

Theosophy IN AUSTRALIA

ISSN No. 1038-1139

September 2020

volume 84 number 3



INSIDE Has Theosophy Become a Creed?
The Message for 'Me'
Fundamentalism: The Great Impediment
New Book on Theosophy and Science

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Subscriptions: non-members \$25 p.a. within Australia, \$30 p.a. overseas

We invite articles or other items with a preferred maximum of 2,300 words

email: pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au

Cover photo: Shutterstock. Pink Lotus, Jiffy Avril

Other photos in this issue by: Dr T. Alaganantham, Dr Helen Lambert, Linda Oliveira, Pedro Oliveira

Photos also sourced from Unsplash and Art Explosion 600,000 with the authority of Nova Development Corporation, USA.

Printer: Kwik Kopy, 320 Pitt St, Sydney. Recycled paper.

The Society is not responsible for any statement in this magazine unless made in an official notice.

Published quarterly by: The Theosophical Society in Australia.





September 2020

Volume 84 no. 3

The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers from all walks of life, belonging to any religion or to none and who are in sympathy with its Objects. It was formed to assist in showing to people that Theosophy exists, and 'to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities'. Wisdom is known by a mind that is completely open. Therefore freedom of thought and open enquiry are given special emphasis in the Society. **Theosophy** essentially refers to 'Divine Wisdom', Sacred Knowledge, which is a transcendent state of consciousness. In a secondary sense, Theosophy is an ancient yet distinct stream of enquiry, exploring and interpreting the truths of existence in terms suited to particular ages, e.g. in the teachings of ancient India, ancient China, Platonism, Neoplatonism, and, since 1875, through the contribution of the TS. At the core of Theosophy is the principle of indivisible Unity underlying the diversity of forms.

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Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the Unity of all Life.

From the International President

Tim Boyd



The Teacher

I would like to give some consideration to a central idea which is, for many, also a central experience in the theosophical life. In the process of our spiritual unfoldment the Teacher plays an unparalleled role. He/she is that person we encounter during the course of our spiritual growth, who seems to have the ability to spur our understanding and hasten our development.

Everyone has had a relationship with someone who has served in the role of a Teacher. It is a common experience in the university, at school, in our home, or in our spiritual life, to encounter someone in whose presence we find difficult things becoming clear, and who, when they speak we find ourselves elevated. In those moments when we are in their presence we feel as though we understand.

On a number of occasions I have had the opportunity to be around His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When he speaks, whether it is to a small

group or an audience of ten or twenty thousand people, there is a presence that he generates in which the sense of the possibility of compassion, which is his universal message, seems to be something very real. I have known people who have attended a talk by His Holiness, then left their job and gone out to attempt great works of compassion, only to find that away from his presence, the profound understanding that they thought was theirs somehow slips away.

From time to time I used to be in the presence of quantum physicist and theosophist Amit Goswami. Quantum physics is a difficult field to grasp, even for quantum physicists themselves. But somehow I would find that when I was sitting around him, listening to him talk, his ideas all seemed so clear, only to walk away and wonder what it was I thought I had grasped at that moment. The process is very much like placing a bar of iron, a cold piece of metal, in front of a fire. Iron has the capacity to respond to heat, so the metal heats up

when it is in that presence. When it is removed, it cools once again.

So the advice we are given by the Great Teachers is that we need to repeatedly expose ourselves to elevated thought and emotion, so that we can become accustomed to vibrating at a higher frequency or responding regularly to an elevated energy. Later we can translate this into a presence to which we can then connect ourselves. They say things like: ‘Think on these things – What is it that is good? What is it that is true? What is the nature of beauty?’

For those of us who have been involved in athletics we are familiar with the process of training for building muscle. Because a demand is made upon it to perform at its highest levels, it responds by growing in size and strength.

The same advice is given with our mental and emotional natures. The process calls for utilising them at the highest levels to which we are presently capable. Initially the process may be demanding and uncomfortable, but they respond by drawing in more matter of a similar type that can vibrate at this heightened level, and by expelling the matter that is unable to vibrate in that way. So we become more and more pure, awake, aware.

In the theosophical teachings we are very much aware of a hierarchy of

Teachers. Most of us have some idea about the Mahatmas, or Masters of the Wisdom, and the hierarchy that exists among them. But They do not really function in this world. They are not the people that we walk, chat, and interact with in our normal way. What they tend to do, it seems, is that They work through their own close students, their ‘chelas’, through whom the Mahatma’s influence can be radiated. Sometimes we are in contact with those chelas, mostly unknowingly.

So we engage in a process of trying to become sensitive to the Mahatmas’ influence in the world and around us. We have become accustomed to some very dull sensations. The noises which surround us are the things that we hear most clearly. The sounds of the birds, the wind, the honking horns of cars and two-wheelers are what attract our attention. Yet always there are subtler sounds, but it takes a certain attunement for us to become aware of these.

The work, as always, is ours, but the guidance, clues, and hints along the way are full of power.

Extract from July 2020 issue of *The Theosophist*, where the full article can be found at ts-adyar.org.

Go to learn/books and magazines.

From the National President

Linda Oliveira



My detailed, final Annual Report will be published in the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*. In the meantime, this issue provides a timely opportunity to provide readers with a broad overview of our Section's activities during the last nine years or so, as individual Annual Reports necessarily deal with one year's activities at a time. The invaluable support provided by the National Headquarters staff will be mentioned in some detail in the next issue.

During the period concerned it has been a privilege to represent the Section and contribute to programmes at the annual International Conventions in India; three Indo-Pacific Conferences in Bali, Auckland and Manila; and the World Congress of the Society in Singapore in 2018. As well, there has been the opportunity to continue serving on the General Council, facilitate an International Rules Review resulting in some seventy amendments and updates; and help bring to fruition the Council's first official major resolution since 1949 – 'The Freedom and Responsibility

of Lodges and Branches' – whose aim is to further clarify the role of our Society in the world today and to provide a guide for Sections and the work of TS centres.

It has been possible to visit and speak at most TS centres around this vast country each year – with the clear exception of 2020, which has taken its own unchartered course due to Covid-19. It is very true that the plans we make, and what life has in store for us, do not necessarily coincide. Make plans for this year we did – but neither the regular national schedule of lecture tours, nor a first ever national tour and School of Theosophy with Elena Dovalsantos, USA, were to eventuate. TS centres all around the country, likewise, have had to modify their plans dramatically since March, with activities resuming gradually. It is as though the year as planned never really got off the ground; instead, it was replaced by a global Karmic test for the human race, requiring new ways of functioning within tighter limitations which have necessitated prioritising

the greater good above individual wants.

During the period under review, Theosophy House in Sydney was sold. This building had been occupied by Blavatsky Lodge and the National Headquarters since 1986. Its sale was followed by the purchase of a new home for the National Headquarters on the Sydney city fringe, and the purchase by Blavatsky Lodge of its new home in the suburb of St. Leonards. These moves were both sizeable undertakings; just as the establishment of the national Springbrook and Canyonleigh Centres have been major milestones, too, during the last couple of decades.

Education

Theosophy is not simply a set of teachings; it is ultimately an experience. Our many gatherings, both national and local, have been able to both touch and enrich the lives of many members and newcomers. Below are listed examples of some of the themes at our national events. These are included to serve as a reminder of the breadth and depth of various facets of Theosophy which have been explored over the past nine years.

Compared with attendance at meetings, it is a different and particularly rewarding experience to live in and participate at events such as those held within our tranquil bushland properties

in Queensland and New South Wales. Inspiring themes and dialogue have helped participants to go within and reflect deeply, while enjoying the company of likeminded people at retreats, seminars, schools and workshops. 2019 saw the Section's 27th School of Theosophy, the initial School having been instigated by Joy Mills, the then National President. Themes for the Schools since 2012 have been: Seeking Wisdom (based on the book of that title by N. Sri Ram); Exploring Buddhist Wisdom – Philosophy and Practice with presenter Rod Bucknell (retired Associate Professor of Comparative Religion and former Buddhist monk); *The Secret Doctrine*: Esoteric Insights and Spiritual Practice with specially pre-recorded classes by Dr Pablo Sender; *The Secret Gateway to Our Inner Self* with Ed Abdill, U.S.A.; *The Spiritual Path in Daily Life*: Exploring The Mahatma Letters with John Vorstermans, New Zealand; *The Yoga of Theosophy* with Pablo Sender, USA; *HPB's Esoteric Instructions* with Michael Gomes, USA; and *Seeking Out the Way* with Perry Coles, WA.

The themes of events held at Canyonleigh during this period have included: *Theosophy in the Light of Truth and Love*; *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*; *Save Nature!* But what is Nature and what are we, that we can

destroy it?; Gnosticism and Esoteric Christianity; One Life, One Law, One Element – letters from Adepts, a journey into The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett; The Flood and the Ark: Myth or Fact?; The Cosmic Process – wherein we consider our place in the world, in and outside of time; a Self-Transformation Seminar; Visions of the Eternal; Theosophy Raw and Unfiltered: the Vedas Past and Present; The Four Yugas: Cycles of Unfoldment and Learning; Some Glimpses into Western Esoteric Traditions; Pearls of the Orient; Towards Stress Free Living: Cultivating Stillness; and The Treasures of India.

In addition to Schools of Theosophy, Springbrook events organised by the National Society have included Soul Nourishment; Healing and Transformation: an Exploration through Dialogue and Practice; Vivekachudāmani of Sri Shankaracharya: A Theosophical Enquiry into Vedanta; Rumi's Mystical Poetry: All Life is One; Unfathomable Godhead: Exploring the Mysticism of Meister Eckhart; Science and the Ancient Wisdom; and The Science of Yoga.

Themes of several Tasmanian seminars jointly arranged by the National Headquarters and Launceston Lodge were Life and Death in the Light

of Theosophy; Search for the Inner Self; and The Challenges of Living in Today's World, featuring International President Tim Boyd.

National Conventions have continued as our main annual gathering, rotating between six states. While allowing for the diverse approaches which reflect our membership, they have also provided a special opportunity for members to exchange views, mingle together over leisurely meals and enjoy day outings together. Participants have not infrequently reported returning with renewed energy to their respective TS centres. Our National Convention themes have included Theosophical Insights and the Contemporary World featuring Dr Richard Silberstein and Dr Jenny McFarlane; Science, Society and Soul Wisdom featuring Dr Victor Gostin and Dr Olga Gostin; Theosophical Landscapes: History, Culture and the Arts with Professor Garry Trompf; Today's World Problems: Insights from the Wisdom Tradition with International President Tim Boyd; Eastern Spirituality, Psyche and the Human Journey with Dr Bruno Cayoun; The Quest for Truth, Science and the Spiritual Search featuring Dr Richard Silberstein; Divine Wisdom in Theory and Practice with Dr Julian Droogan, a former recipient of this Society's John Cooper Memorial Prize; and A Dialogue with the Universe:

Science, Wisdom and Creativity featuring Dr Richard Silberstein.

TS centres around the Section have had the benefit of receiving a number of experienced and inspiring international lecturers since 2013: Ed Abdill from the USA accompanied by his wife, Mary, on their third Australian tour; Vic Hao Chin Jr. from the Philippines; Dr Pablo Sender from the USA; Michael Gomes also from the USA; John Vorstermans from New Zealand; and International President, Tim Boyd. In addition, comprehensive annual schedules of National Lecturers from within our Section have made a meaningful contribution to the programmes of all TS centres, with the exception of 2020 for obvious reasons.

Among the National Society's many educational initiatives during the past nine years, much work by the Education Coordinator has gone into the preparation of three new study courses which have been used widely around the Section in addition to other courses already held at the National Headquarters. These are: Introduction to *The Key to Theosophy*, Introduction to the Study of *The Secret Doctrine* and Understanding the Psychic World. A mentoring studies programme ran for several years. Also, a resources package for Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups was initiated and

developed, providing a detailed inventory of printed and electronic material available from the National Headquarters for study.

Special acknowledgement must be made of the all-important programmes of Lodges, Branches and Groups around the Section which have provided valuable interfaces, year after year, with members of the public as well as TS members generally, through courses, discussions and talks. TS libraries and bookshops, too, have made important contributions to our Society's presence around Australia. The innumerable hours of voluntary service which have been devoted to these local activities by committed members has been particularly impressive.

Also, it would be remiss not to mention the Theosophy-Science Group. Although not a formal Group within the TS in Australia, members of this distinguished group have organised various gatherings at the Springbrook Centre and produced informative newsletters with current scientific information. And it can be noted that this year we have finalised the publication of an anthology of articles on Theosophy and Science in book form by Dr Hugh Murdoch, former Convenor of this Group, which is now available for purchase. (see p.104)

Outreach

The TS cannot, and does not, exist in isolation. Our national e-Bulletin was designed in 2013 and has proved an effective way of helping to advertise events and share information. Several issues have been distributed each year. The distribution list currently stands at 680. The Section's Facebook page commenced in 2014 with modest beginnings and at the time of writing six years later has 1,953 followers. The new national website went live in 2019 after many months of preparation, serving also as a shared platform for our TS centres, providing much educational and other material for interested browsers.

Our Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) was conceived in order to publicise the holdings of TS libraries throughout Australia electronically. This is a special service which is provided by the National Headquarters and has grown substantially since its inception. It can be viewed on the Section's website under Libraries, along with the Campbell Theosophical Research Library, the very valuable *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals* and much additional material. Members are encouraged to explore this area of the site.

In 2016 we completed the Section's first professionally produced pro-

motional video, 'About the Theosophical Society', which can be viewed on the website under the Audio and Video menu.

There have been several contacts of note with Australian media. These have included a community radio interview with me by a Melbourne radio station. A journalist and former diplomat, John Zubrzycki, wrote an article about the TS for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, generously permitting a review for factual accuracy prior to publication. This request stemmed from some over-sensationalised articles about our Society which have appeared in the Australian press in years past. Several of us were interviewed at the time. The journalist was especially interested in history and, in addition to information about the TS, also wrote about The Manor centre in Sydney, which is administered independently from the TS. The piece concerned appeared in *The Good Weekend* which had at the time an impressive circulation of about 850,000. This year has seen an interview on ABC Radio national featuring the Education Coordinator and historian, Professor Wayne Hudson, following an approach by Dr Meredith Lake, the presenter of 'Soul Search'. A reporter from Channel 7 was also given assistance with some research for a future programme focussing on the spiritual world.

Theosophy in Australia remained a tangible unifying factor, reaching all members in this Section. It continued to reflect our Society's diverse views, providing articles for reflection, reviews, information on TS events, administrative notices, and much more. Not only does it reach out to members, but complimentary copies are also sent to various public libraries, including the National Library of Australia. In March 2015 this magazine evolved into its present redesigned form, more compact in size and easily portable. Issues back as far as 2009 can be found on the website by members who are signed in at:

<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/magazines>

The TS in Australia also engages with three universities through the provision of annual prizes for research into the Perennial Philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions. These have been awarded to Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney (since 2000), the University of Queensland (since 2014) and the University of Western Australia (since 2018).

Some General Remarks

A few further general remarks are worth making. In 2013 I circularised a survey to all members. Responses were shared with the national bodies, as well as Lodges/Branches throughout

the Section for their information and consideration. Initiatives stemming from the survey included, among other things, the Mentoring Studies Programme for New Members. Also, and significantly, the various requests for more online content and activity have helped shape the National Society's movement towards a more active presence in the electronic world. Much time and energy has been put into this. Various TS centres also have Facebook pages, in addition to their website presence.

I reinstated and revised a previous orientation package, known now as the Orientation Toolkit, sent out to newly elected Lodge/Branch committee members to help serve as a guide to the TS and committee work. Also, a Code of Conduct has been incorporated into the Section's Rules which is a very useful point of reference for members. This embodies some of the values inherent in a Theosophical way of living: universal brotherhood and service, courtesy, consideration and cooperation.

Much is involved in the Section's administration from the National Headquarters which may not be so readily noticed. Our office is an efficient engine that helps keep the Section running smoothly in many ways. More on this in my Annual Report.

It is noteworthy too that the President of the Indo-Pacific Federation, which includes twelve member countries, is currently Australian member Gerard Brennan who was elected to this office in 2016 and re-elected in 2019. Gerard has already travelled quite extensively within this region, lecturing and holding meetings, and has expressed his keenness to foster connections between TS members in the various countries.

I hope that this broad overview of the last nine years or so has provided a useful insight into this Section's many activities. The further away we stand from anything, the more we see it in perspective. So, too, this particular timespan provides a wider standpoint than the regular Annual Reports.

Going back even further, when the many decades of our existence in

Australia since 1895 are taken into account, it is clear that some remarkable members of the TS in this country have helped create a substantial legacy which has impacted Australian life in different ways. A few examples are: concern for the environment, Theosophical influences on the art world, policies in corporate life which proscribe discrimination, and conflict resolution. Let us continue writing the pages of the history of this Section together, contributing where we can to a Society which has given so much to so many. As numerous members have observed over the years, giving something back to the TS is the only response after receiving so much from the abundant life and gifts of this Society. And one such gift is our precious platform of Freedom of Thought, which forms a clear connecting thread throughout the pages of this issue.

A Scientist's Perspective of Covid-19

'From a systemic perspective, the coronavirus must be seen as a biological response of Gaia, our living planet, to the ecological and social emergency humanity has brought upon itself.'

Fritjof Capra

Source: *Nature Public Health Emergency Collection*
National Institutes of Health, 23 June 2020.



Has Theosophy Become a Creed?

Pedro Oliveira



H.P. Blavatsky

At the end of her book *The Key to Theosophy*, published in 1889, Madame Blavatsky (HPB) issued a warning to the members of the Theosophical Society:

Every such attempt as the Theosophical Society has hitherto ended in failure, because, sooner or later, it has degenerated into a sect, set up hard-and-fast dogmas of its own, and so lost by imperceptible degrees that vitality which living truth alone can impart. You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgment is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of these influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught

to recognise it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.¹

Is it possible that for some students Theosophy has become a creed? It would be so easy, as part of the conditioning alluded to by HPB, to elect some author or authors as one's favourites. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines creed as 'a system of religious belief; a faith; a set of beliefs or aims which guide someone's actions.' How many make their choices of study in Theosophical literature according to the self-professed occult status of their favourite author or authors? Such circumstances could, eventually, become influential factors in Lodge or Branch programmes, thus creating the perception that the TS may

not be different from a sect: Theosophy as a set of ideas that require acceptance, not necessarily investigation.

In the well-known letter to Annie Besant in 1900, nine years after HPB had passed away, Mahatma KH stated:

The T.S. and its members are slowly manufacturing a creed. Says a Tibetan proverb credulity breeds credulity and ends in hypocrisy. How few are they who can know anything about us.²

The ‘creed’ mentioned by the Master was a tendency to worship the Masters as deities, which they refused, as well as to put on a pedestal both HPB and her teachings, as well as Annie Besant.

In his book *Old Diary Leaves*, in an entry for the year 1892, Col. Olcott strongly warned against this tendency, eight years *before* Annie Besant had received that historic letter:

It will have been seen from what is written in previous chapters how much my mind was exercised about the evident probability of a new sect springing up around the memory of H.P.B. and her literature. From week to week things seemed to be going from bad to worse: some of my most fanatical colleagues would go about with an air ‘of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit; as who should say, *I am Sir Oracle, and, when I open my lips, let no dog bark!*’ One would

have thought that HPB had laid upon their shoulders the burden of the whole Himalayan Mysteries; and when one ventured to challenge the reasonableness of something which they were quoting, they would answer with a sort of restraint of the breath: ‘But, you know, she said so’ – as if that closed the debate. Of course they meant no harm, and, perhaps, to a certain extent, were really expressing their awe of the departed teacher; but all the same it was a most pernicious tendency, and, if unchecked, was calculated to drag us into a sectarian pitfall.³

He also wrote:

But let no one suppose that this vicious tendency towards hero-worship has been rooted out from our natures, for a new idol is being fashioned in the form of that dear, unselfish, modest woman, Annie Besant. If the walls around our Society were less resistant, her blind admirers would be already digging out a niche in which to place the idol for worship. Needless to say, one has only to be familiar with Mrs. Besant’s speeches and writings to have overwhelming proofs that such an attitude towards her is most distasteful. Many years ago she deliberately sacrificed the world to work for her fellow-men, and from the first moment until now she has

begged her hearers to regard the thought, and not the speaker.⁴

Some years after that, Annie Besant, then President of the TS, issued a very clear statement about the question of opinion and belief within the TS:

Before dealing with investigations, let me make clear my own position with regard to all questions of opinion and belief within the Theosophical Society itself. Some of our members echo the statements of one seer or another, and seem to consider that such a statement ought to preclude further discussion. But no one in the TS has any authority to lay down what people shall think, or not think, on any subject. We are not in the position of an orthodox Church, which has certain definite articles of faith, which imposes certain definite creeds in which all faithful members are bound to believe. The only point which we must accept is Universal Brotherhood, and even as to that we may differ in our definition of it. Outside that, we are at perfect liberty to form our own opinions on every subject; and the reason of that policy is clear and an exceedingly good one. No intellectual opinion is worth the holding unless it is obtained by the individual effort of the person who holds that opinion. It is far healthier to exercise our intelligence, even if we come to a wrong conclusion

and form an inaccurate opinion, than simply, like parrots, to echo what other people say, and so put out of all possibility intellectual development.⁵

Her colleague, C.W. Leadbeater, also presented his views on belief in regard to Theosophical teachings:



A Young Annie Besant

Theosophy has a considerable literature, but it has no inspired Scriptures. ... Our attitude to Theosophy should, I think, be thus characterised: (1) We must not exchange the blind belief in the authority of the Church for an equally blind faith in personal Theosophical teachers. (2) We must preserve an open mind and an intelligently receptive attitude. (3) We should accept as working hypotheses the truths which are given to us, and should set to work to prove them for ourselves.⁶

Yet, in spite of these clear and unequivocal warnings one can see that

for a number of students of Theosophy the approach to it is creed-like: an almost religious acceptance of the teachings as ideas that come from a Divine source, not as principles to be investigated rationally in order to find the truth about them for oneself. This seems to have happened also to some students of Madame Blavatsky's writings. Her occult status as a initiated disciple of the Masters may have obfuscated for them one of her own most important advices:

On the other hand, the bigoted sectarian, fenced in, as he is, with a creed upon every paling of which is written the warning 'No Thoroughfare,' can neither come out of his enclosure to join the Theosophical Society, nor, if he could, has it room for one whose very religion forbids examination. The very root idea of the Society is free and fearless investigation.⁷

When the nature of Theosophy is seen as being limited to what is contained in books, the tendency to transform it into an ideology will always be there. And an ideology is a walled, closed mindset, which is infused with personal faith. It is not difficult to see how it can easily lead to division and isolation. In his book *Modern Theosophy*, Hugh Shearman makes the following statement:

In practice, theosophy, or god-wisdom, has come to have two principal meanings. First, there is its primary meaning, signifying the ultimate wisdom, the ultimate truth which life holds; and then there is a secondary meaning, signifying the body of teachings about man and the universe which has been given forth, in particular, by members of the Theosophical Society, something which is knowledge rather than wisdom.⁸

In referring to Theosophy's essential nature, Madame Blavatsky makes a similar but essential distinction:

If Eastern comparisons may be permitted, Theosophy is the shoreless ocean of universal truth, love, and wisdom, reflecting its radiance on the earth, while the Theosophical Society is only a visible bubble on that reflection. Theosophy is divine nature, visible and invisible, and its Society human nature trying to ascend to its divine parent. Theosophy, finally, is the fixed eternal sun, and its Society the evanescent comet trying to settle in an orbit to become a planet, ever revolving within the attraction of the sun of truth. It was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by

studying and assimilating its eternal verities.⁹

In *The Secret Doctrine*, HPB hints at the fact that the source of Theosophy lies in a deep investigation into ‘the soul of things’, and that the truths arrived at by those ancient seers are not based on authority but on experience:

The flashing gaze of those seers has penetrated into the very kernel of matter, and recorded the soul of things there, where an ordinary profane, however learned, would have perceived but the external work of form. But modern science believes not in the ‘soul of things,’ and hence will reject the whole system of ancient cosmogony. It is useless to say that the system in question is no fancy of one or several isolated individuals. That it is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity.¹⁰

In its teaching aspect Theosophy can be seen as a description of universal processes unfolding in the human being, in Nature and in the cosmos. Every description involves a point of view. It also involves a

language in which such views can be communicated. This was emphasised by one of the Mahatmas when they were trying to convey occult teachings to A. P. Sinnett. In one of their letters they said: ‘Our terms are untranslatable.’¹¹ But they also had this to say to Mr Sinnett:

You share with all beginners the tendency to draw too absolutely strong inferences from partly caught hints, and to dogmatize thereupon as though the last word had been spoken. You will correct this in due time. You may misunderstand us, are more than likely to do so, for our language must always be more or less that of parable and suggestion, when treading upon forbidden ground; we have our own peculiar modes of expression and what lies behind the fence of words is even more important than what you read; but still Try.¹²



In the *Mūlamadhyamakakarika*, Nagarjuna points to the ending of all views

as *sunyata*, emptiness, the ultimate reality:

The victorious ones have said
That emptiness is the relinquishing
of all views.
For whomever emptiness is a view,
That one has accomplished nothing.¹³

I prostrate to Gautama
Who through compassion
Taught the true doctrine,
Which leads to the relinquishing of
all views.¹⁴

In the so-called Bowen Notes, consisting of a record of studies with HPB in London before her passing in 1891, a similar idea was advanced:

Come to the S.D. (she says) without any hope of getting the final Truth of existence from it, or with any idea other than seeing how far it may lead *towards* the Truth. See in study a means of exercising and developing the mind never touched by other studies.¹⁵

This mode of thinking (she says) is what the Indians call *Jnana Yoga*. As one progresses in *Jnana Yoga* one finds conceptions arising which, though one is conscious of them, one cannot express nor yet formulate into any sort of mental picture. As time goes on these conceptions will form into mental pictures. This is a time to be on guard and refuse to be deluded with the idea that the new-found and

wonderful picture must represent reality. It does not. As one works on, one finds the once admired picture growing dull and unsatisfying and finally fading out or being thrown away. This is another danger point, because for the moment one is left in a void without any conception to support one, and one may be tempted to revive the cast-off picture for want of a better [one] to cling to. The true student will, however, work on unconcerned, and presently further formless gleams come, which again in time give rise to a larger and more beautiful picture than the last. But the learner will now know that no picture will ever represent the truth. This last splendid picture will grow dull and fade like the others. And so the process goes on, until at last the mind and its pictures are transcended and the learner enters and dwells in the world of No-Form, but of which all forms are narrowed reflections.¹⁶

Divine Wisdom, Theosophy, in its own nature is beyond all views. When the study of Theosophy is successful it leads to an unveiled, wordless perception of the essential unity of all life. Such perception is never divisive, exclusivist, or condemnatory of others, for it has become one with the Wisdom that is the life of all things:

For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted

mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets.¹⁷

‘She maketh all things new.’ Divine Wisdom, when found, is a complete renewal of consciousness, a newness of mind and heart, amounting to being born into a world of undivided unity, harmony and compassion. The TS was formed to help its members to ascend towards it and its future usefulness may depend on their ability to do so.

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Pedro Oliveira is the Education Coordinator of the Australian Section.

The Message for 'Me'

Hugh Shearman

Most members of the several movements to which her work gave rise will agree that Madame Blavatsky was a 'messenger'; but what was the nature of the message? Many may think that this is fairly obvious. They imagine that they can read her writings and pass on to others what she said.

Those who proceed in this way tend to expound a system of thought which they represent as hers. But there are others who see a certain difficulty in this. Colonel Olcott remarked on the curious fact that, in much that she wrote, it did not seem to matter if one altered the order of the paragraphs, a fact brought home to him while he was assisting her to organise and complete the text of *Isis Unveiled*. Much that she wrote was not, in fact, addressed to the tidy mind that approaches things systematically and wants to have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Bishop Leadbeater, who had a strong temperamental preference for orderly and systematic exposition, wrote:

her mind, so far as we could understand it, for it was a very gigantic mind, worked somewhat differently from ours. If one may say it with respect and reverence, it was of an Atlantean type in that it massed together vast accumulations of facts but did not make much effort at arranging them.

'Swami T. Subba Rao', he went on, 'said that *The Secret Doctrine* was a heap of precious stones. There is no question that they are precious stones, but one must classify them for oneself; [HPB] did not attempt to do that for us, for she did not feel the need of it at all'.

But must we really classify them? And do those who approach Madame Blavatsky's writings in that spirit – trying to extract systems and put things in what they think is the right order – not miss something fundamental? She herself, in what she wrote, sometimes dropped passing comments which show that she understood herself to be



Photo: Geordanna Cordero on unsplash

dealing with something into which we may have insights but which cannot be made the subject of explanation or argument or orderly presentation.

Early in *The Secret Doctrine* she refers to various Indian systems of philosophy and then speaks of ‘the Esoteric Philosophy, which reconciles all these systems and the nearest exponent of which is the Vedanta as expounded by the Advaita Vedantists’.

Advaitism might be translated as non two-ism. It does not just say that all is One. It simply asserts that there is no other, no antithesis. It denies the dualism which has been the basis of all our scientific and systematic thinking.

It is customary to call our usual way of thinking ‘Cartesian dualism’, after the French philosopher Descartes, who said, ‘I think therefore I am’, and took as the basis for his world view a duality of self and non-self, knower and known, subject and object.

Erosion of Dualism

In our own times this dualistic view, though still firmly enthroned, is beginning to be eroded a little. The recognition of [a] scientific situation in which the observer must himself be seen as part of the experiment or an inseparable part of what he is observing, and certain developments in physics, have begun to demand

a new understanding of the nature of consciousness. But the assertion that two-ness is an illusion which experience dissipates is very ancient. A classical statement of this occurs in the *Yoga Sutrās of Patanjali* (I.41) where we are told that one who is drawing closer to reality finds that the knower, the knowledge and the known are one.

It is natural that anybody who approaches *The Secret Doctrine* or any other work of Madame Blavatsky should begin by asking himself, ‘What is there in this for me?’ From that basis he will probably try to arrange the dualism which Blavatsky’s message, sometimes directly but mostly by implication, repeatedly denies. The message for the ‘me’ is that its separate selfhood is an illusion and that the supposed antithesis of ‘me’ and ‘not me’ has no reality.

Viewed superficially, there is much in Madame Blavatsky’s writings, and in the Theosophical literature that followed them, which is rather flattering to ‘me’. Reading it, we may say, ‘I am something much more splendid than I seem to be. In my true nature I am a Monad, a spark of ultimate Divinity’. But this is the very view which is brushed aside in *The Secret Doctrine* as ‘ignorance’. We are told there (I, p.230) that ‘the Spiritual Monad is One, Universal, Boundless

and Impartite' and that its 'Rays form what we, in our ignorance, call the "Individual Monads" of men'. So the 'me' cannot really 'have' a Monad. It may not appropriate to itself the splendour of That which is boundless or grasp to itself a fragment of the impartite.

The source of our illusion is indicated in the much quoted sentence from *The Voice of the Silence* which tells us that 'the mind is the great slayer of the Real'. The mind slays the Real by being fixated to the defence and perpetuation of a 'me'. It classifies all experience according to whether it is pro 'me' or anti 'me', and it focuses consciousness through the distorting lens of dualism which breaks everything up into self and not-self.

In a sense the 'me' is real enough. It certainly exists, as a complex of memories and reactions. It can look after itself, cross the road more or less safely, give lectures at the Theosophical Society and so many other quite clever things. But it is not the Self. It is something temporarily brought into being in the service of the Self.

The fixated mind which slays the Real is freed, not by accumulations in memory, but by a simplification of its own contents and by being finally emptied of those contents, including the habitual image of 'me'.

Gratification of the 'me'

The first impulse of a 'me' when confronted by the literature of modern theosophy, is to start collecting from it information gratifying to itself. It may, for example, study the notion of reincarnation as a way of extending the 'me' into the past and future, pursuing love affairs in ancient Egypt and hopes of occult promotion in future lives. Madame Blavatsky herself did not show any great interest in reincarnation except as an illustration of a still more fundamental periodicity in nature. Yet study of a subject is not in vain if it leads to small concepts being absorbed into larger ones and the world image in the mind becoming more comprehensive, unified and simple.

The liberated person as portrayed in *The Voice of the Silence* is certainly not mindless. There we are told that 'his mind, like a becalmed and boundless ocean, spreadeth out in shoreless space'. That is not, of course, the fixated mind of any segregated 'me'. And the true Theosophist, as understood by Madame Blavatsky, had to become, not the anxious and the competitive keeper of a separated fragment of life but 'a mere beneficent force in Nature'. There, alone, is the fulfilment and the splendour.

But here one pauses, for each of us is probably still thinking largely in terms

of ‘me’. Indeed, Madame Blavatsky herself in daily life often expressed herself very formidably as a ‘me’. How, then, can we respond to this message that she brought? Does it ask too much? How are we to read what she wrote?

There are those who are naturally learned, who can carry – and like to carry – large and complex concepts in the memory. But there are many who cannot study in that way and who will gain little but a kind of indigestion if they try to force themselves to read and follow *The Secret Doctrine* as a feat of intellectual continuity.

There are, indeed, certain passages that stand out as significant, certain ‘set pieces’. Such as the three principles set out in the Proem. But even these may not be the passages that will speak most directly and intimately to everybody. For many, the best approach is to start reading and go on until they come to something that is strange, challenging and poetic, something that is momentarily seen as being at odds with values, assumptions and thought habits they had hitherto taken for granted. At that point, the reader may shut the book and carry away that fresh insight. Later, he may come back to the book for more. Each student has his own needs.

The message that Madame Blavatsky brought is not addressed to the argumentative mind. It seeks to speak to the heart, to the intuition, to that in us which can awaken to a wholeness of things that lies beyond what our mental process can infer. It is not something with a beginning or an end, nor is it a cumulative process or a goal set up for achievement by a ‘me’. It is an invitation to us to awaken from the dream that we have hitherto imagined to be life.

Atman, the ‘Higher Self’, is neither your spirit nor mine, but like sunshine shines on all. It is the universally diffused ‘Divine Principle’ and is inseparable from its one and absolute Meta-Spirit, as the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight.

Extract of article from *The Theosophist*, 1981, December, p.100.



Dr Hugh Shearman was at one time Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Northern Ireland. He was well-known as a lecturer as well as the author of books such as *The Passionate Necessity*, *The Purpose of Tragedy* and *Modern Theosophy*.

Fundamentalism: The Great Impediment to Science, Wisdom and Creativity

Pamela Peterson



Fundamentalism is a concept that has intrigued me since childhood, when I could never understand why I was expected to change my way of doing things to fit into the so-called norm. Of course, at that stage of my life I was not acquainted with the term ‘fundamentalism’. As I ponder the concept yet again, the following questions spring to mind:

What is fundamentalism?

Does it exist beyond the boundaries of religion?

What dangers are inherent in fundamentalism?

Are we biologically predisposed to be fundamentalist in our views?

Is there an antidote to the problem?

Not surprisingly, the word ‘fundamentalism’ has strong religious connotations, having been originally coined by a group within the Protestant faiths

which arose in America in the late nineteenth century. They rejected commonality with theologically related religious traditions, such as the grouping of Christianity, Judaism and Islam into one ‘Abrahamic’ family, insisting instead on the ‘five fundamentals of Christianity’.

The Oxford Dictionary defines fundamentalism as: ‘Strict adherence to traditional orthodox tenets held to be fundamental to the Christian faith: opposed to liberalism and modernism’. *The Oxford Complete Wordfinder* adds: ‘Strict maintenance of ancient or fundamental doctrines of any religion’.

However, over the centuries fundamentalism has infiltrated a broad spectrum of attitudes and behaviours, spanning every aspect of our lives. Hence my preferred personal definition:

Fundamentalism is the unwavering attachment to a set of petrified beliefs, be they religious, secular, scientific, medical, even sceptical, which threatens world peace, advances in science, the attaining of wisdom, the flourishing of creativity and the acknowledgement of imagination as the source of all invention.

Fundamentalism is a mindset that has impeded progress in many areas and been responsible throughout history for incredible suffering and bloodshed which we see escalating in current society. Fundamentalism is not limited to theologies. Any system of thought can become fundamentalist. Some of the most horrendous genocides and social persecutions have been carried out by fundamentalist politicians and atheists. The human mind will make a religion of communism or free-market capitalism.

In the case of religion, it is characterised by a markedly strict literalism applied to specific scriptures, dogmas or ideologies, and a strong sense of the importance of maintaining ingroup and outgroup distinctions. Any questioning of established fundamentals and their accepted interpretation handed down by those in authority is rejected. None of the recognised religions, western or eastern, is exempt, and atheistic fundamentalism is alive and well.

Sadly, it would seem that the human mind is so constructed that immediately the notion of anything supernatural is eliminated, it simply makes a 'religion' of something else as a replacement.

Fundamentalism Abounds Throughout Society

After the great cultural Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, rational thought was supposed to replace religion and mark the end of fundamentalism. Sadly, it would seem that the human mind is so constructed that immediately the notion of anything supernatural is eliminated, it simply makes a 'religion' of something else as a replacement. Many fundamentalisms are secular and materialistic. It is not the content so much as the absolutist style of conviction and expression that betrays their fundamentalist nature. Scientific fundamentalism, medical fundamentalism, sceptical fundamentalism, and New Age fundamentalism, are but a few of those which abound in society.

Scientific fundamentalism is known as scientism. Pure science makes no pretence of being a belief system or asking

for any kind of faith, other than in the empirical process itself. On the other hand, the 'religious' version of science, called scientism, claims to have an explanation of everything. Whereas the supreme realities in religion are spiritual, those in scientism are material. Scientism mocks anything that has not been validated by its own set of rituals or experiments or approved by its prelates and publications. Anything not directly observable is dismissed. Ideas are held with strong emotional conviction and offered as the only way to see the universe. Examples of this mindset have abounded throughout the centuries.

Specimens of meteorites collected by museums throughout the world prior to the late eighteenth century are virtually non-existent, having been thrown out because scientists of the great Enlightenment, even Lavoisier, derided the idea of stones falling out of the sky. This was disproved in 1790 when a meteorite shower dropped more than 2,000 rocks onto a village in France.

Michael Faraday, the 'Father of Electricity', was denounced as a charlatan. The Wright brothers struggled to get the public to accept that they could fly craft heavier than air. The same brick wall encountered by Edison's electric light, Joseph Niepce's first photograph, and Marconi's wireless are other ex-

amples of scientific fundamentalist dogma at work.

In medicine there has been much fundamentalism along the long path from the prehistoric belief that illness is caused by evil spirits or magical objects implanted by sorcerers, to be sucked out by shamans, to our current medical practices which themselves do not escape the clutches of dogma.

In the sixteenth century it was only with enormous difficulty that Paracelsus prevailed against the establishment to end the old and dangerous practice of bleeding patients to relieve toxic cardinal humours, as well as the long-standing Christian view of illness as a punishment for sin. His claim of remedies to be found in nature was the basis of modern medicine's use of synthesised chemicals as medicines.

The infectious theory of disease being caused by a kind of seed transmitted between people was rejected by the orthodoxy for the next few centuries until Louis Pasteur, whose microbe theory was laughed at until he gained recognition through his work on vaccines. The former theory had been proposed by Pasteur's contemporary, Giralomo Frascatoro.

The Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis, the 'Saviour of Mothers',

derided by the medical orthodoxy for his insistence on the basic washing of hands to prevent infection, was later honoured by Lister, the father of modern antisepsis. Then the germ theory became the new orthodoxy, applied inappropriately to everything, including mental illnesses such as schizophrenia.

More recently, the German physician, Paul Ehrlich, unwittingly created a new dogma, coining the term 'magic bullet' to Salvarsan, the cure for the syphilis bacteria. The idea of a single-remedy medication then dominated modern medicine, encouraged by the discovery of insulin, sulfa drugs, penicillin and antibiotics. Unfortunately, the dangerous 'one-cure-fits-all' orthodoxy persists even today, supported by pharmaceutical companies who present every new medication as a wonder drug.

In the early twentieth century, the American Medical Association, backed by the now flourishing pharmaceutical companies, declared all alternative, energy medicine to be unscientific quackery. Chiropractors, osteopaths and other alternative medical practitioners had difficulty fighting back against this dual orthodoxy to achieve legitimacy.

Many conventional doctors, stuck in their fundamentalist beliefs, still regard alternative medicine as heresy, and are particularly upset when their patients defect to another belief system. How

more beneficial and rewarding it would be for all concerned if both approaches could be recognised and combined. In fact, some doctors and medical schools seem to be casting off the fundamentalist straightjacket and moving in that direction.

However, the brick wall of convention, cemented by giant egos, is hard to dismantle. Think of the current example of Munjed Al Muderis, Iraqi asylum seeker and orthopaedic surgeon, who has revolutionised the treatment and rehabilitation of amputees with his osteointegration technique. The initial efforts of many of his peers to discredit him are nothing short of despicable. Justice has now been served by his being named 2020 Australian of the Year for New South Wales.

Skeptics are often so busy pointing out everyone else's fundamentalist tendencies that they fail to see how fundamentalist they are themselves. Their basic premise is the scientific dogma that there is nothing in the world that has not already been described and understood. Their prime targets are ESP, astrology, extra-terrestrials, alternative medicine, thought-field therapy, acupuncture, the benefits of prayer. Positive results claimed from any of these practices are dismissed as either accidental or fraudulent. The sceptical fundamentalist is as rigid and unyielding in thinking as any other.

Even talent and imagination have not escaped the clutches of fundamentalism, as evidenced by the barriers that have been placed by the Establishment on the path of innovation in the Arts, in literature, music, painting and other forms of artistic expression over the centuries. There is a sad irony in the old schoolboy essay howler: ‘XYZ was born in such and such a year, but was not recognised until he died.’ Indeed life-long poverty and suffering seem to have been prerequisites for the posthumous appreciation of luminaries in the artistic field. Let’s not forget that every discovery, every great invention, began as a thought in someone’s imagination.

Fundamentalism and the Human Brain

If we really belong to the genus ‘*homo sapiens*’, how do we so often unknowingly find ourselves in the grip of fundamentalism of some sort? Is it a matter of nature or nurture? Are we biologically predisposed to be fundamentalist? Are our brains constructed to enable this? Consideration of interesting research done in this area could perhaps help us to avoid becoming a fundamentalist.

Let’s consider a quick overview of the brain. The bump at the top of the spine, or brain stem, is the ‘Reptile Brain’ which we share with lizards

and dinosaurs. It rules essential life functions, including movement, arousal, eating, sleeping. Sitting on top of this is the ‘Old Mammalian Brain’ or limbic system, the centre for emotions, including affection, joy, jealousy, and shame, not easily controlled voluntarily, as we probably all know. At the top is the outer part that makes us truly human, the cerebral cortex or grey matter. The cortex is the centre for our ability to learn, to think, to imagine, to anticipate the future; but it is also vulnerable to lies, illusions and delusions. It receives the imprint of our complex family and original society backgrounds. Family and societal beliefs, values and attitudes are imprinted here at an early age. Our greatest glory, it is also the instigator of our greatest problems, especially when imprinted with insidious pathological family and cultural patterns.

In instances of heightened emotion, our later socially acquired rational, social and ethical principles are easily overridden by more biologically primitive states. The primitive centres in the brain overwhelm the more complex thinking and control areas in the frontal lobes, and we engage in black and white thinking. Crisis, trauma and strong emotions trigger individuals into these rigid positions. When did you have your last fundamentalist thought?

Collective threats do the same to groups and cultures. This is why dominance and territoriality, probably originating in the reptile brain, are also found in the highest levels of human social interaction. Think of our politicians!

The great mythologist, Joseph Campbell, proposed the following ‘Campbell’s Law’: ‘It is our learning history, imprinted on neurology and physiology, that shapes our personality and beliefs.’ As a Roman Catholic altar boy, he knew this first hand. The sacred iconography and ritual imprinted since the earliest childhood have an emotional effect, no matter what the conscious mind intends.

J. Krishnamurti said:

From the moment we are born, the brain is being conditioned, shaped by tradition, by religion, by the literature you read, the newspapers, by parents. If you are conditioned, it means your being becomes mechanical, repeating the same thing over and over again.

What message is there here for parents and educators? Are we skirting the fringes of child abuse? How many people have beliefs or philosophies different from those imposed upon them as a child by parents and teachers? What about you?

Then there is the human nervous system collaborating in all our ideas and

attitudes, loading them with powerful emotional charge. Implanted attitudes such as loyalty, veneration, obedience, submission to authority and hierarchy can expand any kind of belief or reality system into a kind of sacred modality. Remember too that these same attitudes are generally regarded as virtues to be encouraged and rewarded. Where does the fine line need to be drawn between loyalty and fundamentalism?

Is the need for something sacred wired into our psyche? Add to this the powerful, ‘feel-good’ dopamine neurotransmitter system. When this becomes involved, the feeling of certitude is created, convincing the person that he not only knows everything worth knowing, but is also completely right in his perceptions, an attitude called ‘righteousness’, not the exclusive privilege of Old Testament prophets.

Psychologists Eric Fromm and Eric Hoffer suggested that humans have a perennial need to escape from freedom and the responsibility of choosing and possibly making the wrong choice. They prefer to find one emotionally attractive point of view and adhere to it – the safe option. People strive for an inner security by submitting to a single, superior power, the unquestionable, the sacred, resulting in what I term the ‘stuck brain syndrome’.

Is the fundamentalist mentality lurking within us all?

Is the fundamentalist mentality lurking within us all, preventing us from realising our creative powers, from attaining wisdom, from realising our full potential in all areas of life? Most importantly, is there an antidote that we could apply? To do so means breaking out of our concrete bunker of single unquestioning conviction, and opening our minds and hearts to the exciting inevitability of variety and change. Remember that all progress in the world is due to the non-conformist.

Could we take off our blinkers, move out of our comfort zone, reassess our ideas, beliefs, philosophy, remove our labels which are exclusionist, divisive, discriminatory? Can we promote enquiry rather than dismissal, and understanding rather than judgment?

Let's go on Aladdin's magic carpet ride to discover 'a whole new world, a new fantastic point of view, a dazzling place we never knew' as the song, 'A Whole New World', suggests.

The final word I give to Helena Blavatsky who wrote in 1879 in the first issue of *The Theosophist*:

The very root idea of the Theosophical Society is free and fearless investigation ... Once a student abandons the old and trodden highway

of routine, and enters upon the path of independent thought ... he is a Theosophist, an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth, with an inspiration of his own to solve the universal problems.

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Pamela Peterson, BA (Sydney University), a retired secondary school teacher, describes herself as a chronic questioner. She is the Honorary Secretary of Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney.

National Calendar of Events



CANCELLATION OF 2021 CONVENTION

Due to unpredictable state border closures, and various other issues associated with Covid-19, the National Council determined at its July meeting to cancel the 2021 Convention which was due to be held in Perth. Instead, the next National Convention of the TS in Australia will be held in Perth in January 2022.

2021 NATIONAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF THE TS IN AUSTRALIA and INAUGURATION OF NEW NATIONAL PRESIDENT



The National Council has determined that the 2021 Convention Business Meeting will be held in Sydney.

Date: Monday 25 January 2021

Time: to be announced in the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*

Venue: The Sibyl Centre, The Women's College, Sydney

Towards the end of the business meeting, the new National President will be inaugurated and will give a short talk. This will be video recorded and available for members to view on the website. There will also be a catered lunch. Advance registrations will be required by TS members to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements within the venue, and in order to arrange catering. It is hoped that some interstate members may be able to attend this special occasion, depending on the status of border closures. More information will be provided in the November magazine.

Next national event, Canyonleigh Centre, New South Wales

TBA

Next national event, Springbrook Centre, south-eastern Queensland

TBA

Education

Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator



The Three Gems of Theosophical Literature

Since its foundation in New York, in 1875, the TS has produced, through a number of its members, an impressive body of literature. *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, both by Madame Blavatsky, became true landmarks in the exposition of Theosophy to the world. Two works by A.P. Sinnett, *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, helped to disseminate the teachings of Theosophy on a large scale. And the contributions of Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, C. Jinarajadasa, Rohit Mehta, N. Sri Ram, Geoffrey Hodson, I. K. Taimni, Geoffrey Barborka, Clara Codd, and many others helped to popularise Theosophy at a mass level.

However, there are three little books which have been acknowledged as real gems of Theosophical literature: *Light on the Path*, published in 1885, and written down by Mabel Collins;

The Voice of the Silence, the last contribution of HPB to the world, published in 1889; and *At the Feet of the Master*, written by the young J. Krishnamurti and published in 1910.

The subject matter of the above books is only one: the work of preparation to tread the spiritual Path. Unlike the approach of self-serving gurus today, these books show that there is no real spirituality without confronting the weight of our accumulated conditioning. This conditioning is anchored for many lifetimes in a strong, wilful, cunning, sensate and resilient sense of personal self. Unless the nature of such self is wholly understood and its structure dismantled, to use an expression from the Buddha, no progress on the path of spiritual realisation is possible. Let us consider some of the teachings of the Three Gems about the problems created by the personal self:



From *Light on the Path*:

1. Kill out ambition. 2. Kill out desire of life. 3. Kill out desire of comfort. 4. Work as those work who are ambitious. Respect life as those do who desire it. Be happy as those are who live for happiness.

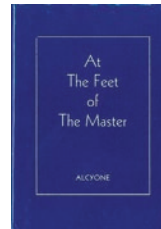
Perhaps most of us think that ambition is not that dangerous, that it is 'normal' and part of life. But we need only to look at the role of ambition in the destruction of the natural world, in the collapse of families and of relationships in society. It is one of the many instruments of assault used by the personal self.



From *The Voice of the Silence*:

Desire nothing. Chafe not at Karma, nor at Nature's changeless laws. But struggle only with the personal, the transitory, the evanescent and the perishable. (Fragment I)

While desire is part of the human constitution and plays a role in human evolution, when it is appropriated by a selfish and self-absorbed mind, it becomes disruptive, insensitive and even destructive. A mind which is dominated by desire refuses to learn and ignores the lessons of the universal laws, including Karma. In so doing it invites suffering for itself and others.



And finally, from *At the Feet of the Master*:

Work patiently at your studies, not that men [or women] may think you wise, not even that you may have the happiness of being wise, but because only the wise man [or woman] can be wisely helpful. However much you wish to help, if you are ignorant you may do more harm than good.

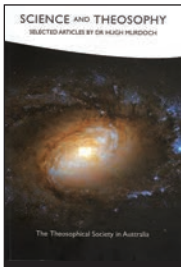
Review ...



Science and Theosophy

Hugh Murdoch

published by The Theosophical Society in Australia, Sydney, 2020, pb, 314pp, cost recovery price TS members - \$32.50 plus postage, non-members \$40 plus postage. Contact: education@theosophical society.org.au



Dr Hugh Murdoch was the National Treasurer of the Australian Section for some fifty years. He was both an accountant and an astrophysicist, his

Ph.D. thesis dealing with the area of cosmic rays.

Hugh founded the Theosophy-Science Group, of which he was Convenor from 1983 until 2011. For many years he edited the *Theosophy-Science Newsletter*. He was also a serious student of *The Secret Doctrine*. Alongside his academic career, and prior to his passing in 2015, Hugh had a substantial body of articles on Theosophy-Science published in TS publications.

An anthology of a selection of Hugh's articles has just been produced by the Australian Section, which is possibly also the first book published by the Theosophical Society in Australia. The Foreword has been written by Dr Victor Gostin.

This substantial volume comprises several sections:

We and the Universe
Remembering Great Scientists
Theosophy and Science
A Deeper Search
Book Reviews.

Some examples of the subject matter are: Origin of the Solar System, The Nights and Days of Brahma, Albert Einstein – Universal Man, New Awareness in Science and Theosophy, Stonehenge an Astronomical Treatise, The Search for Truth and Who are We?

A broad, fascinating and incisive read on Science and Theosophy from a TS member who championed independent thinking. As he asserted: 'Don't be put off by people who are critical of your ideas. Seek your own wisdom'.

Linda Oliveira

News and Notes

COVID-19 and the TS in Australia

As this magazine is being prepared, some of our TS centres are gradually resuming their activities. Please check first before visiting your local centre.

National Headquarters staff continue to work mainly from home, while providing nearly all of the regular support services to TS centres and members. All national tours remain suspended indefinitely.

2020 International Convention

27-30 December 2020

Theme: 'Cycles of Awareness'



The 145th International Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held *online* on the above dates. Registration will be required. For updated information in the coming period, go to: ts-adyar.org



School of the Wisdom November 2020

Director: Fernando A. de Torrijos

17-26 November

**FOUR STAGES OF
MINDFULNESS:**

**A secure path to
the alleviation of suffering**



The next session of the School of the Wisdom, Adyar, for TS members, will be held *online* from 17-26 November 2020. Registration details have yet to be announced. Watch out for further information at: ts-adyar.org

Transitions

Harriet Cornfeld-Fraser, Vice-President, Trustee and former President of Melbourne Lodge, passed to peace on 20 July 2020. She is remembered with affection.

Election for National President

Voting papers were sent to all members of this Section who are eligible to vote in the current election for National President. A reminder that the deadline for votes to reach the National Secretary is **Friday 25 September**. The result of the election will be notified promptly to all TS centres, and published in the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

Election of State Representatives

One nomination has been received for each Electoral State in the election for State Representatives: Sue Lee for WA; Gerard Brennan for NSW/ACT; and Edward Sinclair for Victoria. Each has been duly re-elected and a full announcement will be made in the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.



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

The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches

The freedom of Lodges and Branches is defined by the scope of the Society's Objects as well as its essential mandate to make Theosophy known as a practical living Wisdom, which can uplift human consciousness to a realisation of the Oneness of life. Therefore, although the Society has no official creed of its own and upholds freedom of thought, and while it is acceptable to invite some outside speakers who can contribute to the exploration of the Ageless Wisdom, it is not appropriate for our platform to be used by such speakers to actively promote other organisations or belief systems. Each Lodge and Branch was chartered by the International President to be a representative of the Society in its area. Its work and programme should reflect the character, altruistic ethos and spirit of the Theosophical Society.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (2019)

Section Directory

Please check first with TS centres whether meetings have resumed.

Australian Section National Headquarters

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au>
Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:
Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 1590
Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards
NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)
Telephone: 02 9267 6955
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au
<https://sydney.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays
President: Stephen McDonald
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
7.30pm 2nd Friday each month
President: Tony Buzek
Secretary: position vacant
Tel: 0452 633 132
Email: anthonybuzek61@bigpond.com
<https://newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Blue Mountains Group, Certified 13/5/1997:
Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains
Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),
Katoomba NSW 2780
Meet: every Monday, 2.00 - 4.00pm
Acting Coordinator: Jessica Gemmell
email: [Jasmine de Vimes](mailto:Jasmine.de.Vimes)
tsbluemountains@gmail.com Tel: 0415 535 525

Canberra Group, Certified 16/11/2019
Meet: Emeritus Faculty, ANU
24 Balmain Cres, Acton
2pm, 3rd Saturday each month
Coordinator: Gordon Herbert
Tel: 0466 464 064
Email: canberratheosophicalsociety@gmail.com
Secretary: Barbara Harrod
Tel: 02 6254 1415

Gosford Group, Certified 11/11/1997
Meet: The Narara Community Centre,
Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month
Coordinator: Vivien Wareing
Tel: 0487 196 654
email: vivienwareing@hotmail.com
Secretary: Roni Ostergaard
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

Northern Beaches Group, Certified 2/4/1996:
Postal address and meeting address:
c/- 31 Riviera Street
Avalon NSW 2107
2.00 pm normally 3rd Saturday each month
Please email to confirm meetings.
Coordinator: Nila Chambers
email: nilachambers@bigpond.com

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:
Postal Address: c/- National Headquarters,
Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010
Meet: Meeting Room,
Community Services Tablelands,
rear of 38 Mabel Street, Atherton
2.00pm 2nd Saturday of month except Jan.
Please email National Headquarters
to confirm meetings: tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au
President: Max Brandenberger
Secretary: position vacant
<https://atherton.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:
355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000
Tel: 07 3839 1453
email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au
<https://brisbane.theosophicalsociety.org.au>
Meet: 7.30pm Wednesdays, bookshop
and library open 6.00-7.25pm
President: Phillipa Rooke
Secretary: Dianne Manning

Logan Group, Certified 9/4/2019:
Meet: Meeting Room 2, Logan Hyperdome Library,
Mandew Street, Loganholme, Qld.
1st Friday each month, 9.00am - midday
Tel. 0418 755 496

Coordinator: Christine Gwin
email: logantheosophy@gmail.com

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004:

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
Tel: 0417 873 481
7.00pm Thursdays
Email: theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com
<https://sunshinecoast.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
President: Joyce Thompson Secretary: Jean Carroll

Toowoomba Group, Certified 10/7/2007:

Meet: Hospice Board Room, 57b O'Quinn Street,
Toowoomba QLD 4350.
Meetings on a Thursday evening once a fortnight
at 6.30pm.
Annual Springbrook retreat each Winter
Coordinator: Gayle Thomas
Secretary: Barry Bowden
Tel: 0438 331 885
email: gaylethomas8@gmail.com

South Australia

Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: 08 8223 1129
Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au
www.theosophical.org.au
Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday of
every month. Please contact Lodge for additional
meeting dates.
President: Gaynor Fraser
Secretary: Ann Pritchard

Tasmania

Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000
Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)
<https://hobart.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
Meet: 7.30pm Mondays
President: Helen Steven
Secretary: Berry Dunston
Email: helen_steven@live.com

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

Meet: Salvation Army, 111 Elizabeth Street,
Launceston
1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm
Postal address: 28 Teggs Road, Gravelly Beach, TAS
7276
email: launcestontheosophicalsociety@gmail.com
<https://launceston.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

President/Treasurer: Franka Hughes
Secretary: Ruth Holt
Tel: 0418 346 526

Victoria

Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
email: info@melbournetheosophy.org
<https://melbourne.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>
Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month
Acting President: Edward Sinclair
Secretary: position vacant

Mornington Peninsula Group, Certified 8/2/2000:

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,
Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
of the month
(12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch + library -
1.30pm presenter + questions and comments)
Coordinator: Alice Opper
Tel: 0439 563 313

Wodonga-Albury Group, Certified 9/7/1996:

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

Western Australia

Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104
Email: tsperth@inet.net.au
<http://www.tsperth.com.au>
Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays
President: Franco Guazzelli
Secretary: Victoria la Rondie

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082
All enquiries to Perth Branch
Tel: 08 9328 8104

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Qld

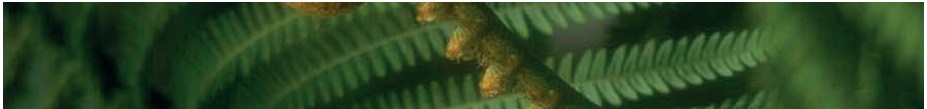
2184 Springbrook Road,
Springbrook QLD 4213
Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211
email: info@tsretreat.com.au
Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein

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)*



The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

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

~

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

~

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