

# *Theosophy* in Australia

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## ***Freedom of Thought***

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasise the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which any member is not free to accept or reject.

Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership.

No teacher, or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties.

The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1924)

## ***Freedom of the Society***

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organisation entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title, 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organisation.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1949)

# Theosophy

in Australia

March 2010 volume 74, number 1

## Contents

<i>From the National President</i>	2	<i>The Way, the Truth and the Life</i>	23
<i>On the Watchtower—Radha Burnier</i>	3	<i>Universal Brotherhood—A Fact in Nature?</i>	24
<i>The Future of Theosophy</i>	5	<i>Calendar of Events, National TS Centres</i>	25
<i>Bohm, Quantum Interaction and Subject-Object Duality: A Reply to Dr Hugh Murdoch</i>	8	<i>Tour—Colin Price</i>	26
<i>On Defining the Divine Loosely</i>	11	<i>Gifts and Bequests</i>	27
<i>Florence Fuller in Adyar</i>	15	<i>Reviews</i>	28
<i>Towards a New Synthesis: The Emerging Paradigm in Religious Thought</i>	19	<i>News and Notes</i>	31

*The Theosophical Society* is composed of students or seekers, belonging to any religion in the world, or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but perhaps a common search and aspiration. The motto of the Society—*There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth*—suggests that the goal and the journey are more important than any conclusions reached along the way.

*Theosophy* literally means 'divine wisdom', *theosophia*. It is defined neither in the Constitution of the Society nor in any official document. We are left to discover what it is for ourselves, taking as our guides whatever religions or philosophies we wish. Everyone in sympathy with the three Objects is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

### *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 unexplained laws of Nature and the  
powers latent in the human being.*

## From the National President ...

Dara Tatray



The present issue reflects several different approaches to Theosophy and the prospect of spiritual evolution or renewal that lies at the heart of it. We find references to the past, the present and the future of our interpretation of Theosophy in the Theosophical Society. An extract from Florence A. Fuller's 1906 article *The Way, The Truth, And The Life* was included for historic value, and because her work is the subject of the curator Jenny McFarlane's article. It would be interesting to know how it comes across to people today, with its impassioned plea to 'live up to the light' and 'identify ourselves always with our highest and truest self'. That was a period of tremendous endeavour and earnestness within the membership of the TS; a fascinating record of which is to be found in the various biographies of Jiddu Krishnamurti, the focal point of much of this earnestness in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Such striving might seem harmless enough, and perhaps commendable, but it contains a serious flaw, which was pointed out by Krishnamurti to his ardent followers: that there is avoidance in our longing; and that seeking can be a form of denial. It may also be a danger to one's sanity. We all love heroic journeys and to think that we ourselves are the legendary grail seekers, the disciples or even the Initiates can lend excitement and meaning to an otherwise dull life (strange but true, some members of the TS did and do regard themselves as Initiates). This is not meant to suggest that there is no such thing as spiritual evolution or transformation; but at times that we feel our lives are empty we may be prone to using the whole thing as a

crutch, which is decidedly not what "the path" is designed for.

Jean Overton Fuller relates an incident in *Krishnamurti and The Wind*, (in my view one of the worst book titles imaginable, but it is a good biography) in which a former General Secretary of the TS in England remarked that what theosophists could most usefully do now is to assimilate the teachings of J. Krishnamurti. I would agree with Hugh Gray there, but with a caveat or a proviso; that it is not the teachings of any particular man which need to be assimilated but the truth of the fact that the religious life, or the sane life, is all about seeing. The art of seeing or the skill of looking is at the heart of transformation and renewal. Even in the most prosaic forms of psychotherapy one learns that admitting a problem is half the solution. There is absolutely no substitute for seeing: belief and faith are but temporary guides. More time spent looking rather than pontificating, opining or thinking would also be beneficial. In fact, when time is so short and more discernment is required as to the best use to make of it, I would suggest that time be given to looking at things together rather than attending lectures. As many of us do not even know what that would entail, a most urgent necessity is to find out what is the difference between thinking and looking. This understanding is the sound rock on which the religious life may be built. Identifying with the sometimes assumed or imagined Higher Self may be romantic but it is shaky ground. ❖

# Unlimited Seeing

On the Watchtower-  
*The Theosophist*  
November 2009



**B**rotherhood is not an Object of the Society as imagined by many people, but 'Universal Brotherhood' is, as mentioned in the first Object of the Society. Universal Brotherhood implies that it must be practised in respect of all persons, rich or poor, important or not important, doing any kind of work or none at all. It is meant to include all human beings.

Unfortunately the word brotherhood suggests a sexual difference to some people, but this was not meant when the word was used. Brotherhood was a term that included women also and therefore the Society's Object concerned all humanity. In English, there is no word which can stand for brotherhood or sisterhood combined, but the common factor in the two words is what is meant.

The term universal brotherhood means, to all those who know and have eyes to see, a vast, in fact an unlimited, vista. The spiritual level embraces all the other levels including the lowest and the highest and to see what brotherhood is from the spiritual point of view, our eyes must be more and more open as we proceed. We would then see not merely the outer surface of everything, but the inner content and meaning. So brotherhood, or whatever else we may call it—perhaps the sense of unity—will be absolutely natural. We will feel at one with all beings, which formerly was not possible.

Some creatures appear to us as not so nice, or as beautiful and lovable as do the ones we like;

but likes and dislikes disappear in the glowing reality of oneness. It is said that the illumined ones see all of life filled with Divine qualities. The impression that some are better than others disappears. So, for the illumined consciousness everything has equal value and is equally lovable.

There is great beauty in the evolutionary process, but we see that beauty only in some places, if at all. A person may have an old face with wrinkles and other signs of age, but it exhibits great beauty all the same. There are some paintings which give this impression. The fact is that in the light of real beauty, old age and youthfulness, the more evolved and the less evolved, are equally beautiful. Indeed, beauty exists whether there is a form to show it or not. The Divine is all around, and surrounds the person who has a sufficiently developed consciousness, and hence in that consciousness there is truth, knowledge, eternity, deep joy, and so forth. These are not separate aspects of reality, they are like the facets of a diamond, which people may see as separate from each other, but they are all from the one source.

To be aware of this, the Divine in so-called ordinary things, one should put aside thought, except when it is needed concerning ordinary things. If there is thought of this kind, everything is brought down to its own level; and when no such thought fills the mind it is free to see things as they are. Unfortunately, when we realise that there is something more than usual

that can make itself known, in searching for it we intend to discover what we already know. The desire to see great art or anything similar is the satisfaction of getting some ideas from the minds of other persons.

There is a story told about a Teacher. He gave a talk one day, it is said, when a bird sitting on the window sang a song. The teacher became silent. When the bird finished he said the sermon was over. There is a song in everything. The whole universe is full of beautiful music, if we can hear. Something of that song shows that the Divine beauty, which needs no object, is present. But these moments are rare. The silence of the mind, the stillness to hear are rare and therefore our relationships are incomplete.

Can we spend a few minutes without such image-making? Can meditation begin when the mind already has a picture in the background, or, does it commence with an empty mind? The emptying of the mind requires much practice. Even if there is an interval of quiet for a short time, some observation is possible. But the observer thinks that he knows only if he is present. He does not want to subside or die and this is the problem. What can we do to go beyond the level of mental knowledge to perfection or awareness? Perhaps we can teach ourselves not to analyse or do anything else, and just be. This may be what the future holds for everybody—an awareness which makes people see. ✠

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Many naïve people think that what is given in *The Secret Doctrine* about any subject is the last word that can be said about it and we need not consider any other facts or views bearing on a particular topic being examined. They forget that H.P. Blavatsky was given the teachings embodied in *The Secret Doctrine* in a very general and incomplete manner and many of the concepts and doctrines were not and could not be properly understood at the time. Besides, she had to present some of these Occult doctrines of a profound nature in a rather hurried manner without first assimilating and relating them with one another. This accounts for the rather fragmentary manner in which the Occult doctrine has been presented in *The Secret Doctrine*. This work had to be elaborated, amplified and deepened. It was meant only to serve as a nucleus for further development in various directions by means of research and deep thought.

The Eternal Wisdom is a transcendent Reality which cannot be poured into a mould, preserved and then worshipped as a fetish... To treat the Occult doctrines discussed in *The Secret Doctrine* as a creed and to consider what has been said in it with regard to various matters as the last word on those subjects is therefore a betrayal of the Eternal Wisdom which the book was meant to partially unveil.

I.K. Taimni, *Man God and The Universe*



# The Future of Theosophy

**Padmanabhan Krishna**



When The Theosophical Society was founded in the nineteenth century it was with a deep insight. The founders realized that religious truths were universal, like scientific truths, but more difficult to perceive since our preconceptions and limited experiences prevent us from seeing the whole as it is and force us to see it only from a particular point of view. Our thoughts and the intellect are limited faculties since they depend on our memories and experience both of which are necessarily limited. It is necessary to go beyond these to perceive the actual truth by eliminating all restrictive illusions from the mind. Therefore they posited truth as higher than any religion and regarded different religions as only approaches to it. One of the great fundamental truths they realized was that all human beings were essentially the same (brothers) irrespective of where they are born or grow up. They did not posit this as an ideal to be achieved in the future but as a truth to be seen and realized here and now. There is nothing between the truth and ourselves except our own conditioning which is different for different people and which colours our perceptions. In that sense one could say that truth comes into existence only when a consciousness perceives what is (the fact) without any distortion. To free our mind of all distortion / illusion is therefore the true religious quest and it is synonymous with the quest for truth. This quest is

non-denominational as it does not really matter which particular illusions I have to free myself from. It is our illusions that divide us and prevent us from realizing the truth that we are really brothers and share the same consciousness.

Madame Blavatsky clearly stated that theosophy is not a religion, it is 'religion itself', meaning that it is the essence of all religions. This was a remarkable insight far ahead of the times because even today humanity has not realized that the ultimate truth is universal. They mostly agree that there is only one science, there is no American science and Indian science, but they do not think so about religion. In other words they agree that Nature operates the same way everywhere—that scientific truths are universal—but they do not think so about human consciousness. Therefore we divide ourselves as belonging to different beliefs which are usually simply acquired after birth depending on the circumstances and the environment in which we grow up. Those beliefs are obviously not truths: they are our particular brand of illusion.

Fortunately, illusion is something that can be ended since it is only a notion and not a fact. Illusion is ended when we perceive what is true and what is false. For that one needs to posit the truth as the unknown and have an inquiring, learning mind which is constantly discerning what is true from what is false and not adhering to any particular opinions including one's own. This is the true religious quest and it is not merely an intellectual quest since the intellect is only a limited faculty and cannot perceive the truth. This distinguishes it from philosophy which has unfortunately become only an intellectual quest. Perhaps it was not intended to be that but in actual fact that

is what fairly intelligent human beings have reduced it to. In the same way, the true religious quest has been reduced to a quest for finding some temporary peace or solace in belief or prayer or ritual. It was the genius of the founders of The Theosophical society to unify this quest and point out its non-denominational, universal nature.

If we posit theosophy as human wisdom, which resides in any mind that frees itself from all illusion and which is in actual perceptual contact with the eternal and universal truths, then there is no such thing as a future of theosophy. The eternal unchanging universal truths can have no future. They remain the same. Our ideas about them, our interpretations and conceptions, may change but the truths do not change. There is no Hindu truth and Christian truth; there is only Hindu belief and Christian belief. A theosophist regards these beliefs the same way as a scientist regards present-day theories about reality. They may or may not be true. One has to find out the truth and not just assert one's belief to be true just because it is 'mine'! Also, truth is not just a correct idea about the fact. It is at the level of direct perception of the fact without any distortion. This distinction, subtle as it is, is the essence of the distinction between religious truth and so called philosophic truth.

It is the direct perception of the eternal truth that transforms our consciousness, not the idea of the truth however correct it may be. Ideas only change our opinions or viewpoints but that is not the same as the transformation of consciousness. The professor of Buddhist philosophy is not the Buddha any more than the Professor of Christian Theology is Christ! The difference is at the level of consciousness and not at the level of ideation. The true religious quest is for transformation of consciousness and not just a transformation of ideas or beliefs. That is why the conversion from one religion to another is a very superficial change though humanity in its present state of ignorance seems to be mightily concerned about it. If a human

being is narrow minded, selfish, violent, greedy, divisive, what difference does it make whether he is Hindu or Christian or an atheist? And if a human being is wise, non-violent, kind, compassionate, large-hearted, what difference does it make whether he is Hindu, Christian or an atheist? The importance we have given to belief, to denomination, to this classification is illusory, superficial. There is only one religious mind, not several. It is the essence, the core of all religions and that essence is theosophy.

So, theosophy is not a new set of beliefs or ideas, a new religion with new rituals and forms. It is the quest for truth and for the ending of all disorder in consciousness through the ending of all illusion and therefore all division in our consciousness. It is the quest for freeing the mind of one's particular conditioning in order to come into direct contact with the eternal truth which is the source of all wisdom. The Theosophical Society is meant to be a body of people who are interested in this quest, who are learning, who are freeing their mind of all illusions; not a body that wants to replace old illusions and beliefs with new ones, not for establishing a new religion or creating a new division in society.

We all know how a human being grows in knowledge; but how does one grow in wisdom? It is important to differentiate knowledge from wisdom. There is very little wisdom in a mind that is full of illusions and does not know itself. It is living in a world of make-believe and not in touch with reality. The growth in wisdom is really an unlearning process: unlearning the false which has been acquired in the process of growing up. There is no point saying my illusions are better than yours (which is the glorified field of comparative religion!). The intellectual is not closer to the truth than the ignorant man and his consciousness continues to be violent, greedy, selfish and full of conflict. The greatest and most profound things in life cannot be had through effort and volition: happiness, peace, non-violence, love, a sense



of beauty, harmony. They are byproducts of wisdom. Virtue is a state of being and a state of being cannot be practised.

There is in each one of us the universal consciousness as well as the individual conditioned consciousness. If we identify ourselves with the individual consciousness, it prevents the operation of the universal in us. A theosophist is one who is acutely aware of this fact and therefore not trapped in his individual consciousness. It is only the universal in us that can come in contact with the universal truth which is the essence of theosophy. The universal is the eternal and the sacred, not the individual, which is an accident of birth and circumstance. A theosophist must attempt to rise to the level of consciousness which is in tune with the eternal and the sacred. So long as I am not in that state I cannot live that way. Therefore I cannot follow sages who have lived that way; I can only live with the wisdom that I have. However, my wisdom is not a static thing if I have a learning mind which is constantly discerning what is true from what is false and thereby ending the false. Such a state of mind is the essence of the religious mind. It is therefore also the theosophical mind. Such a mind lives not with beliefs and conclusions but with

questions constantly exploring and pushing the boundary between the known and the unknown.

If one reads the writings of Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant one finds that they were acutely aware of all this and have explicitly stated it in their works in many places never considering themselves to be authorities to be believed in. If The Theosophical Society creates new beliefs, new authorities and new rituals it will reduce theosophy to a new religion. All religions have undone the teachings of their originator and we will be making the same mistake.

So, brothers and sisters, the future of The Theosophical Society depends on us, not on the so-called leaders. It will be what we make of it. It can be a major force for the quest of truth in this world or it can become mired in a new set of illusions. ❀

Professor Krishna is Honorary Scientist and Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi and in charge of the Krishnamurti study centre at the Rajghat Education Center in Varanasi, India.



**My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, above all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything.**

**Joseph Conrad 1857-1924**

## Bohm, Quantum Interaction and Subject-Object Duality: A Reply to Dr Hugh Murdoch

### Peter Bruza

With this letter I would like to reply to Dr Hugh Murdoch's interesting and informative article "Bohm's Quantum Physics Recognised At Last" (*Theosophy in Australia*, vol 73, no. 3), as well as supply some additional references and thoughts.

Dr Murdoch's article raised a number of points about how quantum theory relates to the macro-world. I am part of a small but growing number of pioneering international researchers who are attempting to use quantum theory to model the behaviour of macro-world domains such as economics; management sciences; human cognition; as well as semantic and artificial intelligence. This new field has become known as Quantum Interaction. Professor Basil Hiley, the long-time close collaborator of David Bohm, was keynote presenter at the Second Quantum Interaction Symposium held at Oxford, March 2008.<sup>1</sup> The title of his presentation was "Quantum Reality unveiled through process and the Implicate Order". As a theosopher, I was interested to hear what Hiley had to say first hand about Bohm's relationship with Krishnamurti, and in particular whether he felt that any of the content of their ongoing dialogue actually made its way into the quantum physics that was being developed at the time. Hiley replied he was sure his discussions with Krishnamurti were influencing Bohm's evolving views and did tacitly influence the development of theory, though Hiley himself was quite sceptical of Krishnamurti and his motives with regard to Bohm.

Dr Murdoch's article included an uncited quote of Bohm's and Hiley's work, so I emailed Hiley to chase up the citation, which he kindly supplied with the comment 'I thought this was one of the better papers I was part of'.<sup>2</sup> The quote in

question was surprisingly broad in scope for physicists, as it seemed very much like they were putting forward 'unbroken wholeness' as being relevant to biology, social science and even psychology—a view orthodox physicists would frown on, but which is now embraced by the quantum interaction research community. I queried Hiley whether he and Bohm ever investigated these broader macro-contexts from the perspective of their quantum-theoretic interpretation, and if so what happened.

He replied with the following, which provides some pointers for further reading:

Yes we discussed many possibilities in very broad contexts. Of course Bohm was much more active in putting these things down on paper. I was very happy just to be part of the discussions. For more general discussions you have to read Bohm's *Fragmentation and Wholeness* which was published by the van Leer Foundation in Jerusalem or his book with David Peat, *Science, Order and Creativity*.

We also discussed a lot about the mind-matter relationship. Try *The Essential David Bohm* edited by Lee Nichol. You can find my papers on this subject, for what they are worth, on my web site [www.bbk.ac.uk/tpru](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/tpru). I don't know how up to date it is but it will give you an idea of what we tried.

It is both very interesting and highly significant to note that Bohm and Hiley were considering the applicability of quantum theory outside of physics in 1975. The core aspect is 'non-locality'. That is, one cannot model phenomena in terms of discrete, separable systems. More than thirty years later, researchers across a range

of disciplines are struggling to model highly contextual systems which time and time again resist being decomposed into discrete inter-related objects or sub-systems, and whereby the whole is assumed to be the sum of the parts (reductionism). Examples of such highly contextual systems are socio-technical systems, natural ecosystems, and even the human mental lexicon. For this reason, some researchers in the quantum interaction research community are looking to quantum theory to provide inspiration for a new genre of modelling tools, which are motivated from a non-reductionist perspective. The key to this perspective is not to assume that a system can be decomposed, but to understand in which contexts seemingly distinct sub-systems are non-separable and behave as a whole.

One of the lurking issues with reductionism is that the modeller steps back and considers him/herself outside of the system or phenomenon to be modelled. Erwin Schrödinger, one of the founding fathers of quantum theory, wrote a thought-provoking essay which describes very precisely what is going on via the 'Principle of Objectivation', which he clarifies as follows:

By this I mean the thing that is also frequently called the 'hypothesis of the real world' around us. I maintain that it amounts to a certain simplification which we adopt in order to master the infinitely intricate problem of nature. Without being aware of it and without being rigorously systematic about it, we exclude the Subject of Cognizance from the domain of nature we endeavour to understand. We step with our own person back into the part of an onlooker who does not belong to the world, which by this very procedure becomes an objective world.<sup>3</sup>

In plain terms, when we step back as an onlooker, the world of objects is born. This raises the question of subject-object duality. Schrödinger was concerned with this question and some of his thoughts on this matter were

tied to the question of interpreting the wave-function in quantum theory. The wave function models the evolution of the quantum system prior to it being measured by some apparatus, for example, a polarizer used to measure the "spin" of a sub-atomic particle like a photon. It was Schrödinger who provided the dynamics of the wave function, an absolutely crucial contribution to the development of quantum theory. However, the wave-function was not treated by all as just a mathematical abstraction. Schrödinger was a very deep thinker and his philosophical position on the ultimate meaning of the wave-function fluctuated over the years. Of all the founders of quantum theory, he seemed to be the one most open to unusual, if not radical perspectives. The following is one of Schrödinger's most striking thoughts on subject-object duality:

The world is given to me only once, not one existing and one perceived. Subject and object are only one. The barrier between them cannot be said to have broken down as a result of recent experience in the physical sciences, for this barrier does not exist.<sup>4</sup>

The 'recent experience in the physical sciences' refers to the development of quantum theory, which raised serious questions about subject-object duality. Schrödinger's statement echoes the oneness at the foundation of many spiritual traditions. Such thoughts are reflected in another essay in which he argues against separate individual consciousnesses, but for the 'oneness of mind'.<sup>5</sup>

By the time Schrödinger had penned such views, his exalted place in the history of science had already been assured. Nevertheless, his "unusual" views on such matters were either politely tolerated and ignored, or treated with contempt. Moreover, quantum theory had become the most stunningly successful theory ever devised by man, and was being applied in a growing number of ways, without having settled

the question of what the theory really tells us about the nature of reality. To date, quandaries in the foundations of quantum theory such as subject-object duality remain unresolved. There are some small signs, however, that foundational issues are being revisited. For example, Shimon Malin, a quantum physicist and cosmologist, has written an intriguing account of foundations of quantum theory from a western philosophical perspective.<sup>6</sup> What is very striking about this book is its third part entitled “Physics and the One”. Following from Schrödinger, he argues that the next step for science is to transcend subject-object duality. Another recent book brings to light the connection between quantum theory and consciousness. Rosenblum and Kuttner, the former a physicist, regard the issue of consciousness as the ‘skeleton in the closet’ of quantum theory and the purpose of the book is to let the skeleton out.<sup>7</sup> This skeleton is connected with the quandary about what causes the wave function to collapse, the consequence of which is a quantum particle actualises in space-time. In the early days of quantum theory there was a group of notable scientists including Eugene Wigner and John von Neumann who held the view that human consciousness was ultimately involved in the wave-function collapse. This view was unpalatable to the vast majority of physicists not only because physics is a “hard”, objective discipline, but also because it is uncomfortably close to solipsism. Put roughly, solipsism in this context is individual human consciousnesses going around collapsing the wave function and actualising reality. In this view, the observer (subject) “creates” reality, a feature that the new age literature on quantum theory emphasizes and often exaggerates.

Schrödinger’s view, however, was of the oneness of mind, not individual consciousnesses. In other words, his position can perhaps be more precisely characterized as a “One Mind solipsism”. If

so, this is very close to some teachings in Zen in which “One Mind is THIS awareness”; or, no distinction between “awareness of life and life itself”, as in, for example, the lucid teachings of Chinese Zen master, Huang Po.<sup>8</sup> I contacted Professor Michel Bitbol, an expert on Schrödinger’s philosophy and asked him how Schrödinger was placed in this regard. He replied that Schrödinger was familiar with Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta, and his vision was deeply in tune with both. Moreover, he agreed Schrödinger’s metaphysical outlook could indeed be called a non-individual form of solipsism, but so much non-individual that it does not even deserve to be called solipsism (It is “solipsism of the Brahman” so to speak...).

Shimon Malin, the quantum physicist mentioned above, wrote, ‘The quest for the One Mind calls for the transcendence of the subject/object mode. Can science participate in this quest?’ The question is still very open, still largely ignored by science, but nevertheless an intriguing and exciting prospect. ❀

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## On Defining the Divine Loosely

Dara Tatray, Annual Convention 2010

The theme of the 2010 Convention was worded carefully to read Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy, rather than Theosophy in Art, Science and Philosophy, as it might well have said. This was to try and remind us all that Theosophy is divine wisdom, and not just a set of teachings about divine wisdom or the way to it. Maintaining an awareness of this distinction is important if we wish to avoid looking like a sect or being a sect.

Keeping things loose, or holding them loosely, is equally important from the point of view of the non-dogmatic nature of the Society, enshrined in the Freedom of Thought Resolution, and regarded by many of us as an essential feature of our membership of The Theosophical Society. The need for certainty and strong conviction at the beginning of a movement and in its adolescent phase is understandable. But in the absence of a genuine authority figure, as is the case in The Theosophical Society—which is not a guru-based society but an enquiry-based society—I think the kind of certainty often displayed by H.P. Blavatsky in her wonderful polemics is not the way for the TS to move forward and sustain itself now. In other words, I think we should hold our understanding of Theosophy lightly, and be seen to hold it lightly, fully embracing the ethos of enquiry, otherwise I suspect that the TS will find itself increasingly out of place in today's world.

At the same time, I believe that it is equally essential to define Theosophy and The Theosophical Society a little more than we have in recent years. There is a danger in defining things, that they inevitably become culturally-

specific, more limited and even parochial. However, with regard to the question of what is Theosophy and what is The Theosophical Society all about, it would be good to be able to make the abstract a little more concrete, without narrowing it or painting it in our own colours. Otherwise we will fall into the trap of becoming nothing more than an umbrella organisation for a lot of other movements and ideas; and remain that way. This definition, I believe, represents the backbone of the Society and the backbone of a Lodge, without which it will not only flop about but also be ripe for takeover by more firm ideas, as has happened more than once.

Theosophy as word and Theosophy as idea is open to interpretation. We know that use of the word dates back at least to the third century AD, when the Neo-Platonist Ammonius Saccas founded the Eclectic Theosophical System, designed to unite the best of Plato with the best of Aristotle. In practice, within The Theosophical Society it is used chiefly in three ways; or, perhaps it might be more correct to say that the word may be used chiefly in three ways:

- \* Simply to mean divine wisdom, from the Greek, *theosophia*
- \* To refer to teachings about divine wisdom and the way to it
- \* To refer to a specific set of teachings on the subject of divine wisdom gathered from a wide variety of sources by H.P. Blavatsky, her teachers and her followers

I think this is quite a good three-tiered definition of Theosophy on which to base a map of the territory and a programme of study.

Most commonly however, judging by what is published in magazines and books, when members of the TS use the word Theosophy they tend to mean a set of teachings compiled and given out by H.P. Blavatsky, her teachers and her followers. The danger of this appears to be two-fold. On the one hand it limits Theosophy to the words and teachings of HPB and company and thus makes of The Theosophical Society a sect. Second, a fixation on the third tier of Theosophy is equivalent to being fixated on the finger pointing at the moon, with a possible neglect of the moon itself. As the purpose of the TS is to show the world that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and not that the writings of H.P. Blavatsky exist (in other words, to point to the moon, and not to the finger pointing at the moon), this would seem to be counterproductive. As it is almost impossible not to fall into this well-worn trap, a periodic reality check is in order; and what better time than an annual convention?

It is one thing to say that H.P. Blavatsky provides an excellent, perhaps to this day unmatched, entrée to the wide world of teachings about divine wisdom and the way to it—which she may well do. It is quite another to say I will read her synopsis of these teachings, or her version of those teachings, and ignore the wisdom itself (both the first and second tiers mentioned above). I wonder if it is at all clear that this is what we do much of the time. Most of us do not have the time or the capacity to study all that Madame Blavatsky did, or to gain her knowledge by whatever means she did, so we content ourselves with reading her. Some members of the TS do not even do that but read only one or two authors who claim to have studied HPB's works in depth, and base their understanding of Theosophy on their reading.

Fortunately, although not all of us have the time to engage in long-term in-depth study of many texts and traditions, we all have time to find out whether we are anywhere near anything remotely resembling wisdom or that which is

sacred. All of us have the time to find out if we are limited and conditioned, trapped in the past, living only through thought which is the response of memory. For that we do not need to read *The Secret Doctrine*, and without that particular piece of self-knowledge, *The Secret Doctrine* will of necessity remain something of a closed book, no matter how often we might peruse its pages. The key in all esoteric studies is after all the student. It is the student who must be unlocked; not some alluring door to a mysterious world.

If we are going to be speaking about divine wisdom in the idiom of today, we might explore such things as the nature of undivided consciousness or an undivided mind; and the possibility that this in fact is divine wisdom. Perhaps divine wisdom or *theosophia* is nothing but the innermost Self, the *ātman*, which, in the words of *The Secret Doctrine*:

... alone warms the inner man, i.e., it enlightens it with the ray of divine life and alone is able to impart to the inner man, or the reincarnating Ego, its immortality.<sup>1</sup>

The question is, are we looking at all of this or are we reading about it and listening to interminable talks about it?

I am fairly certain that an undivided mind cannot be approached or come to by way of a made-up mind. If so, the way of enquiry becomes an essential component of any approach to divine wisdom: it is not an optional extra for those who happen to be interested in self-enquiry or the writings of J. Krishnamurti. So there we have a subject matter and a method; both distinctly implied in the word Theosophy itself.

As to an open mind, there are some commendable open-minded attitudes out there in the world today. Two well-known religious figures have fairly recently expressed views that are worth bearing in mind, especially by people who write and lecture in the TS: they are His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Bishop Shelby Spong. The

Dalai Lama writes in *The Universe in a Single Atom* that:

... so far as understanding the physical world is concerned, there are many areas of traditional Buddhist thought where our explanations and theories are rudimentary when compared with those of modern science. .. I wish to emphasise to the millions of my fellow Buddhists worldwide the need to take science seriously and to accept its fundamental discoveries within their worldview... certainly some specific aspects of Buddhist thought—such as its old cosmological theories and its rudimentary physics—will have to be modified in the light of new scientific insights.<sup>2</sup>

Now if the spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhists can say that certain aspects of Buddhist cosmology and physics may have to be modified in view of new discoveries in science, who are we to say in the TS that everything written by Madame Blavatsky or her teachers is inviolable truth; including any pronouncements they have made in the field of physics, cosmology, geology, and other areas of science? Of course, the Dalai Lama is also aware that Buddhist teachings have something to offer which science does not. As he says:

... it is only through the cultivation of the qualities of the human heart and the transformation of our attitudes that we can begin to address and overcome our mental suffering.<sup>3</sup>

In a similar attitude of intelligent open-mindedness Bishop Shelby Spong writes of the increasing ‘inoperativeness’ and irrelevance of traditional theological doctrines: mentioning in this context the incarnation, the atonement and the trinity. According to Bishop Spong, over the past two hundred years ‘the Bible has become the subject of new and critical scholarship that has quite literally blown away the biblical support for most traditional Christian thinking’.<sup>4</sup> This kind of critical biblical scholarship is now

several generations old, yet many members of the clergy still wish to keep the fact of it hidden from their parishioners. In Bishop Spong’s view they need have no fear that the Church or the faith would not stand up to critical examination and revision. I would suggest that when the fundamentals are sound the fundamentalisms need not be protected, or as Bishop Spong put it, quoting one of his professors: ‘any God who can be killed ought to be killed’.<sup>5</sup>

In stark contrast to the above views, science is no stranger to dogmatism, and some scientists cling to beliefs for which there is no scientific backing, refusing to see evidence for things in which they do not believe. In science, dogmatism often takes the form of what HPB once referred to as unintelligent scepticism, such as that displayed by Richard Dawkins to great effect. This was made quite plain in a piece on Rupert Sheldrake’s website, titled “Richard Dawkins Comes to Call”.<sup>6</sup> The producers of *The Enemies of Reason* thought it would be good to have Richard Dawkins and Rupert Sheldrake discuss a few things for the documentary. Shortly after arriving at the home of Rupert Sheldrake, Richard Dawkins remarked that he would love to believe in telepathy but there was no evidence for it. Dr Sheldrake pointed out that most people had actually experienced some form of telepathy, a very common one being thinking about someone just before they telephone—and he had conducted many experiments in telepathy, which have been written up and published in peer-reviewed journals. At this Richard Dawkins said: ‘I don’t want to discuss evidence’. When asked why not he replied that there was no time, that it would be complicated and that evidence is not what the programme was to be about. At this point the cameras stopped rolling and Rupert Sheldrake said to the producer:

If telepathy occurs, it’s not irrational to believe in it. I thought that’s what we were going to talk about. I made it clear from the outset that I wasn’t interested in taking part

in another low grade debunking exercises.<sup>7</sup> To which Dawkins remarked: 'It's not a low grade debunking exercise; it's a high grade debunking exercise'. And that was the end of that. Sheldrake's report about the event ends with the following apt question, often posed in connection with Professor Dawkins: 'Should science be a vehicle of prejudice, a kind of fundamental belief-system? Or should it be a method of enquiry into the unknown?'

Those scientists who are also confirmed sceptics seem to have made up their minds about the unknown: to them it is known. In my view such a person has no right to the name scientist. Similarly, someone who has made up his or her mind, who is coming from an entrenched position of the known, has no right to the name Theosophist.

In my view we must avoid slipping into the belief that Theosophy is what is to be found in the works of HPB and the Masters; that they are the only reliable sources of Theosophy; and that they gave out the best, highest and most complete teachings on the subject. If that were true then how would The Theosophical Society differ from a sect based on the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters? There is a de facto Blavatsky Society in existence: it is called the United Lodge of Theosophists. They are united in their study of HPB, W.Q. Judge and a number of ULT members who have focussed on studying their works. The TS however is not centred on these or any other authors or authorities; and I believe that we need to take care that we keep it that way.

On the other hand, without a firm grip on Theosophy and The Theosophical Society where would we be? In a situation, not alien to the TS, in which a Lodge first of all becomes so diluted in its programme content that Theosophy is all but lost; and then is taken over one way or another, sometimes right down to its highly valuable real estate. And it all begins with vagueness on our part, including vagueness about our roles and responsibilities on committees.

So if this is not the Blavatsky Society or the Masters Society or the United Lodge of Theosophists what does it mean to be The Theosophical Society? It is much harder to be The Theosophical Society than it would be to be a Blavatsky Society, for in the case of the latter our programme of studies, activities and so forth would be plainly laid out. We would study the works of HPB and related material and try to do whatever she told people to do. What should we study, and what should we do, as The Theosophical Society? One possibility is that it is not so much what we study or do that matters but how: with what attitude, with what awareness, with what degree of open-mindedness?

The following statement made by HPB in *The Key to Theosophy* lends itself to delusions of grandeur in the minds of her followers, but it is also a useful focus:

[Theosophy] is the essence of all religion and of absolute truth, a drop of which only underlies every creed. To resort once more to metaphor: Theosophy, on earth, is like the white ray of the spectrum, and every religion only one of the seven prismatic colours...<sup>8</sup>

But what is this white ray, the essence and synthesis of all creeds? Is it a religion or philosophy called Theosophy? Surely not. And if the essence of religion is not a doctrine, an idea or a belief let us not make an idea or a belief out of it. ❖

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## Florence Fuller in Adyar

Jenny McFarlane



Florence Fuller's  
*Portrait of the Lord  
Buddha* c1910,  
collection of the  
Campbell Theosophical  
Research Library,  
Sydney

FLORENCE FULLER (1867-1947) had the art academies in Australia and abroad at her feet to a degree that few Australian artists have achieved since. Yet we know very little of her because at the peak of her career she turned to devote her art to the service of The Theosophical Society, the most important radical counter-cultural organization of her time. Fuller had studied the academic traditions of portraiture at the highest level. By the time of her arrival in Adyar, the headquarters of The Theosophical Society in Madras (now Chennai), India, at the age of forty-one, her skills were acknowledged by the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy, London.<sup>1</sup> Success followed her back to Australia and she painted society's finest in Melbourne and Perth, and Cape Town (South Africa).

Fuller joined The Theosophical Society on 29 May 1905 in Perth, following C. W. Leadbeater's tour, the same week as Bessie Rischbieth. Together they shaped the growing Perth Lodge into the powerful force it would become in the twenties. Fuller was Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian of the small Lodge and lent her studios for Lodge meetings. In 1906 she wrote a short essay which drew on Blavatsky's writings, urging her fellow Theosophists to put aside the physical body and its needs, to realize that the lower personal self is fleeting and to seek out the highest and truest self.<sup>2</sup> In winter 1908 Annie Besant toured Australia and membership doubled. Besant visited Fuller's studio and admired her early portraits of Olcott and Blavatsky (now in the Perth Lodge) and

invited her to Adyar.

The timing of Fuller's arrival could not have been better. Fuller's stay in Adyar from 1908 to 1911 coincided with an extraordinary period in the history of the Society, and Fuller was at the heart of all the activity. This was the peak of Annie Besant's most clairvoyant period; C. W. Leadbeater arrived in early 1909; and by the end of the year he had "discovered" Krishnamurti. Fuller had a small studio built for her, still called the Fuller Bungalow. Fuller's personal search for the higher, true self was played out on a dramatic scale in the nearby bungalow's octagonal room on a daily basis. As Leadbeater conducted the research into Krishnamurti's past lives, later published as the *Lives of Alcyone*, Fuller found her own search answered. She was included in the *Lives* as 'Ida'. She was male, female, rich, poor, close and distant to the story of Krishnamurti's spiritual evolution. She witnessed Krishnamurti's nightly excursions to the subtle realm to learn at the feet of his Master, Kuthumi, diligently reported and written up every morning as *At the Feet of the Master*. Fuller's practical experience in Adyar enacted what she had before only read about; that the human subject was articulated around a spiritual core, that the physical envelope was ephemeral and even personality was temporary. She learnt that on the subtler level she was connected with people of other races and genders and even with all creation.

Fuller's official position, while in Adyar, was Recording Secretary and one of her tasks

was to enter the names of new members from Melbourne, Chicago, Paris and elsewhere into the enormous registers and issue certificates of membership in her neat firm copperplate. She too listened at the feet of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater and took part in the more ordinary pleasures of concerts, tennis and swimming, which were a feature of life at Adyar. She had at least two students working with her, a girl called Malati and a boy, perhaps called Meenakshisundaram. She may also have been Krishnamurti's photography teacher; in any case she would have formed part of the coterie of Europeans overseeing his early education. Her main project however, was the ambitious task of painting portraits of the Founders, significant members of the Adyar household and the Masters.<sup>3</sup> In The Theosophical Society Fuller found the patron she had been trained to expect. Her portraits were placed in meeting rooms and museums and published with inspirational quotations by the Founders. This project was diligently undertaken and pleasure in her progress reported in the Society's journals.

Fuller's portrait of Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, in the Perth Lodge of The Theosophical Society, was painted before her arrival in Adyar (Fuller *Colonel Olcott* oil on canvas c1907). In this painting we can see something of Fuller's academic repertoire. Olcott had died in 1907 obliging Fuller to work from a photograph. As already mentioned Fuller was herself a keen photographer and, like many academic portraitists, often used the photograph as a documentary tool. In this work Olcott is portrayed as founding father and sage of The Theosophical Society. The high forehead clearly denotes intelligence, and the snowy beard, wisdom. Fuller very comfortably deployed the scientific grammar of the body, the tools of the physiognomist and the phrenologist for whom the face was a chart for identification and distinction. In this portrait Fuller masterfully employed the full range of (pseudo) scientific instruments of her time revealing herself as very much in step with her

increasingly professionalised and specialised academic discipline.

In her portrait of Annie Besant (commissioned by Mr A. Nilakanta Sastry in 1918 and now in the Adyar Museum), Fuller has put aside the bituminous academicism of Olcott's portrait and we can see that the painter found the light and colour she had hoped to find. The broken brush strokes, heightened palette and above all the muted impressionism of this work evidences a real pleasure in painting the material. It is different from both the Olcott portrait and the light and airy miniatures, demonstrating that Fuller was quite happy to move between several different registers. In this work Fuller has opened herself to a psychological reading of the sitter. She has described Besant as an intellectual and organizational giant. Would Fuller have described this work as having captured the hidden life within? The personality of the sitter has been captured—Besant's penetrating gaze reveals much about the person that Fuller knew. But both Besant and Leadbeater taught that personality was as evanescent as the physical form. Beautiful as this portrait is, it is not a representation of the 'hidden life within' that Fuller came to Adyar to find.

Fuller's *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* is the only work which took up the challenge of the subject (Fuller *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* c1910, collection of the Campbell Library, Sydney). It was almost certainly painted during Fuller's time in Adyar. This work is remarkable because it comes to us with the information that 'Miss Fuller's portrait is said to be a lifelike representation of Lord Buddha by one who has seen him'.<sup>4</sup> The implication is that Fuller had a visionary experience in Adyar in which she witnessed the Buddha. The claim is extraordinary in the true sense of the word and by its nature not open to academic investigation.<sup>5</sup> What is open to investigation is what Fuller did with the experience. In her search to represent this experience she resorted to a different register again.

This work may be an aberration in Fuller's oeuvre. However, it is enough to indicate the direction of her ambitions for 'something deeper'. She had said of her work in Adyar that it was 'undergoing a change, and [I] felt it could not satisfy [me] unless it became so much greater.' She felt she was beginning to 'touch realities' and aspired that this would find expression in her work.<sup>6</sup> These are the words of an artist who was thinking deeply about the subject and the possibilities and limitations of the portrait painter.

*Portrait of the Lord Buddha* appears strikingly modern by comparison with Fuller's other work.<sup>7</sup> The forms are flattened and the colours are boldly and firmly placed. The modelling in the face is reduced to a strong recessive plane of green while the body and the background are only notational. The outer form is no longer the primary bearer of meaning. Abstract colour and line assume an importance in this work beyond anything Fuller would do again. Yet, however successful the *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* might be as a formal experiment, it is important not to see this work merely as an icon of early Australian modernism.

This work deployed radical formal strategies to achieve a different realism. Art for art's sake was viewed as empty formalism and was abhorrent to the Theosophical project. The image comes to us as a 'lifelike representation' and Fuller's formal innovations were the result of an ambitious attempt to paint another reality. In fact the striking colours have specific Theosophical meanings.<sup>8</sup> They are made to carry much of the abstract meaning of the image. The strongest note is the yellow of wisdom, with secondary notes of love and devotion to a noble ideal. This work is in another register again from Fuller's other portraits. This is neither the phrenological subject, nor the psychological one but represents the subject in its pure state. This is the subject apprehended through a psychic, visionary experience.

Fuller's *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* proceeds from her dissatisfaction with scientific strategies of observation to apprehend the real. Her academic training had taught her careful examination, often using photography as a tool, to fix the material evidence for careful study. Such was the authorised procedure ratified by the scientific academy. The Theosophical Society encouraged her to see this exterior envelope as fleeting. True sight was rather a matter of intuition, of visualisation. Only such strategies as these could penetrate the physical and capture the inner life of the individual. In this painting of the Buddha, Fuller sought to represent the inner life, the God in every man, which was not visible to the tools of science. The formal resolution of this critique of the visible looks revolutionary, but this is an alternative modernism. Fuller's *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* was not the result of an exercise in formal values but was painted in response to a need.

Fuller's return to London in 1911, in time to march behind Annie Besant in what has been described as the last of the great suffragette marches for the Coronation of George V, was also a period of coming to terms with the reality of earning one's living through portraiture. Fuller's public work gives no hint of the experimentation displayed in the *Portrait of the Lord Buddha*. Fuller returned to Sydney with Leadbeater in 1916 where she undertook a number of teaching positions, lecturing and writing in Theosophical circles.<sup>10</sup> Fuller remained within the Theosophical community until, increasingly vulnerable to poverty and ill health, she was committed, at sixty, to Gladesville Mental Hospital.

Florence Fuller's *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* represents a significant challenge to the means of knowing and representing as they were taught in the art academy. Her radical visuality expressed itself as a modernism which was not stylistically related to European formulae but

was an independent response to a conceptual problem, drawing on visual influences outside the modernist debates of Paris and London. This alternative modernism is informed by a Theosophical imperative. It marks a space for a practice of art which challenged the Eurocentric one of using ocular evidence and Western

reason as the basis. Fuller's *Portrait of the Lord Buddha* is sufficient to destabilize the hegemony of the master narrative of modernism and restore something of the potential and complexity of the period. ✠

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Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable. It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps the Theosophical Society as a living and a healthy body ... Were it not, also, for the existence of a large amount of uncertainty in the minds of students of Theosophy, such healthy divergencies would be impossible, and the Society would degenerate into a sect, in which a narrow and stereotyped creed would take the place of the living and breathing spirit of Truth and an ever growing Knowledge.

H.P. Blavatsky

# **Towards a New Synthesis—the Emerging Paradigm in Religious Thought**

**Mervyn Haines**

**R**eligion, I believe, is the cultural component of the innate spirituality of human beings—divinity glimpsed within the individual expressed in communal relationship. It is also an expression of the curiosity about our origins and condition which are the hallmarks of humanity. So philosophy, science and religion have long been fellow travelers, and in so many cases, the artistic expression of humanity is inspired and nurtured by the religious tradition. Indeed, religion can be said to be humanity's greatest artistic expression. Engagement in the response to the numinous is participation in the great artwork that is the unfolding of the cosmos.

It is not that long ago that the theologians of the Western world were also its scientists. Science has never been a threat to good religion and ongoing discoveries in science do not threaten the concept of a Divine Source, but they do require that we constantly update our understanding of the Source, inasmuch as we can understand it, in the same way that we update our understanding of the physical universe.

Present-day living depends on science more than ever, but the increasing complexity of science means that the average person probably understands it less than ever, a situation often exploited by advertisers and politicians alike. Also the popular sources of information, especially the internet, require the user to be adept at critical thinking in order to separate the bad information from the good. Paradoxically, it is science that best imparts a way of critical thinking that might equip people for this. This may tell us something about the present-day transmission of knowledge, where oversimplification and misinformation may produce a popular culture of pseudo-science.

In a similar way, many of the concepts which are identified collectively as 'Ancient Wisdom', may at a populist level produce an ill-informed folk lore which misleads as much as guides.

## **The survival of religions**

Why is it important that viable religious traditions should survive? Is religion even necessary in the educated secular environment of the 21st Century? Many people might say that it is not; arguing that reason and knowledge alone can enlighten and benefit society. However it is important to remember that our public knowledge, even our language, is the receptacle of ideas and concepts which are deeply rooted in the religious traditions of the world.

Religion has often been confused with the political and economic movements that have masqueraded under its name and for many people today religion has become synonymous with fundamentalism, but fundamentalism as a phenomenon is relatively recent, being mainly a twentieth century reaction against liberal thought.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, much of the attention given by the mass media to religion in recent times has focussed on fundamentalist groups and this public face has so dominated the popular conception of modern religion that it has effectively masked the quiet rise of its antagonist. In the case of Christianity, this is a system of thought emerging from the theological liberalism of the twentieth century that some have termed 'Progressive' Christianity.

## **What's in a name?**

This label, like all labels, has its limitations and problems. It was first registered for use

in 1994 in the United States by The Centre for Progressive Christianity<sup>2</sup> but has quickly become a universally adopted term. The word 'progressive' can be understood as being opposed to 'non-thinking, apathetic or irrationally conservative'. Others prefer the term 'emerging' to emphasise the evolutionary nature of the change, acknowledging that the term 'progressive' may be seen as judgemental and also acknowledging the value of tradition in preserving wisdom. Still others refer to the movement as 're-emerging', noting that its philosophical basis has been a persistent part of Christian thought since before the 17th century. By whatever name, the movement is designed to reach out to those for whom organized religion has proved ineffectual, irrelevant or repressive, as well as to those who have given up on it. During this article I will for the sake of convenience, continue to use the term 'progressive' but with the understanding that the movement is not limited to the one religious expression known as Christianity.

### **Freedom of enquiry**

In this progressive climate ordinary people are openly questioning doctrinal statements on faith. The received teachings are subjected to informed criticism and the rational criticisms of others are welcomed as the basic concepts of the religion are re-evaluated. At the same time many are happy to acknowledge the endurance of mystery and the necessity of paradox. Doubt has been elevated from a sin almost to a virtue as it becomes for many the driving force that impels their open minds towards new discoveries. Tradition, reason and experience are respected but certainty is rejected. Belief is optional. Like The Theosophical Society, progressives have no dogma and therefore no heretics.<sup>3</sup> Of course, heresy has always had more to do with authority than interpretation.]

Progressives are repelled by the idea that only one religion may have a monopoly on truth and therefore declare other religions as being of equal

value, in the understanding that no religion can adequately express ultimate Reality. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus can and do share the same building.<sup>4</sup> Whilst acknowledging this diversity, progressive Christians recognise that they have a spiritual heritage of their own which is their basis for exploration of spirituality in the contemporary world.<sup>5</sup>

### **Characteristics of the new paradigm**

In the attempt to describe what progressive might mean, several declarations of agreed characteristics have been drawn up. None of these declarations are intended to become Creeds, but are simply corporate views of what the main characteristics of a new Christianity may be. The Creeds were formularised in an atmosphere of disagreement in order to impose unity—these statements come out of communities of diversity. As an example, one short list by Prof. Hal Taussig contains five points which I have abbreviated to highlight the salient characteristics:

1. A spiritual vitality and expressiveness. ...using meditation, prayer, artistic forms...a wide range of non-Christian rituals and meditative techniques.
2. An insistence on intellectual integrity. ...interrogating Christian assumptions and traditions ... (including) God language, the relationship between science and religion, and post-modern consciousness.
3. A transgression of traditional gender boundaries ...a commitment to feminism and affirmation of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
4. The belief that Christianity can be vital without claiming to be the best or only true religion ... a commitment to support the complete validity of other religions.
5. Strong ecological and social justice commitments...including peace advocacy ...and a passion for environmentalism.<sup>6</sup>

This list indicates that an appropriate response to the numinous can take the form of meditation,

prayer, music, dance, painting, sculpture, poetry, social action in the struggle for justice and equality, and rigorous intellectual enquiry. This response is consistent with the emerging view of what the term 'GOD' might mean.

### **Naming the Un-nameable**

Christians have always named the creative energy that formed the world and continues to be involved in its life ... 'G-O-D', but as Eckhart Tolle writes:

The word God has become empty of meaning through thousands of years of misuse... By misuse, I mean that people who have never glimpsed the realm of the sacred, the infinite vastness behind that word, use it with great conviction, as if they knew what they are talking about. Or they argue against it as if they knew what it is that they are denying.<sup>7</sup>

However, for two thousand years of mainstream Christianity, God as a symbol has always represented existence itself, life itself and when progressives talk about God they acknowledge that they are encountering this mystery. All statements about God are statements about people's subjective experiences of a presence beyond them, which they call God. And increasingly these experiences are being expressed within the church in a pantheistic way that would have been impossible in the past.

### **Process thought**

Twentieth century progressive Christianity may have been influenced in part by the Process Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). Whitehead's thinking should be familiar to members of the Society. He describes everything in the universe, God, humans and rocks as a single type of reality in motion—in the process of becoming—where the physical universe and the unknowable Source are two

poles of the One; God being immanent in everything but not limited by things.<sup>8</sup>

Each emerging event in this process is influenced by previous events, and has an 'initial aim' which he identifies as Divine Lure or Divine Persuasion, suggesting optimal possibilities for each new moment. Becoming events are not 'predestined' to accept this Divine Persuasion but are urged towards this optimal choice for transformation. When we accept this Divine Persuasion in each new event, we are then 'in process', moving on to richer experiences and becoming 'more like GOD'.<sup>9</sup>

In Whitehead's model the whole universe contributes to the emergence of each moment of experience, and in each moment we experience the impact of past experiences, both positive and negative, as well as the impact of our moment by moment decisions. Some religious traditions might call this karma.

### **Reaction and the way forward**

So why has it taken so long for this quiet but persistent aspect of Christianity to assert itself? Certainly the reaction to recent right-wing governments and the rise of fundamentalist militarism has had much to do with it. The narrowness and negativism of the religious right, whether of Christian or other religions, has inspired others to witness openly to their progressive faith. But it is far more than just a reaction to the rampant right.

The new environmental awareness has engendered a growing appreciation of our interdependence with each other and the Earth we inhabit, and the advance of science has provided a vastly more complex account of reality which highlights our interconnectiveness with the cosmos at all levels.

Ideas that were primarily the province of philosophers and theologians for centuries are now coming into the churches and homes

of ordinary people through the courage and integrity of a new breed of leaders who have in the past found no comfort in the Church, but have now found the courage to take up the challenge of change.

Of course, change always provokes a reaction from those who feel threatened by it. When progressives appear, the conservative majority always circles its wagons and builds its forts. Such large defensive structures are always highly visible and so are often mistaken for the face of religion, even though the progressives have already departed on the continuation of their journey of discovery into the pathless land.

Encouragingly, recent indications are that in spite of the ever-visible surge of fundamentalists, especially in Africa and Asia, present growth in the Western world seems to be on the side of liberal thinking churches. Of course, the future success of this progressive movement will be dependant on education and freedom of thought and assembly. Unfortunately, these are not always the conditions in those countries where conservatism flourishes.

## Conclusion

So what is the significance of all this for members of The Theosophical Society? The Theosophical Society has its own stories to tell. Although only a little over a hundred years old, the principles that formed its foundation and the ills that it is prey to, especially as it struggles to maintain its commitment to freedom of thought, are not dissimilar to the challenges which have always faced progressive movements in religious and spiritual organisations.

A new and exciting possibility of religious dialogue is now emerging among the world's people—not just a dialogue of academics and intellectuals but a reaching out by ordinary people of many backgrounds to a new understanding and to each other, in a genuine desire to reconnect on the issues which matter

most. It only requires that we are introspective enough to examine our basic assumptions, humble enough to accept our shortcomings and willing to engage in open debate as equals.

We do not know what the future of humanity may be but we know that our past has been largely shaped by our beliefs and it is out of these beliefs that we have acted. This latest development in the history of religion should both challenge us and encourage us to look to the future with a degree of optimism. This re-emerging or progressive movement may well help to shape the way forward for many religions, and how The Theosophical Society takes its place in this development in the world psyche may well help to shape the way forward for the Society. ✠

**Mervyn Haines is a member of Hobart Branch. He presented this paper at the 2010 Convention of The Theosophical Society in Launceston.**

## References

- 1 From *The Fundamentals*, a series of publications by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Chicago 1909-1915 <http://www.xmission.com/~fidelis/>
- 2 Founded by James R. Adams, 1994.
- 3 *Theosophy* by Annie Besant.
- 4 e.g. Christ Community Church, Spring Lake MI USA
- 5 *The Promise and Practice of Progressive Christianity* by David Merritt, PCNV.
- 6 Abridged from *Grassroots Progressive Christianity - A Quiet Revolution* by Hal Taussig [http://www.sdc.unitingchurch.org.au/Westar Progressive Article.pdf](http://www.sdc.unitingchurch.org.au/Westar%20Progressive%20Article.pdf) accessed Feb 2008.
- 7 *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle, New World Library & Namaste Publishing, Canada 2004, p.13.
- 8 *Like Catching Water in a Net: Imagining The Divine* by Val Webb, presentation for Centre For Progressive Religious Thought, Canberra May 2006.
- 9 *Like Catching Water in a Net: Imagining The Divine* by Val Webb, Continuum, New York 2007, p.219-220





## The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Florence A. Fuller

Extract from *Theosophy in Australasia*, March 19, 1906

‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,’ are the words of the Christ—eternally true—not only of Jesus, but of every man in whom the divine Life, the Christ, is sufficiently developed. ‘The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ is, in truth, that divine flame which dwells in the heart of each, and which is a spark of the One Divine Fire. By purity of life, by unselfish love, and by ardent aspiration may this Divine Flame be fed; as it grows and develops, it will be our guiding star and will illumine for us the way to Truth and life. It is the lamp, by which we may see the way, and it is, also, the way; it is the star which will guide us to all truth, for it is Truth; it will lead us to fullness of life—because it is itself the Life. So within ourselves is our hope, our light, and our life, for although our sacred lamp burns but feebly as yet, and though its radiance is dimmed, and colored, by the desire, the ignorance of the personal man, yet all possibilities are there, as the germ of the oak is within the acorn, and we are Sons of God, capable of developing all the attributes of our Father. We must live up to the light which is ours, and it will grow; we

must identify ourselves always with our highest and truest self, endeavoring to realise that the lower, personal self is but fleeting, and that the physical body is only an instrument by which we may gain knowledge and experience, and that it must be our servant and never our master. When we can even partially realise this, and live accordingly, we shall begin to be ourselves the Way, and our dim star will gradually shed more light, little by little it will penetrate, and even gradually burn away the veil of personal desire and prejudice, which has gathered round it and has hitherto dimmed and marred its brightness. For only when it can shine with a clear white radiance, can it be to us the lamp of Truth by which we may know things as they are. So only, when we are free from personal desire, and attachment, and are therefore absolutely free from prejudice, can we recognise truth wherever it may be hidden, and under whatever guise. Then only can we know the real from the false, the fleeting from the everlasting, and then never again shall we be deluded by shadows, for then we shall have outgrown the toys of our childhood. ❖

## Universal Brotherhood: A Fact in Nature?

If we accept the idea of the explicate order of everything outside of everything else, then it is absurd to think of human beings all becoming one. But now we say...that by following science itself we have been led to a view which is compatible with the wholeness of mankind, or its holiness

David Bohm, 1982

Around four hundred years ago the world appeared to work like a clockwork mechanism, but now this model conflicts with the facts as revealed by quantum mechanics, biology, neurocardiology and systems theory. The world is looking less like a machine and more like a highly sensitive organism. There has been a shift towards holism and the primacy of consciousness. As Sir Arthur Eddington put it, the stuff of the world is mind-stuff; implying that consciousness rather than matter is the primary reality.

If interconnectedness and unity are the ultimate reality—rather than separateness—then universal brotherhood may well be a fact in nature instead of a noble ideal.

It seems that either we all come from the same source and are ultimately headed in the same direction; or, there is One Being in existence having each of us as his or its experience. Either way, there is far more justification for brotherhood than for enmity.

Calendar of Events

National TS

Centres ...

### **Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook, QLD**

**Event theme: The Secret of *The Secret Doctrine* and Tools of Occult Research**

Date: Arrivals Wednesday 6 Oct Departures Monday 11 Oct

Cost: Members \$200 plus \$10 registration Non-members \$250 plus \$10 registration.

Michael Gomes, Director of the Emily Sellon Memorial Library in New York, has spent the past forty years researching the modern Theosophical movement. Among his impressive achievements is the publication by Penguin/Tarcher of his annotated and abridged edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, and his chapter on Blavatsky and Theosophy in the forthcoming *Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism*.

We are pleased to have Michael tour the Section in October 2010 and to present a paper at *The Legacies of Theosophy* conference at The University of Sydney.

### **Canyonleigh Centre, Bolitho House, Tugalong Road, Canyonleigh, NSW**

**Event Theme: Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy TS members only**

Facilitators: Dara Tatraj and Edi Bilimoria

Date: Saturday 10 April to Sunday 11 April (arrivals Saturday 10th by 10am)

Cost: \$10 Registration Fee **Plus** \$85. This includes all meals.

This two-day live-in event will explore some of the key ideas of esoteric philosophy, including the doctrine of correspondences and the fundamental unity of all life, with a view to understanding them in their original context and finding new ways of expressing these truths in the language of today. There will be opportunity for maximum participation in largely interactive sessions in the unique surrounds of this bush-land retreat.

Registration Forms (NSW/VIC only) enclosed with this Issue. Apply to the National President if from another State.

### **The University of Sydney**

**The Legacies of Theosophy: Unveiling the Creative Imaginary**

Date: 30 September to 3 October

Cost: \$75 for the Conference not including accommodation or conference dinner.

Registration forms for this event are not yet available. Apply to the National President.

# Tour

## Colin Price

*March- April 2010*



Colin Price is a retired research scientist and an international lecturer for The Theosophical Society. He served as National President of The Theosophical Society in England from 1999 to 2008. Colin is a featured speaker at the European School of Theosophy and is a regular lecturer at TS events both in England and abroad. He led the School of the Wisdom at our international headquarters, Adyar, in 2008 and again in 2010.

### NATIONAL TOUR DATES

Fri 12 March	Member's Meeting, Melbourne Lodge	6.30 pm
Sat 13 March	Seminar, Melbourne Lodge	11.30am
Sun 14 March	Seminar, Ross, Tasmania	10.30 am
Mon 15 March	Public Talk, Hobart Branch	8.00pm
Thurs 18 March	Public Talk, Sunshine Coast Lodge	7.00pm
Fri 19 March	Public Talk, Brisbane Lodge	7.30pm
Sun 21 March	Public Talk, Toowoomba Group	2.30pm
Wed 24- Thurs 25 March	Seminar, Blavatsky Lodge	10.00am
Fri 26 March	Public Talk, Newcastle Lodge	8.00pm
Sun 28 March	Seminar, Adelaide Lodge	11.00 am
Sat 3- Mon 5 April	Perth Branch, Mt. Helena Retreat	
Mon 5 April	Public Talk, Perth Branch	7.30 pm
Tues 6 April	Member's Meeting, Perth Branch	7.30 pm

## Gifts and Bequests

to Further the Work of  
The TS in Australia




The Theosophical Society in Australia is the fine organisation it is today as a result of the work of its volunteers and officers, the good thoughts of its members and non-members, and the gifts and bequests received from both members and non-members.

All gifts and bequests received are used carefully and responsibly to further the work and the Objects of The Theosophical Society in this country.

The following form of words is provided for those members who wish to make gifts or bequests in their wills to The Theosophical Society in Australia:

**“To The Australian Section Theosophical Trust (whose registered office is 4th Floor, 484 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000) to be held in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia.”**

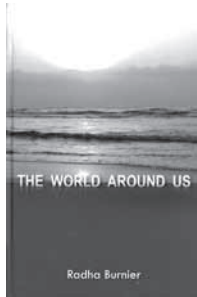
Please note that The Australian Section Theosophical Trust is a company formed to hold moneys, investments, real or personal property in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia as the latter is not incorporated. ☒



**O**ur life is founded not only in bread, but also in arts and words of wisdom....we should fill ourselves with these, and look upon a full belly as mortal, but upon those other things as eternal.

Paracelsus

## Reviews...



**Radha Burnier: *The World Around Us*,** The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai 2009 pps. 620

**I**n the past few years I always wait eagerly for *The Theosophist*, especially for Radha Burnier's *On the Watch-Tower* editorials. That is not as bad as the New Yorkers waiting on the dock for news to see if Little Dorrit was still alive in Dickens's serial novel, but I felt a slight reliance on her frank exposé of my weaknesses. She never told me how to fix them either but each month after I had transgressed I was still awaiting the next issue for my diagnosis.

I received my copy ten days after ordering *The World Around Us* from TPH, which incidentally is a soft cover which I find easier to hold and read than the office hard cover. It contains *The Theosophist* editorials for the years 1980 through 2007. A straightforward classification into subject areas rather than a date order meant that I was straight into the parts that had a particular interest for me. Firstly the short biographical pieces that complement the previous ones I had read of some well-known TS personalities. I particularly liked the article on Mr N. Sri Ram in which the author, his daughter, described how his public persona was no different to his private one. The other article I particularly liked in the biography section was the one on J. Krishnamurti. Mrs Burnier gave a clear but simple observation of his connection with The Theosophical Society and his vagueness about

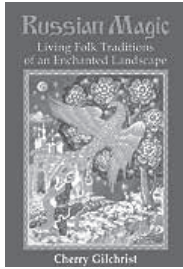
what he had experienced: 'Once you define a thing it is dead'. The article is not written by a devotee but by a searcher for truth in the widest sense; for example, when she writes:

Truth cannot temporize and compromise, and we like to compromise and have the best of both worlds. In *The Mahatma Letters* it is made clear that one who is earnest about the Path must abandon all his accustomed modes of thinking and ways of action.

There are other sections on freedom; the art of living; love; maturity of mind; rights and responsibilities and evolution, to name a few. So for those who have *Thoughts for Aspirants* as a daily meditation aid here is another book to leave beside your bed to dip into and ponder on at night. Like Krishnamurti, Radha Burnier exposes the problem for you to solve. Isn't that the crux of our being?

As for me I am still awaiting each month *The Theosophist* for *On the Watch-Tower*: as if I didn't have enough problems to solve. But in fact I think I do know how to solve my problems but I am not ready to take the leap. Perhaps when I see death coming closer I might take a radical step. Meanwhile I shall continue to read *On the Watch-Tower* as well as *The World Around Us*. ❖

Reviewed by Donald Fern



**Russian Magic: Living Folk Traditions of an Enchanted Landscape,**

**Cherry Gilchrist**

Quest Books,  
Wheaton, Ill. 188pp.

This little gem must surely come with a warning: Beware—highly contagious reading! Though based in England, Gilchrist visited Russia nearly 60 times between 1992 and 2006 and her engagement with that sprawling country emerges as a love affair with Russian culture, its people and the landscape. Initially, Gilchrist was interested in traditional arts and crafts, especially miniature lacquered paintings that often depicted myths and legends, as well as scenes from everyday life. These miniatures became the gateway through which she entered the world of Russian mythology and magic, not just as a keen analyst but more relevantly, as a participant in everyday village life. Her insights into the Russian character, magical beliefs and practices, and her engagement with spiritual matters ring true and resonate warmly with this reviewer of Russian descent.

The book that unfolds is a fascinating blend of personal engagement, narration of major epics and fairy tales, and intelligent analysis, seen through the prism of a particular painting or incident. The unfolding chapters lead the reader from a general introduction to the Russian magical world, to an outline of major cultural themes and legendary heroes, and thence to a fascinating account of how Russian houses physically reflect the values and three-tier worldviews described in earlier chapters. Subsequent chapters deal with spirits of the sky; secrets of life and death; the enchanted landscape, especially the forest environment; and the annual calendar of ritual and celebrations.

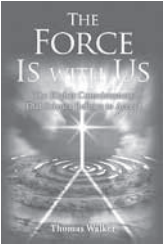
Gilchrist's epilogue—the soul of Russia, today and tomorrow—engages with some of the themes which are woven through the text. This is the only chapter which leaves this reader wishing that the analysis had been sharper and more sustained. In her opening chapter Gilchrist had observed that:

Russian scientists ... do not necessarily close the door to the view that our universe has other dimensions and energies which we are able to explore in non-scientific ways (p.9).

She proposes that extant Russian engagement with folklore, magic and mythology is largely due to the relative isolation of this vast country which was bypassed not only by the influx of Arab learning to Europe in medieval times, but also by the Renaissance and the sweeping Industrial Revolution (p.10). The outcome of this is that Christianity and aspects of modernity operate alongside older indigenous beliefs, so that Russia is characteristically a country of *dvoeverie*, or two faiths (p.19).

The themes of duality, parallelism and syncretism run right through the text where ancient beliefs, rituals and stories find resonance and continuity in modern life, especially in rural areas. Gilchrist has an absolute gift at interweaving the magical and symbolic with everyday village life and even aspects of urban living in Moscow. She does so tenderly, respectfully and convincingly. The text is enhanced by a fine selection of miniature paintings as well as photographs of people and places mentioned in this gem of a book. ✠

Reviewed by Olga Gostin



## **The Force Is With Us: The Higher Consciousness That Science Refuses To Accept**

Thomas Walker, Quest Books, Wheaton, Ill.

*The Force Is With Us* presents the theme that the spirit realm is a vast area of subtle energy and consciousness that creates and sustains our physical reality. Whereas science asks us to believe that the universe is a dead place, with a few bits of living tissue scattered by pure accident among the stars, this book supports the magnificent legends of the ancients which tell us exactly the opposite; the universe is nothing but alive.

Thomas Walker searched for evidence of the vital force and found an incredible amount of quality research supporting the existence of psychic phenomena. Such evidence includes acupuncture; clairvoyance; telepathy; out-of-body experiences; near-death experiences; past life recalls and other paranormal phenomena. He concluded that the evidence is overwhelming, to the extent that those who say otherwise are simply ignorant of the facts, or find fault with the research regardless of its quality. The Chinese, for example, currently feel that they have scientifically proved the existence of Ch'i.

Research on healing and alternate medicine is discussed, with evidence provided that a balanced state of vital energy is achievable by manual manipulation; the laying on of hands; by energy devices; and by a loving healing intent. Prayer too has significant medical value. Memory appears to be a function found

throughout the tissues and cells of the body. This is supported by recent reports of heart transplant patients experiencing memories of their donors. It appears the heart has its own form of wisdom, different from that of the rational brain, but every bit as important to our living, loving, working and healing. A path with heart is one of meaning; it is a choice to pursue worthwhile things in life, rather than our attachments and wants.

Near-death experiences indicate that we are here to take care of one another, and to learn. We survive physical death, retaining much of our knowledge and even our individual personalities. But the first key is to love, it being a method of bonding with the energy of the universe.

The point is beautifully made that the probability that genuine mediums are engaged in something honest and truly spiritual is as great as the probability that the light from distant stars continues in some form, forever. Walker discusses the view that in our modern world the truth is being ignored, even suppressed. There is a staggering bias of orthodox science against psychic phenomena and he asks the question why the scientific community is so resistant to the examination of such topics. He suggests that much of scientific enquiry is politically based, with science being what those in-charge want it to be; the bottom line being money and power.

*The Force Is With Us* concludes that we live in a spiritual universe, in which our familiar physical existence is only a tiny portion, and that religion is on the right track. The physical world is an important scene, but it is only the opening act of a grand play, a prelude to eternity. ✠

Reviewed by Grahame Crookham



## NEWS and NOTES

### World Congress, Rome

The tenth World Congress of The Theosophical Society will take place in Rome, Italy, from 10th to 15th July 2010, on the theme: Universal Brotherhood Without any Distinctions: A Path Towards Awareness. The opening time of the Congress will be on Saturday 10th at 10.00 a.m. and the closure will be in the morning of Thursday 15th. The programme is yet to be finalised but will feature the President of The Theosophical Society, Radha Burnier; the Vice-President, Linda Oliveira and Professor P. Krishna.

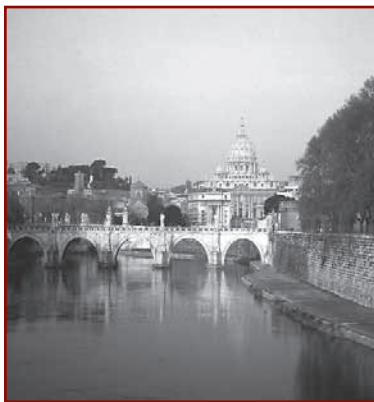
The Italian Theosophical Society, dissolved seventy-one years ago by Fascism for its refusal to accept racial law, is very honoured to organize the 2010 World Congress to reaffirm the values of Beauty, Goodness and Truth, the principle of Brotherhood and communication among researchers and scientists of different creeds and world views.

English will be the official language of the Congress.

As mentioned in the last issue, prices for the stay, inclusive of breakfast, lunch and dinner, are as follows: €88.00 per day in a double room, €110.00 per day in a single room and €70.00 per day in a triple room. Please note that the hotel registration form must be filled in and sent by e-mail to: [pierelli@srh.it](mailto:pierelli@srh.it) or by fax (+39 06 66418062). Please print in block letters.

Registration for the Congress itself is €50 per person and may be paid on arrival. This entitles access to all sessions of the Congress.

Jean Carroll, President of Sunshine Coast Lodge, has organised a group travel option to the World Congress and a possible tour in Italy. The Splendours of Italy tour will take place from July 15-23, directly following the Congress which goes from July 10-15. Places visited will be Rome, Pompei, Sorrento, Capri, Vatican City, Florence, Sienna, Assisi, Perugia, Padova and Venice. With Jean's twenty years experience as a tour operator, and her careful planning, all of these wonderful places will be visited at a leisurely pace.



The cost of the nine days and eight nights is presently \$2460 per person twin share in three and four star hotels. This includes breakfast daily and eight meals, but not the airfares. Rather than go into all the details here, anyone interested may contact Jean at [oneness@tpg.com.au](mailto:oneness@tpg.com.au); (07 5443-4733 or mob 0402 805127).

There is still time to book; places are available on the tour. If not a once in a lifetime opportunity it is certainly a once in seven years opportunity to attend the World Congress of The Theosophical Society; and the first time that it is hosted in the magnificent city of Rome.

### Expressions of Interest: Book gift

The Theosophical Publishing House recently released a biography of the fifth President of The Theosophical Society, Mr N. Sri Ram by Pedro Oliveira, the former Education Coordinator of the Australian Section. Sri Ram was an immensely well-liked figure in the Society, by all accounts a saintly man, and judging from his talks and writings he was extremely intelligent and unfailingly kind. We are presently taking orders from members of the TS in Australia interested in receiving a free copy of this book. If you would like one sent to your postal address, please notify the Education Coordinator by April 19, 2010 either by letter or by email. An appropriate order will then be placed with TPH, Adyar. As it is possible that not every member wishes to receive unsolicited books, even as gifts, we are calling for an expression of interest rather than just sending the book as a matter of course.

### Annual Appointments

The National Council and the national Executive Committee have made the following appointments for 2010:

**National Vice-President:** Harry Bayens

**National Treasurer:** Marie Brennan

**Assistant Treasurer:** Beatrice Malka

**Education Coordinator:** Edi Bilimoria

**National Executive Committee:** The three ex-officio members (National President, National Secretary, National Treasurer); Marlene Bell; Zehra Bharucha; Ken Edwards; Dianne Kynaston; Beatrice Malka.

**Supporting Lecturer:** Noel Bertelle

### National Council Submissions

The National Council will meet again in May this year. National members and Lodges/Branches and Groups who wish to present their views to the Council through their State Representatives should note that the deadline for submissions will be 10 April 2010.

### The Legacies of Theosophy—Unveiling the Mysteries of the Creative Imaginary

The Sydney Society for Literature and Aesthetics; The Society for the Study of Religion, Literature and the Arts; and The Theosophical Society in Australia—

At: The University of Sydney

30 September to 3 October 2010

Cost: \$75 or \$50 student concession, excluding the conference dinner on the 30th

For those requiring it, accommodation will be available at nearby Rydges Camperdown (for approximately \$130 per night), but there may also be student accommodation available for less. Enquiries may be made a little closer to the time.

This conference, jointly organised by the TS, will explore the cultural legacy of Theosophy and the wider theosophical movement in terms of its considerable impact on twentieth century spirituality, modern art, music, literature, politics and science. The works of H.P. Blavatsky sought to demonstrate the existence of a vast evolutionary scheme encompassing the whole of nature, physical and spiritual. Taken up and augmented by the likes of Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, Rudolf Steiner and others, this broad outline, with its implications for the human potential, was highly influential in many and varied fields.

The conference also seeks to explore the continuity and continuous renewal of some of the key ideas regarding spiritual evolution circulating around the modern theosophical movement, many of which date back to antiquity.

If you wish to present a paper please send abstracts (min 200 words for presentations of approx 30min) to Associate Professor Vrasidas Karalis [vrasidas.karalis@usyd.edu.au](mailto:vrasidas.karalis@usyd.edu.au). Proposals due 20 March 2010.

# Section Directory

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Coordinator, Theosophy-Science Group: victor.gostin@adelaide.edu.au

## **Australian Capital Territory**

### **Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:**

Postal Address: PO Box 18, Fisher ACT 2611  
Meet: Cnr Condamine & Bent Streets, Turner ACT 2612  
8.00pm 1st Monday of month  
President: Peter Fokker  
Telephone: 02 6236 3170  
Email: fokker@cyberone.com.au  
Secretary: Tony Fearnside

## **New South Wales**

### **Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:**

2nd & 3rd Floors, 484 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
Telephone: 02 9267 6955 Fax: 02 9283 3772  
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au  
www.tssydney.org.au  
Meet: 2.30pm & 7.00pm Wednesdays  
Members Meeting: 2.00 pm 2nd Saturday each month  
President: Stephen McDonald  
Secretary: Ruth Keenan

### **Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:**

Meet: The Community Room, Charles-town Square Shopping Centre, The Mall, Charlestown  
8.00pm 2nd Friday each month (excluding January)  
Study group (members) confirm dates with Lodge  
President: Therese Woods  
Contact: Danny Boyd 02 4937 4225

### **Blue Mountains Group:**

Meet: Springwood NSW  
11.00am 1st Tuesday each month  
Coordinator: Simon O'Rourke  
Telephone: 02 9267 6955

### **Gosford Group:**

Meet: The Neighbour Centre, Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250  
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month

Coordinator: Vivien Wareing  
Telephone: 02 4325 7434  
Secretary: Roni Ostergaard  
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

### **Northern Beaches Group:**

Postal address: c/ Mina Singh Batra, 22 Woodland Street, Balgowlah Heights, NSW 2093  
Meet: c/- above address  
8.00 pm 3rd Friday each month  
Coordinator: Mina Singh Batra  
Telephone: 02 9949 5958

## **Queensland**

### **Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:**

Postal Address: 14 Herberton Rd, Atherton QLD 4883  
Meet: Meeting Room, Atherton Neighbourhood Centre, Mabel St, Atherton, 2nd Saturday of month  
President: Max Brandenberger  
Secretary: Chris Pang Way  
Tel: 07 4091 5156

### **Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:**

355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000  
Telephone: 07 3839 1453  
Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au  
http://www.theosophyqld.org.au  
Meet: 10.00am & 12.00 noon Wednesday and 7.30pm Friday  
President: Noel Bertelle  
Secretary: Angela Read

### **Caboolture Group**

Meet: Caboolture Senior Citizens Hall  
Hasking St Caboolture 7.00 pm Mondays  
Coordinator: Paul Robb  
Telephone: 07 5494 2638  
Email: pactionbliss@aapt.net.au

### **Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004**

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club, Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556 7.00pm Thursday  
President: Jean Carroll  
Telephone: 07 5443 4733  
Email: oneness@tpg.com.au  
Secretary: Penny Houghton

### **Toowoomba Group:**

Meet: Laurel Bank Park Hall, 50 Hill St, Toowoomba  
1st Wed at 7pm and 3rd Sunday at 2:30pm of each month (Meditation 1pm & Study Group at 1:30pm)  
Annual Springbrook Retreat each winter  
Coordinator: Barry Bowden  
Secretary: Lynden Thomas  
Tel: 07 4693 9157  
Email: lyndenthomas@bigpond.com

## **South Australia**

### **Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:**

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000  
Telephone: 08 8223 1129  
Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au  
http://theosophy.org.au  
Meet: 2.00pm Sunday & Members Meeting 1.30pm last Friday of every month.  
President: Sheryl Malone  
Secretary: Jaya Morton

## **Tasmania**

### **Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:**

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000  
www.theosophicaltas.websytc.com.au  
Meet: 8.00pm Monday  
President: Helen Steven  
Telephone: (03) 6228 3048  
Secretary: Denise Frost  
Telephone: (03) 6248 1430

### **Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:**

54 Elizabeth Street, Launceston, TAS 7250  
Postal address: 66 Flinders Street  
Beauty Point TAS 7270  
email: rmholt@gmail.com  
www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/theolaun  
Meet: 7.30pm Wednesday and noon-2pm Thursday  
Library open noon-2pm Thursdays  
President: Jay Wilson  
Secretary: Ruth Holt  
Telephone: 03 6383 4722

## **Victoria**

### **Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:**

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000  
Telephone: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624  
email: meltheos@netspace.net.au  
Meet: 2.30pm Saturday & 6.30pm Tuesday  
President: Ken Edwards  
Secretary: Edward Sinclair

### **Mornington Peninsula Group:**

Coordinator: Daphne Standish  
Telephone: 03 9589 5439  
Meet: Mt. Eliza Neighbourhood Centre, Canadian Bay Road  
first Sunday of the month 11am-3.30pm (meditation - lunch - Theosophy)

### **Wodonga-Albury Group:**

Meet: Shop 6, Tower Place, High Street, Wodonga VIC 3690  
1st Tuesday each month  
Library hours Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.00pm  
Coordinator/Secretary: Denis Kovacs  
Telephone: 02 6024 2905

## **Western Australia**

### **Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:**

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000  
Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104  
Email: tsperth@iinet.net.au  
http://tsperth.iinet.net.au  
Meet: 7.30pm Tuesday  
President: George Wester  
Secretary: Deborah Weymouth

### **Mount Helena Retreat Centre:**

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082  
Tel: 08 9572 1513  
Caretaker/Manager: Position vacant

### **Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook**

2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook QLD 4213  
Telephone: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211  
email: bhora@bigpond.net.au  
Caretaker: Barry Hora  
Administrator: Donald Fern  
Telephone: 02 9264 6404

