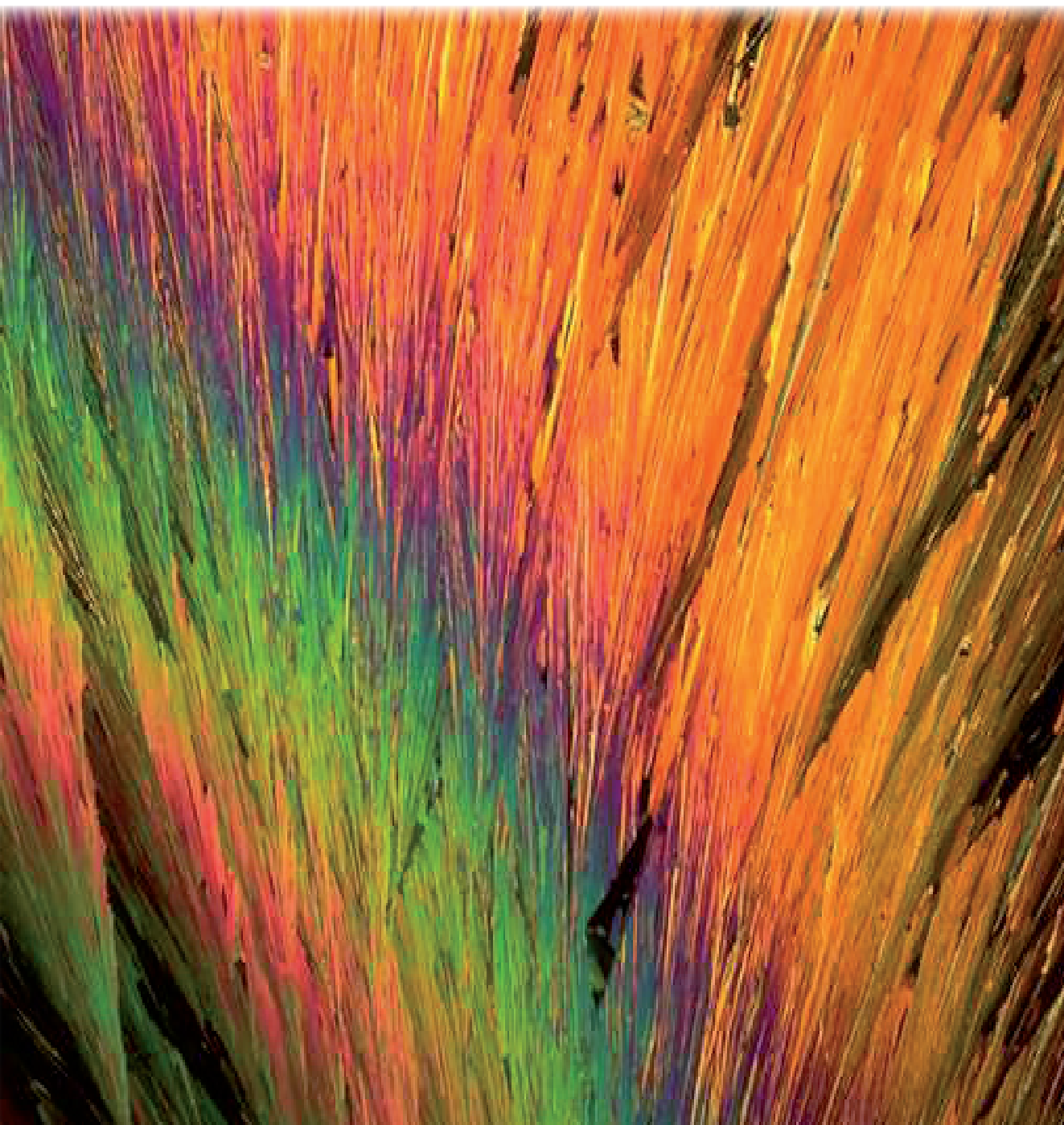


# *Theosophy*

in Australia

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## *Freedom of Thought*

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

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

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

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

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

## *Freedom of the Society*

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

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

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

# Theosophy

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<b>Contents</b>	65	<i>The Supreme Spiritual Ideal</i>	83
<i>From the National President</i>	66	<i>Is Denunciation a Duty?</i>	86
<i>The First Object and the Culture Of Fear</i>	67	<i>Critical Thinking</i>	90
<i>All That We Behold is Filled with Blessings</i>	71	<i>National Calendar of Events</i>	92
<i>Birds of a Feather</i>	74	<i>Agenda for Convention Business Meeting</i>	93
<i>Holistic Consciousness</i>	75	<i>2012 Annual Convention — Brisbane</i>	94
<i>Toowoomba: Theosophy in the 1880s</i>	80	<i>News and Notes</i>	95

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

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

## The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

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

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

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

# From the National President ...



**Dara Tatray**

I have been very happy over the past year or so to receive a number of letters from members in support of the new direction taken in the pages of this journal. Yet other members apparently feel that there is now too much science in *Theosophy in Australia*. No doubt, it will never be possible to please everyone, but the present issue attempts to redress the possible imbalance, by dedicating itself to our first Object: to the theme of brotherhood, and to the occasional marked absence of it in the Theosophical Society and elsewhere.

There is surely more to forming a nucleus of universal brotherhood than placing a sign up on the wall saying that we are all for it. There is an intellectual/scientific side to it, and a behavior/psychological side to it. On the one hand, the success of the enterprise depends, in varying degrees, on study, investigation and propaganda: convincing the wider community that universal brotherhood — a brotherhood of the elephant and the ant as much as of the human being — is a fact in nature. This fact has far-reaching consequences. It has the potential to thoroughly redesign our civilization and refashion the way we go about every sphere of activity (hence the significance of scientific revolutions; they change the way we view the world entirely). One of the contributors to the present issue suggests that an obvious field in need of reworking is the sociopolitical, which could, in her opinion, do with a healthy dose of universal brotherhood. I suspect that some readers will find Dr Gostin's article too political. Like the early Victorians, a number of TS members don't like to talk about politics or about sex: attempting always to avert their eyes. Others will perhaps feel that at last



these pages have been graced with a little social comment.

Be that as it may, we can probably leave the study of science and politics to specialists. The behavior-side of forming a nucleus of the universal brotherhood is another matter, and perhaps a little closer to home for all of us, wherever our professional expertise may lie. This ought to be the easy part, and members certainly are not slow in coming forward with sermons about brotherhood, or assertions of it, or concepts about it. Or even reminders that above all one must practice it. But where has that left the Theosophical Society? My opinion on that matter will be plain enough from reading the reprint by H.P. Blavatsky, and the accompanying essay on critical thinking. If members of the Society do not pay attention to such matters then I fear we will end up as close to brotherhood as the average UFO-logist is to alien life.

David Bohm pointed out that science may be leading us to a view that is compatible with the wholeness of mankind, and its holiness, but it will not guarantee it. Sorry to have lapsed into science again, but he makes a good point. There appears to be an irreducible connection between wholeness and holiness: they go hand in hand. What is the relationship between the wholeness of life and the holiness, or integrity, of the human being? That is for each one of us to find out; and until we do, the unity of life may remain just an idle dream.

# THE FIRST OBJECT, BOAT PEOPLE AND THE CULTURE OF FEAR

Olga Gostin

There are times when it seems to me that a return to roots is not only salutary but necessary. This is particularly true when we are battered by the media with contradictory facts and/or opinions about real or hypothetical doomsday scenarios, and confused as to whether we should engage in this or that course of action. I refer here to major issues that currently engage the Australian public, such as climate change, the proposed carbon tax, and what to do about our border policy and the arrival of unsolicited boat people on our shores. I shall engage with the last of these concerns as the first two require complex scientific and economic analysis that is outside my field of expertise.

I should like to start my exploration of how a theosophist might approach the boat-people issue by reiterating the first Object of the Society which we all know off by heart and repeat, perhaps unthoughtfully, like a well-loved mantra: to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. I suspect that most of us would interpret the meaning of the first Object to extend beyond basic courtesy to veiled women on a bus, Africans in a shopping line or a same-sex couple with their offspring. In proclaiming the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity we delve deeper into our human condition affirming that I + you = we/us, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; that the I-in-me is intrinsically bound to the I-in-you, and that to be, is by implication to be related to each and every Other. This is the core theme of Christian de Quincey's *Radical Knowing* in which the author states that the proper focus in the I-Thou relationship should be on the hyphen which binds rather than on the individual component entities. What is



important says de Quincey, are relationships and relational connections; hence the mark of a good life is the quality of our interconnectedness with others.<sup>1</sup> The sages have long pronounced on this theme: no man is an island; love your neighbour as yourself; do unto others as you would have them do unto you. For all our multiplicity and diversity, we are One in the context of the universal pulse which beats within us all.

In 'Making Brotherhood a Reality', published in 1989, our international President, Radha Burnier, addressed 'the steady increase...of violence, greed, conflict and other symptoms of blind materialism'.<sup>2</sup> Referring to this 'moral morass', Burnier expounded on the crucial importance of the Universal Brotherhood:

Universality of outlook, thought and relationship, which is true brotherliness, implies an extraordinary internal change, a change into a state of consciousness free of every bias, all personal, self-centred motivation and the limitations of mental identity with the physical body, community, nation, religious group or whatever else is satisfying. Universal Brotherhood is the beginning of the journey to realization of absolute unity, which is the highest form of spirituality ... born both of serious enquiry into the human situation and from intuitive inklings of the truth of unity.<sup>3</sup>

Take time to ponder and reflect on this passage. It leads one to appreciate better the Mahatma KH's injunction that 'the first object of the Theosophical Society is philanthropy ... which means "love of mankind"'. KH continues: 'the true Theosophist is a philanthropist — not for himself but for the world he lives'. And which

world does that encompass, we might well ask? The answer is unequivocal: 'The sphere of influence can be found everywhere. It is "now" in each person's hand'.<sup>4</sup>

Burnier picks up on this theme:

Philanthropy need not express itself in dramatic and recognizable acts. In a multitude of seemingly small ways, the truly affectionate heart brings a benevolent touch to what it encounters. Hence it is important for a Theosophist to observe his relationships, and ensure they are affectionate.<sup>5</sup>

Let Sri Ram conclude this brief engagement with the first Object:

World Brotherhood is no longer a matter of moral choice, but has become an imperative necessity; whereas in the old days brotherhood might have been an ideal, today it is a requirement of the existing situation.<sup>6</sup>

The 'existing situation' that I have chosen to address is the unsolicited arrival of boat-people on Australian shores, seeking to resettle in this country. Most come from countries with which we are at war (Iraq, Afghanistan), though there are also Sri Lankans reputedly fleeing the aftermath of their recent civil war. About six thousand have arrived in the past year, and most are held under some form of detention pending the processing of their claim to refugee status and residency in Australia. It is not my intention to engage in any profound analysis of the merits or otherwise of these attempts to emigrate to Australia. Instead I raise the moral issues that confront me as a citizen, and a theosophist to boot. As regards the popular press and talk-back radio, the new arrivals are frequently dubbed illegals, queue-jumpers, economic opportunists or some such negatively-charged label. The more compassionate term, refugee, is invoked less often as it invites consideration of Australia's obligations as a co-signatory to the 1950 United Nations Convention on Refugees. To put our 'problem' into perspective: in these

times of increased mobility, political upheavals and economic disparity between the rich and the poor, Third World African countries like Chad and Kenya harbor hundreds of thousands of international refugees escaping tribal wars in their homelands, while South Africa estimates that over ten million Africans from the north have poured across its borders since the implacable regime of apartheid was toppled in the early 1990s.

There is another undercurrent to the 'existing situation'. Somehow the arrival of boatpeople has become entangled in popular thinking with the existing worldwide concern about the proliferation of terrorism and the so-called war on terrorism triggered by the events of 9/11. The arrival of destitute people, including women and children, on sometimes barely seaworthy craft, has been presented as a possible back-door entry for would-be terrorists — hence the extensive delays and thorough checks while being held in detention, resulting in trauma, despair and occasional suicides. Ironically, on the basis of past experience, well over 95% of such boat-people will be classified as genuine refugees, while up to four times their number (over 24,000) who fly into Australia over the same period and then claim asylum, will live openly in the community while their claims are being processed.

One could enter into all sorts of arguments defending this or that position, depending on one's political convictions, economic considerations or even religious beliefs. None of these however, concern the *moral* dimension that we, as theosophists adhering to the deeper meaning of the first Object, should apply to our approach to boat-people once they reach our shores. Irrespective of the fact that Australia is irrefutably a continent of migrants — by its very geography and relatively recent history of non-Indigenous settlement — I would argue that there is a moral imperative to embrace those who come to these shores under the duress of war and/or poverty with the compassion and philanthropy that is implicit in the wider definition of the first Object, as discussed above.

In taking this stance I am not advocating open slather on immigration or putting my head in the sand about the complexity of the issues involved. All I am saying is this: to the extent that I am not in a decision-making position, I shall render unto Caesar what the government of the day judges best to do in terms of broader policy issues and international negotiation. But for me personally, the Brotherhood of Humanity leaves me no option but to advocate for compassionate, caring and just engagement with the I-in-them: the boat-people arriving on our shores. Native Americans put it another way: judge not until you have walked my path in my moccasins. Christian de Quincey takes us further: ‘Imagine practising philosophy by looking for what is right about the other person’s position. That kind of attitudinal shift begins to pull philosophy and spirituality closer to one another, and truth begins to approach wisdom.’<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, he defines wisdom as:

... an often ineffable knowing born of direct experience — a kind of intuitive pragmatism that takes account of the whole. It is inclusive, integrative and invariably involves empathy and compassion.<sup>8</sup>

If the moral position I have proposed above appears somewhat idealistic, let me refer to the stand taken by Adelaide-born Gill Hicks who barely survived the July 2005 London Underground terrorist bombing and became a double amputee. Currently Hicks is an ambassador for Peace Direct and the founding director of M.A.D. (Make a Difference) for Peace, a charity devoted to building empathy and understanding between people and communities. Referring to her harrowing experience, Hicks reflects:

Peace and love are really important subjects that are used very lightly, dismissively ... Yet they can change everything. Love, proper love, for me has protected me and shielded me from feeling hate and bitterness.<sup>9</sup>

She goes further. In the desperate confusion of the London Underground on that day, her

badly mangled body was simply tagged ‘One Unknown’ as rescue crews did all they could to save her. She calls her anonymous label a gift because it proved to her that:

... there was no ‘us’ and ‘them’, just humanity in different shapes and forms. They didn’t know at the time whether I was male or female or what colour my skin was or whether I was rich or poor ... That is such an amazing, valuable gift, to be able to say to people ‘this is the reality of humanity’ ... Come on, it’s important to be better than we are ... In facing death, I’ve learnt a lot about life.<sup>10</sup>

It may well be that some boat-people also faced death before coming to our shores. Who knows? Their moccasins (mercifully) are not there for us to wear. Their initial appraisal of life in Australia, however, as perceived from behind detention walls and razor wire, must give them a singular view of our collective humanity — or absence thereof.

In this final section I seek to understand why we have so hardened our hearts against boat-people whom we resist calling refugees lest that word validate their plight, their right to succour and our obligation to engage with “the us-in-them” in the collective Brotherhood of Humanity. In the current socio-political climate Frank Furedi’s *Culture of Fear* offers some explanation even though he doesn’t deal with refugee issues specifically.<sup>11</sup> His theme is simple: Western society is in the grip of identifying ever more “at-risk” types of situations or behaviours that have effectively paralysed our individual capacity to own and address issues. Be it stranger-danger, road rage, the risk of skin cancer, pollution, bullying, sexual predation, nuclear danger, domestic violence or substance abuse — and we could now add climate change — there is an ever increasing plethora of presumed at-risk situations. Living has become pathologised; bad news are the norm and there is little that individuals can do about this state of affairs, or so we are told. Even governments hide behind the expertise of panels and experts rather than make

authoritative decisions that they were elected to do. In short, we live in a fear-driven society but, as Furedi points out, the expectation of problems can become a self-fulfilling prophesy: 'Thinking the worst about people is interpreted as an act of courage rather than what it really is - an expression of misanthropy'.<sup>12</sup> Nowhere is this more manifest than in our approach to boat-people who, sequestered and isolated from civil society for months on end (if not years) for no manifest reason, lapse into chronic depression, random violence and/or self-harm.

In his *Moral Panics*, Kenneth Thompson deals with similar themes to Furedi except that he articulates the basis of moral panics defined as 'high levels of concern over the behaviour of a certain group or category of people; and an increased level of hostility towards the group. Panic involves volatility and disproportionality'.<sup>13</sup> The key elements or stages in moral panic include:

- Something or someone is identified as posing a threat to commonly held values or interests.
- This threat is popularised by the media in simplistic and easily identifiable form.
- There is a rapid build-up of public concern.
- Media and politicians respond to the perceived threat.
- The panic subsides but the real causes of social breakdown or moral panic remain unaddressed.<sup>14</sup>

I leave it to the astute reader to apply the schema above to the current moral panic over boat-people who risk their lives to escape war-torn countries (where we ourselves are fighting unjust regimes) to come to the lucky country.

How then do we address the moral panic and the culture of fear over boat-people? I suggest that we return to roots, to the first Object, to the commandment to love one another, to embrace the them-in-us. I cannot help concluding with

the words of Barbara Kingsolver because she encapsulates it all, and also speaks with delightful irony:

We are all in the same boat. It's the same struggle for each of us, and the same path out: the utterly simple, infinitely wise, ultimately defiant act of loving one thing and then another, loving our way back to life.<sup>15</sup>

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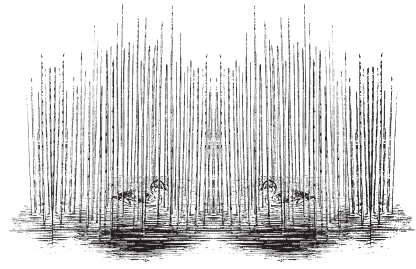
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**Born in Brussels, Dr Olga Gostin completed her first degree in South Africa, majoring in Social Anthropology. After completing her PhD in Australia, Olga joined Australia's founding program for Aboriginal tertiary students, at the University of South Australia, where she is currently adjunct senior lecturer. Olga has been a member of the Theosophical Society for over four decades.**



# ALL THAT WE BEHOLD IS FILLED WITH BLESSINGS

Phillipa Rooke



For me those words conjure up tranquil feelings of beauty and grace, and also implications of the attainment of a certain state of being, which allows a seeing of things in a different way from how we normally see things. I am sure that those words will have a different meaning for each and every one of us. So let us begin by defining that title phrase in the present context.

‘All that we Behold’ we will take as being absolutely everything that the human eye is capable of seeing. And can we take ‘filled with Blessings’ in the spirit of one of the four basic ideas HPB presents to us in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*, that basic idea being the fundamental unity of all existence. This idea is about ‘being’ having two aspects: spirit and matter, consciousness and substance, positive and negative. Can we then say that all matter is spirit made visible, or matter is crystallised spirit? One aspect cannot be present in manifestation without the other, so ‘All that we Behold is filled with Blessings’ we will take as being the realisation or the *seeing* that all matter is infused with spirit; or anything which has substance also has consciousness and is not just “dead matter,” even though with our ordinary vision it may appear that way. It is the realisation that matter is the transient appearance of that one principle Absolute Be-ness or Absolute Spirit.

So what kind of mind would there be behind eyes that saw Blessings, or matter infused with spirit, in all things, all people, all of nature, and even in things which may appear to be dead and in things which may appear to be distasteful? What kind of a mind is that? What sort of journey has that mind undergone? And why can we not see in that way?

Perhaps we cannot see because our vision, our perception is clouded, obscured by our desires, our constant search for material comfort, pleasure, the latest trends in fashion, food, dress, computers, phones, housing etc. We get caught up in the values that are presented to us as being desirable. We succumb to the stories which clever advertisers put forward as needs or as things we deserve, which pander to our ego and inflate our sense of self worth. Our vision is also obscured by our habitual reactions, our conditioning. We may react to some opinions, people or situations, in anger, annoyance or irritation. These reactions get in the way of our being able to see clearly, and we usually do not even know that this is happening. A Buddhist teacher and author, Dhiravamsa says:

Most of the time we are asleep, even in our normal waking life. This sleep has several aspects. During the day our waking consciousness is operating. Sometimes we go into daydreaming, fantasies, restlessness or trance with our eyes open. When we are tired at night, we go to sleep. This unawakened consciousness operates to keep life going and continuous. We may call it the life continuum consciousness. Through all these levels we sleep with what we have, with what we have accumulated, without knowing what we are or where we are going.<sup>1</sup>

We might react to that statement by saying, ‘Rubbish, I always know what I am doing, where I am going and who I am!’. But the very fact that we may react in that way means that we have not looked carefully at our very own selves, to see who we are, how we react, what feelings arise at different times, in order to see just how true that statement is. The only way

to realise the truth of that statement is to really observe oneself. For the moment, let us look at irritation. Just keep an eye on how many little irritations occur in a day. It doesn't have to be huge anger, just little annoyances, tips of the icebergs.

Dhiravamsa also says:

If we can look at our personality, examine our attitudes and habits of feeling and acting, then we will be able to find what is wrong and where we are not in harmony with ourselves. This understanding does not come from knowledge gained from books or other people, but through direct observation and the direct awareness we practise and develop.<sup>2</sup>

We have a wonderful opportunity in this life. We have relationship. Relationship with each other, with things, with ideas, and it is through these relationships that we can learn about ourselves. We have no other starting point for the rest of our existence, except who we are at this very moment. It is no good having wonderful discussions about lofty ideals, and then go home and become annoyed with your family. So we need to find out about ourselves. The tools we can use are direct observation, and direct awareness. To gain a clear understanding of ourselves, these tools must be sharp, and our awareness should not be blunted by expectation of results, or ideas about what or how we should or should not be. I think we need to just look with curiosity, without judgment about what we see in ourselves, about how we behave, how we react, but just seeing it for what it is, no more no less, just the fact of what is, not loaded by thoughts about what we see, attraction or repulsion, judgements or opinion.

Now I think that this requires some practice and persistence, because as soon as any thought about what we see comes into play, then that thought is then what is happening, not the original object of our seeing, so then our clear awareness needs to be brought to bear on that thought, and in seeing it just as it is, because that

is what is actually happening at that moment. It is fascinating to watch the deviousness of thoughts and feelings, overlaying each other, leading us around in the well-worn groves of our reactions and opinions.

Krishnamurti in his *Notebook* has a wonderful insight into 'fact':

There are only facts, not greater or lesser facts. The fact, the what is, cannot be understood when approached with opinions or judgments; opinions, judgments, then become the fact and not the fact that you wish to understand. In pursuing the fact, in watching the fact, the what is, the fact teaches and its teaching is never mechanical, and to follow its teachings, the listening, the observation must be acute ...<sup>3</sup>

So if we wish to learn in this life, we have to find a way in which we can clearly just see a fact for what it is without the interference of thought.

I know for me I have a wonderful opportunity to observe my own irritations whilst I am behind the wheel of a car! Very revealing indeed. I look in wonder at the fiend which is unleashed when somebody fails to indicate properly on a roundabout. Tailgaters are another wonderful opportunity for observing what goes on inside, and also for just looking at what is actually happening at that particular moment. All that is actually happening is that someone is driving behind you; albeit somewhat close. But that is my judgement, my thought about what is happening: and that thought is stirring up my whole being at the time, making my being disturbed, agitated, out of harmony, keeping the waters muddied so to speak. That thought, that reaction, prevents clear seeing, prevents the watching of the fact. It is as if when our life is not operating on the fact of the matter, it operates via our own selfishness, via our own ideas about how things should or should not be. We are so often, in the ideas presented by the great religions, exhorted to give up selfishness, and it seems to me that the clear seeing of the fact, leaving out the self and its opinions,

reactions, judgements, to whatever extent we are able, is a great tool to use, because it does not fix us into any ideas or beliefs, but enables us to be with whatever is happening in a more real, direct way, leaving out the emotions which cloud and distract, leaving out judgement which straight away sets up opposition and conflict within ourselves.

The Christian mystic Teilhard de Chardin has a wonderful insight into fact. He says:

Once and for all he understood that, like the atom, man has no value save for that part of himself which passes into the universe. He recognised with absolute certainty the empty fragility of even the noblest theorisings as compared with the definitive plenitude of the smallest FACT grasped in its total, concrete reality.<sup>4</sup>

How, then, can we come to understand 'the fundamental unity of all existence'? Well perhaps we cannot come to understand with our mind about things which are unthinkable and unspeakable, so where does that leave us? I think that it leaves us with an exploration into how we look at things, how we can get some inkling about what is really meant by words that attempt to describe the indescribable. I do think that we all get glimpses, little windows of clarity, at unexpected times, such as when we are taken by surprise by a beautiful sunset, a creature in the wild, a tiny flower. At such moments we cease to exist, and only the object of our seeing exists. All separation disappears. Let us just listen with openness to Ed Abdill from a recent article:

For a universe to come into being, that boundless principle must be differentiated. We might say that eternal SPACE crystallizes like water into ice to become matter and form. If so, then we and all existence are but temporal states within an eternal reality. If true, as more and more evidence suggests, then universal brotherhood is not something that we must create; it is fact to be realized. We are all different states of the same

stuff. To use another metaphor, we are all unique and distinct waves in an eternal and indivisible sea.<sup>5</sup>

It seems to me that another way to look at that unity is that what the human eye sees as matter is a container holding some of the same space that is outside it. Brian Swimme tells us the atom as being like a huge football stadium, and the nucleus is like an orange in the centre of that stadium and the electrons like a few moths fluttering about in the back of the stands, and the rest is just Space, and we and all we see are made up of atoms, so basically everything contains space, same inside as outside, and the container being that space or spirit, made visible.

I think that 'the fundamental unity of all existence' and other great theories of existence presented in theosophical teachings, and the teachings of the great religions, also need our clear seeing — to whatever degree we can manage, given the nature our minds — and a willingness to drop our own ideas about things, and become open and empty, and therefore more able to see, more available to those moments of clarity in our lives, when another aspect, another dimension of our selves experiences something of the true nature of the apparent reality of our world, and we may come to see that truly, and in fact, 'All that we behold is filled with blessings'.

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## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Pam Witheridge

**L**urking in a local council yard there is a special tree. Passing by, you wouldn't give it a second glance. Too small to be of any significance, it pales into obscurity next to the old metal sheds. The area is usually quiet. Occasionally a vehicle will pass by during the course of the day.

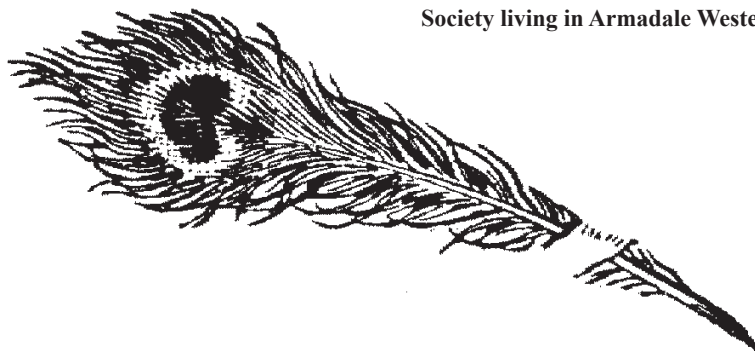
Within the sparse leaves and branches of this humble specimen is lodged an abode which never sought council approval for its construction. No plans were lodged for this work of art. Circular in design, its depth provides ample space for the tiny occupant within. The ruffled fluff on the top of its head the only visible sign that the house is indeed occupied. Alone for long periods during the day, it is left to bob and rock in its arboreal cradle.

Neither the flutter of a feather nor the note or chirp of song betrays the whereabouts of the errant mother of this neglected child. Our bird mother may not be eligible for the Parent-of-the-Year Award, but she certainly should be awarded the Encouragement Award for Creative Recycling!

These days the cry goes out: Recycle, Recycle. We even have Waste Recycling Depots to handle the vast quantities of rubbish that we so eagerly toss out as unwanted. So, is it any wonder that the other creatures of this planet have heeded the call and are pursuing the same path as we humans? Living proof we have of this extraordinary achievement: our Special Tree. Why is this tree special? Well, we humans once used this specimen for decorative purposes in our office. It stood for years in a corner slowly gathering dust and looking sorrier by the minute, until one day someone made an executive decision and tossed it away: to be banished to the top yard. One day a bird was on the lookout for a likely spot to build her nest — and there it was, made to order. Not too tall: why fly great distances down to the ground to snatch a bug or two when you can perch four feet high and be there in an instant! And so the nest was constructed and there it is today, in all its glory, nestling in the sparse branches of a plastic tree.

This is an example of the animal kingdom working together with human beings for its own good. Perhaps more humans should look to animals for solutions to some of our problems.

**Pam Witheridge is a member of the Theosophical Society living in Armadale Western Australia.**



# Holistic Consciousness Intimations from Mystics and Philosophers

Noel Bertelle



**M**ysticism appears to reflect a form of consciousness involving a union with Reality, and a heightened awareness. Perhaps, then, the mystic is a realist, who ceases to pursue imaginary ends — such as happiness through material gain or power: a realist who sees things for what they are and acts accordingly. A mystic might thus give up what most consider important, undergo rigorous training and make immense sacrifices (in a worldly sense) in order to enter higher and more intense states of consciousness; states which may well be beyond the imagination of those same critical contemporaries.

Indeed, perhaps the vision of a mystic is precisely what the world needs. As Gerald Heard expresses it in *Vedanta for the Western World*:

Who has the vision to tell us how to act, who can guarantee that “right action is prized at the heart of things?” Only the mystic, all others speak as scribes ... If we want a more effective social order we must produce better men. How? By giving them that training whereby the innate egotism of the best of today is transcended through what the mystic calls the vision of God ... through an accurate, or painstaking, gradual enlargement of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

(Such advice one may be tempted to put aside as merely utopian, yet such a vision may be what is needed today and those in power might well take note of Heard’s words.)

Let us now ask what it is that actually makes

a mystic? The early Greek Mysteries describe a mystic as one who has been initiated into those mysteries through which it is possible to gain an intuitive knowledge of divine things; a secret wisdom that allows the initiated to break through the world of time and history into one of eternity and timelessness. It is an insight and knowledge about God or the higher concepts. In fact it is a pointer to many wondrous things. And it seems that when this insight dawns it tends to change one’s life and outlook completely. The wonderful thing is that this vision or state is open to all of us, but only if we are adequately prepared to receive it. To that end we are rather helpfully reminded in Proverbs that:

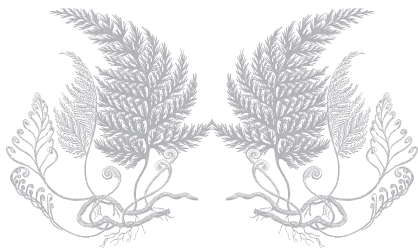
Wisdom cries aloud in the open air,  
She raises her voice in public places;  
She calls at the top of the busy street,  
And proclaims at the open gates of the city.<sup>2</sup>

Yet even though wisdom may indeed *cry aloud in the open air*, the ability to hear her depends entirely on the level of awareness of the passerby. Edward Gall, in his introduction to *The Mysteries of the Spiritual Ascent*, adds to the depth of the Proverbs quotation by saying:

Wisdom may be shouted from the rooftops and man may yet hear nothing; it may be staring him in the face and he may miss it utterly. Having ears, he may hear not; and having eyes, may see not. Tis ye, ‘tis your estranged faces, that miss the many splendoured thing.<sup>3</sup>

Now I cannot imagine that anyone would want to be in a situation so miserable as to miss the wonder and splendour of wisdom-attainment.

So what can we learn from mystics and philosophers that would help to open our minds and our hearts?



We will begin with Dionysius the Areopagite, a fifth or sixth century Syrian monk who prepared what is now considered to be a priceless literary treasure, the *Mystic Theology*, which includes within its pages what was then the startling concept of the Supreme Godhead as the Divine Dark:

... one should negate all that the surface consciousness perceives ... in the diligent exercise of mystical contemplation and leave behind the senses and the operations of the intellect and all things sensible and intellectual, and all things in the world of being and non-being, that thou mayest arise by unknowing towards the union, as far as is attainable, with Him who transcends all being and all Knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

And later:

...The higher we soar in contemplation the more limited become our expressions of that which is purely intelligible ... when plunged into Darkness which is above the intellect, we pass not merely into brevity of speech, but even into absolute silence of thoughts as well as words.<sup>5</sup>

If this seems like a rather tough assignment to begin with, we might take heed from another well-known mystic, Saint Teresa of Avila. This spiritual companion of Saint John of the Cross had no formal learning and struggled to express her thoughts. This made her extremely humble and truthful, as the result of which she seemed to be able to put things in very simple terms,

easy to understand. In her journal *The Life*, she talks about the Four Degrees of Prayer, or Four Stages, and how a beginner might set out to make a garden for the Lord's pleasure on unfruitful, weedy soil.<sup>6</sup>

When starting one's practise the weeds are uprooted, allowing for good plants to take their place. Then with Divine help they grow, and He will often come to take His pleasure and enjoy the garden's virtues. But watering this garden can be very difficult if one has been used to a life of distraction. Saint Teresa advises that one should therefore meditate on the highest virtues until the intellect grows tired, and keep reminding oneself that one's efforts are not just for the self.<sup>7</sup>

After many years Saint Teresa drew a drop of water from the blessed well and thought of it as a mercy from Above.<sup>8</sup> During the Second Stage, with the aid of a device, she was able to draw more water with less labour and was then able to take some rest. That device was the prayer of quiet. During such times of surrender, Grace can reveal itself more clearly and the will is consciously taken captive. She explained that at this stage one must be careful not to pay too much attention to the will and imagination but stay in 'joy and quiet' in order not to lose the way, so that the intellect works very gently, and all the soul has to do is to be calm and quiet.<sup>9</sup>

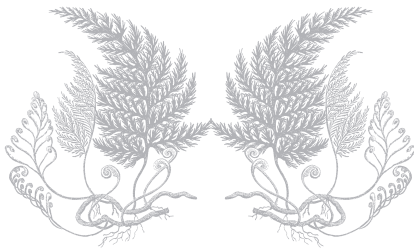
The Third Stage is like the flowing of water from a stream. The faculties of the soul are asleep, not entirely conscious, and Saint Teresa describes the pleasure, sweetness and delight of this state as incomparable: like nothing else but an almost complete death to all the things of the world and a complete fulfilment. She tries to paint us a picture, suggesting the soul is incapable of knowing what to do: whether to speak or be silent, whether to laugh or to weep. She likens it to a glorious bewilderment or heavenly madness, in which true wisdom and fulfilment are acquired.<sup>10</sup>

During the Fourth Stage, the gardener is required to perform less labour, and that labour

is accompanied by bliss and comfort.<sup>11</sup> Saint Teresa then speaks ecstatically of the joy she finds so difficult to communicate and attempts to describe what she terms ‘a union of all faculties’:

The soul cannot make it known how union takes place and what it is ... I cannot use the proper terms ... or explain the soul’s feelings when it is in this Divine Union. It is plain what union is; in union two separate things become one ... I am now speaking of that rain that comes down abundantly from above to soak and saturate the whole garden.<sup>12</sup>

It is impossible not to be touched by Teresa’s gentle words: a deep understanding of Oneness, Divine union or holistic consciousness, as expressed through the eyes of a mystic. Yet because the mystical experience is too varied to fit the one universal expectation it must therefore differ to accommodate each individual.



Let us therefore now move on to intimations from a faith which many would suggest has little to offer this discussion, as it is frequently considered neither a religion nor in possession of any mystical elements and therefore able to contribute little to the understanding of our chosen subject. I refer to Buddhism, a belief system that yet others believe to be the most mystical of all higher religions as expressed through the Mahāyāna. As an example of its mystical content, consider the concept of the Void (Sunyata). F.C. Happold writes:

While Buddhism does not recognize a “God” of the sort found in the theologies of religions such as Christianity and Islam, there is (frequently recognized) some non-personal Ultimate Reality, a Primal

Meaning, an Undivided Unity. It is found in the concept of the Void, which resembles the Godhead of Eckhart, and the Dharmakaya ... This Buddhist God-image can only be realized in that ultimate experience in which all images, all mental processes, all forms, fade away in a bare undifferentiated awareness.<sup>13</sup>

The Buddhist conception of the Void offers a vital insight into the nature of reality and the nature of consciousness, stripped of the usual human vanities and misconceptions; naked and open to truly holistic experiences.

Although the language of Buddhist mysticism may at times not be considered logical, it is no less so than the language of many of the Christian mystics; bringing me to a most important Buddhist scripture offering a dramatic expression of mysticism through the concept of Emptiness or Non-Duality. I refer to the Prajña Paramita Hridāya Sūtra, commonly known as the Mahāyāna Heart Sūtra, a message of intuitive wisdom from those who have ‘gone before’. Though it may be a difficult first read, along with the effort comes an understanding that at the heart of mystical realisation there is a seeing inward into the highest possible spiritual experience. Let me quote a few lines:

... form does not differ from voidness,  
And voidness does not differ from form.

Form is voidness and the void is form;  
The same is true for feeling, conception,  
Volition and consciousness.

... the characteristics of the voidness of all dharmas

Are non-arising, non-ceasing, non-defiled,  
Non-pure, non-increasing, non-decreasing.  
Therefore in the void there is no form,  
feeling,

Conception, volition or consciousness.

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind, no form,

Sound, smell or taste, touch, mind-object,  
or eye,

No ignorance and also no ending of ignorance,

Until we come to no old age and death and  
no Ending of old age and death ...

The Heart Sûtra is but one example of the more  
esoteric or mystical forms of Mahāyāna prayer  
or mantra which reaches out to the intuition.

Let us move on now to another mystic of great  
renown, Jami, a Sufi saint often described as  
the last great classic poet of Persia (1492). His  
vision was one of 'God in Everything', a holistic  
vision which he described as:

Absolute Beauty ... the Divine Majesty  
endued with the attributes of power and  
bounty ... Whoever is wise derives wisdom  
from the Divine wisdom. Whenever  
intelligence is found it is the fruit of the  
Divine Intelligence. In a word all are  
attributes of Deity which have descended  
from the zenith of the Universal and  
Absolute to the nadir of the particular and  
relative ... to the end that they direct thy  
course from the part towards the Whole, and  
from the relative deduce the Absolute, and  
not imagine the part to be distinct from the  
Whole; nor to be so engrossed with what is  
merely relative as to cut thyself off from the  
Absolute.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, The whole is always greater than the sum  
of its parts. As Jami states, it cannot therefore be  
distinct from it. And with that noble assessment  
of a higher state of consciousness, this great Sufi  
mystic reaches out to us all through his words  
to help us fine-tune the rhythm of our inner life  
to that of the Universal life so we may merge  
with the One, to see the world as one, as God  
sees it. A sentiment better expressed in one of  
his poems:

From all eternity the Beloved unveiled His  
beauty in the solitude of the Unseen;  
He held up the mirror to His own face, he

displayed His loveliness to Himself.

He was both the spectator and the spectacle:  
no eye but His had surveyed the Universe.

All was One, there was no Duality, no  
pretence of 'mine' or 'thine'.

The vast orb of Heaven, with its myriad  
incomings and outgoings, was concealed in  
a single point.

The Creation lay cradled in the sleep of non-  
existence, like a child ere it had breathed.

The eye of the Beloved, seeing what was  
not, regarded non-existence as existent.

Though He beheld His attributes and  
Qualities as a perfect whole in His own  
essence,

Yet He desired they should be displayed to  
Him in another mirror.

And that each of His eternal attributes  
should become manifest accordingly in a  
diverse form ...<sup>15</sup>

His words certainly beg our deep spiritual  
consideration.

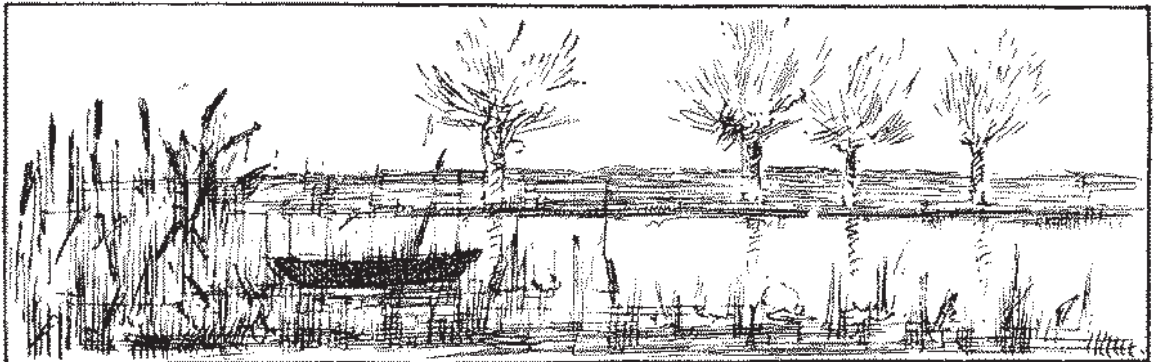
We have now taken our brief journey with  
mystics and philosophers to gain, with  
their guidance, a small understanding of an  
undivided, holistic consciousness — a state  
to which we must surely aspire. And yet  
unfortunately we may not be able to experience  
its fullness unless we remain unwavering in our  
alertness, our unbending desire and our open  
receptivity towards the advice that has come our  
way through the intimations of those who have  
gone before and travelled the path of mystical  
experience. We must fine-tune our spiritual  
discrimination, if we hope to travel the path  
of those mystics and philosophers who have  
lived within the realm of holistic consciousness  
and have left a message of discovery for us to  
consider and perhaps embrace.



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Noel Bertelle is the immediate Past President of the Brisbane Lodge of the Theosophical Society, Its Current Vice-President, and a Supporting Lecturer for the TS in Australia. A proficient meditation facilitator, Noel was for sometime co-director of the Queensland Zen Institute.



**Go to Nature in all singleness of heart and work with her laboriously and ungrudgingly, having no other thought but how best to penetrate her meaning, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing.**

**John Ruskin (1843)**

# Toowoomba: The Centre of Theosophy in Australia in the 1880s

Bernard Michel

Late one night in 2008, shortly after joining the Toowoomba Group of the Theosophical Society, I was taken down town by another member and shown an old building, nestled quietly between The Trades Hall and the Caledonian Society headquarters in the old part of town. Above the door in faded letters was written the words “Olcott Hall.”

This discovery started me on a journey to find out as much as I could about the history of this old building and to wonder about the kind of people who were attracted to Theosophy in Toowoomba in those long ago days. The following is the result of my research.

Theosophy, it seems, came to Australia very early on, after the formation of the Society in New York in 1875. This happened despite the obvious limitations on the ability to disseminate information in those days, without telephone or air travel. To me, this is a measure of the hunger that people had for new ideas and new ways of thinking about life’s big questions.

In 1879, a man named Gilbert Elliott became the first fellow of the Theosophical Society in Australia. The third fellow was a German botanist from Toowoomba named Carl Heinrich Hartmann. Hartmann came to Toowoomba in 1866, possibly from the goldfields in New South Wales. He established the Range Nursery or Hartmann’s Gardens as it became known. This consisted of approximately forty-three acres of land near the very top of the Great Divide on which Toowoomba sits. In these gardens he grew imported shrubs and other plants. He experimented with finding the most suitable fruit

trees for the local area and sold these to the local population. His nursery was so popular that on weekends a bus service was organized to take people from the centre of town to these gardens for picnics and other sight-seeing activities.

According to articles in the local newspaper, the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, Hartmann was a successful practitioner in homeopathy and had helped to cure many people on the goldfields of New South Wales and in Toowoomba. He was also a strict vegetarian.

However, it was mainly his explorations in New Guinea that achieved for him worldwide recognition. As a botanist, he set about collecting, cataloguing and naming the plants of that region and he sent examples to centres all over the world, including Paris, Berlin and London. He may also have been the first European to climb the Owen Stanley Ranges. At the Range Nursery in Toowoomba, he kept museum collections of insects, corals, shells and jars of reptiles as well as all kinds of artefacts from New Guinea such as weapons, fish nets and domestic utensils.

Despite these achievements, Hartmann was still able to find time to promote his love of Theosophy in south-east Queensland. During the 1880s, the Society was very informal. People joined as individuals or came together in small study groups. In these early days, there were twenty-seven names listed in Australia as fellows of the Theosophical Society. Twenty of these came from Queensland and had been recruited by Hartmann. In 1881 Hartmann became the first president of the first Theosophical Society in the southern hemisphere.

It remains uncertain as to whether Brisbane or Toowoomba was the actual location for this group and where its meetings were held. One suggestion is that Brisbane was chosen ahead of Toowoomba because, with Hartmann often away, there was no central meeting place in Toowoomba. Brisbane was better known as an urban centre and the meetings took place at a book shop in Queen Street which was run by the branch secretary, George Smith. The Toowoomba members who couldn't attend the meetings in Brisbane met instead at the Range Nursery when Hartmann was in town, and in each others' homes when he was away.

Carl Hartmann died in 1887 in Brisbane at the age of 54, after contracting a fever while in New Guinea. The Theosophical branch that he had formed was disbanded shortly after that and arguments about his will lead us now onto the next phase in the growth of the Society in Australia. Hartmann left behind a brother and three children and in his will they received nothing. All of his assets, worth five thousand pounds, a small fortune in those days, were to go to the Theosophical Society. His family tried very hard to overturn this decision but were unable to do so.

In 1891, Colonel Olcott made up his mind to come to Australia to sort out the Hartmann legacy. He arrived in Melbourne, visited Sydney briefly, went on to Brisbane and took the, then, six hour train trip from Brisbane to Toowoomba. His solution was to give most of the money back to the family, keeping only a small amount to pay for expenses. The family, understandably, were overjoyed and they promptly joined the Theosophical Society. With this problem now solved, Olcott then began a public speaking tour of Australia that was meant to last for some months but was cut short because of the death of Madame Blavatsky in London. His first talk was in Toowoomba and his topic was Theosophy and Buddhism. He started a new branch of the Society here and then left for Brisbane. There he established the Queensland Theosophical Society before moving on to Sydney to do the same. In Sydney his talk was introduced by

Edmund Barton, who went on to become the first Prime Minister of Australia. With this trip by Olcott, Theosophy became firmly established in this country and its success and growth was now assured.

Back in Toowoomba, the Society also continued to grow, so much so that in the early years of the twentieth century, Olcott Hall was built in Russell Street as the permanent meeting place for this growing branch. Today this building stands as a remarkable monument to the interest shown by the people of Toowoomba in the big questions of spiritual life and its meaning, over one hundred years ago. Currently occupied by a Christian group, the hall is two stories high, with a kitchen, tables and chairs on the ground floor and a wide stair case near the front door, leading up to the second floor, which was probably used as the main meeting room. This hall was in use until 1975 and in the 1950s, it was the centre of cultural activities in Toowoomba. At that time, the Society used only a part of the hall and the rest was rented by the Adult Education Board. On each day of the week different events were held here, including drama, music or the showing of documentary films. The rent money received was used to invite well known lecturers and speakers to Toowoomba, such as Geoffrey Hodson. In 1975, the hall was sold and another venue, a stately old Queenslander was purchased in Carlton Street which was then used for meetings until the 1990s. This also was eventually sold after a decline in membership. Our current group, started by Barry Bowden in 2003, meets in a council owned hall in Laurel Bank Park and the growth in membership shows that, even today, the yearning for a wisdom that lies beyond both science and religion is still strong.

As for Hartmann's gardens, the remnants stayed in the family through the years, until 1982, when the last remaining portion of about ten acres, and worth nearly half a million dollars at that time, was sold to the Toowoomba city council for one dollar, with the only proviso being that, as much as possible, it would be kept in its natural state. This promise has been

kept and along side a path that leads through the middle of this reserve, there are trees still growing that would have been planted by Carl Hartmann himself.

So now, twice each month, the Toowoomba group continues to meet, with growing attendances; and its members wistfully look forward to that day when we can return to Olcott Hall as our rightful home.

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**Bernard Michel is a new member of the Theosophical Society with a longstanding interest in Buddhism and the practice of meditation. A retired primary school teacher, his main interest at present is the wisdom of the Indian tradition. The present article is based on a talk Bernie gave at the Toowoomba Group using mainly the material listed in the references, which are incomplete.**

## The Supreme Spiritual Ideal

Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki

From a speech delivered at the World Congress of Faiths,  
Queens Hall, London 1936.

When I was first asked to talk about the Supreme Spiritual Ideal I did not exactly know what to answer. Firstly, I am just a simple-minded country-man from a far-away corner of the world suddenly thrust into the midst of this bustling city of London, and I am bewildered and my mind refuses to work in the same way that it does when I am in my own land. Secondly, how can a humble person like myself talk about such a grand thing as the Supreme Spiritual Ideal, and this before such a grand assembly of people, everyone of whom looks to me to be so wise and intelligent, knowing everything that is under the sun? I am ashamed that I have somehow been made to stand here. The first mistake was committed when I left Japan.

Let me tell you how I lived before I came to London. In my country we have straw-thatched houses. Japanese houses are mostly little. Well, still in the country you see many such straw houses, and mine is one of them. I get up in the morning with the chirping of the birds. I open windows which look right into the garden. Japanese windows are quite different from your English windows. English windows are somewhat like holes made in the walls, but Japanese windows are a combination of English windows and walls. So when Japanese windows are opened, one side of the house is entirely taken away. The house itself opens right into the garden. There is no division between the house and the garden. The garden is a house, a house is a garden; but here a house is quite separate. A house stands by itself, and so does its occupant. Its occupant is separated from his or her surroundings altogether. There is nature,

here I am; you are you, I am I; so there does not seem to be any connection between these two – nature, natural surroundings, and the occupants of the house.

So by opening Japanese windows, the house continues into the garden. And I can look at the trees quite easily, not as I look from the English window – that is a kind of peeping into the garden. I just see the trees growing from the ground. And when I look at those trees growing right from the ground, I seem to feel something mysterious which comes from the trees and from the mother earth herself. And I seem to be living with them, and they in me and with me. I do not know whether this communion could be called spiritual or not. I have no time to call it anything. I am satisfied. Then there is the little fish pond, a little lower down the garden. I hear the fish occasionally leaping out of the pond as though they were altogether too happy, and could not stay contented swimming in the pond. Are they? I do not know, but I somehow feel they are very very happy indeed. Just as we dance when we are filled with joy, so the fish are surely dancing. Do they also get something from the element in which they live and have their being? What is this something, after all, which seems to be so stirred in my own self, as I listen to the dancing of the fish in the pond?

Then there is the time for the lotuses to bloom. The pond is filled with them, and my imagination travels far out to the other end of the globe. When I talk like this, do you think I am dreaming in the middle of this big city? Perhaps I am. But my dream, I feel somehow, is not altogether an idle one. Could not there be in these things of which I

am dreaming something of eternal and universal value? These huge buildings I see about me are really grand work, grand human achievements, no doubt. I had a similar feeling when I visited China and was confronted with the Great Wall, of which you have perhaps heard. Are they, however, of eternal duration, as I like to say my dreams are? Let the earth shake a little. Here in this part of the earth, fortunately, it does not seem to shake so frequently as it does in Japan. But let it shake for once. Well, I wonder what would be the result/ I can see that result. I even refuse to think of it. But some time ago in an American magazine a certain writer wrote about the ruins of the city of New York when possible future explorers will try to locate where certain of the highest buildings in the world – they call them skyscrapers, don't they – which are now standing in New York would have been. But I will not go on any more with this kind of talk; I must stop dreaming, though it is very pleasant.



Here in London I come out of the hotel where I am staying. I see in the streets so many men and women walking – or rather, running hurriedly, for to my mind they don't seem to be walking; they seem to be really running. It may not be quite correct to say so, but it seems to me so. And then their expressions are more or less strained, their facial muscles are contracted intensely, they could be more easily relaxed. The roads are riddled with all kinds of vehicles. The shops are decorated with all kinds of things, most of which I don't seem to need in my little straw-thatched house. When I see all these things, I cannot help wondering where the so-called modern civilized people are ultimately going. What is their destiny? Are they in the pursuit of the Supreme Spiritual Ideal? Are

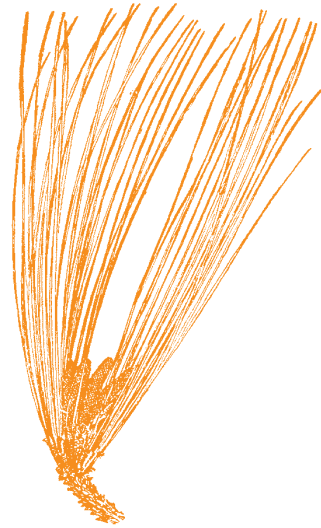
their intense expressions somehow symbolic of their willingness to look into the spirituality of things? Are they really going to spread this spirituality into the farthest end of the globe? I do not know. I cannot answer.

To my mind, the material is not to be despised, and the spiritual is not always to be exalted – I mean anything which goes in the name of spiritual; I do not mean anything that is really spiritual, but things that pride themselves on the name of spiritual. Such things are not always to be exalted. Those who talk about spirituality are sometimes men of violent nature, while amongst those who have amassed large fortunes and seem ever to be inclined towards things material we often find the highest and biggest souls, steeped in spirituality. But the main difficulty is how can I bring my straw-thatched house right into the midst of these solidly built-up London walls? And how can I construct my humble hut right in the midst of this Oxford Circus? How can I do that in the confusion of cars, buses, and all kinds of conveyances? How can I listen to the singing of the birds, and also to the leaping of the fish? How can one turn all the showings of the shop window displays into the freshness of the green leaves swayed by the morning breeze? How am I to find the naturalness, artlessness, utter self-abandonment of nature in the utmost artificiality of human works? This is the great problem set before us these days.

Let me tell you how this was worked out by an ancient master. His name was Yoshu, and the monastery in which he used to live was noted for its natural stone bridge. Monasteries are generally built in the mountains, and this place where Yoshu used to reside was noted for its stone bridge over the rapids. One day a monk came to the master and asked: 'This place is very well-known for its natural stone bridge, but as I come here I don't see any stone bridge. I just see a rotten piece of board, a plank. Where is your bridge, pray tell me, O master?' That question was answered in this way: 'You only see that miserable, rickety plank and don't see the stone bridge?' The disciple said: 'Where is the stone bridge then?' And this is the master's

answer: ‘Horses pass over it, donkeys pass over it, cats and dogs ... They all pass over it, even you O monk, who refuse to see it, are really walking over it quite nonchalantly; and above all, you are not thankful for it at all. You don’t say “I thank you” for crossing over the bridge. What good is this stone bridge then? Do we see it? Are we walking on it? The bridge does not cry out and say: “I am your supreme spiritual ideal”. The stone bridge lies flat and goes on silently from the beginningless past perhaps to the endless future.’

D.T. Suzuki (1980) *The Awakening of Zen*, Prajna Press, London, p.107-113.



**It was said that Dr Carl G. Jung’s favorite story went something like this:**

**The water of life, wishing to make itself known on the face of the earth, bubbled up in an artesian well and flowed without effort or limit. People came to drink of the magic water and were nourished by it, since it was so clean and pure and invigorating. But humankind was not content to leave things in the Edenic state. Gradually they began to fence the well, charge admission, claim ownership of the property around it, make elaborate laws as to who could come to the well, put locks on the gates. Soon the well was the property of the powerful and the elite. The water was angry and offended; it stopped flowing and began to bubble up in another place. The people who owned the property around the first well were so engrossed in their power systems and ownership that they did not notice that the water had vanished. They continued selling the nonexistent water, and few people noticed that the true power was gone. But some dissatisfied people searched with great courage and found the new artesian well. Soon that well was under the control of the property owners, and the same fate overtook it. The spring took itself to yet another place — and this has been going on throughout recorded history.**

Robert A. Johnson (1991) *Owning Your Own Shadow*, HarperCollins

# Is Denunciation a Duty?

H.P. Blavatsky

Reprinted from *Lucifer*, Vol. III, No. 16, December, 1888, pp. 265-273.

*Condemn no man in his absence; and when forced to reprove, do so to his face, but gently, and in words full of charity and compassion. For the human heart is like the Kusūli plant: it opens its cup to the sweet morning dew, and closes it before a heavy shower of rain.*

— Buddhist Precept

In the thirteenth number of *Lucifer* (Vol. III September, page 63), a paper on ‘The Meaning of a Pledge’ was published. Out of the seven articles which constitute the entire Pledge, the first, fourth, fifth, and especially the sixth, require great moral strength of character, an iron will added to much unselfishness, quick readiness for renunciation and even self-sacrifice, to carry out such a covenant. Yet scores of Theosophists have cheerfully signed this solemn ‘Promise’ to work for the good of Humanity forgetful of Self, without one word of protest — save on one point. Strange to say, it is rule the third which in almost every case makes the applicant hesitate and show the white feather ...

What is then this terrible pledge, to carry out which seems to be above the strength of the average mortal? Simply this:

I PLEDGE MYSELF NEVER TO LISTEN WITHOUT PROTEST TO ANY EVIL THING SPOKEN OF A BROTHER THEOSOPHIST, AND TO ABSTAIN FROM CONDEMNING OTHERS.

To practise this golden rule seems quite easy. To listen without protest to evil said of *any one* is an action which has been despised ever since the remotest days of Paganism: ‘To hear an open slander is a curse. But not to find an answer is a worse ...’ says Ovid. For one thing, perhaps, as pointedly remarked by Juvenal, because: ‘Slander, that worst of poisons, ever finds an easy entrance to ignoble minds ...’.

In fact, the duty of defending a fellow-man stung by a poisonous tongue during his absence, and to abstain, in general, from condemning others

is the very life and soul of practical theosophy, for such action is the handmaiden who conducts one into the narrow Path of the “higher life,” that life which leads to the goal we all crave to attain ... Nor is it difficult to avoid slander-mongers. Where there is no demand, supply will very soon cease ... To condemn is to glorify oneself over the man one condemns.

We may be told, perhaps, that we ourselves are the first to break the ethical law we are upholding. That our theosophical periodicals are full of “denunciations,” and *Lucifer* lowers his torch to throw light on every evil, to the best of his ability. We reply — this is quite another thing. We denounce indignantly systems and organisations, evils, social and religious — cant above all — but we abstain from denouncing persons ... Nor are we more partial to ourselves. Ready to lay down our life any day for THEOSOPHY — that great cause of the Universal Brotherhood for which we live and breathe — we yet denounce as openly and as virulently the distortion of the original lines upon which the Theosophical Society was primarily built, and the gradual loosening and undermining of the original system by the sophistry of many of its highest officers ... And we tremble at the thought that, unless many of our ways and customs, in the Theosophical Society at large are amended or done away with, *Lucifer* will one day have to expose many a blot on our own escutcheon — e.g., worship of Self, uncharitableness, and sacrificing to one’s personal vanity the welfare of other Theosophists — more “fiercely” than it has ever denounced the various shams and abuses of power in state Churches and Modern Society.



Nevertheless, there are theosophists, who forgetting the beam in their own eye, seriously believe it their duty to denounce every mote they perceive in the eye of their neighbour. Thus, one of our most estimable, hardworking, and noble-minded members writes, with regard to the said third clause:

The 'Pledge' binds the taker never to speak evil of anyone. But I believe that there are occasions when severe denunciation is a duty to truth. There are cases of treachery, falsehood, rascality in private life which should be denounced by those who are certain of them; and there are cases in public life of venality and debasement which good citizens are bound to lash unsparingly. Theosophic culture would not be a boon to the world if it enforced unmanliness weakness, flabbiness of moral texture...

We are sincerely sorry to find a most worthy brother holding such mistaken views ... If a theosophist happens to be a public officer, a judge or magistrate, a barrister or even a preacher, it is then, of course his duty to his country, his conscience and those who put their trust in him, to 'denounce severely' every case of 'treachery, falsehood and rascality' even in private life; but — *nota bene* — only if he is appealed to and called to exercise his legal authority, not otherwise. This is neither "speaking evil" nor "condemning," but truly working for humanity ...

But what has a "working" member of the Theosophical Society independent of any public function or office, and who is neither judge, public prosecutor nor preacher, to do with the misdeeds of his neighbours? If a member of the T.S. is found guilty of one of the above enumerated or some still worse crime, and if another member becomes possessed of irrefutable evidence to that effect, it may become his painful duty to bring the same under the notice of the Council of his Branch. Our Society has to be protected, as also its numerous members. This, again, would only be simple justice. A natural and truthful statement of facts cannot be regarded as "evil speaking" or as a

condemnation of one's brother.

Between this, however, and deliberate backbiting there is a wide chasm. Clause three concerns only those who being in no way responsible for their neighbour's actions or walk in life, will yet judge and condemn them on every opportunity. And in such case it becomes — "slander" and "evil speaking." This is how we understand the clause in question; nor do we believe that by enforcing it 'theosophic culture' enforces 'unmanliness, weakness or flabbiness of moral texture', but the reverse. True courage has naught to do, we trust, with denunciation; and there is little manliness in criticizing and condemning one's fellow men behind their backs, whether for wrongs done to others or injury to ourselves. Shall we regard the unparalleled virtues inculcated by Gautama the Buddha, or the Jesus of the Gospels as 'unmanliness'? ... Are the commands, 'Judge not that ye be not judged', and, 'Put up again thy sword . . . for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword' to be viewed as 'flabbiness of moral texture' — or as the voice of Karma?

But our correspondent is not alone in his way of thinking. Many are the men and women, good, charitable, self-sacrificing and trustworthy in every other respect, and who accept unhesitatingly every other clause of the "Pledge," who feel uneasy and almost tremble before this special article. But why? ... So deep has this moral cancer — the habit of speaking uncharitably of our neighbour and brother at every opportunity — eaten into the heart of all the classes of Society, from the lowest to the very highest, that it has led the best of its members to feel diffident of their tongues! They dare not trust themselves to abstain from condemning others — from mere force of habit. This is quite an ominous "sign of the times." Indeed, most of us, of whatever nationality, are born and brought up in a thick atmosphere of gossip, uncharitable criticism and wholesale condemnation ... Who shall dare deny that in our age, modern society in its general aspect has become a vast arena for such moral murders, performed between

two cups of five o'clock tea and amid merry jests and laughter? Society is now more than ever a kind of international shambles wherein, under the waving banners of drawing-room and church Christianity and the cultured tittle-tattle of the world, each becomes in turn as soon as his back is turned, the sacrificial victim ... And, oh! let us feel grateful that we no longer live in danger of being ushered into the arena of the Colosseum, to die there a comparatively quick death under the claws of the hungry wild beasts! It is the boast of Christianity that our ways and customs have been wonderfully softened under the beneficent shadow of the Cross. Yet we have but to step into a modern drawing-room to find a symbolical representation, true to life, of the same wild beasts feasting on, and gloating over, the mangled carcasses of their best friends. Look at those graceful and ferocious great cats, who with sweet smiles and an innocent eye sharpen their rose-coloured claws preparatory to playing at mouse and cat ... The mouse will be made to bleed for years before being permitted to bleed to death ...

Addison had not words of contempt sufficiently strong to rebuke this Society gossip of the worldly Cains of both sexes:

How frequently is the honesty and integrity of a man disposed of by a smile or a shrug? How many good and generous actions have been sunk into oblivion by a distrustful look, or stamped with the imputation of proceeding from bad motives, by a mysterious and seasonable whisper. Look. . . . how large a portion of chastity is sent out of the world by distant hints — nodded away, and cruelly winked into suspicion by the envy of those who are past all temptation of it themselves. How often does the reputation of a helpless creature bleed by a report — which the party who is at the pains to propagate it beholds with much pity and fellow-feeling — that she is heartily sorry for it — hopes in God it is not true!

Such are the results of slander, and from the standpoint of Karma, many such cases amount to more than murder in hot blood. Therefore,

those who want to lead the “higher life” among the “working Fellows” of the Theosophical Society, must bind themselves by this solemn pledge, or, remain droning members. It is not to the latter that these pages are addressed, nor would they feel interested in that question, nor is it an advice offered to the F.'s T.S. at large. For the Pledge under discussion is taken only by those Fellows who begin to be referred in our circles of Lodges as the “working” members of the T.S. All others, that is to say those Fellows who prefer to remain ornamental, and belong to the “mutual admiration” groups; or those who, having joined out of mere curiosity, have, without severing their connection with the Society, quietly dropped off; or those, again, who have preserved only a skin-deep interest (if any), a lukewarm sympathy for the movement — and such constitute the majority — need burden themselves with no such pledge. Having been for years the “Greek Chorus” in the busy drama enacted, now known as the Theosophical Society, they prefer remaining as they are. The “chorus,” considering its numbers, has only, as in the past, to look on at what takes place in the action of the *dramatis personae* and it is only required to express occasionally its sentiments by repeating the closing gems from the monologues of the actors, or remain silent — at their option. “Philosophers of a day,” as Carlyle calls them, they neither desire, nor are they desired “to apply.” Therefore, even were these lines to meet their eye, they are respectfully begged to remember that what is said does not refer to either of the above enumerated classes of Fellows. Most of them have joined the Society as they would have bought a guinea book. Attracted by the novelty of the binding, they opened it; and, after glancing over contents and title, motto and dedication, they have put it away on a back shelf, and thought of it no more. They have a right to the volume, by virtue of their purchase, but would refer to it no more than they would to an antiquated piece of furniture relegated to the lumber-room, because the seat of it is not comfortable enough, or is out of proportion with their moral and intellectual size.

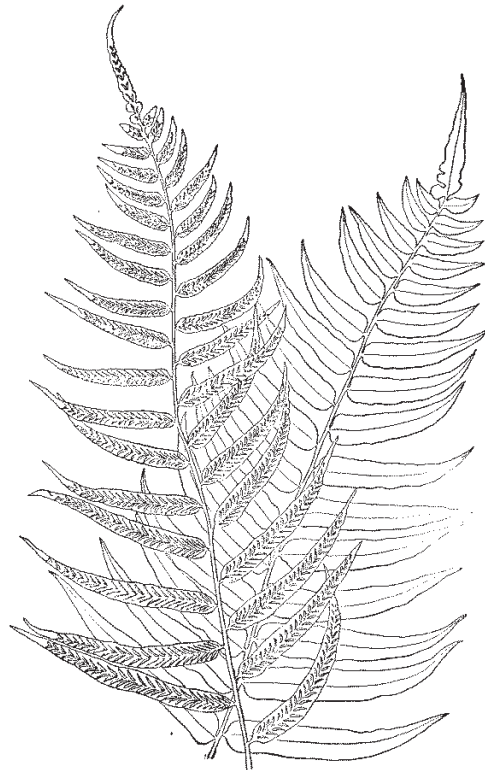
We must not close without once more addressing the former [the working member]. Who of these will undertake to maintain that clause three is not a fundamental principle of the code of ethics which ought to guide every theosophist aspiring to become one in reality? For such a large body of men and women, composed of the most heterogeneous nationalities, characters, creeds and ways of thinking, furnishing for this very reason such easy prettexts for disputes and strife, ought not this clause to become part and parcel of the obligation of each member — working or ornamental — who joins the Theosophical movement? We think so, and leave it to the future consideration of the representatives of the General Council, who meet at the next anniversary at Adyar. In a Society with pretensions to an exalted system of ethics — the essence of all previous ethical codes — which confesses openly its aspirations to emulate and put to shame by its practical example and ways of living the followers of every religion, such

a pledge constitutes the sine qua non of the success of that Society ... No Ethics as a science of mutual duties — whether social, religious or philosophical — from man to man, can be called complete or consistent unless such a rule is enforced. Not only this, but if we would not have our Society become *de facto* and *de jure* a gigantic sham parading under its banner of “Universal Brotherhood” — we ought to follow every time the breaking of this law of laws, by the expulsion of the slanderer. No honest man, still less a theosophist, can disregard these lines of Horace:

*He that shall rail against his absent friends,  
Or hears them scandalised, and not defends  
Tells tales, and brings his friend in  
disesteem;  
That man's a KNAVE, be sure beware of  
him.*

**The duty of a Theosophist to himself is to control and conquer, through the Higher Self, the lower self. To purify himself inwardly and morally; to fear no one, and nought, save the tribunal of his own conscience. Never to do a thing by halves; i.e., if he thinks it the right thing to do, let him do it openly and boldly, and if wrong, never touch it at all.**

**H.P. Blavatsky**



# Critical Thinking

Dara Tatray

Intelligent thinking seems to be prized by members of the Theosophical Society. The motto of the Society is There is No Religion Higher than Truth. Additionally, the Freedom of Thought Resolution highlights the freedom to think for oneself, afforded each member, with no doctrine or belief incumbent upon them. Being free to think, however, does not guarantee any degree of thoughtfulness on our part. If Madame Blavatsky (HPB) could write so pointedly on the subject of gossip and slander ('Is Denunciation a Duty?') – and if we are no strangers to the phenomenon today – then perhaps there is in fact a shortage of critical thinking in the Theosophical Society.

What is critical thinking; and how does it relate to the points raised in HPB's article? Simply put, the critical thinker does not take things at face value, but tries to verify what has been said:

- Is it true?
- Does it make sense?
- Have I seen any first-hand evidence of it?
- Why is this person telling me about it?
- What do they want me to do with it and what do they stand to gain?

If members of the Society sincerely asked themselves these questions first and foremost, when confronted with negative comments about any fellow members, we would be more than inching towards the ideal of brotherhood; and we would save a lot of people a lot of angst.

Assuming that you are interested in the truth or otherwise of what you hear, some things that

are said to you may give rise to a bad feeling, a warning sign. Something is not quite right. In the critical thinking literature this is known as a red flag: 'a clear sign to dig deeper to find out about the information and its source(s)'.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes it is not at all clear why the red flag has been raised. It may stem from past experience or knowledge that is now subconscious. Or it may be the result of what in the Theosophical Society is frequently described as intuition. We need to learn to trust those feelings and act on them. If necessary dig deeper. Of course there may always be the unacknowledged temptation not to question, but instead to run with the information at hand, especially if you stand to gain something as the result. It is not uncommon for people to hop on the bandwagon, whether the vehicle is sound or not. And few of us are totally up to speed regarding our motivations.

However, I am assuming that most members would not wish to act on false rumours and unverified assumptions. For those, there is the following sage advice:

Continually questioning how you are interpreting (comprehending) information is essential to critical thinking. Some of the land mines to critical thinking such as group think, intolerance or social conditioning can bias interpretations of information.

If you are aware of land mines to critical thinking you can adjust your thinking as necessary. This will help to ensure you are interpreting information accurately and fairly.

Asking a trusted colleague or friend about his or her interpretation of information is a good way to get a second opinion to help you to test the validity of your interpretation.

Question the implications of choosing certain information. The more critical the issue, the more important the information, and the more time should be invested in verifying it.<sup>2</sup>

Following this procedure will help to straighten out our thinking and open our minds. The more

critical the information, the more important it is to find out whether true or not. A person's career may be at stake, their income or their well-being may be adversely affected as the result of comments made and passed on, uncritically. It is also a case of listener beware. As HPB pointed out, you may be next on the hit list. Those who live by the sword die by the sword.

This raises a related issue of the absence of a culture of guardianship in the Theosophical Society. We have instead tried to operate on a model that combines turning the other cheek with brushing things under the carpet: a mixture of nobility and cowardice. That is human nature I suppose. Equally, in a Society the first Object of which is brotherhood, there is, at times, precious little evidence of the members taking care of each other. Perhaps the TS should abandon its high-flying objectives and adopt the simpler attitude of the Three Musketeers: *All for one and one for all, together we stand divided we fall*. No doubt examples of care and concern will come to the mind of many readers, but the fact of the matter is that slander, backbiting and

manipulation go on in the Society, right from the top all the way to the Lodge level.

As to turning the other cheek: that may be all very well for the cheek-turner, but it does not necessarily raise the standards of behavior of our fellow-members: it does not necessarily make the Theosophical Society a better place. Perhaps we ought instead to try a combination of critical thinking and guardianship. As HPB once said, it is mutual culture not self culture that we are about.

#### Reference:

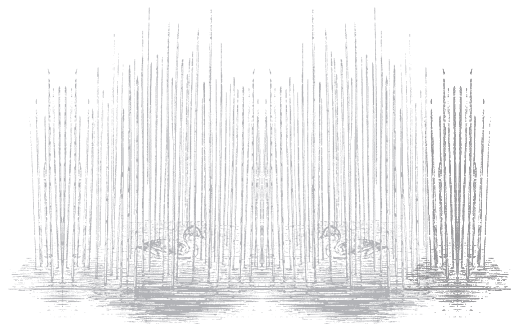
1.If you wish to know more about critical thinking, and about sound decision-making, then a good place to start is the following website, the source of much of the material in this short article: <http://www.problem-solving-techniques.com/Critical-Thinking-Questions.html>.

2.Ibid.



# Calendar of Events

## National TS Centres



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

**Friday 21 October to Monday 24 October (afternoon)**

Theme : *Heaven and Earth – Change and Continuity*  
*An Exploration of Taoist Thought, the I Ching and Tai Chi Chuan*

Presenters: Horacio Paz and Dara Tatray

Format: Talks, discussion, movement

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

**Friday 11 November (10.30am start) to Sunday 13 November (after afternoon tea)**

Theme : *Heaven and Earth – Change and Continuity*  
*An Exploration of Taoist Thought, the I Ching and Tai Chi Chuan*

Presenters: Horacio Paz and Dara Tatray

Format: Talks, discussion, movement

Horacio Paz is a proficient teacher of Tai Chi Chuan and a long-term practitioner. This retreat will provide the opportunity to explore Taoist thought and Tai Chi Chuan through talks, discussions and movement.

### **2012 National Convention—Brisbane**

**Saturday 21 January to Wednesday 25 January. Post-convention outing on Thursday 26th.**

*Theme: Current Thinking in Evidence of the Third Object*

Highlights: Inauguration of National President  
Lecture by Brisbane Lodge Member Peter Bruza  
fresh from the Science and Nonduality Conference in  
California, on *Subject-Object Duality in Quantum Theosophy in Buddhism*.

Full Convention Programme in the November *Theosophy in Australia*.

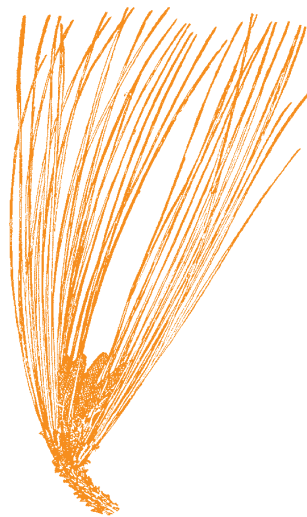
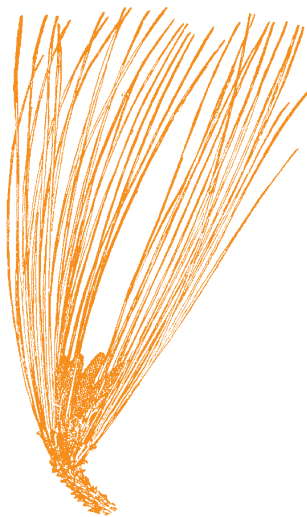
Registration forms for all events in this (September) issue.

## ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

The 2012 Convention Business Meeting of The Theosophical Society in Australia will take place at 8.00 pm on Saturday 21 January 2012 at St. John's College, University of Queensland, Brisbane. This notification is provided in accordance with Rules 12 and 13 of the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia.

### AGENDA

Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies  
Confirmation of Minutes of 2011 Convention Business Meeting  
National President's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2011  
National Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2011  
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended  
31 August 2011, and Auditor's Report thereon  
Budget for the Year Ending 31 August 2012  
Appointment of Auditor  
Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers  
Announcement of Ballot Results:  
- Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia/Northern Territory  
Vote on Notices of Motion  
Place and Time of Next Convention  
Resolutions of Goodwill  
Any Other Business





**The Theosophical Society in Australia  
2012 Annual Convention  
St. John's College, Brisbane**

**21-25 January**

*Current Thinking in Evidence of  
the Third Object*

**Public Lecture on the convention theme: Dr Dara Tatray**

**PROGRAMME:** The Convention programme will appear in the November 2011 issue of the magazine.

**EARLYBIRD REGISTRATION FEE:** \$20 per person for day and live-in registrants to be received **no later than 7 October 2011** by the Convention Secretary.  
(Registration Fee non-refundable)

**REGULAR REGISTRATION FEE:** \$40 per person for day and live-in registrants if received after 7 October 2011 by the Convention Secretary.  
(Registration Fee non-refundable)

**REGISTRATION FORMS:** Enclosed with this magazine.

**COST:** \$72 per night, including all meals and sessions.

**PAYMENT:** Full payment for Accommodation should be received at the National Headquarters by **18 November 2011** in order to secure a room at the College.

**SCHOLARSHIP:** Members of Hobart, Launceston, Canberra, Newcastle and Atherton Lodges may enquire at their local TS centre to receive the Edna Jenks Scholarship.

Applications should be received at the National Headquarters by **Friday 7 October 2011**.

**FURTHER ENQUIRIES:** Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary, TS National HQ.  
Tel: 02 9264 7056 (Mondays to Fridays 9.00 am - 3.30 pm noon)  
Email: [jennifer@austheos.org.au](mailto:jennifer@austheos.org.au)



## NEWS and NOTES

**Krotona School of Theosophy**

Short courses September to November inclusive.

As this is a fairly good time for Australians to visit the United States (dollar-wise) it may be worth mentioning some of the upcoming sessions of the Krotona School of Theosophy at Ojai, California.

Martin Liederman, *Divine Beings: Images of Hierarchy and Wholeness*.

Joy Mills, *The Voice of the Silence: Listening with the Heart*.

Nelda Semarel, *Helping the Dying, Helping Ourselves*.

Robert Ellwood and Maria Parisen, *The Spiritual Path: Where Mysticism and True Occultism Meet*.

Mark Lee, *Responding to Krishnamurti: What I Would Say to the Man in Seattle*.

Isaac Jauli Davila, *Myths as Keys to Transformation of the Human Soul*.

You may attend single sessions at US\$10 per session or the entire series for US\$225.

Accommodation is available at reasonable cost. For a full programme, or to register, please contact: [schoolinfo@krotonainstitute.org](mailto:schoolinfo@krotonainstitute.org).

**School of the Wisdom, Adyar**

1 to 11 November 2011

Theme: *Meditation and Its Practice*

Director: Professor V. V. Chalam

This session of the School will be run as a meditation retreat. Daily meditation practise will be an essential component, in addition to talks. Professor Chalam joined the TS in 1944 and has lectured in India, England and the United States. He is the author of two books: *Enlightened Living and Blissful Living*.

14 November to 2 December 2011

Theme: *The Path of the Spiritual Aspirant*

Director: Professor C. A. Shinde

Spiritual strength and courage are essential for the aspirant to move forward on the path to perfection. The path to spiritual perfection is the process of becoming what we are. This need not be an intellectual recognition only but a deep spiritual realisation. Spiritual perfection is possible only when there is inner order or harmony. In this session we shall explore this subject in depth, and attempt to discover the truth — the unchanging Self within.

Professor Shinde is a Retired Lecturer on Zoology from the Shivaji University at Kolhapur and from the Bharathi University in Pune, both in Maharashtra, India. He is the Librarian of the Adyar Library and Research Centre at Adyar and a National Lecturer for the Indian Section.

## 5 to 16 December 2011

Theme: *Astrology and the Wisdom Tradition*  
 Director: Mr Ricardo Lindemann

Among others, the following subjects will be considered during this session: What is Astrology?; The twelve Signs and their Correlation with the twelve Apostles in the *Last Supper*; The Law of Cycles and the Second Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*; The Rising Sign; The Astral Chart; Discrimination and Existential Planning; Astrology, Karma, and Free Will; Astrology, Science, and their Origin in the Mystery Schools. Mr Lindemann is a former National President of the TS in Brazil and one of its National Lecturers. He has been a student of Astrology for more than thirty five years and has written books on the subject besides having lectured on it widely.

## 9 January to 2 February 2012

Theme: Explorations in the Rig Veda  
 Director: Professor Ravi Ravindra

This four-week course will explore some of the most significant sections of the *Rig Veda*, the oldest text in any Indo-European language. Among the sections to be studied are those dealing with the origins of the cosmos; the natural order (*rta*); sacrifice (*yajña*); and the Gayatrī mantra. Professor Ravindra is retired Professor of Comparative Religion and Physics from Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada, and the author of many papers in Physics, Philosophy and Religion and of several books, including *Whispers from the Other Shore*, *The Yoga of the Christ and Science and the Sacred*.

Registration for the School and Accommodation at Adyar.

Any questions about the School of the Wisdom should be addressed to Mrs Kusum Satapathy [secy.hq@ts-adyar.org](mailto:secy.hq@ts-adyar.org).

Anyone wishing to stay at the international headquarters, whether registering for the School or not, should send an email to [pres@austheos.org.au](mailto:pres@austheos.org.au) with the proposed dates of their visit and a brief note as to the purpose of the visit. Permission to stay on the compound is given by the international President and must be obtained in advance.

## TOS Breaking News

A number of members have wondered what the Theosophical Order of Service is doing to help with the disastrous food shortage in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. The answer is, as much as possible, and judiciously. The TOS in Kenya will support five families for six months by providing food at a cost of 2,000 Kenyan shillings per month per family of two parents and three children. The food will be personally handed to the recipients, principally the mothers. The total sum for the full period of six months including all five families comes to US\$700. TOS committees in the following countries have kindly offered to match the five families taken on by the TOS in Kenya: Australia, England, France, Italy and New Zealand. Funds have thus been found for thirty families. There are fifty families on the list. If you wish to help contact your TOS branch. Every penny will go to the beneficiaries, except for the bank fees associated at each end with the sending of the money.

## The Truth According to Puppetji

In case any of this is getting too heavy for the reader it may be well to pass on a message from Guru Puppetji c/o <http://puppetji.com/ohm/>: ‘Do not listen to what I am saying because I have no idea what I’m talking about’.

Puppetji runs a virtual retreat centre, your ‘ohm away from ohm’, offering words of *wizdumb Socksangs*, and other tools to help you Enlighten-up!



