

Theosophy

in Australia

June 2010 volume 74 number 2

Contents

<i>From the National President</i>	34	<i>Minutes of the 2010 Annual Convention Business Meeting</i>	58
<i>Nature Mirrors the Divine: In her Laws and in her Art</i>	35	<i>Calendar of Events—National TS Centres</i>	60
<i>The Problem with God</i>	40	<i>Call for Nominations—Election of State Representatives</i>	61
<i>An Interface of The Dreaming with Christianity</i>	44	<i>Reviews</i>	62
<i>The Making of The Secret Doctrine</i>	49	<i>News and Notes</i>	63
<i>The Campbell Theosophical Research Library: New Acquisitions</i>	57		

The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers, belonging to any religion or to none, who are in sympathy with its Objects. The motto of the Society is *There is no Religion higher than Truth*. The word *Religion* in this statement is a translation of the Sanskrit *dharma*, which among other things means practice; way; virtue; teaching; law; inherent nature; religion; and that which is steadfast or firm. The word *Truth* in the motto is a translation of the Sanskrit *satya*, meaning among other things, true, real and actual. It derives from the root *sat*, sometimes translated as boundless unconditioned existence.

Theosophy is not defined in the Constitution of the Theosophical Society, or in any official document. It literally means divine wisdom, *theosophia*, but members of the Society are left to discover what it is for themselves, taking as guides whatever religions or philosophies they wish.

The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

*To encourage the study of Comparative Religion,
Philosophy and Science.*

To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being.

From the National President ...

Dara Tatray



A common tactic used to marginalise psychic research, Theosophy and various forms of uncomfortable knowledge is exemplified by the following statement of J. Robert Oppenheimer, scientific director of the Manhattan Project (to design the first A-bomb): ‘If we cannot disprove Bohm, then we must agree to ignore him’ (*Network Review* Spring 2010). Bohm’s unconventional treatment of quantum mechanics and its lukewarm reception was discussed in the last two issues of *Theosophy in Australia*. But the attitude of some scientists towards valid, testable—not disproved—hypotheses which bear uncomfortable broader implications continues to amaze.

It recently came to my attention that in 2001 Royal Mail in Britain received complaints from British scientists regarding a statement sent out with a set of stamps produced in commemoration of the Nobel Prize centenary. A winner of each of the six categories of the Prize was asked to provide a statement about their discipline and its possible future direction. “Physics and the Nobel Prizes” was written by Brian Josephson, head of the Mind-Matter Unification Project of Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge University, who won the Nobel Prize in 1973 for what is known as the Josephson Effect in superconductivity. His 130 word contribution closed as follows:

Quantum theory is now being fruitfully combined with theories of information and computation. These developments may lead to an explanation of processes still not

understood within conventional science such as telepathy, an area where Britain is at the forefront of research (<http://www.tcm.phy.cam.ac.uk/-bdj10/stamps/text.html>).

The fractious letters sent to Royal Mail in response to the above included statements such as: ‘This is utter rubbish. Telepathy simply does not exist’. One complaint suggested that practicing transcendental meditation has had a disastrous effect on Josephson’s intellect. Josephson’s response seems to have been rather muted. Perhaps he was busy, thanking his lucky stars that book-burning and witch-hunting are no longer in fashion. He did however admit deliberately using the occasion to highlight paranormal research, which journals such as *Science* and *Nature* routinely censor. As most of our readers know, there is a lot of evidence in support of telepathy and other psychic phenomena, which, because it has not been disproved, is instead ignored. Similarly, in the history of The Theosophical Society we find that if an author or a book cannot be shown to be fraudulent or be made ridiculous it will instead be ignored. The first stratagem normally resorted to is ridicule, the second is silence. Trying to ignore David Bohm has not really worked. His ontological interpretation continues to gain in significance. It is perhaps not surprising that a physicist working on the Atom-bomb would like to disprove the suggestion that the truth about reality is nonlocal undivided wholeness: or failing that, to ignore it. But truth is stronger than fiction. ❖

Nature Mirrors the Divine: In Her Laws and In Her Art

Edi Bilimoria



EXPOSITION

The principal tenets of the ancient Mysteries—from Vedānta, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism in the East, and Plato, the Kabbalah and Alchemy in the West—affirm the fact of the radical Unity of the ultimate essence of each part of Nature, such that existence is One organic Being, not a combination of several things linked together. Accordingly, there is no such thing as dead matter. Everything is endowed with consciousness; and is indeed the product of consciousness. These tenets have been synthesized in a modern idiom by the likes of H. P. Blavatsky, Paul Brunton and Ken Wilber in what is sometimes referred to as the perennial philosophy. If these propositions are taken to be true, not as dogma or blind belief, but as working hypotheses as in good science (and incidentally these ideas are finding ever-increasing corroboration from quantum physics), then self-consistently it follows that:

1. Consciousness is the ultimate Reality which we may choose to call the Divine—and if that be the case then;
2. There is one fundamental law—Divine/Natural Law—that functions at all levels. Not a collection of separate laws but one law. All the laws of physical nature that science has discovered to such perfection such as electromagnetism, light, etc. are tributaries from one central stream of Divine Law (which Einstein intuitively realized when he spent the last thirty years or so of his life attempting to unify gravity with electromagnetism), and so;
3. All manifestation spanning the whole spectrum from the macrocosm to the microcosm is the expression in Nature of the operation of

Divine Law; in which case, Nature being the visible garb and expression of the Divine must, like a hologram, mirror Divine Law as a whole, and in her various aspects resemble a fractal from a master pattern.

Let us try to discern how Nature's laws, her beauty and her art, mirror the Divine even though our ordinary human state, immersed in materiality, must perforce see such Divine expression in terms of Sense.

Just as invisible white light is broken into a coloured spectrum by a prism, Divine Law is refracted through our senses into a spectrum of beauty in which the various arts are like colours, each distinct yet merging one into another: music into poetry, poetry into literature, then into painting, decoration, sculpture and architecture.¹

The first Divine Law is Unity. But for manifestation there must be a duality subsumed within the Unity. And so the second aspect of Divine Law is Polarity. In the West, Schopenhauer pointed out that polarity or the sundering of a single force into two opposed activities forever striving after re-union is a fundamental phenomenon in nature that we see in the positive and negatives poles of magnetism, in night and day, in consonance and dissonance, male and female. In the East, there is the ancient Hindu-Aryan legend that in order that the world might be born, the Creator-Brahma, fell asunder into Man and Wife—Brahma and Saraswati—in other words became Name and Form. The two universal aspects of Name and Form are what the perennial wisdom refers to as the two modes of consciousness one of Time and the other of Space.² This story of the one Brahma dividing in two is no mere Oriental imagery for: “Tis thus at the roaring loom of time I ply,

and weave for God the Garment thou see'st him by".³ Space and Time weave the fabric by which we see the garment—the expression of the Divine. Goethe's affirmation is indeed a precise scientific exposition of the fact of polarity. In all the arts there is an evident polarity. In music we have the major and minor modes; the chords of the dominant seventh and the tonic; dissonance and consonance. In speech, we find the vowel and the consonant; in painting the warm and the cool colours; in architecture the vertical column and the horizontal lintel.²

But now another aspect of Divine Law seems to pervade all nature, namely the Trinity. For two implies three: twilight comes between day and night; the child resolves the polarity between man and woman; in music there is a resolving chord between the dominant seventh and tonic; in architecture the arch is the interface between the column and the lintel. Dualities and triplicities are not individual components of Divine Law or separate laws but rather the *modus operandi* or operating mechanism whereby unity—the implicate order—can become explicated through tension, and its resolution as triplicity, the child of duality. From triplicity emerges multiplicity which implies symmetry and balance.

So it stands to reason that when we look into Nature we see mirrored three aspects of Divine Law: there is an intrinsic sense of harmony and proportion, a sacred geometry; correspondences exist at all levels, with the laws operating in the macrocosm mirrored in the microcosm; and each part of nature is entangled with the rest of nature in what modern physics would term nonlocality. Let us see some examples of these.

NATURE MIRRORS THE DIVINE Harmony — The Golden Mean

A harmony of proportion pervades Nature as also great art, which mirrors the harmony in Nature. Known as the golden ratio, approximately equal to 1.62, it says that the whole to the greater part is as the greater to the lesser part. We see

examples of this in the Greek temples and in the human body. In great music we find, for example, that Chopin's Etudes and Nocturnes are formally based on the golden ratio in that the biggest climaxes of both musical expression and technical difficulty invariably occur about two-thirds of the way into the piece.

David Bohm maintained that there is an inner, hidden, enfolded or implicate order analogous to Plato's intelligible realm that underlies the outer, unfolded or explicate order, analogous to Plato's sensible realm. Not surprisingly then, we would expect the golden ratio to underpin the very core of life and the heart of matter. This seems to be the case. The DNA molecule has a length-to-breadth ratio of 1.62. Fig. 1 shows the remarkable agreement between the experimental values of the mass of atomic and subatomic particles and their theoretical values from the work of El Naschie⁴ who drew upon Bohm's Platonic insights and discovered that particles appear to be a 'cosmic symphony', that their relationships form a harmonic musical ladder and a function of the golden ratio and its derivatives (like Bohm, El Naschie was nominated for the Nobel Prize).

The Golden Ratio at the very heart of matter

Subatomic particle	Theoretical mass from Golden Ratio, Φ (MeV)	Experimental value (MeV)
electron	$\sqrt{(10\Phi^2)}/10$ = 0.51166	0.511
neutron	$20\Phi^8$ = 939.574	939.563
proton	$20\Phi^8 \cos(\pi/60)$ = 938.28	938.272
quarks	Also in very close agreement	

MeV is mega electron volt $\Phi = 1.618$

from David Bohm and El Naschie in *The Golden Section* by Scott Olsen

Figure 1

Correspondences and Correlations in Nature

Pythagoras' remark, that music is geometry, is borne out and we can discern how the music of the spheres finds its echo in the human ear. A spiral nebula (such as Virgo) and the cochlea

of the human inner ear are both spirals. Just as the spacings of the hairs along the spiral organ of Corti (the core component of the inner ear) determine what sound frequencies the ear detects, so points along the spirals of planetary nebula of our Solar system determine octaves and perfect fourths associated with the mean distances of the planets from the Sun.⁵

Next we see in Fig. 2 how human birth corresponds to cosmic birth.⁶

As Is the Great, So Is the Small Cosmic Birth and Human Birth – Their Correspondences <small>severely abridged from <i>The Secret Doctrine</i></small>	
Cosmic Process – The Upper Pole	Human Process – The Lower Pole
The Cosmic Seed, the Monad which contains the whole Universe as the acorn the oak	The terrestrial Embryonic seed which contains the future man with all his potentialities
Vital principle of Ether (the blood of the Cosmic Body) nourishes everything on other Planets and Earth	The Allantois, a protrusion from the Embryo, conducts nourishment from mother to Embryo
The outer Crust of every sidereal body, or the Shell of our Solar System and Earth	The Chorion or Blastodermic Vesicle, the membrane of which form the physical man

Figure 2

In contemplating the perennial wisdom we discover correlations between things apparently unrelated. One of the things we find is that those transcendent glimpses of a divine order and harmony throughout the universe that were vouchsafed the mystics and artists in their moments of vision are not intoxicated states of mind but truly glimpses of reality. Such is the case with the last Five String Quartets of Beethoven. They form a group quite apart from his other twelve quartets and comprise some of the most advanced and mystically inspired music bequeathed to humanity. Although no masterpiece of art can ever be created by consciously or mechanically following set rules, yet an analysis of any masterpiece shows that the artist having glimpsed a higher order of being, follows the rules “unconsciously” without knowing them. Sound, form, motion are mathematically related and correlated. Look at Fig. 3 and see how the fingers of the human hand, in space order, have the same relative lengths, in space, as do the five quartets, in time, in their chronological order.⁷ This is not mere

coincidence or fabricating ratios. It demonstrates the correspondences and correlations we see in Nature and in great art when the artist has glimpsed a divine order.

CORRELATION AND RELATIONSHIP
AN EXAMPLE FROM ART: BEETHOVEN'S LAST FIVE STRING QUARTETS
The fingers, in space order, have the same relative lengths – in Space – as do the quartets – in Time – in their chronological order.

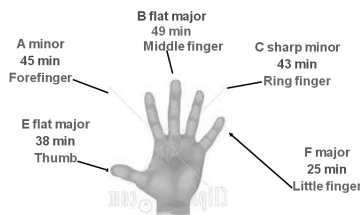


Figure 3

THE DIVINE IN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN TERMS

In traditional, theological terms of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, there is no finer metaphor than Newton's to show that divinity pervades all beings. He asks us to imagine three bodies on top of one another. *A* is a heavy body, say a stone slab, bearing directly on two almost weightless bodies, *B* and *C*. There is then a force in *A*, a force in *B* and the same force in *C*. But these are not three separate forces but *one* force originally in *A*, and by communication and descent, in *B* and *C*. Similarly:

... there is divinity in the Father, divinity in the son and divinity in the Holy Ghost, not three separate divinities but one communicated down from the Father. And as in saying there is but one force, that in body *A*, I do not deprive Bodies *B* and *C* of that force which they derive from *A*, so by saying there is but one God, Father of all things, I deprive not the Son and Holy Ghost and all beings of that divinity they obtain from the Father.⁸

In traditional philosophical terms we recall the familiar division of Spirit, Soul and Body, or the more sophisticated sevenfold occult subdivision of nature and man. One force acting in all.

In religion, Islam refers to the 99 names of Allah, Zoroastrianism to the 101 names of Ahura Mazda: 99 and 101 being metaphors for the transcendental nature of deity, encompassing as it does the totality. The *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of the limitless potentiality of the Lord in “precipitating” numberless universes while yet remaining undepleted by these manifestations. In modern terms, the theological or philosophical trinity might be understood as Consciousness, the Morphogenetic Field and Material Nature, the three being as one. Truths about downward causation and the primacy of consciousness, which our forbears discovered in their own ways, quantum physics has enabled us to re-discover through a combination of utmost theoretical rigour backed by a veritable arsenal of experiments with unprecedented precision—such as the laboratory experiments proving nonlocality, and the demonstration that conscious choice, even delayed choice, is crucial in the shaping of manifest reality not only in the micro-world of particle physics but also in the macro-world.⁹ God or the Divine understood as ‘objectively defined cosmic or universal consciousness’ is the view that is being forced on us by quantum physics with its unequivocal demonstration that consciousness is the ground of being.¹⁰ It seems that truly everything unfolds from consciousness. Matter is nothing but possibilities of consciousness or modes of consciousness and, as already stated, there is no such thing as dead matter.

All this talk of the Divine is one thing, but is there any hope for us struggling mortals to glimpse the Divine? Let us not say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Rather let us consider how *not* to do it. Fig. 4 shows the circular process that occurs automatically in our minds, that is, until and unless we become consciously aware of our thought processes.¹¹ As Einstein realized, our thought world grows as an incessant escape from wonder; that is, thought moves us away from what IS. Without arresting that movement the Divine will never be so much as glimpsed.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER—SCIENCE, RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND ART

The ancient metaphor of the Jewel Net of Indra illustrates the concept of interpenetration, interconnection and interdependence very well. Imagine a vast network of precious, glittering gems hanging over the palace of the god Indra stretching out infinitely in all directions. If we select any one of these jewels for inspection

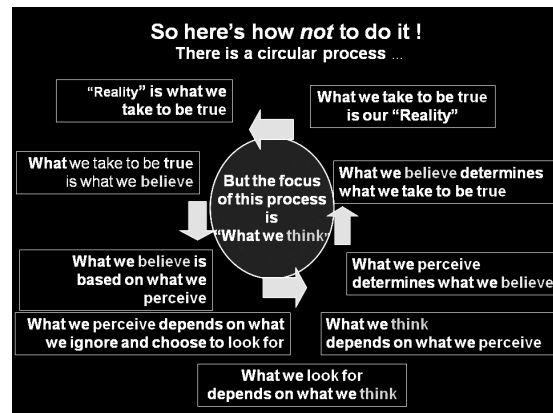


Figure 4

and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected *all* the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring.¹²

This metaphor dates back over 2,500 years, but what does Indra’s Net mean to us nowadays in the twenty first century? A scientist might say that particles are dynamically composed of one another in a self-consistent way, and in that sense can be said to contain one another. In other words, Indra’s Net is a metaphor for the quantum view that all particles exist potentially as different combinations of other particles. A poet/artist would rejoice ‘To see a world in a grain of sand, And a heaven in a wild flower, Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, And eternity in an hour’.¹³ A Buddhist would affirm through meditation that each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object and

in fact IS everything else. In every particle of dust, there are present Buddhas without number. Finally a metaphysical philosopher would say through acute contemplation: ‘The creative source of the Divine Mind, hidden in a veil of thick darkness, formed *mirrors of the atoms* of the world, and *cast reflection from its own face on every atom*’.¹⁴

Drawing upon our own life experience and contemplation of the perennial doctrines let us inquire what Indra’s Net means to us. Without resorting to sentimentality, does it mean that we are reflected in all others as all others are reflected in us? Can we truthfully ask ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’¹⁵ ✠

References

1. Bragdon, C. (1978) *The Beautiful Necessity: Architecture as “Frozen Music”*, Quest Books, p. 12.
2. *ibid.*, p. 13.
3. Goethe’s *Faust*.
4. Olsen, S. (2006) *The Golden Section: Nature’s Greatest Secret*, New York: Wooden Books, Appendix V.
5. Phillips, S. “*The Logarithmic Spiral Basis of the Titius-Bode Law*”, available online at <<http://smphillips.8m.com/article-17.html>>.
6. Blavatsky, H. P. (1950) *The Secret Doctrine: The*

Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy, 6 volume Adyar edition, volume 5, The Theosophical Publishing House, London, pp. 422-25.

7. Tame, D. (1994) *Beethoven and the Spiritual Path*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, p. 197.
8. Cited in Westfall, R. S. (1980) *Never At Rest*, Cambridge University Press.
9. Hellmuth, T., Zajonc, A. G., Walther, H. (1986) “Realization of ‘delayed-choice’ experiments”, *New Techniques and Ideas in Quantum Measurement Theory*, ed. Greenberger, D. M., New York Academy of Science, pp. 108-14.
10. Goswami, A. (2008) *Creative Evolution*, Quest Books, pp. 38-41.
11. Zukav, G. (1979) *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, Rider/Hutchinson of Australia, p. 328.
12. Cook, F. H. (1977) *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
13. William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*.
14. Blavatsky, op. cit., p. 348.
15. Genesis 4:9.

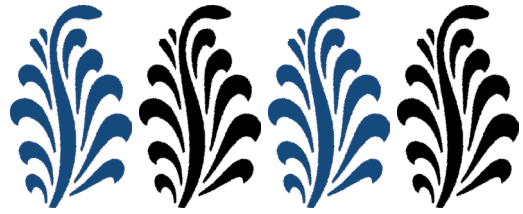
A talk given at the Annual Convention, Launceston 2010.

A human being is part of a whole, called by us the “Universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

- Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

THE PROBLEM WITH GOD

Brian Parry



About three thousand years ago a Hebrew Psalmist looked up into the night sky at the moon and the stars shining through the trees, listening to the breeze. He asked a question that has been the same for all human beings. It is recorded in Psalm 8:

O Lord, our Sovereign; when I look at your heavens, the work of your finger, the moon and stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of us, what are we that you care for us?¹

And there are other, related questions: How did all the apparently unconnected things come to be in such an amazing interconnectedness? How does it come to be that I am here, separate again and yet totally part of this moment?

There have been two broad groupings of answers developed since the first humans confronted the mystery: each excites awe, each wonder. The first answer traces the where and how by many an intricate path right back to the big bang some thirteen and a half billion years ago. Wonder-full as the story is however it has inherent problems: it cannot go back before the beginning of time. St Athanasius pointed out that the human mind cannot go back beyond the beginning. No matter how many universes prior to ours are postulated, at some point we arrive at a beginning and come to a full stop.

There is another problem with the scientific explanation, and particularly with evolution through natural selection; it is simply that it does not account for the very human capacity

for compassion and empathy. From the point of view of natural selection the Nazi eugenics policy would seem to be an appropriate utilitarian plan, but it was not. Natural selection may be a policy that applies in the wild but has no place in human society. The existence of empathy is a real problem for natural selection.

Another, related, problem is that although we are products of the universe's evolutionary process we can actually question the universe of which we are a product. A pot cannot complain about the potter's intention and design, but we can. In us the universe is aware of itself.

The religious answer also has very severe problems. The Psalmist cannot see back beyond the beginning any more than can the scientist. Further, he cannot know who or what the sovereign Lord is. According to the Psalmist, first there was a great wind hurtling rocks around, but the Lord was not in the wind; then there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and then a huge fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire— 'a sound of sheer silence'. This silence is not a concept but an existential experience of that which is beyond definition or description. Theosophists will be reminded that H.P. Blavatsky's Diagram of Meditation ends with 'beyond that it cannot be said'. Another expression of that which cannot be said comes from the Chinese *Tao te Ching*: 'The Way that can be told is not the Way. The name that can be named is not the constant name'.² We could express this slightly differently: any God that I can think is not God; any description that I can give is not true.

In India the Hindus devised a spiritual exercise, the *brahmodya*. This was a serious group contest only undertaken after intensive spiritual preparation. The aim was to attempt to define Brahman testing the limits of language to the point beyond which it could not go. The first participant asked a question about Brahman and an opponent had to reply with an equally puzzling and ultimately unsatisfactory question of his own. The contest ended in the experience of the silence when no more could be said. The realisation that mind and words could go no further was the whole point of the exercise. One of the Christian Desert Fathers, Evagrius of Pontos, taught his disciples, ‘When you are praying, do not shape within yourself any image of the Deity, and do not let your mind be stamped with the impress of any forms.’³

In the sixth century CE an unknown Syrian monk with the pseudonym Dionysus the Areopagite said that Christians had to believe that God had certain attributes because that is what Scripture said—for example that God is love—but he said the love that God is, is not like any love that we can ever know. He developed a spiritual exercise in which one would first affirm that scripture describes God as say, peace. Then one must examine that description and realise how absurd it really is. God is not any peace we can know. The final step is to realise that the negation itself is absurd. One cannot know what God is so how can one say what God is not? This exercise then brings silence to the mind and in this silence of the mind the reality may be experienced. In this context it is easy to see why *The Voice of the Silence* states that the very first step on the Path is recognition that one is profoundly ignorant. One can only ever know about things. To know that I do not know is the beginning of wisdom.

In 1882 the theosophist A.O. Hume proposed to write a book on the Occult Philosophy with a preface entitled ‘Preliminary Chapter on God’, and asked for advice. In Letter 88 (or Letter 10 in other editions) the Mahatma Koot Hoomi

responded with comments that caused a storm at the time and led many to accuse theosophists of being atheists:

Neither our philosophy nor ourselves believe in a God, least of all in one whose pronoun necessitates a capital H ... Parabrahman is not a God, but absolute immutable law ... The word ‘God’ was invented to designate the unknown cause of those effects which man has either admired or dreaded without understanding them, and since we claim and that we are able to prove what we claim—i.e. the knowledge of that cause and causes—we are in a position to maintain there is no God or Gods behind them.

In the next paragraph were more harsh words:

The God of the theologians is simply an imaginary power ... Our chief aim is to deliver humanity of this nightmare, to teach man virtue for its own sake, and to walk in life relying on himself instead of leaning on a theological crutch, that for countless ages was the direct cause of nearly all human misery. Pantheistic we may be—agnostic NEVER. If people are willing to accept and regard as God our ONE LIFE immutable and unconscious in its eternity they may do so and thus keep to one more gigantic misnomer.⁴

This is the major problem with God: no-one can know what it means, and so meaningful communication is impossible.

This would be bad enough but there is a further, more sinister problem. That is the appalling things that people do in the name of their particular God; the pogroms, mass slaughters, inquisitions, terrorisms inflicted on others, the degradation of women, the bans on condoms in the battle against AIDS, bans on stem cell research—the list is lengthy and depressing, but what is the cause? Why do religious people do

such things?

There is a tragic—comic story which points to the fundamental cause. Shortly after the founding of The Theosophical Society a group of Brahmins petitioned Colonel Olcott to allow them to form a Lodge in Allahabad composed only of Brahmins because they could not associate with non-Brahmins without losing caste. Surprisingly, Olcott finally gave permission. Some time later the Brahmins complained that it was unfair that Sinnett and Hume, ‘beef-eating, wine drinking Englishmen’, were writing to the Mahatmas and receiving answers while they were not. The response from the Mahatma Morya was brutally direct. He says that the Mahatmas feel no obligation to communicate with anyone who has not given up caste, which he called exclusive selfishness. Then he goes on:

... unless a man is prepared to become a thorough theosophist i.e. to do as D. Mavalankar did,—give up entirely caste, his old superstitions and show himself a true reformer (especially in the case of child marriage) he will remain simply a member of the Society with no hope whatever of ever hearing from us... It is useless for a member to argue ‘I am one of a pure life, I am a teetotaller and an abstainer from meat and vice. All my aspirations are for good etc.’ and he, at the same time, building by his acts and deeds an impassable barrier on the road between himself and us... There are 100 of thousands of Fakirs, Sannyasis and Sadhus leading the most pure lives, and yet being as they are, on the path of *error*, never having had an opportunity to meet, see or even hear of us... Mr. Sinnett and Hume are exceptions. Their beliefs are no barrier to us for they have *none*. They may have had influences around them, bad magnetic emanations the result of drink ... which with a little effort we could counteract and even clear away without much detriment to ourselves.

Not so with the magnetism and invisible results proceeding from erroneous and sincere beliefs. Faith in the Gods and God, and other superstitions attracts millions of foreign influences, living entities and powerful agents around them, with which we would have to use more than ordinary exercise of power to drive them away.⁵

The thought form that a strong belief can take becomes an entity that can infect (and occupy) the mind. Thus it is the very nature of belief itself that lies at heart of the problem of God. This does not mean that we need to associate ourselves with Richard Dawkins and company, for whom atheism has itself become a belief. Their works are full of the same sense of superiority, the same sense of intolerance, the same vitriol, as the most bigoted fundamentalist. An alternative expression might be *non-theist*; like the term non-rational, which does not mean irrational but acknowledges that there are realities which transcend rationality. Likewise, non-theist does not suggest a belief in atheism but refuses any belief concerning a God, howsoever described.

The message from *The Mahatma Letters* for theosophists today is very clear: We can believe anything we like to be God—even the One Life—but we must be aware that our belief is just as misleading as anyone else’s, even when that belief is described as based on intuition. It is the mind-generated belief process itself that is the problem with God. It is easy to vainly think that the problem with God is rooted in the erroneous beliefs of the religious of every type. Theosophists have to be constantly aware of the same belief tendencies in themselves. Any belief system we present as Theosophy just creates another cult: and the world has too many of those already.

When we really get to this point of realisation we can also begin to see why the first fundamental proposition upon which *The Secret Doctrine* is based uses the language that it does: ‘An omnipresent, eternal, boundless,

immutable principle upon which all speculation is impossible because it transcends the power of human conception.' We cannot devise any mental image or picture of this principle. We cannot attribute any qualities to it. We cannot believe in it or pray to it or worship it.

Madame Blavatsky makes the point that the closest human minds can come to this fundamental principle is to think of empty space; not space with things in it but empty space. A bucket provides an excellent example of the importance of empty space. A bucket needs to be empty. It is the space within it that is the whole purpose of the bucket. If the space is not empty then its use is limited. But that is not the whole story. It is the material that contains the space that also makes the bucket. For students of the Stanzas of Dzyan the outer material is the *ahi*, the boundary, the vehicle that limits and therefore manifests the emptiness. But there is more. The outer material plastic is itself surrounded by empty space. The One Life, the Tao, Ultimate Emptiness is itself not restricted in any way by the container. Whether inside or outside the space remains always itself.

For those with the eyes to see every object is a vehicle through which the ultimate emptiness may be perceived. The One Life does not prize a bucket less than a diamond; the lowest outcast is as much a manifestation as the highest Brahmin. The space in a home is the same as the space in a prison. We can see differences but instead of seeing and rejoicing in the differences we project our own values onto those differences and create distinctions. The first Object of the Society is not a vague expression of tolerant brotherhood but the first step to enlightenment. Chuang Tzu went even further:

Identify yourself with the Infinite. Make excursion into the Void. Exercise fully what you have received from nature, but gain nothing besides. In one word, be empty.⁶

Some people find the symbol of space, cold, remote or indifferent. Annie Besant shared a different insight into the emptiness that is the Tao in her invocation 'O Hidden Life'. The One Life is hidden; not only from sight but hidden from any conception or belief system. Although hidden it is vibrant, alive in every atom. That which cannot be seen is nonetheless shining in every creature; none is truly dark within. Above all, far from being cold, remote or indifferent the Hidden Life embraces, enfolds all, without qualification or exception, in oneness. The Milky Way Galaxy with its billions of stars is no more or less embraced than a lady bird. The sages of all the traditions unite in proclaiming that the Void, Shunyata, Space, Ultimate Emptiness, the One Life is not nothingness. It is a plenum, a fullness, beyond the grasping, image making capacities of our minds.

J. Krishnamurti once said: Look don't think. Then there is no problem with God because without thought there isn't one. ☒

References

1. *Together in Song: Australian Hymn Book* vol.1 Harper Collins, p.4-5.
2. Lao Tzu *Tao Te Ching* (1963) Penguin Classics, p.57.
3. Armstrong, Karen (2009) *The Case for God*, Bodley Head, London, p.112.
4. Barker, A. T. c. (1993) *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. & K.H.* Quezon City, Philippines, Theosophical Publishing House, p.269-270.
5. *ibid*, p.95.
6. Cooper, J.C. (1972) *Taoism: The Way of the Mystic*, The Aquarian Press, UK, p.95.

Brian Parry served eighteen years as Executive Chairman of the Melbourne Fire Brigades Board. In 2004 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia as the result of this and other community work. Brian has been an active member of The Theosophical Society for over 50 years and continues to study and speak on Kashmir Shaivism, Advaita Vedanta, and *The Voice of the Silence*.

An Interface of The Dreaming with Christianity

Olga Gostin



This talk was inspired more than three decades ago by a conversation between two priests who were reflecting on the outcomes of their ministries in Papua and northern Australia respectively. While the older priest could confidently assert that ‘his’ Papuan people were devoutly converted and committed Catholics, the younger priest reflected that his decade among Aborigines had raised profound questions about his own spirituality. Coming to grips with The Dreaming had, in the end, convinced him of the validity of his calling to the priesthood, but, in his view, precluded any attempt at conversion since he had encountered a spirituality that transcended any particular expression of Christianity.

In essence, The Dreaming refers to an unspecified period of creation when the highly charged spirit forces contained within the earth emerged from the folds of an undifferentiated and flat landscape to create all the physical attributes that we recognise today: mountains, lakes, rivers, plains and valleys. The spirit beings which assumed different forms—animal, human or a combination of these—moved over the country endowing the land with plants, foods, animal and human species, and prescribing rules of relationship and proper care between them. This was the essence of The Dreaming: it affirmed the interconnectedness of all aspects of life and imbued all matter with an immanent spirit force. Having completed their creative acts, the spirit beings then returned into the earth at specific sites which remain associated with them and are identified as sacred sites to this day. Through human agency and proper performance of ritual observance, living custodians of the land can reactivate the powers latent in the land, and indeed, have a duty to do so. Local custodians

often interpret catastrophic floods and fires as a failure to have engaged properly with the land through ritual and prescribed ceremonial.

It follows that Dreamings are site-specific, and within the vast cultural diversity that was pre-(European) settler Australia, each nation had its own Dreamings, handed down through oral tradition from generation to generation. David Hope has coined the term ‘menticulture’ to describe this unique relationship between people, the land and the metaphysical connection between them, based on memory (oral tradition), mobility (ongoing connection with the land) and metaphor (where landscape literally *is* the ancestral being).¹ Despite distinctive local terminology for the concept of The Dreaming there was a common continent-wide engagement with a primary and ongoing creative spiritual force. It is in this sense that W.H. Stanner refers to The Dreaming as ‘Everywhen’ (1956).² It is neither fixed in the past, defined by the present nor confined by the future. It is immanently there, permanent but not immutable. There may well be variations in detail over time, but the essence of The Dreaming remains beyond question. As Strehlow observes:

In my view the great and specifically Australian contribution to religious thought has been the unquestioning Aboriginal conviction that there is no division between Time and Eternity.³

We can thus assert that God was indeed there in the beliefs of the First Australians, but that Christ was brought.

Unlike the exile of the Pilgrim Fathers to North America, the British settlement of Australia was

essentially a secular affair. The first missionaries arrived in Sydney in 1821, 33 years after penal settlement, when dispossession and Aboriginal trauma were the norm along the eastern seaboard and the bloody frontiers of settlement. There was no single missionary experience: different times of first contact in different parts of the country resulted in different encounters. Overall, though, Harris suggests that the parent missions in England considered Australia a missionary backwater.⁴ The best talents were reserved for missionary initiatives in India and China where encounters were expected with major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and the like. The First Australians were dismissed as unenlightened pagans. It would take almost a century before the missionaries recognised that they were themselves prisoners of their own cultures and historicity, and that this had been a major impediment to their effective spiritual interaction with the First Australians.

From their earliest encounters, missionaries identified white settler debauchery, drunkenness and sexual abuse of Aboriginal women and children as the main impediment to their evangelising mission. Specifically, they noted the ‘gross contradiction between Christian values and the lifestyle of colonial white society’.^{5/6} Though the missionaries were alert to the weaknesses of settler society, they nevertheless rated Aborigines as the flawed descendants of Ham—Noah’s son cursed by his father and doomed henceforth, along with his dark-skinned descendants, to be slave to his brothers Japheth and Sham and their progeny. Indeed Aborigines were collectively described as the Lazarus of Australia: poor, ailing, despised and outcast at the gate of mainstream society.⁷

The missionary endeavour was plagued by a confusion between civilising and Christianising agendas. For most missionaries, the processes were interlinked and there was a presumption that the First Australians should exhibit attributes of civilisation (cleanliness, dress, work and sedentary habits) before they could

be Christianised. The ambiguous approach of missionaries was further accentuated by a multiplicity of duties. Some duties were performed on behalf of the government—pacification, distributing rations, training, educating, teaching, employing—and then there was the evangelising. Not surprisingly, Aborigines looked on the missions as an extension of government, irrelevant to their lives and propagating a message of love and peace that was not observed by society at large. There was widespread initial resistance to missions and the Christian message. Not only were there few adult conversions but by the mid 1840s all eastern seaboard missions had closed down.

However the situation was different inland and in the outback where the frontier was relentlessly moving westward. Here the missions came into their own as they offered relative safety against the lawless predation of pastoralists and the ensuing conflicts with Aborigines fighting to protect their lands. Missions acted as protective buffers during these expansionary years and Aboriginal people made calculated choices to move to the missions even if they remained skeptical about the Christian message. Several historians make the point that Aborigines were by no means passive participants in history or helpless victims of the missionary endeavour, a notion developed by Stanner’s discussion of accommodation^{8/9}. In particular, parents chose to leave their children under missionary care while they sought somehow to reconcile with the vast changes on the frontier and to maintain their duty of care to country. Under the stark conditions on the bloody frontier up to the end of the nineteenth century, parents consciously surrendered children and their own freedom in return for protection and survival. (This was quite different from the post-1930 forceful removal of children of mixed descent from their parents under the official policy of assimilation that lasted till the late 1960s, resulting in the so-called Stolen Generations of the twentieth century.)

Most missions were authoritative regimes which regimented and controlled the actions of mission inmates, having the final say on movement in or out of the mission precinct, forbidding the use of native languages and the performance of traditional rituals, prescribing who to marry, dictating the obligation to work, sequestering monies earned, stipulating what might be purchased, and most important, maintaining control of children. It was on the children that the missions focused their evangelical efforts and to this end children were separated from their parents, segregated into gender-based dormitories and underwent the full brunt of the civilising and Christianising mission. Any challenge to mission authority met with rigorous reprisals, and the formula 'no Hallelujah, no damper' epitomised mission control over its inmates where attendance at church services was a pre-condition to accessing government rations dispensed by the missions. Indeed Hume, among others, describes Yarrabah mission as a penal institution harbouring the living dead.¹⁰ There were, it must be reiterated, notable exceptions to this appraisal of missionary activity in the nineteenth century, but the overall picture was indeed rather bleak. Missionaries were often the first to note their own shortcomings, but seemed to be trapped in a situation of welfare delivery, chronic underfunding and imposed responsibilities way beyond their original Christianising intent.

Against this background, it comes as something of a surprise that at the latest census a higher percentage of Aboriginal people identified as Christian than the rest of the Australian population, and that of these, a higher percentage of Aborigines are practising Christians than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. How did this turnaround occur? On the face of it, the equation is simple: missions were officially disbanded in the 1970s and replaced by "self-managing" communities. Thus most Aborigines over 50 are part of the dormitory generations raised on the missions, while those younger are the offspring of those generations. In a

way, current censuses are profiling the religious convictions of mission-influenced, dormitory-raised Aborigines. And their recollections are not all negative. With hindsight and against current conditions of ongoing disadvantage in education, health, housing and employment, many of the dormitory-raised Aborigines reflect with nostalgia on the ordered and relatively safe era of mission-controlled communities. Whether future generations raised totally outside mission legacy will exhibit a similar attachment to Christianity remains an open question.

The closure of the missions left communities to their own religious devices and the ministry was taken over by local elders, itinerant pastors or whatever arrangements had been put in place by the departing missionaries. This period saw the efflorescence of an Indigenous grassroots Christianity, facilitating the transition from (white) mission to Indigenous church. In his seminal *White Christ Black Cross* Loos traces this development in Anglican communities in Cape York.¹¹ The Uniting Church saw the emergence of profound theological thinkers like Djiniyini Gondarra and the development of the so-called Rainbow Spirit Theology.¹² The Catholic Church too, had good reason to reflect on its missionary legacy. It made the important shift from denying the validity of Indigenous beliefs to an engagement that saw Christianity as the fulfillment of pre-existing spirituality, following the dictum that Christ had come not to destroy but to fulfill the law (Barr, 1979).¹³ Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann is one of a strong body of Indigenous Catholic thinkers who combines her artistic skills with a profound engagement with the mysteries of Christian faith, melding both in the act of deep inner contemplation or *dadirri* of her traditional spirituality.¹⁴

This is not the place to evaluate the various movements driving the emergence of an Indigenous Christianity. I would rather conclude this brief account by considering some changes that I have witnessed in the last

few decades at the interface of Christianity and The Dreaming. Specifically, I have been intrigued by the recurrent reference in literature to the process of inculturation, referring to the dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture, in this case, an insertion of Christian aspects into (Indigenous) cultures. My own observation and fascination has been with the *opposite* trend whereby aspects of Indigenous spirituality and culture have become incorporated into mainstream Australian culture.

It is now commonplace to open conferences, public meetings and formal gatherings—even the 2000 Sydney Olympics—with an acknowledgment of country, paying respect to the ancestral custodians of that specific area of land and acknowledging the ongoing connection and duty of care of their living descendants. These are site-specific invocations and if taken to their profoundest level, call forth The Dreaming ancestors and their connection to country, erasing the time separating the present from the past, and uniting all in a transcendent bond with each other through the land on which we stand. Each acknowledgment of ancestral custodianship thus becomes an affirmation of Oneness at its most profound level.

Smoking ceremonies are increasingly becoming incorporated into mainstream ritual, especially on solemn or festive occasions and at major building sites. Thus the site of the new Parliament House in Canberra, The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) building on Acton Peninsula in the same city, the dedication of a church, the burial of Nugget Coombs, or even the celebration of a (European) historic event (such as the sesquicentenary of South Australia), were the occasion for smoking ceremonies carried out by local Indigenous custodians with the intent of clearing away bad forces, affirming positive outcomes and in the very enactment of the smoking ceremony, bonding all those present.

There are other, more subtle reminders of the engagement of contemporary Australians with the cultural heritage of the First Australians. I recall the poignancy of the return of the Unknown Soldier from French battlefields to the War Memorial in Canberra on 11/11/1993. The officiating Church of England dignitary intoned a homily to the Unknown Soldier with the words, ‘God of The Dreaming’. Two years earlier Pope Jean Paul II had addressed an Aboriginal audience at Alice Springs:

The hour has come for you to take on new courage and new hope. You are called to remember the past, to be faithful to your worthy traditions; and to adapt your living cultures whenever this is required by your own needs and those of your fellowman....¹⁵

The way is open for an exciting and enriching spiritual dialogue between the First and latter Australians. Indeed, authors like David Tacey^{16/17} and Eugene Stockton¹⁸ among others, have already sought to embrace and redefine Australian spirituality in the context of broader Aboriginal concepts of the sacred. It is most important however, that such engagements should not be predatory, opportunistic or “New Agey”, but be based on mutuality, respectful dialogue, genuine engagement with living Indigenous cultures and the real plight of the First Australians. Oodgeroo Noonuccal sums it up:

Give us Christ, not crucifixion,
Though baptised, and blessed and Bibles,
We are still tabooed and libelled.
You devout salvation sellers,
Make us equals, not fringe dwellers.¹⁹ ☒

References:

1. Hope, D. (1983) ‘Dreams Contested’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Flinders University, SA.
2. Stanner, W.E.H. (1956) ‘The Dreaming’, reprinted in Edwards, W.H. (1998, second edition) *Traditional*

Aboriginal Society, Macmillan, South Yarra.

3. Cited in Wilson, M.J. (1978) *New, Old and Timeless: Pointers Towards an Aboriginal Theology*, Nelen Yubu Missiological Series No.1, Kensington, NSW, p.63.

4. Harris, J. (1994 second, revised edition) *One Blood: 200 years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope*, Albatross Books, Sutherland, NSW, p. 539/657.

5. *ibid* pp. 46,120,165.

6. Loos, N. (2007) *White Christ Black Cross: The Emergence of a Black Church*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

7. Harris *op.cit.* p. 699.

8. Loos *op.cit.* p.13.

9. Thompson, D. (1995) *Bora Belonga White Man: Missionaries and Aborigines at Lockhart River Mission*, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Queensland, p.1.

10. Hume, L. (1991) "Them Days: Life on an Aboriginal Reserve 1892-1960", *Aboriginal History*, Vol.15, No.1, p.220.

11. Loos *op.cit.*

12. Rainbow Spirit Elders, (1997) *Rainbow Spirit Theology: Towards an Aboriginal Theology*, Harper

Collins, Blackburn, Victoria.

13. Barr, K. (1979) *Not to Destroy but to Fulfill: Some Reflections on the Indigenisation of the Church*, Nelen Yubu Missiological Series No.2, Kensington, NSW.

14. ATSI Apostolate, (1993) *A Spirituality of Catholic Aborigines*, Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, p.34.

15. *ibid* p.93.


16. Tacey, D. (1995) *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia*, Harper Collins, North Blackburn, Victoria.

17. Tacey, D. (2000) *ReEnchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*, Harper Collins, Sydney.

18. Stockton, E. (1995) *The Aboriginal Gift: Spirituality for a Nation*, Millenium Books, Alexandria, NSW.

19. Quoted in Harris *op.cit.* p.67 and Loos *op.cit.* p.158.

Born in Brussels of mixed Flemish-Russian parentage, Olga Gostin grew up in a vibrant cultural environment with French and Russian as home languages. Having obtained her PhD and a number of other academic distinctions, Olga took prominent part in Australia's founding program for Aboriginal tertiary students at The University of South Australia. She remained there for 20 years until her retirement.



Jabobi's book *On Divine Matters* made me feel ill at ease. Dearly beloved friend that he was, how could I welcome the development of the thesis that Nature conceals God? My own pure, deep, innate and schooled view of things has taught me without fail to see God in Nature, Nature in God, and this view was the foundation of my very existence.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The Making of *The Secret Doctrine* Michael Gomes

While most theosophists are familiar with the fact that H.P. Blavatsky's *magnum opus*, *The Secret Doctrine*, was published in 1888, and are aware of the theories of vast cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis contained therein, the events which shaped the making of the book are not as well known. Fortunately a number of eyewitness accounts have survived making it possible to reconstruct this period. The most fascinating and detailed is Countess Wachtmeister's *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine* published in 1893 after H.P.B.'s death, and reprinted by Quest Books.

The blond, blue-eyed Countess was a society woman related to the old French family of de Bourbel de Montjucon. Her father was the Marquis de Bourbel, and she was born in Florence, Italy, on 28 March 1838. She married her cousin, the Count Karl Wachtmeister, in 1863, who was then stationed in London as the Swedish and Norwegian minister to the Court of St James. Subsequently they lived in Copenhagen where he was minister to the Danish court, and in Stockholm, where he was named minister of foreign affairs. After his death in 1871 she developed an interest in spiritualism. But like many titled members of the early Theosophical Society—the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Baron Spedalieri, Duchesse de Pomar—her spiritualism soon developed into occultism. Her reading *Isis Unveiled* led her to join the British Theosophical Society in 1880.¹ It was at the London home of the popular theosophical author A.P. Sinnett, early in April 1884, that Countess Wachtmeister first met H.P.B., who had come over briefly from Paris for the London Lodge T.S. elections. The Countess saw Mme Blavatsky later that

spring at the chateau of the Count and Countess d'Adhemar at Enghien, France, before returning to Sweden, and was told by H.P.B. that 'before two years had passed, I would devote my life wholly to Theosophy',² which at the time, she says, she regarded as an utter impossibility.

When Countess Wachtmeister contacted H.P.B. again, at the beginning of December 1885, the situation was a very different one from the brilliant receptions of London and Paris, which had culminated with a gala farewell for Col Olcott and Mme Blavatsky at Prince's Hall in London on 21 July 1884, attended by 500 people in evening dress. 'It's not life', H.P.B. had written to her sister Vera, then, 'but a sort of mad turmoil from morning till night. Visitors, dinners, evening callers, and meetings every day.'³ But now the theosophical leader was in disgrace, 'abandoned by all and deserted'. Letters attributed to her in the September and October 1884 *Madras Christian College Magazine* seemed seriously to compromise her phenomena, as had her failure to prosecute for libel, and her sudden leaving of India in March 1885 for Europe. An agent had been sent by the newly-formed London Society for Psychical Research to investigate the matter, and his report to be issued soon was generally believed to be unfavourable.⁴

The Countess had intended to spend the winter of 1885/86 in Italy, and had stopped en route at the home of a fellow T.S. member and student of the occult, Marie Gebhard in Elberfeld, Germany. Mme Gebhard, who had been one of the few private pupils of the French Kabbalist, Eliphas Levi, urged her guest to see H.P.B. now settled in nearby Würzburg. Mme Blavatsky's response was a polite refusal claiming lack of

space and time to entertain a visitor, as she was engaged in writing *The Secret Doctrine*. But as the Countess was preparing to leave for Rome, and the cab was actually at the door, a telegram arrived saying, 'Come to Würzburg at once, wanted immediately—Blavatsky'.⁵

Because of the rumours of fraud and deception circulating about Blavatsky, Countess Wachtmeister says she could not help being on her guard as she climbed the steps of No.6 Ludwigstrasse in Würzburg on the evening of her arrival. She found an unhappy 54 year-old woman who was smarting sensitively under insults and suspicions, and who embarrassingly told her that she had not initially invited the Countess because the small size of her apartment, mainly a bedroom, dining room, sitting room, and maid's quarters, might not satisfy someone of her guest's background.

Countess Wachtmeister must have been a remarkably unpretentious person for she stayed with Mme Blavatsky for the next five months. A screen had been bought which separated the bedroom to provide their only private space. At six in the morning their Swiss maid, Louise, would bring a cup of coffee for H.P.B., who then rose and dressed, and was at her writing desk by seven. Breakfast was at eight when the day's mail would be read, and then Mme Blavatsky would return to her writing. Their main meal was served at one in the afternoon, but when the Countess rang the handbell, sometimes H.P.B. might not respond for hours depending how well her writing was going. Finally at seven she put it aside, and after tea, the two of them would spend 'a pleasant evening together', H.P.B. amusing herself with a game of patience, while the Countess read her passages and articles from the daily journals. By nine H.P.B. retired to bed where she would read the Russian newspapers late into the night.

They had few visitors at this time, the regularity of their days punctuated only by the weekly visit of H.P.B.'s doctor who usually stayed an hour,

and an occasional appearance by their landlord. Most of H.P.B.'s time was spent working on her new book which had been advertised in the *Journal* of the Society as a new version of *Isis Unveiled* with a new arrangement of the matter, large and important additions, and copious notes and commentaries. But the work had gone slowly. An attempt at grouping subjects exists from H.P.B.'s 1884 European tour, and before the arrival of the Countess she had managed to put together a few chapters. Like Col Olcott's testimony for H.P.B.'s writing *Isis Unveiled*, and Annie Besant's on the production of *The Voice of the Silence*, Countess Wachtmeister's account tallies with the depiction of H.P.B. being able to sit for long hours and write continuously, stopping only to gaze into vacant space. H.P.B. explained her technique as being able to:

make what I can only describe as a sort of a vacuum in the air before me, and fix my sight and my will upon it, and soon scene after scene passes before me like the successive pictures of a diorama, or, if I need a reference or information from some book, I fix my mind intently, and the astral counterpart of the book appears, from it I take what I need. The more perfectly my mind is freed from distractions and mortifications, the more energy and intentness it possesses, the more easily I can do this.⁶

But soon the peaceful atmosphere the Countess had managed to create by relieving H.P.B. from concern about the running of the household was shattered in a most dramatic way. On New Year's Eve 1885 a member of the Germania T.S., Prof. Sellin, appeared with the finally published report by Richard Hodgson for the Society for Psychical Research Committee on theosophical phenomena in which the Committee had judged her worthy of permanent remembrance as 'one of the most accomplished, ingenious and interesting imposters in history',⁷ and Hodgson had added his own conclusion that she had done it all as a cover for her being a Russian spy!

‘I shall never forget that day,’ the Countess records in her *Reminiscences*, ‘nor the look of blank and stony despair that she [H.P.B.] cast on me when I entered her sitting room and found her with the open book in her hands’. In the intensity of the moment H.P.B. turned on her shouting, ‘Why don’t you go? Why don’t you leave me? You are a Countess, you cannot stop here with a ruined woman, with one held up to scorn before the whole world, one who will be pointed at everywhere as a trickster and an imposter. Go before you are defiled by my shame.’⁸

The Countess did not go, instead she stayed on, not only through this crisis, but until H.P.B.’s death in 1891. Her presence did much ‘to alleviate H.P.B.’s suffering, and her personal integrity must be counted towards influencing H.P.B.’s later acceptance by London Society. This is something H. P. B. herself acknowledged, for in writing to a T.S. member in India, she says, ‘The widow of the Swedish ambassador in London, the ex-visitor at all hours of the Queen, and one who is known in London for twenty years in the highest circles as a woman of unblemished reputation and one who has never uttered a falsehood in her life, is not likely to throw her reputation, her friends and position, to become the most devoted champion of an H.P.B., if there was nothing serious in it.’⁹

Still, they had a terrible time as Countess Wachtmeister’s letters to A.P. Sinnett in London show. ‘We have had a terrible day and the Old Lady wanted to start to London at once,’ she wrote him on the evening of 1 January 1886.¹⁰ The Countess had finally managed to calm H.P.B. down, who wanted to write a number of indignant protests to all concerned, and who in her excited state had developed palpitations of the heart and had required a dose of digitalis. The following days brought rude letters and resignations as the contents of the S. P. R. Report became known, until, the Countess says, ‘my heart used to sink every morning, when the postman’s ring was heard at the thought of

the fresh insults which the letters would surely contain’.¹¹

‘We are having a horrible time of it here’, she informed Sinnett on 4 January. ‘I thought Madame would have had an apoplectic fit—but fortunately a violent attack of diarrhoea saved her, but I weary of it all so much.’¹² The Countess reports how H.P.B. ‘felt herself deserted by all those who had professed such devotion for her. As she pathetically said one day:

If there was only one man, who had the courage to come forward and defend me as he would his own mother, if thus scurrilously attacked, the whole current of the Theosophical Society would be changed.¹³

It was a critical moment for the Society, and H.P.B. was left alone in her agony and despair. Out of this crucial testing period came the nucleus of *The Secret Doctrine* as we know it. The book would no longer simply be a revision of an earlier work, but something H.P.B. felt would serve as her vindication by answering the charges against her. She wrote to the President of the Society accordingly on 6 January:

Secret Doctrine is entirely new. There will not be there 20 pages quoted by bits from *Isis*. New matter, occult explanations—the whole Hindu Pantheon explained, based on exoteric translations (to be easily verified) and explained esoterically proving Xty and every other religion to have taken their dogmas from India’s oldest religion. In four Parts—Archaic, Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Periods. Each Part 12 chapters, with Appendices and a Glossary of terms at the end. Countess here, and she sees I have almost no books. Master and Kashmiri dictating in turn. She copies all. This will be my vindication, I tell you.¹⁴

Here perhaps is the great lesson of the writing of *The Secret Doctrine*. Here was someone whose

world was crumbling around her, who had worked for a decade to see the Society that she had helped start almost destroyed, to be socially ostracized, shunned and dropped by friends and acquaintances. How did she react? Did she give up, as many others might have, defeated? No. She turned on her critics by producing a book containing one of the most complete outlines of physical and spiritual evolution of her century. A book that has survived a hundred years and that is read around the world.

When H.P.B. returned to the writing of *The Secret Doctrine* at the start of February 1886, it was with a grim determination that would carry her through the next two years, and which would triumph over death itself. By the end of the month she had completed 300 foolscap pages of a preliminary volume that would show 'what *was* known historically and in literature, in classics and in profane and sacred histories—during the 500 years that preceded the Christian period and the 500 years that followed it' of the existence of a 'Universal Secret Doctrine,' and would serve as an introduction to her translation of the Stanzas of Dzyan.¹⁵

As the rent on the apartment at Würzburg was only paid up until 15 April, H.P.B. decided to pass the summer months at Ostende on the Belgian seacoast. Her sister Vera and a niece would stay with her, allowing the Countess the chance to return to Sweden to settle her affairs there. An English member, Miss Emily Kislingbury, whose affiliation with the Society went back to 1876, would travel with H.P.B. till Ostende. But when they arrived at Cologne to change trains and rest for the day, Gustav Gebhard persuaded H.P.B. to pay a brief visit to his family in Elberfeld. It was there that she slipped and sprained her leg, which postponed her leaving till July accompanied by her sister and niece. She arrived in Ostende at the height of the season to find everything overpriced. With the help of her sister she managed to find a suite of rooms, first at No.10 Boulevard Van Isgham, and later at No.17 Rue d'Quest, where, reunited

with the Countess, she passed the winter. The regularity of their Würzburg days was repeated, the monotony broken only by a few more visitors, the English seer, Anna Kingsford, and her uncle, Edward Maitland; Sinnett gathering material for his proposed biography of H.P.B.; Arthur Gebhard and Mohini Chatterji, who spent their time 'studying "Bhagavad Gita" all day;' ¹⁶ the Rev. A. Ayton; and K.F. Gaboriau from France.

A copy of the MS. of the finished preliminary volume of *The Secret Doctrine* was given to Marie Gebhard to send to Col Olcott from Elberfeld, but she kept it for a month, and it did not reach him in India until 10 December. This volume was to be the introductory section to the 'real pukka S.D.' volume of the Archaic Period with the seven stanzas of Dzyan and the commentaries on them. 'It is an absolutely necessary one', H.P.B. informed Olcott, 'otherwise if they began reading the Archaic vol., the public would get crazy before five pages, *too metaphysical*.'¹⁷

The Countess had been sent to London to attend to a business matter there, and H.P.B. passed the New Year into 1887 alone. 'The 2nd anniversary in exile and for what guilt or fault, ye Gods', she wrote to an American member. 'Ah, life is a hard thing to bear.'¹⁸ It was at this time that she made the following important decision about her future. 'Either I have to return to India to die this autumn, or I have to form between this and November next a nucleus of true Theosophists, a school of my own.... I can stop here, or go to England, or whatever I like', she revealed to Countess Wachtmeister.¹⁹

Perhaps it was just coincidental, but after the Countess's return H.P.B. began receiving letters from a small group of members of the London Lodge who still met on a regular basis, and who wrote her for advice on the best way of carrying on the work. Dr Archibald Keightley, who with his uncle Bertram, had joined the Society in 1884, was deputed by this group personally to

invite H.P.B. to come over to England where she could spend the summer. Since Countess Wachtmeister had to go to Sweden that summer to dispose of property there to enable her to live with H.P.B. on a more permanent basis, the move was decided upon.

A departure date of 27 March had been set, but on the 17th of the month H.P.B. uncharacteristically lost consciousness in her armchair after dinner. Then she developed a cold, and on the fifth day of her illness, the doctor diagnosed uremic poisoning due to inaction of the kidneys. The Countess says she became alarmed when H.P.B. began to drift into 'a heavy lethargic state, she seemed to be unconscious for hours at a time, and nothing could rouse or interest her'.²⁰

Madame Gebhard had come from Elberfeld so that in shifts someone would always be in attendance with H.P.B., and as their local doctor could get no results, Countess Wachtmeister telegraphed Dr Ashton Ellis, a member of the London group of Theosophists, to send over a specialist. Dr Ellis replied that he would come immediately, and upon arrival prescribed a programme of massage to stimulate the paralyzed organs, which he proceeded to do for the next three days.

As there seemed to be no improvement to H.P.B.'s condition, Mme Gebhard suggested that her will be made out, for if she died intestate in a foreign country there would be no end of complications. So a lawyer, the doctor, and the American Consul were to come the next day. During that night's watch the Countess says, 'To my horror I began to detect the peculiar faint odour of death which sometimes precedes dissolution. I hardly dared hope that she would live through the night.'²¹

H.P.B. was anxious about the fate of the manuscript of *The Secret Doctrine*, and gave the Countess instructions to send it to Col Olcott at Adyar to have it printed. She said she was glad to die after what she had suffered in the

last years. She drifted into unconsciousness, and as the night passed seemed to grow weaker by the hour. The strain of the last few days was such that the Countess says a 'wave of blank despondency' swept over her and she too drifted off.

Morning light was already streaming in when Countess Wachtmeister opened her eyes. Her first thought was that H.P.B. might have died as she slept. Instead she found an alert and awake H.P.B. who told her that during the night she had the choice of being able to die or finish *The Secret Doctrine*. 'But when I thought of those students to whom I shall be permitted to teach a few things, and of the Theosophical Society, in general, to which I have already given my heart's blood, I accepted the sacrifice.'²²

It was a joyous group that the lawyer found when he arrived to make the will later in the day. The Belgian doctor kept repeating, 'But she should be dead...she should be dead,' and the American Consul, who had come as a witness, left with the words, 'Well, I think this is enough fatigue for a dying woman',²³ and the little party laughed heartily over the events of that day's turnaround.

The Countess looked so used up that Mme Gebhard suggested that she leave for Sweden at once, and offered to stay until the Keightleys came to take H.P.B. to London. In spite of bad weather the crossing to Dover was without incident, though everyone was concerned for H.P.B. who had not left her heated rooms for weeks. She was housed at 'Maycot', a small cottage in Upper Norwood, with Mabel Collins, a member of the London group, on 1 May, and before the day's end was back at work with *The Secret Doctrine*.

During Countess Wachtmeister's absence in Sweden throughout the summer of 1887, the narrative for the making of *The Secret Doctrine* is continued by the accounts of two young Cambridge graduates, Archibald (1859-1930), and his uncle, Bertram Keightley (1860-1945).

By the end of May, Bertram Keightley could write to W.Q. Judge, General Secretary of the newly formed American Section, and editor of the New York *Path*, that 'H.P.B. is fairly well and working away right hard at *The Secret Doctrine*, which is *awfully good*, and I am sure you will be immensely pleased with it.'²⁴

Soon after her arrival at Maycot, H.P.B. passed her MS., which was now over three feet high, over to the Keightleys 'to read, punctuate, correct the English, alter, and generally treat as if it were our own'.²⁵ Their summer was spent 'reading, rereading and copying'. *The Secret Doctrine* as it came to be published dates from this time, for it was the Keightleys' suggestion that 'instead of making the first volume to consist, as she had intended, of the history of some great occultists, we advised her to follow the natural order of exposition, and begin with the Evolution of Cosmos, to pass from that to the Evolution of Man, then to deal with the historical part in a third volume treating of some Great Occultists; and finally, to speak of Practical Occultism in a fourth volume, should she ever be able to write'.²⁶

The material was then rearranged under the headings of Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis with the stanzas of Dzyan and her commentaries leading off each volume, followed by explanations of the symbolism and science treated therein. The thing that impressed the Keightleys was the paucity of Mme Blavatsky's personal library. Archibald, who had made the transit with her from Ostende and who had helped her unpack, states: 'I knew there was no library to consult and I could see that H.P.B.'s own books did not amount to thirty in all, of which several were dictionaries and several works counted two or more volumes.'²⁷ Yet the manuscript edited by them for the press quoted or referred to over 1300 books. The checking of the sources alone occupied a group of people, including E. Douglas Fawcett, assistant editor of the London Daily Telegraph, Richard Harte, a member from America, and it was even

rumoured, S.L. Macgregor Mathers, who was regularly seen at the British Museum poring over old folios of Cabalistic lore.

Concurrent with the editorial work on *The Secret Doctrine* were a series of events which revived theosophical work in England. The Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society (still in existence) was formed 19 May with ten members; by the second meeting a week later it was decided to publish a magazine that would bring theosophical ideas to a larger public, and The Theosophical Publishing Company was started to manage this. By the time Countess Wachtmeister arrived in England in August, a three storey brick building had been leased at 17 Lansdowne Road in London to serve as a residence for the theosophical household.


The Secret Doctrine was to be issued by the London publisher George Redway, with whom A.P. Sinnett had invested in, but after a disagreement on terms the work was taken over by The Theosophical Publishing Society, and the release date of 27 October 1888 set. An advance copy of the first volume (723 pp.) exists bearing the notation by Richard Harte that he received it at Lansdowne Road from the printer on 20 October as he was leaving for India with Colonel Olcott. The first edition of 500, bound in light grey, and bearing the dedication 'to all True Theosophists, in every Country and of every Race', sold out immediately, going mainly to subscribers, and a second edition was printed before the end of the year.²⁸ With the publication of the book, Countess Wachtmeister closes her *Reminiscences* with the words 'H.P.B. was happy that day'.²⁹ In comparison to *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* was not as widely reviewed by the press, though THE THEOSOPHIST reprinted notices from such diverse sources as the *Memphis Appeal*, the New Orleans *Southland*, and the London *Secular Review*. Such was the prejudice against the movement at the time that the New York *Evening Telegram* published a review based only on the prospectus sent out four months

before the actual release date. The *Telegram* reported:

Mme Blavatsky is undoubtedly an intellectual phenomenon, but because she can soar back into the Brahmin ignorance of the Buddhists and furnish Edwin Arnold with food for thought is no proof that everything she says is true... Ten minutes of Edison and Noah Webster will do more for civilization than all the fine spun immoralities of the Indian poets. However it is a good thing to study history, and Mme Blavatsky, with her learning and patience throws the light of her intellectual dark lantern on the monstrosities of the past. Her book is very elaborate and comprehensive in its scope, and will undoubtedly be widely read.³⁰

Perhaps the most influential review appeared in London's literary *Pall Mall Gazette*. The anonymous reviewer's closing remarks serve as a fitting conclusion to the making of *The Secret Doctrine* and an introduction to the book itself:

Mme Blavatsky's views may not meet with acceptance, but they are supported by sufficient learning, acuteness and ability to enforce a respectful hearing. It is indeed the East which, through her, challenges the West, and the Orient need not be ashamed of its champion.

The book deserves to be read: it deserves to be thought over; and none who believe in the progress of humanity has the right to turn away over-hastily from any contribution to knowledge, however new its form, from any theory, however strange its aspect. The wild dreams of one generation become the commonplaces of a later one...³¹ 

References

1. Biographical information on the Countess is given in the *Path*, N.Y., Nov. 1893, pp. 246-47, and with slight amplification by Boris de Zirkoff in *Theosophia*,

L.A., Fall 1957, p. 16. The Countess's early psychic experiences are given in her 1897 talk, *Spiritualism in the Light of Theosophy*, printed by the Mercury Pub. Co., San Francisco, 1897. She applied for membership in the Theosophical Society in London, 24 Nov. 1880, and was elected 5th December.

2. Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H.P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893, reprinted Wheaton: Quest Books, 1976), p.9.

3. H.P.B. to Vera Zhelihovsky, July 1884, the *Path*, N.Y. June 1895, pp. 74-77.

4. For background on this incident see my article, 'The Coulomb Case, 1884-1984.' in *The Theosophist*, Dec. 1984, Jan., Feb., 1985.

5. Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences*, p. 12.

6. *Reminiscences*, p. 25.

7. *S.P.R. Proceedings* 3 (1885): 202.

8. *Reminiscences*, p. 18.

9. H.P.B. to Judge N.D. Khandalavala, 12 July 1888, T.S. Archives, Adyar. 'She would never consciously tell an untruth,' remembers another member of the London household, James Pryse, *Canadian Theosophist*, 15 June 1932, p. 126.

10. In *The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*, (LBS) p. 270, Letter CXXVI.

11. Wachtmeister, 'A New Year's Greeting,' *The Vahan*, London, 1 January 1891, and *Theosophical Siftings*, 3:17, p. 3.

12. *LBS*, p. 272, Letter CXXVII.

13. Wachtmeister, *H.P.B. and the Present Crisis in the Theosophical Society*, privately printed, London, c. 1895, p.6.

14. In *The Theosophist*, H.P.B. Centenary number, August 1931, p. 667.

15. H.P.B. to A.P. Sinnett, 3 March 1886. *LBS*, p. 195. Letter LXXX.

16. *LBS*, p. 217, Letter XCVII.

17. H.P.B. to H.S.O., 23 September 1886, *The Theosophist*, March 1925, p. 789.

18. H.P.B. to Elliott Coues, dated by her 'between 1886-1887', *The Canadian Theosophist*, Nov.-Dec., 1984, p. 116.

19. *Reminiscences*, pp. 54-55.

20. *ibid.* p. 59.

21. *ibid.* p. 60.

22. *ibid.* p. 62.

23. *ibid.* p. 64.

24. Letter of 29 May 1887, quoted in Kirby van Mater's 'The Writing of The Secret Doctrine', *Sunrise*, November 1975, p. 60.

25. B. Keightley, 'Writing of The Secret Doctrine' in *Reminiscences*, p. 78.

26. B. Keightley in *Reminiscences*, p. 79. In addressing the December 1890 Adyar T.S. Convention he revealed that 'what would now be the 3rd volume was to have been the first volume....'.

27. A. Keightley, 'Writing of The Secret Doctrine,' in *Reminiscences*, p. 84. Marion Meade in her biography Madame Blavatsky, 1980, p. 380, notes, 'In fact, every person involved with Madame Blavatsky during the writing of *The Secret Doctrine* seems to have gone out of their way to mention the curious lack of reference works.' They were genuinely impressed by it.

28. Harte's copy with the October 20, 1888, notation

on the flyleaf now in the Boris de Zirkoff Collection at the Olcott Library, Wheaton, formerly belonged to the Blavatsky Association in London. The note is transcribed in de Zirkoff's exhaustive presentation of the writing of *The Secret Doctrine, Rebirth of the Occult Tradition* (Adyar: T.P.H., 1977), p.1. A copy of the second edition inscribed 7 December 1888, and presented 'to the Adyar Library by its most devoted and humble servant, H.P. Blavatsky,' exists in the Adyar Archives.

29. *Reminiscences*, p. 72.

30. *N.Y. Evening Telegram*, June 30, 1888, 'Words with Wings'.

31. *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 25, 1889, p. 3, 'Among the Adepts'.

Reprinted from *The Theosophist* May 1988, originally published in *H.B. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*, Virginia Hanson ed. Quest 1988

Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocrities. The latter cannot understand it when a man does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices but honestly and courageously uses his intelligence.

Of all the communities available to us there is not one that I would devote myself to, except for the society of true searchers, which has very few living members at any time.

- Albert Einstein



The Campbell Theosophical Research Library New Acquisitions 2010



Biography and History

Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas (2008) *The Western Esoteric Tradition*, Oxford University Press. An historical introduction to esoteric traditions in the West from ancient Hellenistic sources right through to the modern Theosophical Society and its outreach.

Killinger, Margaret O. (2007) *The Good Life of Helen K. Nearing*, University of Vermont Press. A lively biography of the wife of Scott Nearing, who, as a young girl, then named Helen Knothe, was in the intimate circle of J. Krishnamurti.

Kumar, Satish and Freddie Whitefield (eds) (2006) *Visionaries of the 20th Century: A Resurgence Anthology*, Green Books. Brief biographies of the lives and work of one hundred inspiring men and women including world leaders, spiritual figures, writers, scientists, organic pioneers, educationists, economists and ecological activists.

Lutyens, Lady Emily (1957) *Candles in the Sun*, Rupert Hart-Davis. This is a poignant first-hand account of life in the ranks of The Theosophical Society from 1910 to 1930, providing numerous insights into the life of J. Krishnamurti with whom the author was intimately associated for many decades, during and after his association with the Society.

Peat, F. David (1997) *Infinite Potential: The Life and Times of David Bohm*, Helix Books. An in-depth and compelling biography of one of the most important scientists and philosophers of the last century.

Sahagun, Louis (2008) *Master of the Mysteries: The Life of Manly Palmer Hall*, Process. A compelling biography of the author of *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* by a Pulitzer Prize-winning staff writer at the *Los Angeles Times*.

Sloss, Radha Rajagopal (2000) *Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti*, An Authors Guild Backinprint.com Edition. The story of the complex relationship between Rosalind Rajagopal, her husband, and J. Krishnamurti. In common with all biographies related to J. Krishnamurti, this contains a great deal of TS history.

Sloss, Radha Rajagopal (2006) *The Story of Happy Valley*, Happy Valley Foundation. The vision of Annie Besant based on her conviction that spiritual ideals can bring about practical and effective social change, realized through the Happy Valley School in the Ojai Valley in California.



Biography performs for us some of the work of fiction, reminding us, that is, of the truly mangled tissue of man's nature and how huge faults and virtues cohabit and persevere in the same character.

Robert Louis Stevenson



The Theosophical Society in Australia

Minutes of the 2010 Annual Convention Business Meeting

The Convention Business Meeting of The Theosophical Society in Australia commenced at 8.10 p.m. on Saturday 17 January 2010 at the Australian Maritime College, Launceston.

CONVENTION CHAIR

The Meeting was chaired by the National President, Dara Tatray.

ROLL-CALL OF VOTING DELEGATES AND PROXIES

In accordance with Rule 15(2) of the National Rules, the named voting delegates and the votes of the Lodges/Branches certified on Form 4 of the National Rules had to be received by the National Secretary two weeks prior to this meeting in order to be valid.

The roll call of the valid voting delegates was read out as follows:

Adelaide – Sheryl Malone; Atherton – Robert Tucker; Blavatsky – Hana O'Rourke; Brisbane – Geoffrey Harrod; Canberra – Peter Fokker; Hobart – Helen Steven; Launceston – Ruth Holt; Melbourne – Kenneth Edwards; Perth – George Wester; Sunshine Coast – Jean Carroll.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE 2009 CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING

The Meeting noted that the Lodges/Branches had voted at Lodge/Branch Convention Meetings to confirm the Minutes of the 2009 Convention Business Meeting held at Trinity College, Perth on 18 January 2009, as published in the June 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2009

It was noted that the National President's Annual Report for the Year ended 31 August 2009 as published in the November 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, had previously been voted on and accepted unanimously in the Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meetings. The meeting expressed its appreciation and thanks to the National President for her Annual Report.

NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2009

It was noted that the National Treasurer's Report for the Year ended 31 August 2009 as published in the supplement to the November 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, had previously been voted on and accepted unanimously in the Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meetings. The meeting expressed its appreciation and thanks to the National Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and the Finance Committee for the extensive work they had done during the year.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2009, AND AUDITOR'S REPORT THEREON

The Financial Statements, Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 August 2009 and the Auditor's Report thereon were presented for comments or questions. It was noted that the Lodges/Branches had voted unanimously to accept the Balance Sheet, Income and Expenditure Account and the Auditor's Report as published with the November 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia* at their individual Convention Business Meetings.

BUDGET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 2010

The National Treasurer reported that the National Council previously approved the Budget at its meeting in June 2009, and that the National Council had authorised the Executive Committee to approve any subsequent necessary minor amendments after the completion of the annual accounts. The Budget for the current financial year, as published with the November 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, was received at the Meeting and discussion was invited.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

The National Treasurer reported that, following the recommendation of the National Council, Storey Blackwood, Chartered Accountants of Sydney, were reappointed as Auditors for 2010.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEWLY APPOINTED OFFICERS (January 2010 National Council Meeting)

The National Secretary reported that at its meeting of 14 January 2010 the National Council had appointed the following people to their respective offices for 2010:

National Vice-President – Harry Bayens
National Treasurer – Marie Brennan
Assistant Treasurer – Beatrice Malka
Chair of Rules Committee – Donald Fern
Editor of *Theosophy in Australia* – Dara Tatrav

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT RESULTS – State Representatives for Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia/Northern territory:

The National Secretary reported that as only one valid nomination each was received for all three States, no ballot was necessary. The following members were elected to office in the three Electoral States:

Tasmania: Denise Frost
Queensland: Paul Robb (re-elected)
South Australia/Northern Territory: Patricia Hale (re-elected)

The results of the Election were published in the November 2009 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

VOTE ON NOTICES OF MOTION

Four Notices of Motion were received and voted

on at various Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meetings and had been passed. These Motions had been published in the September issue of *TinA*.

PLACE AND TIME OF NEXT CONVENTION

The Chair reported that the 2011 Convention would be held in Brisbane at St. John's College, Brisbane, between 15 and 22 January 2011. The next Convention Business Meeting will be held at 8.00 pm on Saturday 15 January 2011 during that Convention.

RESOLUTIONS OF GOODWILL

It was noted that postcards had been prepared for sending to friends in Australia and overseas with signatures from Convention delegates.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Committee: The National Secretary reported that the following were appointed as members of the national Executive Committee for 2010: Dara Tatrav - National President, Donald Fern - National Secretary, and Marie Brennan - National Treasurer (all ex officio) together with Beatrice Malka, Zehra Bharucha, Ken Edwards, Simon O'Rourke and Marlene Bell.

There being no further business the Chair closed the Meeting at 8.35 pm. ✠



The new physics presents prima facie evidence that our human thoughts are linked to nature by nonlocal connections. What a person chooses to do in one region seems immediately to affect what is true elsewhere in the universe. This nonlocal aspect can be understood by conceiving the universe to be, not a collection of tiny bits of matter, but rather, a growing compendium of “bits of information”. And I believe that most quantum physicists will also agree that our conscious thoughts ought eventually to be understood within science and that, when properly understood, our thoughts will be seen to do something: *They will be efficacious.*

- Henry Stapp

Calendar of Events

National TS

Centres ...

Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook, QLD

October 6-11 **Michael Gomes** *The Secret of "The Secret Doctrine and Tools of Occult Research*

Michael Gomes, Director of the Emily Sellon Memorial Library in New York, will be touring the Section in October and speaking at *The Legacies of Theosophy* conference. His recent publication credits include the publication by Penguin/Tarcher of his annotated and abridged edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, and a chapter on Blavatsky and Theosophy in the forthcoming *Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*.

Members: \$200 plus \$10 registration. Non-Members \$250 plus \$10 registration. Registration forms with this issue.

Canyonleigh Centre, Bolitho House, Tugalong Rd, Canyonleigh, NSW

Friday 5 to Sunday 7 November *Light on the Path*

Light on the Path is a highly elevated yet practical guide to Enlightenment, discipleship and greater inner freedom. The advice was written for disciples but pertains to all those who are ready and willing to learn. This weekend will be an opportunity to delve deeply into the text in an environment of friendship and enquiry. Sessions will be led mainly by Dara Tatray and Edi Bilimoria.

Arrivals Friday evening for those who can make it (bringing food to share for that one evening meal). Sessions begin after breakfast on Saturday.

Cost \$85 plus \$10 registration includes three nights' accommodation and all meals Saturday and Sunday.

Registration forms for NSW/ACT members next issue. Others apply to the Education Coordinator.

The University of Sydney

The Legacies of Theosophy October 1-2 (see the March issue and our website for further details).

2011 National Convention—Brisbane

Theme: *Undivided Consciousness—in Mind and in Nature*

Venue: St John's College Brisbane

Dates: January 15 to 22, 2011.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE ELECTION OF STATE REPRESENTATIVES FOR EACH OF THE ELECTORAL STATES OF NSW/ACT, Victoria and Western Australia

In accordance with Rules 17(1)(c) and 19, the current terms of office of the State Representatives for New South Wales/ACT (Hana O'Rourke), Victoria (Georgina Fode) and Western Australia (Harry Bayens) will expire at the appointment of new State Representatives towards the end of 2010. Hana O'Rourke, Georgina Fode and Harry Bayens are all eligible for re-election.

Nominations are invited for the election of one State Representative for each of New South Wales/ACT, Victoria and Western Australia. Nominations may be made by a Lodge (Branch) in the relevant Electoral State, or by any two Members resident in the relevant Electoral State who have been Members in Good Standing for the last two years prior to the nomination.

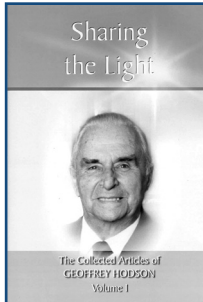
To be eligible for election as State Representative, the candidate must be resident in the relevant Electoral State, must have been a Member in Good Standing for the last three years, and has served for at least one year on the Executive Committee of a Lodge (Branch) by the time of the election.

The State Representative elected in each State will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in that State in all meetings and affairs of the National Council. They shall also liaise with all Lodges (Branches), Groups and National Members in their Electoral State and shall represent their views to the National Council and to the National Society Officers, as appropriate. As well, they shall receive and deal with representations from individual Members within their Electoral State, and shall refer the representations where requested or deemed necessary.

A photograph of the candidate, a curriculum vitae, relevant biographical data, and a personal statement by the candidate, which may be edited as necessary for distribution in consultation with the candidate, must accompany all nominations. All nominations should be on Form 8, endorsed with the consent of the Nominee, and reach the National Secretary no later than 10 September 2010.

Copies of Form 8 can be obtained from the National Secretary, The Theosophical Society in Australia, 4th Floor, 484 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000, or from your Lodge/Branch President or Secretary.

Reviews...



Sharing the Light: The Collected Articles of Geoffrey Hodson

Compiled by John and Elizabeth Sell
Theosophical Publishing House,
Philippines, 2008, 2 volumes
xxxvii + 1889 pages, \$A90.

Sharing the Light is an inspirational collection of four hundred articles and covers an impressive range of topics including: Spirituality and the path of discipleship; Clairvoyant investigations; The angelic world; Presenting and promoting the wisdom teachings; World religions, ceremonial and symbolism.

Most articles have been collated from those published between 1927 and 1985 in Theosophical Society magazines around the world. The articles stand alone as fascinating glimpses of a seer in his travels around the world. The book has an extensive glossary and a detailed index that is invaluable as an aid for serious study.

Sharing the Light is primarily addressed to members of The Theosophical Society; however the content will appeal to a much wider audience, including those with an interest in the Ancient Wisdom, occult science, meditation, clairvoyant diagnosis of disease, thought projection and vegetarianism in the Bible. It also includes ten ways to attract the attention of the Masters.

Geoffrey Hodson was an internationally known lecturer and writer who devoted his life to spreading the principles and applications of

Theosophy. He was a mystic, a highly developed clairvoyant and an outstanding spiritual teacher of the twentieth century. He has written more than sixty books on spirituality, extrasensory faculties, the invisible world, theosophy, religion and similar fields; and has been an advocate of world peace, animal welfare, vegetarianism and various other movements that promote harmony, compassion and understanding. A list of his books and booklets is provided in Volume 2. Service to humanity was the motivating incentive in all of Geoffrey Hodson's activities and achievements. Born in England in 1886 he joined The Theosophical Society in his 20s, lived for some time in various centres in Australia and later settled in Auckland, New Zealand, living adjacent to the national headquarters. I last met Geoffrey Hodson and his wife Sandra in 1981 when he was visiting my parents at their home. I am deeply grateful for having met him, feeling great respect and awe for this distinguished, wise and gentle man.

In the article 'The attainment of spiritual awareness' Geoffrey Hodson stresses the urgent need for the continually deepening realisation of unity for the whole of mankind. Selflessness in motive and deed and regular meditation or contemplation of the Divine is essential. A deepening knowledge and realisation that the oneness of things is the natural state of affairs may gradually be attained.

Mr Hodson gives us his views as to what should be taught through The Theosophical Society and how to popularise a knowledge of theosophy. There is a great deal of excellent material that is suitable for group discussion, debate, study classes or individual study. Suggested topics for discussion are given in Volume 2. Every Lodge and Branch in The Theosophical Society would greatly benefit by having copies of *Sharing the Light* available to its members. ☩

Reviewed by Peter Urbahn

NEWS and NOTES

John Cooper Memorial Prize

The National President and the Education Coordinator attended the Prizes & Awards ceremony at The University of Sydney in April. Dr John Cooper died in 1998 while working on a scholarly edition of the correspondence of H.P. Blavatsky. He was posthumously awarded a PhD for his initial analysis of the correspondence and the extensive research undertaken. In 2003 John's collection of books, serials and other archival material was acquired by the National Library of Australia. The bibliography of this collection is over four hundred pages long, and a substantial amount of it pertains to the history of The Theosophical Society in Sydney. The \$1500 prize is generally split between two people, and is awarded at the discretion of the University. This year the title of the Undergraduate winning essay was, *How can Desire be Understood to Disable and Enable Relations with the Sacred?* (This involved a comparison of Tantric and Augustinian Christian traditions). The title of the winning Postgraduate essay was, *Spiritual Tourism: Secular Examination of the Self in the Mirror of Religious Practice*. The National President was invited to say a few words about the prize and about the Society, before a rather august audience of academics and authors.

Visit to Sydney Unitarian Church

The Education Coordinator, Edi Bilimoria, was invited to give a talk at the Sydney Unitarian Church on May 9 on *Sir Isaac Newton: England's Greatest Occultist and Mystic*. Given this title,

and its display on a board outside the Church, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the Unitarian Church is decidedly not dogmatic; but rather based on freedom, tolerance and reason. Previous members include Charles Darwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Jefferson and Louisa May Alcott. As a bonus we were treated to some fine piano playing by Church member Chad Vindin from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. The service consisted of some opening words; a number of non-sectarian rather spiritual hymns; a talk by Edi; and music, followed by refreshments.

Book Gift - While Stocks Last

Around thirty copies remain of the current book gift to members of the Section. So if you would like to obtain a free copy of Pedro Oliveira's biography of N. Sri Ram then please let the Education Coordinator know promptly.

World Congress, Rome July 10-15

This relatively rare event is fast approaching, and the programme is now available on The Theosophical Society, Adyar, website under Events/World Congress; with a link to it from the Australian Section's website. Highlights include talks by Professor Krishna, Radha Burnier, Linda Oliveira and Mary Anderson. There will also be a number of musical and cultural programmes. The post-Congress tour of Rome arranged by Jean Carroll, President of Sunshine Coast Lodge, is now full; with 25 registered to participate, including a number of members from the USA and New Zealand.

Adyar Website Redesigned and Updated

Our international headquarters has a new highly attractive user-friendly website. A number of useful features have been added, including a good link to The Theosophical Publishing House from which one can purchase directly online (with prices quoted in American dollars); a photograph gallery; and audio/video files. Some sections of the new website are in early stages of development (such as the video files) and will be significantly added to in time.

School of the Wisdom, Adyar

First session: 1 November to 10 December 2010

Theme: *The Urgency of Transformation*

Guest speakers:

Swami Chidananda—Director, Rajghat Education Centre, Varanasi;

Prof. P. Krishna—International lecturer and author

Prof. R. C. Tampi—Director, The School of the Wisdom.

Second session: 5 January to 9 February 2011

Theme: *Inquiry into the Nature of the Self in the Upanishads*

Director: Dr Ravi Ravindra—International lecturer and author.

OPAC

As previously noted the Online Public Access Catalogue is now available on the Section's website, where it will be found at Resources/Library Catalogue. Ignore the Login field on the left; it is not necessary for you to log in. Searches can be made for a specific book using <all words> with a keyword from the author and the title: for example, <Blavatsky secret>; or for an author. If you enter the name of an author all books by and about that author will be listed. So far the catalogue contains

mainly books from the Campbell Library and the Melbourne Theosophical Society's library. Entering the required details into the catalogue is the painstaking work of Jennifer Hissey in Sydney and Pamela Lloyd in Melbourne.

'Paranormal' Beliefs

According to a Gallup Poll taken in 2005, around three in four Americans hold at least one 'paranormal' belief. The most common belief is in Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP), followed by a belief in haunted houses. The following list, showing the percentage of believers in various phenomena is published at <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/16915/three-four-americans-believe-paranormal.aspx>>.

Extrasensory perception, or ESP 41%
That houses can be haunted 37%
Ghosts/that spirits of dead people can come back in certain places/situations 32%
Telepathy/communication between minds without using traditional senses 31%
Clairvoyance/the power of the mind to know the past and predict the future 26%
Astrology, or that the position of the stars and planets can affect people's lives 25%
That people can communicate mentally with someone who has died 21%
Witches 21%
Reincarnation, that is, the rebirth of the soul in a new body after death 20%
Channeling/allowing a 'spirit-being' to temporarily assume control of body 9%

Additionally, more than half of Americans, 55%, believe in the healing powers of the mind. The poll shows no statistically significant differences among people by age, gender, education, race or region. ☒