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Responses to Ethical Issues of Late Modernity

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Oral Presentation O5.2

RESPONSES TO ETHICAL ISSUES OF LATE MODERNITY

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This paper explores the ethical principles and conceptualizations articulated by members of the Theosophical Society in America. The research focuses on the Theosophical Society's responses to ethical issues of late modernity, specifically to Zygmunt Bauman's problems of universality and foundation. In their responses to issues of late modernity, members of the Theosophical Society employ premodern, modern, and postmodern approaches in their conceptualizations of morality in a unique Theosophical framework. Special attention was paid to the members' use of postmodern ethics.

The data analyzed consists of one- to two- hour long qualitative interviews conducted with individual members of Theosophical Society, as well as documents issued by the Theosophical Publishing House that address ethical issues. The members were asked to explore their own conceptions of morality, specifically with regard to issues of universality and foundation and to the ways that the Theosophical Society deals with problems of ethics.

Members of contemporary society grapple with the problems of universality and foundation in late modernity, and this study of the Theosophical Society illustrates some unique world-constructing methods by which to deal with these problems. There have been few studies on the Theosophical Society, and this paper brings many of their viewpoints to light.