

ORTHODOXY HAS NO PLACE IN THEOSOPHY

For students of Theosophy, familiarity with its doctrines is desirable—a doctrinaire approach to their study is not. These doctrines, or principles, have been enunciated differently by various commentators, each of whom may have some unique insight or perspective. The timeless truths of Theosophy are such that no one writer or person can claim to have the final word. As Montaigne said, “Truth and reason are common to everyone, and no more belong to the man who first spoke them than to the man who says them later.”

In theosophical circles it is often noted that none of us are experts, that we are all students. That seems to be a very healthy point of view, for it helps prevent our intellectual inquiry from devolving from one that is fresh and open-minded to one that is rigid and predictable. Cicero once observed: “The authority of those who want to teach is often an obstacle to those who want to learn.” Having said this, it is generally recognized that some students have been at it longer than others, and therefore possess a considerable storehouse of knowledge and wisdom. That is a very different thing from posing as an authority. And while it is quite legitimate that we have acknowledged authorities in the fields of medicine, engineering, jurisprudence, and other areas of secular knowledge, it is quite improper—even absurd—to assume the mantle of “authority” in the field of theosophical inquiry.

Those who are widely read are likely to have a broader perspective than those who are not. These words from T. S. Eliot, though made in a different context, are relevant to our point:

Wide reading is not valuable as a kind of hoarding, an accumulation of knowledge, or what sometimes is meant by the term “a well-stocked mind.” It is valuable because in the process of being affected by one powerful personality after another, we cease to be dominated by any one, or by any small number. (*Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*)

And consider these words of H. P. Blavatsky, found in Vol. IX of the *Collected Writings*:

Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable. It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps the Theosophical Society a living and healthy body . . . Were it not . . . such healthy divergences would be impossible, and the Society would degenerate into a sect, in which a narrow and stereotyped creed would take the place of the living and breathing spirit of Truth and an ever growing Knowledge.

As a farmer’s soil is enriched when crops are rotated yearly, so too will our understanding of Theosophy will be enriched if we expose our minds to diverse and varied thought.

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