

Theosophy, Its Meaning and Value

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FRIENDS, —

It is right that I should say at the very outset of the lecture that no society and no individual, because such a society may invite me to its platform, is in any way bound by the opinions which here I may express. It would not be just to hold the Ethical Society responsible for that which I might put forward to you, for it is only offering me a free platform, and not in any way endorsing the opinions I may lay before you. Hence in what I say I speak for the Theosophical Society, and put forward things which by study I have found to be true. But I do not desire to commit to those opinions either the gentleman who is good enough to take the chair for me, or the [Page 2] society of which he is the president. With that preface let me turn to what I have to say.

I want, if I can, to enable you to answer a question which is very often asked — "What is Theosophy?" For very different opinions are put forward with regard to that name by those who have not much looked into the subject nor endeavoured to understand it. Some people, if you ask them, will say, "Oh, it is a kind of Buddhism"; and many other suggestions may be made. I want, if I can, to tell you what it is from the standpoint of those who study it and accept it.

Now its name, to begin with, tells you really the meaning. The name "Theosophy" — the name evidently drawn from the Greek — has been taken for thousands of years to express a particular view of the universe and of men; and to express, above all, man's relationship to God. The "Divine Wisdom" — whether you take it in the Greek form, or whether you go further East and take it under the name that there has been given to it, the Brahmavidya — has always implied the very opposite of the position which was defined by the late Prof. Huxley as that of the [Page 3] Agnostic. Sometimes it is easier to realise a position which is unfamiliar when it is contrasted with one that you may chance to know better in the West. You will remember that Prof. Huxley defined his position to all religions and to super-physical facts as that not of a denier, nor of an affirmer, but of an agnostic. Literally, of course, the word means "without knowledge"; but it was very well understood that when the name was taken by the great scientist, the particular kind of knowledge he declared himself to be without was that which has long been known in Philosophy, as the "gnosis", or the knowledge. So that when he put the " a " before it and took the term "agnostic", he intended to convey, as he there definitely stated, that the possibilities of human knowledge were bounded by investigation into the phenomena that the senses could observe, and that which the reason could deduce from the study of phenomena. He declared that man had senses for observation; he had reason for study and for understanding what he had observed; but he stated that man had no powers, no faculties, [Page 4] which could carry him beyond observation and reasoning thereupon. And hence he declared that the position of himself, and those who agreed with him in this, was that all

subjects beyond the reach of the senses and of the reason were unknowable by man.

Now when that proclamation was made to the Western world, science had been for some time going along lines, and was continuing to follow those lines, which took it more and more into antagonism to the religions of the world. More and more it appeared to be building up a materialistic edifice. Since that time, as you know, the lines of scientific investigation have changed, and it is now engaged in various researches which are practically bringing back in a scientific form much that during the last part of the 19th century had been taught to be outside scientific possibility. If I wanted, then, to put over against the position of Prof. Huxley — the position of the agnostic — that which Theosophy is, I should say it is the "gnosis", the knowledge. And that is a declaration that just as man can study the phenomenal world [Page 5] by observation of the senses, just as by the reason and the intelligence he can conquer the intellectual world and so extend the results of his observation, so also does man possess not only senses and intelligence, but also a spiritual nature; and that by virtue of that spiritual nature he can know the spiritual world as he can know the intellectual by the reason, as he can know the phenomenal by the senses. And, therefore, Theosophy is the declaration that man can know God — not only believe, not only think about Him, not only argue about Him, not only reason about Him, but know Him. Now that is one of the oldest affirmations in the world; it lies at the root of every great religion of the past and of the present. It is the declaration that, man being a spiritual being and the spiritual nature being the profoundest part of himself, by the unfolding of that, by the knowledge, in the deepest sense, of himself, man is able to reach the knowledge of the supreme, of the universal life. It is the assertion that man, being fundamentally a spirit, can know the spiritual; and just as in the Christian religion you have the declaration from the lips of the [Page 6] Christ that the Kingdom of God is within you; just as in Hinduism you have the declaration that the self in man is part of the self universal — so in modern days Theosophy re-proclaims the ancient affirmation; so in the face of agnosticism it raises again the banner of gnosticism, and it declares that the spiritual nature is a fundamental part of human nature, and that man in the deepest recesses of his being has a spiritual life, and not only an intellect and a possession of the senses. That is the fundamental meaning of Theosophy.

This declaration of knowledge being possible, you will at once realise that, if that be true, then religion is founded upon a bed-rock which nothing will be able to shake. It does not in that case rest upon any books, however sacred, nor on any authority, however venerable. It does not in that case depend upon any Church, any sect, any congregation. It rests ultimately on the experience of human consciousness, on the testimony of that consciousness to that to which it is akin. And so religion in its ultimate essence does not become a matter of authority but a matter of [Page 7] experience, each man being capable of reaching the experience for himself, each man being able to find within himself the testimony to spiritual realities; and no matter what may be the differences between the religions, no matter what may be the quarrels that have divided religious men, still there remains in heart of each the final testimony — the testimony of human experience, the most universal and the most identical throughout the whole evolution of humanity. And that is the first declaration and the essence of Theosophy.

Now, in addition to that, Theosophy is a body of teachings. You may say, "How are these teachings obtained ?" Look back to the last fifty years of the 19th century, and you will see that there grew up during that time — out of the many investigations into the past, out of the many unburials of ancient cities and ancient temples — there gradually grew up what was called "the science of comparative mythology". Now that science was based upon a number of facts that it was impossible to deny. Only the ignorant could deny them. It was found that wherever [Page 8] you searched back into the past, certain

great teachings were found in every religion. When the tombs of Egypt were opened when the mummies were unrolled, fragments of papyrus were over and over again found on the breast of the mummy within the rolls of the cloth. These were gathered together one after another, brought up from the places where these fragments had been buried for thousands upon thousands of years. By much research, by unwearied patience, men who devoted themselves to the study of ancient Egypt at last gained clues by which they were able to translate these fragments of ancient writing that had come into their hands. They learnt to translate the hieroglyphics ; they managed to discover the secret of the ancient writings, the priestly writings of Egypt. And so at last, leaf after leaf, translation after translation, they gathered together a mass of information which told to the modern world what Egypt had believed in the days of her greatness; rolled back the mists of centuries, and made the Egyptian religion live once more before the eyes of men. And when they had thus gathered [Page 9] together what Egypt had to tell them, they carried on the same kind of work in nation after nation, unburying city after city. They went across the Atlantic to ancient Mexico, and there they dug down till they came to the temples of the great civilisation which was ancient when the Aztecs overthrew it—they who themselves were ancient when Cortes and his Spaniards ravaged Mexico. And as they dug up those long-forgotten temples they found there the same hieroglyphics that they had learned to read in Egypt — the same symbols, the symbols containing or concealing the same teachings. And so from America as from Egypt they brought back the facts they had discovered, and they preserved them for future study. They unburied the cities of Chaldea; they read again the old Assyrian story. Then, when they had gathered ancient religion after ancient religion together, they began to study the living religions of antiquity as they had studied those that had passed away. They asked China what she had to tell of her ancient beliefs; they went to India, and translated many a book out of her mighty [Page 10] literature; they asked the Buddhist what he taught; and then, coming down the stream of ages, they came to the more modern faiths, and put them side by side with the ancient living and the ancient dead. And out of that there came a conclusion that it was not possible to deny — that all the great religions of the past had taught similar doctrines; that all the great religions of the past had proclaimed a similar morality; that all the great religions of the past told of divine teachers who had been the founders and teachers of great religions — and who all had given similar teachings to the world.

And when they had gathered all this together, they baptised it with a name which showed the way in which they regarded it: for they called it "comparative mythology". And then they drew a conclusion not so certain as their facts. They declared that all the religions of the world thus shown to be identical in their main features had their root in human ignorance; that we only had in the most refined and philosophical religions a refinement which had been gradually brought about with the improvement of human reason, [Page 11] and with the building of human civilisation; but that if you ignored that refinement, that philosophising, then you would find that primeval ignorance lay at the root of all these great religions. Thus they struck the deadliest blow which yet had been struck at religion in showing that all were alike, and in adding that which they had not proved — that all grew out of the primeval ignorance of the savage.

It was just at that time that the "Ancient Wisdom" was again proclaimed to the modern world which accepted all these facts; it stated that many more facts of a similar nature remained to be discovered, and took as true all this great basis of knowledge that had been obtained, but challenged the deduction which "Comparative Mythology" had made from it, pointed out that there was another possibility to explain the likeness of all the religions, living and dead. And that was the possibility that there had been a primary teaching of a wisdom, and that all the religions really had their root, not in human ignorance, but in divine wisdom; and that great religious teachers were members of a mighty brotherhood [Page 12] who

taught the same truth because truth is eternal, and only gave it different forms in order to suit the need of the people to whom they came as revealers of the truth.

So these two were put over against each other, those who maintained the origin of all religions in divine wisdom, and those who asserted their origin in human ignorance. The facts the same in both; the deductions equally, for the time being, unproved. And then the question arose, "What evidence can be found for one or the other?" Looking back into the past is there anything which may guide us to a conclusion as to whether ignorance or wisdom be really the root of the similarity among all religions? And then as, in search of that which should decide the quarrel, students went backward into the past, one thing came out strongly and universally, and that was that the further you went back along the stream of the religious teaching, the purer it became, the wiser — not the more ignorant, the more savage. The great bibles of the religions were found to contain the purest morality that these religions had taught. The philosophy of the past was searched into, [Page 13] and it was found that to those most ancient books of the Hindus — their Vedas — they had attached those great philosophical treatises which have been the study of Orientalists in Europe and the admiration of those who have tried to study and to understand — it was found that the further back you went the nobler the teaching, the sublimer the spirituality. And that is true of all religions alike. If you want in your own faith of Christendom to inspire people to a nobler morality you do not take the Data of Ethics from Herbert Spencer, you take the Sermon on the Mount, from the lips of the Christ. There it is that you find your inspiration, and not in the later discussions. And so with all the great religions of the world. Hence along this line of study the verdict went in favour of the conclusion that the unity of religions grew out of the wisdom which lay behind them, and that you cannot prove the thesis that the comparative mythologists had started with — that they were only the refinement from savage and barbarous superstitions. And so in the second sense Theosophy came to be the great body of teachings common to all religions, the teachings which you find [Page 14] alike in all that are not the exclusive possession of any. And those teachings are not very many in number, however great in significance. You could count them off upon your fingers, and find them in everyone of the great religions of the world. Let me run them over and you will see that this is so with the exception of one on which, perchance, you might challenge me.

The first great universal teaching common to the most ancient, the longest dead, religion of the past and to the youngest religion is the proclamation of the unity of God; the one life throughout the universe, the one consciousness from which all consciousnesses are drawn, the one mighty existence from which all other existences are derived. That is the first universal teaching of all religions without exception. Even among the savages where you find them sunk in the depth of fetishism and animism, even there you find, as Lang has shown, that behind all those results of ignorance there is ever the teaching, which they say is their oldest teaching, of the one universal and all-embracing life. Even there, behind the fragments that have [Page 15] come down, this one central teaching is found.

Then you find as the next point of this universal teaching that in the manifestation of life, in the building up of a universe, triple are the qualities which show themselves forth — just as your own consciousness is triple in its nature, just as in yourselves you can find in miniature the reflection of that all-pervading consciousness. And so the dogma of the Trinity grew up, the popular way of putting the philosophical conception of this threefold nature of consciousness alike in God and man. And in all these ancient religions that is the second great truth that comes out, whether you take it from the mouth of the philosopher or from the mouth of the believer in the popular form of religion.

And then the third thought that comes out equally from every faith is the great hierarchy, or hierarchies, of spiritual intelligences whereof humanity is one. Different names are given to these in different religions; and it is the labels that make the differences and the quarrels, not the great truths that these labels denote. The Hindus called them [Page 16] "shining ones", devas, a word often translated by the word "gods", but not accurately or rightly thus translated. Mussalmans and Christians call them angels or archangels — the names do not matter. What does matter is the conception that humanity is not the only living intelligence within this great universe, or even in our solar system; that life is found everywhere bodied out in many forms; that evolution has been going on for ages and ages; and that man is neither its highest product nor its lowest; that above him rise vast ranks of intelligences mightier than his own, just as below him also there stretch many ranks of intelligences less unfolded than his. And it is interesting to notice how many scientists of today are now recognising the fact that it is not rational to confine this idea of intelligence embodied in matter within the narrow limits of humanity on a single globe among many globes that are found in space. A man like Sir Oliver Lodge declares that there is nothing unreasonable in believing in these great ranks of hierarchies of living intelligences who are evolving in the great field of the universe, as man is evolving in his own little globe. And [Page 17] so the universe becomes again, as it was of old time, the home of myriads of beings, and not of man alone; and the same so-called heresy, which was amongst those for which Bruno was burnt in Rome, the idea of a plurality of inhabited worlds, has come back again to the thoughts of man, and it is realised that man is not alone; he is only one of a vast army of spiritual and unfolding intelligences; that he has brothers above him as well as below him, rank after rank of higher and lower evolution, and himself is evolving in the midst.

And then comes the teaching which I said some of you would challenge — and yet you cannot challenge it if you look carefully into the past history of your own faith. How does consciousness evolve? We find degrees of consciousness as marked as the various types of body. We find some people born into the world with very limited intellectual capacity, very limited moral power as well as intellect. Others are born with high intelligence; others with saintly qualities shining out from the early days of infancy. Whence all these strange differences between man and man? [Page 18] Why so vast a gulf of difference between the highest that our own humanity has produced, and the lowest that it is still producing? How does consciousness unfold? And the answer given to that by all the ancient religions without exception was that this consciousness of man was a continuing thing; that it began as a germ and unfolded gradually by life after life and experience piled upon experience. And that view, known under the name of re-incarnation, is the one great view which dominated alike ancient religion and ancient philosophy. You find it in the writings of the Hindus and the Buddhists; you find it in the writings — less clearly marked because they are so fragmentary — amongst the Zoroastrians; you find it in the teachings of the old Hebrews; you find it in the teachings of the Greeks and the Romans. Everywhere the same teaching comes out to you alike from religion and philosophy. And you find the teaching in the earlier centuries of the Christian Church; you find a great Christian teacher like Origen declaring that every man receives a body according to his deserts and his former [Page 19] actions; and you may trace that doctrine sometimes in the form of the pre-existence of the soul, sometimes in the form of repeated resurrections of the body, right down from those early days of Christianity until it was made a heresy by a Council of the Church in the sixth century. And even then it does not disappear; even then it is handed on by sect after sect. The Albigenses held it although persecuted by Rome. One sect after another through the Middle Ages holds up this same teaching which came from the East. You find it peeping out frequently in the writings of the most learned of the faith of the prophet Muhammed. You find it in the Middle Ages expressed under cover often of allegory and symbol, but still definitely enough to be seen. You find it reappearing above the surface again in the time of Charles II among the clergy of the English Church. You find it reappearing again in Germany in the writings of their greatest philosophers. Goethe taught it; Fichte, Schelling, Lessing, they all put forward this explanation of the growth and development of human

consciousness. You find it in your own poet [Page 20] Wordsworth, seeing by the insight of the poet that which other eyes are often blind to, when he declared that —

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting, and cometh from afar.

And so, in one after another, in Browning, Rossetti, and others, in ever-accumulating testimony, in Christendom the old truth has made its way again and has now become popular among the most thoughtful and educated of our own people. You may remember how Hume the sceptic declared that it was the only theory of immortality upon which a philosopher could look; and you may remember that in our own times one of our own philosophical writers, Professor McTaggart, has declared the same thing; and after going through various theories of immortality has declared that the most natural is that of reincarnation. And so we cannot really put Christianity outside of all the religions that have given this explanation of Divine Justice and human evolution. In Christianity, as well as elsewhere, we find the teaching, and it has again become [Page 21] popular in our own times among our own thinkers. Even a man like Huxley, agnostic though he was, declared that there was nothing in the analogy of nature against it and very much to support it. So that even there we find no hostility, although no definite acceptance of the idea. And this is the one teaching that I said you might challenge out of all those that universal religion has given. But that challenge grows feebler and feebler as the history of Christian doctrine becomes more accurately known. Out of that you will see at once must spring up the idea that man, passing out of the body, continues a living consciousness, passing through experiences in worlds on the other side of death, there working up all that he has gathered during his life here, changing thought into power, experience into faculty, and bringing back that transmuted thought as capacity, as the dower with which he is born to a new experience of earthly life.

The more you study this teaching the more will it recommend itself to your intelligence, the more will it explain to you the riddle of the world; the more will it render human [Page 22] life intelligible and full of hope, nay, full of certainty of higher and higher evolution, for then the differences between us in mind and in morals become differences of experience and not differences inherent in our nature. The lowest criminal is but a savage such as we were in lives gone by; the loftiest, divinest man is only fuller charged with experience than we are; and we shall climb to the place of the genius and the saint as we have grown out of the lower conditions of mankind. And so it is a teaching of hope as well as one which comes to us with all the weight of human experience in the past. It is the necessary corollary of the scientific teaching of the evolution of the body — the unfolding of the consciousness side by side with the improving of the body, a consciousness to unfold more in ages yet to come until every man has grown into divinity, and the perfect man lives upon earth. If to these teachings we add those of the three worlds and of the universality of causation, we have completed the list of fundamental doctrines.

And so Theosophy in the secondary sense means all this teaching, universally accepted, [Page 23] forming the backbone of every great religion. Hence Theosophy cannot be the enemy of any religion, but the servant and helper of each. And the great work of the Theosophist in every country is to bring out the essential verities that the religion of the country unfolds; and so to strengthen its hold on the hearts and reasons of men in order that religion may be able to justify itself at the bar of reason and prove the realities on which it rests. Hence, in becoming a Theosophist a man does not leave his own religion. He deepens it, spiritualises it, makes it more and more vital, more and more rational and intelligible. And that

is the work that the Society is doing all over the world — bringing back the inner and more spiritual side; making religions realise that life is in the spirit and not in the letter. Now Theosophy does a good deal to enable religions to justify themselves in the face of the sceptic, for Theosophy has brought back also a scientific teaching which has never been lost in the East, but is only beginning now to be discovered in the West — the teaching that man as a spiritual intelligence is capable of reaching his own higher [Page 24] consciousness by a definitely scientific training, and that anyone who has the courage and strength to follow the training, and who begins with a certain capacity from the past in that direction, may reach first-hand knowledge for himself, I say "with a certain knowledge brought out of the past". That is the condition which every science makes for those who reach its highest points of knowledge. When you have a Senior Wrangler in mathematics he is not made out of a boy who is absolutely devoid of mathematical ability. The boy must show mathematical ability first before you have the foundation upon which you can lay your training and so develop in the course of a couple of decades to a man who receives the highest honours of mathematical training. And so with every other science. All our great experts began life as children showing exceptional capacity for those lines of scientific research in which they have excelled. Go back to their childhood and in their biographies you will read how early the great men of science showed the capacity for scientific thought. And it is true of the great science — the science of the [Page 25] soul — that unless a person has some capacity in that direction, then in the present life he will hardly be able to gain first-hand knowledge. In other lives, yes ! For the foundation must always be laid in some special life; but inborn capacity as well as training are needed for this science as well as for all others.

Now what is this science of the soul ? It is the practical experience that just as you possess a physical body by which you come into touch with the physical world around you, through which your conscience works in all its observations and reasonings, so do you possess also bodies of subtler matter in which the same consciousness — which is yourself — is able to work. And as these subtler bodies become more and more organised by study and training, the consciousness in them can come into touch with other worlds as accurately and precisely as it can come into contact with the physical by means of the physical body. Further, that it is possible for a man to separate himself consciously from his physical body and work in those subtler bodies which all men possess, and [Page 26] that by the means of this training we can obtain direct knowledge of those other worlds of which religion has said so much; all the great teachers of the past having claimed, remember, that they knew those things of their own personal knowledge. That science of the soul having been gradually lost, religion has been left somewhat helpless when challenged to justify itself. I say that all the great religions of the past by the mouth of their founders and teachers claimed this first-hand knowledge. You may read if you like in one of the old Hindu books, "A man ought to be able to separate himself from the body as you can separate the grass stock from the sheath that is around it". And I might quote you a hundred passages like that from the philosophic treatises of the Hindus. Take again the founder of the Buddhist religion, which has become so sadly materialised. In the later days when the young Brahmana came to him, the Lord Buddha, and asked him about the worlds on the other side of death, what was his answer ?" If you wanted to know the way to a village you would ask the man who lived there and who knew [Page 27] the way to it; and so you do well to come to me and ask me, for I know those other worlds, and I know the roads that lead thereto". And I might quote to you dozens of other passages all making the same claim. Now that is a matter for personal experience, for those who would become experts in this particular science. A considerable number of Western people in the countries of Europe are studying that science now and finding by their own experience that it teaches what is true; and they are showing that in some cases by using some of the lower powers of the body, by investigations along physical lines — chemistry, electricity, and along the lines of the investigations of the physicists — showing that these subtler things can be seen and that their testimony is as natural as the testimony of the physical world around. This is not supernatural or marvellous; it is simply evolving yourselves a little more rapidly than your race is doing. Does it strike you

as strange if I say to you that all of you have these subtler senses not thoroughly developed and controlled, but none the less in you? And if you ask me to prove it, my answer [Page 28] is simply that if you take a dozen or twenty people haphazard out of an ordinary audience of fairly educated men and women and throw them into the mesmeric trance, you will find the very large majority of them become what is technically termed clairvoyant or lucid. What is the natural deduction? Let us see what you have done. You have stopped the working of the senses you are accustomed to use. The eye of the person in the mesmeric trance is blind. If you flash an electric light into it there is no contraction of the iris. The ear is quite deaf; you can fire off a pistol beside the man, who shows no sign of hearing. But if you talk to that man and ask him a question — I will give you an instance of what can be done. Ask him to tell you what is going on in a distant place, and he will be able to read a hundred miles away, although the physical eye cannot read the book you put in front of it. The case I am going to mention has a particular interest to me because it was done by my old friend, Charles Bradlaugh, who was a sceptic. He was a man of extraordinarily strong mesmeric power, and at one time [Page 29] used to make a number of experiments in mesmerism; and he used to mesmerise his own wife, and found that she became clairvoyant. One day when he had thrown her into a mesmeric trance he asked her to go to his printing office in London and tell him what was going on. She very naturally said that his paper was being set up. That might have been thought transference, or a normal guess of what was happening. Then he asked her to look at what was being set at the moment, and she said to him: "Look at the woman who is setting up that article," and then she added, " Oh, the stupid woman, she has put that letter" — I think it was an " r " — "in upside down"; and she read the sentence. The next day's post brought to Mr. Bradlaugh the proofs set up the preceding day, and when he turned to the article of which his wife had read a part hundreds of miles away in the North, he found the letter set upside down as she had pointed out in the trance the day before. That is a good example, because Mr. Bradlaugh was not what was called a religious man; he was a secularist, a materialist; but he recognised the existence [Page 30] of such powers as that in man. Hence his testimony becomes the more valuable not being readily given without careful investigation.

Now those powers, I say, you possess, most of you, but they are not yet so developed that they are able to work at the same time as our ordinary physical senses are working, for those senses, corresponding to coarser and grosser vibrations, drown the testimony of the finer senses which cannot make themselves heard through the vibrations of the coarser. But if you choose to go through the training that some of us have gone through you will find that you can hasten a little the normal evolution, and that those senses which are just near the surface in all cultivated people may be made active by hurrying a little that evolution to which you are all subject. That is what a number of us have done. Then it is not necessary to go into trance; then it is not necessary to close the outer senses; you can use both at the same time, and so check what you see super-physically — not supernaturally — by the observation of others who observe at the same time [Page 31] and who are using their waking consciousness. Thus you can discuss in your ordinary condition that which you are also observing with those keener organs of vision. These are the things which are going on around you at the present time, things which people of your own race are doing, understanding, practising. It is that more than anything else, perhaps, which has made such tremendous changes in the ordinary thought of the time; because you find how many people are having experience of the superphysical who were ashamed to speak of it when everybody was laughing at it, who are ready to bear testimony today when the higher faculties of men are gradually showing themselves as real. The result is that you bring a new help to many religious teachings which turn upon the facts of worlds beyond our side the grave. You can follow those who have passed through the gateway of death into the worlds where they are still alive, find them there, talk to them, know them as you knew them here on earth, not by bringing them back as the Spiritualists do, but by learning to live in the world where they are living [Page 32] now. And as the knowledge spreads and becomes more common many a thing that religion has hoped for will be shown to be scientifically true. That is the

scientific side of the Theosophical teaching where the science of the soul and the invisible world is followed as definitely and along lines as well understood as the lines by which you train the ordinary scientist and teach him to reach the point that others have reached before.

Looking then on Theosophy in this way its value is at once obvious. You can use these higher senses for scientific investigations; you can use them, as they are being used, for medical diagnosis; you can use them along various lines of medical research, and use them without hurting either human or animal life in your investigations. As this power becomes more common that terrible road along which science in our own days has gone and is going, the road of the torture of the helpless animal, that road will be seen to be as unnecessary as it is cruel and wicked. Then we shall be using higher human faculties for study instead of trying to wring [Page 33] secrets out of the torture of the bodies of animals. Then medical men will begin to tread on the safer pathway of knowledge, instead of trying to invent poisons of every sort to neutralise other poisons already in the body, and so get what they call "health", which is only a diseased condition of balancing poison against poison. And as they drop those evil ways they will come back to the science of healing which is now so much cast on one side, and learn to heal along lines which work with the recuperative forces of nature, instead of trying to balance poison against poison, which is the modern way that the doctor has begun to use. And if these lines will come out as valuable even when you are dealing with human bodies what shall they do for human minds? They are beginning to make us understand the power of thought; they are beginning to teach us how by the exercise of right thought we can build up right character; how by deliberate meditating on virtue we can reproduce that virtue in ourselves, and how that power of thought is found to be the mightiest power on earth — [Page 34] that great creative force which belongs to the human spirit, which can be used for the noblest purposes, which can be utilised for the greater service of mankind. So you see that looking at Theosophy in this way, while I would never dream of asking you to accept it on the statement of one who has studied it even as long as I have — during the last twenty years — to find that each successive year it becomes more luminous, more helpful, and more inspiring — while I would not ask you to take it on my word, I think I have shown you enough to prove to you that it is worthy of your thoughtful consideration.

And that is all I desire to do. A lecture to do its work should not simply give information — that is better gained by each individual in his own study and by his own thinking. What a lecture should do is to stimulate people to inquire and to think; and if the lecturer succeeds in doing that with even a handful of his auditory he has done his work, for no thought is worth the thinking unless it is your own and not the repetition only of someone else's. No belief is worth holding unless you have proved it yourselves [Page 35] and know exactly why you believe and how you have reached that point of knowledge. And a lecturer should be a sign-post simply along the road that leads to knowledge, pointing out where knowledge has been found, pointing out where further knowledge may be gained. Such a sign-post I would fain be to some of you tonight, telling you partly what I have learnt, but most of what I have said I have verified by my own personal investigations, by my own study, and my own practice. For I was taught when I first entered the Theosophical Society twenty years ago, not to believe because I was told, not to believe because others had experienced, but to study and experiment for myself and then speak out my belief in that which I myself knew to be true. It may be that among you are some whose minds are oppressed by the burden of the want of understanding of the world and of human life, who suffer because it is unintelligible — for the worst suffering in life is not to be found in poverty and disease and physical misery, but in the mental perplexity and bewilderment that makes the world unintelligible to us. [Page 36] I have found this teaching makes the world intelligible; I have found it solve the great problems of life; and therefore I bring it to you. For after all we are all seekers after truth, and if in plunging into that great ocean anyone of us has found an oyster containing a pearl, then in rising after the dive into the ocean we

can show the pearl that we have found in order that others may also dive, may also seek, may also find. And so to you I come this evening to tell you of divings into that ocean that others as well as I myself have made. We have found there precious pearls that have enriched our lives; and so we say to you: "Plunge into that great ocean and have no fear; your intellect will guide you, your courage will sustain you, your strength will enable you to find; and if, like us, you come up from that dive into the ocean, your hands full of the pearls of truth you have discovered, then scatter those pearls abroad among men in order that they also may be stimulated to seek and to find."

And no greater service I believe can be done by one human spirit to another than [Page 37] to speak of the truth found so as to stimulate others to the finding, trying to win others to seek, rather than trying to impose upon them that which one knows oneself to be true.