

**A World in Distress: The Remedies
As Seen by the Theosophist**
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C.Jinarajadasa

We members of the Theosophical Society have no particular common faith or creed, except our assertion of belief in a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. Our sense of Brotherhood impels us to feel a unity with all that lives, and most particularly with all mankind. Therefore to be a Theosophist means to be acutely conscious of any kind of distress in the world, and to be reformers ever striving to know in what way we can diminish the world's misery. Our prime duty as Theosophists is to go out into the world to abolish or minimize suffering wherever we find it, and in order to do our work efficiently we have a great body of thought called Theosophy to guide us.

This body of thought comes from the past, but it is being continually added to age by age. None of us in the Society is committed to all that Theosophy proclaims; we select from its great ideas whatever teachings and ideals inspire us to live as Theosophists. Each will select according to his temperament, and each will therefore act in life according to the manner in which he feels he can be most serviceable.

Today five of us begin to expound to you what we as Theosophist feel are the solutions to the problem of a World in Distress. But we are only five speakers, and we are not proclaiming something which is final and to be accepted by all. Each one as he expounds will describe the manner in which the great problem appears to him, and what is the way in which he himself can be most efficient in the service of the world. Therefore, as we speak, each will survey the problem from his own particular standpoint, and he will offer you what appeals to him as the remedy. If we had a Convention lasting for a month we could have thirty speakers presenting thirty points of view. Everyone of you as a Theosophist has, or should have, some remedy to suggest; but we are limited only to four days of Convention, and therefore can touch upon only a few of the many remedies which may be suggested to the world.

You are all aware from what you have read in newspapers and heard in lectures what the economists of the world say with regard to the distress everywhere today. They will tell you that it is due to this, that or the other cause, and all the time they are propounding remedies. It is striking that they are not all united in their remedies. Some suggest changing the banking system, others the abolition of tariffs, and so on. But as I visualize the causes from a standpoint which shows them clear to me, the root of all our troubles is due to the a subtle change which has taken place in the world regarding what is worth seeking in life.

Surely there can be no dispute finally as to what is worth seeking — what is the right, what is the beautiful, what is the good. But of late, largely due to the effect of modern science, there has come about a change concerning what is worth seeking. Science has released the forces of Nature, and has given us myriads of new things as the result of the perfection of machinery. The wonderful advance of scientific and mechanical achievement during the last fifty years has given to us numbers of objects which our grandparents never dreamed were necessary for our daily life. We say today that the standard of living has become higher. That is true, but also as the result of these manifold improvements introduced by science and by machinery, the struggle for life has become intensified as never before. New needs have been created for us of which we are conscious which were unknown to past generations. We feel that we cannot be happy unless we have this or the other possession, and year by year more and more objects must cater to our physical comforts. Such is our life today that the whole gospel of modern business is to create more needs for us, and to make us believe that these needs are conducive to our happiness. We are no longer happy with the few needs which our grandparents thought were sufficient.

All the nations are reorganizing themselves economically, and that reorganization fundamentally is to sell more to others, and to purchase as little as possible from them. That is the great economic cry today: Let us organize our country in order to be a seller of many things, but put up tariffs walls so that we may be a buyer of as few things as possible. But as the principal nations have aimed at selling to each other while restricting their purchases from each other, what is the result? A plethora of goods, more goods than the world needs, because there is not enough money or purchasers to buy them. Therefore all the solutions presented today by the economists amount to this: *We must create more money for all, so that they may buy more goods.* I do not think that is the real solution, and I shall explain why.

The great trend away from the old ideals of life, which I have mentioned, has largely been due, I said, to the growth of modern science. In the great past days of religion, men were taught that this our life of 70 or 80 years was only an ante-chamber to a larger life, and that all objects of this world and the activities in it had their value only in so far as they released the powers of the Soul. The gospel of every religion is that man is only a passer-by by travelling through this world into an eternal world. But all that is changed today; more and more people are trying to live in this world as if it and its enjoyments were the only reality. Therefore anything which intensifies the sense of reality of *this* world appeals to them. Naturally enough, all economists take for granted that men know of or care for only one life. They say that we must alter the banking system, abolish or alter tariffs, that the present exploitation of the works must cease, that men's hunger for land must not be thwarted by the few who hold it, that armies and navies must be reduced. They propound a hundred and one suggestions, but all their suggestions come to this: *There must be more money for all!*

But the real solution is this: *There must be more Soul for all.* It is because we have forgotten the great idea that life is fundamentally Soul, and have put instead of Soul the conveniences summed up in the word "money" that today there is a World in Distress. It is by capturing once again the spiritual sense which has fled that the true remedy begins. What is worth while in life? It is upon that the whole problem hinges. In modern days what is the gospel which we are teaching in our educational system? It is that, if you can save money, can invest, and so produce more goods through investment, you will be secure against distress in old age. The whole economic system whispers its message: "Take care of your future in *this* world, provide for your old age, save and invest!"

And yet there is another and the truer gospel which was proclaimed in ancient days and is well

expressed for us in a Chinese saying: "If you have two loaves, sell one and buy a lily". There we have the great spiritual principle of transmuting Life. But that is not the principle today. The principle today is to save and to invest; but what an English poet says sarcastically when commenting upon our modern system is true: "I love a bank for violets. I loathe a bank for savings".

The sense of life, of growth, of self-expression, does not come from a multitude of possessions, but only from possessing the *right* things. When King Janaka saw Mithila, his capital, consumed by fire, he said: "Nothing that is mine is burning". For he had as his eternal possession the Oneness of Life which he had discovered. It is not more money for all that we need for the prosperity of the world, but more good taste for all. It is on such a spiritual principle that the world's reorganization must proceed.

What are the true riches that life has for us? Suppose instead of hoping and planning for a larger income, we plan to have more eyes with which to see, more ears with which to hear. Think of a man striving to train himself to know more flowers, to see more delicate shades in sunsets, to hear more overtones in the roar of the surf. It is these things that are Life, and any true system of education should teach us to select from experience the things that are permanent, and which the wearing away of the body will not take from among our eternal possessions. To discover the permanent from the fleeting, that is the reason why we are born.

But that reason is no longer suggested to us by the religions, at least with any intensity to produce conviction. That is why in many ways we have to learn life all over again. For the greatness of life for an individual comes from the few things that he *selects*. As we lessen the number of our needs the more intrinsic beauty we find in them. To select from life: that is the true task of education. True wealth is always from selecting, and from transmuting the coarser to the finer, the fleeting to the permanent. Let me illustrate. It is quite true that in my room I have a wall full of books, but if I were going to be exiled to a desert island, with only a few of the world's books, I should select just these few; a volume of the Upanishads, the Bible, the Sutta Nipâta, Dante's Divine Comedy, Hardy's poems, and the two Oxford books of English and Spanish verse. And why so few? Because I have discovered by world of literature, and what I read in these reflects my own inner discovery.

It is for this inner discovery of our true wealth and possessions that we are here in the world, but unfortunately that is no longer being taught us clearly today. But religion must come to our aid once again. I do not mean creeds, formulae and rituals. I mean that sense which religion should give of a fine taste towards all life's experiences, whereby we know the lovely from the meretriciously, the eternal from the passing. *Back to the soul — that is the remedy!*

But to teach ourselves to get back to the Soul, how shall we find the method? Not by laws. No laws of an administration, no laws proclaimed by any king or legislator, will teach us where is the way to discover more Soul. That can only be done by the souls themselves. When there are a few in the world who have the true characteristics of the Soul, they are like little miniature suns shining on all sides to others what is the greatness of the Soul.

The solution in each country is for a small number, a thousand at most perhaps, to set about discovering the Soul, and to take their stand on Soul and not on possessions. These few will be marked men in the

beginning, scoffed at an ridiculed. But they will be understood after a while, and the great doctrine will be preached by their mode of living that man comes here to discover what is the essential nature of Soul in *everything* — in each stone, in each shrub, in every human being who lives and suffers. If only the religions of the world today would combine to preach this doctrine: that man is eternal, that his life Here is only to discover something of the beauty of the life Yonder, that this life is only the antechamber to it, that this life which is fleeting, with its miseries and sorrows, has only one value — that we may discover the Perfect, the Eternal, the Beautiful and the Happy!

If one religion were to teach it, if only all the religions would combine today to teach mankind once more that Soul is the greatest thing in life, then the economic machinery of the world which is out of gear would come back into its right adjustment. To lessen the struggle for all — that is the crying need. For if each individual lessened the struggle for himself by selecting, by seeking not the transitory but the eternal world, then slowly, his example would be copied by thousands, and instead of "speeding up" life we should slacken life, until there would be leisure to discover the Soul in the beautiful little things of life, until we se only One Thing — the Essential Thing in eternity. To go wherever in the world we may, and see and read the One in everything, that is Life. When a man finds that One in all existence, he finds all things. Is not the whole ocean mirrored in a dewdrop? Is not the whole beauty of the world in a tiny wild flower? Have we not the Divinity of Christ and Shri Krishna in a child's face?

These are the truths which the world today needs for mankind, and it is only in so far as we understand that in finding the Soul of things we find the All, we shall, to my judgment, discover the remedy for the World in Distress today.

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C.W.Leadbeater

I very thoroughly agree with all that the last speaker has so eloquently said to you. The question put before us appears to be what is the remedy which Theosophy has to offer for the unquestionably unsatisfactory condition of affairs in the world at the present time.

You had better, perhaps, define to yourself exactly what you mean by Theosophy. People sometimes — strangers — come up and say: "But what is this Theosophy: Is it a philosophy? Is it a religion? Is it science?" When you try to answer, you have to say: "No, not exactly any of these, but yet it comprises them all". If you are asked: "What are the objects of the Theosophical Society?" the answer to that is plain enough. "Its first Object is: To form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood", and perhaps that is the only one that concerns us for the moment.

But Theosophy is not imposed upon members of the Society at all. We do not ask them what they believe; that is their own business, not ours. We do exact from them that they shall work for Brotherhood in some way or other, but there are many ways of working for Brotherhood. So then if you say: "What is the attitude of Theosophy:" we reply: "It is a system, but any member who joins the Society to work for Brotherhood is not expected to believe all that the others believe. We have a certain set of beliefs of our own, and that has crystallized itself into a system of philosophy. Theosophy is a philosophy, because it

tells us something about the scheme of things. It is a religion, because it points out a way of life and shows us how, according to the opinion of the great Rishis and Teachers of the world, true progress is only to be made by each individual thinking of the soul and not only of the body; it is distinctly in that respect non-materialistic".

It is a science? Yes, certainly it takes science into account. I should put it that it is a science which has a wider scope than the system to which we ordinarily assign that name. In science there is investigation, mainly from the physical point of view, into the phenomena that surrounds us on our globe. In astronomy we study the other worlds far away from us, but science depends for its conclusions upon the collection of facts on the physical plane. Of course it also includes speculation as to the meaning of the phenomena, but one is safe in saying that science considers that everything must be based upon observation and experiment.

In Theosophy we extend that observation and experiment to include higher parts of the world. I do not myself like talking about "other worlds" at all. We heard just now that religions usually fix their attention on other worlds, and say the life we live here is a preparation for the eternal life in higher worlds. Well, I think I would state that a little differently. First of all, there is an endless life, and the life in all of us — trees, animals, men, the very rocks — is the Divine Life. There is One Great Life. We are working out, each one of us, a very small fragment, as it were, of this Life; and as we do this, it is necessary that we should descend now and then to the physical plane, in order to learn certain things about it, in order to develop certain powers in connection with it. But this is part of an education. The endless life is being lived *now* by everyone of us, and the part that we play will certainly affect our progress in connection with that Life.

We must not despise the physical life here, or turn our backs upon the physical world, for this physical is part of our training. I should myself regard the physical plane as a school, and rather an uncomfortable, unpleasant school, to which you the Soul, the Ego, have to descend sometimes, because there are some lessons that can only be learned here. I fully admit that they are but a small part of the total sum of knowledge and power that you have to gain. The other worlds — let us call them the higher part of this world — are enormously more important, but all the same, under the laws of Nature it is necessary that at this stage of our development we should descend to this physical plane and live here. You may say you would rather not; that has nothing to do with the matter. This is part of the scheme of things.

What sort of life are we supposed to live? It varies very much in accordance with what a man knows about the total of life. If people could only realize, as you were told just now, that life is a matter of the Soul, and that our concern down here is for the benefit of the Soul, then, though you are in a physical body, you must not make the mistake of living only for that. You must consider how much of the Soul, of the great Divine Whole, you can manifest down here. All religions have their teaching on many of these points, and I myself should say that they are like different classes in a school. You go to one class for drawing, to another for mathematics, to another for languages, etc.. And so you are born into different races and religions in order that your character may be rounded off, and that you may learn all sides of some of these mighty truths.

All the great religions agree on certain things. Is Theosophy a religion? Well, at least we may say of it that it is the basis which underlies all religions. It is an endeavour, according to its name, the study of the

Divine Wisdom. God, by whatever name you call Him, is Knowledge, because everything is in Him. However far we are away from that as yet, the nearer we can come to that Knowledge the more our action will inevitably be in accordance with the Law which governs all.

When we talk about Law, you must remember that there is a very great difference between the divine laws and our man-made laws. The laws of any country are made with a view to the benefit of the people of that country as a whole, or ought to be. But they are only the opinion of a particular law-maker as to the best way to govern that country, to help its people along; and of course there may be many ways, many opinions. But don't you see that the laws of Nature are something radically different? Take the law of gravitation. Nothing whatever that you do or say or think makes the slightest difference to the law of gravitation. Of course you can resist it for a time; you can take something in your hand and hold it, and so resist the law of gravitation; but when you let go, it will fall. The laws of Nature are always acting, and therefore of course you have to adapt yourselves, your lives, in accordance with those laws.

If you can have that idea clearly in mind, that the great law, says of Karma, for example, is just as unchangeable as gravitation, just as far above your petty terrors, your temptations, as that, then you would see that there is no use fighting against the Divine Law. You have to order your life in accordance with it. One of the things the Theosophical Society especially advocates is the study of the Law as it manifests itself on other planes than the physical. Science is useful, but do not forget that there are other planes than those which modern science studies to be taken into consideration; and if you study them you will make fewer mistakes down here.

How does all this apply to the distress of the world? Theosophy teaches very much more about the world as a whole — not the physical plane only, but the astral, the mental, the causal worlds, etc.. It teaches that which will very much modify our attitude and therefore our actions. As has been very truly said, all kinds of remedies are being brought forward — remedies in the financial line; you may be "off" or "on" the gold standard; remedies are suggested to create money, so that you can do all sorts of wonders. I do not know anything about finance, but it does seem to me that money always depends upon credit. You may draw a cheque, but will it be accepted? Yes, in your own town, your own country where they will say: "We know you". It is not the same with gold? Why do we trust in gold? Because we think the flow of gold will be steady, because gold is something solid; we can hold it in our hand.

But wait a moment. One of these days the old alchemy will be revived, and it will be possible to make gold; and when gold is just as common as lead, what about your gold standard? Even the discovery of a big gold mine would at once send down the value of gold. It all depends on your trusting one another. That is why Theosophy has something to offer.

There are many disputes recently over what form of government is best for the people, whether an absolute monarchy, or a constitutional monarchy with a Parliament. The word "parliament" means talking, and parliaments do it to such a degree that little business can be done; there is an interminable waste of time. I have been sometimes impressed with the enormous advantages of an absolute government. If something is decided upon by an absolute monarch, it is done; there is no more talk about it. But in our parliaments it is hard to have any work done under a year or two.

What really emerges from history is that if the will of people is good, if they are all moving for the good of the State and not for the individual, then almost any form of government will do. There mere form matters far less than the good will of the people who are to carry it out. I have seen cases where, under the finest government in the world on paper, a great deal of corruption and trouble arose because the people who have to carry the law out are each acting selfishly and not for the good of the whole. The form matters very far less than the goodwill of the people.

And so, as has been said by greater people than we, the problem of the world is the problem of the individual. If you can bring yourself into the true attitude, then almost any system will work; but you had better have something simple if you can.

Now there is financial trouble, trouble between capital and labour, between one country and another, and so on. In every one of these cases there is a great deal to be said on both sides, and the way to solve each problem would be to come together and settle it in a friendly way. Why do not people come together? Because they do not trust one another. Each man is conscious of a certain amount of selfishness in himself, and therefore he gives credit or otherwise for the same to the other man and says: "I know inside that I mean to have so and so, and I am sure the other fellow is also trying to obtain something for himself; and so to whatever he suggests, I shall say, No. "

If they were only truly friendly and brotherly, each would naturally want to present his case, but he would say: "I want to hear what you have to say on your side, and then let us bring someone else to arbitrate". That is just what the League of Nations is trying to do. Some countries have been wise enough, even in the past, do do that. I remember a big dispute between England and the United States about a ship that did some damage to American shipping in the Civil War. Very fortunately both peoples agreed to arbitrate and they put it before the Emperor of Brazil, who took an enormous amount of trouble to collect evidence, and gave his decision that England should pay a certain compensation, about three million pounds, I think. Of course the English people grumbled a little, but they paid it. Suppose that instead they had gone to war; don't you think it would have cost each side three hundred million pounds or more?

If you learn something about the higher planes, you will see that nothing is worth quarrelling about. To settle a dispute anyway is better than to fight, in nearly all cases. Of course, there are some times when a nation must fight, as when Sri Krishna said to Arjuna: "Therefore fight, O Bharata". There are cases like that, but first try all other methods. And so I should think that with all these disputes, the first thing would be to come into a true brotherly attitude about it, and then whatever arrangement was made, the people would fall in with it.

I cannot say what is the best way out of the financial difficulty; we want financial experts for that. But this we can say, that while we distrust one another we shall not arrive at any true solution. There are starving people; if we could come together and say: "This must not be, this must be put right", if all agreed upon putting it right, the starvation would end. I am great believer in the human intellect; it could settle all matters that are in dispute, if only people would approach them in a brotherly attitude. There are so many people whose idea of compromise is having their own way.

This is the great thing Theosophy has to say to you all - have Brotherliness. In financial matters you had

better see how the principle can be applied. Theosophy does not go into details. Capital and labour — there is much to be said on both sides. Theosophy gives you this advice: Approach the other people in a brotherly spirit. Certainly the collection brain of humanity will be wise enough to find a way. First of all be in the frame of mind of the Whole, as far as you can, and not be thinking of I, I, I, all the time.

Mind, I am not saying it is altogether your fault. It is not altogether the world's fault. Men have come up very slowly from the animal kingdom into the human, then into what we call the "more highly civilized life". They have developed individuality during all that time since they left the animal kingdom. It was weak at first, and had to grow strong, and in order to do that it had to think very much about itself. It is not against the law that the savage should be selfish, but it is against the law that *you* should be. He has to fight at first until he has formed a strong centre, or he will not be of much use later on in his evolution. It is not so much that selfish people are wrong as that they are out of date; they have not grasped yet that we are on the upward arc back towards Unity. If they realized that, a great many of these difficulties would be speedily solved. If every one had goodwill, agreement would be reached.

So I think that is our Theosophical contribution; not that we can pretend to settle the details of all these things, but we do say: You must begin by altering your spirit, by understanding that we are all one in reality, and that therefore when you are fighting against a fellowman you are fighting against yourself, because all humanity is one, and it should be one expression of the Mighty Logos of the System, the One Self. If we knew that really, fully, we should not have all these local difficulties. Let us move towards Brotherhood in everything, and promote it in every way we can; then we shall be making our contribution towards solving these problems of the world. I do not presume to suggest details; the spirit of the things is the main matter, and there is where Theosophy can speak.

Agree first on what you want to do, on what is good for the advancement of the whole world; and remember that each one of you is part of it and is responsible for doing his little bit wherever he happens to be. Wherever you are, you are not there by chance; you are put there because that is what you have deserved and also because it is there where you can make the best advancement. Evolution, you know, is working for the good of all. "God has a plan", a Great One said not long ago, "and that plan is evolution". It includes not only the development of whole world, but also of every individual, every single person in it. All are part of the Great Plan, and all the while we are being given opportunities. Of course we may take them, or leave them. Many people miss opportunities mostly because they do not see them.

Those of us who have spent many years in investigation know certain things that prove the Unity of all that lives, and therefore we can say with perfect confidence this much: that the movement of all mankind as a whole is onwards and upwards steadily, and so we must try to promote that in every way. We must never forget that each one of us has his own part to play, and must play it not only for his own sake but for his sake of the the world, because he is one little cog in the great machinery. You have heard much about individual uniqueness. It is absolutely true that every man is different from all others; he has to develop himself and contribute his little bit to the work. If he fails, the work is not progressing as well as it might.

To me the fundamental thing is: Bring yourself into the right attitude; learn all you can in order to understand the scheme; and then act accordingly. Modern science has discovered remarkable things about hygiene. It would be foolish to take no notice of them; surely a man who knows of them but does

not conform to them is very silly. That is true also of the higher things. When you have higher knowledge, you would be distinctly foolish if you did not act according to it. Emphasize Brotherhood in every way you can, and try in every way to mollify disputes. Smooth things down; move for peace always, and have understanding.

I am told that there are quarrels between Muhammadans and Hindus just now in India; but for heaven's sake, why? Why cannot each man worship his own Deity in his own way? If the other man does things you do not like, let him go his own way; do not try to force him into yours. Brotherhood always; in the beginning, the middle and the end.

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L.W.Rogers

"A World in Distress" is a very accurate description of the present economic condition of the planet on which we live. We are accustomed to periodical financial depressions in various parts of the world, now in this nation and now in that; and we are familiar with occasional famine through the widespread failure of crops in India, in China, and sometimes elsewhere. But never before in the known history of the human race has there been universal distress in the midst of plenty. We are not only a world in distress, but this is a terrifying form of distress that combines the physical and the mental, a partnership of hunger and fear.

It seems that no great calamity ever comes without warning, and without its lesson to teach. The classical Theosophical example would be Atlantis; and if the lesson that gross selfishness brings terrible reaction was not then learned a repetition in some form is inevitable. The world of that day had warnings in plenty but still clung to its pernicious course. Many intelligent men prophesied the World War but begged in vain for a serious consideration of their views before it should be too late. Again, today, there are persistent predictions of impending doom, and the warnings of approaching disaster come from practical men of affairs whose intelligence and ability are beyond question. Among them are economists, statesmen and captains of industry — John Maynard Keynes, the noted British economist, Montagu Norman, Governor of the Bank of England, H.G.Wells, a thinker of world repute, and others of equal reputation for good sense. Some of these men declare that the only hope is for the statesmen to turn affairs over to the economists, some say that our civilization will not last a year, others that it will soon go with a crash and with slight chance of reconstruction, while all agree that unless drastic changes are soon made utter chaos with unknown but terrible consequences will overwhelm us.

Now, what actually are the conditions upon which a prediction so alarming is based? To me they seem to be first, and perhaps most impressive of all, the fact that although the mechanism of the world for producing food and goods is vastly superior to what it ever before has been, nevertheless multitudes of people throughout the world are living in poverty. Steam and electricity have increased the productive power of the race to the point where one man can do more than ten could do a generation ago. But that has not prevented want and destitution so widespread that it fills the governments of many nations with fear.

The next fact to arrest attention is that while in some sections food is so abundant that it cannot be used, in other places the people are upon the verge of starvation. Brazil burns coffee because there is no market for it. Farmers in Iowa use grain for fuel because they have no money with which to buy coal. Millions of bushels of fruit have rotted on the trees because the price it will bring is less than the cost of harvest. Yet millions of people are hungry.

The third item in the universal tragedy is that small property owners are losing their possessions because they can find no way in which to pay the taxes. In the State of Mississippi 39,699 farms were sold in one day by sheriffs throughout the State for taxes and on mortgage foreclosures. Thus within a period of a few hours about forty thousand families lost their homes. From one American city it is reported that 11,500 city lots were sold for taxes. One State reports that about fifteen per cent of the town property, in addition to farm lands, has been sold for taxes, and that not less than one-fourth of the real estate of all kinds has passed to the ownership of the State. If we add to that the mortgage foreclosures by companies and individuals we shall have some understanding of the rapidity with which the ownership of the property of the world is passing to the banks and money-lenders.

The fourth form of misfortune is that people who are dependent upon incomes derived from industrial earnings find those incomes shrinking if not totally disappearing. Looking closely at the report of a leading corporation that is in the class known as "gift edged", or super sound financially, we find that its net earnings are less than one-seventh what they have normally been for a long series of years. Consequently a family whose income is derived from money invested in the stock of that company now has but one dollar to spend for every seven dollars they had in the past. Tens of thousands of people who confidently believed that they had assured incomes for life now find that they have but little. In some cases their total investments have vanished.

In this world-wide calamity there are many phases of distress, but perhaps few are so pitiful as that of youth denied its legitimate experience in human affairs. Our colleges and universities are turning out annually an enormous number of young men and women educated for the trades and professions but who can find no opportunity of employment. In thousands of home youths arriving at manhood's estate learn that the family income is not even equal to the proper support of their sisters and parents. So they go out into the world seeking the employment that cannot be found. From one country it is reported that more than two hundred thousand of them under the age of twenty-one years are drifting about from city to city and gradually becoming dependent upon charity.

Many elderly people can remember the time when, in the newer nations, there were no great inequalities of wealth and poverty. Everybody at least had food and clothing and shelter. There were neither millionaires nor paupers. But for the last half century the wealth of the world has been drifting with accelerating speed into the hands of the few while poverty has been increasing among the masses of the people. What has brought about this state of affairs?

There are many factors in the problem. In the younger countries where there were immense areas of virgin land and enormous natural resources, able, resourceful men contrived, through special legislation, which was often obtained dishonestly, to get control of the various bounties of nature, the forests, the deposits of oil, coal, iron, etc., and by organizing corporations with enormous capital to crush out all competitors. By such methods vast fortunes were amassed. Gradually a plutocracy grows up and

assumes control of human affairs, always seeing all problems from the viewpoint of great wealth. It was Ambassador Gerard, who represent the United States at Berlin prior to the World War, who made the startling statement that twenty men in America have it within their power to control the national policies of that country. Whether or not it is true that only a score of individuals have such power, it certainly is true that a plutocracy of wealth and power constitutes an "invisible government" that manages to defeat legislation that is unfavourable to the interests of the extremely rich. I have been speaking chiefly of the United States only, because I am more familiar with what is occurring there and because statistics in that country are easily obtained; but what is true of nation today is substantially true of all nations of its class. Every commercial and manufacturing country has its plutocracy of wealth and power, that constitutes its actual government and which really determines the national policies, quite regardless of the political party that happens for the moment to be in control. To put it differently, what has come to be known as "big business" really governs in every nation and always gets what it wants regardless of what may be best for the masses of the people.

There is not time to go into the details of just how the policies of "big business" are inimical to the common welfare, but one or two items will indicate the injurious nature of some of the things that the plutocracy has invented. The gold standard is one of them. It has so limited the volume of the money of the world that the free exchange of commodities has become impossible and people are compelled to resort to barter, to trading wheat for oil, and coffee for rice, because there is not money enough to facilitate exchange. Another injurious thing is the so-called "protective" tariff. It is claimed for it that it guarantees high wages to the workers in the factories, that it "protects" them from the competition of lower paid labour in other nations. Has it done so in the United States? Or has the gold standard enabled that country to escape the depression? Of course not. Never before have our tariffs against foreign goods been so high, but our factories are without work and our workmen without wages. Never before has the national treasury held so large a share of the world's gold and never before has hunger and destitution been so general. Like the gold standard, the tariff against foreign goods strangles trade, and a few only get profits at the expense of the many.

For more than two years the apologists of the present industrial system have been assuring us that prosperity "is just around the corner" and that all our troubles will soon be over if we are only patient for a little while longer. But at last even "big business" has taken alarm because matters have grown steadily worse. And what remedies do they propose? Not one thing that means a fundamental change, not one proposition that interferes with special privilege, not a single idea that goes to the root of the evils that afflict us.

What cure, then, is Theosophy able to offer? One Theosophical truth alone is potent enough, if actually comprehended and practised, to set the world right. That one truth is the *underlying Unity of the Human Race*, the fact that an injury to *anyone* will certainly react disastrously to those responsible for it. The man who is willing to injure another that something may be gained for himself is careful to break no statute law; but he thinks nothing at all about natural law, for he has never heard of Karmic reactions. But if he could be shown that to injure another is to hurt himself, that to wreck another's fortune is to imperil his own, that to strike another is to aim a blow at his own heart, then that man would do the right and the merciful thing in the present and the future. In his ignorance he uses his intellect and power against others because he can see only the immediate results to the separated self. Theosophical knowledge would turn his abilities to the service of the race, and that would be the complete solution of the economic problem; for there is nothing wrong with the world except the selfishness that interferes with the operation

of natural law. The earth has never yielded more abundant harvests. The help from labour-saving devices has never been so great. As a whole the race can produce enough in a few weeks to sustain itself for a year. The trouble is not that we do not produce enough for all but that what is produced is not equitably distributed. We are dealing with a problem that can be solved only by a statesmanship that sees our troubles from the viewpoint of the common welfare of humanity.

Just what must be done? We must find the method by which the producers, from the man in the ditch to the manager in the office, the men and women in every activity of civilization, will receive the equivalent of the values they create. There could then be no such thing as poverty anywhere, and there could be no such thing as enormous and useless accumulation of wealth. But there would be more than enough for all. Literally everybody would be wealthy, if the sum total of wealth annual created by the race were equitably distributed in proportion to the thought creation and the labour creation of each. Some would have very much more than others but all would have abundance. Do not overlook the fact that although there are such vast numbers of wealth creators idle now throughout the world, nevertheless there is a large surplus of food and goods in addition to the enormously greater annual accumulation of capital,

As the matter now stands, what prevents that all important equitable distribution of the wealth annual created? In a word it is simply the various forms of human selfishness that have crystallized into special privileges for the few; and the difficulty is not only that wealth accumulates in some places while poverty is accentuated elsewhere, but also that the mechanism of production passes into the ownership of those few who have no other motive for operating it than that of gain; and there can be no profit when the people cannot buy. Hence the shops and factories are becoming increasingly idle.

The Theosophical philosophy is equal to the situation. We must hammer home that truth of the absolute Unity of the Race. People must learn that there can be no such thing as personal gain at the expense of others. We must be aggressively active in destroying the walls that have been built between groups of citizens and between the nations. As tribes have grown into nations, nations must now grow into the Commonwealth of the World. We shall never have world peace until we have destroyed the rivalries between the separated nations, because war is the result of economic strife. There can be no better illustration than Japan at Shanghai. Her one demand there was: "Stop the boycott on the sale of my goods". It amounted simply to the convincing argument: "Buy my goods or I will shoot you". The economic cause of war is not always so obvious but it is always there in some form.

The first step toward the return of prosperity is for the nations of the world to learn that substituting co-operation for selfish isolation will pay in the material as well as in the moral sense. They must learn that greed is just as bad for a nation as for an individual. They must be told plainly that nationalism is but a narrow form of selfishness, and that no matter how much it may be gilded and glorified by sentiment it leads to ultimate disaster.

It must not be supposed that in a matter of such complexity the ground can be covered in an hour. Too many factors are involved. But there is an exceedingly important one that should not be overlooked because it alone would perpetuate the problem after many other difficulties were removed. The displacing of men by machinery is the point. It is a case of a beneficent thing being the temporary means of making trouble. A few centuries ago the workmen belonged to the estate on which they were born. But even so their lot was better in the Feudal Age than it was after the machine introduced factory life. The

machine enormously increased the productive capacity of the workers and therefore the wealth of the world. Had that sudden increase of wealth been equitably distributed in higher wages, and increased standards of living, all humanity would have benefited. But, and here again is where Theosophy so clearly explains the present situation, the development of compassion has not been equal to the development of intellect. Capital took too much and gave labour too little. By law, as well as by competition, wages were kept at the minimum and the hours of labour at the maximum. Finally, organization gave labour the power of collective bargaining, but inventive genius filled the world with machinery so rapidly, and wealth consequently came so fast, that collective bargaining had little effect as an equalizing agent.

Have you thought of the rapidity with which machinery is displacing people? Forty or fifty years ago lamp lighters walked from corner to corner through the cities lighting each gas lamp as they went. There was an army of lamp lighters. Now we have electricity and a single switch can instantly do the work of a multitude of men. Recently an American inventor found a way of making for \$7.50 an automobile frame that previously cost a hundred dollars. That greatly increased the general wealth but it also put nearly three thousand men in one factory out of work. That displacement of people is going on in every department of industry. Do not forget that the machine age has only well begun. Far greater inventions than we now have will come. That is natural and inevitable. The existing wealth of the world will be doubled again and again as invention continues, until finally a tenth of the population can produce more than the race can consume, and nine-tenths of the people will have neither work, wages nor incomes. That is what we shall ultimately come to under the present economic system, if it continues.

Although the distress is world-wide, and although the situation has for many months been growing worse, not a single statesman anywhere has proposed any remedy that shows the slightest grasp of the fundamental principles involved in the problem. None of them seem to have the slightest conception of where the trouble lies; so they talk of modifying the tariff, the rearrangement of war debts, and how to revive foreign trade! That is about as sensible as to say that a good remedy for poverty is to find a million dollars that somebody else has lost! How can foreign trade be revived when the people in any particular nation cannot even buy the goods already there? The trouble is not with foreign trade but with domestic trade which is paralysed because about a fourth of the people have no money to spend. Statistics show that in the United States the purchasing power of the farmer population alone has shrunk from sixteen thousand million dollars a year to less than five thousand million dollars. That means a domestic trade loss of eleven thousand million dollars annually or more than twice our total foreign trade at its best! And what is the loss through the enforced idleness of about twelve million wage earners? Perhaps not less than twenty thousand million dollars more. Such figures make all the talk about war debts and loss of foreign trade being responsible for our troubles look foolish. The trouble lies far deeper than any current circumstance. It is inherent in the economic system itself.

It is improbable that the platform of any existing political party in the world contains the solution of our problem. It is clear that the present system has failed and that its apologists can neither understand why nor offer a reasonable remedy. The future system will probably evolve from the ruins of the present one as we gradually learn from trial and error. But any plan to be successful must embody certain fundamental principles. It must test all its measures by the rule of the greatest good to the greatest number and see every problem from the viewpoint of the common welfare of the race.

Apparently world-wide upheavals are impending, and many time-honoured institutions will disappear and

new ones will be evolved. We may pass through a period of stress and turbulence that will clear away much old Karma rapidly as the foundation of a new and better civilization is laid. But under the beneficent laws of nature nothing can happen that should not occur, and out of the chaos and storm will emerge a finer humanity, with less selfishness, and a greater love of liberty, with more tolerance, with more humility, and with knowledge that rests upon experience — the only true knowledge there is.