

HPB's Diagram of Meditation

Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu

*'Wisdom as to the Field and the Knower of the Field,
that is the Wisdom.'*

(Bhagavad-Gita, XIII-3)

We are concerned with approaching HPB's Meditation Diagram in such a way that our mind is led to the discovery of logic.

This logic proceeds from an inclusive and penetrating view.

Its discovery brings to the mind the quality of attention which is needed to deal with meditation, its process and its outcome. Therefore, the diagram should be seen as a whole, without focussing on any of its parts in particular.

I. Looking at the diagram in this way, one can discover a few points which can be stated as follows:

1. The whole diagram is the summarised description of a process. This process is a continuous movement of consciousness from Unity towards identification with Space and Time.

2. We should read the diagram from right to left, i.e. from 'Deprivations' to 'Acquisitions'. Although it is stated that 'passions and virtues interblend', since the deprivation of passions can be considered as a step in the alchemy of transmutation, that step which leads towards the acquisition of virtues – logic demands that we follow this direction in reading the diagram.

3. Among the interblending passions and virtues, there is an axis around which the entire transmutation takes place. This axis is represented by the first Acquisition (i.e. the first, reading from right to left):

**'The Perception in all embodied
beings of Limitations only'**

DIAGRAM OF MEDITATION

Dictated by H. P. Blavatsky to E.T. Sturdy in London 1887-1888

First conceive of **UNITY** by Expansion in Space and Infinite in Time

(Either with or without self-identification)

Then meditate logically and consistently on this in reference to states of consciousness.

Then the normal state of our consciousness must be moulded by:

ACQUISITIONS

Perpetual Presence
in imagination in all
Space and Time.

From this originates
a substratum of
memory which
does not cease in
dreaming or waking.
Its manifestation is
courage.

With memory of
universality all dread
vanishes during the
dangers and trials
of life.

Continued attempt at
attitude of mind to all
existing things, which
is neither love, hate
nor indifference.

Different in external
activity to each,
because in each
the capacity alters.
Mentally the same
to all.

Equilibrium and
constant calm.
Greater ease in
practising the 'virtues',
which are really the
outcome of wisdom;
for benevolence,
sympathy, justice, etc.,
arise from the intuitive
identification of the
individual with others,
although unknown to
the personality.

The Perception
in all embodied
beings of
Limitation only.

Criticism without
praise or blame.

NOTE: Acquisition is completed by the conception
'I am all Space and Time.'
Beyond that ... (It cannot be said).

DEPRIVATIONS

Constant refusal to think of reality of:

Separations
and
Meetings.
Association
with Places,
Times and
Forms.

Futile
longings,
Expectations,
Sad
memories,
Broken-
heartedness.

The
distinction,
Friend and
Foe.

Resulting in
absence of
anger and
bias.
(Replaced
by
judgement.)

Possessions
Greed
Selfishness
Ambition

Personality
Vanity
Remorse

Sensation
Gluttony,
Lust, etc.

NOTE: These deprivations are produced by the
perpetual imagination – without self-delusion* – of
'I am without', the recognition of their being the
source of bondage, ignorance and strife. 'Deprivation'
is completed by the meditation:
'I am without attributes'.

* There is no risk of self-delusion if the personality is
deliberately forgotten.

GENERAL NOTE: All the passions and virtues interblend
with each other. Therefore the Diagram gives only
general hints.

Herein lies the clue to the whole diagram and its centre, as this point contains the 'modus operandi' of the transmutation from passions into virtues. This transmutation cannot take place unless the condition of perception of limitation – i.e. seeing the unreal in all embodied beings – is fulfilled.

Therefore, the first Acquisition can be compared with the well-known verses from the Buddhist Diamond Sutra:

‘Stars, darkness, light,
A phantom, a dewdrop, a cloud,
A dream, a lightning-flash, a bubble; This is how all things should be seen.’

What images could better represent limitation in Space and Time than a lightning-flash and a bubble? Perception of that limitation relativizes the world of appearance, i.e. the realm of forms. Consequently, this perception lessens the impact of that world upon our mind by inculcating into it, to some extent, non-attachment to what happens to us during that period of time which we call our existence.

Due to the materialistic way of life, which tends to become generalised, the mind gets stuck in and used to incorrect ways of thinking. One such incorrect way of thinking is associating consistency and substance with what in reality is neither consistent nor substantial. Materialism originates in the lack of right vision of the whole. Right vision of the whole means that things, ideas and people are ordered in one's mind and that each of them is accorded its own right value – a value which does not prevail by taking precedence over the value of Truth, which is Oneness. Right vision of the whole and perception of limitation in all forms act as a synergetic pair of forces helping to bring about the transmutation from passions to virtues.

4. The diagram starts with:

First conceive of UNITY by Expansion in Space and Infinite in Time

and the last Note on Acquisitions refers to the conception:

I am Space and Time

Both indicate that, in the last stage of the process summarised in the diagram, there is interblending between the conception of Unity, which means knowing theoretically, and being ‘I am’ which is knowing actually. This blending of concept and reality – although lasting only an instant might be the actual realisation of the Self through the recognition of the Self by the Self.

5. The same note ends with:

Beyond that ... (It cannot be said).

Obviously, this refers to what is unknown and unknowable.

II. Following those remarks – which are first glimpses – let us now consider the diagram according to the chronological unfoldment of consciousness as it reveals:

First conceive of UNITY by Expansion in Space and Infinite in Time

Space and Time are determining dimensions of manifestation, which cannot be defined except with them. The Unity referred to here is unity of what is visible and conceivable. Consciousness experiencing the conception of Unity lets itself be pervaded by Unity. The latter, as an inherent quality of the substance of Space, flows unceasingly and, in so doing, creates Time by its movement. Expansion in Space which is boundless – is never-ending. And Time which is bound to Space is therefore infinite as long as consciousness is expanding in Space.

The first statement of the diagram gives the right start, so to speak, to the meditation. This means that the starting point of meditation has to be Unity, boundless, as conceived in Space, and infinite, as conceived in Time.

(Either with or without self-identification)

This hint is rather ambiguous, but it is perhaps useful to note that actually it is difficult to conceive with self-identification or to identify oneself when there is conception. This point is all the more important since at the end of the diagram there will be conception – but with self-identification – referred to as ‘I am Space and Time’.

Then meditate logically and consistently on this in reference to states of consciousness.

Then the normal state of our consciousness must be moulded by:

The terms ‘logically and consistently’ exclude the possibility of any dreamy state of consciousness. On the contrary, they suggest a highly awake and active level, where there is an energetic action which sustains the dynamic conception of Unity as described above. The sustaining of such a state of consciousness is part of meditation itself.

The state of consciousness during the process described by the diagram is defined as ‘must be moulded by’ which is stated next:

**... must be moulded by:
DEPRIVATIONS and ACQUISITIONS**

Reading from right to left:

DEPRIVATIONS

- **Sensation** with 'gluttony, lust etc.', can be assimilated with physical and emotional passions.
- **Personality** with 'vanity, remorse, and
- **Possessions** with 'greed, selfishness and ambition': both can be assimilated with mental passions.
- **The distinction between Friend and Foe** is a kind of sclerosis in relationship. If this Deprivation is actual, it results 'in absence of anger and bias. (Replaced by judgment.); according to the diagram. Another way of putting it is: a quiet mind capable of discrimination.
- **Separations and Meetings, Association with Places, Times and Forms:** All of these can be assimilated with attachment.
- **Futile longings, Expectations, Sad memories, Broken-heartedness.** All these states can be assimilated with mental projections.

The Note on Deprivations shows that the constant mode of functioning in Deprivations is NEGATION. But saying 'I am without ...' still means 'I am'. So there is inevitably self-identification, although NOT with the state of consciousness which is present, even though defined by Deprivations. The self-identification here refers necessarily to what is in the background of consciousness during the whole process, starting from the first step, which is Unity. (Furthermore, self-identification at this stage of evolving consciousness happens independently of the first step.)

For **ACQUISITIONS**, a similar reading leads to simplified points as follows:

- **The Perception in all embodied beings of limitations only.** This point is the 'dynamo' of the whole diagram, being the axis of transmutation from passions into virtues. Another statement could be suggested: '*Perception of the Unreal*'.
- **Criticism without praise or blame** is equivalent to *clarity of mind*.
- **Continued attempt at attitude of mind to all existing things, which is neither love, hate nor indifference.** This is not different from *equanimity*.
- **Different in external activity to each, because in each the capacity alters. Mentally the same to all.** The foundation of this attitude is *awareness*.
- **Equilibrium and constant calm. Greater ease in practising the 'virtues' which are really the outcome of wisdom; for benevolence, sympathy, justice etc., arise from the intuitive identification of the individual with others, although**

unknown to the personality. This entire attitude and such action are the *outcome of Intelligence*.

- **Perpetual Presence in imagination in all Space and Time** is not different from *sustaining awareness of the all-pervading Principle*.
- **From this originates a substratum of memory which does not cease in dreaming or waking. Its manifestation is courage.** The Buddhist tradition calls this substratum of memory *Alaya*, which is the *Universal Soul*. Awareness of this state of Alaya or Alaya-Vijnana is said to make reminiscence of the past possible.
- **With memory of universality all dread vanishes during the dangers and trials of life:** The vanishing of dread resulting from this memory is *non-self-conscious fearlessness*.

The Note on Acquisition states that it is completed by 'the conception "I am Space and Time"'. Here again, there is self-identification, although during the entire stage of Acquisition self-identification has been absent.

If one looks at the diagram as a whole, following the movement of consciousness, one can observe that, starting with the first step, 'either with or without self-identification', consciousness keeps up this mode during the second step, where there is 'meditating logically and consistently on Unity in reference to states of consciousness'. When consciousness is moulded by Deprivations or the constant refusal to think of the reality of passions, there is necessarily self-identification, but not with the state of consciousness at that moment. When consciousness is moulded by Acquisitions, which are mostly an attitude of mind or quality of consciousness at that time, there is no self-identification.

Then the conception **I am Space and Time** completing the Acquisitions, points out that there is again self-identification. But here identification is that of consciousness experiencing a state which is Unity with Unity itself shaped in Space and Time. The evolving process can be summarised as a 'cycle of meditation' that points towards a totally open and new situation in the last part of the Note on Acquisition which reads:

Beyond that... (It cannot be said).

From here on, what happens cannot be said. But What is it?

Examining once again the whole diagram could perhaps bring more insight. As has been said, the diagram summarises a process of consciousness moving from Unity (with or without self-identification) towards Unity, necessarily with self-identification ('I am Space and Time'). The whole process of consciousness evolving from diverse states to the stage of identification with Space and

Time could be matched with the experience of what is called 'the Field' in the thirteenth discourse of the Bhagavad-Gita.

Up to the stage of a substratum of memory – which is *Alaya* – one could say that 'the Knower of the Field' has been watching without interfering or identifying with the level of experience. This condition remains until the last stage of the cycle of meditation, when the conception 'I am Space and Time' emerges within the Field. At that moment, consciousness merges into the object of its experience. There is fusion of the Knower with that which is known in a transcendent quality of consciousness which is referred to as Wisdom (*Prajna*). In other words, the Knower of the Field is then merged with the Field, which is the Field of experience of consciousness. This Field, being all things, all beings, includes actually the field of the human psyche where consciousness experiences inwardly.

When the field of experience is Space and Time – as is the case in the last stage of the cycle of meditation concerned – self-identification means that consciousness which is experiencing Space and Time, as a continuum, merges into that continuum. The fusion of the Knower of the Field with the Field – which is here boundless Space and infinite Time – seems to be the last state which consciousness can actually KNOW. Here ends the domain of the knowable.

'Beyond that ...', i.e. beyond Space and Time, '(It cannot be said)', according to the Note in the diagram. Nevertheless, the thirteenth discourse of the Bhagavad-Gita reads as follows:

'THAT, the light of all lights, is said to be beyond darkness; Wisdom, the Object of Wisdom, by Wisdom to be reached, seated in the hearts of all' (Verse 18)

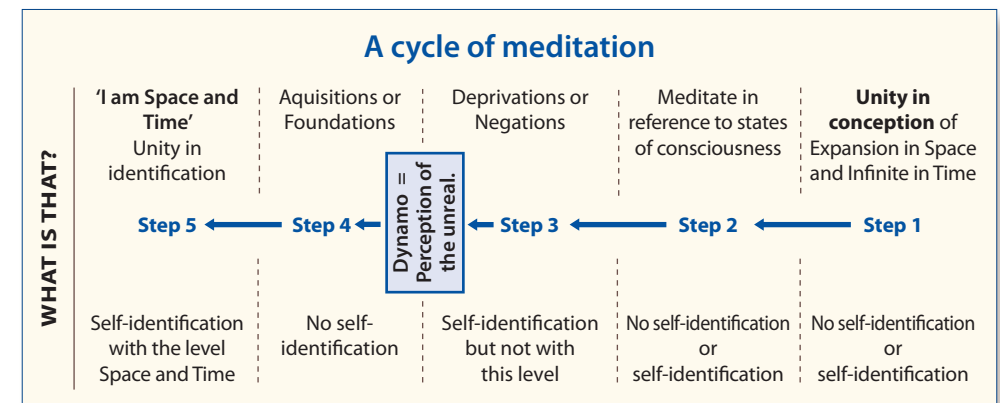
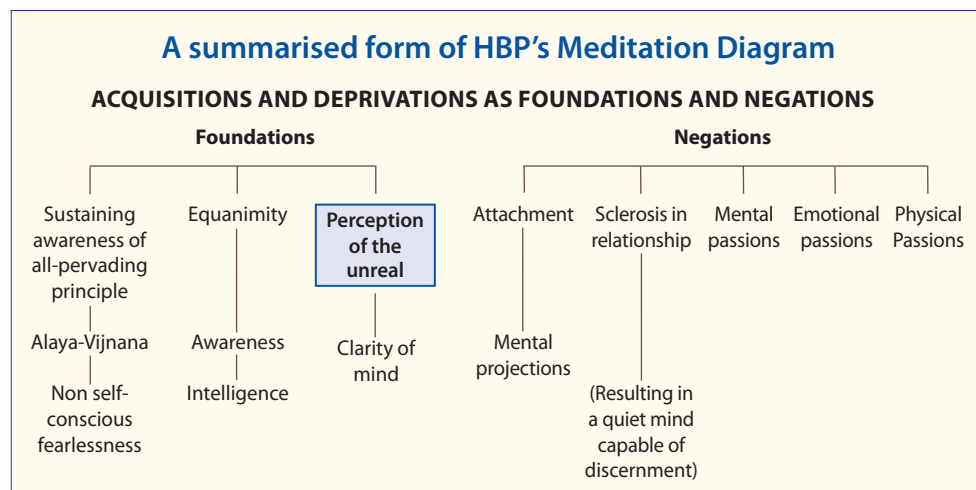
'Without and within all beings, immovable and also movable; by reason of His subtlety imperceptible; at hand and far away is THAT' (Verse 16)

So, beyond what is embodied, felt and experienced, beyond Space and Time, beyond the Field and the Knower of the Field, beyond consciousness of all things, but dwelling in the heart of everyone, what is THAT?

Is not the whole process of meditation simply meant for discovering THAT which is unknowable and nameless?

At the threshold of what is beyond Space and Time, as nothing can be said, one cannot but bow in one's innermost heart. And still, out of a sense of wonder and bliss, the same impossible question remains:

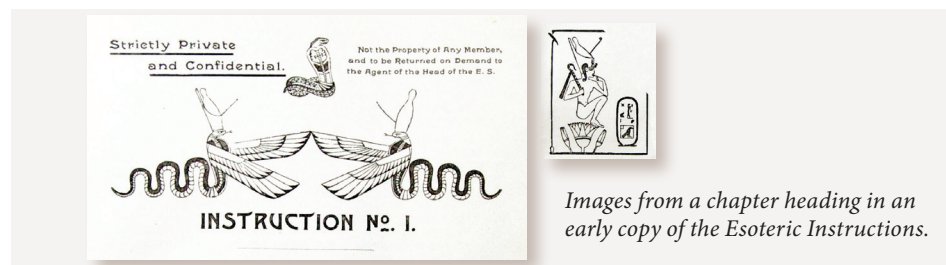
'What is THAT?'



Trần-Thi-Kim-Điêu is Chairperson of the European Federation of Theosophical Societies. She lectures and leads courses all over the world, including giving the Blavatsky Lecture at the English Section's Summer School last year.

She travels widely to encourage co-operation and promulgates the teachings so as to share experiences in the service of the Society. Her main concern is to promote a new way of living where each human life can be guided by universal ethics and the mystic dimension of consciousness.

A brief history of the Esoteric Section, the Diagram of Meditation and E.T. Sturdy



Images from a chapter heading in an early copy of the Esoteric Instructions.

The Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society...

...was a group originally set up in late 1888 by Mme Blavatsky under the guidance of the Masters, and helped by T.S. co-founder W.Q. Judge, for those wishing to make a deeper and more practical study of the Theosophical teachings. “The need of it was felt everywhere. Unable to give out a great many things publicly (either in *Lucifer*, or in *The Secret Doctrine*), and old and tried members being entitled to learn certain things in occultism... the formation of such a section was very much clamoured for from all sides.... if out of the hundred (109) theosophists who have already pledged themselves, I can place on the right and true path half a dozen or so – I will die happy. Many are called, few chosen... I can only show the way to those whose eyes are open to the truth, whose souls are full of altruism, charity and love for the whole creation and who think of themselves last...” (from a letter from H.P.B. to Dr. J.D. Buck in the United States (*Letters of H.P. Blavatsky VII*)).

The Theosophical Society’s magazine *Lucifer*, October 1888 issue, introduced the Esoteric Section, and invited those wishing to join to write to Mme Blavatsky. She then judged their suitability by “studying... their auras and photographs.” *Lucifer* also published an article about the meaning of the pledge to be taken when they joined. After this, the six Esoteric Instructions, which they became known as, were then secret. As the section was world-wide, no meetings were held, but the course papers were sent through the post.

H.P.B. encountered many problems with the Section due to its nature – mainly that people were unable to fulfill the high standards of the pledge which they had taken, and only three Instructions were sent out before she died, on 8th May, 1891. The last three were put together from notes made to members of her Inner Group, and the Compiler of the *Collected Writings*, Boris de Zirkoff

comments “The text that has come down to us exhibits many uncertainties.” Numbers IV and V were both issued in 1891, VI much later in 1901, under the ‘Eastern School of Theosophy’ in New York. On several occasions the Section referred to itself in this way, a notable occasion being in the statement of support for HPB, issued by the British E.S. Council shortly after her death.

Large excerpts of the Instructions can be found in Volume III of *The Secret Doctrine* (which is a collection of H.P.B.’s papers arranged by Annie Besant and published in 1897). The excerpts are entitled ‘Some Papers on the Bearing of Occult Philosophy on Life’, and were published to prevent them from being misrepresented by those wishing to attack the Society.

Instructions I-V, including material connected with the setting up of the Section and letters which accompanied the Instructions can be found on pages 477-713 in H.P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings* Volume 12 1889-1890, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Ill, U.S.A., 1980.

Instructions I-III, ‘Notes on Some Oral Teachings’ and other material are published in *Esoteric Instructions*, H.P. Blavatsky, compiled by Michael Gomes. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 2015.

Michael Gomes, guest lecturer at this year’s 2017 Summer School, has chosen the Esoteric Instructions as the subject for his third talk.

The Inner Group...

...was an inner circle of the Esoteric Section. One of the members, Alice L. Cleather, tells us “She [H.P.B.] selected six men and six women... from her most trusted workers, and formed them into an Inner group bound by a more solemn pledge.” (*H.P. Blavatsky, Her Life and Work for Humanity*, Alice Leighton Cleather, Calcutta, page 68.)

They met weekly, between 20th August 1890 and 22nd April 1891, in a special room reserved solely for them at the house in which H.P.B. lived at the time and which was the Society’s headquarters – 19 Avenue Road, London. Formal notes were not prepared by H.P.B., but each member was requested to bring a notebook in which to keep a log of the teachings as they were spoken by her. These were then compared and a typed copy made of them.

Annie Besant was a member of the group, and a month before H.P.B. died, was appointed as the ‘Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section and Recorder of the Teachings’. Some of the notes appeared as Instructions IV, V and VI as mentioned above. The meetings ceased after H.P.B.’s death.

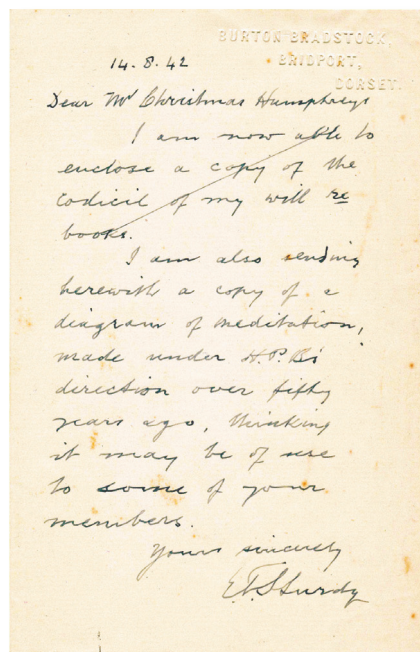
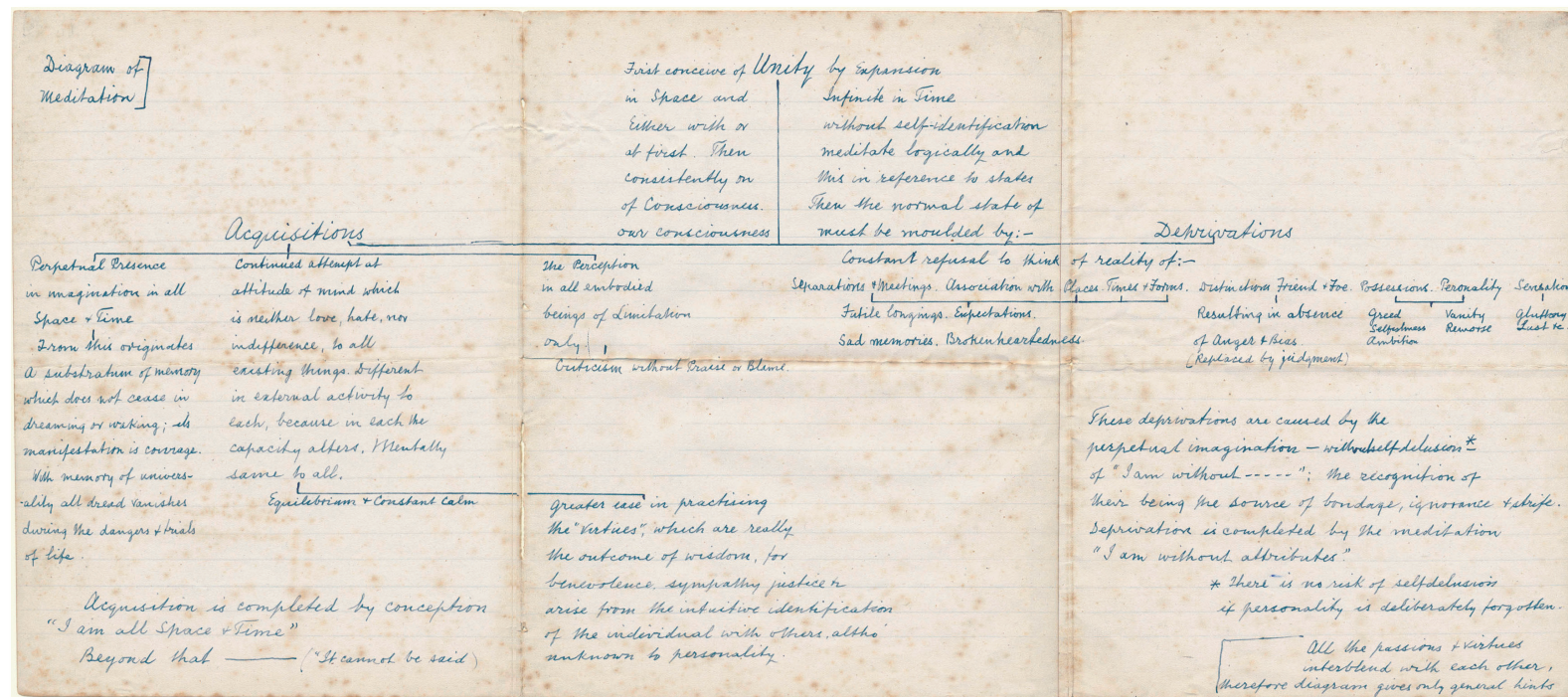
See also Bhupendra Vora’s article ‘The Theosophical Society & The Esoteric Section of Theosophy’ published in the Summer 2015 issue of *Insight*.

The History of the Diagram

One of the six men in the Inner Group was E.T. Sturdy, and it may have been at one of these meetings that H.P.B. dictated the Diagram of Meditation to him, or it could have been during the earlier days of meeting with her in 1887-88. Whichever is the case, Spierenburg tells us:

This diagram is not incorporated in the *Minutes of the Inner Group*.... Among the recipients is E.T. Sturdy, one of the members of the Inner Group. Apparently the diagram was part and parcel of esoteric instruction of H.P.B. For the sake of completeness we print it here.¹

The only reference to its age comes in a short letter, written by E.T. Sturdy to



his friend Christmas Humphreys on 14th August 1942, when he would have been around 82 years old.

Written partially to accompany the mailing of the diagram, the relevant portion reads:

I am also sending herewith a copy of a diagram of meditation, made under H.P.B.'s direction over fifty years ago, thinking it may be of use to some of your members.

The Diagram itself, reproduced here, was written out on lined notebook paper

Above: the original Diagram of Meditation.
Left: the letter to Christmas Humphreys from E.T. Sturdy.

and glued together, its total dimensions measuring 20½ inches (53cms) wide and just under 9 inches (22.6cms deep).

It was printed for the first time in *The Canadian Theosophist*, March 1943, and after that e.g. in *The Theosophist*, January 1968.¹

Trần-Thi Kim-Điêu says of the Diagram, in her Blavatsky Lecture of 2016:

This seems like a tiny gift that got lost in her [H.P.B.'s] tremendous inheritance.... However, serious exploration of the Diagram gives evidence to the fact that it is a precious map destined to guide the genuine inquirers.

¹ *The Inner Group Teachings of H.P. Blavatsky*, compiled and annotated by Henk J. Spierenburg. 2nd, revised and enlarged edition, Point Loma Publications, California, USA, 1995.

With thanks to the Mahatma Letters Trust for permission to photograph and reproduce this original document together with the accompanying note from E.T. Sturdy to Christmas Humphreys.

E.T. Sturdy

Edward Toronto Sturdy (1860-1957) became one of the first members of the TS in New Zealand. This was followed by trips associated with the TS to Adyar, NW India and Ceylon. He first met H.P. Blavatsky in London in 1887, and W.Q. Judge in New York in 1888. Then back to New Zealand where he helped to set up the first Lodge there (Nov 1888). A month later he left for England, where he stayed for a few years, becoming a pupil of H.P. Blavatsky.

A member of the Esoteric Section of Theosophy, he was invited to become a member of the Inner Group in August 1890. "I think I must have been the most skeptical of all the members of HPB's Inner Group" he wrote many years later. He did however, come to believe in H.P.B. and the Masters as "concrete individuals" and not only as ideals.¹ He was also influenced by Vedanta and Buddhist teachings, meeting Swami Vivekananda in 1895 and later working with him on an English translation of the Bhakti aphorisms of Narada.

We learn something of E.T. Sturdy's life from the writer Lafcadio Hearn (a.k.a. Koizumi Yakumo) who wrote in April, 1898: "I have met a most extraordinary man.... His name is E. T. Sturdy. He has lived in India – up in the Himalayas for years – studying Eastern philosophy; and the hotel delicacies will do him no good, because he is a vegetarian.... Beyond any question, he is the most remarkable person I have met in Japan. Fancy a man independent, strong, cultivated, with property in New Zealand and elsewhere, voluntarily haunting the Himalayas in the company of Hindoo pilgrims and ascetics, – in search of the Nameless and the Eternal. Yet he is not a Theosophist exactly, nor a Spiritualist. I did not get very near him – he has that extreme English reserve which deludes under the appearance of almost boyish frankness; but I think we might become fast friends did we live in the same city. He told me some things that I shall never forget, – very strange things."²

He came back to England and settled at Norburton Hall. In 1947, he wrote: "I am the last of all her Inner Group. I live almost the life of a hermit, for my contact with the outer world is almost entirely by letters".¹ He died peacefully in March 1957, aged 97.

Janet Hoult

1. Letter to Boris de Zirkoff. April 18, 1947. Boris de Zirkoff Papers. Records Series 22. Theosophical Society in America Archives Department.

2. Elizabeth Bisland, *The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*, Volume 2 (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2006), 380.

References from TS Wiki, http://www.theosophy.wiki/en/E._T._Sturdy, accessed 3.2.2017.



Edward T. Sturdy, ca. 1902



Above: E.T. Sturdy in his later years outside the front door of Norburton House.



Top right: the main hall with the fireplace bearing the inscription in Sanskrit 'There is no religion higher than Truth'.



Right: part of the inscription.

Norburton Hall

– a house with 'There is no religion higher than truth' carved on its mantelpiece

E.T. Sturdy bought the house and farm buildings in 1901. He was a Sanskrit scholar and was also interested in philosophy and theosophy. Together with Philip Sturdy, his cousin, as architect, he extended the property using the Arts and Crafts style, with features which include wood panelling, stained glass, mullioned windows and carved fireplaces and staircase. Edward Toronto christened his new house 'Norburton' presumably because of its position on the north side of the village. He lived in the house for over fifty years, raising a family – he had a daughter, Dorothy May and a son, Ambrose.

Today the large Main Hall, which houses a grand piano is used by the village as a venue during the Burton Bradstock Music Festival. Its impressive stone fireplace bears the date 1906 and a Sanskrit inscription which was the motto of the Theosophists and translates as 'There is no higher religion (or law) than truth.' In the former dining room there is much Arts and Crafts detailing, and the decoration of the fireplace includes serpents, which are an important symbol in theosophy.

Thanks go to Colyn Boyce for his help with this information

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