



Ethics in the Third Object of the TS: Spiritual Alchemy

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ON one occasion, Oscar Wilde, author of the fictional novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, said: “When the gods wish to punish us, they answer our prayers”, and he may well have been right. Sometimes illusions, desires, and fantasies overcome us, always rushing to fulfilment no matter the cost. This is entirely natural in the hedonistic world we live in; it is the continuous vicious cycle: desire, obtaining the object of desire, desire again. The problem can arise when we are unconscious of the following:

1. Why do we desire these things?
2. What will happen when we have obtained the object of our desires?
3. Will it help human beings to conduct a harmonious life, free from suffering and the burdens of life?
4. Will it contribute to the alleviation or elimination of world problems?

If the answer to these questions relies upon human pride and selfishness, indeed, the object of our desire may be a punishment that we have unconsciously imposed on ourselves.

Answering the previous questions requires deep investigation and slow meditation, and it is of particular importance when we decide to comprehend the Third Object of the

Theosophical Society (TS): *To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in humankind.*

The search for these answers takes profound honesty with oneself, without prejudice, because to know the hidden spiritual realities of the world is the right and duty of the student of Divine Wisdom. Not for the sake of knowledge, which being empty decays over time, but for the potentiality that this knowledge, guided by the Light of Buddhi — the ray of Love, Wisdom, Compassion, Service — can bring to the world.

The word “latent powers” can be the perfect breeding ground for synonyms such as superpowers, psychism, or altered states of consciousness, and for all kinds of practices that lead to experiencing these realities. However, the meaning of the Third Object of the TS goes far beyond experiencing these phenomena.

The latent powers in the human being are nothing more and nothing else than natural capacities inherent in “the unexplained laws of Nature”. Therein, we are all called upon to develop them when the time is proper to do so. Nevertheless, there are very delicate aspects that must arise from the Soul’s Truth, and, in these, the ordinary temporal



consciousness of the human being is not to intervene simply because it cannot comprehend what is beyond its scope.

“There is no religion higher than Truth”, says the motto of the TS. Truth is born from the Freedom of the Higher Self to express his capabilities, challenges, and characteristics. We all have these potentialities within us.

Although we may not know, our Higher Self *does* know why, what for, and when. It is therefore essential to know these hidden laws and internal processes so that when that moment arrives, we live it naturally. It is like the flower blooming; the flower does not think of it, it simply blooms.

We are all called upon to bloom if we accept the rays of the spiritual Sun, the Universal Law. No one lacks the knowledge and the necessary guidelines to face the trials before their very eyes. The task is to discover where those guidelines lie and, in this process, the latent capacities may appear.

This process should develop naturally, with the required psychological and mental maturity. Unfortunately, it is well known that people who naturally show these capacities and sensitivities often must deal with incomprehension, leading them frequently to numbness or subversion, which can cause painful disorders and mental illnesses with possible terrible endings.

For this reason, clear purpose and guidance are implicit in The Third Object, and this is service. It is through service to our fellows and to the Universal Law that the true and most crucial capacity arises; the one which allows us to enter into a higher level of consciousness, into a broader capacity to

understand the Universal Laws enabling us to function as their faithful vehicle of expression, or in other words, a vehicle of Love.

Nevertheless, the path of the occultist, of the seeker of Divine Wisdom and its laws, is fraught with dangers of all kinds and conditions. So H. P. Blavatsky points out to us in *The Voice of the Silence*:¹

Three Halls, O weary pilgrim, lead to the end of toils. Three Halls, O conqueror of Mâra, will bring thee through three states into the fourth, and thence into the seven worlds, the worlds of Rest Eternal.

If thou wouldst learn their names, then hearken, and remember.

The name of the first Hall is Ignorance — *avidyâ*.

It is the Hall in which thou saw'st the light, in which thou livest and shalt die.

The name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy Soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled.

The name of the third Hall is Wisdom, beyond which stretch the shoreless waters of *akshara*, the indestructible Fount of Omniscience.

H. P. Blavatsky also tells us² that one must watch ceaselessly, night and day, because Mâra, Illusion, is the great deceiver, the temptation personified by the vices of men, or “that which kills the soul”.

The Law of Karma is a Universal Law, and it is the decisions we make and the actions we take that will lead us to one side or the other of the road. At the intersection, one can go to the right, the path of the Buddhas or sages, but one can also go to the left, the path of the *dugpas*, or black magicians. When the path has been so long, it can be easier than one might think to get confused about the way to go. Mâra, the Illusion, is after all, the great deceiver.



Clara M. Codd points out in *Theosophy as the Masters See It*:²

Chelaship is no child's play. It is tremendous and stern reality, not to be lightly invoked or entered upon, even in the region only as yet of intense desire for it. The disciple as he grows in capacity and power becomes increasingly, the object of insidious attack; but, at the same time, he has the power of his Master behind him, [who continually protects and observes him]...

Sigh not for chelaship; pursue not that, the dangers and hardships of which are unknown to you. Chelaship unveils the inner man and draws forth the dormant virtue as well as the dormant vice. Latent

vice begets active sins and is often followed by insanity. . . . Be pure, virtuous, and lead a holy life and you will be protected. But remember, he who is not as pure as a young child better leave chelaship alone.

The questions to be asked, quoting from the preamble of *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti,³ are: How to distinguish the unreal from the Real, how to move from darkness to Light, how to conduct ourselves from death to Immortality? Both Krishnamurti in this small work, and Blavatsky in excerpts of the beautiful poem "There is a Road"⁴ indicate this to us:

There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer.

There is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through.

There is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount.

For those who win onwards, there is reward past all telling — the power to bless and save humanity.

For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.

Even if the aspirants fail and get trapped in the quicksand of passions and fears, if goodness is to be found in the heart, the aspirants may return to the father's side, having repaired the consequences of their actions. The Law is loving, the Law is fair, the Law gives each one what is needed to learn.

Annie Besant explains in *The Path of Discipleship*:⁵

Let us now see how it was proposed by the great Teachers that man by experience should learn to choose of his own free will the ideal which was placed before him, and from which he turned aside; how the great Teachers endeavored to build up from the imperfect humanity towards the perfected ideal manifested in the beginning for the guidance of the race, and unrealized in evolution, by the weakness and the childishness of men.

In order that, in the course of ages, this might be achieved, what is called Karma-Yoga was taught to the people — Yoga, or union, by action. That is the form of Yoga, which is fitted for the men of the world, beset with life's activities; it is by these very activities, by the training afforded by them, that the first steps towards union must be taken. And so, you find laid down for the training of men this Karma-Yoga.

The human being is always given the ability to choose whom he will serve at each moment: the Immortal Self that dwells beyond eternities, or the fading personality that will eventually wither away. An exemplification of this can be found in the Temptations of Jesus:⁶

and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God", he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot



against a stone.”

Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you”, he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

Jesus said to him: “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

God represents the Universal Law. When spiritual hunger lurks and we are confused, and the way is not so clearly distinguished, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” The food is the Truth that springs from our Soul. It represents the First Vestibule, transcending ignorance.

When we feel ourselves falling before the precipice: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test”, for it is before the path of probation, The Second Vestibule, when the qualities of the Seven Rays are manifested in the Soul of Man.

Moreover, when we are promised a world full of beautiful illusions — beautiful, yes, but illusions after all — “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” It represents the transcendence of faults and sins: the Third Vestibule, akshara.

It is then when the words described in Archive XIII of the Masters’ Record ⁷ make sense:

What part, O Pilgrim on the Way, play you within this scheme? How will you enter into peace? How stand before your Lord?

I play my part with stern resolve, with earnest aspiration; I look above, I help below; I dream not, nor I rest; I toil; I serve; I reap; I pray; I am the Cross; I am the Way; I tread upon the work I do; I mount upon my slain self; I kill desire, and I strive, forgetting all reward. I forego peace; I forfeit rest, and in the stress of pain I lose myself and find Myself and enter into peace.

These, in short, are the foundations upon which the Ethics of the Theosophical Society’s Third Object rests: humility, commitment, service, and spiritual transformation. It is through karma-yoga (union through action), also called spiritual alchemy, that we can be worthy seekers of Truth, for, in truth, what could be more wonderful, more enriching, more liberating than to be able to develop the Love that drives us every day to become better people and better citizens? It is the power of Love and not the love for power.

In this subtle nuance resides the key for all of it.

Endnotes

1. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, Verbat. Ed., 2015.
2. Clara M. Codd, *Theosophy as the Masters See It: As Outlined in the “Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom”*, Theosophical Publishing House, 1953.
3. J. Krishnamurti, *At the Feet of the Master*, Chicago: The Rajput Press, 1911.
4. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. 13, “There is a road . . .”, p. 219.
5. Annie Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1899.
6. Matthew 4:1–11.
7. Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation, Human and Solar*, Lucifer Publishing Co., 1922.