

# Exploring Theosophy

A Study Guide  
by  
Anton Lysy, Ph.D.

To be used in conjunction with Robert Ellwood's book

*THEOSOPHY:  
A MODERN EXPRESSION OF THE WISDOM OF THE AGES*

---

Suitable for group work or individual study

Department of Education  
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA  
P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60189  
[www.theosophical.org](http://www.theosophical.org)

© 2005 The Theosophical Society in America

# CONTENTS

1. Preface	page 3
2. Introduction	page 4
3. Theosophical Foundations	page 6
4. Universes, Solar Systems, Worlds	page 10
5. The Human Experience	page 14
6. On the Path	page 19
7. Theosophical Interpretations of Evil	page 22
8. Veiled Truth	page 26
9. Theosophical Living	page 29

## PREFACE

In *THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY*, H.P. Blavatsky wrote: “To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual each person must progress by her or his own efforts.”

This “Critical Companion” to Robert Ellwood’s book, *THEOSOPHY: A MODERN EXPRESSION OF THE WISDOM OF THE AGES*, is suitable for individuals or group work. This study guide is designed to help the inquiring student reflect on and “between” the lines and paragraphs of the text. Sometimes you will be asked to reread a passage “in slow motion” to note possible interpretations. You might be asked to cite examples you have experienced or witnessed of something referred to in the text. Or you may be given a passage from another text to compare with a passage from Robert Ellwood’s *THEOSOPHY*.

The numbers at the left margin of this study guide refer to the *page* and *paragraph* of the Ellwood text, respectively. For example, “3.4” indicates that the fourth paragraph which begins on page three is being discussed. “4.1” tells you the first paragraph on page 4 is being examined. A page number followed by a zero (i.e., “4.0”) would mean that something is being discussed in the paragraph carried over from the previous page, i.e., “Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know.”

All page numbers in this study guide refer to the first edition (1986) of Robert Ellwood’s *THEOSOPHY*.

— Anton Lysy, Ph.D.  
October 2005

## INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 List some observable patterns found in nature that show order, sequence, and regularity in a manner which suggests there is an underlying “unifying principle” that can be grasped by human consciousness.
- 3.3 Using a good dictionary, compare the word *theosophy* with the more familiar words *philosophy* and *theology*. Keep these distinctions in mind as you read the rest of this book.
- 3.4 Use an unabridged dictionary to look up the words *wisdom* and *knowledge*. Compare the definitions of these two important terms.
- 3.4 The statement “divine truth is an endless ocean” is a metaphorical expression. The use of metaphor is indispensable when we attempt to communicate the subtle aspects of any subject matter. Watch out (and in) for use of metaphor, simile, and analogy throughout this text.
- 3.4 In this paragraph, how does the use of metaphor express differing dimensions of experience by citing “oceanography” and “swimming” as ways of gaining knowledge?
- 3.5           Thirty spokes share the wheel’s hub  
              It is the center hole that makes it useful.  
              Shape clay into a vessel;  
              It is the space within that makes it useful.  
              Cut doors and windows for a room;  
              It is the holes which make it useful.  
              Therefore profit comes from what is there;  
              Usefulness from what is not there.

*Tao Te Ching*

Consider this passage in the light of the concept of a “unifying principle” introduced in 3.1. Does the absence of “required” dogmas in Theosophy mentioned in the Foreword (x.1) seem to be clarified by this example of how “what is not there” can be useful?

In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, C. G. Jung wrote, “The ultimate fate of every dogma is that it gradually becomes soulless.” Cite some examples from history that illustrate a dogma losing its vitality.

- 7.2 Explain the difference between a *mystery* and a *puzzle*. What human faculties do we normally use in solving riddles or puzzles? When confronted with a true mystery, do we call upon any other faculties?
- 7.2 Consider the implications of viewing human life as part of a grand Mystery.
- 8.3 If our ultimate environment is in some sense *divine*, note that the faculty of *Sophia* (the source of insight into the infinite Reality) emerges as part of our own human constitution, as something we are equipped with at birth. (We are looking for our “owner’s manual.”)
- 9.1 Look up the word *initiation* in a dictionary; consider its definitions in terms of the metaphor “expanding horizons.”
- 10.2 Review your life and select some key people or seminal events that, in retrospect, were “stepping stones” on your journey to self-knowledge and self-transformation. Describe these “stepping stones” as “inner initiations” which transformed your consciousness and behavior.
- 11.2 In the Theosophical classic, *The Voice of the Silence*, divine compassion is characterized as the “LAW of laws—eternal Harmony.” Do you sense compassion or loving kindness at the very heart of life on this planet?
- 12.1 How can one even begin to understand the history of “Earthlings” from the perspective of an expanding universe described by modern astronomers? One could say, “In the beginning, before the Earth settled into its orbit, there was an inherent principle of orderliness.”
- 14.1 *There is no religion higher than Truth*. What are some possible interpretations of this motto of the Theosophical Society? What happens to the meaning of the motto if one replaces “religion” with “philosophy,” “science,” or “art?”
- 16.1 Look up the words *esoteric* and *occult*. Can you describe any situations in ordinary life where you would use these terms?