

Before dealing with investigations, let me make clear my own position with regard to all questions of opinion and belief within the Theosophical Society itself. Some of our members echo the statements of one seer or another, and seem to consider that such a statement ought to preclude further discussion. But no one in the T.S. has any authority to lay down what people shall think, or not think, on any subject. We are not in the position of an orthodox Church, which has certain definite articles of faith, which imposes certain definite creeds in which all faithful members are bound to believe. The only point which we must accept is Universal Brotherhood, and even as to that we may differ in our definition of it. Outside that, we are at perfect liberty to form our own opinions on every subject; and the reason of that policy is clear and an exceedingly good one. No intellectual opinion is worth the holding unless it is obtained by the individual effort of the person who holds that opinion. It is far healthier to exercise our intelligence, even if we come to a wrong conclusion and form an inaccurate opinion, than simply, like parrots, to echo what other people say, and so put out of all possibility intellectual development.

In fact, differences of opinion among the members ought to be regarded as safeguards to the Society rather than as menaces, for our one great danger, as H. P. B. recognized, is the danger of getting into a groove, and so becoming fossilized in the forms of belief that many of us hold today; this will make it difficult for people in the future to shake off these forms, and thus will involve posterity in the same troubles which so many of us have experienced with regard to the teachings among which we were born. The Society is intended, always has been intended, to be a living body and not a fossil, and a living body grows and develops, adapting itself to new conditions; and if it be a body which is spiritually alive, it should be gaining continually a deeper and fuller view of truth. It is absurd for us to pretend, at our present stage of evolution, that we have arrived at the limit of the knowledge which it is possible for men to obtain. It is absurd for us to say that the particular form into which we throw our beliefs at this moment is the form which is to continue for ever after us, and to be accepted by those who follow us in time. All of us who study deeply must be fully aware that our conceptions of truth are continually deepening and widening, that, as we might reasonably expect, we find new avenues opening up before us; and nothing could be more fatal to a Society like ours than to hallmark as true special forms of belief, and then look askance at any one challenging them, trying to impose these upon those who will come after us. If the Society is to live far into the future, as I believe it will, then we must be prepared to recognize now, quite frankly and freely, that our knowledge is fragmentary, that it is partial, that it is liable to very great modifications as we learn more and understand better; and especially is this true of everything which goes under the name of investigation.

Annie Besant, *Investigations into the Super-physical*
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