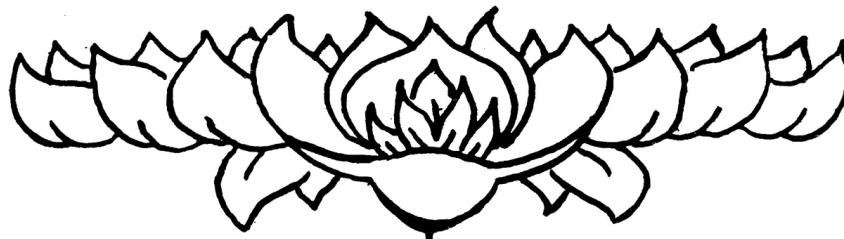


£1.50

THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY

An independent quarterly journal founded in 1985 London England



January 1986

CONTENTS

Vol. 1 No. 5

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Editorial: Esoteric Sections and the Historian | 90 |
| The Modern Occult Revival in Vienna | N. Goodrick-Clarke 97 |
| S.P.R. Archives: Massey's Resignation and the S.P.R. | Leslie Price 112 |
| Early Steps into Shakespeare or Bacon | Jean Overton Fuller 115 |
| Correspondence | Dr. J.H. Dubbink 120 |
| Theosophical History Centre | 124 |



ESOTERIC SECTIONS AND THE HISTORIAN

An Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society was announced by Madame Blavatsky in 1888, though attempts at such a section had been made before. Almost all Theosophists believe that this was one of H. P. B.'s personal projects, and that she was carrying through a suggestion of the Brothers. But notwithstanding the publication of some new material in H. P. B. C. W. Vol. XII, the origins of the E. S. remain obscure, and the whole subject deserves a new, thorough, and impartial examination. The suggestion may in fact have come from Mr. Judge, who then persuaded both H. P. B. and the Brothers to support it. Writing of the E. S., Mr. G. R. S. Mead, who had been H.P.B.'s private secretary, claimed;

“This had been started by Mme. Blavatsky in about 1890. She, however, had not done this willingly, but had been over-persuaded by some of her most enthusiastic and credulous followers. She herself really disliked the idea.” (The Quest April 1926 p. 293)

Mead was writing long afterwards, when his distaste for H. P. B.'s heirs had become great, so his claim is of limited value. Moreover, there is a celebrated mahatmic letter, printed as letter 19 (p. 44–8) of “Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom” (First series) in which K. H. warns Col. Olcott to leave occult matters to H. P. B. Mr. Jinarajadasa elsewhere explains;

“Here it can be frankly stated, with no sense of depreciation of the services of the Society's first great President, that Col. Olcott viewed with displeasure the creation in the Society of an imperium in imperio, a kind of Secret Society whose fiat might dominate the outer Society to its detriment. There arose then a most difficult situation. H. P. B. held that the salvation of the Society lay in the resuscitation of its occult nucleus. But the President of the Society was hostile to such a situation, as he was afraid that such a secret nucleus might try in Jesuitical ways to control the Society.” (From his introduction to H. P. Blavatsky “The Original Programme of The Theosophical Society” (T. P. H. 1931 Reprinted 1966) p. XI.)

The mahatmic letter is held to have significantly influenced Col. Olcott to support the establishment of the E. S. but it does not explicitly mention the E. S. and I am not sure if it did have such influence. (A further important question is the relation between the E. S. and the Golden Dawn which emerged at the same time, and on this we hope to have some new data at our July conference!)

Madame Blavatsky died in 1891. At this point, theological differences between Theosophists emerge with full force, since some would claim that when the teacher died the school automatically ceased to exist. The historian however notes that at least an external organisation did continue, and that Mrs. Besant and Mr. Judge administered it in increasing discord, until there was fragmentation. Under various names, esoteric sections persisted under the leadership of Mr. Judge, Mrs. Tingley, Dr. Steiner, Mrs. Bailey and others. But the largest was that led by Mrs. Besant and Mr. Leadbeater—so far as one can judge, since these bodies do not publish member-

ship figures. The various groups and leaders, did not give mutual recognition to each other, and sometimes repudiated each other's teaching.

The historian is bound to pay attention to such bodies as the E. S. because of their claimed substantial influence on events. Mr. Jinarajadasa, for example, in his presidential address printed in "The Theosophist" January 1953 said;

"Before the beginning of the third seven-year cycle in 1889, a most important event took place, in 1888. This was the creation by H. P. B. of "The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society", a year later changed to "The Eastern School of Theosophy", so that the Theosophical Society might not in any way be involved in the occult organization founded by her. It is this body, known today as "The Esoteric School", that has been most vital in the development of the Society, because the E. S. has been like the steel framework of the Society." (p. 220)

Mr. Jinarajadasa associates a conversation between K. H. and H. P. B. with the decision to found the E.S.

[92]

(apparently letter 47 in "Letters" cited above)

"It was then that H.P.B. determined on creating the steel framework of the Society.

"It is true that to accept the Theosophical Philosophy does not involve a belief in the existence of the Masters, or in "The Path". Nevertheless, since H. P. B. founded the Esoteric School in 1888, the staunchest workers for the Society, those who have made the greatest sacrifices for the Society's sake, have been members of this School. Certainly there are some who do not care for esotericism in any form, and are fully devoted to the study of Theosophy; but on the other hand, the growth of the Society has had definitely as one factor not merely the dissemination of Theosophical ideals, but the personal devoted effort and dedication to Lodges, in maintaining their strength, which has been due to the members of the Esoteric School in various parts of the world. This has been my experience during the last forty-eight years." (p. 220)

A similar claim was made by Mr. Geoffrey Hodson in an article "The Theosophical Society and the Esoteric Section" ("Theosophy in New Zealand" July-Sept. 1979)

"The majority of the most devoted, reliable and effective workers at Headquarters at Adyar, in Section Headquarters, in Lodges and in their family and business lives, are members of the E. S. and for the most part will so remain until the end of their lives."

Mr. Hodson also suggests that devoted members of the E. S. may attract the attention of the Masters, though without denying that other aspirants may make the necessary inner contacts who are not E. S. or even T. S. members. He compares the E. S. to an ashram in the spiritual help it gives.

"Almost from the beginning, the E. S. has been described as, the "heart" of the T. S. and if the above descriptions are accepted it does indeed become for many of its members the very

“heart” of their lives in the truest sense. To divide these two—the T.S. and the E. S.—would, I submit inevitably remove a great deal—if admittedly not all—of the mystical and spiritual “heart” from the Theosophical Movement in the world of today.” (p. 59 ff.)

On the negative side, we find an inverse, but equally important role ascribed to the E. S. In the

[93]

eyes of some old students of H. P. B. it became a political vehicle used to introduce Neo-Theosophy, a spurious teaching quite different from her own “Practical Occultism” and channelled especially through Mr. Leadbeater, not an E. S. member so long as H. P. B. lived, who was briefly head of the E. S. before his death in 1934 and whose teachings had for many years been circulated to E. S. members. For such critics the claim of the later E. S. to be the continuation of the Blavatsky E. S. would be like that of the Roman See to have the teaching and authority of the early Christian church. The quotation we made earlier from Mr. Mead about H. P. B. and the E. S., for example, continues;

“She herself really disliked the idea. And in this her intuition had been right; for this Section speedily developed into a great danger and became the inner rot to the whole movement, seeing that it was based on blind obedience to (so-called) ‘esoteric orders’. In the hands of Annie Besant, later on, this “Esoteric” cabal became a camouflaged political caucus, ‘pulling’ every crisis in the Society from within to suit A.B.’s own views and purposes.” (p. 293)

The vehemence of these sentiments—and they could be paralleled with others from persons who stayed within the T. S.—set in contrast to the enthusiasm from the defenders of the E. S., but added in both cases to the immense role ascribed to the E. S. by defenders and critics alike, makes the task of the historian difficult. There are strong feelings on both sides. The historian is interested in charting what happened. He cannot write a history of Theosophy as if the E. S. was not there—that would be fantasy history. It is significant that in her 1938 history, Mrs. Ransom did mention E. S. developments, however briefly—though the E. S. disappears from the index of “The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Book” which she published in 1950. This brings us to a delicate point. Esoteric bodies do not like their affairs to be discussed, either by historians or anyone else. This is particularly the case when the earlier history of the esoteric school has been racked by controversy, and it is still regarded with suspicion and even hostility by

[94]

some Theosophists in the wider world. So the discussion of the history of the E. S. is not encouraged in the T. S., either in meetings or in print. Apart from a valuable and long-running discussion in “The Canadian Theosophist” in the mid-1960s, to which the then Outer Head of the E.S. contributed, there are only the incidental and infrequent references in most T. S. journals. One may naturally sympathise with this policy. Any kind of training can be disrupted by controversy, and so can any wider Society. In no time such a discussion may get on to such questions as whether Mr. Leadbeater was a very great occultist or apostate; whether Mr. Judge was fairly treated or numerous other undead issues smouldering in Theosophical breasts. Far better to focus on things that unite.

Other organisations have come up with various compromises to accommodate the attempts of historians to study the sensitive past. Most British public records are made available in the Public Record Office after 30 years. Lambeth Palace Library, which holds the papers of the Archbishop of Canterbury, has a 40-year rule. Even the Jesuits, who have played a prominent role in the history of Theosophy as the alleged inspirers of those who annoyed the leaders of the time, have made changes. J. C. H. Aveling, in his book "The Jesuits" (London, Blond & Briggs, 1981) notes;

"Of recent years the Society has, to some degree, significantly modified its traditional rules of rigid secrecy about its internal affairs. The Jesuit Constitutions, for centuries printed (like the Society's other book of rules) privately and for limited circulation among members, are now for sale to the public. Today the shelving of all major public libraries contains the fifty large volumes of the continuing series of the Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu. This is a vast compendium of published private records of the early, formative days of the society. An increasing number of Jesuit archives in Rome and elsewhere have recently been opened to outsiders: hitherto they were shut even to the generality of Jesuits.

This new attitude of openness, and the effects of the training

[95]

of some Jesuit historians in the spirit and techniques of modern research, has started to produce marked changes in Jesuit historical writing. In the past, with few exceptions, their historians, were untrained and had very little access to archives. The superiors had what then seemed to be excellent reasons for a distinct distrust of history. The calls on their manpower were so great that historical writing came very low on the official list of priorities. Archives were primitive, dirty, uncatalogued storerooms. Their contents were frequently scattered or lost when persecution of the Society led to confiscation of its houses and expulsion of the inmates. Moreover the old Society had long been accustomed to, even trained to a posture of defensiveness. Ordinary prudence seemed to dictate locking up archives and using Jesuit historians largely as defenders of the good name of the Society from calumnies. Hence Jesuit historians automatically worked within the narrow bounds of officially-approved traditions. Today they are emerging from the old catacomb. It is not surprising that some still shrink from the unaccustomed glare of the light of day, and others are inebriated by it and launch out into radical reassessments of Jesuit history, treating tradition as so much legend.

At present the Esoteric School for Adyar T. S. members is a good deal more secret than the Jesuits in its history. In fact, it has preserved secrecy more effectively than the Golden Dawn in many respects. Sometime members such as Mead and Ernest Wood, ("Is This Theosophy?") were careful even in their critical comments to respect undertakings of secrecy, especially about methods of training. The historian, as I have said, sympathises with this wish to preserve confidentiality, but cannot be expected to avoid discussion of events of decades ago because of their controversial nature. Let us therefore suggest for discussion some things to be desired. (Our remarks apply firstly to the Adyar E.S. but could be extended to other esoteric bodies in the Theosophical world, from California to New York to Dornach.)

1) There should be some public one-volume histories of the E. S. written by members and non-members of the E. S.

[96]

2) There should be a rule of a certain number of years, say 50 years, before which archival material is normally made available.

3) Letters from historians to the E. S. should receive replies, even if the reply is (as it is sometimes bound to be) “No”. Mr. Tillett’s claim (in “The Elder Brother”) that some of his letters were not answered is disquieting.

4) It would be useful if there were a public statement, even if only a few hundred words, of what the E. S. today is: a school for yoga; a school of initiation; under the Inner Headship of H. P. B.’s Mahatmas or just the humble Headship of the senior Theosophist who at present has to bear that heavy responsibility? This will help historians to place the E. S. in context.

Meanwhile, the attitude of this journal is one of neutrality between the critics and defenders of the E. S. as a factor in Theosophy. We do believe however that it is a factor that, because of its importance extending even to the belief sometimes expressed that the E. S. has de facto control of the T. S.—must have a place in historical discussion.

LESLIE PRICE

Subscription

If there is a subscription reminder notice with your copy, your subscription is now due to “Theosophical History”. Many subscribers are taking the opportunity of subscribing also to the pamphlets of the T. H. C. (see back page). Is your Theosophical or esoteric group a subscriber?

[97]

THE MODERN OCCULT REVIVAL IN VIENNA 1880 – 1910

by

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke

The late nineteenth-century revival of interest in the occult at Vienna owed its inspiration to three foreign influences, all fostered and fashioned by specifically Austrian conditions. First was the contemporary craze for spiritualism and psychical research, which was stimulated by the arrival of travelling mediums from the United States and England. Their demonstrations and the ensuing controversy over séance phenomena fuelled scientific and philosophical debate concerning the mind-body problem at a time when materialistic ideas were under challenge. Second was the strong appeal exercised by the ideas of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner over student intellectuals impatient at the shortcomings of high liberalism in Austria during the 1870s. These German thinkers offered a radical critique of modernity, rationalism and self-seeking material-

ism, invoking myths and religious feeling to redeem the vitality of culture. Their Austrian disciples adopted a pietistic cult in this spirit and were receptive to similar idealist, utopian and occult ideas. The international theosophical movement, the third exotic influence, struck roots amid this milieu of inspired cultural criticism and an illuminated rejection of liberalism, rationalism and atomistic individualism. This paper presents a survey of the modern occult revival in Vienna between 1880 and 1910, with respect to both its sources and development.

The key figure in this modern occult revival was Friedrich Eckstein (1861–1939), the son of a Jewish paper manufacturer at Perchtoldsdorf. He read natural sciences at Vienna University and subsequently pursued a career as an industrial chemist and businessman, yet all the while cultivated an extraordinary range of

[98]

interests in the arts, history, literature, religion and philosophy. The unofficial private secretary of Anton Bruckner in the 1880s and a close associate of such personalities as Hermann Bahr, Siegfried Lipiner, Gustav Mahler and Viktor Adler, Eckstein enjoyed the reputation of a brilliant polymath among his own generation.⁽¹⁾ His intellectual development is our central concern, for he successively avowed a pietistic Wagner cult, attended spiritualist séances and engaged in psychological research, and ultimately introduced theosophy to the Habsburg capital, becoming President of the Vienna Theosophical Society. To understand the origin of Eckstein's career in the modern occult revival, it is necessary to focus on the popularity of Nietzschean and Wagnerian ideas among students at Vienna.

In the late 1870s Eckstein came into contact with the Pernerstorfer circle, a group of young intellectuals who had clubbed together for the purpose of political and philosophical discussion a decade earlier. As early as 1867 Engelbert Pernerstorfer, Viktor Adler, Heinrich Friedjung and Max Gruber had, as pupils of the Schottengymnasium, formed the Telyn Society to discuss German folk nationalism, the social question and failures of the contemporary liberal government in Austria. During their university studies these young men played a key intellectual role in the Leseverein der deutschen Studenten Wiens (1871–1878), a political society pre-occupied with similar issues and the development of German nationalist consciousness among the students. The subsequent crises that beset the liberal government of the 1870s—the Franco-Prussian War, German unification under Prussia, the economic collapse of 1873 and the Offenheim scandal—all served to deepen the disillusionment of the Pernerstorfer circle with the self-seeking individualism and materialism of laissez faire high liberalism in Austria.⁽²⁾

Between 1875 and 1878 the Pernerstorfer circle began to explore and expound the theories of Nietzsche and Wagner as an antidote to the cultural vicissitudes of liberalism. The early Nietzsche, represented by

[99]

Die Geburt der Tragödie (1872) with its emphasis on Dionysian inspiration and the power of music in the revitalisation of culture, provided a coherent philosophical ideal opposed to the liberal faith in progress and scientific rationalism. With the emergence of Siegfried Lipiner as the

circle's dominant intellectual force, Wagner was also widely accepted as the leader of the crusade for German cultural rebirth. From the mid-1870s until his death in 1883, Wagner had become increasingly involved in a new religious pietism, which was paralleled by an ambition to establish himself as the prophet of a new religion combining Schopenhauerian philosophy, musical theory and Christian mysticism. His programme called upon vegetarian associations, humane societies, temperance leagues, and the socialists to unite against the corrupt egoism of modern society. Although some members of the Pernerstorfer circle were eventually to follow Nietzsche in rejecting this development, the initial response to the new religious sect was highly favourable and the circle began to display the trappings of a religious cult. Richard von Kralik, Gustav Mahler, Hugo Wolf and Friedrich Eckstein joined the circle c. 1878 against this Wagnerian background.

After the government's dissolution of the Leseverein in December 1878, the Pernerstorfer circle patronised a vegetarian restaurant on the corner of the Wallnerstrasse and Fahnengasse. Here the young intellectuals met in a gas-lit cellar to talk of Pythagoras, the Essenes, the therapeutics, the Neo-Platonists, and the evils of flesh-eating. Eckstein's autobiographical memoirs vividly record this bohemian scene: "It was mostly young people who met there and took part in the collective exchange of views: students, teachers, artists, and followers of the most diverse professions. Whilst I myself, like several friends, went summer and winter almost completely clad in linen, according to the theories of Pythagoras, others appeared clothed in hairy garments of natural colouring; and if you add to this that most of us had shoulder-length hair and full

[100]

beards, our lunch table might have reminded the unself-conscious spectator not a little of Leonardo's Last Supper."⁽³⁾ To this circle belonged Hermann Bahr, Siegfried Lipiner, Gustav Mahler, Hugo Wolf, Viktor Adler and Friedrich Eckstein. The new cult of Wagner remained their paramount concern. Adler had visited Bayreuth as early as 1876 and an increasingly religious aura surrounded the accounts of members' later visits. A number of the circle attended the première of Parsifal at the Bayreuth festival in 1882. Eckstein demonstrated his Wagnerian piety by travelling the entire distance from Vienna on foot.⁽⁴⁾

In the late summer of 1880 Eckstein met Dr. Oskar Simony (1852–1915), a Dozent at Vienna University and Professor of Mathematics and Physics at the Hochschule für Bodenkultur. Besides being a keen botanist and entomologist, Simony was a pure mathematician with a special interest in number theory and topology. He was concerned with the putative existence of higher mathematical dimensions and their possible relation to spiritualistic phenomena. He studied the experiments of Friedrich Zöllner, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Leipzig, who had interpreted the feats of the-American medium, Henry Slade, in terms of spirits operating in a fourth dimension in space. Slade travelled on to Vienna in late 1878 and had seven séances with Lazar Hellenbach (1827–1887), a speculative metaphysician and the leading Austrian spiritualist. Simony was fascinated by the subject and persuaded Hellenbach to bring Slade to Vienna once again for investigations. Slade was to have stayed at Eckstein's house, but the project was abandoned when the medium suspiciously insisted on bringing an assistant.⁽⁵⁾ Hellenbach continued to hold seances with travelling mediums, though with mixed results. Slade was said to have bro-

ken control but made a table disappear, and Harry Bastian was unmasked as a fraud by Archduke Johann of Habsburg: the resulting furore was aired in a series of partisan brochures.⁽⁶⁾

Between 1880 and 1884 spiritualism enjoyed consid-

[101]

erable popularity at Vienna. Hellenbach catered for the highest social circles and it is also recorded that Lipiner and other members of the Pernerstorfer circle frequented spiritualist seances in the early 1880s.⁽⁷⁾ Eckstein and Simony had become close friends and jointly pursued their studies in spiritualism and psychical research, consuming the works of Sir William Crookes, Theodor Fechner and Sir Alfred Russel Wallace. Around 1884 they visited the distinguished British scientist, Lord Rayleigh, then resident at Vienna. Rayleigh told them that he had witnessed Indian ascetics moving objects at a distance, an achievement he regarded as the work of spirits, which he moreover claimed to have seen himself.⁽⁸⁾ Simony continued to attend seances, all the time hoping for a confirmation of the actuality of the supernatural phenomena. In due course he advanced a theory that mediums possessed abnormal muscular development and that the electrical energy in their peculiar muscular contractions could produce the phenomena attributed to the spirits.⁽⁹⁾

This involvement with spiritualism led Eckstein to theosophy, then in the earliest stages of its European dissemination. Begun in 1875 at New York by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Olcott for the purposes of studying spirit and other occult phenomena, theosophy subsequently developed into a new religious movement based on the ancient wisdom of Egypt, India and esoteric schools through the ages. Between 1879 and 1885 Blavatsky lived chiefly at Bombay and at Adyar near Madras, where the basis of an international sect was laid among Indians, expatriate English and other foreign visitors. Alfred Percy Sinnett, an English newspaper editor, generated widespread interest in theosophy with the publication of The Occult World (1881), which contained numerous accounts of Blavatsky's 'miracles' and contacts with the mahatmas, and his Esoteric Buddhism (1883), which summarised the cosmological and religious ideas of theosophy for European readers. After his return from India in 1883,

[102]

Sinnett became President of the London Lodge in the T.S. in January 1885. Blavatsky and Olcott had visited Europe in summer 1884 to drum up support and a German branch of the Theosophical Society was briefly established under the presidency of Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden in July 1884. Blavatsky finally returned to Europe in April 1885, together with Franz Hartmann, who was to play a prominent role in later German theosophy, and stayed in Naples (April–August 1885), Würzburg (August 1885–May 1886) and Ostend (July 1886–May 1887). She then came to London where she acted as a focus of theosophical activity until her death in 1891.⁽¹⁰⁾

Franz Hartmann had encountered spiritualism while working in the United States during the 1870s and then joined the theosophists at Madras between 1883 and 1885. Returning to Europe after an eighteen-year absence, Hartmann travelled on from Naples via his old home town Kempten to Vienna.⁽¹¹⁾ Here he encountered Friedrich Eckstein, who was greatly impressed by the expatriate's close association with the theosophists and invited him to lodge with him until

his plans were settled. Hartmann offered Eckstein an introduction to Blavatsky, who was acting as a magnet to spiritual seekers on her slow tour across the continent. In late 1886 Eckstein visited Blavatsky at Ostend. Their meeting was cordial and their discussions enthusiastic, for Eckstein departed with sheaves of theosophical literature, an authorisation to found a Vienna branch of the Theosophical Society and a personal gift of a special Rosicrucian pendant. Back at Vienna, Eckstein and Simony graduated from spiritualism to theosophy, devouring the works of Sinnett, Blavatsky's Isis Unveiled (1877) and Mabel Collins's Light on the Path (1885).⁽¹²⁾

Eckstein was now the recognised local authority on theosophy, since Hartmann had left to establish an 'alternative' sanatorium for the treatment of respiratory diseases at Hallein near Salzburg. He quickly attracted a circle of theosophical novices and the Vienna lodge of the Theosophical Society was founded in October 1887 with Eckstein as President, Dr Graevell as Secretary and Franz Kanitzer as Treasurer. The group

[103]

fused theosophical precepts with the earlier Wagnerian pietism, with which there were significant overlaps relating to anti-materialism and religious revival. A bye-law of the lodge excluded from membership "all users of flesh food or spirituous liquors". The same notice also described the circle as devoted students of esoteric philosophy, a label justified by the catholic range of Eckstein's occult interests, which included German and Spanish mysticism, Palestrina's masses, the Templars and the Freemasons, Swedenborg, vegetarianism and oriental religions.⁽¹³⁾

Through his close friend and fellow-lodger, Hugo Wolf, the Wagnerian composer, Eckstein was introduced to Dr. Edmund and Marie Lang in November 1887. Their social circle included the brothers Julius and Karl Mayreder, both architects, and the latter's wife Rosa Mayreder, the leading feminist at Vienna. The friends often discussed religious subjects and theosophy, which were close to Marie Lang's heart. In the summer of 1888 the group rented Schloss Bellevue at Grinzing for a summer colony, where art, music and culture might flourish. Marie Lang cooked vegetarian meals; Wolf composed Lieder; the main topic of conversation was theosophy, whereby its elaborate cosmology, the 'miracles' and the mahatma letters accompanied discussions of the social questions from a progressive standpoint. The group was joined by Count Karl zu Leiningen-Billigheim, a young diplomat who had learned his theosophy from Eckstein and subsequently became Secretary of the Vienna branch, and Franz Hartmann, now well-known as the author of several books on theosophy. The Wagner cult still prevailed, for Eckstein and Wolf broke their stay at the Schloss to attend the annual Bayreuth festival.⁽¹⁴⁾

In 1889 Rudolf Steiner frequented the Lang circle. He had studied literature at the Technische Hochschule under Professor Karl Julius Schröer, who encouraged his interest in Goethe's symbolism. It was through Schröer that Steiner met Eckstein. Steiner had read Sinnett's Die esoterische Lehre oder Geheimbuddhismus (1884)

[104]

soon after its German translation and asked Eckstein to explain the secret doctrine. In due course Eckstein introduced Steiner to Rosa Mayreder and the theosophical circle of Edmund and Marie

Lang, whom he perceptively described as ‘homeless souls from Wagnerland’. However, Steiner empathised with the subjective pietism of Marie Lang and remained the life-long friend of Eckstein, who had shown him the occult key to Goethe’s symbolism. Under the influence of the circle, Steiner studied oriental thought, medieval mysticism, Neo-Platonism and the Cabbala. By the time Steiner left Vienna in 1890 to take up his post as editor of Goethe’s scientific works at Weimar, his interest in both theosophy and German idealism was firmly established. In 1902 he became the General Secretary of a new German section of the Theosophical Society, but subsequently broke away to form his own Anthroposophical Society in 1913.⁽¹⁵⁾

Eckstein’s scientific and business interests brought him to London in 1891. He stayed for several months and made the acquaintance of many leading theosophists, including Mrs. Annie Besant, the successor of Blavatsky in London, Herbert Burrows, Edward Maitland, Henry Steel Olcott, Countess Constance Wachtmeister, and Alfred and Patience Sinnett. The First Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Europe was held on 9-10 July 1891 and Eckstein attended as the Austrian delegate. He subsequently accompanied the London theosophists on an Indian-vegetarian picnic held on the estate of Mrs. Milbank near Maidenhead. A number of Indians were present and Mohan Mohini Chatterjee spoke about his recent studies in the Bhagavad Gita. Both Eckstein and Leiningen-Billigheim participated in the Second Annual Convention at London in July 1892. Although no Austrian delegates were present at succeeding Annual Conventions, the names of the Vienna lodge officers were entered in their reports until 1897. Thanks to Eckstein’s enthusiasm, Vienna must be considered the principal centre of German-speaking theosophy in its earliest European years.⁽¹⁶⁾

[105]

This pre-eminent position is demonstrated by the relationship between the Vienna Theosophical Society and the Blue Star Lodge at Prague, founded in 1891 by Baron de Leonhardi, a member of the Austrian parliament. The new theosophical lodge counted among its ten or so members Karel Weinfurter, A. Rimay de Gidofalva and Gustav Meyer (later Meyrink), best known for Der Golem (1915) and other occult novels. (17) The Blue Star Lodge pursued a variety of occult practices, including breathing and concentration exercises, magic, alchemy and tantric yoga. Meyrink actively corresponded with occult groups all over Europe, but retained the highest respect for Eckstein as an adept. The Prague group frequently sought advice from the Vienna theosophists regarding the wisdom, effectiveness or danger of their occult practices. They were generally counselled against magical invocations and Rimay’s description of his success with visualization techniques was loftily dismissed. But Vienna still continued to give occult guidance to Prague. In the mid-1890s the Blue Star Lodge received a telegram from the Vienna theosophists, announcing that they were in contact with a new adept: ‘Come at once, the way is open’.⁽¹⁸⁾

The Vienna group had evidently known the adept for several years. His name was Alois Mailänder (1844–1905) and he was the leader of a pietist group of weavers at Kempten, whom Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden, the German theosophist, had discovered around 1884. Some seven years earlier Mailänder had gone through a religious experience, which transformed him into a Christian visionary. His simple teaching (both he and his weaver colleagues were illiterate) consisted in a primitive variant of Jakob Boehme’s theosophy combined with oracular biblical utter-

ances. The Mailänder circle attracted many German and Austrian theosophists, including Franz Hartmann, the Gebhards, Friedrich Eckstein, Blasius von Schemua and Gustav Meyrink, who all made pilgrimages to Kempten. When Mailänder became ill through overwork, the leading theosophists raised funds so that he and his circle were able to

[106]

retire and buy a farm near Darmstadt.⁽¹⁹⁾

Notwithstanding its initial lead in the 1880s and early 1890s Vienna was ultimately succeeded by Germany as the main focus of German-speaking theosophy. New lodges were founded in 1894 at Berlin and Munich, in 1898 at Hamburg and Hanover, in 1899 at Berlin-Charlottenburg, and in 1902 at Kassel, Düsseldorf, Leipzig and Stuttgart.⁽²⁰⁾ In 1902 Rudolf Steiner was appointed General Secretary of a new German Section of the Theosophical Society, which together with other national sections in France, Italy, Scandinavia and Holland replaced the former European Section. Under Steiner's leadership the Theosophical Society made strong progress in Germany with new publications, periodicals and an expanding membership.⁽²¹⁾ A rival theosophical organisation, the German branch of the International Theosophical Brotherhood, deriving from the Judge schism mainly of American theosophists in April 1895, had been founded at Leipzig in 1896 under Franz Hartmann's auspices and this national society remained distinct from the organisation under Steiner owing allegiance to the London theosophists.⁽²²⁾ These developments did not concern Vienna where theosophical activities appear to have lapsed at the end of the century. After 1897 there was no further mention of the Vienna lodge in the theosophical periodicals published at London.

Theosophy did experience a revival at Vienna, although in a different context from its initiation under Eckstein, Steiner and the Lang circle. After 1900 theosophical and occult ideas entered the völkisch ideology of German nationalism, racism and defensive political reaction. Around 1902 the elderly nationalist Guido von List (1848–1919), whose popular romances had described the ancient Teutons of the Austrian homeland, assimilated theosophical ideas to expound a new racist mysticism. In his 'Ario-Germanic I researches, published between 1908 and 1914, List celebrated the Armanen, ancient priest-kings of the old Aryan religion, as the architects and govern-

[107]

ers of a Germanic golden age. These druidic hierophants had supposedly preached a gnostic religion based on occult notions and racial eugenics, with many borrowings from theosophy, including exalted masters, astrology, cabbalism, Hindu cosmology and eccentric palaeogeographical theories. The List Society (est. March 1908) counted both prominent Vienna politicians and several German theosophists, including Franz Hartmann and Hugo Göring, and the Vienna Theosophical Society among its own supporters.

Close to List was another racist mystic, Jorg Lanz von Liebenfels, (1874–1954) who combined occultism with pre-fascist political ideas in his magazine Ostara (1905–1918), published to defend the interests of the master race against social inferiors and non-German national-

ities. Lanz interpreted the grail as an electrical symbol relating to the supernatural powers of the pureblooded Aryan race. Regarding the Templars' quest for the grail as a poetic metaphor for their supposed eugenic programme intended to breed a new caste of god-men, Lanz founded the Order of New Templars as the vanguard of his pan-Aryan racist movement in 1907. In 1915 he coined the term 'Ariosophy' to denote the twin sources of his doctrine in Social Darwinist racism and theosophy. Both Lizt and Lanz von Liebenfels were associated with the Austrian Pan-German movement of Georg von Schönerer. Their abstruse theories demonstrated how theosophy and occultism were effectively quarried to buttress and legitimate, albeit in an esoteric sense with limited appeal, burgeoning presence of German nationalism in the Habsburg empire after 1905.⁽²³⁾

Whereas the early Viennese theosophical movement (1885–c.1895) was defined by speculative parapsychology, a neo-gnosticism rooted in the Wagner cult and an intellectual rejection of liberalism, rationalism and materialism, the later ariosophical manifestation was explicitly linked to the mass political concerns of German nationalism and racism. The uses of theosophy for political purposes consisted in its universal and

[108]

non-Christian perspective upon the cosmos, against which the sources of Teutonic belief, customs and folk-identity could be located. Indeed, the very structure of theosophical doctrine lent itself to völkisch thought. The implicit elitism of the mahatmas with superhuman wisdom corresponded to the whimsies of a master race; the notion of an occult gnosis in theosophy, notably its obscuration by Christian orthodoxy, accorded with the attempts to ascribe a long pedigree to German völkisch nationalism, especially in view of its really recent origins. The shift from liberalism towards the emergence of mass political movements, which increasingly threatened the precarious balance of the multi-national Habsburg empire, favoured this changing perspective on theosophy at Vienna. While the modern occult revival had begun as an idealist and illuminated reaction to the perceived failures of liberalism among a small intellectual circle in the 1880s, it ended by offering a religious mystique to the tide of illiberalism among Austrian Pan-Germans by 1910.

[Read at the international conference 'The Habsburg Monarchy in Transformation 1890–1914', School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 19 September 1985.]

[109]

REFERENCES

1. The principal source for Eckstein's life and interests is Friedrich Eckstein, 'Alte unennbare Tage!' Erinnerungen aus siebzig Lehr- und Wanderjahren (Vienna, 1936).
2. The best available study of the Pernerstorfer circle and its intellectual rejection of liberalism is William J. McGrath, Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria (New Haven, 1974).

3. Eckstein, op. cit., p. 105f.
4. *ibid.*, pp. 110–12, 213–24.
5. *ibid.*, pp. 62–68. Lazar Hellenbach, Mr. Slade's Aufenthalt in Wien (Vienna, 1878).
6. Erzherzog Johann, Einblicke in den Spiritismus (Linz, 1884) and Lazar Hellenbach, Die Logik der Thatsachen. Eine Entgegnung auf die Brochure 'Einblicke in den Spiritismus' (Leipzig, 1884).
7. McGrath, op. cit., p. 94.
8. Eckstein, op, cit., p. 68f.
9. Oskar Simony, Über spiritistische Manifestationen vom naturwissenschaftlichen Standpunkt (Vienna, 1884).
10. A survey of the early theosophical movement is contained in Howard Murphet, When daylight comes: a biography of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (Wheaton, Ill., 1975).
11. Details of Hartmann's life and theosophical activities appear in Hugo Göring, Dr. Franz Hartmann, ein Vorkämpfer der Theosophie.

[110]

- (Brunswick, 1895) and Franz Hartmann, Denkwürdige Erinnerungen (Leipzig, 1898).
12. For Eckstein's earliest theosophical interest, see Eckstein, op. cit., pp. 69ff. His meeting with Blavatsky is documented in Emil Bock, Rudolf Steiner. Studien zu seinem Lebensgang und Lebenswerk (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 79f and Charles Blech, Contribution à l'histoire de la Societe' Théosophique en France (Paris, 1933), p. 115.
 13. Notice in The Theosophist 9 (1888), Supplement (October-November 1887), iv. References to Eckstein's esoteric interests in Eckstein, op. cit., pp. 194, 206f.
 14. Details of the Lang circle and the summer colony at Schloss Bellevue in Eckstein, op. cit., pp. 183–6, 201–204.
 - 15 Rudolf Steiner's involvement in Viennese theosophy is documented in Eckstein, op. cit., p. 130f, Bock, op. cit., pp. 80–4 and Rudolf Steiner, An Autobiography, second edition (New York, 1980). Pp. 141–4.
 16. Eckstein, op. cit., p. 260f. The Theosophical Society in Europe, First Annual Convention. Report of Proceedings (9–10 July 1891), pp. 2, 17 and Second Annual Convention. Report of

Proceedings (14–15 July 1982), pp. 2, 15f, 33, 67 and subsequent annual convention reports, Reference Library, The Theosophical Society in England, London.

17. The inauguration of the Prague lodge is documented in Lucifer 10, No. 55 (15 March 1892), p. 81 and The Vahan 1, No. 9 (1 April 1892), p. 7.

18. An account of the activities of the Blue Star Lodge appears in Karel Weinfurter, Man's Highest Purpose (The lost word regained) (London, 1930), pp. 43–51, 152–4.

[111]

19. Alois Mailänder and his pietistic circle are documented in Hans-Jürgen Glowka, Deutsche Okkultgruppen 1875–1937 (Hiram-Edition 12) (Munich, 1981), pp. 105–7.

20. Foundation dates of German theosophical lodges in The Theosophical Society (European Section), Twelfth Annual Convention. Report of Proceedings (5–6 July 1902), p. (28).

21. The Theosophical Review 32, No. 187 (15 March 1903), 83; The Theosophical Review 36, No. 213 (May 1905), 265–8.

22. Schwabe, 'Protokoll über die 1. Nationalkonvention der "Theosophischen Gesellschaft" in Europa (Deutschland)', Metaphysische Rundschau 1 (1896), 279–83. The origins of American theosophy are documented in Emmett A. Greenwalt, California Utopia: Point Loma 1897–1842 (San Diego, 1978), pp. 1–34.

23. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, The occult roots of Nazism: the Ariosophists of Austria and Germany 1890–1935 (Wellingborough, 1985) presents a full documentary history of the racist mystical sects at Vienna and their links with Austrian Pan-Germanism.

The contribution of Michael Gomes to our S.P.R. Archives series has been unavoidably held over.

[112]

MASSEY'S RESIGNATION AND THE S. P. R.

The impression has wrongly grown that C.C. Massey, first president of the British Theosophical Society, resigned from the T. S. because of the S. P. R. Report. Josephine Ransom, for example, in "A Short History of The Theosophical Society" (1938) says

“He left the Theosophical Society when the S. P. R. attacked H. P. B., and gave evidence before it that she had in 1879 arranged that a Mahatma letter should reach him in a mysterious way.” (p. 113)

In 1972, George E. Linton & Virginia Hanson published “Readers Guide to The Mahatmas Letters to A. P. Sinnett” (T. P. H.) in whose alphabetical notes we read of Massey;

“He was also one of the founders of the Psychical Research Society and after the Hodgson Report was issued, he resigned from the T. S.” (p. 239)

Similarly Margaret Conger in her “Combined Chronology for use with the Mahatma Letters” (Theosophical University Press 1973) states in her biographical note on Massey:

“In 1884, frightened by the report of the Society for Psychical Research, he resigned from the T.S.” (p. 25)

In fact, at the time of Massey’s resignation, the S. P. R. had made no attack on H. P. B.; its Committee had just begun its work, and Myers, Gurney and even Hodgson, were still favourably disposed towards her. It is likely that Massey’s doubts influenced them rather than vice versa. He lost faith first. The date of his re-resignation is known fairly precisely, from two sources.

Although Mr. Sinnett is not a reliable historian, he did have the minute book of the B.T.S. before him when he wrote “The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe” (1922) and noted;

“From the Society’s minute book I find that at a meeting held in July 1884, the President (then Mr. Finch) announced with regret,

[113]

that C. C. Massey had resigned his membership of the Theosophical Society.” (p. 70)

(In passing we may note that the present location of that minute book, later the minute book of the London Lodge, is obscure. Has anyone seen it?)

Mr. Sinnett adds “He explained his reasons to me at the time, and I find a record of them in the “Proceedings” of the S. P. R. (page 397, Vol. III)” This is a reference to the 1879 British Letter, about which we published evidence in T. H. July 1985, p. 54–9.

Contemporary evidence for a different trigger is provided through a long article by Massey in the Spiritualist weekly “Light” 26 July 1884, (to which Mr. Fraser Nicol drew my attention,) entitled “The Explanation of the “Kiddle Incident” in the Fourth edition of the “Occult World”.” At a later date, we hope to publish some of the copious documentation of the Kiddle affair, in which parts of an address by the Spiritualist Mr. Kiddle turned up in a Mahatma letter. Here we can only quote the 3 final paragraphs with a reminder to readers that Mr. Massey did not have all the particulars now available in “The Mahatma Letters”

There will still be such a thing as common-sense even when the facts of Occultism are admitted and understood; and that does not point to a Thibetan origin of the celebrated “Kiddle letter.”

The evidence of the existence of Adepts—or “Mahatmas”, since that term is now preferred—and even of their connection with individual members of the Theosophical Society, need not here concern us. We may, and I do, accept it; and yet see in their methods, or rather in the things that are said and done in their names, such deviations from our Philistine sense of truth and honour as to assure us that something is very wrong somewhere. For this is by no means a singular case. The repeated necessity for explanations—which are always more formidable than the things to be explained—must at length tire out the most patient faith, except the faith superseding all intelligence, the credo quia impossibile.

I have only to add that while preserving all the interests, and much of the belief which attracted me to the Theosophical Society, and which have kept me in it up to now, notwithstanding many and

[114]

growing embarrassments, I do not think that the publication of the conclusions above expressed is consistent with loyal Fellowship. The constitution, no doubt, of the Society is broad enough to include minds more sceptical than my own in regard to the alleged sources of its vitality and influence. But let any one try to realise this nominal freedom, and he will find himself, not only in an uncongenial element, but in an attitude of controversy with his ostensible leaders, with the motive forces of the Society. That is not consistent with the sympathetic subordination or co-operation which is essential to union. If anything could keep me in a position embarrassing or insincere, it would be the noble life and character of the president, my friend, Colonel Olcott. But personal considerations must give way at length; and accordingly, with unabated regard and re-respect for many from whom it is painful to separate, I am forwarding my resignation of Fellowship to the proper quarters.

July 22nd, 1884

C. C. Massey.

The student should re-read the estimates of Massey’s character in “The Mahatma Letters”. Whether it was the British letter or the Kiddle incident which precipitated his resignation, we may never know, but assuredly this is not one of the defections for which the S. P. R. report can be blamed.

L. P.

THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

“We clearly need to know more about Signor B.,” I wrote in T. H. October 1985 p. 84, Signor B. being a participant in the Butterfly incident on p. 16 of “Old Diary Leaves”. (First Series.) It has since occurred to me that he is probably Signor Bruzzesi mentioned on p. 115 as present at one of the meetings leading to the foundation of the T. S. But who was Signor Bruzzesi then?

L. P.

Early Steps Into Shakespeare or Bacon

Like my first, this article arises from my correspondence with Mr. Leslie Price. After reading my Sir Francis Bacon, he asked me if I had always been a Baconian, and how I became one.

That goes back to just after my fifteenth birthday. My birthday is in March and for the Easter Holidays, in April, I had asked my mother to take me to Stratford-on-Avon. For the past couple of years, I had been reading the plays in the family Shakespeare, one by one. It had started when I was twelve, when I was one of the fairies in the Brighton & Hove School of Elocution and Dramatic Art's production on the Palace Pier. Not content with learning my own part, I had read the play, and went on to read others. I had recited scenes from Shakespeare for the I. L. A. M. examinations, hoped when I left school to play more Shakespeare at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and eventually on the professional stage. I wanted to see the plays brought alive, by professionals.

After we had arrived in Stratford and I had unpacked my things, in my bedroom, there was about an hour to spare before it would be time for dinner. Should I start reading a new play? I decided, instead, to try something I had not touched as yet, The Sonnets. I began at the beginning, and found that the first ones urged a young man to get married and have children. Then they became descriptive of his feelings for a friend. When they came to be about a woman with black eyes, in doubtful relation with the poet and the friend, it struck me I might understand these poems better if I knew who they were written to, and the relations in which the persons stood to each other and the poet. Unaware that I had arrived at the great problem of Shakespeare scholarship, over which literary historians had theorised for three centuries, I turned back to the biographical introduction at the beginning, in the innocent expectation it would tell me.

It told me William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway

[116]

and had some children. That threw no light at all.

It was by now time for dinner. Joining my mother at the dining-table, I told her what I had been reading, and remarked that the biography, for all the help it gave, could have been of another man. She shot me a rather odd look, and said, "Some people think he didn't write them".

Who, then, did they think did?

Well, she said, there was a theory they were by someone called Francis Bacon, who had been Lord High Chancellor of England.

I was not sure what a Lord High Chancellor was, and I asked, "Was he married?"

I saw her ask herself, for a moment. Then she said, “I don’t think at the time when the Sonnets were written”.

The reason I asked the question was that, upstairs, sitting on the edge of my bed, that heavy book in my hands, reading on and on and on, I had felt myself entering into the company of a very lonely man. He had been pouring out on to paper his love for people who had not loved him back. He had sat alone in his room, penning these because he was alone. There was nothing about a wife in them, and nothing about children.

Perhaps, said my mother, he forgot about them, after he came to London and got caught up with other people.

I meditated on that. If it was a case of, “out of sight, out of mind”, it seemed extraordinarily complete. If he had had a wife and children in the country home he had left, I would have thought that in his black despair on being so let down by those in town on whom he had fastened his affections, his thoughts might have turned back to them. There was no sign of that. Then again, he reproached himself for having made the woman false to her husband, as though that were the only adultery involved. I felt they were the work of a single man.

There was something else that worried me in that biographical introduction. It spoke of his killing

[117]

a calf and declaiming while he butchered it. I was repelled, and found it difficult to reconcile with the sensitivity of the poet who noticed a snail’s horns were sensitive.

Bacon offered a way out, and I remained alert for any reference to that name that I might come across. I had not, however, realised there were books on him, and could take it no further at that time.

Pass to when I was eighteen. I had left the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and had been playing Juvenile Leads and a few Leads on the professional stage, but mainly in modern plays. I was between jobs when a phone call came from Rosa Thornbury, the theatrical agent. Would I come down and see her? The Bragg-Liddell Shakespeare Company wanted an actress to take over a long part tomorrow night, in New Brighton, Liverpool. She had thought of me because she knew that I had, at twenty-four hours notice taken over the Lead in the Aldwych farce, It Pays to Advertise, in Dundee. It was presumed, therefore, I was a “quick study”. Naturally, I said I would do it. Which was the play and which was the part? The play, she said, was Othello. She had forgotten to ask the part.

Mother and I took the train from Euston. The part of Emilia I knew already, so I spent the journey learning Desdemona. The light was fading as we glimpsed for the first time Merseyside, but I thought I could go on as Desdemona.

It was dark when I enquired my way to the Wintergarden Theatre. The play was in progress, and I was shown Mr. Bragg's dressing-room, where I waited until he came off stage, with his face blacked as the Moor. It fell as he saw me. "You're too young," he said. "I wanted an older woman, but it's too late to change you, now. You're Mistress Quickly, in The Merry Wives of Windsor, TOMORROW NIGHT!"

I was disappointed and exasperated. It meant that—with my brain already tired from learning Desdemona—I had to sit up for the whole night learning the longer and less rewarding part of Mistress Quickly.

[118]

Mr. Bragg had said he would give me "a walk through rehearsal" in the morning. That is to say, the whole play was not performed but just the actors who would be involved with me came on, and, in our everyday clothes, we walked through the scenes. This was chiefly for the purpose of marking on the script the part of the stage on which I should be standing at any particular moment—Walk down right... up centre ... down centre ... as different lines were spoken. I would find my costume in the evening.

I arrived early, to find in my dressing-room the Mistress Quickly day-time costume, but not the Fairy Queen one, into which there was the change in Act V. I was told,. "Your Fairy Queen costume will be given you in the wings". That worried me, for I thought it meant that it had been lost, and during the first four acts worried not only about whether I was going to remember the lines and to be in the right position on the stage whilst saying them, but whether that costume was going to be found in sufficient time. "It will be handed to you..."

As I came off the stage for the last time before the change, several pairs of hands grabbed the costume I was wearing, pulled it off over my head, and then I saw that another pair of hands was holding above me a glistening white, silken robe. Several pairs of hands were pulling it down over my head, smoothing it down, smoothing my hair down. A wand was put in my hand. "Now on, quick!"

Bragg, as Falstaff, had already finished his soliloquy, and was pacing up and down, alone on the stage waiting for the Fairy Queen to enter to him. Bearing my wand, I hastened on, announcing:

Fairies, black, grey, green and white ...

and there really were some, who had materialised from somewhere in the depths of the wings and followed me on to the lighted stage. My worst troubles were over, and I could turn to them and command,

About, about!

Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out ...

[119]

I was thinking, “There is just this long speech, which is the best one, and then it will soon be over!” It was with a feeling of relief, almost abandon, that I made my final walk Down Centre proclaiming:

Fie on sinful fantasy!
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a bloody fire ...

Now we had Mr. Bragg (Falstaff) in our clutches, and I was urging on the fairies:

Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out!

And I gave him a good slap, to mark my relief at what was, for me, the end of it.

As I came off the stage, somebody in the wings said, “That’s the worst quick change in the whole of Shakespeare! There isn’t time to go to the dressing- room.” Just imagine if it was the Theatre Royal Norwich, where the dressing-rooms are several flights above the stage. And even here, where they are unusually close, there still was not time to reach them. “The change has to be done in the wings”. I was just unfortunate that Quickly had to come on stage in V.i., just to speak one, unnecessary line,—”If it had been any other author, one would cut it!”—before coming on again, in such little-time, in the different costume. It always meant Falstaff—however slowly he dragged out his soliloquy—pacing up and down the stage alone, trying to invent some “business” because he has no more words left to say ...

But how, I asked myself, could a man of the theatre; presumed to have produced, not have noticed the awkwardness at the rehearsals, and altered the script? It came to me that he had not been at the rehearsals. He had written it, given it to them, and they had not been able to get in touch with him before the first night.

Jean Overton Fuller

120]

Correspondence

Dear Sir

In the first paragraph of ‘Krishnamurti and Blavatsky’, (p. 20, April T.H.) the editor asks Miss Overton Fuller the question “What happened to the Brotherhood in question?” (i.e. to the Mahatmas who inspired H.P.B.) This question is not so very difficult to answer, the only answer based on historical data being “We do not know and we cannot know.” Every other endeavour to give an answer can only be called an example of wishful (or other emotional) thinking. Why is such an apodictic negative answer possible? Because the ‘Brothers’ themselves overtly announced it. I may refer the reader to page 492 of Vol. XII of “The Collected Writings (C.W.) of H.P. Blavatsky.” No Master of Wisdom from the East will himself appear or send anyone to Eu-

rope or America after that period.’ A few lines earlier that ‘period’ is defined as 1888—December 31st. 1899.

An anonymous correspondent on p. 53 of the July issue seems to interpret these and other words of the same trend as if we are ‘deserted’. That such an interpretation is wrong can be seen by anyone, who knows something about the ‘Brotherhood’ and its work, during the years the T.S. existed as an undivided body and before the foundation of our society. (I will return to that point presently.)

First a rather bitter remark. During nearly 60 years in theosophical thought and organisations, I came across about ten Mahatma Moryas, who not only flatly contradicted each other, but some of them even called the others everything under the sun. This is, according to my poor judgement, a clear sign that those good people who were convinced that they, and not anybody else were ‘chartered’ to bring messages &c from Morya (and from others), seem to have forgotten or have ignored the words of H.P.B., (i.e. her ‘master’) in the above quoted introductory letter to candidate members of the E.S.

This situation inside the T.S. seem to have scandalized the Mahatmas. One of them, K.H., even went out of his way to warn in a letter in 1900 (!) Annie Besant (Outer Head of the E.S.) “The cant about ‘Masters’ must be silently but firmly put down.” That letter was published for the first time by Jinarajadasa in “The Theosophist” May 1937 and repeatedly reprinted by him in “Letters of The Master of the Wisdom”, First Series (No. 46).

The next question arises: “What is meant by the word ‘cant’?” A modern Dutch-English dictionary gives ‘hypocrisy’, and that suits;

[121]

for in the E.S. every member was expected to know the fatal terminus of 1 January 1900, and A.B. was advised to remind the members and herself. The word also was used by H.P.B. and the Masters and a special variety of ‘hypocrisy’ was meant. In Vol. IX, p. 83 she quotes a well-known American dictionary, Webster, giving the following definition: “whining, hypocritical pretensions to goodness.”

If the reader makes a casual reading in the adjacent volumes of “Collected Writings”, he will find that H.P.B. sees as a big task of the Theosophical Society an effort to neutralize the dangerous influence of people who act according to the laws of ‘cant-’. ‘Cant’ in the sense Webster defines is a characteristic of all religious and political propaganda. Leaders in these organisations pretend not only to ‘goodness’, but also to power to realize for their followers’ happiness in this life and hereafter.

Every theosophist to some degree versed in the teaching H.P.B. formulated will remember her words in the first volume of “The Secret Doctrine” p. XLIV. One could try to translate a little more freely, and introduce the word and concept of ‘cant’ which she uses often in this sort of context. The new religion, Christianity, pretended to be led by God Almighty, unknown to Greeks and other heathen. Therefore all other religions had to be crushed in the Name of the true God and his Church.

This super-criminal ‘cant’, if I am permitted to use these words in this context, was exposed by a contemporary of H.P.B., the well-known Russian author, Dostoyefsky, (1821–1880). In his novel, “The Brothers Karamazof”, he inserted an episode called “The Legend of the Great Inquisitor”. Christ, returning to earth in the middle-ages is forthwith arrested by the Holy Inquisition as he disturbs the order and law established by His Church. But in the course of His interro-

gation by the cardinal-archbishop and head of the Holy Inquisition, the latter candidly confesses that the church already centuries ago in her wisdom had discovered that it was impossible to maintain a human civilisation on values other than those Satan had shown Jesus, and which values Jesus had renounced (Matthew 4, 1/11). According to H.P.B. this episode was inspired to Dostoyefsky by the ‘Masters’ (C.W. Vol. III p. 324.) This point is raised by me for two reasons. Firstly to draw the attention of the reader, that even (??) during the last quarter of the nineteenth century the attention of ‘our’ Masters was directed to others than members of the T.S., to a professed Christian author in Russia, as Dostoyefsky was. Secondly, I wanted to stress the general intentions of ‘earnest sincerity’—

[122]

the only antidote to ‘cant’ (religious or political) H.P.B. prescribes in her articles in “Lucifer”.

Before going further I think we ought to make clear, what this ‘sincerity’ amounts to, when ‘translated’ in the more esoteric language also used by H.P.B. The words ‘earnest sincerity’ are used on p. 83 of Vol. IX of “C.W.”, and first published in March 1888, “Lucifer”, Vol. II, p. 68 ff. A few months later “The Secret Doctrine” was published. Here we find again, that an earnest sincerity of thought, self-critical and critical general speaking, is the highest good for us all. These words ‘highest good’ are in Latin ‘summum bonum’—a term well known to all students of philosophy. In Sanscrit these words are ‘param artham’. This word is treated on p. 44 of the first volume. In the foot-note we read “In clearer words: One has to acquire true Self-Consciousness in order to understand Samvriti, or the ‘origin of delusion’.” It will be clear I hope, that ‘cant’ is an aspect of delusion (samvriti), and ‘earnest sincerity’ of true self-consciousness or Summum Bonum.

From this starting point we can give some complementary answer to the question “What happened to the Brotherhood?.” The answer was ‘we do not know’, and that still holds good. No historical facts can be adduced. But from the activities of the Brotherhood about ‘cant’ we may infer, that these anti-cant activities must have gone on, as they are apparently part of the more or less ‘public’ activities. It is of course only something of interest for a superficial curiosity of mind, to ask which of the many critical organisations are inspired by ‘Masters’ and which are not. Also in this respect an ‘authority’ means an obscuration of our personal critical responsibility for our thoughts and actions.

Secondly, it becomes clear that any ‘official’ contacts with people who discovered Krishnamurti or looked after his education are out of the question. It is not a question of ‘us’ (T.S. members) being deserted. Maybe the ‘discovery’ of Krishnamurti by C. W. Leadbeater was in some way inspired, just as Dostoyefsky was inspired to write his “Legend of the Great Inquisitor”. But as far as I can see, it is impossible to conceive, that the whole ‘inner government’ of C.W.L., and his endeavours to make Krishnamurti to play a role in that group of occult civil servants can be something different from the ‘cant’, against which the masters warned Annie Besant in 1900.

I will conclude with a last remark. In the nineteenth century the ‘brotherhood’ was accepting members before they took the initiative for the founding of the T.S. In “The Letters of H.P.B. to A.P. Sinnett”

[123]

p. 20. An English gentleman is mentioned, who became a member some decades before 1880.

J.H. Dubbink

Madame Blavatsky at Fountainebleau

Jean-Paul Guignette, whose bibliography of H.P.B. we noticed in our last issue (p. 84) contributes a valuable paper under this title to "The Canadian Theosophist" November – December 1985. He has identified the hotel at which H.P.B. stayed while writing "The Voice of the Silence" as the Hotel de la Ville de Lyon et de Londres, 23 Rue Royale. Alas the hotel is now demolished.

MADAME BLAVATSKY UNVEILED?

Leslie Price

Publication date: 17 February 1986 £2.50 (\$5 U.S.)

ISBN 0 948753 013 44 pages

Available from any good theosophical bookshop, or post free from:

Theosophical History Centre
50 Gloucester Place
London W1H 3HJ

In this booklet, Leslie Price presents a new discussion of the most famous investigation of The Society for Psychical Research, and suggests that the 1885 report did not reach the root of the case.

[124]

THEOSOPHICAL HISTORY CENTRE

We are honoured that Miss Lilian Storey has accepted an invitation to be Hon. President of the Theosophical History Centre for 1986. Miss Storey will be known to most readers as the Librarian of the T.S. in England, but she is also a genealogist. For some years she has been attempting to trace the family origins of one of Theosophy's most controversial figures, and she

will be presenting her findings so far in her presidential address “The Search for Leadbeater” at the International Conference on Theosophical History in July 1986, in London.

Summaries of papers for the conference are still coming in, following the call for papers in our July 1985 issue. But it is already clear that it will be a stimulating occasion, possibly without precedent in its field. From America we expect Professor James Santucci who will deal with a troubled chapter in the American T.S. just after World War One; John Van Mater to describe the work of the Theosophical University Library; Michael Gomes to present some unknown H.P.B. letters; and a paper exploring H.P.B.’s links with the Sufis and Gurdjieff. From England, a member of a certain Tibetan school will review the attempts by David Reigle and others to place H.P.B. in a Tibetan context; David Redstone will consider why Anna Kingsford failed to spread her brand of Christian Theosophy, Leslie Price will suggest priorities in Theosophical History, and Robert Gilbert will bring some new material on relations in 1888 between the Esoteric Section and the Golden Dawn. A booking form for the conference is being circulated with this issue. More details in April issue.

T.H.C. members have been sent our new pamphlet, “Madame Blavatsky Unveiled?” which will be published on 17 February. Members receive these pamphlets free. Any person or institution can be an Associate Member (£4 or \$10 American in 1986) on application to Theosophical History Centre at 50 Gloucester Place, London W1H 3HJ. It is also possible for members of the English Section of the T.S. to pay their dues through T.H.C.

Theosophical History is edited by Leslie Price. Cover design by Claire Jameson. Subscription—£5 per year (\$10) or £8 for 2 years (\$15) from Editor, 46 Evelyn Gardens, London SW7 BH Canadian cheques add \$4 .

All material is copyright to authors and publishers, and may not be reproduced without permission. Views expressed are those of the authors alone, not those of any Theosophical body.