Chapter I

THEOSOPHY

A. Introduction

It is important from the outset to realize that Theosophical thinking represents no one point of view as expressed in any one great religious tradition or philosophical system. Theosophy tends to synthesize existing systems of thought in an effort to establish relative commonalities. Under this synthetic approach, Theosophy establishes what is in common within the religions, philosophies and sciences known to men and then suggests that what is in common is more likely to be true. Once these concepts are formulated, Theosophy reviews all systems of thought in terms of their tendency to support the existing commonalities. In other words the process is threefold: First, concepts are scrutinized, secondly what is in common to all is established as "Truth" and thirdly, these "Truths" are re-applied to all thinking. By the third stage Theosophy emerges as a unique system of religious thought itself.

Theosophy adheres to no one religion; it entertains them all and in so doing enters more into the realm of philosophy. It investigates the mythologies of ancient religions always attempting to unravel the mysteries hidden behind the veil of symbolism. In fact, a knowledge of ancient religious and philosophical symbolism is absolutely critical to the Theosophist. For the Theosophist believes that the profound truths were by
necessity encoded to ensure that a knowledge of the mysteries remain safe from the eyes of the vulgar.

The basic beliefs of the Society are that all major religions contain a certain amount of truth; that every man through spiritual development is capable of becoming god-like; and that essentially humanity consists of one great brotherhood. With spiritual advancement, Theosophists maintain that the entire human race will accelerate the process of escaping the "wheel of Karma." This will be achieved, however, only when man pays more attention to the esoteric rather than the exoteric side of "Nature."

A member of the Theosophical Society may follow any religion of his choosing or no religion whatsoever. He may be more interested in science or philosophy than religion. The only rules that the Society insists upon are that no member should impose his particular beliefs upon another and that all should believe in the brotherhood of man. Though the Society's definition of what being a Theosophist entails is very broad, critics have pointed out from time to time that most members seem to reflect a singular view as handed down from the Theosophical hierarchy.¹

A great need is present, within Theosophy, to integrate religious principles, philosophical ideals, and scientific data. Theosophy asserts that in the Occidental world, religion, philosophy, and science had become compartmentalized to the
extent that each branch of knowledge dogmatized to the exclusion of the other. Further, it was to be deplored that the only common philosophy remaining was that of "Materialism", the by-product of increasing rationality and decreasing spirituality. It was felt that Christianity was incapable of arresting the tide of materialism as it had long fallen into the abyss of exotericism. Scientists were undermining the position of Theologians, while philosophy seemed to be written for the philosophers themselves. The founders of the Theosophical Society (1875) looked to the Orient with the hope of discovering the secret of unity within diversity. It was believed that the West was in danger and that only the knowledge or wisdom of the ancients could save the situation. Religion, science and philosophy would be put into a proper perspective, therefore in unity, and man would again become a spiritual being.

Theosophy finds that Western civilization has not sufficiently acknowledged its intellectual debt to Ancient civilization. The ancient world is said to have reached a level of intellectual speculation vastly superior to that of modern times. Theosophy suggests that a certain misconception of the achievements of men of ages ago came about as a result of the development of Scientific Materialism and Rationalism in recent centuries. It was also perceived that Christianity had done its best to obliterate all that was associated with pagan philosophies.

The reasons for bringing before the reader's attention several aspects of Theosophy will obviate themselves throughout
the rest of the study. It is not enough to state that the Theosophical Society exists and then proceed to explain its activities in India. However convenient such an approach would be for the writer, it would leave the reader confused in later chapters concerning the deeper meaning in the Society's interaction with the Christian missionaries in India and their specific approach to the whole question of Aryan revivalism and their defense of Hinduism.

Most of this chapter is based upon H.P. Blavatsky's "Isis Unveiled" (1877) and the "Secret Doctrine" (1888). These two works are really the foundation upon which Theosophy rests. The writer has read several other volumes and hundreds of articles written by prominent Theosophists, but remains convinced that the most universally accepted views are those of Madame Blavatsky. There are a few reasons for this: One, many works on Theosophy are no more than elaborations upon Blavatsky's ideas, and two, that Theosophy allows each member of the Society to write upon the subject as he sees it. Further, the original Theosophical Society experienced a few important schisms which led to one group discrediting the writings and ideas of the other. This occurred after the death of Blavatsky. Her writings alone seem to be accepted by all Theosophists. In no sense is the subject of Theosophy rendered here complete. It is rather that certain areas of interest are explained to give the reader an impression of what Theosophy concerns itself with. Some aspects of the subject are arbitrarily stressed more than others and indeed much of what is significant has been left out.
Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine" was essentially based upon the "Book of Dzyan," an alleged archaic work from which all other religious texts evolved. In the introduction to "The Secret Doctrine" Blavatsky states that "The Book of Dzyan" is completely unknown to philologists, at least under that name and that those who insist upon following methods of research prescribed by official science are likely to be disappointed. However, she adds that to every genuineosophist these considerations hardly matter. This statement is immediately qualified by suggesting that the main body of the doctrine is to be found in hundreds of thousands of Sanskrit MSS., most of which still awaits translating. Claims such as these seem all the more amazing when one understands that Blavatsky knew barely a Sanskrit word. However, there is no inconsistency in the claim, for the writer of "The Secret Doctrine," received her knowledge from the "Masters of Wisdom," those spiritually advanced beings, who to this day are supposed to inhabit the remotest regions of the Himalayan ranges. These supernmen are believed to possess the entire knowledge of men's past, present and future, and therefore, from time to time, give out portions to selected chelas. Needless to say, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Masters chose Madame Blavatsky as the transmitter of their wisdom. To the astonishment of her critics, she was able to quote full passages from works only suspected to have existed in antiquity which she insisted still were extant in hidden crypts in Tibet and other places in Asia. This was
possible for her through a process known as "Tulka," a Tibetan term which describes the condition when "a living Initiate or high Occultist sends a part of his consciousness to take embodiment, for a longer or shorter period of time, in a neophyte-messenger whom the Initiate sends into the outer world to perform a duty or teach. The Messenger acts as a transmitter of the spiritual and divine powers of the Initiate." The existence of the Masters will be reviewed more thoroughly a little later on in this chapter. "The Secret Doctrine," is therefore based upon the "Book of Dzyan," which was the parent doctrine of later religious and philosophical texts; and not existing in any modern library, the essence of the work was revealed to Madame Blavatsky by her Masters, who used the doctrine of "Tulka" to diffuse their knowledge.

According to Blavatsky, the word Theosophy originated with the Alexandrian philosophers. Theosophy roughly translated from the Greek language means Divine Wisdom. The name was first used by Ammonius Saccas in the third century of the Christian era. The term is the exact equivalent of an early Indian word, the Sanskrit compound Brahmanvidya or Divine Wisdom. It is admitted that the modern Theosophical movement is based upon the same principles as those of the Neo-Platonic school of Ammonius Saccas. He also dreamed of uniting all the various religious sects and philosophies of the world under one common ideal. He firmly held that all religious beliefs were more or less legitimate children of one common parent, the Wisdom Religion.
B. Ancient Wisdom

Madame Blavatsky states in her "Secret Doctrine," that basically there were three ancient centers of religion — "there was a common Aryan religion before the separation of the Aryan race; a common Semitic religion before the separation of the Semitic race; and a common Turanian religion before the separation of the Turanian races." Antecedent to the three basic branches of religion, Blavatsky claims that there existed a root religion from which they sprang. The root religion was the secret doctrine or the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world. This root religion had little in common with the orthodox religions that we see around us in modern times. Long before our present race evolved, Theosophists tell us that there existed a purer more spiritual race of men who were in direct communication with God. Though that race died out perhaps millions of years ago a certain amount of knowledge about its humanity still exists. In historical times that knowledge is referred to as Ancient Wisdom. How exactly this wisdom was handed down to our present humanity will be discussed further on in this chapter.

One of the most important assumptions of Theosophy is therefore that there is a great body of doctrine, in existence, that forms the basis of all the knowledge that we are capable of knowing. I use the word capable because one understands from "The Secret Doctrine" that our present humanity is necessarily limited in its ability to comprehend the nature of the "Divine." It is claimed throughout the literature of the Society that there is
nothing essentially new about Theosophy. The only thing novel or
different in modern Theosophy is that perhaps for the first time
an attempt has been made to synthesize the composite wisdom of the
ancient and modern worlds into an intelligible idiom. This Madame
Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott may have achieved with the establish-
ment of the Theosophical Society.

Theosophy insists that there have always been two types of
interpretation with regard to religion, philosophy and science.
The exoteric interpretations was for humanity at large, who were
unable to appreciate the subtle truths of the higher spiritual
worlds. The esoteric interpretation, however, was reserved for
those special beings, who were equipped to comprehend the "Divine."
Naturally most of man's present knowledge or wisdom is based upon
esoteric understanding and therefore remains quite limited. One
of the tasks of modern Theosophy is to spread esoteric wisdom
through the development of man's occult faculties, which once
developed would enable him to transcend the material plane of
existence. This is a clear departure from the practices of the
Initiates of the past. Apparently, Theosophists now feel that
man has evolved spiritually and intellectually far enough to
comprehend something of the hitherto kept secret doctrine.10

It is claimed that the Archaic Wisdom Religion was once
known in every country having pretensions to civilisation. Of
course this special knowledge was not shared at large, but was
rather in the possession of a few men who were known as Initiates.11
These Initiates belonged to various esoteric schools.12 It was
their duty to protect the secret doctrine from profane hands. The idea is that the child-like humanity was not prepared to com-
prehend the occult principles inherent within the secret doctrine and therefore it was considered wise to hide much of the truth.
These enlightened beings were known as Rishis, Gurus, Swamis and Seers in India and Prophets, Messiahs, Sages and Philosophers elsewhere. They at various points throughout the ages demonstrated one aspect or another of divine knowledge. The documents were kept hidden, but the occult knowledge itself was always understood to have existed by the hierophants of the temples, where the mysteries were preserved. Always ahead of their times, the great Initiates of the past were often in danger of persecution by their less spiritually developed brothers. Thus those who understood the Mysteries were usually forced into secrecy and isolation. Theosophists tell us that this is why so little is known of the secret doctrine in modern times.

Though the Initiates may have been separated by geography and culture, Theosophy claims that the knowledge they possessed was ever one and formed the basis of every succeeding religion or philosophy known to man. These Initiates are said to have been able to comprehend the secrets of the nature of all things. No one Seer is said to have had a complete understanding of the occult truths, yet each contributed something generation after generation down through the ages. The truth of this can be easily verified according to Blavatsky. Each religious system has both its sectarian and esoteric sides. The original teachings, which formed the basis of all the great religions have been distorted
significantly. As religions became institutionalized, the mythologies employed to explain abstract principles by the Initiates became narrowly understood. Theosophy tells us that much of this occurred because priests lost their spiritual knowledge over the centuries and because for political reasons it was found advantageous to stress the esoteric side of the teaching. Despite the efforts of those who would destroy the true meaning of the Initiate's teachings, Blavatsky claimed that there were records well hidden which contain the pristine truths.

The history of religions is marked by the presence of certain great teachers, who through their intuitive insight into the nature of God were revered by others. In some cases the teachings of these beings were pertinent to the social, political and religious realities prevailing at the time. Great reformers such as Buddha, Christ and Mohammed left a lasting impact upon the world. In India god-men such as Krishna and Rama demonstrated one aspect or another of Divine Wisdom. By these and many more of the religious personages from time immemorial, the secret doctrine was taught to humanity. Often the teachings had to be couched within elaborate symbolism or taught in parables, with double meanings. One of the objects of the Theosophical Society is to investigate these teachings in order to more fully validate that there existed one root religion anterior to all.

Madame Blavatsky tells us that the origin of the Mysteries may be traced back as far as the Fourth Root Race. That Race is referred to in Theosophy as the Atlantean Race, a humanity far more spiritual than that of our own. As we will see later on in
beings taught the early sub-races of the Aryan Race the origins of the gods and of man. It is probable that the first initiates were in India and that their precepts were passed on to Egypt, Greece, China and Chaldea. This all remains a bit vague, but as we get into historical times those who were considered to be Initiates becomes clearer. We are told that Pythagoras was an Initiate, and one of the greatest scientists of all times. Euclid also is said to have learned geometry by being initiated into the Mysteries. Buddha and Jesus were Initiates, though Buddha's position within the spiritual hierarchy is said to be much higher than that of Jesus. Senkarscharya was perhaps one of India's greatest Initiates, in fact, he is considered to be a higher deity reincarnated as is Buddha. Further, Krishna, Plato, Moses, Apollonius, Orpheus, Mohammed etc. were all Initiates, but not of all the same spiritual stature according to Blavatsky. There was no discrimination between the sexes within the mystery schools. Hypatia is also included amongst the initiated. The Neo-Platonists knew the Mysteries as did the early Christian Fathers. It is claimed that the Mysteries conducted in India were identical with those of Egypt, Greece and elsewhere.

What was it exactly that the Initiates learned within the mystery schools? This is not an easy question to approach as occult learning remains at a vague level even within "The Secret Doctrine." That is to say, that by just reading an account of what Blavatsky describes as occult knowledge gives one little insight into its essence. Part of the Mysteries concerned Alchemy
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and the study of geometry, as we learn that Pythagoras' numerical system had an esoteric base. It was taught that everything in the manifested universe emanated from one eternal source, and that there is no such thing as supernatural phenomenon as the whole universe is subject to the one immutable natural law. Further, the idea that the material world is in a state of constant evolution as is the mental world was taught. Initiates would have learned that occult forces existed and that by spiritual development man could come to control the forces. He would also have studied the principles of magic. It was taught that the astrological bodies were motivated by mental forces and that these forces had a relation to men. The Initiate would have understood that man is locked within material existence and could only escape re-incarnation by uniting himself with the "higher beings." He would have studied the prehistoric history of the universe and of man.

The initiation into the Mysteries would have taken several years. This is said to be particularly true of initiation into the occult arts as progress depended upon spiritual and moral strength. If an Initiate reached the seventh degree of initiation in Egypt, he would be sure, after death, to resurrect in a new and imperishable body. The outer forms of the various Mystery schools throughout the world were certainly different, but the content is said to have been the same.
C. The Supreme Being

Theosophists reject the idea of a personal or anthropomorphic God. They believe rather in a Universal Divine Principle, the Rootless Root of "all that was, is or ever shall be." It teaches the essential unity of all manifested nature and Theosophists hold that this unity of manifested nature necessarily involves the recognition of the Unmanifested, the "Absolute," the "Eternal," the "Infinite," the cause of all. They state that the "Finite" cannot comprehend the "Infinite" as the "Manifested" cannot realize the "Unmanifested." In other words, Theosophy postulates that there exists something which may best be described as "That," which can have no meaningful attributes whatsoever, as the human being is only capable of recognizing things of his own world. Though our world comes from "That" ultimately, we are obviously in the dark as to be able to describe something which is totally beyond our senses. Theosophy finds that this proposition was generally understood by all the Initiates of the Wisdom schools and formed the esoteric basis of all succeeding religions as far back as man may recall. One can say almost nothing, even within metaphysics, about this concept. Words such as Omnipresent, Boundless, Eternal, Divine Principle, Absolute Reality, It, Infinite, Unmanifested, etc., do little more than point out man's mental limitations. If the subject were left to rest there, further speculation would be impossible. However, Theosophy, through the use of archaic symbolism, is able to expand upon the subject by dividing the whole into parts.
Out of "That" or Parabrahman as it is called in Sanskrit comes two: "The First Logos: the impersonal, and in philosophy, Unmanifested Logos, the precursor of the Manifested, and The Second Logos: Spirit-Matter, Life; the Spirit of the Universe, Parusha and Prakriti." 28 So it is understood from the above that within the "Oneness" exists duality, that which is the impetus for manifesting matter and the manifested matter itself, or as Theosophists put it, Subject and Object. From this point onwards there is a spiritual breakdown from the One to the Many. Elaborate systems of logic, either from the occult or physical sides of nature are hereafter employed to substantiate that eventually man as everything else within the universe known and unknown is a reflection of the One Being or "That."

Out of the "Absolute Essence," the Universe periodically manifests itself. 29 The appearance and disappearance of the Universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of the "Great Breath," which is eternal, and which, being motion, is one of the three symbols of the Absolute-Abstract Space and Duration being the other two. 31 The concept that something can stop existing and still be existing is peculiar to Oriental philosophy. Pralaya, which is the state of Cosmic rest, when nothing is manifested within existence, is sometimes referred to as the "Night of Brahma." 32 Existence therefore is said to consist of the Days and Nights of Brahma, which means periodic manifestation and dissolution. We thus understand that everything is constantly evolving or changing from one state into
another. Nothing is permanent save "That" which cannot be manifested in itself. To put it into the language of the occultist: "What is it that ever is? - Space, the eternal Amupaaka (Parentless). What is it that ever was? - The Guna is the Root. What is it that is ever coming and going? The Great Breath. Then there are three Eternals? - No, the three are one. That which ever is one, that which ever was is one, that which is ever being and becoming is also one; and this is space."33

Since everything in the manifested universe is considered to be temporary, Theosophist accept the Hindu concept of Maya. This concept recognizes that for conscious beings within the manifested universe a reality does exist, but that this reality is never permanent and therefore at the higher level of comprehension must be seen as illusion.34 So far we see that Theosophy maintains that: 1) The Universe simply exists at some Unconscious level of Consciousness; 2) The Unconsciousness becomes subdivided into Consciousness and Manifestation; 3) What is manifested represents the outbreathing of the Universal Mind, and that there are periods of time when there are no manifestations; and 4) What is manifested is no more than illusion, an illusion produced by the gods if you will.

D. Hierarchies of Cosmogony

According to "The Secret Doctrine," the entire cosmos is guided, controlled, and animated by almost endless series of
Hierarchies of sentient Beings, each having a mission to perform, and who—whether we give them one name or another, whether we call them Chyans Chohans or Angels—are Messengers, in the sense only that they are the agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws. These hierarchies, according to Theosophy, consist of spiritual beings, who either were men during some former cycle or will become men in a future cycle (Kanyantara). Those who have transcended the human material plane are said to be the higher beings or Angels or Archangels, while the spirits who have yet to become men are known as the lower Elementals. They are equally bound up with and the victims of Karmic Law and therefore man can neither propitiate nor command the Devas. In fact Theosophy explains that these beings have no individuality or are devoid of the feeling of personality in the human sense.

Another cornerstone of the Theosophic edifice is the law of evolution within the universe. Blavatsky states that "The whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a higher life." That is to say everything within the universe is endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. In occult philosophy, all matter is alive and in some manner reflects "Divine Consciousness." Therefore everything within the universe, whether material or spiritual is evolving to a higher state. Occultists maintain that this law is observable in everything and includes much more than the relatively simple Darwinian theory of animal and human evolution.

The whole Cosmos is electrified with an energy known as
"Fohat" within Theosophical philosophy. Fohat, which is personified as He, is the occult power which, "under the will of the Creative Logos, unites and brings together all forms, giving them the first impulse, which in time becomes law." It is said that each world has its Fohat and that millions and billions of worlds are produced with every Manvantara. To go deep into the background of how Fohat is conceptualized in Theosophy is well beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that these forces are seen as intelligently directed by Divine Consciousness. To the modern scientists, Fohat would be understood as forces in nature such as electricity, magnetism, light or heat.

One of the most important numbers within occult philosophy is seven. In fact, it is maintained that everything within the metaphysical as well as the physical universe is septenary, as an example, the planets are said to be accompanied by six other globes, all of which are invisible to the normal eye. Moreover, the evolution of life proceeds on these seven globes, from the first to the seventh, in seven Rounds or seven cycles. The process by which these globes are formed is called the rebirth of Planetary Chains (or Rings) by occultists. When these globes reach the seventh Round of their existence, they begin to die out. During the first three rounds the globes are said to consolidate with the hardening taking place only in the fourth. During the last three Rounds the globes gradually return to their first ethereal form, or from the material point of view die out. The planet Earth is said to be in its fourth Round. Our Earth
is seen as the visible representative of its invisible superior fellow globes, its "Lords" or "Principles." Though our Earth has reached the fourth Round of its existence, there seems little reason for alarm as each Round may last for hundreds of millions of years. Every Life-Cycle is further sub-divided into seven Root Races, which like the heavenly spheres evolve from ethereal substance to denser matter and then are eventually resolved back into the spiritual.

Therefore, we recognize one of occultism's most basic laws of nature. All manifestation of matter, in what ever form, in the universe is sevenfold. The process goes something like this: From the ethereal, the Divine Idea in Consciousness is expressed through agents (Hierarchy) which materialize the Idea, at first in an ethereal way which over time thickens to grosser matter and later thins out again and disappears, or returns to the Conscious level. In this sense all matter is alive as Pohat supplies the divine spark which compels all matter to obey Universal Law.

In Theosophy, man is stated to be the microcosm of the universe. That is to say that it is believed that there exists an interaction between what man does on the physical plane with that of the Cosmic plane. As man is said to consist of seven bodies just as the planets do, every act performed or state of mind achieved is registered at some other levels. It is taught that all which is manifested in the universe is no more than an expression, in whatever form it may be, of the Divine Mind. What is
expressed at the various material levels is subject to the law of evolution and therefore is ever changing. The Universe, therefore goes through several cycles of change, Kārvantra after Kārvantra, and is extensive as living wind itself. Man is but a part of this total scheme of divine evolution, but nevertheless is compelled to the same law of evolution.

The Cosmos should be seen as Divine Wind at its Conscious level ever manifesting itself on the various planes of the material world. The process by which this manifestation takes place is a complicated and metaphysical one and occurs within the realm of noumenon. In Theosophy, the allegory of divine personification in the form of Hierarchies is employed in order to comprehend the process of devolution from the mental to the material planes of existence. Once the Divine has been objectified into materiality the law of evolution affects everything from the smallest particle within the atom to the greatest celestial bodies. The law compels, in an inverse fashion, everything objectified to dematerialize, as it were, or to return to its subjective state. The number seven is the key to this evolutionary chain.

It is a general axiom within occult philosophy that there can be no manifestation of Consciousness except through the vehicle of matter. To define how Divine Thought objectifies itself into matter is nearly an impossible task for the trained metaphysician. It seems that during the period of Universal
Pralaya, Cosmic Ideation doesn't exist. Further, the differenti- 
tated states of Cosmic Substance are resolved back again into 
the primary state of abstract potential objectivity. Madame 
Blavatsky explains that: "Manvantaric impulse commences with the 
re-awakening of Cosmic Ideation, the Universal mind, concurrently 
with, and parallel to, the primary emergence of Cosmic Substance, 
the latter being the manvantaric vehicle of the former -- from 
its undifferentiated pralayic state. Then, Absolute Wisdom 
mirrors itself in its ideation; which, by a transcendental process, 
superior to and incomprehensible by human Consciousness, results 
in Cosmic Energy, Fohat. Thrilling through the bosom of inert 
Substance, Fohat impels it to activity, and guides its primary 
differentiations on all the seven planes of Cosmic Consciousness. So 
Fohat is the bridge, then, by which the ideas existing in the 
Divine Thought are impressed on Cosmic Substance. In a sense 
it is the intelligent medium or guiding power of all manifes-
tation and is transmitted by agents called Dhyen Chohens in the 
visible world. The Secret Doctrine teaches the progressive deve-
lopment of everything, worlds as well as atoms; and this stupendous 
development has neither conceivable beginning nor imaginable end.

B. Occultism in Science

So far we have seen that Theosophy concerns itself with 
three broad areas of knowledge -- religion, philosophy and 
science. We have seen that its eclectic approach towards the 
ancient and modern religions resulted in new philosophy, which
representing none of them in its entirety borrowed here and there various tenets of interest to Blavatsky. If it were possible to trace the basic philosophy of Theosophy in so brief a chapter, one would discover that its principles emanated from essentially four systems of thought - Buddhism, Hinduism, Neo-Platonism and Christianity. It has an explanation for the world around us and man's place within it. As mentioned earlier, Theosophy speculates boldly upon subjects little understood even in the late twentieth century. It is not within the perimeter of this chapter to contrast Blavatsky's teachings in light of various discoveries made within modern science over the past hundred years. To say that theories postulated by Occult Science or Metaphysical science, in toto, are of no value to Modern Science would be wide of the mark. On the other hand, it seems quite apparent that no pure occultist has demonstrated enough evidence or logic to supersede the so-called modern scientific approach to the "nature of things". Undoubtedly, the modern scientist works within a philosophical framework as does the philosopher or the historian. This framework shifts from period to period as new evidence is brought forth. The scientist of today would certainly accept as plausible theories that would have been out of the question in the late nineteenth century, especially in the realms of psychic phenomena and the nature of Matter. In this sense one can without too much difficulty sympathise with Blavatsky, when she complained of the narrowness
of several of the great scientists of the nineteenth century, in their refusal to even entertain any concepts outside the philosophical framework in which they operated.

Blavatsky was fond of pointing out that the ideas embodied within "The Secret Doctrine" were beyond the understanding of most of the "educated" of the late nineteenth century. In her view, the atmosphere was too polluted with material values to allow for a fair hearing. She seems, in fact, to have dwelled upon the uniqueness of her intellectually controversial position. She quotes from H.J. Buckle's "History of Civilisation" to support her attitude. "Every science, every creed has had its martyrs... a few generations pass away, and then there comes a period when these very truths are looked upon as commonplace facts" etc. She also comforts herself by stating that "People have laughed at everything unusual, and have scouted every unpopular idea at first, and then ended by accepting it." In fact there are endless examples which could be cited to demonstrate that she indeed had the martyr's complex. Of course, one cannot escape the alternate possibility that the ideas embodied within "The Secret Doctrine" may be completely unacceptable, as has been demonstrated by more than one critic of Theosophy.

Blavatsky was clearly frustrated with the intellectual climate in the West, when she commented, "Between the two conflicting Titans -- Science and Theology -- is a bewildered public, fast losing all belief in man's personal immortality, in a deity of any kind, and rapidly descending to the level of a mere animal
existence. Such is the picture of the hour." It is true to say that influences of Rationalism and Materialism prevalent in the late nineteenth century left little room for the intellectual's spiritual yearnings. As Christian dogma yielded point by point before scientific discoveries, an atmosphere of spiritual bankruptcy, for those outside orthodox religion, prevailed. As indicated earlier, Blavatsky increasingly looked to the East for a remedy. She says in "Isis Unveiled" that "When years ago, we first travelled over the East, exploring the peninsula of its deserted sanctuaries, two saddening and ever recurring questions oppressed our thoughts: Where, Who, what is God."  

If Christianity had been so easily discredited by the rationalist spirit and the onslaught of scientific investigations then it must have possessed only a limited degree of "Truth". Therefore Blavatsky looked for the source from which religious values had sprung. She discovered that anterior to Christianity there existed religious speculations, however concealed within symbolism, that anticipated modern science. Blavatsky says that "The discoveries of modern science do not disagree with the oldest traditions which claim an incredible antiquity for our race."  

First of all, let us consider in exactly what way Occult science differs from what is generally called modern science. Occult science teaches that there is a metaphysical basis for every material phenomenon. There is a belief in "conscious powers
and Spiritual entities; in semi-intelligent, and highly intellectual Forces on other Planes; and in Beings that dwell around us in spheres imperceptible, whether through telescope or microscope." 58 Needless to say this basic belief is a strong departure from the premises under which modern scientists work.

Blavatsky tells us that Occult science is by far the more permanent type of science as its principles hold true in every situation, unlike the conflicting hypotheses of modern scientists, which alter basic conceptions with every small gain in acceptance. More important than this, however, is the claim that Occult science was based upon changeless tradition, handed down by Beings who were wiser than man. Occult science, as Blavatsky sees it, claims for itself divine revelations, when it opposes "Beings, who were wiser than man" against modern scientists, who after all, are merely men. For example, Blavatsky tells us that the Forces are not what modern learning would have them—"a Force such as magnetism is not simply a mode of motion; the nature of Matter is metaphysical; or that modern chemistry understands little concerning the elements. These and infinitely more such attitudes abound in Theosophy. Sometimes the entire modern scientific community would be indicted as in the case when she claims: "The Hindu initiated yogi knows really ten times more than the greatest European physicist of the ultimate nature and constitution of light, both solar and lunar." 59 Blavatsky complained that science had no speculations to offer upon Fire per se, whereas occultism had much to say. Fire is categorized within the "Puranas"; "PANCA" is
Electric Fire or "MUKHITA" which is fire produced by friction and "SHUCHI" which is Solar Fire are all said to be the sons of "ASHIMANIKH", the "AGNI" (Fire), eldest son of DHARMA and of SWAHA." 60  But, of course, to the critical non-theosophic mind this tells modern science nothing new about the nature of Fire itself. To the Occultist, the Sun is not a globe in combustion. In fact, they maintain that what is perceived by scientists as the Sun is merely a glowing sphere reflecting the true Sun, which is hidden behind the visible Sun. Further, Blavatsky states that "Modern Science is ancient thought distorted, and no more." 61 To add credence to this statement she says that "KABALA," Xenippus, Democritus, Epicurus, Leocrates, etc. are now reflected, as in a clear mirror, in the supporters of the Atomic Theory of our modern days, beginning with Leibnitz's, and ending with Vortical Atoms of Sir W. Thomson. 62 However, it should be noted that Blavatsky failed to tell us in what respect those ancient theories were relevant to modern scientific understanding of the atom.

The "Holism" of Theosophic speculation is presented most clearly when Blavatsky says that "From Gods to men, from worlds to atoms, from a star to a rush-light, from the Sun to the vital heat of the nearest organic being—the world of Form and Existence is an immense chain, the links of which are all connected." 63 John Beattie Crosier, in his "History of Intellectual Development" sharply analyses the Theosophical theory of the Planetary Chain. He refers to the so-called harmonies implicit within the Chain
theory as "paper harmonies," which have no meaningful implication other than that they appear to be harmonious on paper, as there is no relation established between the Planes, Forces and Principles outlined. Further he says, "But the Mahatmas, instead of binding these abstract principles into a system of true knowledge by living bonds of relation, have merely arranged them into pretty and harmonious wreaths, rings, and festoons of the Planetary Chain, as so many cut flowers mechanically tied together by invisible threads. And the consequence is, that like butchers who have dealt all their lives with the organs of the animal body, but who from want of knowledge of the physiological relations of these organs leave off with as little knowledge of the body as when they begin..." ... And now we can understand how it is that Theosophy with all its pretensions has done nothing for the progress or civilization of the world." His attitude is that since Theosophists delude themselves with false knowledge, they are incapable of adding anything to the scientific world of knowledge.

F. Magic

Theosophists believe that magic comes within the realm of science. In the larger sense Occult Science is magic applied to the world of phenomena. It is maintained by Theosophists that if one is able to comprehend the laws of the universe he may utilize this knowledge by applying these laws to phenomena on the material plane. Therefore we have great
magicians down through the ages demonstrating supposedly "miraculous feats" by simply manipulating the laws that be. All of the great Initiates and Teachers discussed previously may be called Magicians, as they were able to demonstrate "miracles" of one sort or other. There are actually two sides to this question of Magic. Magic itself seems to imply no value in relation to universal law. It is only when Magic is utilised for one purpose as opposed to another that a value system is placed upon it. Hence, Theosophists refer to "White" and "Black" magic. Blavatsky tells us in "The Secret Doctrine" that "There have been in all ages use and abuse of Magic, as there are use and abuse of mesmerism or hypnotism in our own." She attributed this to the human condition, wherein personal selfishness develops and urges man to abuse his knowledge. As mentioned earlier, this is one of the reasons why the need for guarding the Mysteries became essential to man's well-being. It thus becomes apparent that a knowledge of the "divine principles" that operate within the universe may be utilized for evil purposes. It follows, therefore, that there are both "good" and "bad" Initiates. It is said that "Magic is a dual power; nothing is easier than to turn it into Sorcery; and evil thought suffices for it. The science of good and evil is fraught with dangers and perils." In this sense there exists two approaches to Magic: One, is the Right Hand Adepts, who are interested in the well-being of mankind, and two, the Left Hand Enemies of the Adepts, who use their understanding of Magic to harm mankind.
The ancient religious texts are said to be loaded with the principles of magic. With this realization in mind, it is perplexing to find Blavatsky recommending books upon the subject to interested students of magic. "For the study of theoretical Occultism there are, no doubt, a number of works that may be read with profit, besides such books as the Finer Forces of Nature etc., the Zohar, Sepher Yetzirah, The Book of Enoch, Franc's La Kabbale, and many Hermetic treatises. These are scarce in European languages, but works in Latin by medieval philosophers, generally known as Alchemists and Rosicrucians, are plentiful." 70

In fact, she becomes more specific with her recommendations when she says that the mystic characters, alphabets and numerals found in divisions and sub-divisions of the Great Kabalah, are, perhaps, the most dangerous portions in it. Further, we are told that the Eastern books such as the Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads are more dangerous than the Bible because the Eastern books are worked on the septenary principle. Theosophists do not believe in the Christian concept of the Devil. They interpret the Devil to be the anthropomorphised symbol of evil forces that the Church adopted to discourage its followers from indulging in magic generally. This is said to be one of the reasons why in Western culture the whole idea of Magic is enshrouded in ignorance. Theosophy attempts to place Magic on a par with science.

G. The Mahatmas

Perhaps the most controversial idea held by Theosophy
in general is their belief in the existence of Mahatmas, Masters or adepts, who are stated to live somewhere in highest ranges of Himalayan mountains in Tibet. Remembering that the highest ranges of those magnificent mountains were totally unapproachable in the late nineteenth century, the concept remained largely unrefutable. Of course, even today, with Tibet being incorporated within China, the concept of the Mahatmas’ homeland remains equally valid for the Theosophist. If there is anything within Theosophy that takes it out of the philosophical realm and places it with traditional religions it is this belief that super human beings exist, who have the welfare of the human races in mind, and from time to time contact certain members of our race in order to give direction. Theosophy’s assertion of the existence of Mahatmas has landed that Society in serious trouble more than once. Olcott and Blavatsky disagreed as to the place of the Masters within the Society.

If there exist anything within Theosophy that suggests an element of supernaturalism, it is the belief that those exalted beings of the “Snowy Mountains” are guardians over the Theosophical Society and indirectly manage its development. This, of course, was done through a few of the Society’s most prominent members such as Blavatsky, Olcott and Annie Besant. From a book known as “AVATARS OF THE AMRA Blavatsky quotes an interesting passage “Who is in possession of the true knowledge?” is asked. “The great Teachers of the Snowy Mountains,” is the response. It is
claimed that Hindus have believed in these beings for centuries and that the Yehatees live in Ashrams scattered all over the Trans- or the Cis-Himalayan slopes.  

Madame Blavatsky has said that the “Masters are not Indian yogis. They are simply adepts in Esoteric Science and Osmolism: Adepts whose Headquarters are in a certain part of Tibet and whose Members are scattered everywhere through the world.”  

It seems that the re-awakening of India was the ideal of the Masters. The Theosophical Society was said to be under the guidance of the Masters and it was their desire to see India regenerated. This concept should not be ignored in the history of the Theosophical Movement as it played a large role in the growth and development of the Society in India. The concept of the Masters not only attracted many Indians into the movement because of its spiritual ramifications, but also gave to Theosophists a sense of historical necessity in that the work of the Society was being guided by beings wiser than man.  

A Master is a former human being who had reached a very high state of spirituality and moral purity, during his earthly life, and then passes on to a spiritually lofty plane of existence. Blavatsky tells us that “When an Adept reaches during his lifetime that state of holiness and purity that makes him equal to the Angels, then at his death his apparitional or astral body becomes as solid and tangible as was the late body, and is transformed into the real man.” Such a lofty being as the