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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)

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

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

The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

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

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

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

On the Watch-Tower

'The Art of Living'
reprinted from *The Theosophist*
September 2012



Radha Burnier



There are aspects of true art which are worth noting, because of our misunderstanding of the word 'art'. Those who are aware know that all art makes us aware of harmony. If harmony does not ensue from the creation of anything, it cannot be reconciled with art. Art is what makes one aware of beautiful proportion, a fine symmetry (even of asymmetry) of sounds, colours and forms. Without these no art is evident, and therefore the art of living must have the Order that comes from the beautiful harmony of sounds, colours and forms.

Therefore, it seems that a higher level of significance is realised when something is like a flower, growing from a little seed into a greater and greater source of experience. As one does when watching a flower coming into existence, 'Seeing the world in a grain of sand' is an experience which is transforming. There are many such expressions in great literature; for example, when Wordsworth wrote of 'splendour in the grass and glory in the flower'. This indicates that harmony is the nature of the universe.

The discovery of harmony is the aim of yoga and all great works; these also reveal something – fragmented though it be – of this fundamental truth. One of the Mahatmas wrote: 'We recognise but one Law in the universe, the Law of Harmony, of perfect equilibrium.' This is the existence of the subtler *sattvaguna* or quality, which implies the discovery of what yoga really means.

Paul Davies writes in *Superforce*: 'There is a unity to the universe and one which goes far deeper than a mere expression of uniformity. It is a unity which says that without everything you can have nothing.' This is a remarkable

statement which offers a glimpse of the Nature which J. Krishnamurti also touched upon. He wrote:

Beauty is not in the museum, in the painting, in statues, or listening to a concert: beauty is not in a poem or in the lovely sky of an evening; or in the light on the water, or in the face of a beautiful person, or in a building. There is beauty only when the mind and the heart are completely in harmony and that beauty cannot be got by a shallow mind that is caught in the disorder of the world.

Works of real art can convey only in a small measure this internal principle in Nature. Real artists create what they see, hear and so forth, but soon they return to chaos and become part of the disharmony of the world. Their vision of harmony is fragmentary, because their material for expression is transitory. Even their technique lacks the essential quality of conversion of life into form, and is therefore defective.

Therefore, the art of living is harmony unfolding into deeper levels of significance. *Light on the Path* says: 'Before the eyes can see, the harmony within must be attained.' It is in the way we understand. In one of the *Letters to the Schools*, Krishnaji says: 'All existence is relationship. Without it you cannot live.' Real relationship exists only when there is harmony, for when it is perfect, it produces an ambience which is irreplaceable. When it does not, relationship is broken, scattered, imperfect.

We must examine the whole question of life, the relationship between harmony and the fulfilment of life, before we arrive somewhere near the understanding of life. When we look at the question only from the outer point of view we do not really understand. Even a great artist like Beethoven caught the truth only at times.

From the
National
President



Linda Oliveira



Relationship - the Ultimate Challenge

A common thread running through the several articles in this magazine is that of relationship and the various forms it takes. It can be a sizeable challenge to make our principles a reality in *all* of the compartments of our life. Think about it. Is it possible to achieve a consistent and seamless compatibility between our principles on the one hand, and different kinds of relationships on the other? Some examples are relationships with family and friends; with people who have very different ideological viewpoints; relationships with animals and plants; and with the Earth. In short, what actually informs our relationships?

The first article suggests a spiritual practice which reflects the great Propositions mentioned in *The Secret Doctrine*. For example, can unity be ignited and vivified in meaningful ways? It seems to be predicated upon the emergence of spiritual intuition, which comes about when the 'I' merges with the ALL. For most reasonably intuitive individuals, such a state is probably at best partial and occasional.

When we are not in a state of unity, which even for a more aware individual would be most of the time, it seems that we still mirror cosmic processes even unconsciously. One observation in the article just mentioned concerns the way in which macrocosmic processes of 'numberless universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing' are reflected in our feelings, thoughts, memories, et cetera. This is intriguing – and logical – if we think in terms of correspondences. Universes arise within the vastness of space and eventually collapse. Our thoughts and feelings, too, arise within the relatively limited space of our consciousness, eventually to disappear.

Some do not disappear permanently but recur on a serial basis, especially when nourished by desires; others simply die out for lack of sustenance. Thoughts and feelings have a pivotal role in the quality of our relationships. Take trees, for example. One article in this issue mentions that trees are sensitive to human intent, which is interesting to dwell upon. Many people have a special relationship with plants and trees. Considerable public comment is made about animals and our treatment of them. The entire world of the plant kingdom, and our personal interactions with it, also deserve our consideration. The existence of the field of ethnobiology, which concerns the treatment or use of animals and plants by humans, is of interest in this regard.

The title of the article 'All the Problems are Caused by Me' may cause some discomfort, or a reaction – 'not in my case!' The mind relishes the opportunity to justify things that we do. Yet a little self-observation may result in a realisation that we are the protagonists in the theatre of our own suffering, which is reflected in relationship.

What actually causes pain? HPB suggested that the main cause of it is the way in which we perpetually seek the permanent in the impermanent. This has many ramifications. As Annie Besant wrote in the book *In the Outer Court*: 'the message of liberty is that the cause of sorrow lies in ourselves and not in the universe; that it lies in our ignorance and not in the nature of things; that it lies in our blindness and not in the life'. With light comes liberty, and the joy and the laughter of the individual who has become divine.

Comment of up to 200 words is invited on items in this issue: pres@austheos.org.au

The Secret Doctrine as Spiritual Practice

Pablo Sender



H.P. Blavatsky's major work was *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, which, according to one of her Masters, was the triple production of Mahatma M, HPB, and Mahatma KH.¹ While it was being written, she was seriously ill and her life was in peril, but the Masters must have considered this book a very important one, for they kept her alive, in the midst of pain and suffering, in order to leave this legacy to humanity. Whether we follow a religious tradition or not, if we consistently embrace some form of spiritual endeavour we may come to points in our lives which can be described as spiritual crossroads – places of introspection and decision, sometimes dark places of doubt or confusion. These can seem like very personal experiences to us, but if we look at the life stories of the great religious figures of history we will find that they too have had these moments.

In its original form the *SD* consisted of two large volumes, yet HPB said she had prepared a third volume and was working on a fourth, but she died before publishing these. Six years after her passing, her disciple Annie Besant published the third volume and, although some people claimed this was a spurious one, later investigations made by Daniel H. Caldwell showed that much of its material was actually the real third volume intended by HPB.² The promised fourth volume

was to be almost entirely devoted to practical Occult teachings, although its publication, according to HPB, depended entirely upon how Volumes I and II would be received by theosophists. Unfortunately, this volume was never published.

The *SD* is frequently taken as a theoretical compendium of metaphysical and abstruse teachings, or as an 'esoteric' history about the genesis of the Universe and Man. In that context, this work can be studied as an exposition of some essential facts related to the Cosmos, Humanity, and the general plan for their development according to certain immutable laws. This conception has its own value, because it provides a deep and comprehensive cosmivision of existence. However, since the study of this subject is frequently reduced to a mere intellectual exercise with little impact on our daily life, one wonders if a book considered so important by the Mahatmas and HPB should not have a greater practical significance. In fact, in a letter to A.O. Hume, Master KH said:

The truths and mysteries of occultism constitute, indeed, a body of the highest spiritual importance, at once profound and practical for the world at large. Yet, it is not as a mere addition to the tangled mass of theory or speculation in the world of science that they are being given to you, but for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind.³

Therefore, the truths of Theosophy must have a real (practical) meaning for humanity. It is our duty as members of the TS to discover the real dimension of the *SD* (and all theosophical teachings), not as a collection of concepts, but as a transforming force in our lives.

Signposts on the Path

According to HPB, the *SD* has different keys of interpretation: metaphysical, astronomical, physiological, psychological, and so forth. Therefore, we will attempt here to consider these teachings from a psycho-metaphysical point of view, as HPB would say, looking for an interpretation that allows us to make them part of our spiritual practice.

In a talk with some students, HPB is reported to have said: ‘TRUTH lies beyond any ideas we can formulate or express’,⁴ and ‘no picture will ever represent TRUTH’.⁵ In another context, J. Krishnamurti [JK] also said: ‘The unknown, the limitless, cannot be captured by thought.’⁶ Every authentic spiritual tradition or teaching states that Truth ‘is beyond the range and reach of thought’. If this is so, how can the Truth be realised? Maybe the question arises because we are used to considering *thought* as our only tool, although according to Theosophical teachings, this is not the case. HPB wrote:

The INFINITE cannot be known to our reason, which can only distinguish and define; but we can always conceive the abstract idea thereof, thanks to that faculty higher than our reason — *intuition*, or the spiritual instinct.⁷

The text is referring to *buddhi*, or *Spiritual Intuition*, which is the faculty we need to awaken for the perception of Truth. If the modern presentation of Theosophy has the object of guiding us to this goal, it must provide us with tools to help us make operative this ‘power latent in man’ through which spiritual realities can be grasped.

Thus Mme Blavatsky denied that the real value of the *SD* is to furnish a complete philosophical account of existence, and advised: ‘Come to the *SD* without any hope of getting the final Truth of existence from it, or with any idea other than

seeing how far it may lead TOWARDS the Truth.’⁸ She said that this book is ‘a means of exercising and developing the mind never touched by other studies’,⁹ and the right work on it is ‘what the Indians call *Jñāna Yoga*’.¹⁰ Therefore, the information given in the *SD* is not an end in itself, but a means. As JK said, ‘the word is not the thing’, and this book was written just ‘to provide him [the student] with signposts on that Path’.¹¹ When the student works rightly with the *SD*, it may lead him beyond the mental processes, where the light of Intuition may shine. This is what HPB pointed out in the Proem when she wrote: ‘Indeed, it must be remembered that all these Stanzas appeal to the inner faculties rather than to the ordinary comprehension of the physical brain’.¹²

One important thing to bear in mind when engaged in theosophical study is the concept of learning. In the present time, we tend to consider learning as the intake of new information from outside, and therefore we think we know Theosophy because we have collected concepts from different books and memorised them. But this knowledge mostly affects only the surface of our being; therefore, there is a gap between theory and practice. The real learning, as Plato stated, comes from within, and the Stanzas try to awaken this inner knowledge, which may be what is sometimes called ‘the archetypes in our deeper mind’. This knowledge is more comprehensive and has a transformative effect upon us.

Awakening Spiritual Perception

We should be serious in examining what are the bases for awakening our spiritual perception. As we have said, the mere recollection of the information given in the *SD* is not enough, and we should not imagine that spiritual perception will be awakened in some obscure way simply by reading. To reach this ‘deeper mind’ is not so easy and there are several factors involved in it, as expressed in theosophical literature.

HPB says that Intuition arises in ‘a state in which one ceases to be the conditioned and personal “I”, and becomes one with the ALL’.¹³ This is also the very core of JK’s teachings, since he

was primarily interested in helping us transcend all activities of our brain consciousness (*kāma-manas*). In one of his dialogues with Dr David Bohm, he differentiates between the Mind, which is universal and unconditioned, and the brain, which is limited. And he says that the brain is the basis of the self, while the Mind is the source of the highest form of intelligence. But then the question arises: how can that Mind act through the brain? According to JK this is possible only when there is no sense of separateness:

- DB: You are using the word Mind; not 'my' Mind.
 JK: Mind. It is not 'mine'.
 DB: It is universal or general.
 JK: Yes. . . .
 DB: It would almost seem to imply, then, that in so far as a person feels he is a separate being, he has very little contact with Mind.
 JK: Quite right. That is what we said.¹⁴

So, both HPB and JK established the necessity of leaving the 'self' behind as a basic condition for awakening Intuition. Obviously, this breaking of that sense of separateness is not something that can be achieved taking a single course of action; all the different aspects of our life have to be orientated towards this aim, but here we will concentrate on how the *SD* can help us in this task.

First Fundamental Proposition

The Fundamental Propositions given in the Proem of the *SD* contain statements about the essential nature of the Cosmos and, at the same time, Mankind, which is a mirror of the Universe. As HPB wrote:

As above so it is below, as in heaven so on earth; and man — the microcosm and miniature copy of the macrocosm — is the living witness to this Universal Law and to the mode of its action.¹⁵

Therefore, proper study of cosmic processes from an esoteric point of view can have a direct impact upon us in a variety of ways. We will attempt now to examine these Fundamental

Propositions, not in full length or in all their connotations, but highlighting certain aspects useful for a psycho-metaphysical interpretation.

The first one establishes that there is a 'ground' on which and through which the Cosmos is manifested. It is:

An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought — in the words of the *Māndukya* [Upanishad], 'unthinkable and unspeakable'.¹⁶



At first glance, it seems nonsensical to teach something on which all thinking or speculation is impossible; therefore some say it is useless to study that Absolute Principle, even though it is a Fundamental Proposition of theosophical teachings. On the other hand, people who try to deal with this subject frequently reduce it to a mere philosophical postulate about that primordial Unity in which illusory diversity takes place. But taking into account the fact that many pages in the *SD* are dedicated to this Absolute Reality, there must be another reason for writing about this 'unthinkable and unspeakable' Principle.

This First Proposition and Stanza I in the first volume of the *SD* refer to the unmanifested state

of the universe, where there is only infinite space and eternity in an absolute state. According to HPB, right meditation (not merely intellectual study) upon this concept may have an important effect upon the mind. She recommended this exercise as the very foundation for practising her Diagram of Meditation, when she said: ‘First conceive of UNITY by expansion in Space and infinite in Time.’¹⁷ This statement suggests that we expand the mind; but why? This is in order to abolish self-centredness and lose the sense of time. As JK repeatedly mentioned ‘the notion of time is based on thought’, and we find that in that state of universality and eternity the mind becomes still and quiet, without images to work with. Later in her Diagram, HPB says that the normal state of our consciousness must be moulded by: ‘Perpetual presence in imagination in all Space and Time.’ This could seem a mere fantasy, but the Diagram points out that doing this will produce a change upon the consciousness:

From this originates a substratum of memory which does not cease in dreaming or waking. Its manifestation is courage. With memory of universality all dread vanishes during the dangers and trials of life.¹⁷

This last concept is quite evident because if we look inside ourselves, we will see that fear comes from the sense of separateness, the identification of our consciousness with this mortal, small self, and this type of work helps us diffuse it. We find a similar statement in *Light on the Path*:

Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the Eternal. This giant weed [of self] cannot flower there; this blot upon existence is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought.¹⁸

Then, establishing our consciousness in a state of universality and eternity (which is quite different from talking about it) helps us to leave the self behind, and then there is the possibility of being *in rapport* with the unconditioned. Let us consider it from another angle, as in the dialogue quoted above between JK and Dr Bohm:

DB: What is the nature of the Mind?
Is the Mind located inside the body,

or is it in the brain?

JK: No, it is nothing to do with the body or the brain.

DB: Has it to do with space or time?

JK: Space — now wait a minute! It has to do with space and silence ...

DB: Now I would like to go into the question of how they are making contact.

JK: Ah! Contact can only exist between the Mind and the brain when the brain is quiet ...

DB: And one can see that if the brain is quiet it could listen to something deeper?

JK: That’s right. Then if it is quiet, it is related to the Mind. Then the Mind can function through the brain.¹⁹

Therefore, the correct meditation upon the First Fundamental Proposition, which points out a Reality beyond thought, may steer us to a condition of silence and quietude, where the self is not, where Spiritual Intuition can arise.

Therefore, the correct meditation upon the First Fundamental Proposition, which points out a Reality beyond thought, may steer us to a condition of silence and quietude, where the self is not, where Spiritual Intuition can arise.

Second Fundamental Proposition

However, we do not know how to proceed in that direction, being in the midst of a restless mind. The Second Fundamental Proposition gives us a clue. It affirms: ‘The Eternity of the Universe in toto as a boundless plane, periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing”.’

From a macrocosmic point of view, the Universe in toto (the Space) is eternal and boundless, but there is periodically an incessant

movement of manifestation and dissolution taking place within that immutable Space. The 'numberless universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing' in the macrocosms would correspond in the microcosms with our feelings, thoughts, memories, and so on, which are constantly arising and coming to an end. Following the sequence of these two Fundamental Propositions at first we must have, as far as possible, an 'unconditioned' perception, and then deal with the conditioning within. This progression is closely related to the Diagram of Meditation mentioned above, where HPB says that after conceiving the Unity we have to meditate on our states of consciousness. Why are we exhorted to do this? Perhaps this is a strategy to meditate 'upon one's lower self in the light of the inner divine man'²⁰ and not as a mere intellectual analysis done by the conditioned mind. Here, we are looking at our normal movement from the highest state we are able to reach. This also resembles JK's answer to a question. When asked how we can build a bridge between our conditioned state and That which is unconditioned, he replied that it is impossible. The bridge has to be built from That to this. Of course, this does not mean that we have to delude ourselves, taking for granted that the thinker is different from the conditioning. The (lower) mind, the self, is the conditioning. But the (silent) faculty of perception is not inevitably limited to the brain consciousness, to the self. So, what is required here is for the perception to detach itself from the ego-sense and from identification with psychological processes, which is done through that sense of 'being the space'.

To examine this more closely, each one experiences an incessant movement of sensations, feelings, thoughts, memories, expectations, and desires, in succession. Although nothing in this movement is permanent, somehow we attach to it a sense of being a single identity, 'the thinker', to whom all this occurs. But we do not realise that all these processes take place mechanically: there is 'something' in us that thinks or feels as a response to external or internal stimuli, or, in other words, those processes are merely the activity of *skandha-s*.²¹ However, identifying

The 'numberless universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing' in the macrocosms would correspond in the microcosms with our feelings, thoughts, memories, and so on, which are constantly arising and coming to an end. Following the sequence of these two Fundamental Propositions at first we must have, as far as possible, an 'unconditioned' perception, and then deal with the conditioning within.

ourselves with that inner movement, we say 'I am he who is thinking or feeling'. But this perception is mistaken, because there is no thinker as a separate entity. If we observe silently, we may realise there are only different thoughts, each one assuming the role of the 'thinker' when active, with memory connecting all the passing thoughts, thereby creating a sense of continuity. But then, what is permanent? As mentioned earlier, it is 'the space'. This means that in the attempt to raise the consciousness from the impermanent to the Eternal, we have to identify ourselves with the (inner) immutable space in which the psychological processes are taking place, that is, with that *which contains* all movements, and not with the movement itself. As Sri Sankarāchārya says:

Space is not affected with the smell of wine by contact with the jar, and in the same way one's true nature is not affected through contact with the things one identifies oneself with.²²

One should become aware of oneself, indivisible and perfect like Space itself, when free from identification with such things as one's body, senses, functions, mind, and sense of doership, which are all the products of one's own ignorance.²³

This suggestion is not an abstraction or imagination created by thought. When one is actually watching very quietly the inner

movement and loses the sense of ‘me’, at least for the time being, there is a feeling of being just the space which embraces the psychological processes. And this state may be considered as one of pure ‘Self Existence’ because there is no sensation of ‘I am this or that’, but one of pure ‘Be-ness’, simply a sense of identity without any demarcation.

And there is something interesting in this process: we begin trying to put ourselves in the position of being the Space, being the Witness of all that happens inside us, and finish in that condition of being the silent and quiet pure space. This resembles the famous statements of JK: ‘The first step is the last step’, or ‘freedom (from the conditioning) has to be at the very beginning’. In classical theosophical literature we find similar concepts when it is said that the Path (the means) and the Goal are essentially one and the same.



Third Fundamental Proposition

Finally, the Third Fundamental Proposition gives us a hint as to the correct attitude towards daily experiences. It establishes:

The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul — a spark of the former — through the Cycle of Incarnation, or ‘Necessity’, in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law . . . [in order to] have an independent (conscious) existence.

This Proposition affirms that we, as a consciousness, are essentially the Universal Oversoul, that is, the Universal Mind. However, we have to live through these particular vehicles (the physical, emotional, and mental bodies) which limit that Universal Consciousness in order to acquire a pure self-conscious existence. Therefore, we cannot refuse to go through all experiences in life, irrespective of their being pleasant, painful, or neutral, and these experiences may not be of much use unless we go through them with a certain attitude. *The Voice of the Silence* says:

The seeds of Wisdom cannot sprout and grow in airless space. To live and reap experience the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul. Seek not those points in Māyā’s realm; but soar beyond illusions, search the eternal and the changeless *Sat* [the one eternal and absolute Reality and Truth, all the rest being illusion], mistrusting fancy’s false suggestions.²⁴

Human beings change very slowly because, although we are alive, we are not experiencing life to the fullest. We usually act mechanically, inattentively, and moreover, identify ourselves with the personality, selecting pleasant experiences while rejecting those which are painful. Consequently, we learn very few lessons from them. But ‘to live and reap experience’ our mind needs ‘breadth and depth’, that is, it needs to be open, vulnerable, void, not engaged in all the psychophysiological processes and reactions. It needs rather to be a Witness, and this is possible only if our consciousness is not confused with Māyā’s realm, ‘hearing fancy’s false suggestions’, but is pointed towards ‘the eternal and the changeless *Sat*’, the immutable Space or Be-ness, as previously discussed. In this way, the Fundamental Propositions can be seen as a spiritual practice, showing us what

kind of attitude we should have while living our daily lives to really ‘reap experience’.

Those interested in this subject will find it useful to consult HPB’s Diagram of Meditation, which has further suggestions to complement this practice.

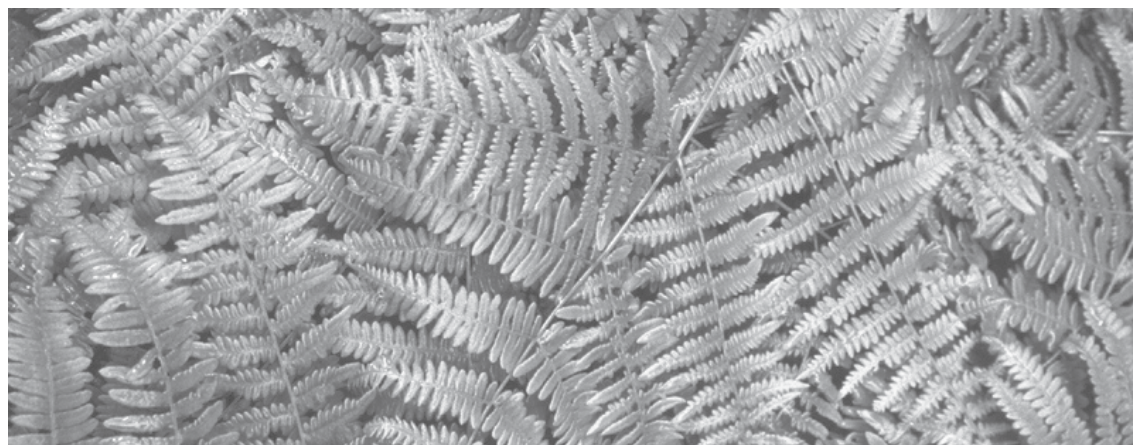
Endnotes

1. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Second Series, No. 69.
2. Daniel H. Caldwell, ‘The Myth of the “Missing” Third Volume of *The Secret Doctrine*’, Blavatsky Study Centre, online ed., 2004, <<http://www.blavatskyarchives.com/sdiiipt1.htm>>.
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4. *How to Study Theosophy*, Robert Bowen, (1997) TPH Adyar, p. 8.
5. *ibid.*, p. 13.
6. *The Future of Humanity*, First Conversation, Brockwood Park, 11 June 1983.
7. ‘The Beacon of the Unknown’, H. P. Blavatsky’s *Collected Writings (CW)*, XI, p. 258.
8. Robert Bowen, *op.cit.*, p. 9.
9. *ibid.*, p. 9.
10. *ibid.*, p. 13.
11. *ibid.*, p. 14.
12. *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, 2003, TPH Adyar, 3 Vol edn, p. 21.
13. ‘The Beacon of the Unknown’, *CW*, XI, p. 258.
14. *The Future of Humanity*, Second Conversation, Brockwood Park, 20 June 1983, pp. 71-3.
15. *SD*, *op. cit.*, p. 274.
16. *SD*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
17. *The Theosophist*, May 2003, pp. 308-9.
18. *Light on the Path*, 2000, TPH Adyar, p. 20.
19. *The Future of Humanity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62, 67.
20. *SD*, Vol V, 1962, TPH Adyar, 6-Vol. ed., p. 468; or *CW*, XII, p. 603.
21. Psychic ‘aggregates’ of habits and tendencies.
22. *Viveka-chudāmani (The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination)*, v. 450.
23. *ibid.*, v. 384.
24. *The Voice of the Silence*, v. 114.



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The three paintings featured in this article are from the Rona Scott collection recently gifted to the National Headquarters by the late artist’s husband, Ralph Abbott. They are part of a sizeable series of paintings by her which were inspired by the Stanzas of Dzyan.



Can a Theosophist be a Christian?

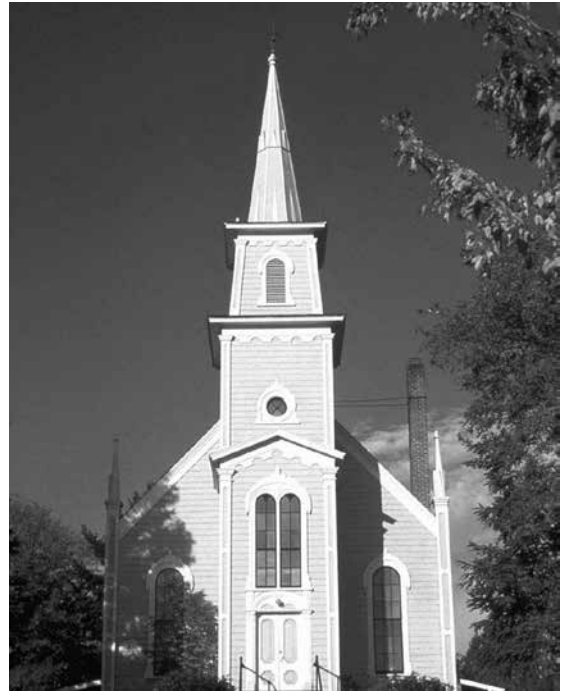
Pedro Oliveira

Having travelled through different countries in which the Theosophical Society is established and visited many of its lodges and branches, one cannot help noticing a certain pattern that seems to emerge. In almost thirty-five years of association with the TS I have seen, in the premises of many of its lodges and branches, religious symbols associated with Hinduism and Buddhism, including many statues and pictures of the Buddha, the Sanskrit word Om in Devanagari script, pictures of Krishna and Shiva, paintings of the lotus flower, pictures of the Founders of the TS and of its several Presidents, paintings and pictures of the Society's emblem, but very rarely a cross.

Judging by the decoration in our lodges and branches it is not difficult for a newcomer to associate the TS with either the Buddhist or the Hindu tradition, or even with both. This is a definite pattern which has probably existed for most of the existence of the Society as a public institution. How did such a pattern emerge? What are the historical reasons for it? Is there a subliminal anti-Christian streak in the TS? These questions have prompted the writing of this article.

Even before the Coulomb-Christian Missionaries conspiracy against Madame Blavatsky in Madras, in 1884, Christianity already had received a bad press within the Society. Commenting on and endorsing the views of the anonymous author of *Ancient and Pagan Christian Symbolism* in *Isis Unveiled* (1877) HPB writes:

If by *Christianity* is meant the external religious forms of worship, then he certainly seeks to



destroy it, for in his eyes, as well as in those of every truly religious man, who has studied ancient exoteric faiths, and their symbology, Christianity is pure heathenism, and Catholicism, with its fetish-worshipping, is far worse and more pernicious than Hinduism in its most idolatrous aspect. But while denouncing the exoteric forms and unmasking the symbols, it is not the religion of Christ that the author attacks, but the artificial system of theology.¹

In another passage in the same book she writes:

The Christian virtues inculcated by Jesus in the sermon on the mount are nowhere exemplified in the Christian world. The Buddhist ascetics and Indian fakirs seem almost the only ones that inculcate and practice them. Meanwhile the vices which coarse-mouthed slanderers have attributed to Paganism, are current everywhere among Christian Fathers and Christian Churches.²

By any standard of interpretation, some of her sweeping statements mentioned above are quite extraordinary. She describes Christianity as 'pure heathenism' and Catholicism as 'fetish-worshipping'. As Nagarjuna taught, in the eighth

century CE, absolute views cannot liberate us from the torments of *samsāra* or conditioned existence. He also taught that *nirvāna* is the end of all absolute views. Madame Blavatsky seems to ignore the fact that, despite its many problems, the Christian tradition did contribute a great deal to the academic and social progress of the western world, as the University of Oxford and the thousands of charities which are inspired by Christian values testify, but also through the living testimony of countless Christians throughout the world who have been inspired to lead nobler, better and more useful lives because of the Christian teachings.

It is also quite difficult to see men like Cardinal Newman and C.S. Lewis, for example, both deeply Catholic in their outlook and understanding, as ‘fetish-worshippers’. However, perhaps the most remarkable of her statements is the claim that ‘the virtues inculcated by Jesus in the sermon on the mount are nowhere exemplified in the Christian world’. For that would mean that in the entire Christian world there is not even one single person who is inspired and who seeks to live his or her life according to the sublime ethics contained in that teaching. Either Madame Blavatsky’s clairvoyance was so far reaching and precise, as to scan the minds and hearts of billions of people worldwide, or her statement betrays a deep-seated reaction to the tradition originated in Christ. Clothed with her intrinsic authority and known forcefulness it is not really difficult to see how such views became almost the accepted currency in the Theosophical Society.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, Madame Blavatsky expounds her views on prayer. As can be seen from the quotation below, she does admit the possibility of a deeper level of prayer in another religious tradition but not in Christianity.

ENQUIRER. But how do you explain the universal fact that all nations and peoples have prayed to, and worshipped a God or Gods? ...

THEOSOPHIST. It is explained by that other fact that prayer has several other meanings besides that given it by the Christians. It means not only a pleading or *petition*, but meant, in days of old, far more an invocation and incantation. The *mantra*, or the rhythmically chanted prayer of the Hindus,

has precisely such a meaning, as the Brahmins hold themselves higher than the common *devas* or ‘Gods.’ A prayer may be an appeal or an incantation for malediction, and a curse (as in the case of two armies praying simultaneously for mutual destruction) as much as for blessing. And as the great majority of people are intensely selfish, and pray only for themselves, asking to be *given* their ‘daily bread’ instead of working for it, and begging God not to lead them ‘into temptation’ but to deliver them (the memorialists only) from evil, the result is, that prayer, as now understood, is doubly pernicious: (a) It kills in man self-reliance; (b) It develops in him a still more ferocious selfishness and egotism than he is already endowed with by nature.³

The writings of St Augustine, Meister Eckhart, St John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich, Thomas à Kempis, to mention but a few, make it very clear that although there is a tendency towards petitionary prayer in devotees of *many* traditions, including Christianity, there is also a much deeper and perhaps mystical dimension in what is called prayer. ‘When I pray for naught, my prayer goes for naught; when I pray for naught, I pray as I ought’, wrote Eckhart. In his work *Ascent of Mt Carmel*, St John of the Cross wrote:

When he is brought to nothing, the highest degree of humility, the spiritual union between his soul and God will be effected. The journey does not consist of recreations, experiences and spiritual feelings, but in the living, sensory and spiritual, exterior and interior death of the cross.

True prayer can thus be a spiritually transformative experience, cleansing one’s nature from every vestige of self-centredness and illusion.

It is reported on his own website that when His Holiness the Dalai Lama is at home in Dharamsala, he wakes up at 3.30 am. After his morning shower, he begins the day with prayers, meditations and prostrations until 5.00 am. After breakfast, from 6 am to 8.30 am, His Holiness continues his morning meditation and prayers. After returning from his office, he then has time for his evening prayers and meditation from 6.30 p.m. until 8.30 p.m. Prayer is therefore central to his daily life. And one of the prayers

he repeats, every day, is from Shantideva's book *A Guide to the Way of Life of the Bodhisattva*:

For as long as space remains,
For as long as sentient beings remain,
Until then may I too remain
To dispel the miseries of the world.

The following passages from *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* and *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* explicitly deny the historical existence of Jesus, who is the source of the Christian teachings:

As a matter of fact, in spite of all the desperate research made during long centuries, if we set aside the testimony of the 'Evangelists,' i.e., unknown men whose identity has never been established, and that of the *Fathers* of the Church, interested fanatics, neither history, nor profane tradition, neither official documents, nor the contemporaries of the *soi-disant* drama, are able to provide one single serious proof of the historical and real existence, not only of the Man-God but even of him called Jesus of Nazareth, from the year 1 to the year 33. All is darkness and silence.⁴



W. Stainton Moses, an English medium who was in correspondence with A. P. Sinnett, declared in a letter that the spirit called 'Imperator' was 'clearly visible and audible' to him, to which one of the Mahatmas commented:

So was Madme. Lebendorff to the Russian child medium ... So is Jesus and John the Baptist to Edward Maitland; as *true* and as *honest* and *sincere* as S.M.; though neither knew the other

John the Baptist having never heard of Jesus who is a spiritual abstraction and no living man of that epoch.⁵

Modern scholarship, however, has established through works such as *The Nag Hammadi Library*, edited by James M. Robinson, and *Christian Beginnings* by Geza Vermes, that the existence of Jesus is an undeniable fact. Some of the Gnostic manuscripts, which were discovered in Upper Egypt in 1945, and dated from the fourth century CE, actually mention his name and corroborate the view that he was a genuine spiritual teacher in his time. The scholars who edited such texts for publication were not mere believers, 'interested fanatics' nor zealots. They were trained men and women exercising the rigour of their academic knowledge and experience on the documents before them, and after years of work they declared the texts to be historically genuine.

The word 'tradition' admits two meanings in its original Latin expression, *traditio*: one is 'to transmit', to pass forward; the other is 'to betray'. Perhaps every religious tradition, without exception, bears testimony to this dual meaning in its own history and development. The Crusades, the Holy Inquisition and more recently the sexual abuse of children within the Church are real blemishes within the Christian tradition. The fanatical Hindus, who chanting verses of the *Bhagavad Gitā* destroyed the Babri Masjid, an ancient mosque in Ayodhya, in 1992, and threw India on the very edge of a social, political and religious abyss, are a blemish on the Hindu tradition, as is the caste-based discrimination which although illegal still thrives in that country. Buddhist countries like Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka are not free from widespread corruption, exploitation and discrimination, in spite of the lofty teachings of Buddhism. The position of women in Islamic countries is well documented and shows that countless numbers of them are deprived of their legitimate rights as females and subjected, sometimes 'legally', to a male authority.

In spite of the misrepresentations of the Christian tradition in theosophical literature – and criticism of any tradition should always be

welcomed, provided it is based on facts – there is much in that tradition that would attract the unbiased student. Some of its central teachings do not appeal to metaphysical realities, to mere belief nor to an attitude of aloofness towards the world. They actually address the primacy of mutual love and understanding and are therefore profoundly relevant today.

In his letter to the Galatians (3:28), St Paul makes a statement that reaffirms the reality of universal brotherhood without distinction: ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.’ His is a voice of sanity that our deeply divided world could well listen to. The apostle of Christ who never met him in the flesh but entered into spiritual communion with him, declares, at the very beginning of the Christian tradition, that our appearance, religion, ethnicity, culture do not matter. What truly matters is this life-altering perception that we are one humanity, one life, one destiny.

In the gospel according to St John (17:22-26), before he was arrested Jesus prayed to the Father for his disciples, those chosen by him to carry his message into the world. It is perhaps one of the most moving prayers in the Christian tradition:

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. ... And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

The essence of religion is not a creed, a doctrine, ritual, belief, custom, regulations, ceremonies. It is indeed a perfect, profound, irreversible and transforming realisation of the unity with our fellow human beings and with all life. Such realisation is also love in its deepest sense, the Ground of Being. The birth of the Christian



tradition lies in the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. And his last gift to them, before his arrest, was a heartfelt prayer to God the Father that the love that was his very life would also inundate, bless and inspire his disciples in their work in the world.

Can a theosophist be a Christian? It is difficult to say. Perhaps this is a matter for individual consideration. But there is no doubt that Christians like St Paul and Jesus were indeed theosophists for they both taught altruism which, according to HPB, is the essence of Theosophy.

Endnotes

1. Blavatsky, H. P., *Isis Unveiled*, J. W. Bouton, New York, 1877, Vol 2, p. 80.
2. *ibid.*, p. 526.
3. Blavatsky, H.P., *The Key to Theosophy*, Theosophical Publishing House, London, no year given, pp. 69-70.
4. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, 1962, Vol 9, p. 226.
5. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Theosophical Publishing House, Manila, 1993, Letter 38.

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All the Problems are Caused by Me

Brian Parry

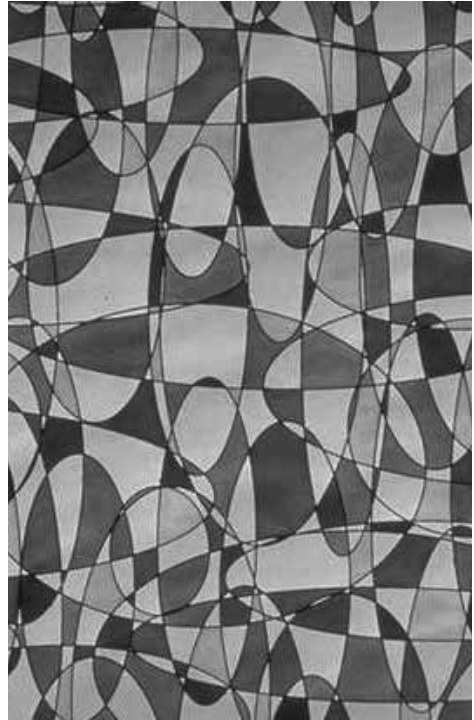
I seem to live in a world of problems. There are the world problems: the ongoing conflict with Israel and Palestine, civil war in Syria and Africa, terrorism in many places, millions of starving refugees, people smuggling, planetary degradation, species extinction, the European debt crisis and so on and on.

Then there are the Australian problems: involvement in a meaningless war in Afghanistan, having to choose between our long term but failing ally and our best customer, a disgraceful asylum seeker policy, our ineffective, negative and aggressive politicians at every level, business and union dishonest practices, constant injustices, official indifference to the suffering and disadvantaged, and so on and on.

Even more serious are the personal problems: financial anxiety for the future, health issues, increasing loss of capacities and an increasing attendance at funerals to remind me of my inevitable demise. Interestingly, with a theosophical attitude, death is not a worry although the process of getting there is a growing issue.

All these problems can be explained by karma but that doesn't make them any less of an omnipresent burden. The words of an old hymn are apposite; 'our foes press in from every side'.

It is little wonder that the Buddha's teaching that all existence is suffering is increasingly seen to be such an insightful analysis of the human situation.



In a different category are those problems arising from words. I have to use them for communication with others but somehow there is often, usually, a gap in understanding of meaning. An outstanding example is to use the word 'God' in a conversation. This one word uncovers different meanings, certitudes and antagonisms across a whole range of people. There is an even deeper issue with words; they only refer to or label an object. They can never capture the meaning or essence of that object. What is worse, I actually think in words, so my perceptions are always coloured by them. I think a word and act on the assumption that I am in contact with the object.

A short time ago I went out into the garden and was frightened to hear the loud and angry buzzing of a large number of bees. A single angry bee can be a problem; with a large number I thought 'danger'. Fearfully I looked to see the cause of their agitation. There were a lot of bees there and they were buzzing but they were actually all collecting nectar from a large native shrub in full flower. This was not angry buzzing; this was a joyful buzzing. My problem

was an illusion based on memory-based fear labelled as ‘danger’. In reality there was no problem but the fear had been real.

Upon reflection it will be seen that this multitude of problems, serious and trivial, have one factor in common. They are all ‘my’ problems; situations, events, opinions as perceived by me.

Of all my problems this insight is itself perhaps the most worrying. It is sobering to realise that apart from the Pope no one is infallible; not even me. There are always other people who disagree with my problem identification and diagnosis. My terrorist is someone else’s holy warrior for God; my political has-been is someone else’s political messiah; my support for same sex marriage is another’s end of civilisation. Most of these I can dismiss and put down to their ignorance or lack of wisdom, but what about when the other person is a noted guru or sage?

Pure Consciousness

In 1971 Nisargardatta Maharaj was asked how he regarded or reacted to the appalling atrocities being committed by the Pakistani Army in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). His response shocked his listeners. ‘In pure consciousness nothing ever happens.’ Indignantly pressed by the questioner for his attitude he again responded: ‘No attitude. Nothing is happening’.

He went on to say that the destruction of a building has no impact on the space contained within it.¹ He concluded by saying that ‘Evil is the stench of a mind that is diseased. Heal your mind and it will cease to project distorted, ugly pictures’.

These are very disturbing comments. They seem to leave no place for compassion. The temptation is to become indifferent to cruelty to the helpless and animals; unconcerned about the future of the planet. Should I just ignore problems and put all the suffering I observe down to karma? What criteria am I to use to judge how my votes should be cast if my observations are all the result of a diseased mind? It is all too tempting to pass by on the

other side and avoid involvement in dangerous situations. Surely compassion is the supreme human virtue?

Upon reflection it will be seen that this multitude of problems, serious and trivial, have one factor in common. They are all ‘my’ problems; situations, events, opinions as perceived by me.

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Ceaseless Self-Deception

Shortly after reading Nisargardatta I came across the famous quotation from Madame Blavatsky:

The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is *ceaselessly* self-deceived.²

This is just as devastating an instruction as Nisargardatta’s diagnosis. I am not an object of deception; I am the very cause of all my deceptions. If I am ceaselessly self-deceived then all my cherished opinions and prejudices have no value. What I think that I observe is not the truth; the reality. I am not seeing things as they are in themselves.

So the question becomes: ‘How can I feel a genuine compassion if I am ceaselessly self-deceived?’ Any action arising from self-deception will be inevitably wrong. It might satisfy my desire to do something but it will always only add to the problem.

Perhaps a hint of a way forward can be found in one of the most profound of Madame Blavatsky’s instructions in her Diagram of

Meditation. She asked her pupils to make a 'Continued attempt at an attitude of mind to all existing things, which is neither love, hate nor indifference'.

The story of the Good Samaritan is an excellent example of the approach she was urging. Unlike the first two passers by who saw the victim through the lenses of their own self-deception, the Samaritan merely saw a person who had been assaulted. He did not enquire as to who was to blame; analyse the criminal's motives or background; resolve to write to the papers and complain about inadequate policing. He certainly did not just put it down to the man's karma. He just responded in a quite disinterested way that was most effective to the actual situation. He then went on his way. The Samaritan was not possessed by his compassion. He did what the situation demanded and then went on.

Genuine, Disinterested Interest

An attitude that is not based on desire or revulsion, but on a genuine disinterested interest, would dissolve the whole swag of assumptions I usually bring to experiences and allow me to see a situation as it really is. What would it be like to live with interest but no attachment or revulsion; to face life without preconceptions?

Sometimes life gives us an utterly unexpected hint, a foretaste of what these great sages were suggesting could be our everyday experience. Sometimes, rarely, there are moments, all too fleeting, when there is no problem but only joy.

I was walking along a corridor in a shopping centre when a toddler and his mother turned into it. When he saw me the boy, for no reason, laughed up to me and gave a little dance. Without thought or motive I danced and laughed with him. For that fleeting moment the whole world danced and laughed with us and there were no problems at all.

The 'no preconceived love or conditioned aversion or indifference' approach of the Diagram of Meditation underlies the First Object of the Society. We are to be a nucleus

of a brotherhood of humanity that makes no distinctions. Distinctions are all value judgements or prejudices and these are all based on my capacity for ceaseless self-deception. We are to be interested in the differences that constitute each individual but without any of the usual judgements that underlie every distinction. Even if it sounds difficult this is the ideal we are urged to embody. When it happens it is a magical moment; when it doesn't the Society is just another organisation.



All of this makes the prescription of *The Voice of the Silence* so helpful on the way out of 'my' problems:

Having become indifferent to the objects of perception, the pupil must seek out the Raja of the senses, the thought producer, he who awakens illusion.³

At first glance indifference to an object of perception as proposed by *The Voice of the Silence* seems incompatible with the injunction of the Diagram of Meditation to be without indifference. But this is not so. We can be deeply interested in an object but without being

personally involved with it. The mind will attempt to label or classify according to its usual method of operation but this can be countered by remembering our ceaseless self-deception.

An excellent way to practise this vital first step to enlightenment is by watching Question Time in the Federal Parliament. The natural and first reaction to each politician will be one of revulsion at such misuse of Parliament, ego-mania and naked self-interest. This is the moment to remind oneself of one's own self-deception and then to look again. What I am seeing is not the politician but my own judgements that are always wrong. In this moment there is the realisation that I am not watching the TV, but looking in a mirror. The politician, in that moment, is transformed from an object of scorn and derision into a fellow sufferer. This is the moment when true compassion arises.

To discover the other, more fundamental significance, one has to go out and actually listen to the wind blowing in the trees. In this experience the wind and trees are not a symbol for problem assessment. The meaning has nothing to do with problems. It is just itself; real wind and real trees. There is a song in the wind, a dance of branches, varied rustlings of different leaves. And as one listens there is air on the face, a lift of the heart, sudden clarity of mind.

Problems - Like the Wind Blowing in the Trees

It is undoubtedly true that all the problems I perceive are caused by me, but I can begin in a small way to resolve them by taking tentative steps to identify and thereby eliminate their real source.

A former President of the Society, Mr N. Sri Ram, was once asked how he seemed to cope

so calmly with the multitude of problems facing the Society. He replied, 'I just regard them as the wind blowing in the trees.' This advice has helped me immeasurably in a long life confronting irresponsible unions, employers and governments. It puts one's problems into perspective; just the wind blowing in the trees.

But this is only half, and not the most important half, of this wise man's words. To discover the other, more fundamental significance, one has to go out and actually listen to the wind blowing in the trees. In this experience the wind and trees are not a symbol for problem assessment. The meaning has nothing to do with problems. It is just itself; real wind and real trees. There is a song in the wind, a dance of branches, varied rustlings of different leaves. And as one listens there is air on the face, a lift of the heart, sudden clarity of mind. Here is interacting spirit and matter, the play of *purusha* and *prakriti*, and this is just what all the world and human situations really are. This wind in the trees has a magic message for all situations. It is only when each situation can be experienced at this depth that the problems disappear, and we can act effectively and with power.

Endnotes

1. Sri Nisargardatta Maharaj, *I am That*, Chetana (P) Ltd, Bombay, 1973, p.233.
2. Blavatsky, *Lucifer*; Vol 1, no. 2, (October 1887, p. 89.
3. *The Voice of the Silence*, Theosophical Publishing House, Chennai, 1988, verse 3.



A long-time TS member, Brian Parry has been a Supporting Lecturer for The Theosophical Society in Australia. He is a former CEO of a number of organisations and a member of the Order of Australia. Particular interest areas of his include Advaita Vedanta, Kashmir Shaivism and the text *The Voice of the Silence*.

Trees and the Third Object

Tony Fearnside

Theosophical literature contains some notable works about nature spirits and the angelic kingdoms by respected clairvoyants such as C.W. Leadbeater (*The Hidden Side of Things*) and Geoffrey Hodson (*The Kingdom of the Gods and Fairies at Work and at Play*). However, literature about the occult nature of trees and plants is mainly from sources outside the theosophical movement, and includes folk tales of Nordic and Celtic gods associated with trees and accounts of trees as symbols, merging into ethnobotany as well as some recent scientific studies.

I am not aware of any similar written descriptions that concentrate solely on Australian tree spirits but there are several contemporary Australian authors who have written extensively about nature spirits and related phenomena. Examples are: Alanna Moore's many articles in the electronic magazine *Geomantica*; Geoff Campbell's very extensive descriptions in *Angels of the Botanic Gardens, Melbourne* (<https://chisync.com/Geo/Angels/>) and Steven Guth's many contributions to the kheper website (<http://www.kheper.net>). There is also the compilation *Devas and Men*¹, an intriguing book which takes work from several different authors and seamlessly melds them together to form an anthology of theosophical writings on nature spirits.

Botanical science has long known that chemicals are transported within plants which can be considered to be a form of communication analogous to the transmission of sensations in



humans. Recently there has been a distinct trend towards the study of communication in plants (plant neurobiology) as evidenced by the book *Communication in Plants - the neuronal aspects of plant life* (Springer) which presents twenty-eight papers on various aspects of communication within and sometimes between plants. Also, in 2012, scientists at Exeter University (UK) contributed to a BBC TV programme which showed that cabbage plants emit a volatile gas to warn other plants of danger such as leaf-eating caterpillars or garden shears.

Communication With Trees

I cannot lay claim to having any developed clairvoyant capabilities (and indeed am quite happy not to) while perhaps admitting to a degree of sensitivity. Quite several years ago, one of the senior members of a TS lodge told me about a message that one of her much-loved trees, an oak, gave her. This was just after a devastating bushfire which left large areas near her rural home blackened and seemingly dead. The tree's message was 'do not worry, I will

grow new leaves in the spring’, which it did. Later one of my favourite garden trees, a rare spinning gum (*Eucalyptus perriniana*) asked me to remove the adjacent wattle. I did not understand, and did not do it – to my sorrow the tree died not long afterwards and I assume that the wattle’s roots had grown over the eucalypt’s roots as is often the case. Too late, all I could do was use parts of its trunk to form garden beds. Later, an orange blossom shrub said a ‘thank you’ to me after I had pruned a neighbouring tree to give it more space.

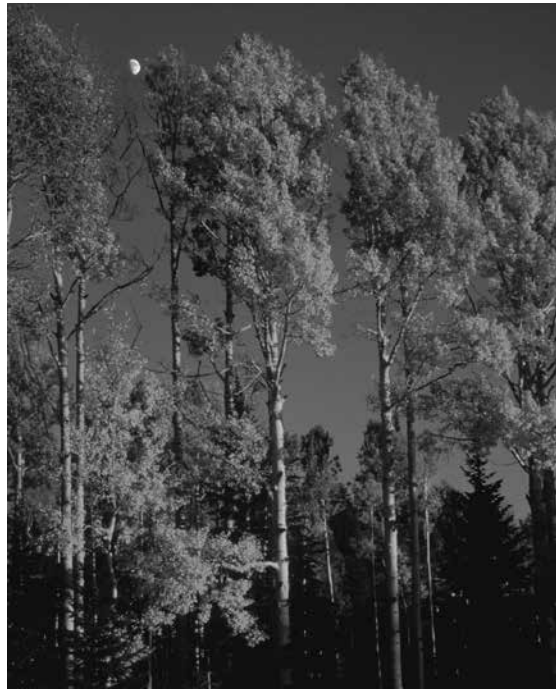
I have often worked with arborists, and one of them told me that he once had a strong feeling (received a warning) from a tree not to step on a branch as he was about to climb it. It turned out that the branch was rotten and would not have held his weight if he had stood on it as he had planned. He probably escaped a serious fall. Others have spoken about particular feelings they have towards special trees.

In about 1999, two friends and I received a small grant from the Australian Capital Territory government to prepare a heritage nomination for ‘Blundell’s Arboretum’² which was the most impressive in a series of arboreta that had been established by the Forest Research Institute from 1926 onwards, but which were burnt in the Canberra fires of 2003. My task was to assess each plot of trees and I looked forward to my first day working in the arboretum. When I got there, there was a distinctly unwelcoming atmosphere – the trees did not want me and I noticed some signs of recent vandalism: labels had been removed and a fence post had been driven into a termite mound and so on. On subsequent visits the atmosphere became more welcoming as if the trees were recognising that I was not out to harm them.

Several accounts by Dora Van Gelder (later Dora Kunz) describe tree spirits and associated fairies. For example, in her paper, *Tree Spirits*³, she told of a malevolent tree spirit associated with a remnant tree in Indonesia and of tree spirits in North American woods and forests. She said that, by and large, tree spirits are kindly disposed to people but have a lower degree of consciousness, and a slower reaction to stimuli

than humans, and that they are able to leave the tree which they inhabit for short distances. This complements Geoffrey Hodson’s description of a ‘gnome’ associated with an ash tree in England which could leave the tree in which it ‘lived’ for short distances and then return, perhaps to re-energise itself. (Note that Hodson described his nature spirits in anthropomorphic terms and sought to classify them as fairies, gnomes, mannikins, et cetera.) In *The Hidden Side of Things* Leadbeater pointed out that:

Strong influences are radiated by the vegetable kingdom also, and the different kinds of plants and trees vary greatly in their effect... trees – especially old trees – have a strong and definite individuality, well worthy [of] the name of a soul.⁴



Trees Have Feelings

So it seems that trees do have feelings, that they are sentient beings and in some cases are able to convey messages which we are sometimes able to interpret or understand. How can trees and plants introduce us to the ‘unexplained powers of nature’ so we do not have to call on those with well-developed clairvoyant abilities to see and describe tree spirits and fairies?

Let's start with Kirlian photography, accounts of which can be found on the internet.⁵ In short a Russian scientist Semyon Kirlian found, in 1939, a way of photographing leaves and human hands to show fields of energy around them. This was claimed to show that auras existed, which was (and still is) greeted with a degree of scepticism even though most of us can feel energy, often as a tingling, in our fingertips if we rub our hands together briskly, shut our eyes and hold our hands in front of us, fingers pointing to, and close to, each other. Kirlian also showed that if parts of the leaf were cut off there was still an energy field around the space previously occupied by the excised part, which is reminiscent of amputees' statements about being able to feel a foot or a hand after it has been removed ('phantom limbs').

Another way of demonstrating energy in plants is to hold a pendulum or a divining rod over a live plant – the pendulum will begin to rotate (if it is not held too firmly) or a divining rod will start to swing. The same thing happens if they are held over a hand or a head. This leads us to tree hugging to feel energies in trees which is best done in older clothes that are ready for the laundry. It is important to approach the tree with a feeling of sympathy or respect, in the same way that an interview with another person will be more fruitful if the conversation is empathetic or compassionate rather than unfriendly. Speak quietly to the tree if that will help, then hug gently and firmly; you should be able to feel energy of similar intensity to that passing between your fingertips.

These energies are not as strong as, for instance, electrical energy in our domestic power sources; nevertheless they are there, subtle though they may be. They remind us that *prāna* (or *fohat* or *chi*) really is a fact and may begin to explain how at least some of the unexplained forces of nature are transmitted, for example the feeling of well-being that we get when gardening or walking among trees in parks and nature reserves.

Meditating when sitting with one's back to a tree is another aid to understanding the unexplained forces of nature. The tree's subtle energy seems to help the sitter's meditation. One does not

need to be a Buddha in search of enlightenment under a Bodhi tree to gain some benefit – just do it!

In conclusion, it is appropriate to consider another excerpt from *The Hidden Side of Things*:

... trees exercise much more influence over human beings than is commonly supposed, and ... he who sets himself to cultivate sympathetic and friendly relations with *all* his neighbours, vegetable as well as animal and human, may both receive and give a great deal of which the average man knows nothing, and may thus make his life fuller, wider, more complete.⁶

Endnotes

1. *Devas and Men* – a compilation of Theosophical studies on the Angelic Kingdom by the Southern Centre of Theosophy, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, India, 2000.
2. Arboretum: a collection of trees established for scientific or other purposes.
3. *Gaia's Hidden Life: the Unseen Intelligence of Nature*, compiled by Shirley Nicholson and Brenda Rosen, The Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Original, 1992.
4. *The Hidden Side of Things*, C.W. Leadbeter, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 1912, p. 94.
5. e.g., Wikipedia at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirlian_photography; and *The Skeptics Dictionary* at: <http://www.skepdic.com/kirlian.html>
6. C.W. Leadbeater, op. cit., pp. 96-97.



Tony Fearnside has been a member of the national Executive Committee as well as President of Canberra Branch, of which he is currently the Secretary and Treasurer. He is a retired forestry consultant and has worked for various forestry organisations in Australia and overseas.



Tree

Bill Neidjie

*Adapted by Olga Gostin
from the poem 'Tree' in
Bill Neidjie's Story about
Feeling, Magabala Books,
1989, pages 21-36.*

Earth ... exactly like your father or brother or mother
because you got to go to earth,
you got to be, come to earth,
your bone ... because your blood in this earth here.
Tree same thing. He watching you.

You look at tree, he listen to you.
He got no finger; he can't speak.
But that leaf ... he pumping, growing,
growing in the night.
While you sleeping, you dream something.
Tree and grass - same thing.
They grow with your body, with your feeling.
When you feeling tree, he work with you.
You cut him a little bit, you got water coming out.
That's his blood, same as your blood. So he's alive.

If you feel sore ... headache, sore body,
that means somebody killing tree or grass.
You feel because your body in that tree or earth.
Nobody can tell you, you got to feel it yourself.
Tree might be sick ... you feel it.
You might feel it for two or three years.
You get weak ... little bit, little bit ...
because tree going bit by bit - dying.

Tree not die when you cut it.
He not die tomorrow, he still green.
Might be five or six weeks, might be two months.
You feel it then ... your body ... you feel it.

This story for all people.
Everybody should be listening.
Same story for everyone, just different language.
We got to hang on, not to lose our story,
not to lose our country ...
This ground never move. I'll be buried here.
I'm hanging onto this ground; I'll become earth again.
I belong to this earth, and earth should stay with
us.

Tree the same as me. When he get old, he'll die.
He'll be dead and burn. He'll leave his ashes behind.
Tree become earth.

From the Archives -

Letter from Mark Hawthorne,
a Launceston Lodge Member in India,
1912



Reprinted below is an extract from a letter which was held in the Archives of Launceston Lodge and which was recently donated by the Lodge to the Archives at the National Headquarters. It was written by a member of the Lodge who was visiting India early in the twentieth century. Some place names are spelt differently now, in which case the modern spelling is included in brackets afterwards - Ed.

To the Brethren at Launceston

Greetings in Love Peace and Harmony.

I think most of you already know of my new field of activity for 1912. Mrs Besant has asked me to take up lecturing and organising work in Northern India. I left Adyar on the 23rd December for Benares [Varanasi], travelling via Calcutta [Kolkata]. I had a good look round Calcutta in the eight hours we had to wait in that city before we could get the train for Benares. Our party visited the famous Zoological Gardens – also had a good look round the various places of interest in the city. The shipping in the river Hoogli [Hooghly] was immense – have never seen so much together before – not even in Melbourne. The city has some very fine buildings, for Calcutta has been the seat of Government – but now, to their sorrow, it is to be shortly removed to Delhi. When we were there great preparations were being made in view of the King's [King George V's] visit – six days later – and crowds of people watched the progress of the preparatory work.

We left Calcutta and travelled all night reaching Benares at ten next day. Our first glimpse of Benares was from the big 'Dufferin' bridge which crosses the Ganges to the south of the city. All our party were alert to see the sacred city and the sacred river. First we saw the tall minarets of the Orangzeb [Aurangzeb] Mosque standing up clear against the northern sky. Then the river bank crowded with temples and with the palaces of the Maharajahs and other big men of India. These palaces are only used on Festival occasions but every Indian noble thinks it the right thing to have a residence on the river bank. This makes the palaces somewhat crowded for only on one side of the river are there houses – the other side is quite desolate – the story is that it means bad luck to build on the other side of the river. The river rises some fifteen or twenty feet in flood time and so, above the many steps that lead to the river, are huge protective walls. One sees several temples and palaces which in the long past have been undermined and now but their spires and upper portions remain.

As we cross[ed] the railway bridge some of our party threw coins into the river – it is supposed to bring good luck and also a quick return to sacred Kashi – which is the Hindu name for Benares.

Benares is very ancient and evidence of its antiquity is to be seen on every hand. Palaces, temples, and houses now crumbling to decay and ruin. Everywhere the houses seem touched with the spirit of decay – and everywhere there

is the dirt – the squalor – the poverty of the lower class – which seems characteristic of all the Indian cities I have seen. One day I went for a walk through the city to the river. There are no European shops – only the small native shops – quite open to the street – the goods covered with street dust – for the streets are very dusty – and the owners squatting at the side of their wares – contentedly smoking their enormous pipes as they wait patiently for their customers. The Chowk – the name they give to the principal market place – was alive with people, plenty of fruit and vegetables were on sale – not many oranges or bananas, but plenty of guavas, enormous in size, and plenty of native fruits. Here and there were a few shops in which the beautiful Benares brass ware was for sale – and also there were shops, which would delight the eye of my Launceston sisters – the rich silks – so very cheap – the famous Kashmir shawls of every hue and texture.

From the Market we walked to the river, through a lane only six feet wide but which was crowded with people – shops on either side. As we went there passed us several funeral processions, the deceased carried on four poles – a shroud only over the body – by four men who unceasingly cry out ‘*Rama Rama – Sattvah*’, which being interpreted means – ‘*Rama is the Truth.*’ Immediately the river is reached the body is immersed in the sacred waters and so the soul is cleansed from all sin and assured of a happy future in another world. Then the body is left to dry on the bank while the funeral pyre is built.

One night we went on the river to see the city by moonlight and then everything seemed calm and peaceful – we could see the flames of the pyres at the (ghats) – but everything seemed shorn of the sordid and commercial aspect, which so often accompanies sacred places in India, and which, unfortunately, is true of Benares. For hundreds of priests and beggars live on the gifts of the many pilgrims to the sacred city.

One morning I went out to Sarnath – about six miles from Benares – the place where the Buddha first preached. There is nothing much to see except the ruins of a very large monastery, said to have been erected during the lifetime

of the Buddha. Anyway it is now in ruins. Nearby is a museum containing stone statues of the Buddha – and of the principal events in his life. There is a very peaceful feeling about the place – and of course it is visited by all the many pilgrims who come to Benares.

Well now let me tell you about the Convention and about the home of the TS in Benares. Most of the European delegates were put up at the Central Hindu College which adjoins the TS grounds. The CHC was formerly a palace belonging to the Maharajah of Benares and as the buildings cover about three acres – you can imagine their extent. Well, we were located in what is called the Chor Mahal. *Mahal* means Palace and *Chor* means stolen. The story is that one of the old Maharajahs stole some women from a neighbouring Maharajah and shut them up in this part of the palace – where even his own wives could not see them. The college boys were a great help to the visitors in showing them round the city and in attending to their various wants.

*Annie Besant,
who became the
2nd International
President of
the Theosophical
Society*



As to Convention itself, I need not weary you with the business details – you will be able to read that in *The Theosophist* later. Mrs Besant’s lectures on ‘The Ideals of Theosophy’ were splendidly given. She seems stronger and more forceful than ever. Mr. C. Jinarajadasa gave one lecture on ‘The Vision of the Spirit’. He is very eloquent and logical as a speaker – and it was a great pleasure to listen to him. At the Convention Meeting I had to read the report of the Russian Section – not because I have any Russian about me, but because there was no Russian delegate present.

Mrs Besant spoke very nicely in referring to my future work in Northern India – cordially

recommending me to my Hindu brothers. At the Anniversary Meeting which concluded the Convention I was called upon to speak for Australia and New Zealand. I had only about ten minutes to prepare but I got through all right. The other speakers in English were Mrs Sharpe (England) and Mr C. Jinarajadasa (America). There were numerous side activities all with their various features of interest.



*Mr C. Jinarajadasa, 4th International President
of the Theosophical Society*

Other meetings of an important character were those connected with the Sons of India and TS Order of Service. I was initiated with about a score of others, as a member of the Sons of India. Altogether it was a very important Convention. It was glorious to see so much colour everywhere – the rich shawls and sarees of the Hindus making it a feast of colour.

Well, now I begin my tour in about ten days from now. I hope to pay a visit to Buddha Gya [Bodh Gaya] – the place where the Buddha reached illumination under the Bodhi tree – in a day or two. Then I go to Allahabad, Cawnpore, Agra, Delhi and several other cities of Northern India. I shall tell you, later on, what I see in my travels. All is going well with me – my health is A1. I shall try to get to some cool place for the summer months. I am looking forward to the time when I shall see you all again and then be able to tell you what I have seen and heard in this ancient land in more detail.

I trust that all is going well with the Branch – with all the members. My thoughts are ever with you, wishing success to the Branch – and happiness and prosperity to individual members. Keep ever the Love Peace and Harmony vibrations going strong – in unity is your strength.

The Peace and the Wisdom of the Holy Ones be with you always. My Love and best wishes to you all.

From yours ever sincerely and fraternally.

M.H. Hawthorne

A Lesser Known Fact about the Motto of the Theosophical Society:

A former palace belonging to the Maharajah of Benares is mentioned in the above letter. It is of interest that the motto of the Theosophical Society, *satyān nāsti paro dharmah*, commonly translated as ‘There is no Religion higher than Truth’, was first used by HPB in the January 1881 issue of *The Theosophist*. Below the English translation of the motto she added: ‘Family motto of the Maharajahs of Benares.’

Josephine Ransom, in her book *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (p.151), wrote that the adoption of the motto followed a visit by Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky to Benares in 1880, where they met the Maharajah who gave them permission to use the family motto. The motto, according to Ransom, is taken from the Mahabhārata in a slightly transposed form. Originally, the affirmation was: ‘There is no duty which is higher than Truth, and no sin more heinous than untruth.’ (Mahabhārata, *Shanti Parva*, chapter 160, stanza 24) - Ed.

Tour - International Speaker

Dr Pablo Sender



Dr Pablo Sender, PhD, is a Microbiologist and has a doctorate in Biological Sciences. He became a member of the Theosophical Society in his native Argentina in 1996, where he was an active member and part of the National Council. He lived and worked for almost two years at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India, and currently lives and works at the National Centre of the TS in America. Pablo has presented theosophical lectures, seminars, and classes in India, Europe, and several countries in the three Americas. He has published two books in Spanish and a number of articles in both Spanish and English in different theosophical journals. See also page 28.

NATIONAL TOUR DATES

Mon 15 April	Brisbane Lodge, Public Lecture <i>'An Esoteric View on Happiness'</i>	10.30am
Mon 15 - Sat 20 April	School of Theosophy, Springbrook (see p. 28)	
Sun 21 April	Perth Branch, Public Seminar <i>'Unfolding the Higher Consciousness'</i>	2.00pm
Tue 23 April	Adelaide Lodge, Members Lecture <i>'Essential Qualities of a Theosophist'</i> Adelaide Lodge, Public Lecture <i>'The Secret of Who you Really Are'</i>	5.00pm 7.00pm
Wed 24 April	Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney, Public Lecture <i>'Daily Life as a Spiritual Practice'</i>	6.00pm
Fri 26 April	Melbourne Lodge, Public Lecture <i>'An Esoteric View on Happiness'</i>	6.30pm

The Triennial Indo-Pacific Federation Conference

**1-6 November 2013
Bali, Indonesia**



The next Indo-Pacific Conference will be held in Bali, Indonesia, starting with arrivals on **1 November** and 6.00pm dinner, and finishing with breakfast on **6 November** and departures.

We would like to invite all members of the Theosophical Society to this special triennial event, especially those in the Indo-Pacific Region. The Indonesian Section is hosting the conference. Guest Speakers will include **Prof. Ravi Ravindra** from Canada and **Vicente Hao Chin, Jr** from the Philippines with further distinguished speakers from many of the Indo-Pacific Sections.

Theme: Practising Theosophy

Conference Venue: Wantilan Convention Centre

Accommodation: Aerowisata Sanur Beach Hotel, Bali (twin share rooms)

Convention Costs: Rp 3,850,000 (approx. US \$400.00)

The costs include twin shared accommodation; breakfast, lunch and refreshments during the conference; wifi access from room; dinner on the 1st and 5th November. As there are a lot of quality dining establishments outside the hotel area we will be eating out on 2nd, 3rd and 4th at the venue of our choice. An outing day will be arranged by the Indonesian Section during which we will visit some of the places of spiritual significance on the island of Bali. There will be an extra cost for this outing.

Registration Deadline: 1 September 2013

To confirm your registration you will need to do one of two things:

1. Fill out the online registration form and deposit the conference fee into the Theosophical Society in New Zealand Inc. bank account to confirm your registration. Details at: <http://ipf-ts.org>
2. Print out the registration form available at <http://ipf-ts.org>, fill it in and send it to the address below including a bank draft for the conference fee in **New Zealand Dollars**:

c/o John Vorstermans
Info-Pacific Federation of the Theosophical Society
18 Belvedere Street
1051
Auckland
New Zealand

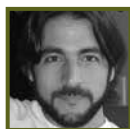


Further details: <http://ipf-ts.org>

National Calendar of Events...



Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook QLD
Mon 15 April (arrivals) – Sun 21 April 2013 (departures)
FOR MEMBERS ONLY
2013 SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY



Theme: ‘The Secret Doctrine: Esoteric Insights and Spiritual Practice’
International Guest Presenter: Dr Pablo Sender, USA

Cost: \$230 (includes accommodation, all sessions, meals and the \$10 non-refundable registration fee)

Overview: H. P. Blavatsky’s major work, *The Secret Doctrine*, is frequently taken as a treatise of metaphysical teachings or as an esoteric history on the genesis of the Universe. However, this book has even greater potentialities. Madame Blavatsky pointed out that its study, by appealing to the inner faculties rather than to the ordinary comprehension of the physical brain, is meant to awaken the spiritual intuition of the student. We will examine the basic concepts found in the ‘Three Fundamental Propositions’ of *The Secret Doctrine* and explore how they can nurture our spiritual practice. As part of the School programme, students will be asked to give a five-minute talk at the end of the School on a topic of their choice relating to the morning study sessions. Interactive afternoon sessions will also be presented by the National President and the Acting Education Coordinator on the TS and its work.

Places for the School are still available. Please register soon.

Canyonleigh Centre, Bolitho House, Tugalong Road, Canyonleigh, NSW
Fri 17 May (arrivals) – Sun 19 May 2013 (departures)

Theme: Save Nature!

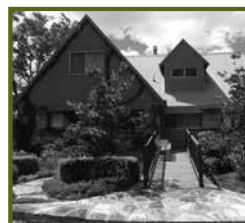
But what is Nature and what are we, that we can destroy it?

Presenter: Dr Dara Tatray

Cost: \$130 members / \$145 non-members (includes accommodation, all sessions, meals and the \$10 non-refundable registration fee)

Overview: Through philosophy, dialogue and meditative exercises we will explore the conviction of many sages that there is in fact no world at all, our experience being nothing but a product of our state of mind. Do we have the power to affect material reality? Advaita Vedānta, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Deep Ecology help us answer this question. Save nature one shift at a time.

Further information: see national website



2014 National Convention, The Women’s College, University of Sydney
Tues 21 January (arrivals) - Tuesday 28 January 2014 (departures)

Guest presenters: Emeritus Prof. Garry Trompf, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney

More details: June 2013 issue, *Theosophy in Australia*

Registration forms for Springbrook and Canyonleigh events: available from the National Headquarters (02 9264 7056) and the national TS website: www.austheos.org.au/what's on

Education



National Headquarters Media Library - New DVDs

***The Holographic Brain* with Karl Pribram (30 min)**

With a better understanding of neurological functioning we may find the groundwork for a new approach to understanding spiritual and mystical experiences.

***The World's Philosophies* with Huston Smith (60 min)**

Dr Smith suggests that we confront three essential relationships: with nature, with other people, and with ourselves, and these relationships correspond to the enduring philosophical traditions of the West, of China and of India. He also argues that human history may be divided into four philosophical epochs: archaic, traditional, modern and post-modern.

***A New Science of Life* with Rupert Sheldrake (30 min)**

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake has stimulated and even startled the scientific world by challenging mechanistic thinking in the life sciences. He proposes a startling alternative to the idea that genetic programming is solely responsible for diversity of form, development of behaviour and development of mind in living creatures.

***The Presence of the Past* with Rupert Sheldrake (30 min)**

Were there any 'laws of the universe' at the time of the 'big bang'? Oxford trained biologist Rupert Sheldrake, author of *The Presence of the Past*, says that all laws developed as 'habits' over time. Thus the universe and its laws can be seen to be continually evolving. In this view the theory of evolution can be applied to physics, chemistry and cosmology.

***The Universal Organism* with Rupert Sheldrake (30 min)**

The so-called 'laws of nature' may actually be more like habits and instincts than immutable and inviolable laws. Rupert Sheldrake, biologist and author, suggests that from this perspective all of creation may be viewed as a living organism. This ancient concept, he says, challenges the notion of the universe as a mechanism with God as the great mechanic.

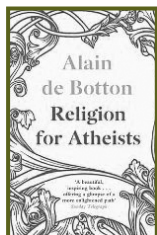
***Studies in Parapsychology* with Rupert Sheldrake (28 min)**

In his pioneering work, *A New Science of Life*, Sheldrake brought forth the idea of 'morphogenetic fields'. Since, he has gone on to capture the global imagination with his forays into parapsychology with a prudent and conservative scientific perspective on an otherwise explosive subject.

DVDs can be borrowed by Lodges, Branches, Certified Groups and National Members for a period of thirty days. For borrowing, please email edcoord@austheos.org.au, or call (02) 9264 7056.

Note: all audiovisual resources belonging to the National Headquarters are governed by its Copyright Policy, which states that borrowers are requested to adhere strictly to the relevant copyright provisions, and that copying of audiovisual resources is not permitted.

Review



Religion for Atheists
(A Non-Believer's Guide to
the Uses of Religion)

Alain de Botton
 Hamish Hamilton/Penguin
 Books, 2012, 320 pages

Alain de Botton is a best selling author and founder of the School of Life in London. His most recently published book, *Religion for Atheists*, is a welcome contribution to the field of religious thought.

In this book Alain, a devout atheist, presents a range of ideas about the value and necessity in society for the community structures, moral guidelines, social connections and artistic endeavours that have been provided by religions.

He focuses on only three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism, having had direct involvement with all three through his European lifestyle, but much of what he states can be attributed to all the religious bodies.

The chapters come under the headings of: Wisdom without Doctrine, Community, Kindness, Education, Tenderness, Pessimism, Perspective, Art, Architecture and Institutions. Under these headings he explores many subjects, such as the compassionate ideal of Mary, the value of rites and ceremonies in bringing people together, and the role of art to 'serve the needs of psychology as effectively as, for centuries, it has served those of theology'.

His exploration of the story of Job in the Old Testament provides a whole new insight into this puzzling tale of the good man who has everything taken from him by God. Job's direct challenge is answered by God, outlining the vastness and complexity of the Galaxy as compared to the insignificant problems of Job's life. Alain states:

The strategy works: Job is reminded of the scale of all that surpasses him and of the age, size and mystery of space. God's whirlwind, and the sonorous, sublime words he speaks, excite a pleasing terror in his audience, a sense of how petty are man's disasters in comparison with the ways of eternity, leaving Job – and the rest of us, perhaps – a little readier to bow to the incomprehensible and morally obscure tragedies that every life entails.

From this one can consider the idea that whether one believes in the existence of God or not, it is a fact that the life of the individual is a minimal part of the vast extent of the universe.

It is refreshing to read a book which looks quite objectively at the place of religion in the world-wide community, both past and present, and at the same time provides concepts we can take from religions out into the secular world.

In fact he concludes with the notion that the secular world needs to address the problems of modern living by taking on the solutions put forward by religious practices. He states:

It has been the purpose of this book to identify some of the lessons we might retrieve from religions: how to generate feelings of community, how to promote kindness, how to cancel out the current bias towards commercial values in advertising, how to select and make use of secular saints, how to rethink the strategies of universities and our approach to cultural education, how to redesign hotels and spas, how better to acknowledge our own childlike needs, how to surrender some of our counterproductive optimism, how to achieve perspective through the sublime and the transcendent, how to reorganize museums, how to use architecture to enshrine values – and, finally, how to coalesce the scattered efforts of individuals interested in the care of souls and organize them under the aegis of institutions.

The style of writing is easy to read and one can grasp the key points of his arguments, even if one does not necessarily agree with all of them. This book provides quite a fresh and objective perspective on religion, as well as a new paradigm from which the reader can view his or her own thoughts on this complex and controversial subject.

Dianne K. Kynaston

News & Notes

Anniversary of the Publication of *The Secret Doctrine*

2013 marks 125 years since HPB's magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*, was first published. Articles on this subject will be published this year in our international journal, *The Theosophist*. The theme for our Section's 2013 School of Theosophy, '*The Secret Doctrine: Esoteric Insights and Spiritual Practice*', is also a fitting tribute to this work.

Annual Appointments

The annual appointments made by the National Council and the national Executive Committee for 2013 were as follows:

National Vice-President: Geoffrey Harrod
 Assistant Treasurer: Beatrice Malka
 Executive Committee: two ex-officio members (National President and National Secretary), Beatrice Malka, Ken Edwards, Marlene Bell, Dianne Kynaston and Dai Trandang.

In relation to the office of National Treasurer, which has not yet been filled, a Rule change was flagged during the National Council meeting which could provide in future for either an Honorary National Treasurer which is the present provision, or else a paid person to take on this work if necessary. We remain compliant with statutory requirements even in the absence of a National Treasurer. Also, the Assistant Treasurer is willing and very well qualified to continue to assist with the Section's finances. The National Council has determined that a Rule change will also be required before the position of Education Coordinator can be advertised. The Council agreed that the Acting Education Coordinator, Pedro Oliveira, would continue in this role for the time being. If the Rule change concerned is passed then an advertisement for this position will appear in the March 2014 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

Notices of Motion will consequently be framed and sent to lodges/branches with a view to adoption at the January 2014 Convention Business Meeting.

Theosophical Order of Service

The TOS congratulates the TS Headquarters and the Melbourne Lodge for an outstanding Convention. It was very special to meet so many of our TOS members and see the enthusiasm that the Convention generated.

I would like to remind you of another conference to be held in July at the American TS headquarters in Chicago. This year following the American TS Summer National Convention (19-23 July) the TOS is holding its 3rd International Workers Conference, (23-27 July). All TOS office bearers and workers are invited to attend. Please check in as early as possible on 19 July and check out on 27 July. All details including the programme are available at the link below. If your option is to stay off campus at the Holiday Inn please remember to advise on your registration form that you have chosen this option. <http://www.theosophical.org/national-conferences>

For any queries contact:
 National Coordinator, Jean Carroll
 mob: 0402 805127
 or email tos.australia@gmail.com

Transitions

We remember with affection the following members who have passed in recent months:
 2 November 2012: Richard Mortensen (Blavatsky Lodge, joined 1998). Richard gave steady support to the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) and was the Vice-President of the TOS in Sydney.

17 December 2012: Harma Klomp (Hobart Branch, joined 1996). Harma gave many years

of dedicated voluntary work in the Branch's library . At one time a Committee member, she also had an important role in a TS Group run in Kingston, a suburb of Hobart.

3 January 2013: Amanullah Amir. Although not a member of the Australian Section Aman, who was from Pakistan, would have been well-known to various Australian members. He was Hon. Treasurer of the Theosophical Order of Service in Pakistan for many years and President of the Karachi Theosophical Society. A real humanitarian, he had a gentle presence. Later in his life Aman spent a lot of time in Sydney with his family.



The use of one gender to cover both genders is avoided as far as possible in this magazine. However, quotations from writings in which one gender is used in this way are printed as originally written. This applies both to older writings and some contemporary ones.

Gifts and Bequests to Further the Work of the TS in Australia

The Theosophical Society in Australia as we know it today is a product of well over a century of impressive service by volunteers and officers, as well as the more tangible gifts and bequests received from both members and non-members. All gifts and bequests 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'.

The latter is a company formed to hold monies, investments, real or personal property in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia, which is not incorporated. Further Enquiries:

Please contact the National Secretary
email: natsec@austheos.org.au
tel: 02 9264 6404

Result – Election of State Representative

On 9 November 2012 in accordance with Rule 19(5) the National Secretary declared the result of the counting of the ballot in the election of the State Representative for Western Australia as follows -

Valid nominations:	2
Number of members voting:	64
Votes for Franco Guazzelli:	39
Votes for George Wester:	25

Franco Guazzelli was therefore declared the member elected as State Representative for Western Australia. The term of office for State Representatives is for a period of two years from the declaration of the election result. The State Representatives will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in the State in all meetings and affairs of the National Council. They shall also liaise with all the Lodges (Branches), Groups and National Members in their Electoral State and shall represent their views to the National Council and to the National Society Officers, as appropriate. As well, they shall receive and deal with representations from individual Members within their Electoral State, and refer the representations where requested or deemed necessary.

Section Directory

Australian Section National Headquarters

4th Floor, 484 Kent Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
www.austheos.org.au
Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
campbell@austheos.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:
Postal Address: PO Box 7418,
Fisher ACT 2611
Meet: Friends Meeting House, cnr Bent &
Condamine Streets, Turner ACT 2612
7.30pm 1st Monday of month
(Please confirm by email or telephone)
President: Peter Fokker
Tel: 02 6236 3170
Email: fokkerbakker@gmail.com
Secretary: Tony Feamside
Telephone: 02 62887656
Email: janton@netspeed.com.au

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: 2.00pm Wednesdays
President: Stephen McDonald
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
8.00pm 2nd Friday each month
(excluding January)
Study group (members) confirm dates
with Lodge
President: Tony Buzek
Tel: 02 4933 1326, 0452 633 132

Blue Mountains Group:
Meet: 1st Floor, 122 Katoomba Street,
Katoomba NSW
2.00pm 1st Monday each month
Coordinator: Donald Fern
Tel: 02 4757 1910

Gosford Group:
Meet: The Neighbour Centre,
Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month
Coordinator: Marianne Fraser
Tel: (02) 4339 7118, 0400 713 273

E-mail: marifraser256@gmail.com
Secretary: Roni Ostergaard
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

Northern Beaches Group:
Postal address: c/ Patricia Witts,
22 Laitoki Street,
Terrey Hills, NSW 2084
Meet: above address
8.00 pm 3rd Friday each month
Coordinator: Patricia Witts
Tel: 02 9450 1362

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:
Postal Address: 14 Herberton Rd,
Atherton QLD 4883
Meet: Meeting Room, Community Services
Tablelands, 38 Mabel St, Atherton
2.00pm 2nd Saturday of month except Jan.
President: Max Brandenberger
Secretary: Chris Pang Way
Tel: 07 4091 5156

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:
355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000
Tel: 07 3839 1453
Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au
President: Phillipa Rooke
Secretary: Angela Read

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 14/10/2003
Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
7.00pm Thursday
Acting President: Esther Pockrandt
Tel: 07 5435 2738, 0409 065062
Email: estherp@aapt.net.au
Secretary: Joyce Thompson

Toowoomba Group:
Meet: 49 Lindsay Street, 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: Julie Murphy
Tel: 0427 751 464
Email: murphyj@usq.edu.au

South Australia

Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:
310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: 08 8223 1129
Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au
http://www.austheos.org.au/adelaide
Meet: Members Meeting 1.00pm 4th Friday
of every month. Please contact Lodge for
additional meeting dates.
President: Sheryl Malone
Secretary: Marlene Bell

Tasmania

Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:
13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000

www.theosophicaltas.websyte.com.au
Meet: 8.00pm Monday
Acting President: Helen Steven
Email: helen_steven@live.com

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.austheos.org.au/launceston
Meetings: Wednesdays commencing
7.00 pm for meditation, followed
by meeting at 7.30 pm
President: Tony Harrison
Secretary: Ruth Holt
Tel: 0448 397 246

Victoria

Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:
126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
email: meltheos@bigpond.com.au
Meet: 2nd, 3rd and 4th Tuesdays, 6.00pm
President: Kari Torgersen
Secretary: Ken Edwards

Mornington Peninsula Group:
Coordinator: Daphne Standish
Meet: Mt. Eliza Neighbourhood Centre,
Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
of the month 11am - 3.30pm
(meditation - lunch - Theosophy)
www.austheos.org.au/centres/mpg
Tel: 03 9589 5439

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
Tel: 02 6024 2905

Western Australia

Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:
21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104
Email: tsp Perth@iinet.net.au
http://tsp Perth.iinet.net.au
Meet: 7.30pm Tuesday
President: Harry Bayens
Secretary: Deborah Weymouth

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:
1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082
Currently Closed
All enquiries to Perth Branch
Tel: 08 9328 8104

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Qld

2184 Springbrook Road,
Springbrook QLD 4213
Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211
email: info@tsretreat.com.au
Acting Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein
Administrator: Dara Tatrav
Tel: 02 9264 6404

