

THE SPARK OF ENTHUSIASM

People who are drawn to the teachings of Theosophy are attracted to them in varying degrees. If one were to construct a composite graph measuring the intensity of each person's attraction to the wisdom teachings, it would form a type of continuum. Furthermore, that continuum would appear to be divided into three stages. Let us label these stages in terms of relative intensity, from weakest to most potent: *curiosity*, *interest*, and *enthusiasm*.

By its very nature, curiosity is often short-lived, being easily satisfied with superficialities and pleasantries; this fact results in its moving on in search of further attractions (or distractions). Information on chakras, auras, telepathy, past-life memories, out-of-body experiences, and psychic abilities typically draw the attention of those who are driven primarily by curiosity.

But curiosity can lead to a deeper exploration of the wisdom teachings, one that is characterized by a persistent level of inquiry. At this stage, curiosity has been replaced by a level of sustained interest. The casual inquirer has now become a student, seeking out detailed knowledge by reading theosophical literature, listening to lectures, attending discussion groups, participating in workshops—and doing so on a regular basis. Whereas the initial attraction was intermittent and superficial, that curiosity has deepened into a serious interest characterized by consistency and regularity in the pursuit of knowledge.

But one's interest in a subject may fade or diminish in time; or one may be content to stay within a certain prescribed area instead of expanding into related areas of knowledge. On the other hand, it may be transformed into a deeper level of inquiry if the necessary catalyst or conditions are present. For example, if the teachings begin to resonate deeply and not just serve as an amusing intellectual pastime; or if a dynamic speaker motivates and inspires the listener to a new level, based on the speaker's level of conviction; or if an author articulates a difficult or mystifying aspect of the teachings in a clear and convincing manner; then something very important and essential may occur—the spark of *enthusiasm* may ignite. When this happens, the quest for knowledge begins to burn with a brightness and intensity that was previously lacking. With genuine enthusiasm, theosophical study becomes not merely an interesting pursuit, but a lifetime preoccupation, essential to the soul's sense of purpose and well-being. And that is why L. W. Rogers said, in *Hints to Students of Occultism*, "Enthusiasm is a thing of priceless value."

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