IS THEOSOPHY AUTHENTIC?

By Franklin Merrell-Wolff

Is Theosophy authentic? This question has arisen many times since the founding of the movement, and many answers have been given. Yet the question has arisen again and by individuals who are genuinely oriented to the Enlightened Consciousness and who, therefore, must be viewed as entirely sincere. As a consequence the writer has felt himself called upon to face once more this query which had been one in his own mind in earlier years. In the present instance the questioning has come from individuals who are sincerely oriented to the Buddhistic Dharma and thus presents a different and, on the whole, a higher form of doubt than that expressed by those with a western scientific or orthodox Christian orientation. Accordingly, here the problem will be approached with a primary reference to the relationship between Theosophy and the traditional Buddhistic Teaching as it exists available for a non-initiated student.

First, in order to clear the field, it will be desirable to determine in what sense "Theosophy" is to be understood. This is necessary since the word is old and can be traced at least to the time of Plotinus, and is not always employed in the same sense. The word has been used from time to

time by various societies belonging to the Christian milieu, once at least as early as the seventeenth century. Vaughan has identified "Theosophy" with philosophic mysticism thus placing it in contrast with the non-rationalistic forms of mysticism. Baldwin's "Dictionary of Philosophy" defines it in two senses, as follows: (1) "A stage into which philosophic reflection passes when its primary data are God and an organ through which He is revealed or mystically intuited." (2) "A form of Buddhistic thinking from which the postulate of a divine principle deduces the fundamental law of things, a vibratory movement of evolution and involution, the application of which in the sphere of psychic life leads to the process of perpetual reincarnation." "Theosophy", as understood in the present discussion, is related to the second part of the above definition, though the latter is in many ways inadequate and unacceptable. Specifically it is related to the movement which was founded in New York in 1875 by H. P. Blavatsky with certain associates. The sense in which "Theosophy" will be understood is that defined by the literature of this movement, the primary base being the "Secret Doctrine" and with this, all else attested as coming from the same source. Thus the "Mahatma Letters", certain articles in the early issues of "The Theosophist" and other writings by the same authors

or vouched for by them as being theosophical, will be viewed as defining "Theosophy" for our present purposes.

It is an error to view Theosophy as exclusively a form of Buddhistic thinking as given in the second part of the Baldwin Dictionary definition. The "Key to Theosophy" is clear on this point. It is stated definitely that Theosophy is not Buddhism if by Buddhism is meant exclusively the exoteric religious tradition which is known by that name. However, the "Key" does not with the same emphasis say that Theosophy is not Vedanta, or Christianity or Moslemism although it is quite clear that it is not identical with any of these. The fact is that the Buddhistic coloring in Theosophy is so marked that it was especially necessary to clarify the distinction between Theosophy and Buddhism. Actually, among those principally responsible for the Theosophical Movement and its teachings the majority were primarily oriented to Buddhism and rated the Great Buddha as the greatest and noblest among men during historic times. As one reads the "Secret Doctrine" and the "Mahatma Letters" one receives the impression of a predominant, but not exclusive, coloring from Buddhistic thought. Therefore the identification of Theosophy with traditional Buddhism is understandable, though careful study would clear away the error.

If,then, Theosophy is not identical with Buddhism, Vedanta or any other openly known philosophy or religion, just what is it? The source works are definite on this point. Considering Theosophy in the sense of a doctrine or teaching, rather than in the other sense of "a way of life", it is said to be a partial statement emanating from pure Bodha or the Eternal Wisdom of which every authentic religious movement or philosophy is, in its origin, a partial manifestation. Bodha in its essence and purity is beyond name and form and is eternal, but in variable degree and in less pure form is revealed in name, form and symbol. The degree in which it can be revealed to the individual consciousness depends upon the purity and evolutionary development of the latter. Consequently, the higher aspect of the revealed Bodha is unavoidably esoteric for most men. The open religions and philosophies are in the nature of stepped-down or exoteric statements, not for arbitrary reasons, but from the necessities imposed by the limitations of the understanding of most human beings. The esoteric Bodha has existed in this world as long as man has existed. From time to time exoteric presentations have appeared throughout the whole history of mankind, but all such presentations have been only partial and, apparently, have always been subject to corruption and decay. From this source came Buddhism, the Vedanta and all the other great religious and philosophical

movements ever known among men. Theosophy, in its primary meaning, is identical with both the utterly pure Root-Bodhi and its esoteric manifestation, while in the more objective sense as a movement starting in 1875 it is another opening of the door of presentation. Such is the statement one finds in the source material.

The question as to whether Theosophy is what it claims to be does not concern us at this point. For the present we are interested only in its self-definition and its consequent relation to extant religions and philosophies, particularly historic Buddhism. As self-defined it is identical with the Root of all these religions and philosophies and, in especially marked degree, with the Root of Buddhism and Vedanta. Thus, in the FUNDAMENTAL sense, it claims to be identical with both Buddhism and Vendanta.

It may well be that a scholarly study of the source literature of Theosophy would find a predominance of the Buddhistic approach and language. If so, this is quite understandable since the two intelligences most responsible for Theosophic literature are self-confessed Buddhists in their personal consciousness and background. Nonetheless, they do not affirm Truth as being the exclusive monopoly of historic Buddhism. It is also possible that there does exist some Buddhistic sect in which the formulated Dharma exists in

a greater state of purity than elsewhere. In any case, Theosophy is not identical with the whole of exoteric Buddhism nor with any other Oriental philosophy or religion. It ties in with occidental currents as well.

PART II

The present challenge of the authenticity of Theosophy comes from persons who assume, or apparently assume, the primacy, at least within the limits of objectively known history, of the One who was known as Gautama Buddha. The Theosophic literature gives abundant evidence that its authors gave the same valuation to the entity who was known as Gautama in one of his incarnations. The present writer testifies to his sharing in the same view. So we start with agreement at quite an important point. But in as much as there are clearly discrepancies between the extant and accessable formulated Buddhist Dharma and the teachings of Theosophy, the question naturally arises as to which is authentic. The challenge of Theosophy lists a number of items which are given below.

a. Fundamental in the teachings of traditional Buddhism is the doctrine of anatman or the denial of a persistent self or soul. Since this doctrine is found very widely spread throughout the great divisions and sects of Buddhism, despite their divergence and even incompatibility on many other points, the conclusion seems ineluctible that this was

a primary teaching of Gautama Buddha. In contrast, Theosophy seems to assert the reality of the atman in certain senses while agreeing with the anatmic doctrine in other respects. An incompatibility is suggested which seems to force a choice.

b. Buddhistic teaching is nastikata or nontheistic viewing the ultimate as an impersonal "Suchness" to take a term from the Shunyata (Voidness) form of the Mahayana. On this point Theosophy is in agreement in affirming the ultimate Root to be an "Eternal, Boundless, Omnipresent and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and can only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude". But Theosophy does affirm the existence of a number of more-than-human intelligences, some trans-nirvanic that may be and, at times, have been called "gods". The correspondant suggests a discrepancy here.

c. Theosophy teaches or seems to teach, the ultimate reality of Svabhava or Svabhavat as the one real Element from which both spirit and matter are derived, whereas Buddhism teaches Svabhavashunyata or that all things are empty. Thus Theosophy appears to give a substantive value to the Ultimate while Buddhism is radically non-substantive or positivistic in the noumenal as well as in the phenomenal sense.

d. Theosophy teaches the existence of an esoteric doctrine requiring initiation for realization of it, while it is said that Buddha had no esoteric doctrine and repudiated the idea.

e. Points are raised below the philosophic level challenging the motives and integrity of H. P. Blavatsky and the authors of the "Mahatma Letters" involving the following contentions.

(1) The phenomena reported to have been produced seems too much like card tricks and stage-magic to be authentic with added doubt cast by the Coulomb affair and the SPR report in connection therewith.

(2) No new Buddhistic material translated and given to the public.

(3) A particular translation given in the "Mahatma Letters" was only a paraphrase of Beal's "Catena of Buddhist Scriptures".

(4) The "Mahatma Letters" are too argumentative and gossipy and the philosophy is limited and has been better stated in other exoteric sources.

(5) "Theosophy" uses nirmanakaya to mean a bodhisattva who is not physical but working on the astral plane. The Buddhist nirmanakaya INCLUDES those living on the physical.

(6) Theosophy, though claiming to be an esoteric doctrine does not rise to an elementary understanding of the publicly taught doctrines of Buddhism.

(7) Hindu and Buddhist terms are mangled and jumbled up together without distinction.

(8) Theosophy emphasizes saving of the world in the face of a crisis while Buddhism views salvation as a perpetual problem.

(9) Theosophy is activistic while Buddhism along with Hinduism is contemplative...Other minor points are raised but hardly of enough importance for consideration here.

The specific implication of the above queries is given explicitly in the question: Was H. P. Blavatsky a 'phony'? Before undertaking the detailed consideration of the above points the writer will briefly consider this last question.

PART III - Was H.P.Blavatsky a phony?

The charge of conscious fraud is serious, yet, in view of the very great intelligence evident in the production of the "Secret Doctrine" and its all but super-human scholarship, the hypothesis that it was a massive but honest self-deception seems well-nigh unthinkable. It would seem that we must view the whole Theosophical conception as either a fraud or else that it is just what it claims to be. Several considerations could be raised that discredit the hypothesis of fraud but the writer will here consider but two which in his mind are practically conclusive.

(a) There must be an adequate motive for the perpetuation of a conscious fraud. The labor involved in one work alone, i.e., "The Secret Doctrine", is so vast that it seems unthinkable that a person of such ability could not have perpetrated a fraud that would have given her some tangible worldly advantage. Actually all she got out of it in a material sense was work in poverty while enduring the pain of a body that was far from well and, with-all, subjected to much adverse criticism and calumny. A motivation of lofty compassion seems the only one adequate to explain the willingness to put forth such herculean effort in the face of so much pain. This seems enough to cover the point.

(b) Some years ago the writer in preparation for a lecture made a comparison of the state of Western science as it was at the time of the publication of the "Secret Doctrine" and as it was at the time of the lecture, the twentieth century physics having been well developed at that time. The special points noted were those in which the "Secret Doctrine" took exception to scientific conceptions and suggested a counter point of view based upon the occult teachings. The writer had little difficulty in finding twenty-four or five points in which the change in scientific views was definitely toward agreement with the occult teachings as given in the Theosophical literature. Some of the shifts were very

important, others were minor. Two instances are noted below.

In the tenth letter of the second edition of the "Mahatma Letters" there is to be found the following statement: "Rejecting with contempt the theistic theory we reject as much the automaton theory, teaching that states of consciousness are produced by the marshalling of the molecules of the brain; and we feel as little respect for that other hypothesis - the production of molecular motion by consciousness. Then what do we believe in? Well, we believe in the much laughed at phlogiston (see article 'What is force and what is matter?', Theosophist, September, 1882), and in what some natural philosophers would call nisus the incessant though perfectly imperceptible (to the ordinary senses) motion or efforts one body is making on another - the pulsations of inert matter - its life. The bodies of the Planetary spirits are formed of that which Priestly and others called Phlogiston and for which we have another name - this essence in its highest seventh state forming that matter of which the organisms of the highest and purest Dyans are composed, and in its lowest or densest form (so impalpable yet that science calls it energy and force) serving as a cover to the planetaries of the first or lowest degree."

If we turn to the article in "The Theosophist" for September 1882 we find the following significant statement. "Neither an atom of silicon, nor an atom of oxygen, is capable of any further subdivision, into something else - they (the scientists) say. But the only good reason we can find for such a strange belief is, because they have tried the experiment and - failed. But how can they tell that a new discovery, some new invention of still finer and more perfect apparatuses and instruments may not show their error some day? How do they know that those very bodies now called 'elementary atoms' are not in their turn compound bodies or molecules, which, when analyzed with still greater minuteness, may show containing in themselves the real, primordial, elementary globules, the gross encasement of the still finer atom-spark - the spark of LIFE, the source of electricity - MATTER still!"

The phlogiston theory is one suggested by Stahl and advanced by Priestly in the seventeenth century. The phlogiston was conceived as "the matter of fire in composition with other bodies." Ordinary burning, such as flame, was conceived as a release of this phlogiston. Subsequently the theory was abandoned and replaced by the familiar conception that fire is an effect of oxidation and thus is not itself a kind of matter. In its original form the notion of phlogiston is

outmoded in science but it is not hard to see that the essence of this conception has returned in a subtler form in twentieth century physics.

Dampier Whetham ("A History of Science") gives 1897 as the date at which the modern revolution in physics begins, and this is fifteen years subsequent to the letter and article above quoted. Today we definitely view the atom as compounded and subject to disintegration both in nature and under conditions controlled by the scientist. Chemical elements have been transformed into other chemical elements and even some elements synthesized which have not been found in nature. The atom-bomb has publicized this fact to all the world. In the explosion of the atom bomb there is a development of very intense heat and light and extensive radiation. Now, to be sure, this phenomenon is not fire in the ordinary sense of oxidation yet it is very reasonable to view it as a kind of fire. May we not view the radiation as a "matter of fire in composition with other bodies"? Today science does view radiation as essentially a state of matter holding the property of "mass" in common with ordinary matter. Have we not at last found the real phlogiston?

Today the idea that matter and electricity are of one sameness is virtually a commonplace, and the idea that electricity and life are essentially the same is not strange.

Now the point in this discussion has probably become clear. A view of matter advanced in Theosophical literature as early as 1882 has, in the period from 1897 to the present, become so dramatically established that the whole field of human life, political and otherwise has been profoundly shaken. It would be a remarkable "phony" that could call a turn like that!

Another striking instance or rapproachment between the teachings of Theosophy and of western science, during the period subsequent to the publication of "The Secret Doctrine", is found in the change in the estimation of the age of the earth. Dampier-Whetham reports that Lord Kelvin estimated the age of the earth in 1862 as less than 200 million years since it was in a molten state and in 1899 shortened the period to between 20 and 40 million years. None of the astronomers and physicists gave figures sufficiently large to satisfy the needs of the geologists and biologists. In "The Secret Doctrine" (Vol. II, p.71-2, 3rd ed.) figures are given from the Tamil calander called the Tirukkanda Panchanga for the age of the earth which are said to agree approximately with the figures of the Esoteric Philosophy. The figure for the evolution of the solar system up to 1887 is 1,955,884,687 years. As is well known, "The Secret Doctrine" statement of the total period of earth-evolution is 4,320,000,000 years and the present is roughly at the half-way point. Hence the round figure

in either case is on the order of 2,000,000,000 years. Now in his book, "The Mysterious Universe", the late Sir James Jeans, a top-shelf astronomer and physicist, gives the age of the earth as also on the order of 2,000,000,000 years, a result reached by two lines of evidence and calculation, one of which is particularly interesting. It appears that the age ofa piece of uranium ore can be calculated by weighing the relative amounts of uranium and uranium-lead in the ore, since the rate of decay of uranium to lead is known. The above figure is derived from uranium taken from the oldest known rocks.

Since today science is convinced, with good reason, that the source of solar energy is not shrinkage or solar combustion, in the ordinary sense, but radiation released from intra-atomic levels, the sheer mass of the sun is sufficient to supply radiation for much more than 2,000,000,000 years, no difficulty arises because of the time indicated by the decay of uranium. Thus, in the light of present knowledge, the figures appear to be sound and, at the same time, are reached quite independently of either the Indian or esoteric figures.

The foregoing are two samples of correlations which the writer knows may be extended to several more instances. (Indeed an exhaustive study along this line might prove very profitable.)

However, we shall forego the examination of other instances here as this seems enough documentation of the argument at the present time.

If, now, in twenty-five or more instances it can be shown that late science has developed in the direction of agreement with the teachings of Theosophy, when compared with the views of science in 1888, what is the probability that the Theosophical movement was a fraud or hoax? It is not hard to realize that the theory of probability would give us a very small fraction, particularly as some of the conceptions are quite complex. On this line of evidence alone it appears to the writer that the conclusion that those responsible for the basic Theosophical teachings had "something" is ineluctible. Also that something must be pretty big.

It is not suggested that the basic Theosophical teachings are to be viewed as beyond serious criticism. But any adverse criticism aimed at an overthrow of the system as a whole would have to be a major and profound piece of work if it is to deserve serious consideration. The typical attacks which are based mainly, if not wholly, on the argumentum ad hominum are contemptible and should be received with scorn.

PART IV

It is hoped by the writer that what has been said so far

will serve to lift the present argument well above the level of mud-slinging and the impugning of the motives or the ability of those responsible for the Theosophical Movement and its basic literature. The question of its relation between Theosophy and traditional Buddhism, or the Vedanta for that matter, is a high level question, and should be treated with seriousness anddignity. As between these three systems there are certain obvious and unquestioned agreements. But there are also differences of sufficient importance to force upon the student the responsibility of decision as to which is the most profound and truer. As the writer understands the attitudes of the proponents of these systems they all grant the seeker the right of free and honest decision, but urge serious and unbiased study. We propose to approach the subject in that spirit.

The first query, the one relative to the anatmic doctrine, is probably the most important of all. This doctrine is so basic throughout Buddhism, with all its multitudes of divisions, that it may well be viewed as the most crucial doctrine principle of that system. In contrast, Theosophical teaching on its surface does not appear to stand in agreement. Thus it might appear that the two systems must fundamentally diverge. This is a question which we must examine with some care.

According to the accounts of the life of Gautama Buddha, as they have come down to us, the Great One, early in His search for the Truth that might resolve the problem of suffering, sought wisdom at the feet of certain Brahmin Pandits. They taught Him karma, reincarnation and the doctrine of a persisting atman, which is variously translated as "self" or "soul". Gautama, after penetrating into these teachings, confirmed the soundness of the first two but denied that the conception of a persistent self or soul was valid. It appears that in his subsequent discourses no point was more emphasized than this. It appears that the Indian world as a whole did not find this teaching acceptable and it has posed a difficult problem for western man as it was quite contrary to centuries-old Christian teachings. In the various divisions and elaborations of Buddhism that have developed since the time of Gautama, this teaching apparently persists throughout though with variations, some apparently, more sweeping than the original doctrine and some, also presumptively, less sweeping. As a matter of fact, the exoteric scholar can never be perfectly certain as to the exact content of Buddha's teaching, since He seems to have never written anything, and, subsequent divergences in the doctrines are plainly evident. We must infer a good deal. But there can be no reasonable doubt that anatman in some sense was taught and that it was fundamental to the formulated Dharma.

The central core of Buddhistic psychology, which appears as most ancient and probably was taught by Shakyamuni himself and is generally accepted by the various sects, may be stated quite simply in a few words. Quoting from McGovern ("An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism", p. 133) the teaching is outlined as follows: "There is no atman (permanent self or soul) for the personality consists of five skandhas or aggregates, or faculties, vis.:- (1) Rupa, body or form, in other words the physical body, (2) Vedana, sensation or perception, (3) Samjna, conception or ratiocination, (4) Samskara, mental qualities such as love, hate, etc., and (5) Vijnana, consciousness, more especially in this connection, self-consciousness. None of these can claim preeminence. One is not the basis around which the others are grouped. They are all co-ordinate parts, constantly changing, so that at no two moments can the personality claim to be identical, yet at the same time there is a constant Karmic persistence."

The picture one may receive from this is of an organism of distinguishable but self-existent parts that are always in a state or condition of constant change or becoming or never-ceasing interweaving, with Karmic Law serving as the only binding unity. Disregarding the specific form of the classification, the basic idea is not unknown in the history of

western thought. One is reminded of the universal flux of Heraclitus and the quite modern psycho-physical concept of organism as body-mind rather than body and mind. We also find something quite similar in the Theory of Relativity of modern mathematical physics wherein even space and time are no longer absolutes and there is no permanent atom.

However, though the conception of the atman in the sense of a permanent and substantial self or soul is denied, there is not a complete absence of all permanency. All stands interconnected and unified by Law or Karma (the analogue of the mathematical but non-substantial invariants of modern Relativity). Thus there is a thread of continuity or unity between youth and age and between the various entities of a series of incarnations. There is that which does persist through all changes, including those of birth and death, and so a meaning does attach to the conception of an effort to attain Emancipation or Enlightenment which extends over more than one incarnation.

In the preface to his "The Gospel of Buddha", Paul Carus makes the point that the notion of "self" or "soul" could have been and could be defined in such a way that it would have been quite acceptable to Buddha. The objection was aimed at the conception of the "self" as a permanent

substance, an idea that was widely current at His time. Thus if the "I AM" identification is with the continuum, of the LAW then the conception of a permanent Atman or "I" would be acceptable with primary Buddhism. That it is the notion of "substantiveness" which is really the focus of objection is born out by the frequent reference in many Sutras to "ego-substance" and "self-substance". Futhermore, this ego-self-substance is denied not only of all persons and sentient beings, but likewise of all things. This is a usage which the writer for a long time found difficult since it seemed quite unreal to attach the notion of "Self" to anything so objective as "substance" or "thing". Likewise the notion of "Atma"in Shankara's "Atmavidya" does not at all suggest the objectivity which normally belongs to the notion of "substance".

There is another point to note before turning to consideration of Theosophical psychology. In "The Gospel of Buddha" we find the following sentence given as part of a discourse by the Buddha: - "That which men call the ego when they say 'I am' is not an entity behind the skandhas; it originates by the cooperation of the skandhas". If we may assume that this quotation is a valid representation of the original teaching, then it throws a considerable light upon the meaning of the anatmic doctrine as it was meant by Buddha

Himself. The "I am" in this sense seems to be none other than personal egoism which carries the force of "I am I and none other" and, therefore, is separative and the base of selfishness. Furthermore it is viewed not as the core which supports the aggregates as attributes, but as a sort ofepi-phenomenal effect growing out of the interaction of the aggregates. As compared with the aggregates the personal ego is a maya or mirage which, while the belief in it produces practical effects, yet has only a transitory or unreal existence which vanishes completely after the final death of the incarnation. With new birth its successor appears, but it is not the same ego though karmicly related. If this is true to the real meaning of the Buddha's teaching then, as we shall see later, there is no discrepancy between the anatma doctrine of Buddha and the Theosophical psychology.

The psychology of Theosophy is basically similar to that of Buddhism in that it conceives man as an aggregate, though the term "principles" is most commonly employed. But the classification differs from the aggregates as given both in the sense of a variation in the definition of the component parts and in that the number is seven instead of five. However, the different Buddhistic schools do not always use the five-fold system and, according to McGovern, the Yogacharya school of the Mahayana branch has an eight-

-fold system. Similarly, the Theosophical system has not had a constant form even during the life-time of the founders of the Movement. Though the main classification remained septenary there are three principle listings of the component principles involving certain changes, these changes being explained as progressive approximations to the truth necessitated by pedagogical considerations. Also there is a four-fold classification given in the "Key" which, however, involves no contradiction. The following classification seems to present the picture with reasonable accuracy.

(1) ATMA or HIGHER SELF, the inseparable ray of the universal or ONE SELF, which can never be 'objective' under any circumstances, even to the highest spiritual perception and is really the ABSOLUTE and indistinguishable from IT.

(2) BUDDHI or SPIRITUAL SOUL, the vehicle of Atma and passive with most men, but when united with Manas or the Mind-principle, asin him who is Enlightened, becomes the spiritual or divine EGO.

(3) MANAS or MIND-PRINCIPLE, the basis of the relatively permanent Inner or Higher Ego or individuality which persists from incarnation to incarnation.

(4) LOWER MANAS or thepersonal or animal mind which, in conjunction with the three lowest principles forms the lower or personal ego.

(5) KAMA RUPA literally the form or body of desires which is said not to be a body during life but becomes such for a season after death in Kama Loka.

(6) PRANA or the LIFE PRINCIPLE in its more objective aspect which sustains embodied existence.

(7) LINGA SHARIRA, sometimes called ASTRAL BODY and sometimes ETHERIC BODY, but it is really the Paradigm upon which the physical body or objective appearance is draped, as it were.

The earlier classifications listed the physical body but later it was explained that this is properly an effect of the conjunction of the Principles rather than being a Principle in its own right. In the final and less well known classification the Atman is replaced by another principle, it being explained that ATMA is no true Principle but rather the all-embracing ABSOLUTE. Thus ATMA in the Theosophical system may be viewed as having the same meaning as the ALAYAVIJNANA in the Yogacharya system as given by McGovern.

Theosophy is definite and insistent in its teaching that the lower self or personal ego is essentially unreal and evanescent, lasting only during one life-time and during a limited

afterdeath period of rewards or penalties. The personal ego associated with the subsequent incarnation is a new ego but is the Karmic effect of its ancestor.

It would seem that so far as the personal ego is concerned the teaching of Theosophy is in fundamental agreement with the Buddhist teaching as thus far considered. If this is the sense in which Gautama Buddha, employed the notion of Atma in asserting the anatma doctrine there is no disagreement between the original Buddhism and the Theosophical teaching on this point. There are references which support the view that this was the case.

The following quotation is taken from the third volume of the third edition of "The Secret Doctrine", P. 393. "Said the All-Merciful: Blessed are ye, O Bhikshus, happy are ye who have understood the mystery of Being and Non-Being explained in the Dharma, and have given preference to the latter, for ye are verily my Arhats - The elephant, who sees his form mirrored in the lake, looks at it, and then goes away, taking it for the real body of another elephant, is far wiser than the man who beholds his face in the stream and looking at it, says "Here am I - I am I;" for the "I", his Self, is not in the world of the twelve Nidanas and mutability, but in that of Non-Being, the only world beyond the snares of Maya. - That alone, which has

neither cause nor author, which is self-existing, eternal, far beyond the reach of mutability, is the true "I", the Self of the Universe."

Here quite clearly the: "I" or "Self" is denied and in another transcendent sense is affirmed. This position is consistent with the Theosophical teachings.

The following is from the Abhidharma Kosha Vyakha. "Mendicants; remember that there is within man no abiding principle whatever, and that only the learned disciple who acquires wisdom in saying 'I am' - knows what he is saying."

Here the point is that there is a valid I - reference but it is not a principle within man. Both the ATMAN of Theosophy and the ALAYA VIJNANA of Buddhism are not principles within man. Nor indeed are they without, being neither within nor without.

Again, consider the incident where the Buddha refused to answer the question of the monk Vacchagotta when he wished to know whether there was or was not an Ego in man. According to the Samyuttaka Kikaya when subsequently Ananda asked of the blessed One why he maintained silence, the latter said: "If I, Ananda, When the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me: 'Is there the Ego?' had answered 'The Ego is', then, that, Ananda, would have confirmed the doctrine of

the Samantas and the Brahmanas, who believe in performance. If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me, 'Is there not the Ego?' had answered 'The Ego is not' then that, Ananda,would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believe in annihilation."

This carries the implication that the Buddha's teaching was that "the Ego neither is nor is not", or, equally, "the Ego both is and is not". As is always the case with paradoxes, the reconciliation consists in taking the terms in two senses. In this case it could mean, and probably does mean, denial of the personal ego, while affirming the Higher Self.

In this quotation the implication of an esoteric teaching is very clear. Not everything was taught to everybody, but only as the understanding was prepared to receive. This is the essential meaning of an Esoteric Doctrine.

It is perfectly true that one can take quotations from other Sutras which at least seem like a radical denial of all selfhood or egohood up to the loftiest conception of an Universal Self or Atman. It is also possible to find quotations which suggest that Buddhism is annihilistic materialism, as such, for example, the following quoted by Rhys Davids from the Brahmajla Sutra: - Upon what principle, or on what ground, do these mendicants and Brahmans hold the doctrine

of future existence? They teach that the soul is material or immaterial, or is both or neither; that it will have one or many modes of consciousness; that its perceptions will be few or boundless; that it will be in a state of joy or misery, or neither. These are the sixteen heresies, teaching a conscious existence after death. Then there are eight heresies teaching that the soul, material or immaterial, or both or neither, finite or infinite or both or neither, has one unconscious existence after death. And, finally, eight others which teach that the soul, in the same eight ways, exists after death in a state of being neither conscious nor unconscious.' 'Mendicants, that which binds the teacher to existence (viz., tanha or thirst), is cut off, but his body still remains. While his body shall remain, he will be seen by gods and men, but after the termination of life, upon thedissolution of the body, neither gods nor men shall see him.' Rhys Davids goes on to remark: "Would it be possible in a more complete and categorical manner to deny that there is any soul, - anything of any kind which continutes to exist in any manner after death?"

Mr. Rhys Davids, who in his time was the ranking western Buddhist scholar, states categorically that "Nirvana" means complete extinction and that Buddhism is materialistic. Also Spengler asserts that it is materialistic. Quotations

can be found which seem to justify these views. What is the truth? Clearly not all the Sutras, both northern and southern can be viewed as the authentic teachings of Gautama Buddha, and while it is unquestionably true that there is much in Buddhistic literature which is valuable and sound which was spoken and written by others than Gautama Himself, yet it is His teachings which most properly define what real Buddhism is. How are we to know what this is? It would appear that if there is no esoteric authority, such as a hidden and preserved record, to resolve this question, then we run the danger that mere individual taste, favorable or malicious, will answer the question in innumerable and incompatible ways. Theosophy blaims to speak from such authority and builds a strong supporting case.

The Theosophical psychology has more elaborate ramifications than appear to have been the case with the earlier exoteric Buddhism taught by the Buddha. The four lower principles may be viewed as substantially an aggregate in the Buddhistic sense with respect to which the personal ego is no more than an epi-phenomenal effect, lasting through the life-cycle and a limited subjective period after death, but no longer. But Theosophy posits a Higher Ego, identical with a higher phase of Mind, which persists from incarnation to incarnation, and which is identified with individuality, conceived as distinct from the objective personality. It is not hard to find Buddhistic statements which also affirm the continuance of individuality from incarnation to incarnation.

Take for example the following from "A Buddhist Catechism" by Subhadra Bhikshu. "Buddhism teaches the reign of perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal God, continuance of individuality without an immortal soul, eternal happiness without a local heaven, the way of salvation without a vicarious Savior, redemption worked out by each one himself without any prayers, sacrifices and penances, without the ministry of ordained priests, without the intercession of saints, without Divine mercy. Finally, it teaches that supreme perfection is attainable in this life and on this earth."

It is thus quite apparent that at least some forms of Buddhism stand in agreement with the Theosophical teaching of a persisting individuality. There may be a difference due to the naming of this individuality, "Higher Ego", but one may well doubt that this point is fundamental. For Theosophy does not teach that the Higher Ego is permanent in more than a relative sense. In fact, Theosophy distinguishes between "egoism" and "egoity", the former applying to the personal ego and identical with "selfishness" while the latter is identical with "individuality". It would be Theosophically correct to say that Gautama Buddha had no egoism but had egoity for He had a recognizable character. The word "ego" corresponds to the sense "I am I" which,

while in the lower sense this takes the form "I am I and none other", in the higher sense of egoity means "I am I and also others".

It is Theosophically correct to say that all egoity is achieved and in addition, what is also taught by Buddhism that everything which becomes is impermanent. There is a difference of relative persistence in the different kinds of egos, just as a granite outcropping has a greater persistence than a mushroom, but in time all is resolved back into the Primordial and Indeterminate Permanency.

Theosophy teaches that the two-fold ego-hood is a general characteristic of mankind, though there are some exceptions both of a supernal and infernal sort. It is also taught that there is a rare third form of egoity. This is the Divine or Spiritual Ego, the conscious union of Buddhi and Manas and it would seem to constitute the Egoity of the Buddhas or Christs, though the literature gives but little more than hints on this subject. The Spiritual ego is definitely viewed as an attainment, so far realized by very few units among mankind. The writer would suggest, on his own authority here, that this egoity may be achieved only by Him who, having reached Nirvana, makes the Great Renunciation.

The Theosophical literature gives very scanty material upon the subject of the Spiritual Ego and the references are often ambiguous. The clearest statement is to be found in the "Key to Theosophy", but elsewhere one gets the impression that it is the same as the Higher Ego, as in the "Glossary" and also as being the same as the "Higher Self", as in the case of certain references in "The Secret Doctrine". But in the "Key" this ambiguity is acknowledged and the statement there is intended to clarify the subject. In the latter case the Spiritual Ego is not identified with the Higher Self. Here the Higher Self is identified with the Universal Atman in the sense of the ABSOLUTE, and involves no element of individuality or becoming. The Higher Self may be identified with the ultimate reference of "I" but It definitely is not "I am I" in any sense however lofty or inclusive.

Definitely it is taught in Theosophy that Spiritual Egoity is achieved. It is not an entirely existing endowment of all men, whereas the Higher Self is a universal fact, the same in the beginning as at the end. It thus follows that even Spiritual Egoity is not absolutely eternal or permanent. Thus there is no contradiction here with the general thesis of Buddhism that all egohood is temporary and, therefore, is in the most ultimate sense unreal when Reality is identified

with ultimate performance. However, the teaching is more elaborate than that which seems to have been a part of the original exoteric teachings of the Buddha. But this does not necessarily imply any contradiction between the two teachings if it is granted, as Theosophy affirms that Buddha had an esoteric doctrine as well as an exoteric teaching designed to meet the limited understanding of the masses.

To conclude this part of the discussion, in summary we may say that it appears, from the records available, that the original anatman doctrine taught by Gautama Buddha applied to the notion of a permanent personal ego conceived as a differentiated core supporting the aggregates as attributes. Buddha denied that there was any such core and affirmed for the personal ego only an ephemeral epi-phenominal existence as an effect of the interaction of the aggregates. Theosophy stands in essential and perhaps complete agreement with this view, but posits two higher forms of egoity which are relatively more permanent, but not absolutely permanent, and does not apply the notion of Atman to ego-hood in any sense. Thus there is some discrepancy in the use of words, but not therefore a difference of meaning. There are Sutras, more especially belonging to part of the northern canon, which rather strongly suggest, with respect to

the doctrine of anatman, a contradiction between Theosophy and the forms of Buddhism oriented to those Sutras. Thus before one could say that there is a definite disagreement between Buddhism and Theosophy on this point one would have to decide which form of Buddhism is authentic. Upon this question a completely objective decision, without any reference to esoteric knowledge, appears extremely difficult if not impossible, and it appears that there is real danger that wishfulness or prejudice may become determinant in one's choice, in the absence of esoteric insight, with the result that one's conclusion may be mainly significant as a subjective psychological confession.

PART V

b. The question as to whether Theosophy and Buddhism agree or diverge in their attitudes on theism is very easily answered. They both teach a non-theistic doctrine. That this is true of Buddhism is well known; that it is also true of Theosophy can be confirmed by several references, but for a clear statement on this ppint we shall simply quote from the tenth letter of The Mahatma Letters:

"Neither our philosophy nor ourselves believe in God, least of all in one whose pronoun necessitates a capital H. - we deny God both as philosophers and as Buddhists. We know there are planetary and other spiritual lives, and we know there is in our system no such thing as God, either personal or impersonal. Parabrahm is not a God, but absolute

immutable law, and Iswar is the effect of Avidya and Maya, ignorance based upon the great illusion."

Such are the words of one of the two men who were most responsible for the Theosophical Movement and its teachings, though acting behind the scenes. Repeated confirmation of this view is to be found throughout the literature. There are statements in which the terms "God" and "gods" appear but theyare definitely not to be taken in the theistic sense.

However, Theosophy does teach that there are developed beings, so far transcending man that the ignorant may very well think of them as gods. Yet such are ex-men, and belong to a higher andhumanly inconceivable order of evolution. They are said to have much to do with the government of worlds and lokas. In "The Secret Doctrine" and "Mahatma Letters" they are commonly called "Dhyan Chohans", though other names are also given. A hierarchy of intelligences is definitely affirmed. But this in itself does not imply a divergence from the teaching found in some Buddhistic sutras.

So far as the writer knows the term"Dhyan Chohan" does not exist in the available translations of exoteric Buddhistic Sutras, but there are other terms which may be equivalent. The "Mahatma Letters" confirms this in the three following quotations.

In letter No. XVI we find the following: "The Deva-Chan, or land of 'Sukhavati', is allegorically described by our Lord Buddha himself. What he said may be found in the Shan-Mun-yi-Tung. Says Tathagata:-

'Many thousand myriads of systems of worlds beyond this (ours) there is a region of Bliss called Sukhavati - This region is encircled with seven rows of railings, seven rows of vast curtains, seven rows of waving trees; this holy abode of Arahats is governed by the Tathagatas (Dhyan Chohans) and is possessed by the Bodhisatwas. It hath seven precious lakes, in the midst of which flow crystalline waters having "seven and one" properties, or distinctive qualities (the seven principles emanating from the ONE). This, O Sariputra is the "Deva-Chan". Its divine Udambara flower casts a root in the shadow of every earth, and blossoms for all those who reach it. Those born in the blessed region are truly felicitous, there are no more griefs or sorrows in that cycle for them. - Myriads of Spirits resort there for rest and then return to their own regions. Again, O Sariputra, in that land of joy many who are born in it are Avaivartyas -'".

Again, from the same letter: "Everything is so harmoniously adjusted in nature - especially in the subjective world, that no mistake can ever be commited by the Tathagatas -

Dhyan Chohans - who guide the impulses."

Finally, also in the same letter: "Every such 'world' within the Sphere of Effects has a Tathagata, or 'Dhyan Chohan' - to protect and watch over, not to interfere with it."

Here the identification of the Dhyan Chohans with the Tathagatas is unambiguous. Thus the Dhyan Chohans are as little to be viewed as "God" in the theistic sense as are the Tathagatas. Also it is clear that in Theosophical usage the conception of Parabrahman is not to be viewed in the theistic sense. So we must conclude that there is no discrepancy between Theosophy and Buddhism as to their respective views with respect to a theistic "God".

The writer would like to add a question suggested by the above quotations. Is Sukhavati the same as the "Buddha Lands"?

c. The third point raised concerns the nature of Ultimate Reality. The correspondant points out that Theosophy teaches Svabhava, which suggests a substantive character, while the Buddhism of the Oriental ists teaches Svabhava-shunyata (all things are empty in their self-nature), which suggests a radical positivism and, indeed, to many

minds absolute annihilation. Here we face what is probably the most abstruse and difficult feature of both teachings and the derivation of a clear conception of what is meant by either teaching is by no means easy. However, some facts are definite and easily understood.

First of all it should be noted that, while in some sense there is substantial agreement among Buddhistic sects on the doctrine of anatman, there is great divergence in the treatment of Ultimate Reality. Mc Govern says, (p.53): "On no point is the diversity of Buddhist philosophy so exemplified as on that of its various theories of the nature of Ultimate Reality." As a consequence we cannot contrast traditional Buddhism as a totality with Theosophical teaching with respect to this point. To show a contrast one must pick the teaching of particular sects or schools or particular Sutras. All that is then shown is at most that there is a contradiction between Theosophical teaching and that of the sect of school chosen. To go further and say that the contradiction is between Theosophy and Buddhism as such implies the prior judgment that the given sect or school is identical with authentic Buddhism, while all adverse Buddhistic teachings in other sects or schools are in error and apocryphal. Certainly, unless such a judgment is adequately documented it is arbitrary.

A clear and concise picture of the differences between five of the schools of Buddhism is formulated by McGovern and perhaps the simplest course would be to quote from him. On pages 54-5 he gives the following summary:

1. Primitive Buddhism, or psychological agnosticism, in which no attempt is made to explore the recesses of the noumenal world, and no theories concerning ultimate realities are postulated.

2. Hinayana Buddhism teaches a materialistic realism, that the universe consists of a certain small number of elements, uncreated, which enter into into combination in accordance with causal law, unconnected with any supernatural law giver.

3. The Madhyamika School of Mahayana broke up these elements into components parts, and stated that there is only a fluid, fluctuating stream of life, and that therefore all seemingly unchanging phenomena have only a conceptual existence.

4. The Yogacharaya School of Mahayana called this stream of life Essence of Mind or the Alaya Vijnana, which is no less fluid or devoid of eternal particularity. The evolution of this Essence of Mind brings about the phenomenal universe.

5. Chinese and Japanese Mahayana (especially the Tendai and Kegon sects) has developed the theory of the Absolute latent in the foregoing conceptions, and states that the Bhutatathata is both the Norm or Pure Form, or Supreme Idea, and also the fundamental essence of all life."

Assuming that the foregoing is a substantially correct representation of the Orientalist's view of Buddhism, a brief discussion of the five theories may be of profit to us.

1. The primitive Buddhism would seem to be closer to the actual public teaching of Gautama Buddha Himself. It is said that He taught publicly only a practical or ethical doctrine and was silent upon metaphysical questions since discussion of these would be only confusing for those who were not prepared. But there is also a tradition that He gave further teachings to His qualified disciples, and the claim is made by proponents of the Mahayana that their metaphysical teachings are derived from these. These contentions imply that He did have an esoteric doctrine, as is maintained by Theosophy. In any case, in this instance, it is impossible to predicate a contradiction between Buddhism and Theosophy.

2. There is doubtless a greater or lesser incompatibility between Hinayana materialistic realism and Theosophy. An extensive study of Theosophy gradually brings out the fact that it is neither realistic nor idealistic but occupies a sort of middle position and is capable of accommodating itself to both views. However, it is inconceivable that its teachings would ever suggest to anyone a nihilistic materialism, while Hinayana Buddhism seemed to be such to Rhys Davids.

3. The Madhyamika teaching, as given above, suggests much the view of Vitalism, in western philosophic classifications. Especially can one see a similarity to the views of Shopenhauer who posited the Will as the ontological principle while the Idea constituted the basis of the phenominal. Schopenhauer expressly states that the Will is essentially identical with Life, the latter being the Will manifested. As for Theosophy, one of its terms for the all-in-all is "The One Life", as is shown, for instance, in the following quotation from the "Mahatma Letters" (p.129): "We call it 'Immortal' but the one Life in its universal collectivity and entire or Absolute Abstraction; that which has neither beginning nor end, nor any break in its continuity." Thus to this extent at least, there is no disagreement between the teachings of the Madhyamika school and Theosophy.

4. The Yogacharaya School in viewing the stream of life as the Alaya Vijnana accentuates a different facet from the preceeding. "Alaya Vijnana" is commonly translated "Essence of Mind" but McGovern suggests "Receptacle Consciousness". Since "Alaya" means literally "home" or "seat" it readily suggests yhe meaning of "Basis" or "Root". Hence we would just as well call it "Root Consciousness" with the same meaning as "Absolute Consciousness". The shift in accentuation is from "Life" to "Consciousness". This suggests a certain similarity to the Hegelian philosophy.

"Absolute Consciousness" is one of the terms employed for designating the Ultimate Reality. This is documented by the following quotations from "The Secret Doctrine":

"It (the Ultimate Reality) is the ONE LIFE, eternal, invisible, yet omnipresent, without beginning or end, yet periodical in its regular manifestations - between which periods reigns the dark mystery of Non-Being; unconscious, yet absolute Consciousness, unrealizable, yet the one self-existing Reality; truly, 'a Chaos to the sense, a Kosmos to the Reason'". (V.I, pg. 32, 3rd ed.)

"Parabrahman, the One Reality, the Absolute, is the field of Absolute Consciousness, i.e., that Essence which is out of all relation to conditioned existence, and of which conscious existence is a conditioned symbol. But once we pass in thought from this (to us) Absolute Negation, duality supervenes in the contrast of Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter, Subject and Object." (V.I., p. 43, 3rd ed.)

"There are 'Seven Paths' or 'Ways' to the 'Bliss' of Non-Existence, which is absolute Being, Existence and Consciousness." (S.D. V.I., p. 70, 3rd Ed.)

"In the Occult teachings the Unknown and Unknowable Mover, of the Self-Existing, is the Absolute Divine Essence. And thus being Absolute Consciousness, and Absolute Motion -

to the limited senses of those who describe this indescribable - it is unconsciousness and immovableness." (S.D. V.I, p. 86, 3rd ed.)

It would appear from these quotations that there is no contradiction between Theosophy and the primary teaching of the Yogacharaya School as given above.

5. The conception of the Tendai and Kegon sects that the Absolute or Bhutatathata is both Supreme Idea and the fundamental essence of all life appears as something of a synthesis of the two foregoing views. It approximates the view of von Hartmann who really synthesized Hegel and Schopenhauer. From what is already written it should be clear that this view does not suggest a contradiction with Theosophy.

The doctrine of the "Shunyata" (Voidness, Emptiness, Nothingness) is characteristic of the Mahayana, according to McGovern, and is particularly developed in the "Shraddhotpada Shastra", believed to have been written by Ashvaghosa. It is said this Shastra is viewed as orthodox by all branches of the Mahayana. In this teaching the Absolute is said to have two phases, the Unmanifest and the Manifest. The Shunya conception occurs in the detailed explanation of the Unmanifest phase. We quote Mc Govern's condensed statement of this. "The

UNMANIFESTED PHASE is the Ideal World the underlying unity the quintessence of all being. It is the eternal sameness under all apparent difference. Owing to our subjective activity (nen) we build up a vision of a discrete, particularized universe, but in reality the essence of things ever remains one, void of particularity. Being absolute it is not nameable or explicable. It cannot be rendered in any form of language. It is without the range of perception. It may be termed Shunya or the Void, because it is not a fixed or limited entity but a perpetual becoming, void of self-existing component parts. It may likewise be termed Ashunya, the Full or the Existent, because when confused subjectivity has been destroyed 'we perceive the pure soul manifesting itself as eternal, permanent, immutable, and completely comprising all things that are pure.'" (P. 62).

The important point to note in this quotation is that the Ultimate is viewed as both Shunya and Ashunya, or both Void and Full. It all depends upon the perspective. In this connection the attention is directed to the phrase "this (to us) Absolute Negation" in the second quotation from the Secret Doctrine on page 33. The development of the conception of the Ultimate Reality as absolute negation is nothing more nor less than the Shunya doctrine. The impression of apparent contradiction can be derived from the Sutras that develop the Shunyata Doctrine with exclusive emphasis, but it is evidently an error to view this sort of statement as com-

prising the full meaning of the Mahayana. On the whole, Theosophy emphasizes the positive view and so if there is a difference on this point it is one of emphasis rather than of essence.

From the standpoint of pedagogical considerations it is very questionable whether emphasis of the Shunya aspect would help to advance the acceptance of the Dharma by activistic western men.

Summing up: - the Theosophic teaching of Svabhavat, the One Element from whence proceeds both Spirit and Matter, both Subject and Object, is not in principle incompatible with Buddhistic teaching in the Mahayanistic form, although it may be incompatible with the Hinayana.

PART VI

d. On the question of whether or not Buddha taught an esoteric doctrine it is not necessary to say much. It may be that some sects deny an esoteric teaching, particularly among the Hinayanas. But one can find plenty of evidence of an esoteric tradition among the Mahayana schools, and so the Theosophical contention is not negated by Buddha as a whole, at the very least. The story of Buddha's maintaining silence when the monk Vacchagotta asked his questions simply implies that there was a teaching that was not given out generally. It has been said Buddha did lift the veil of secrecy to some extent, but that He by no means tore it down completely.

The whole point of an esoteric teaching is founded on the difference in ethical character and developed understanding of different human beings. What is food for one man may be poison for another.

To be sure, the correctness of the thesis that there is an esoteric doctrine which constitutes the heart of Buddha's teaching as well as that of the Vedanta and of all the great religions is not itself proof that Theosophy is derived from that source. In the nature of the case objective proof to the uninitiate is impossible. At best a presumption may be built and each individual must decide for himself whether the presumption of truth developed is sufficiently strong to make the test with his life. This test may bring an incommunicable assurance, but in these matters certainty cannot be attained by him who is fearful of daring.

e. On the problem of phenomena associated with the person of H.P. Blavatsky we are dependent as to the question of <u>fact</u> upon the testimony of individuals who in few or no instances are still among the living in this world. On the question of <u>possibility</u> of such phenomena a presumptive attitude may be derived from both the philosophy of Theosophy and of Buddhism. Both affirm the possibility of supernormal phenomena, of which the general philosophical rationale is easily understandable, however difficult it may be to understand the specific processes and to master the art. From the general thesis "nothing exists save as it is seen of the mind", it is easy to see how,

in principle, conscious voluntaristic production of effects in nature and the psyche is a possibility, once the general thesis is assumed or known to be true. The actual production of given instances of phenomena could be valuable as a partial confirmation of the philosophy; or for the purpose of breaking down adverse skepticism in minds that were sincere and honest.

As to the factuality of the phenomena in question the writer has nothing to offer on his own authority. There is the record and the published testimony and the reader is referred to this as a basis for forming an independent evaluation and judgment.

As to the Coloumb affair and the SPR report the data has been collected, analysed and competently evaluated in a work called The Theosophical Movement (E.P. Dutton, 1925) and any student who wishes to reach a just and honest understanding should read this. The following quotation from this source strikes at the core of this matter. (See p. 91, The Theosophical Movement).

"In no one thing, perhaps, is the weakness of the S.P.R. investigation more fatally self-betraying than in the motives they assign to account for the 'long continued combination and deliberate deception instigated and carried out by Madame Blavatsky'. That anyone, let alone a woman, should for ten or more years make endless personal sacrifices of effort, time, money, health and reputation in three continents, merely to deceive those who trusted her, with no possible benefit

to herself; should succeed in so deceiving hundreds of the most intelligent men and women of many races that they were convinced of the reality of her powers, her teachings, her mission as well as her phenomena, only to be unmasked by a boy of twenty-three who, by interviewing some of the witnesses and hearing their stories, is able infallibly to see what they could not see, is able to suspect what they could find no occasion for suspecting, is able to detect a sufficient motive for inspiring H.P.B. to the most monumental career of chicanery in all history - this is what one has to swallow in order to attach credibility to the elaborate tissue of conjecture and suspicion woven by Mr. Hodgson to offset the solid weight of testimony that the phenomena were genuine.

"'No crime without a motive'. What then was the motive attributed by Mr. Hodgson and the Committee to make credible their conclusion that she was 'one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history'? SHE WAS A RUSSIAN SPY, AND HER MOTIVE WAS TO DESTROY BRITISH RULE IN INDIA!"

As a matter of fact, one who has studied the whole question without prejudice is forced to the conclusion that the procedure of the SPR was incompetent and unjust and the motive of the members of the Committee suspect.

5. (2), (3) & (4). The Point has been raised that if the authors of The Mahatma Letters were Buddhists, as the writers themselves affirm they are, then there should have been

material from sources not reached by the orientalists. In one instance of a translation it is pointed out that it is really a paraphrase of Beal's Gatena of Buddhist Scriptures, the apparent suggestion of the correspondent being that the Letters were a fabrication or a hoax. The writer fails to see how there is much force in this line of reasoning. Thus there is nothing surprising that if two individuals independently translate from the same source that the results should be similar, but not identical. For the source is the same. Further, the writers of the Letters are, by hypothesis at least, masters of the inner essence of Buddhism and thus speak from out themselves what they know, rather than merely recite and copy.

It should always be borne in mind that these Letters were written to individuals and not for publication and general dissemination. There may be a question as to whether the publication of the Letters was just to either the writers or recipients, but to judge the Letters out of context of the specific problems of the time and the purpose for which they were written is less than just. However, since the Mahatma Letters have in fact been published it would seem to be our duty to evaluate them by the inherent worth of their content.

The correspondent writes: "... my general impression of the Letters is that they are gossipy and argumentative with a little philosophy, which had been better stated in a hundred other purely 'exoteric' books." It is presumed that anybody has a right to his general impressions. The writer too has his

general impression, and it takes quite a different form. Let us oppose impression to impression since such matters cannot be argued objectively. His impression is - the Letters reveal the activity of intelligences which in sheer range and depth have been surpassed by none in the whole range of literature with which he is acquainted; intelligences abreast of the western sciences and philosophies of the day, masters of the intricacies of the Oriental philosophies and religions, and of something far more profound which man in the world cannot measure. Beyond this he has an impression of a selfless compassion and a patience rarely exemplified in the history of man. And, finally, he has an impression of power combined with majesty in the best sense.

To be sure, the Letters are fragmentary, for reasons adequately explained. In part they deal with intimate personal problems of the time which were the concern of the recipients and the writers. The ideas are patiently argued as to convince rather than compel those to whom they were sent. They reveal none of the spirit of categorical ex-cathedra dogmatism, so characteristic of the religious and political dictator, and that, in the opinion of the writer, is one of their outstanding merits.

After twenty-three years of acquaintance with these Letters the writer finds them an unexhausted source of knowledge and wisdom, of more worth than the total of all exoteric Vedantic and Buddhistic literature which he has read. So much for testimony which is, admittedly, not objective argument.

e. (5) The question of the use of terms in a different sense by Theosophy as contrasted to Buddhism, in the form available to Orientalists, proves nothing as to the authenticity of Theosophy. If once we grant the thesis that formulated Theosophy is derived from an enduring esoteric Wisdom which, among other things, is identical with the hidden meaning of Gautama Buddha, then the fact that basic terms are interpreted in different ways is not only not surprising but to be expected. The one all important question is: "Is Theosophy what it claims to be?"

An objective and definitive answer to this question is impossible on exoteric grounds alone. A presumption one way or the other can be built, but that is all. To go beyond this one must be willing to gamble his life in faith, though prior testing in every way that is possible is not only everyone's right but is perfectly proper.

(6). The correspondent writes: "Theosophy, far from revealing a more esoteric side of Mahayana Buddhism, does not rise to an elementary understanding of the publicly taught doctrines." So! How is anyone to decide this unless he is an Initiate? Among the early contributors to The Theosophist were high Buddhists who quite competently gave expositions of Buddhist teaching. But how is one to form a judgment on this matter? There are many Mahayana sects, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan and an enormous canon. Theosophy does not claim to be an exposition of all of this. There is not a doubt in the world but that one

can find Sutras that build a different picture of the Mahayana Buddhism from that found in Theosophical teachings. But how shall it be decided which picture is authentic?

(7). It is affirmed that Hindu and Buddhist terms are "mangled" and "jumbled" and that the whole forms a "labyrinth of ill digested concepts". Well, no doubt there is some indigestion, but who is it who has the stomach trouble, the writer or the reader of the Secret Doctrine? Bus seriously, there is an intermixed use of Hindu and Buddhist terms and, it might be added, Cabbalistic terms as well. But in what way is this surprising? Let us recall the primary thesis of Theosophy that it is a formulation of a portion of the Esoteric Doctrine COMMON to the great religions and philosophies. Assuming the truth of this thesis, does it not follow that traces of the Doctrine will be found in the different systems? Naturally we would expect identity of conception underlying different terms and different approaches and organizations. Let us not forget that Theosophy aims at integration rather than an exclusive approval of one preferred extant system. It does not say that one must become a member of such and such a Buddhist - or Vedantist, sect or he is hopelessly lost. Rather it says: "Clear the conceptions of the system to which you are oriented of false and extraneous growths and then you will find revealed a facet of Ultimate Truth. But remember that this is equally true of the outwardly different systems to which some of your brothers belong."

By learning to see identity of meaning in seemingly quite

different terms, progress is made toward unity and brotherhood. The effect would be quite different if it were said that everyone must become Buddhist, or everyone must become a Vedantist, or Cabbalist in the exclusive and separative sense. That spirit is definitely alien to Theosophy.

The plaint is often made by the reader of the Secret Doctrine that it uses so many words for the same thing and departs so often from the line of the pure teaching into side-excursions that the total effect is one of confusion. The writer can sympathize with this feeling and he admits that he would have found a clear-cut line more comfortable. But he who would find gold must go to nature and delve for it in the forms in which nature has provided it, and this is seldom upon a "silver platter". Now in the teaching the ultimate Doctrine is half revealed and half concealed, and to understand it at all the student must work. He is spared long years of sitting cross-legged in a sealed-up cave, but he must use his mind and have patience. He must also overcome prejudice. Thus it may be more natural for one to speak of Archangels, but he should learn to accept the fact that when others say "Elohim", "Kumara", "Dhyan Chohan", "Dhyana Buddha", "Ah-hi", or "Tathagata", they mean, knowlingly or not, with greater or less understanding, the same thing.

The extensive side-excursions one finds in The Secret Doctrine are not intended to increase confusion but mainly to build up presumptive evidence not only to support but also to render more acceptable the primary thesis. To be sure, the excursion

that helps one may not help another and vice versa, but the announced purpose is to help all, as far as may be, and not merely a preferred few. Further, the central doctrine is largely in the form of fragments and hints, partly because there were reasons why all could not be given explicitly, and also partly because the student must earn the right to understanding by work.

Part of The Secret Doctrine is obsolete today because a cross-sectional view of western science now is different when compared with what it was in 1888. As a result, quite an amount of the polemical material would no longer be needed or would have to be changed as to form. The writer is convinced that the postive help or support from science today would be far greater. But all this involves no change in the meaning of the central Doctrine.

Some temperaments object to the lengthy arguments which run all through the basic Theosophic literature. They would have preferred definite categorical pronouncements. But on this point the announced policy of the real founders was definite and for reason. Bare assertion of conceptions, no matter how true they may be, implies upon the part of the reader blind acceptance or rejection and injects the spirit of authoritarianism. The founders were emphatically opposed to this. To be sure, there are rare individuals who need little more than bare statements to awaken the "Inner Eye", but the Theosophical writings are not aimed at these who need little or no help at all. For the rest

the policy was to build as convincing a case as possible, leaving the student free to decide, in the light of the presented evidence and reason, what appeared true to his uncoerced consciousness. To many, the writer among them, this attitude constitutes one of the strongest appeals of Theosophical literature.

(8) & (9). These two points are really interconnected and so will be handled together. There can be no question but that one can receive the impression from much of Mahayanistic literature that the labor toward the end of the salvation of all creatures is a perennial task, rather than a passing crisis. On the other hand, Theosophical literature does emphasize certain critical junctures such as the present which is said to be the cycle of transition between the first 5000 years of Kali Yug and a subsequent period. But this hardly involves any contradiction since logically both standpoints could be valid. A perennial condition could, quite conceivably, have critical phases. But this matter becomes considerably less simple when it is borne in mind that Theosophical teaching does give the impression of accentuation of the activistic factor while both Buddhism and Hinduism strike one as more oriented to quietism. In its deeper ramifications the ultimate question becomes: Does Enlightenment imply the permanent transcendence of the activistic or evolutionary process, or does it have some interconnection with this process?

In its exoteric forms both the Vedanta and Buddhism give the impression that the whole meaning of Liberation or Enlightenment

is the correction of an innate error. The correction of the error leads to transcendence of the World-field and all dualistic consciousness in essentially the same way that a dream is destroyed by awaking. Thus to the awakened consciousness there is no more activity in the sense of an evolutionary process. In contrast, Theosophy views the active phase as fundamental as the inactive or unmanifested phase. Enlightenment has the value of New Birth before which lie both active and passive possibilities. To be enlightened is to be an Adept and no one is an Adept in the Theosophical sense who is not enlightened. There are seven degrees of Enlightenment and the full Buddha is one who has culminated all these seven steps. A full Adept is the same thing as a full Buddha, and the Tathagata is the same thing as a Dhyan Chohan, a guiding Intelligence in Nature.

It is easy to see that Theosophy implies an Enlightenment such that the resultant consciousness is a sort of fusion of the Unmanifested with the Manifested aspects, or of nondualistic with dualistic consciousness. In this state the error or delusion is destroyed, but action, including evolution, and quietude both remain. The refusal to accept the private enjoyment of the Bliss of Nirvana, while including the meaning of continued effort in the direction of redemption of all creatures, has other and even more fundamental values; values which would still remain although all creatures were finally redeemed.

The writer does not mean to suggest that the inner meaning of both the Vedanta and Buddhism is at variance with Theosophy in

the above respect. There may be inner agreement and, indeed, this seems very likely. But the other impression does exist and there is literature which at least seems to confirm it. It is with respect to this latter impression that a contradiction exists.

As a matter of strict logic neither action not inaction can be predicated of a non-dual Reality, and It is thus as close to the active phase as to the inactive.

There can be no doubt that the appeal of the active or inactive phases appeals differently to individuals and races of different temperaments. One may prefer inactive contemplation while the other prefers activity. But such preference has no force as a determinant of the nature of Ultimate Reality. Western man is, on the whole, activistic while Eastern man is more largely quietistic but neither is therefore more right or righteous than the other.

We have been comparing doctrines which, as the Oriental would say, exists in terms of names and form, as indeed that is all that possible can be compared and discussed. All three, Theosophy, Vedanta and Buddhism, agree in saying that the ultimately true Dharma or Theosophia transcends all name and form, all possibility or delineation in any way. For This, to relative consciousness, appears exclusively as Absolute Negation, or That of which nothing whatsoever can be predicated in the private sense. Before THIS all beings whatsoever, high or low, must stand SILENT in the face of utter MYSTERY.

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