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## THE SECOND OBJECT OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science.

— *Second Object of the Theosophical Society*

What is the purpose of the second Object of the Theosophical Society? On one level, the intent seems obvious—to encourage people to acquire a general familiarity with the world's major religious traditions, the key ideas from Western and Eastern schools of philosophy, and the latest theories and trends in modern science. Since its inception in 1875, the Theosophical Society has played a major role in fostering an attitude of understanding and goodwill between people of different faiths. It has been instrumental in bringing the wisdom tradition of the East to a Western audience, as well as rediscovering some of the Western esoteric traditions that had been ignored or forgotten over the centuries. In the field of science, H. P. Blavatsky railed against the materialistic attitudes held by scientists of her day, but as a new generation of thinkers began to emerge in the twentieth century, leading scientists such as David Bohm, Albert Einstein, and Werner Heisenberg put forth theories which seemed very compatible with those found in *The Secret Doctrine*.

On another level, the intent of the second Object may be less obvious. When the founders of the Society framed the second Object, they had in mind another purpose beyond the mere broadening of one's intellectual horizons, which was to encourage the type of study aimed at discovering universal and underlying truths. Comparative study was never meant to be an end in itself, but rather the means to uncovering fundamental and eternal verities. We can continue accumulating more surface knowledge for the rest of our days, but to what end? Every underlying principle can be expressed in a multitude of ways; therefore our search for knowledge will never exhaust the finite expressions of the Infinite.

Once we understand the basic principle behind the phenomena, all else falls into place; but if we get lost in the terminology of various disciplines we end up confused and bewildered.

To put it another way, one of the benefits of reading in this manner is that it enables the student to distinguish the outer expressions from the inner realities that those symbols are meant to represent. As the motto of the Theosophical Society states, "There is no religion higher than Truth."

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