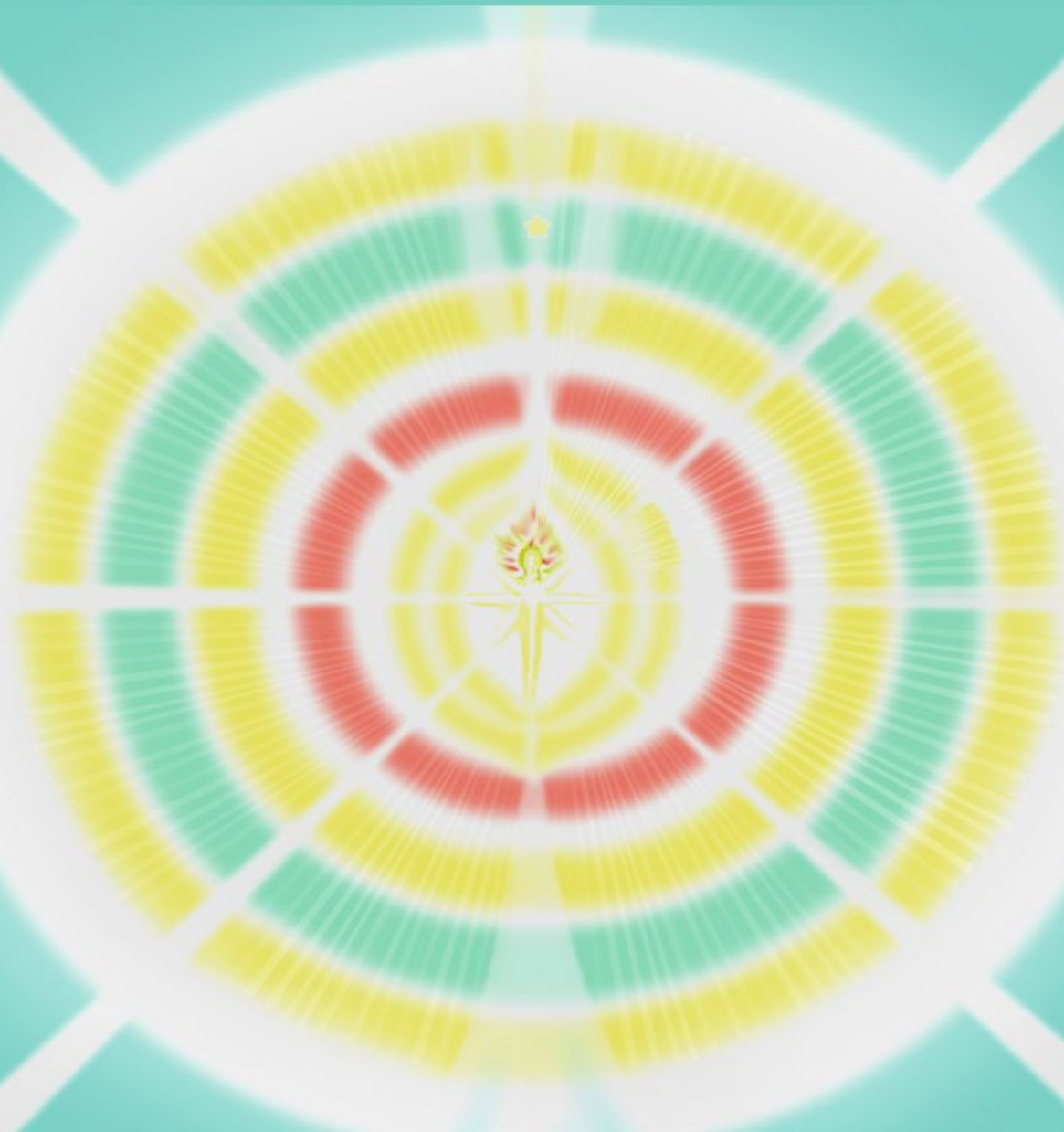


THE THEOSOPHICAL BOOKSHELF



**A TEXTBOOK
OF THEOSOPHY**

C. W. LEADBEATER

A Textbook Of Theosophy

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Contents:

[Theosophy - A Primer](#)

[A Textbook Of Theosophy](#)

[Chapter I - What Theosophy Is](#)

[Chapter Ii - From The Absolute To Man](#)

[Chapter Iii - The Formation Of A Solar System](#)

[Chapter Iv - The Evolution Of Life](#)

[Chapter V - The Constitution Of Man](#)

[Chapter Vi - After Death](#)

[Chapter Vii - Reincarnation](#)

[Chapter Viii - The Purpose Of Life](#)

[Chapter Ix - The Planetary Chains](#)

[Chapter X - The Result Of Theosophical Study](#)

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Theosophy - A Primer

By John T. Driscoll

(Theosophia = "wisdom concerning God")

Theosophy is a term used in general to designate the knowledge of God supposed to be obtained by the direct intuition of the Divine essence. In method it differs from theology, which is the knowledge of God obtained by revelation, and from philosophy, which is the knowledge of Divine things acquire by human reasoning. It is often incorrectly confounded with mysticism, for the latter is properly the thirst for the Divine, the aspiration for the invisible, and hence a natural manifestation of the religious sentiment. By intuition or illumination the initiated Theosophists are considered to be in harmony with the central principle of the universe. This knowledge of the secret forces of nature of the true relation between the world and man frees them from the ordinary limitations of human life, and gives them a peculiar power over the hidden forces of the macrocosm. Their exceptional faculties

are alleged as experimental proof of their superior science: they are the only guarantee of the truth of their teaching. They are said to transmit this truth by way of revelation. Thus theosophy appeals to tradition but not in the Christian sense.

(1) India is the home of all theosophic speculation.

Oltramere says that the directive idea of Hindu civilization is theosophic. This development covers a great many ages, each represented in Indian religious literature. There are formed the basic principles of theosophy. Knowledge of the occult laws in nature and in life, the intuitive method, superhuman powers, hostility to established religion are not all equally apparent in each age, but are present conjunctively or separately through the whole course of its history. The early Brahmanic writings contain the germs, which have gradually developed into a rich vegetation of ideas and beliefs. These ideas are organized into systems, not however homogeneous or autonomous but mixed with other belief. Then they leave the schools to act upon the masses, either in forming a religion, e.g. Buddhism, or in penetrating popular religions already existing, e.g.

Hinduism. Thus the Upanishads teach: that the individual soul is identical with the universal soul, hence the doctrine of *advaita*, i.e. non-duality; that the individual existence of the soul is a state of suffering, hence the doctrine of *samsara*, i.e. metempsychosis; that the individual soul is delivered from suffering by its reunion with the universal soul, a reunion realized by seizing the consciousness of identity with it, hence the doctrine of *moksa*, i.e. salvation. The basic doctrines of the Vedanta and Saukhya systems are monistic Pantheism, intuition as the supreme means to reach truth, metempsychosis, the world of sense is only a very little part of the category of things, the theory and method of salvation strictly intellectual. These systems developed from the Upanishads. The final development is

the Yoga. Yoga, i.e. "one who fits himself, or exercises", refers to the exercises practiced to free the soul from the body, which to it is like a string to a bird. Some of these exercises were: to rid one's self of moral faults (though the masters do not agree as to what these faults are); to sit in certain painful postures, check the breath, and reduce thought to a minimum by staring at the tip of the nose; to place the soul in a particular part of the body, and so gradually acquire mastery over it, or, rather, let the soul, the true self, acquire mastery over the body; to stave and learn to subsist on air or even without it; to concentrate thought by meditation, i.e. to think of nothing. *Thyana*, the highest state of which is the cataleptic trance *samadhi*, in which the mind is suppressed but the soul is in full activity. In this state the person is a *mahatma*, i.e. master-soul and can enjoy a temporary release from the body which it leaves to go roaming about, performing wonderful feats on material nature and controlling other less powerful souls. This latter was the secret of the Yoga's real power and was supposed to be done by a transfer of soul. When the soul re-enters the body, the Yoga wakes and is like other people. By repeated exercises the soul can become so strong that it secures perpetual release from the body, thus, according to the older Yoga teaching, it flies to heaven where it enjoys great happiness, riding in a celestial car attended by lovely women and music; but with the latter Yogas, on breaking all bodily bonds it formed immediate absorption into the Supreme Soul.

(2) Theosophic teaching comes to the front in the third period of Greek philosophy. Hence it is found in the Jewish-Greek philosophy with the neo-Platonists. The theosophic atmosphere due to the influence of the Orient is plainly shown in Plotinus. The Gnostic systems reveal more theosophy than theology and in the Jewish Kabbala is found a theosophy mixed with various forms of magic and

occultism. The Renaissance brought into modern thought neo-Platonism and the Kabbala, e.g. Reuchlin (d. 1492), Agrippa (d. 1535), Cardano (d.1576), Paracelsus (d.1540), Weigel (d. 1588). More important is the teaching of Jakob Böhme (d.1624). He taught that the "eternal dualism" of God is the ultimate cause of all evil; that there is a "dark" negative principle in God, which evil element makes manifest His goodness. Without this there would be no revelation. Further, were it not for this principle God could not know Himself. Böhme's teaching influenced Baader, Schelling, and Gegel. Theosophic principles colour the theology of Swedenborg, and are found in the group of modern thinkers, especially neo-Hegelians, who claim that the existence of God is know by direct intuition or by a special faculty of the soul.

A new importance of these teachings in modern thought is due to the school of Modern theosophy dating from the foundation of the Theosophical Society in New York City by Madame Blavatsky in 1875. She is the chief and only authority for the revelation of so-called Tibetan occultism. A.P. Sinnett however used the term Esoteric Buddhism. They claimed to have the true solution for the problems of the universe and of man from the Upanishads and Buddhist Sutras through Oriental savants, *mahatmas*, the faithful depositories of a profound and superhuman wisdom. In fact, a great part of their nomenclature is derived from India, and they seek there for a justification of teachings drifting about in modern thought and derived to a great extent, if not wholly, from neo-Platonic and Jewish sources through the Renaissance. The objects of the society are: to form the nucleus of a universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour; to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science; to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. This last clause gives

occasion to include magic, the occult, the uncanny, and the marvelous in any and every form. Madame Blavatsky, with Colonel Olcott, went to India in 1878. Shortly afterwards her frauds were exposed through letters written by her and published by Columb and his wife, who had been in her service. This was acknowledged by the London Society of Psychical Research, which in Nov., 1884 sent R. Hodgson, of St. John's College, Cambridge to investigate (Edmund Garrett, "Isis very much Unveiled", London, 1895; Francis Podmore, "Studies in Psychical Research"). In spite of this, however, the teaching was continued and propagated by her disciples Mrs. Besant, Col. Olcott, A.P. Sinnett, and others.

Modern theosophy claims to be a definite science. Its teachings are the product of thought, and its source is consciousness, not any Divine revelation. As a science it is supposed to be based on investigation and experimentation of the occult laws in nature and in human life. Only those qualified for the inquiry can grasp these laws, and they gain from this knowledge certain superhuman powers. Mrs. Besant calls it the great synthesis of life, i.e. of religion, science, and philosophy, as old as thoughtful humanity, proclaimed in a new form suited to the present time. Its aim is that spirit is and can become the master of matter. Hence it is considered as a protest against materialism which teaches that thought and feeling are the results of the aggregations of matter. Theosophy on the contrary sees in matter an instrument of life, and in thought the creative and moulding power of matter.

The basic teaching of theosophy is the universal brotherhood of humanity. Hence springs the preaching of toleration to all persons and to all varieties of belief, e.g. Buddhists, Christians, Atheists, It considers the different religions as methods adopted by man in the search for God.

They are of necessity various, because men differ in temperament, type, needs, and stages of evolution. Hence they are different and imperfect expressions of truth. As such it says: "we cannot afford to lose any of the world's religions, for each has its partial truth and its characteristic message which the perfect man must acquire." Hence theosophy appeals to men as the great peacemaker, for it teaches that all religions mean one and the same thing, or rather that they are all branches of a single tree. In this sense it attacks comparative mythology which tries to show that religion was originally the fruit of man's ignorance and will disappear with the increase of knowledge, whereas in fact religion comes from Divine knowledge, i.e. theosophy.

The principle of universal brotherhood rests upon the 'solidarity' of all living, of all that is, in the one life and one consciousness. Solidarity springs from the belief in the immanence of God, the only and external life manifested in the multiplicity of creation. All forces are external; there is no supernatural, except the superhuman and supersensuous, i.e. powers greater than those normally exercised by man, which, however, can be developed. Ignorance therefore makes the miracle. Hence there is no personal God, and for this reason Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant say that theosophy is more readily embraced by Atheists and Agnostics. Hence also Colville could teach that the spirit or soul in man is the only real and permanent part of his being; everything else pertaining to him is illusory and transitory. Solidarity, i.e. the common life pervading all things, is thus made the basis of morality. Hence a wrong done to one is done to all, as e.g. an injury inflicted on one part of the human organism results in pain diffused and felt throughout. At the same time we are told that God is good and man immortal, that the "immanence of God justifies religion", i.e. the search after Him, that all

things move to good and to man's benefit, that man must understand and co-operate with the scheme of things.

Man has seven aspects, or rather is being composed of seven principles. These are viewed in two groups: the Quarternary, corresponding to our animal nature, i.e. soul and body, the mortal part of man, the products of evolution; and the Triad, corresponding to our spiritual nature, i.e. spirit, for theosophists say that Christian philosophy hold the threefold division of body; soul, and spirit in man. The Quaternary is made up of *Sthula Sharira*, i.e. physical body; *Linga Sharira*, i.e. astral double; *Prana*, i.e. principle of life; *Kama*, i.e. our passional nature. The Triad is composed of: *Manas*, i.e. mind or the thinker; *Buddhi*, i.e. the dwelling-place of spirit; *Atnir*, i.e. spirit. Hence we find *Atnir-Buddhi* used conjointly. This Triad is called the Immortal Triad. It is united to the Quaternary by *Manas*, in itself viewed as *Higher Manas*, sending out a Ray, which as *Lower Manas* is imbedded in *Karma*. Thus *Kama-Manas* is the link joining our animal to our spiritual nature, and is the battle-ground of life's struggles. Man is primarily divine, a spark of the Divine life; this living flame passing out from the Central Fire, weaves for itself coverings within which it dwells and thus becomes the Triad, the *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, the Immortal Self. This sends out its Ray, which becomes encased in grosser matter, in the Kamic body, in the Astral Double, and in the physical body. The Astral Double, i.e. rarer matter, the exact double of the physical body, plays a great part in spiritualistic phenomena. The *Manas* is the real I, the reincarnating ego makes the human personality. The Quaternary as a whole is viewed as the Personality, i.e. the shadow of the self. In fact each principle or aspect may be considered a Personality in so far as it undervalues *Atma*, i.e. throws its shadow over *Atma*, i.e. the One Eternal Existence. The seer however knows that *Atma* is the one reality, the essence of all things, that *Atma-Buddhi* is the

Universal One Soul, itself an aspect of *Atma*, that *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* is the individual mind or Thinker, that the shadow of *Manas*, our *Atma-Buddhi*, makes men say "my soul" and "thy soul", whereas in reality we are all one with *Atma*, the Unknown Root. After death all of the Manasic Ray that is pure and unsoiled gradually disentangles itself, carrying with it such of life's experiences as are of a nature fit for assimilation with the Higher Ego. The Manasic Ego united to *Atma-Buddhi* passes into the Devachonic state of consciousness, rapt in blissful dreams coloured by the experiences of the earth-life. This state is a continuation of the earth-life shorn of its sorrows, and a completion of its noble and pure wishes.

Theosophy is not only a basis of religion; it is also a philosophy of life. As such, its main teachings are reincarnation and the law of Karma. Karma is the outcome of the collective life, a law of ethical causation. In the past incarnation the ego had acquired certain faculties, set in motion certain causes. The effect of these causes and of causes set in motion in previous incarnations and not yet exhausted are its Karma and determine the conditions into which the ego is reborn. Thus inequalities of natural gifts, e.g. genius, of temperament and of character are explained. The law of progress is the law of involution and evolution, the returning of the Divine Spark into a unity with Spirit through various reincarnations, which are viewed as a process of purification. Sin, poverty, and misery are the fruits of ignorance, and are gradually removed as the spirit in us becomes freed from earthly dross. There is no heaven nor Hell. Death is the passage from this state of life to another. There is an evolution behind and before, with absolute certainty of final attainment for every human soul, i.e. to be one with the Absolute. As man advances in this process his spirit becomes stronger, and can develop latent powers, not shown in ordinary mortals.

A Textbook Of Theosophy

Chapter I - WHAT THEOSOPHY IS

"There is a school of philosophy still in existence of which modern culture has lost sight." In these words Mr. A.P. Sinnett began his book, *The Occult World*, the first popular exposition of Theosophy, published thirty years ago. [Namely in 1881.] During the years that have passed since then, many thousands have learned wisdom in that school, yet to the majority its teachings are still unknown, and they can give only the vaguest of replies to the query, "What is Theosophy?"

Two books already exist which answer that question: Mr. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* and Dr. Besant's *The Ancient Wisdom*. I have no thought of entering into competition with those standard works; what I desire is to present a statement, as clear and simple as I can make it, which may be regarded as introductory to them.

We often speak of Theosophy as not in itself a religion, but the truth which lies behind all religions alike. That is so; yet, from another point of view, we may surely say that it is at once a philosophy, a religion and a science. It is a philosophy, because it puts plainly before us an explanation of the scheme of evolution of both the souls and the bodies contained in our solar system. It is a religion in so far as, having shown us the course of ordinary evolution, it also puts before us and advises a method of shortening that course, so that by conscious effort we may progress more directly towards the goal. It is a science, because it treats both these subjects as matters not of theological belief but of direct knowledge obtainable by study and investigation. It asserts that man has no need to trust to blind faith,

because he has within him latent powers which, when aroused, enable him to see and examine for himself, and it proceeds to prove its case by showing how those powers may be awakened. It is itself a result of the awakening of such powers by men, for the teachings which it puts before us are founded upon direct observations made in the past, and rendered possible only by such development.

As a philosophy, it explains to us that the solar system is a carefully-ordered mechanism, a manifestation of a magnificent life, of which man is but a small part. Nevertheless, it takes up that small part which immediately concerns us, and treats it exhaustively under three heads—present, past and future.

It deals with the present by describing what man really is, as seen by means of developed faculties. It is customary to speak of man as having a soul. Theosophy, as the result of direct investigation, reverses that dictum, and states that man *is* a soul, and *has* a body—in fact several bodies, which are his vehicles and instruments in various worlds. These worlds are not separate in space; they are simultaneously present with us, here and now, and can be examined; they are the divisions of the material side of Nature—different degrees of density in the aggregation of matter, as will presently be explained in detail. Man has an existence in several of these, but is normally conscious only of the lowest, though sometimes in dreams and trances he has glimpses of some of the others. What is called death is the laying aside of the vehicle belonging to this lowest world, but the soul or real man in a higher world is no more changed or affected by this than the physical man is changed or affected when he removes his overcoat. All this is a matter, not of speculation, but of observation and experiment.