

## Theosophy and Modern World Problems

by J.W. Brodie-Innes

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It is more than likely that what I have to say may bring down the wrath of many worthy members of the Theosophical Society. It seems so very simple, when one has a fad, and when one has learned to persuade oneself that in one's own fad lies the solution of all that is called evil in the world, to proceed to the further conclusion that the exploiting of that particular fad is the divinely appointed mission of Theosophy, the purpose of its existence at this time and upon this planet. And yet nothing can be more clear than that gigantic schemes for the reconstitution of society and repairing the mistakes committed by the directing forces of the world have nothing whatsoever to do with Theosophy, and of this nature are nearly every one of the prevalent fads to which I have alluded. The panaceas of social and political quacks have attracted so much attention and proved so fascinating to mankind in all ages that we need not wonder when we hear on one side that some form or other of socialism is the acme of Theosophy, being the only real altruism; whether it be the strange but seductive dream which is embodied in Bellamy's "Looking Backward", or the theories of Henry George, or the modern gospel of salvation by strikes, each prophet exploits his pet nostrum; or on another platform we hear that the true purpose of Theosophy is the emancipation of women, elsewhere it is the universal adoption of a pure diet and the utter prohibition of killing of animals for food or for sport or for science; again, it is the absolute abolition of all intoxicating drinks. And so one faddist raves against another, and all claim the divine light of Theosophy to solve the problems of the world. And the lines of everyone of the fads are similar, certain axioms are laid down, [Page 4] predicating the meaning and purpose of the world and the reason for the presence in it at this time of the human life monad. Then follows sundry statements of the present conditions of humanity, whence it is triumphantly proved that the existence of a particular group or section of humanity offends against the basic principles of the present manvantara, which cannot continue its upward evolution so long as that section continues to exist.

Now, where it not that one meets faddists of this type constantly among Theosophists, one would say that the whole principles and conception of Theosophy were opposed to such fads. One would say that the most rudimentary understanding of the law of Karma would negative them altogether; but seeing how widespread and how apparently fascinating to good Theosophists this faddism is, it is worth while to examine it closely and see what germ of truth, or it may be perversion of truth, underlies it all.

If we consider, for instance, the dream of the Socialist we see how it is founded on a presumed intention of the ruling spirit of the world that all human beings should be born free and equal. The exact meaning of "freedom" in a state of existence whose very necessity it is to be *conditioned* is a subject of considerable dispute, and equality never has been the condition of human beings, their inequality presenting, in fact, a problem utterly insoluble save by theosophic teachings grounded on the law of Karma. Such teachings, however, the Socialist waives aside with a lofty scorn. He says, and he is perfectly right in saying, that the poor have been for centuries growing poorer and the rich growing richer, and that the contrasts have never been so sharp as they are at present, that all wealth is accumulated

into few hands, and those, as a rule, the hands of men who do the very least for the well-being of humanity, financiers, speculators, contractors, and the like, the bulk of whom might be swept off the earth by a sudden cataclysm, and leave it none the poorer. The truth of all this may be readily granted and the outcome of occult learning appears to be that whatever conditions of earth life are most favourable for the development of the life monads, which at any given time are pressing into incarnation, will undoubtedly subsist, and that when those peculiar conditions cease, from any change in the necessities of the monad, to be requisite for its evolution, then these conditions will cease to subsist. Thus some of the races of mankind, when their functions as sheaths or vehicles of the incarnating monad is no longer required, utterly cease to exist. Vain is any endeavour of man to alter or to retard by one hour the effect of this law, vain his attempt to save the [Page 5] Maori or the Redskin from becoming extinct. Meanwhile the woolly-headed African, seemingly at first sight a lower type than either, so far from perishing before the white man, thrives and multiplies alongside of him, as in America today. The Theosophist knows that the purpose of the Maori is accomplished; that of the negro has yet to be completed.

And as with races so it is with classes. In the middle ages there were classes of men in England whose degradation and sufferings would not be believed now. Like the races above mentioned, they have ceased to exist, and, for the same reason, there is now no need for them; the life monads to whom those peculiar human bodies were necessary no longer press for incarnation. Be it observed no human law has anything to do with this.

It would be easy to show from history, if time sufficed, how law after law has been passed for ameliorating the condition of certain classes, or for abolishing, certain classes considered to be so degraded as to be a reproach to humanity, and every law has been a dead letter until the proper time arrived, and then in many cases the result simply took place without a single legislative change. To this day there are on the Statute Book unrepealed laws which, if put in force, would make earth a hell for whole classes; these laws are out of date and dead, and the classes whom they would have oppressed exist no more, for the need of them in the cosmic economy is past. It may be asked, then, whether it is wrong to try and improve the condition of humanity, and the answer is certainly not wrong, but so far the endeavour implies an attempt to change the conditions under which humanity exists before the human life monads coming into those conditions are changed, it is for the Theosophist, who should know better, infinitely foolish, as being a waste of time and power, trying to do that which no human strength or skill can accomplish before the right time, but which at the right moment will be accomplished in nature evolution without any human effort.

Multitudes of Socialistic schemes have been launched within the last hundred years, but not one has come to anything, "because of the selfishness of man", says the Socialist. Precisely! — and until man is less selfish every scheme will similarly fail.

But, it may be said again, the first followers of Christ were Socialists. True again! for those first followers had attained a height of unselfishness which made it possible in this little community, but they never proclaimed it as a lesson for the whole world in its then condition of self-seeking cruelty and tyranny.

Many years ago a pamphlet was published by a half-crazed philanthropist, which began by pointing out in graphic language the number of poor creatures in London who suffered torments or actually died from cold, then proceeded with elaborate scientific reasoning to show that under the whole of London, below

the stratum of the green sand, lay a vast reservoir of water, and below this again the central fires of the globe burned perpetually; bore deep enough, this was the conclusion of the pamphlet, bring the water and the fire together, and you have a perpetual supply of boiling water sufficient, if carried in pipes around London, to form a vast heating apparatus for the whole metropolis. It would make coal unnecessary and render it impossible to anyone should suffer from cold again.

Of such sort, to the mind of a Theosophist, are the Socialistic schemes.

Are we then to sit unmoved and irresponsibly gazing on the misery of the world, and merely saying "Kismet". By no means, for those who seek practical work in the way of benevolence there is plenty to be done. Feed the hungry, cloth the naked, comfort the afflicted, but do not waste time and force in grand schemes to banish hunger and cold and sorrow from this planet. There is one grand scheme, and Theosophy shows us what it is, "bear one another's burdens"; so will you aid, as fully as the power given to you admits of, to kill selfishness out of the world, and teach others the same sublime lesson, and then when this lesson is fully learned the Socialists' dream will come true.

Meantime you want some grander, more exhaustive scheme for bringing the millennium to mankind at once. Examine your motives closely. Is not your real desire that your own name may be linked to some such scheme, that you may have the adulation of the multitude; is it not, in a word, a miserable personal vanity, an accentuated separateness, that actuates you? A very natural, very human sentiment; but beware, O human brother! that you deceive not yourself by calling it love of humanity. Only when all desire of personal glorification or recognition of services is destroyed can the work for humanity be really begun on the lowly and unnoticed lines that are the true spirit of theosophy.

And as it is with Socialism, so is it with all the other fads above mentioned, and many another besides. A truly noble object is the emancipation of women, but not one to be accomplished by legislation or platform speeches. Theosophist should know well the theory of the evolution of sex and all it involves, and why the reincarnating life monad is attracted to a female rather than a male body. Let those who do not know something of this, study occult works until some meaning of the problem begins [Page 7] to dawn on them, and they will then see the conditions on which the emancipation of women can become practicable.

When social and political questions are looking at in the clearer and stronger light of Theosophy many proposed reforms will seem very much like going into a gymnasium and removing therefrom all the apparatus for the more difficult exercises.

Not that one should blame reformers, they have their uses; indeed even while we realize their mistakes and know that we cannot follow them, we know that they are indispensable factors of evolution. But Theosophist should not be reformers of such a type as has been indicated; the clearer light, the higher qualities which enable them to be Theosophists indicate a higher grade of usefulness, for which there is no reward of man's praise, no premium such as the self-seeking separateness of the individual demands, but rather that far higher blessing which is shared by the whole universal brotherhood, and means one more step gained towards the final attainment of Para-nirvana.