right to kill animals for his food or for any other reason. He must refrain, not because the act is forbidden, but because his whole nature, through the great love and pity that he feels, naturally recoils from such an act. It is plain, if this rule be the correct one—and I think it is—, that a person who stops the eating of meat in order that he may by complying with that condition attain to a development he has set before him misses the mark, and has acquired a selfish motive for the line thus adopted.” (WQJ, “Theosophic diet”, *The Path*, December, 1888)

“What, then, is the true theosophic diet? It is that which best agrees with you, taken in moderation, neither too much nor too little. If your constitution and temperament will permit vegetarianism, then that will give less heat to the blood; and, if it is practiced from the sincere conviction that it is not true brotherhood to destroy living creatures so highly organized as animals, then so much the better. But if you refrain from meat in order to develop your psychic powers and senses, and continue the same sort of thoughts you have always had, neither cultivating nor practicing the highest altruism, the vegetarianism is in vain. The inner nature has a diet out of our thoughts and motives. If those are low or gross or selfish, it is equivalent to feeding that nature upon gross food. True theosophic diet is therefore not of either meat or wine; it is unselfish thoughts and deeds, untiring devotion to the welfare of “the great orphan Humanity,” absolute abnegation of self, unutterable aspiration to the Divine—the Supreme Soul. This only is what we can grow upon. And vain are the hopes of those who pin their faith on any other doctrine.”(WQJ, “Theosophic diet”, *The Path*, December, 1888)

- Extracts of the documentary Food Inc. :<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dyiwvj1srCY>



- **The Case of 14 year old Lucy Gavaghan**, the girl who convinced Tesco bosses to stop selling 'caged eggs'. In 2012, the EU placed a ban on keeping hens in battery cages, but the industry gets round this by putting the hens in larger "enriched" cages, designed to hold around 90 birds for 72 weeks at a time and - in theory - giving them more space. But, says Lucy, each has about the size of an A4 sheet of paper and can't spread their wings. The schoolgirl, who owns 5 hens, two of which used to live in commercial barns, and one which was rescued from a colony cage, says she started the campaign because she wanted people to appreciate the fact that animals are "sentient beings" and don't deserve this inhumane treatment. "I'd been writing to the supermarkets for quite a while before I started the Change.org campaign. I had written to a few politicians and I wasn't really getting much response from them," says Lucy, who lives just outside Sheffield. "I wanted to really try and have people take notice of the issue so I started the petition and sent it round to as many people as possible and asked them to share it. It just kept gaining more and more interest and more signatures - over 280,000 in the end. Lucy finally got her meeting with the supermarket giant after much perseverance." "From the meeting I didn't really get the sense that they were planning to change. That was back in May, and then last Wednesday I got a call, when I was at school, to

say they were going to be making an announcement saying they would stop selling caged eggs by 2025." The retailer, which sells 1.4 billion eggs a year, said it had 'conducted a detailed review of its egg sourcing strategy, which included consultation with suppliers, industry experts and other key stakeholders' and committed to 'transition to 100% cage-free eggs, moving to alternative sourcing methods, such as barns, free range and organic.' But Lucy, who seems to have a remarkably wise head on her shoulders, says that while she is delighted at the news, her priority now is to make sure Tesco follow through with their pledge. "It is quite a large time frame they have set for themselves, but I can see that it will take quite a long time because of the nature of the supply chain. "It will take them a long time to generate the response they need from their farmers. I can appreciate that. I'm going to try and work with them to make it happen as soon as possible." "They've said it now, so all the campaigners including myself are going to make sure it does happen." "People see chickens as egg laying machines and in a lot of cases this leads to them being kept in cages. It's completely inhumane. They're not inanimate objects, they are animals, they are creatures, they are sentient beings." "The fact that they are kept in cages means they don't have the room to move around or the capacity to express themselves. "The fact that the supermarkets are selling the eggs that the hens lay means, I think, that the hens should get a good life in exchange for that at the very least. "You get the sense that if anyone can make them see sense it's this incredibly determined teenager. "I don't think that will be the end of my campaigning," she says. "I'm hoping to carry on pushing these welfare issues and keep trying to get the standards lifted, as well as possibly outlawing cages altogether in the future. (The Telegraph, online edition 25 JULY 2016)

- Human relations and inequalities

“The subject relates to our conduct toward and treatment of our fellows, including in that term all people with whom we have any dealings. No particular mode of treatment is given by Theosophy. It simply lays down the law that governs us in all our acts, and declares the consequences of those acts. It is for us to follow the line of action which shall result first in harmony now and forever, and second, in the reduction of the general sum of hate and opposition in thought or act which now darkens the world. ” (WQJ, “How Should We Treat Others” The Path February, 1896)

The appearance of the concept of sustainable development (a short intro: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCN6itOLZvY>)

Definition: Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Universals to particulars...and back to Universals!

“ The great work of evolution proceeds from within outwards”;“Theosophy gives us the true basis for right thinking and so for right action” (R.C. Daily Readings for 17th and 18th May)

“It is apparent to anybody that the cause of all human troubles is selfishness and ignorance. The greatest need, then, is to have a right and true philosophy of life, for the following of it will not only bring relief from the many forms of suffering, but a knowledge that will lead humanity to greater heights” (R.C. Daily Readings for 14th June)

“Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways — which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate; while another sees in them the action of blind Fatalism; and a third, simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them — would surely disappear, if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause. With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction

that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the 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 act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the "ways of Providence." We cut these numerous windings in our destinies daily with our own hands, while we imagine that we are pursuing a track on the royal high road of respectability and duty, and then complain of those ways being so intricate and so dark. We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making, and the riddles of life that we will not solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life. If one breaks the laws of Harmony, or, as a theosophical writer expresses it, "the laws of life," one must be prepared to fall into the chaos one has oneself produced. For, according to the same writer, "the only conclusion one can come to is that these laws of life are their own avengers; and consequently that every avenging Angel is only a typified representation of their re-action."(H.P. Blavatsky, "The Secret Doctrine" Vol. I, p.643-4)

"Too much, too much, trying to force harmony. Harmony comes from a balancing of diversities, and discord from any effort to make harmony by force. . . . In all such things I never meddle, but say to myself it is none of my affair at all, and wait till it comes to me — and thank God if it never arrives! And that is a good rule for you. . . .

We all differ and must agree to disagree, for it is only by balancing contrary things that equilibrium (harmony) is obtained. Harmony does not come through likeness. If people will only let each other alone and go about their own business quietly all will be well. . . . It is one's duty to try and find one's own duty and not to get into the duty of another. And in this it is of the highest importance that we should detach our minds (as well as our tongues) from the duties and acts of others whenever those are outside of our own. If you can find this fine line of action and inaction you will have made great progress. (WQJ, Letters That Have Helped Me, 2:79-80, 71)

"It [Theosophy] will gradually leaven and permeate the great mass of thinking and intelligent people with its large-minded and noble ideas of Religion, Duty, and Philanthropy. Slowly but surely it will burst asunder the iron fetters of creeds and dogmas, of social and caste prejudices; it will break down racial and national antipathies and barriers, and will open the way to the practical realisation of the Brotherhood of all men. Through its teaching, through the philosophy which it has rendered accessible and intelligible to the modern mind, the West will learn to understand and appreciate the East at its true value. Further, the development of the psychic powers and faculties, the premonitory symptoms of which are already visible in America, will proceed healthily and normally. Mankind will be saved from the terrible dangers, both mental and bodily, which are inevitable when that unfolding takes place, as it threatens to do, in a hot-bed of selfishness and all evil passions. Man's mental and psychic growth will proceed in harmony with his moral improvement, while his material surroundings will reflect the peace and fraternal good-will which will reign in his mind, instead of the discord and strife which is everywhere apparent around us today" (HPB, The Key to Theosophy, p306)