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INSIDE

The Gospel of Thomas -
Early Christian Gnosis

Evolution and the
Intelligence of Life

National President's
Annual Report

A Vegetarian Lifestyle

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Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasise the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties.

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

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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

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

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Contents

From the National President	98	2014 Convention Programme	120
The Gospel of Thomas - Early Christian Gnosis	99	Results - Election of State Representatives	122
Evolution and the Intelligence of Life	103	National Calendar of Events	123
A Vegetarian Lifestyle	106	Viewpoint	124
National President's Annual Report	108	TOS	126
Annual Membership Analysis	118	Annual Index	127
2014 Convention - advertisement	119	News and Notes	128

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

- 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.

*From the
National
President*



Linda Oliveira



The following pages include among other things articles on the Christian tradition, science and a vegetarian lifestyle, as well as my Annual Report. The endeavour is to keep this publication eclectic, while remaining true to the Society's Objects. I suggest that members look at the Annual Report because it summarises how much goes on within this Section, both nationally and in our various TS centres. Also, the September magazine generated a number of responses – see 'Viewpoint'.

A person can become a member of the TS if he or she sympathises with the Objects. We may rejoice in the fact that no member is asked to believe anything or to adopt any particular mode of living. During a recent members' meeting at my local Lodge the question of the relative merits of belief was discussed, with the inevitable divergence of views. One was that many people find beliefs a useful stepping stone; another view was that beliefs are absolutely unnecessary – in fact, a hindrance.

At least one author has proposed that we could simply regard teachings which we meet in our pursuit of Theosophy as working hypotheses. This seems to be a sensible approach because it allows for the possibility of a changed view about something as time goes on. Beliefs may become fixed and inflexible. For example when a person says that he or she believes in reincarnation, is this some kind of blind, second hand belief? Is it simply because the thought is comforting? Is it based on logical reasoning, on authentic reminiscences of the soul, or is it based on some kind of deeper conviction? In short, why do we assert that we believe something? It is useful to go into this question from time to time.

Consider, for example, the general concept of 'the Path' which has been made well-known through the TS. This has been brought out in our literature in different ways, with the underlying assumption that spiritual evolution is a fact and that it is possible to be deeply transformed – indeed, thoroughly regenerated. Some may assert that such a process is incremental; others, that Enlightenment can happen at once, in this moment – presumably preceded by living a certain kind of life. If we accept that physical evolution is a fact – which science amply demonstrates – then by extension it does not seem too far-fetched to contemplate the plausibility of spiritual evolution.

It was said on one occasion that, although various people might think that they are on the 'Path', most are probably on one of the many paths which lead to the Path proper. It is easy to be deluded about spiritual status. Theosophical teachings about the Path discourage both dependence and credulity. Fetters to be shed in order for one to become a selfless servant of the world have been well documented in our literature. Also, some inspirational points about the Path may be reflected upon and considered – the existence of superhuman individuals who have gone before us, some of whom, it is said, continue to help humanity; taking responsibility for our spiritual unfoldment – while enjoying the benefits of the company of like-minded individuals along the way; and, hopefully, a renewed impetus to become a better human being in the fullest sense of the term.

Comment of up to 200 words is invited on items in this issue by 31 December and may be published: pres@austheos.org.au

The Gospel of Thomas – Early Christian Gnosis

Richard Larkin



In 1945 thirteen bundles of texts wrapped in dilapidated containers were found in Egypt by a humble villager and sold on to scholars. These texts proved to be spiritual dynamite and have radically changed our understanding of the early Christian movement. Now known as the ‘Gnostic Gospels’, these texts have opened up a whole new world of Christian belief and practice from those early years of the movement of Jesus. They also provide insights into the nature of spirituality in general.

Background

The first thing to understand about this early period of Christianity is that there was no orthodox or ‘right’ interpretation of Jesus’ teachings or his mission. While an embryonic church began to develop around the Mediterranean world, led by the apostles and later by respected leaders who eventually became bishops, most Christian groups were autonomous. There was a wide range of belief and practice. Many groups organised around congregational worship and ‘love feasts’, an ancestor of today’s church services. Many other groups were charismatic, with dreams, visions and prophecies held in high regard and considered proof of the purity and authenticity of those who had them (these too have their descendents in today’s Pentecostal churches). Dreams and visions about Jesus were considered to be *from* him, a sign of continuing revelation from a resurrected Jesus. Most Gnostics also shared this belief in ongoing divine revelation, as seen in their carefully constructed and complex mythologies.

Much fierce debate revolved around the person and the mission of Jesus himself. Was he the unique son of God or a human Messiah? Was he here to save our souls or to lead humanity towards a more spiritual life? Did he want social justice for humanity in this life or was he concerned with an otherworldly Kingdom of God? Eventually the evolving Catholic church would provide answers to these questions, but there was a great deal of opinion that diverged from those views which became standard dogmas. The Gnostics became notorious for their interpretations of whom and what Jesus was.

Gnosticism

The classic form of Gnosticism that developed in the 2nd century CE combines the cosmology of Plato with the Jewish apocryphal and wisdom traditions. Gnostics believed that this material world was a pale shadow or even a badly flawed reflection of the pure and perfect heavenly world, a place far away from our own. Our spirit is seen as being an exiled part of that pure spiritual world which has become trapped in this world of matter. It is this exile, in a place in which our spirit doesn’t belong, that accounts for our sense of alienation and unhappiness with life as we know it. This is an interesting parallel with the Buddhist interpretation of human unhappiness and suffering brought about by desire in an impermanent universe.

Likewise, Gnostics did not consider the God of the Old Testament, accepted as THE God by most early Christians, to be the ultimate

The mission of the Gnostic was to gain understanding and mystical or intuitive knowledge of the true state of our world through study and ethical living. There may also have been meditative exercises to help with this understanding and reflection. The aim of Gnostic practitioners was to purify themselves and prepare for the afterlife when they would go beyond the flawed Creator and his minions to return to the true Heaven world that is our actual home.

Creator. The God of the Old Testament is seen as a secondary creator of this flawed material universe which is the cause of human suffering. Some Gnostics considered him to be outrightly malevolent, rather than being merely a limited divinity. The true God is both benevolent and also very remote from our universe, and seemingly uninterested in it.

The mission of the Gnostic was to gain understanding and mystical or intuitive knowledge of the true state of our world through study and ethical living. There may also have been meditative exercises to help with this understanding and reflection. The aim of Gnostic practitioners was to purify themselves and prepare for the afterlife when they would go beyond the flawed Creator and his minions to return to the true Heaven world that is our actual home.

The Gospel of Thomas

So where does the Gospel of Thomas fit into this story, and how authentic is it?

Scholars now date the writing of this scripture to about the year 90 CE. This would place the Gospel of Thomas just before the time that the Gospel of John was composed but just after the three synoptic gospels had been written down.

By the way it is set out, the Gospel of Thomas appears to be a compilation rather than a narrative of the life of Jesus as with the three canonical gospels. It was probably compiled in Syria, where the following of the apostle Thomas was particularly strong. The text consists of a series of one hundred and fourteen sayings that appear to have come from an earlier oral tradition. About seventy-nine are similar to sayings found in the canonical scriptures (though often with a twist), the rest being unique to the Gospel of Thomas.

A number of these sayings are so very cryptic they are almost like Zen koans, which are seemingly illogical riddles designed to tease the mind beyond distraction and logic to an enlightenment experience. Though the Gospel of Thomas can be read in under an hour, it is definitely a scripture that has to be contemplated over!

Jesus said:

Blessed is the lion that the human will eat, so that the lion becomes human. Cursed is the human that the lion will eat, and the lion will become human. (Saying 7)

As noted, many other sayings are similar to those found in other gospels, but usually pithier, which may indicate that they are closer to the actual words of Jesus. For example, the parable of the mustard seed is found in both Mark 4 and in Thomas 20. The famous saying 'the blind leading the blind' is found both in Matthew 15 and in Thomas 34 (see example below).

Given all of this, I would have to say that the Gospel of Thomas is just as 'authentic' as the canonical scriptures. Undoubtedly the scripture was written down by what could be described as a 'school of Thomas', a group that had preserved the original disciple's teachings as handed down by oral tradition. It is likely that something similar can be said for at least some of the canonical scriptures as well.

Here I would raise the question of just how 'Gnostic' the Gospel of Thomas really is. By the standards of the later classic Gnostic scriptures the answer would have to be – not very. As

mentioned, there is no narrative or mythic story so beloved of the later Gnostic scriptures and so central to their mode of teaching. Nor is there any indication of the flawed God standing over humanity that is so apparent in later Gnostic works.

I would call it a mystical scripture, with a Gnostic perspective. And a Gnostic perspective on many of the more difficult sayings does in fact help with their interpretation. But in the sense of the word 'gnosis', implying an intuitive insight and exploration of Divine Wisdom, then I would say yes it is just that indeed.



Some Themes in the Gospel of Thomas

The major theme of Thomas is that the Kingdom of God is already in the here and now, if only we had eyes to see. The Kingdom of God is seen as a continuing spiritual reality, a view shared by many Christian mystics up to modern times. To gain the keys to the Kingdom it is necessary for seekers to understand themselves. We are, after all, made in the image of God and are thus sharing in His divine light and life force. But Jesus does not underestimate how frightening that search can be nor the effort involved in

overcoming the ego to achieve Self- Knowledge. A number of sayings confront this necessity for spiritual growth.

Jesus said:

When you see your likeness in a mirror, you are pleased. But when you see your images that came into being before you and that neither die nor become visible, how much you will have to bear! (Saying 84)

Interestingly, in this scripture there is little said about Jesus' life, nor his crucifixion and resurrection. It is never made clear just who Jesus actually is, though there are hints that he was sent here by God to teach and direct the seeker back to the spiritual Path and that his ministry is of cosmic significance.

Jesus said:

I am the light that is over all things. I am all. From me all came forth, and to me all extends. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there. (Saying 77)

The reward for this effort is of course Enlightenment or the 'Kingdom of God' in Jesus' terminology, when the mysteries will be opened up to the seeker. A number of sayings imply that this awakening will happen very quickly, as taught in Zen Buddhism (e.g. Saying 108). In fact, in the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus appears more in the guise of a Zen-like spiritual guide than as an authoritative teacher.

Another theme in this scripture is one that is shared by later Gnostic texts and also by Buddhism – the theme of ignorance rather than 'sin' as our chief obstacle to the Kingdom of God, or Enlightenment if that word is preferable. Humanity is seen as being asleep and has thus forgotten its Divine origin, due to its seduction by the world of matter. It is implied that Jesus has been sent here to awaken us and to guide us in our search, but ultimately we must make that effort by ourselves. Here Jesus does not 'save' us by faith in him, as in later orthodox belief, but by encouragement to discover the Divine within ourselves.

Finally, the text has many sayings that are really just homely advice about daily life,

but at the same time carrying spiritual advice as well: Jesus said, 'If a blind person leads a blind person, both of them will fall into a hole.' (Saying 34)

And he said:

The man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisherman discovered a fine big fish. So the fisherman threw all the little fish back into the sea and with no hesitation kept the big fish. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear! (Saying 8)

Conclusion

As we know, the Gospel of Thomas did not become part of the canonical scriptures, undoubtedly because of its encouragement for seekers to achieve their own Enlightenment rather than salvation by faith in the Risen Christ.

There was a price to pay by the young Christian church for the victory of orthodox Christianity over its mystic and Gnostic elements. The loss of a living tradition based on experiential knowledge led to narrow dogmas and an authoritarian approach to spirituality that ultimately has no resonance with many modern people.

The discovery of the long lost Gnostic Gospels like that of Thomas have occurred at the same time that many seekers are rediscovering spirituality based on experience rather than on faith alone. Many people have turned to the

Eastern traditions in this search, but the Gnostic Gospels, along with the writings of the later Christian mystics, show that there is also a way in the Western tradition as well.

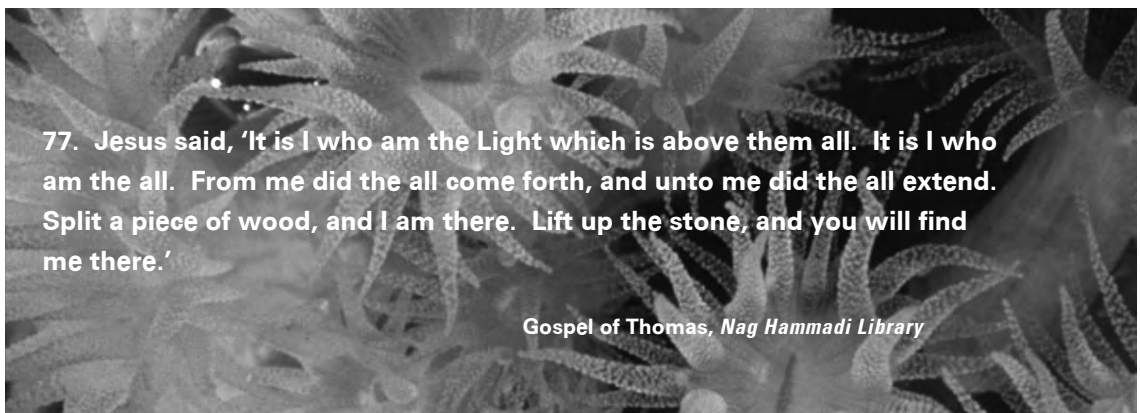
The revival of the Western esoteric traditions is of particular interest to students of Theosophy, along with the arrival of the Eastern traditions which an earlier generation of Theosophists did so much to bring about. Now, with these spiritual currents from differing streams mingling, we can look forward to a very interesting future for spirituality.

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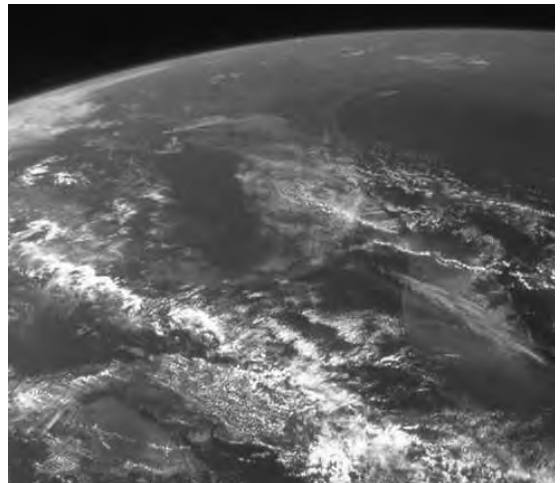


Richard Larkin has been a member of the TS for over twenty years. He has a great interest in both Taoism and Gnosticism, as well as comparative religion in general. Richard is currently the President of the TOS branch in Sydney.



Evolution and the Intelligence of life

Victor Gostin



Modern science is increasingly moving towards the view that our Universe involves many locations where life and intelligence are flowering, and where our presence participates in their conscious evolution. This article summarises a lecture delivered at the annual Australian TS Convention held in Melbourne, January 2013.

Galactic Kitchens of Organic Compounds

From the best available scientific research, it appears that this universe began some 13.7 billion years ago. Our own solar system with planet Earth assembled (accreted) some 4.5 billion years ago, and similar planetary systems were probably present in our galactic neighborhood during earlier times. Current estimates surprisingly predict that there are probably more planets than stars.

Astronomers using infrared telescopes capable of determining the nature of carbon-bearing compounds have concluded that our galactic dark nebulae are indeed akin to kitchens for a host of complex organic compounds. Similar compounds were produced in 'space simulating' laboratories, confirming this chemistry. Studies of meteorites and asteroids have now shown that water and all chemicals (including catalysts) necessary for life were available to our planet

early in its history. For example scientists led by Sandra Pizzarello, at Arizona State University, found large amounts of ammonia in a primitive Antarctic meteorite. This high concentration of ammonia could account for a sustained source of reduced nitrogen essential to the chemistry of life. Geological research has further recorded the presence of early life using isotopes and organic biomarkers preceding the record of microfossils.

Evolution Before Life

It would seem that evolution occurred even before life appeared. A rudimentary form of natural selection probably existed in the primordial soup before life arose on Earth. Because longer chains require more assembly reactions, they should be much less common than short chains. And if some assembly reactions run faster than others, then chains built from these fast-assembling sequences of building blocks grow to be most abundant. Thus according to Nowak and Ohtsuki (2008) 'the best replicator may get fast and accurate enough to dominate the population, sucking up all the resources and driving all the other prebiotic sequences extinct. This is the threshold of life', they state. In showing that selection actually precedes the origin of life, and helps to shape it, Nowak helps bridge the gap between nonliving and living systems.

If intelligence is defined as the general ability to store past experiences and to use that acquired knowledge to solve future problems, then it would appear that intelligence was implicit at the earliest manifestations of life. This notion is expressed by neurosurgeon Frank Vertosick Jr, M.D. (2002) in his book, *The Genius Within: Discovering the Intelligence of Every Living Thing*. In this book he describes the ‘brilliance of viruses and canniness of germs. How some cancer cells outwit our finest medical techniques, and how deviously clever is our immune system.’



Universal Memory

As memory is a fundamental property of life, Ervin Laszlo, a philosopher and polymath, has extended this property to the whole universe, calling it by an ancient term: the Akashic Field. As Laszlo puts it:

The Akashic Field is a holographic field connecting organisms and minds in the biosphere, with particles, stars, and galaxies throughout the universe. This transforms a machine-like universe that is blindly groping its way from one phase of its evolution to the next into a whole-system universe that builds on the information it has itself generated.

Impressively he concludes: ‘The world is more like a living organism than a machine. ... Its logic is the logic of life itself: evolution toward coherence and wholeness, through interconnection and interaction.’ (Laszlo, 2004)

Co-evolution of Life and Earth

In their research on the evolution of very early life on Earth, Lynn Margulis and Michael Dolan (2002) stated that:

The more we learn about the Earth, the clearer it is that our planet’s surface has been highly altered by the origin, evolution, and growth of life on it. As life expands, it alters the composition, temperature, and chemical nature of the atmosphere and the composition, texture, and diversity of the Earth’s surface.

Importantly:

We consider naive and hopelessly incomplete the Darwinian view of ‘nature red in tooth and claw’.

We see ourselves and our planetmates as products of cellular symbioses. Cells beginning with those of bacteria were built up from other cells to make even larger more complex cells. The cell is the unit, the minimal unit of life. Partnerships between cells once foreign and even enemies of each other are at the very root of our human being ... We humans are extremely similar and related by evolutionary history not just to primate mammals but to fungi, oxygen-respiring bacteria, and spirochetes. The microbial world is at the basis of the ancient, continuing outward expansion of life on this green Earth.

Earth’s memory is abundantly recorded in its fossil-bearing strata. The most detailed ‘tree of life’ indicates that the single-celled ancestor of all life emerged under very hot conditions, and even modern deep-sea black smokers vent hot sulphurous fluids that support extensive ecosystems. It took an enormous period of time for the planet to emerge from an anoxic environment into the present oxygen rich one. This revolution was created by plant photosynthesis, and the burial of much organic carbon. Thus, about half way back in Earth time (2 billion years), enough atmospheric oxygen appeared that resulted in most of the planet’s huge deposits of iron ore (iron oxide). Then, only about 600 million years ago, enough oxygen was available to enable multicellular organisms to ‘breathe’ through their skins. An enormous variety of life forms then emerged. Occasionally evolution may appear to reverse direction such as the loss of legs by whales, and

tails by primates (humans), or even in the loss of a central nervous system (Spinney, 2007).

Mass Extinctions

Extinction is a normal part of the evolution of life, and is inevitable. Life continues, however, as new descendant species appear. The diversity of species generally fluctuates over time, and on occasions decreases markedly. These catastrophes are called 'mass extinctions'. Many factors are thought to result in such events, or perhaps even their coincidence in time. Extensive shallow continental seas during warm, non-glacial times promote species diversity. Conversely, glacial times with low sea levels and narrow continental shelves promote extinctions. Asteroidal impact and massive volcanic eruptions, creating environmental crises, however, remain the most favoured theories, with over 2500 papers and books published in the last decade on the corollaries and postulates involving the impact hypothesis, including periodicity of extinctions (Drury, 1999).

It has been estimated that perhaps 99% of all species that ever existed are now extinct. Using the diversity of marine animals compiled from occurrences of over 34,000 genera, it emerges that there were five major extinction episodes in the last 500 million years at 65, 215, 251, 385 and 444 million years ago respectively.

So, What is the Pacemaker?

Enormous flood-basalt volcanic events have 30 million year bursts; oxygen isotope records of climate change, and Earth's magnetic field reversals also have this periodicity. Mountain building events show periods of 30 to 36 million years, and sea-level changes show a 33 million year oscillation. Bringing all the Earth events together statistically shows the predominance of a period of about 30 million years, an unlikely chance occurrence (Drury, 1999).

One strong suggestion is that this corresponds to our Solar System oscillating through the galactic plane as we circulate around the galaxy, once every 260 million years. Apparently, our Earth with its living passengers, responds not

only to its solar system but also to its greater galactic rhythms.

It is a very sobering thought that today we are living through the sixth major species extinction on the planet, one caused directly by one of its species – us. Humanity's overriding impact on our home planet since industrialisation has given rise to the label the Anthropocene (Steffen et al. 2011). The challenge then, is to realise our common humanity and responsibility for managing our planet in a sustainable way.

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A Vegetarian Lifestyle

Celia Novy



In the exquisitely illustrated large tome *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890 – 1985*, as well as in the inspiring pamphlet ‘Theosophy and the Zeitgeist’ written by Dr John Algeo, it is proposed that Theosophy has affected modern culture in art, music, literature, science, ecology, esotericism and, above all, values in society.

The word ‘vegetarian’ thirty years ago was almost too difficult to pronounce, while menu cards in every restaurant nowadays feature at least several dishes for vegetarians. I suggest that it was the work of many members of the Theosophical Society as well as thoughtful men and women throughout the world, realising the benefits to their physical and mental health, who promoted the meatless life style.

Compassion for animals has been traced as far back as the teachings of Buddha Gautama, and – while it is not documented – to earlier periods in human history. It is therefore not surprising that a number of members of the Theosophical Society have embraced this ethical attitude towards all sentient life.

It is based on the realisation of

The radical unity of the ultimate essence of each constituent part of compounds in Nature – from from star to mineral atom ... in the fullest acceptance of the term, and whether applied to the spiritual, intellectual or physical worlds – this unity is the one fundamental law in Occult Science. (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol I)

Would not the ethics implied in the recognition of the interrelationship of all life therefore demand inclusion of, and respect for, all kingdoms of Nature: mineral, vegetable, animal, human and beyond?

Ever since the beginning of the Theosophical Society a vegetarian life-style, in consequence, became an important part of many members’ everyday living. The delightful story of how Mahatma Gandhi learnt about *The Bhagavad Gītā* when he sought out a vegetarian restaurant in London which was frequented by TS members, is too well-known to be repeated here.

It was TS Members who actively founded or supported such movements as:

- the vegetarian societies in many countries.
- ‘Beauty without Cruelty’ which is against testing beauty preparations on animals. This was founded by Lady Dowding from London. This movement is perhaps one of the most successful – recent international laws have been introduced regarding the manufacture of cosmetic preparations.
- Nylon-fur (faux-fur) coats, gloves, hats, collars, et cetera., started by London TS members (including Betsan Coats), and promoted by Brigitte Bardot and other movie stars. A TS Member in Melbourne has been a representative of some of these products for Australia.
- ‘Crusade against all Cruelty to Animals’, founded in London by Michael Fryer.
- an international campaign against vivi-

section (testing on drugs and surgery procedures which are conducted on animals strapped permanently to fixed apparatus – initially without pain-killing medications).

- Rukmini Devi, sister of former TS International President N. Sri Ram, and Founder of the Kalakshetra College of Fine Arts near Adyar, was the Minister for the Arts and Culture of the first Indian Parliament. She campaigned actively for the care of animals. She also corresponded with Dr Albert Schweitzer, who wrote extensively on the importance of love and compassion for animals.
- Movements against hunting in England and elsewhere, especially against killing for pleasure and entertainment.
- Stunning of animals in abattoirs was introduced and promoted by members of the TS (Geoffrey Hodson and others) to the governments of New Zealand and Australia, as well as England and the USA.
- Stopping research on dolphins in enclosed pools. Geoffrey Hodson interviewed Dr John Lilly, who soon after released his dolphins. (See the book *Lilly on Dolphins*.)
- Many changes in ecological-human relationships have been inspired by TS members the world over, including ‘re-mineralisation of the Earth’, a project started by Sir Richard St. Barbe-Baker for regeneration of the soil and promoted by Betsan Coats.
- On the subject of animal compassion, C.W Leadbeater said : ‘If I were asked, I would say quietly: “I hold that all life is sacred, that the animals are really younger brothers of ours, and we have no right to kill them ...”’.

- And on the effect of meat in the diet he wrote in his *Talks on the Path of Occultism*:
And the still more cruel superstition that man needs flesh for food. That is a superstition, because there are many millions of people who exist in perfect health without it. ... Flesh food is undesirable because it is cruel to kill animals and also because it brings undesirable particles into our bodies, which coarsen them, and excite animal desires in the elementals of those bodies.

In 1875 it was a ground-breaking and courageous statement by the Theosophical Society to recognise the Brotherhood of all humanity, without any distinction – when, even then, indigenous people from Africa and Australia were seen as of partial animal nature. Now, in the 21st century, when science has discovered the DNA which all life on earth shares, we surely can include all living beings in that Brotherhood.

Let us shed a tear and smile with Paul Richard, author-philosopher and former husband of the beloved ‘Mother’ at Sri Aurobindo’s ashram, who said:

‘That is why, to expiate for this deep crime of humanity against the good beasts, I always take my hat off reverently whenever I pass by a butcher’s shop.’

Celia Novy has been a TS member for over sixty years. At one time the President of the Young Theosophists in 1961 and 1962, she is a past Coordinator of Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney and has been a State Representative on the National Council.

He shining, everything shines.

Katha Upanishad 2:2:15



National President's Annual Report

1 September 2012 to
31 August 2013

Linda Oliveira

Preamble

It is a pleasure to present this annual report of activities in the Australian Section during the past year. The report covers many aspects of our collective work, including a summary of the activities of each Lodge, Branch and Certified Group.

Some highlights of particular note during the year, on which more details appear further on in the report, include:

- A Member's Survey – possibly our first
- The commencement of a mentoring programme of studies for new members
- A new university prize
- A good start on the redesign of the national website
- The near completion of the design of a national e-Bulletin

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

We have completed a productive and harmonious year at the National Headquarters, with the ongoing support of the National Council and the national Executive Committee.

National President's Work

My duties during the year have included organising and overseeing the Annual Convention; visiting TS centres around the Section; writing presentations; reviewing and suggesting National Council policies or amendments; organising the National Speakers Schedule; organising an event in October as well as the annual School of Theosophy at Springbrook; co-presenting afternoon training sessions at the School of Theosophy; editing and production of the national magazine, *Theosophy in Australia*; membership of the National Council and the national Executive Committee; chairing meetings of the national Executive Committee and The Australian Section Theosophical Trust; overseeing the redesigning of

the new website and the designing of an e-Bulletin, in conjunction with the members of the Website Committee; answering correspondence; working with members of two Lodge committees regarding some issues of concern; and writing the initial draft Notices of Motion for discussion with the Rules Committee and the National Council, with a view to updating the Section Rules.

National Council

(See also item on Membership Workshop under Membership, p.110.) The National Council met in January in Melbourne and in June at the National Headquarters in Sydney, on each occasion for two full days. The Council's concerns include broad matters of policy. In 2003 a Policies Document was developed which has since been regularly reviewed and updated, proving to be an invaluable supplement to the Rules and helping to clarify our directions at the national level in a range of areas. It covers areas such as education, events, membership, staff issues, standard of behaviour and Conventions.

As at 31 August 2013 the National Council comprised two ex officio members (the *National President* and the *National Secretary*), along with six elected *State Representatives*, each of whom may serve up to three two-year terms:

Denise Frost – Tasmania
Franco Guazzelli – Western Australia
Geoffrey Harrod – Queensland
Travis James – South Australia/Northern Territory
Dianne Kynaston – New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory
Kari Torgersen – Victoria

The time and effort which has been given voluntarily by the *State Representatives* during the year has been very much appreciated, including four full days of meetings, and especially when particularly serious matters have been under discussion.

The following appointments were made by the National Council for a 12 month period in January 2013:

Chair of the National Council and *National Vice-President* until January 2014 – Geoffrey Harrod.
Executive Committee – see next item

We continue without a *National Treasurer* for the time being. However, the National Council agreed at its mid-year meeting to recommend a motion for possible adoption at the January 2014 Convention Business Meeting which would provide for more future flexibility. The motion concerned would allow either an honorary *National Treasurer* who is a member, or else a paid (non-member) accountant who would perform the duties of a *National Treasurer* without taking office on the national Executive Committee or the National Council. (See also the section on Finance, p.114.)

National Executive Committee

The national Executive Committee is concerned with the day to day administrative and business work of the national Society. It met monthly, except in January, during the year under review. As at 31 August its members included two ex officio members, the *National President* and the *National Secretary*, as well as the following members who were appointed by the National Council in January: Beatrice Malka, Dai Trandang, Ken Edwards, Marlene Bell and Dianne Kynaston. Two members live in Melbourne and Adelaide, commuting to Sydney for meetings every two months.

The members of the national Executive Committee are also required to be Directors of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust, which is responsible for the Section's properties except for Theosophy House in Sydney.

In December, the national Executive Committee appointed Linda Oliveira as the *Editor of Theosophy in Australia*, as well as Beatrice Malka as the *Assistant Treasurer* of the Section. Also in December, the following working committees were appointed by the Executive Committee: Rules, Finance, Website, and Education and Training.

Headquarters Staff and Volunteers

I would like to express sincere gratitude to all staff, as well as those volunteers who are part of both our

immediate and our extended National Headquarters team, for their dedicated work for the Section. The main tasks performed by each during the year were:

Dara Tatray, *National Secretary*: reporting to the national Executive Committee, the National Council, The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd, and The Australian Section Theosophical Trust on matters pertaining to the properties owned by the Trust or Foundation, matters pertaining to the Rules and matters pertaining specifically to administration and personnel; taking care of all business for these four entities; writing and distributing their Minutes and Agendas; ensuring that all their statutory requirements are met. Paying insurance and ensuring that premiums are at an appropriate level for all the component Lodges/Branches that make up the TS in Australia. Overseeing the payment of wages, and paying all bills for the Foundation and the TS in Australia. Producing and distributing quarterly investment trust reports to members of the Foundation and to its investment partners. Creating a new chart of accounts for the Theosophical Society in Australia, with the much-valued assistance of Beatrice Malka, and overseeing the monthly financial reports to the Trust and the national Executive. Working on the Budget and end of year financial statements with the *Assistant Treasurer*. Reviewing the regular expenses of the National Headquarters, cutting costs where possible, and initiating a proposed increase in the dues. Training of the new bookkeeper. Initiating an asbestos audit of the Springbrook Centre and arranging urgent remedial work. Conducting extended negotiations in the leasing out of the first floor of Theosophy House and the café on the ground floor and overseeing the drafting of related contracts.

Jennifer Hissey: entering data for the Online Public Access Catalogue; handling enquiries for material in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives as well as cataloguing work; networking with other libraries in Australia; liaising with Softlink in order to improve OPAC; *Convention Secretary*.

Gil Murdoch: Webmaster for the Australian Section's website; maintaining sound equipment and data projectors; updating the *Union of Index of Theosophical Periodicals*; indexing the *Brahmavidyā* journal; assisting in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; making audio recordings at the National Convention.

Pedro Oliveira, Acting *Education Coordinator*: programming and giving presentations at national events; presentations to various Lodges, Branches and Groups, the annual School of Theosophy, and a seminar in Tasmania; development of modules for the Resources Package; responding to requests for educational material and general educational matters; responsibility for the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; assistance to the *National President*.

Richard Larkin, *Membership Secretary*: preparing membership reports; maintaining the membership database; typing articles for publication; banking; responding to orders for DVDs and courses; general office duties, assistance to the *National President* and the *National Secretary*; and *National Lecturer*.

Barry Hora and Kay Schiefelbein: see item on Springbrook Centre, p.113.

Charlotte Stahl: caterer and caretaker, Canyonleigh events.

Beatrice Malka: volunteer – *Assistant Treasurer* and member of the national Executive Committee.

Dai Trandang: volunteer – organising the quarterly mail out of *Theosophy in Australia*; work on the *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals*, member of the national Executive Committee.

Marlene Bell and Ken Edwards: volunteers – members of the national Executive Committee.

Dianne Kynaston: volunteer – member of national Executive Committee, *National Lecturer*, member of Editorial Committee, *State Representative*.

Geoff Harrod: volunteer – *State Representative* and *National Vice-President*, editing of Convention videos.

Franco Guazzelli, Travis James, Kari Torgersen and Denise Frost: volunteers – *State Representatives*.

Janice Scarabottolo, Dr Olga Gostin and Patricia Ossenberg: volunteers – members of Editorial Committee.

Noel Bertelle, Barry Bowden, Simon O'Rourke: volunteers – *National Lecturers*. (See also item on National Lecturers, p.112.)

Jef Ladbrook-Sloan: volunteer – calligrapher, Membership Diplomas for new members.

Kay Schiefelbein, Marie Bertelle, Rohzi Hicza, Marion Smith: volunteer caterers at Springbrook.

Tony Buzek: volunteer – videoing Convention sessions.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of every member of this Section is valued and appreciated. It has been a real pleasure to meet members during my engagements around the Section.

National Workshop on Membership

The National Council held its second workshop in six months on membership in January. The decision to conduct a members' survey arose out of this workshop. Points which came up also included the importance of recognition of members in various ways; being aware of the format and atmosphere of our meetings; finding out why people join and leave the Society; the desirability of trialling an in-house social network in due course; the need for a members' webpage on the national website; and some significant statements about the survival of organisations at this time which are made in an article called 'Membership is Dead?', which was sourced by the *National Secretary*. Just one of the many points the article makes is the importance of an organisational culture which reflects a generationally diverse, welcoming and engaging community. But it includes a lot more, providing a considerable challenge, and is worth a look. It can be located easily through a Google search.

Members' Survey

I developed a members' survey which was sent out in March to all members along with *Theosophy in Australia* magazine. The aim was to find out the needs and views of members, in order to assist the work of both the National Society and Lodges/Branches. The response rate of 19% of members (191) was somewhat more than anticipated and very encouraging. The responses were collated at the National Headquarters office and I prepared a summary report for the mid-year meeting of the National Council. There was considerable discussion about the report, which was also sent to all Lodges/Branches along with the minutes of the mid-year meeting for their information and consideration.

Overall, there was a general sense of satisfaction by members with the TS and, significantly, quite a few additional suggestions and comments which have been noted. One of the initiatives stemming from the survey is the Mentoring Studies Programme for New Members, mentioned earlier in this report. We have also taken cognisance of quite a few requests

by members for more online content and activity and are working actively with this. 25% of respondents were interested in the possibility of a national social network. The need for relevance of our activities to today's issues was also one among many issues brought out.

Unfortunately, a small number of respondents had become disillusioned over some observed behaviour during the past couple of years and consequently were not renewing their membership for that reason. Helpful and dedicated members who might otherwise have given a considerable amount to the Society in the longer term, may be put off by even one member. The matter of falling membership comes up fairly regularly; we need to provide a positive and welcoming environment, acknowledging and valuing members.

A number of positive responses have also been received about the fact that the survey was conducted.

Exit Survey

One of the suggestions made in a national membership workshop was the development of an exit survey in order to give individuals who resign, or else whose membership has lapsed, an opportunity to tell us why. This may help in looking to address possible causes. With this in mind, I developed a brief exit survey towards the end of the year which was approved by the national Executive Committee for use. If any reasons of note are given which relate to particular TS centres, they will be notified; likewise if any reasons of note are given which pertain to the National Society, or if any particular patterns emerge, we will examine them and consider what might be improved.

Theosophy in Australia

Our national magazine was published four times during the year under review in September, November, March and June. I continue to appreciate the assistance which is provided by the members of the Editorial Committee. During the year permission was given for a series of articles from back issues from the magazine to be reprinted in the *The Light Bearer*, the magazine of the Canadian Theosophical Association. Due to the cost of production of the magazine, and the fact that membership dues have not been increased for quite a few years, one of the Notices of Motion agreed to by the National

Council provides for membership either with or without a 'user pays' subscription for print copies of the magazine. The national magazine is already available on the national website at the beginning of the month after hard copies are released. A smaller, A5 sized magazine is being contemplated for the future. If the Notice of Motion concerned is passed, a change in the format of the magazine would take place as from the beginning of the 2015 calendar year. It is interesting to note that 85% of respondents to the members' survey indicated that they prefer to receive a hard copy by post as at present; the remainder preferring electronic copies.

National Members

Our National Members are greatly valued and numbered 125 as at 31 August 2013. I sent a letter to all National Members in May which highlighted our Society's heritage as well as resources which are available through the national website. A number of positive responses to the letter were received and further use has been subsequently made of our media library at the National Headquarters.

Membership Issues

Although we allow considerable latitude to members – in line with our First Object – sometimes boundaries are crossed because of the ongoing behaviour of a member who will not check his or her conduct over a period of time, despite warnings. If this occurs then a serious issue has arisen and some action needs to be taken. After thorough discussion at its mid-year meeting, the National Council took action to terminate the membership of one individual.

2013 CONVENTION

The Annual Convention was held in Melbourne on the theme 'Theosophical Insights and the Contemporary World'. The key speakers were Prof. Richard Silberstein, who gave a lively and very well attended public lecture to a crowded hall on the subject of intuition from a transpersonal and neuroscience perspective; and Dr Jenny McFarlane from Canberra who is a freelance art historian, writer and curator. Jenny imparted some fascinating information on the influence of the TS on Australian art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Gratitude is extended to Melbourne Lodge for hosting the Convention. The day outing to the seaside and the evening entertainment were extremely well received. Also, some encouraging feedback about the week was

received afterwards from various members. As one response to the 2012 survey of Lodges/Branches, the videoing of Convention sessions was trialled. DVDs and CDs of the Convention were prepared and sent out some months later. The first video from the Convention was placed on the national website, receiving many visits, and the project will be continued at the 2014 Convention.

EDUCATION

Education and Training Committee (formerly the Education Unit)

A proposal was developed by the Acting *Education Coordinator* as a response to the survey of Lodges/Branches. This involved the development of a Resources Package for Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups based on specific requests for educational material from the National Headquarters which had been received from around the Section in the completed surveys. During the year the first module of the package was sent out to all Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups: 'How to Plan, Organise and Conduct Meetings'. The second module, 'Introduction to *The Key to Theosophy*', was almost completed.

Mentoring Programme of Studies for New Members

One result of discussion about the Members' Survey by the National Council at its mid-year meeting was agreement that the Acting *Education Coordinator* provide the option of guided study suggestions for new members after twelve months of membership. A mentoring studies programme was subsequently commenced, providing choices for new members between several areas of study.

Resources

Regular additions are made to the resources of the National Society. From time to time donations are also made by members. Special thanks are extended to Dr Geoffrey and Shirley Miller who generously donated the entire collection of DVDs of J. Krishnamurti's talks, which are being housed at our Springbrook Centre.

Also, there was an unexpected positive development as a result of the cancellation of the planned tour by Dr Pablo Sender (see also item on *International Lecturers*, p.113), when he offered to produce a set of DVDs of the classes which he would have given

at the School of Theosophy. The DVDs were of a high standard and have been included in the national Media Library for loan to Lodges, Branches, Certified Groups and National Members.

Website

The web pages of Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups were updated on a regular basis. Each issue of *Theosophy in Australia* magazine produced during the year was placed online on the Section website. The indexing of *Brahmavidyā*, the Bulletin of the Adyar Library and Research Centre, was commenced. There was an average of 11,500 monthly visits to the site, the *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals* and *Links to Theosophical Texts Online* being among the most visited pages on the site. Also, the slide show 'The Perennial Philosophy – Past and Present' attracted many viewers.

Progress on redesigning the website commenced during 2013. This will include a slide show on the home page with facts about the TS, as well as facilities for PayPal payments, the use of online forms and a comprehensive clickable calendar of events. When completed, and when combined with e-Bulletins (see item under Annual Fund), this will improve our digital profile.

Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives

The Library continues to receive requests from around the world through OPAC (Open Public Access Catalogue) regarding articles and references belonging to the Campbell Library collection. A copy of Michael Gomes' book, *The Secret Doctrine Commentaries – The Unpublished 1889 Instructions*, by H. P. Blavatsky, was added to the collection. The collection of the late Rona Scott-Abbott, consisting of over forty paintings based on the Stanzas of Dzyan from *The Secret Doctrine*, as well as books, was graciously donated to the TS by her husband Ralph Abbott. Also, it is very encouraging that more scholars conducted research in the Library during the year under review: from Universität Duisburg-Essen, Germany, the University of Queensland, Macquarie University in Sydney, the Australian National University and Griffith University in Queensland.

National Lecturers

As a result of a decision by the National Council, *Supporting Lecturers* have been known as *National*

Lecturers since January. In addition to travels by the *National President* and the Acting *Education Coordinator*, Barry Bowden visited Canberra, Richard Larkin visited Tasmania and Perth, Simon O'Rourke visited several centres in Queensland, and Dianne Kynaston visited Canberra. Noel Bertelle, who passed away peacefully in September 2012, is remembered with much affection. The National Speakers Schedule on the website is updated regularly, indicating where and when speakers can be heard.

International Lecturers

Regrettably, as already mentioned, the planned tour by Dr Pablo Sender from the American Section had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances which required him to remain in the USA for the time being. See also the item under National Centres below.

Book Depot, National Headquarters

Books were sold regularly from a collection of selected texts held at the National Headquarters, also being available for purchase online through the national website under Resources/Books on Theosophy for Sale. This collection will be expanded.

NATIONAL CENTRES

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Queensland

In March our *Caretaker* of some fourteen years, Barry Hora, retired due to family reasons. His dedicated service at the Springbrook Centre over a long period is acknowledged with gratitude. Kay Schiefelbein was appointed as Acting *Caretaker* and was subsequently appointed as the Centre's *Caretaker* by the National Council at its mid-year meeting. Kay had already been managing the Centre in Barry's absence and had provided general assistance at Springbrook for approximately three years. An enthusiastic and capable person, we welcome her in this role.

The September 2012 event on 'Soul Nourishment' proved to be a good outreach event, about half of the participants being members of the public. The main presenter was Beverley Champion, a former *National President* of this Section. Her sessions were lively and interesting. Several participants travelled up from Sydney, with the remainder coming from south-eastern Queensland.

A very successful School of Theosophy took place in April on 'The Secret Doctrine: Esoteric Insights and Spiritual Practice'. The DVDs provided by Quest Books, USA, were followed by facilitated discussion. The School was well attended, with twenty-one students, and we were particularly happy to welcome five participants from overseas – four from the New Zealand Section and one from Indonesia. A number of messages of appreciation were received afterwards.

Canyonleigh Centre

A decision was made to let out Bolitho House at the Canyonleigh Centre to compatible groups, to help defray the costs of maintaining the property. Charlotte Stahl, a neighbour and long-time friend of Bill Bolitho who gifted the property to the Society, will oversee lettings, under the coordination of the *National Secretary*. Charlotte and her husband Ron helped to complete Bolitho House and also maintain the property.

A successful event was held by Dr Dara Tatray in May on 'Save Nature! But What is Nature and What are We that We Can Destroy it?'

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

(See also item on the Website, p.112.)

General

The National Headquarters assisted interested Lodges and Branches with publicity during the year through the inclusion of their programmes on the national website at no cost.

National Events

Appreciation is extended to TS centres which helped make known national events to their members and sympathisers.

OPAC

The substantial amount of detailed work on the Online Public Access Catalogue was continued during the year. Mention is made here of some selected items. Additions included several hundred coloured images of book covers as well as the creation of three new search lists – books for children, the Blavatsky Lecture series, and *The Secret Doctrine* reference series. The entry in Trove (the public access catalogue of the National Library) was amended to enable easier access and a direct link to OPAC. As

at 31 August the number of records entered were: Adelaide Lodge – 3166; Brisbane Lodge – 2947; the Campbell Theosophical Research Library – 2404; Launceston Lodge – 672; Melbourne Lodge – 5238. Also, the total number of records at the end of the year was 14,427.

National e-Bulletin

The basic design of the new national e-Bulletin was almost completed. (See also item on this under Annual Fund.)

Universities

In May I awarded the John Cooper Memorial Prize at the University of Sydney to the winners of the 2012 prize. The prize winners were Johanna Petsche for her postgraduate doctoral thesis on ‘Music for Remembering: The Gurdjieff/deHartmann Piano Music and its Esoteric Significance’; and Vivien Cinque for her undergraduate essay on ‘Choose one Hindu pilgrimage site that was active during the Classical period and discuss its significance (or lack thereof) to cosmology and/or the divine’. As always, it was a pleasure to meet faculty members and students.

Furthermore, I am delighted to report that our university outreach activities have been expanded. During the first half of 2013 I contacted Associate Professor Neil Pembroke, Head of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, offering a prize with the same scope as the John Cooper Memorial Prize which has been well received at the University of Sydney since 2000; that is, a prize on any aspect of the Perennial Philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions. The prize was agreed to by both the National Council and the University and is being offered for the first time this year. It will amount to \$1,500, split between a postgraduate and an undergraduate prize.

Publicity in Alternative Magazines

As the result of a suggestion from Blavatsky Lodge, the Acting *Education Coordinator* sent a 500 word article to *Nova* magazine on ‘Theosophy, Old and New’. The article was published in the June issue of the magazine which is distributed through 1,300 outlets around the country.

Advertising in magazines tends to be less expensive in regional areas. A noteworthy example during

the year was Atherton Lodge’s ongoing efforts at advertising in a local magazine and a local newspaper, as well as an alternative newspaper. This kind of effort is especially appreciated when national speakers are sent around, to help generate more interest in the TS.

Australian Entry, Online Theosophical Encyclopedia

The *Theosophical Encyclopedia* was conceived by Philip Harris, who was a well-known member of this Section and its General Editor, and published by the TS in the Phillipines in 2006. Dr John Algeo is now the General Editor of *Theosophedia*, an online version of this publication which revises and enlarges the original number of items. As a result of a request from Dr Algeo, the entry for the Australian Section was updated and may be readily viewed online.

SUPPORT

Support for TS Centres by National Headquarters

Support for TS centres included (although not exclusively) the ongoing provision of a variety of educational resources – DVDs, study courses and books; the provision of *National Lecturers* as well as visits by the *National President* and the Acting *Education Coordinator*; and support for Lodges/Branches experiencing issues that could not easily be resolved by their Committees. In relation to the latter, special thanks are extended to the *National Vice-President* Geoffrey Harrod, and Carolyn Harrod, for some assistance they provided to one Lodge.

Support to the International Headquarters

This year a portion of the cost of the Acting *Education Coordinator*’s forthcoming visit to Adyar in November, to conduct two weeks of classes at the School of the Wisdom, was paid by the Australian Section as part of its support of the work of the International Headquarters.

FINANCE

Special appreciation goes to both our *Assistant Treasurer* Beatrice Malka, who is a financial controller by profession, for overseeing the accounts and providing expert advice; and to Dara Tatrav, our *National Secretary*, who has worked hard to become familiar with many aspects of our chart of accounts, as well as drawing up the annual budget. In addition, we continue with the services of a bookkeeper.

Finance Committee

At its January meeting the National Council appointed the Finance Committee for 2013, consisting of the *Assistant Treasurer*, the *National Secretary* and the *National President*.

The Finance Committee met with our financial managers, Maple-Brown Abbott, during the year under review. Our approach to investments continues to be conservative, which has stood us in good stead for many years now.

Annual Fund

Donations to the Annual Fund each year are gratefully received, no matter how small. This fund is used for new educational initiatives and promotional activities for the TS in Australia. During the year a number of Annual Fund projects were either commenced or completed:

. Copies of the book *Concerning the Spiritual – The influence of the Theosophical Society on Australian Artists 1890-1934* were sent to those Lodges and Branches in the Section which have a library, as well as several overseas TS libraries.

. A professional company was engaged to design our new e-Bulletin. Bulletins will not be long but will typically include information such as a forthcoming event, an inspirational quote, a fact or two about the TS and some general information about the Society. A subscribe option will also be available to members of the public through the redesigned website, to help further publicise our activities.

. Also, a major Annual Fund project was commenced during the year to redesign the national website. (See item on the website, p.112.)

RULES

The members of the Rules Committee reviewed a number of sets of changes to Rules by Lodges/Branches during the year. Also, in June the National Council approved a set of Notices of Motion to amend the Section Rules in June. (Note: These are also being distributed with the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.)

REPORTS FROM LODGES/BRANCHES

Hobart Branch, TAS (chartered 1889)

Our oldest Branch managed to secure the services of a qualified volunteer librarian to catalogue and advise on library matters. Public meetings continued weekly, as well as once a month on the weekend. A meditation group was held in May and June.

Interstate visitors included the Acting *Education Coordinator* and *National Lecturer* Richard Larkin. One Branch member attended a workshop by Events Tasmania which will help in planning events next year for their 125th anniversary. The website was updated, with online discussion forums for members and the public set up. Unfortunately, access to the latter had to be restricted due to inappropriate behaviour by some members of the public. Also, TOS members met several times during the year and donated to various charities.

(See also item on Launceston Lodge regarding joint Tasmanian seminar.)

Melbourne Lodge, VIC (chartered 1890)

Melbourne Lodge hosted the Annual Convention in January, providing some much needed assistance in various ways and welcoming delegates. Public meetings were held twice a month during the year as well as members' meetings once a month. The *National President* visited. Also, the Acting *Education Coordinator* presented a well-attended seminar on 'The Bodhisattva Path: Mystical Teachings in *The Voice of the Silence*'. A number of groups were run during the year, e.g. 'Yoga', 'Meditation', 'Metaphysical Studies', 'Holistic Study of Religion, Philosophy, Science, Cultures and Civilisations' and 'Astrology'. Members of the TOS held a picnic.

Adelaide Lodge, SA (chartered 1891)

The library and bookshop continued their operations in the Lodge's attractive premises. A considerable amount of group work took place during the year. The study group for members on *The Secret Doctrine* continued twice a month. Other groups included 'Theosophy Science'; 'Theosophy/Religion/Spiritual Growth'; 'Journeys in the Perennial Wisdom'; '*The Voice of the Silence*'; 'Theosophy Watch'; 'Introduction to Esoteric Principles' and a book discussion group on *Ancient Wisdom – Modern Insight*. A retreat on 'Into the Voice of the Silence' was held, as well as an Easter weekend seminar on Buddhism. An enthusiastic new initiative was the commencement of a community radio programme on a Sunday morning with the cooperation of about eight members of the Lodge. Also, a Winter solstice dinner raised funds which went to the TOS.

Brisbane Lodge, QLD (chartered 1895)

As an outreach initiative, the Lodge has developed 'Library Postcards' which are being spread out into

the community. In addition, an advertising campaign has recently been started in a local holistic magazine. During the year visiting speakers included the *National President* and *National Lecturers* Simon O'Rourke and Barry Bowden. Group activities included 'Krishnamurti', 'Theosophy', 'Gnosis', 'Meditation' and '*The Bhagavad Gītā*'. Two silent meditation retreats were held at the Springbrook Centre. Among its other activities the TOS run a very successful art show which I was able to attend. A lot of effort was involved in setting up this attractive show, which proved very worthwhile.

Perth Branch, WA (chartered 1897)

Five study/discussion groups were run during the year under review: 'Sound Meditation', '*The Collected Writings of HPB – Isis Unveiled*', a Theosophy Science Discussion Group, an 'Introduction to Theosophy' course, and 'Concealed Wisdom in World Mythology'. Regular weekly members' meetings were held, with less frequent public meetings; these take place when there are visiting speakers. The March Easter seminar featured *National Lecturer* Richard Larkin, who gave several presentations on the topic 'Ancient Wisdom for Modern Times'. The *National President* also visited. During the year under review attention was given to the future viability of the Mt. Helena Centre, owned by the Branch. The Centre was closed for a period after severe storm damage, with restoration work taking approximately ten months. The TOS held healing meditations, normally once a month, and weekly yoga classes were conducted.

Launceston Lodge, TAS (chartered 1901)

Launceston Lodge held regular weekly meetings during the year: two members' meetings and two public meetings each month. Presentations included subjects such as 'The Perennial Philosophy', 'The Philosopher's Stone', 'Theosophy: an Introductory Study Course by John Algeo' and 'Presentation Techniques'. Programme highlights included presentations by *National Lecturer* Richard Larkin, Mervyn Haines from Hobart and Jenny Haslem. The library of the Lodge has been inactive for some time, with books in boxes, pending repair and refurbishment of the building. A successful and well attended joint weekend seminar was held in conjunction with Hobart Branch on 'The Nature of Being'. Presenters included Mervyn Haines from Hobart, the Acting *Education Coordinator*, *National*

Lecturer Dianne Kynaston and *State Representative* Denise Frost from Devonport.

Blavatsky Lodge, NSW (chartered 1922)

Highlights for our largest Lodge during the year included the introduction of the 'All Day Last Sunday of the Month' event; restructuring of the monthly members' meeting as the 'Members' Circle'; successful continuation of the Thursday afternoon discussion group; well attended study groups on *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Bhagavad Gītā*; the 'Magic Light' series involving discussion of theosophical themes in public films; and a lecture delivered by a speaker from the Blake Society. Weekly public meetings continued, and twelve book study classes were conducted as well as a number of discussion group sessions. Visiting speakers included *National Lecturer* Barry Bowden and a Buddhist nun, Sister Yeshe. The Adyar Library continued its activities, with a steady flow of donated books and DVDs. Also, the TOS conducted monthly talks, its major donations going to the Exodus Foundation and the Sri Narayana Orphanage.

Newcastle Lodge, NSW (chartered 1941)

This Lodge continued to meet on two evenings each month, one meeting being a study group on Annie Besant's book, *A Study in Consciousness*. A highlight during the year was a talk entitled 'Turkish Delights' by former *National Secretary* Philip Carter, concerning women in Freemasonry. *National Lecturer* Simon O'Rourke and the Acting *Education Coordinator* also visited and spoke. The Lodge's report indicates that attendance has decreased during the last twelve months, possibly partly due to the location of the current premises. It is understood that this is being reviewed by the Lodge.

Atherton Lodge, QLD (chartered 1950)

A decision was made to pay for advertisements every month in *Connect* magazine, an alternative magazine which covers North Queensland. Highlights during the year included visits by the *State Representative* Geoffrey Harrod, *National Lecturer* Simon O'Rourke and the *National President*. Titles of some of the presentations included 'Mindfulness', 'Homer's Odyssey' and 'Poverty, Wealth and the Spiritual Path'. The Lodge reports an increase in attendance compared with the previous year due to visits by a number of high quality speakers.

Canberra Branch, ACT (chartered 1971)

Discussion group meetings were held in most months and proved popular. The Branch found that moving to some faculty rooms at the Australian National University for this purpose was helpful and economical. Topics discussed included 'Highlights of the 2013 TS Convention', 'C.W. Leadbeater and his Influence on Society, Art and Religion' and 'Healing Methods and Experiences'. Visiting speakers included the *National President*, the Acting *Education Coordinator* and *National Lecturer* Barry Bowden. The Branch continued to produce informative quarterly newsletters. Also, a small TOS group was active, with participants contributing to fund-raising efforts at a series of lunches/coffee mornings.

Sunshine Coast Lodge, QLD (chartered 2004)

Members' meetings and public meetings were held during the year at two venues – Buderim and Noosa/Tewantin. Meetings at both places enjoyed a good, steady level of attendance. At the time of receipt of the Lodge's Annual Report, a retreat planned for later in the year had been filled almost to capacity. The *National President* visited during the year as well as *National Lecturer* Barry Bowden. Also the TOS group continued to raise funds, enabling assistance to be given to some charities.

REPORTS FROM CERTIFIED GROUPS**Blue Mountains Group, NSW**

The Blue Mountains Group enjoyed stimulating study and discussion during the year and is now in its third year at a Katoomba address. The meeting format consists of an affirmation and short meditative silence, study or else listening to a guest speaker, followed by a break and then further study. The Group met for study on *The Voice of the Silence* once each month, with a weekly study group on *The Secret Doctrine* held once a week for the remainder of the month. In addition, several talks were given by guest speakers.

Gosford Group, NSW

The members of this group continued to meet once a month except in January. A monthly book study group was also conducted. Refreshments were brought by members and shared after meetings and study classes. Phone calls and visits were made to members who need support. Several Sydney members visited and spoke during the year as well as the *National*

President. Such visits are much appreciated. Also, some members of the Group attend TS lectures in Sydney and National Conventions.

Northern Beaches Group, NSW

This small but dedicated Group normally met monthly, with a change of venue during the year. Visiting speakers included the *National President* and *National Lecturer* Simon O'Rourke. Presentations included discussion on the Stanzas of Dzyan and the paintings of Rona Scott, 'Theosophy in the 21st Century', 'On Simplicity – a Key to Inner Spiritual Ecology', 'The Process in Which Consciousness Produces Physical Reality' and 'In Search of the Holy Grail'.

Toowoomba Group, QLD

A regular two-monthly newsletter was commenced by an enthusiastic Toowoomba Group member. The group held a camping weekend twice during the year, with invitations extended more widely to other members and friends. A weekend was held at the Springbrook Centre on the theme 'Discovery of Self'. Public meetings were held once a month, as were members' meetings. Presentations were given by several visiting speakers on subjects such as 'The Odyssey', 'Thought and Transformation – a Hero's Journey', 'The Cycle of Day and Night', 'Can we Maintain Non-dual Consciousness in a Dual World?', and 'Living the *Gītā*'.

Mornington Peninsula Group, VIC

This group, possibly our oldest Certified Group, continued to meet monthly throughout the year except in January and the annual report received from the Coordinator mentions that it is functioning well and harmoniously. A number of speakers from the Melbourne area gave presentations as well as the Acting *Education Coordinator*. Titles of some presentations were 'The Four Noble Truths', 'The Spiritual Hierarchy', 'The Golden Stairs', 'Keys to Understanding *The Secret Doctrine*', 'The Ancient Language of Symbolism' and 'Mythology – an Inner Guide to Self-Discovery'.

Wodonga-Albury Group, VIC

Volunteer members of the Wodonga-Albury Group continued with their commendable work of opening the Group's library to the public for four hours every weekday. During the year group activities included 'Meditation', 'The Perennial Philosophy' and a weekly discussion and study group. Visiting

speakers included the Acting *Education Coordinator* and the *National President*. In addition to the study of several books, there were also some readings from *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*.

THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

The report sent by the *National Coordinator* of the TOS indicates that the highlight of the TOS year was the Annual General Meeting held during the 2013 Convention in Melbourne, providing an opportunity to meet and learn from each other.

At the AGM the international projects agreed to were:

(a) continuing to support the literacy home schools run by the TOS in Pakistan

(b) developing a project at Kitui, Kenya to educate women to be self-sufficient and earn a livelihood

(c) a new project run by the TOS in Bhubaneswar, India, providing billboards to heighten community awareness to stop violence against women

Many local groups on their own initiative supported the Golden Link College in the Philippines, as well as projects in India – the Mobility Aids project, the SEE venture and the Adyar animal clinic. Also, throughout the year members were active in their local groups and communities, each group being autonomous.

The quarterly TOS bulletin has helped to keep people informed of what is going on nationally and internationally in the TOS world. The 3rd International Conference of the TOS was held at the National Headquarters of the TS in the USA. A report can be found at www.international.theoservice.org.

The *National Coordinator* also mentioned in her report that interested members can email tos.australia@gmail.com.

CONCLUSION

An impressive amount of activity has gone on throughout the year around the Section and some important new initiatives have commenced. At the same time, as will be seen in the annual membership analysis table below, there has been a further loss of members during the year. It is important that we do not become complacent, that we actively value and nurture members and consider ways in which membership of this Society can be made as meaningful and rewarding as possible. The National Headquarters is here to support Lodges, Branches, Groups and members. Please do not hesitate to contact us if assistance is required or if there are issues of concern. Your participation is important to us.

Annual Membership Analysis of Lodge/Branch Membership as at 31/08/2013

Lodge/Branch	Members 31-Aug-12	Trans in	New	Rejoin	Total in	Resign	Lapse	Dec	Trans out	Total Out	Members 31-Aug-13	Diff
Adelaide	95	0	10	5	15	1	15	0	0	16	94	-1
Atherton	17	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	19	2
Blavatsky	232	0	8	11	19	14	20	1	1	36	215	-17
Brisbane	85	0	1	4	5	1	15	1	0	17	73	-12
Canberra	16	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	19	3
Hobart	26	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	2	8	19	-7
Launceston	28	1	1	0	2	0	4	0	0	4	26	-2
Melbourne	182	1	13	4	18	1	35	3	1	40	160	-22
Newcastle	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	15	-1
Perth	139	0	19	10	29	1	23	3	0	27	141	2
Sunshine Coast	89	0	8	0	8	4	13	0	1	18	79	-10
Sub Total	925	2	65	35	102	23	127	12	5	167	860	-65
National	135	3	11	2	16	1	23	1	1	26	125	-10
Total	1060	5	76	37	118	24	150	13	6	193	985	-75

2014 Annual Convention

for TS members

The Women's College, University of Sydney

Tues 21 – Tues 28 January

Photo courtesy The Women's College

Theme: 'Theosophical Landscapes: History, Culture and the Arts'

Key Speakers:

Prof. Garry Trompf, Emeritus Professor, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney

Fiona Fraser, Ph.D. Candidate in Music and History, ANU

Full programme: see page 120.

Registration Fee (non-refundable):

\$40 per person – includes entry to any or all sessions during the week.

Registration Forms: on the Section's website www.austheos.org.au/what's on

Also available from Lodges/Branches around the Section

Cost: \$89 per night including all meals, and morning and afternoon teas

Some rooms are still available for registrants who wish to live in.

Deadline for full payment, live-in registrants: no later than **Friday 22 November**.

Join us for a week of diverse presentations and like-minded company, including a day outing to the Central Coast as well as afternoon tea at the Manor on the Sydney harbour foreshore – a spiritual community which is possibly the oldest of its kind in Australia.

Further Enquiries: Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary,
TS National Headquarters

Tel: 02 9264 7056 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 9.00am – 3.30pm)

email: Jennifer@austheos.org.au

2014 Convention Programme

Theme: Theosophical Landscapes – History, Culture and the Arts
21-28 January, The Women's College, University of Sydney

Tues 21 January

7.30pm Welcome, Introduction – Key Speakers, Workshops
Greetings to the Convention
Reception – Light Refreshments

Wed 22 January

6.30am Qigong
7.30am Morning Attunement
9.15am Official Opening of Convention
**ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA**
Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies
Confirmation of Minutes of 2013 Convention Business Meeting
National President's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2013
National Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2013
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended 31 August 2013,
and Auditor's Report thereon
Budget for the Year Ending 31 August 2014
Appointment of Auditor
Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers and National Council Members
Announcement of Ballot Results:
- Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia/Northern Territory
Notices of Motion
Place and Time of Next Convention
Resolutions of Goodwill
Any Other Business
INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION SESSION
2.00pm The Theosophical Order of Service
'Being of Service in an Interstellar Intracellular Universe' - Keith Howes, followed by
Overview of the recent TOS International Conference held at Wheaton, July 2013
- Carolyn Harrod, Dianne Manning and Jean Carroll
4.00pm 'Phyllis Campbell and the Colour of Sound'
KEY SPEAKER: Fiona Fraser
followed by a live performance of some of music composed by Phyllis Campbell
7.30pm 'Rukmini Devi Arundale - an Inspirational Life'
- Isolde Sueltemeyer

Thurs 23 January

6.30am Qigong
7.30am Morning Attunement

- 9.15am Short Talks:
 'Amphitheatre and Airwaves - 20th century Cultural Experiments' - Linda Oliveira
 'Theosophy on Air in 2013' - Nancy Inkster
- 11.00am 'Music and Spirituality - the Influence of Theosophy on Modern Art Music'
 KEY SPEAKER: Fiona Fraser
- 4.00pm Workshops
 Edward Sinclair: 'Working with *The Secret Doctrine*'
 Pamela Peterson: 'Mystical Landscapes Revisited - What is Their Significance?'
 Horacio Paz: Tai Chi
- 7.30pm Emmy award winning DVD on Dr Albert Schweitzer
 'My Life is My Argument'

Fri 24 January

- 7.30am Attunement
 OUTING AND PICNIC LUNCH
- 7.30pm 'Songs for Voice and Guitar' - concert with Wendy Dixon

Saturday 25 January

- 7.30am Attunement
- 9.15am 'Healing with Intent' - Dara Tatray
- 11.00am 'The Wisdom Tradition in Today's Culture':
 Film - Simon O'Rourke
 The Layout of Canberra - Tony Fearnside
 Indigenous Australian Culture - Dianne Kynaston
- 4.00pm 'Madame Blavatsky's Macrohistorical Vision: from *Isis Unveiled* to
The Secret Doctrine'
 PUBLIC TALK - KEY SPEAKER Prof. Garry Trompf
- 7.30pm 'A Journey to Tibet' - audio/visual presentation, Helen Lambert

Sunday 26 January

- 6.30am Qigong
- 7.30am Attunement
- 9.15am Short Talks
 'Foundations of a New Continent of Thought' - Pedro Oliveira
 'Esoteric Teachings of Plato' - Lynette Muller
- 11.00am Workshops
 Stephen McDonald: 'J. Krishnamurti's Teachings'
 Phillipa Rooke: 'Eastern Landscapes of Spirituality'
 Horacio Paz: 'Tai Chi'
- 2.00pm The Theosophical Order of Service: AGM
- 4.00pm 'Rudolph Steiner as Teacher and Occultist' - Barry Bowden
- 7.30pm 'Cosmic Birth - the Rona Scott Collection'

Monday 27 January

- 6.30am Qigong
- 7.30am Attunement
- 9.15am 'Kepler: Man of Two Worlds' - Brian Harding
- 11.00am Q and A: Brian Parry, Phillipa Rooke, Stephen McDonald and David Allan
- 4.00pm Perspectives on the Convention
 Invitation to 2015 Convention, Adelaide
 Closing of Convention (National President)
- 7.30pm An evening with the Sydney Jazz Collective

Tuesday 28 January Departures

Results – Election of State Representatives

As announced in the June 2013 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, nominations were called for one *State Representative* for each of the Electoral States of Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia / Northern Territory.

As there was only one candidate for each of the Electoral States of Tasmania and South Australia/ Northern Territory, the following were re-elected unopposed:

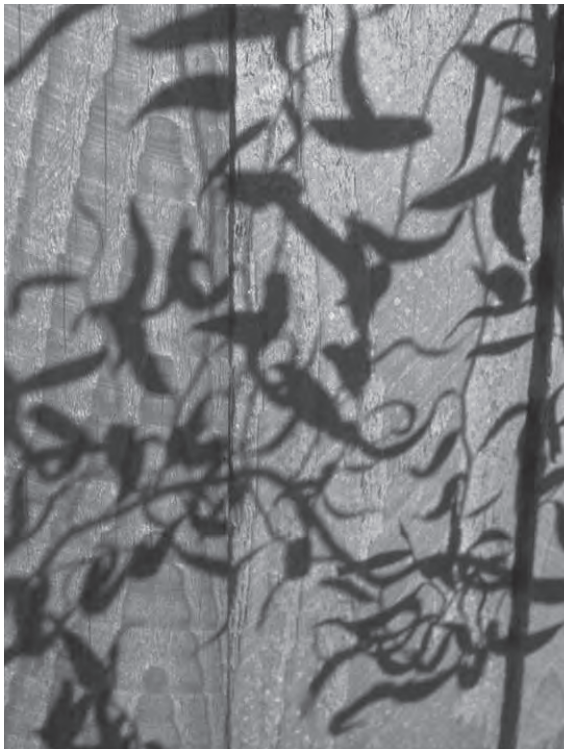
Tasmania: Denise Frost

South Australia/Northern Territory: Travis James

As there was only one candidate for the Electoral State of Queensland, the following member was elected unopposed.

Queensland: Phillipa Rooke

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



The truth is that we hardly know anything! We are like the space occupied by the earth in the universe – close to zero! We must have the humility to acknowledge this, and to look for newer ways of regenerating ourselves spiritually, because the truth is that all spiritual practices, no matter how sophisticated and inspiring at the beginning, tend to flatten and deaden with time. It takes a great deal of self-awareness and humility to see this and to awaken the sparkle in us that can see the wonder and mystery and the presence of Spirit everywhere and at all times!

Devdas Menon

National Calendar of Events...



Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook QLD
Fri 25 April – Thurs 1 May 2014
2014 SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY
For Members Only
Theme: THE SECRET GATEWAY TO OUR INNER SELF



International Guest Presenter: Ed Abdill, Vice-President, TS in America
Overview:

The Ageless Wisdom tradition reveals a key that leads to freedom from human suffering. That key lies in universal principles discoverable in our own nature. This course will point us toward the secret gateway that opens inwardly to the inner Self. It will help us discover our own soul and spirit. Evidence, rather than beliefs, will be presented for consideration, and an effort will be made to induce participants to experience something of the reality that the Ageless Wisdom describes as the immortal SELF.

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

It is recommended that members register soon for this special event.

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



CANYONLEIGH CENTRE

The next Canyonleigh event will be announced in the March 2014 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, on the national website and through the e-Bulletin.

2014 ANNUAL CONVENTION FOR TS MEMBERS

Theme: 'Theosophical Landscapes: History, Culture and the Arts'
See full advertisement on page 119 and programme on pp.120-121.

Viewpoint

Re: Animals and Theosophy
(p.69, September 2013 issue)

Thank you for a very interesting issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

Whilst reading Beverley Champion's 'Animals and Theosophy', it brought to mind a small book I read many years ago. It was written by George Arundale and he describes his night time experiences during the years of the 1939-45 World War. The title of the book, *The Night Bell*, referred to his out-of-body activities after putting his physical body to sleep. One particular episode affected me profoundly. The following is an excerpt from the book in which Arundale is with a Master of the Wisdom. The Master, whom Arundale does not name, made 'A Call to Humanity'. He said:

The Cry of the suffering of animals is forever sounding in the ears of men.

But few there are who heed the Cry, and fewer still who act.

It is a Cry the more piercing for that the suffering is caused by those upon whose dull ears its tragic sounds beat in vain.

It is a Cry the more penetrating for that there can be no Peace in the world until it be stilled by Righteousness.

In this universal war for Brotherhood, is mankind fighting for the entry of animals into the Brotherhood of Life, or do injustice, tyranny and cruelty still reign in the hearts of men?

War – a terrible incarnation of ignorance – must still remain while the Cry of the suffering of animals persists in unheeded anguish.

Then he sent a cry – perhaps I should better say a Call – ringing through the world. He turned away

from me as a specific individual to the whole of us humanity:

Who will dedicate his humanity to the relieving of this Cry, and thus help to release mankind from that inhumaneness which prevents it from being truly human?

He pointed out that humanity may be called humanity, but will not be really humanity until the vast majority of its constituent beings become humane; for that is the great purpose of the human kingdom.

Noël Duzevich, Bindoon, WA.

Re: 'A Quiet Revolution?'
(p.67, September 2013 issue)

What does Universal brotherhood really mean? Besides the TS definition, does it mean that we are all just nice to each other? But what do we do if someone is not nice? Or even better, what do we do when someone is nice upfront but somehow we do not feel 'nice' afterwards? I guess that to keep feeling warm and fuzzy we start avoiding certain situations or people. Confrontation and Universal Brotherhood seem not to go well in the same sentence. However, I don't think avoidance should be the right strategy. Isn't avoidance the beginning of the end of a group? Maybe we have lost the skill to see beyond the words to the heart.

My point is, group leaders or facilitators must have the ability to protect the group from harm and keep it harmonious. Therefore, it should be our priority to equip our leaders/group facilitators with the right tools and skills to encourage and uphold Universal Brotherhood in our community. So I ask myself and the community, would it be a good idea to develop

an education strategy to uphold universal brotherhood? It could include all sorts of subjects: Emotional intelligence, dealing with difficult people, et cetera.

Elmar Pappenreiter, Melbourne

Re: The First Object and Positive Deviance, September 2013 issue

I have two comments. One is on the First Object which among other things mentions forming a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. The nucleus means a powerful centre radiating energy in all directions. If we drop a stone in a pool of water, circular waves go in all directions endlessly. The drop point becomes the nucleus of waves. Similarly each TS member needs to become a nucleus of energy to attract attention of all who come in contact, creating a bond of brotherhood.

The second comment is about positive deviance. PD is a technique that uncovers innovations that are invisible in plain sight, and is illustrated by a story:

In one of his many guises Nasruddin, the mystic Sufi character, appeared on earth as a smuggler, arriving at the customs checkpoint at the end of each day leading a herd of donkeys. The customs inspector would feverishly turn upside down the contents of the hung baskets but find nothing of interest. Years went by and Nasruddin's legend as a smuggler grew in proportion to the rising frustration of the inspector. One day, after both Nasruddin and the inspector retired from their respective occupations, their paths crossed. 'Tell me Nasruddin', pleaded his former adversary,

'What were you smuggling?' 'Donkeys', said Nasruddin.

So the obvious was being missed. In modern research techniques the PD approach is used to look for the uncommon in society – those who are doing things a little differently and succeeding. This helps uncover innovations that are invisible in plain sight, for the benefit of others.

Mahendra Singhal
International Vice-President, Adyar

Re: September 2013 issue:

Just a brief note to express my very deep appreciation for yet another fine issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

The articles in issues of our magazine are not only thought-provoking but do also provide sound guidance for making Australia a better place to live.

Dr Arthur Mowle, National Member, Western Australia

Re: September 2013 issue

Just a quick note to say how deeply inspiring each issue of *T in A* is and I want to thank you and the Editorial Committee for the selection of the written submissions. Reading the articles every time is so uplifting and reaffirms my membership and bigger picture commitment to the Society's work.

Esther Pockrandt, Sunshine Coast



Once anger is conquered by tolerance, insight, and forgiveness, its furious fire is available to be creatively used by wisdom. The force that was so destructive is transformed into heroic energy.

Robert Thurman

Theosophical Order of Service



Report on International Conference in Chicago

In July this year I attended the back-to-back conferences of the TS in America followed by our International TOS conference. Both these get-togethers had a similar focus based on change. 'Be the Change' was the TS theme and the TOS concentrated on 'TOS into the Future'. Change was certainly in the air.

In the opening ceremony our TOS International Secretary, Diana Dunningham-Chapotin, International TS Vice-President Brother Mahendra P. Singhal, National President of the TS in America Tim Boyd, and President of the TOS in America Nancy Secrest, welcomed delegates. Also, our International TOS President, Mrs Radha Burnier, and Joy Mills, sent greetings for a successful conference.

During the next three days sixty delegates embraced the concept of change with enthusiasm. Diana Dunningham-Chapotin chaired the sessions with the assistance of Carolyn Harrod, our TOS Treasurer. Inspirational speakers motivated us prior to the variety of workshops

on offer. These workshops were designed to enable all delegates to contribute their vision for our future. The results of these insights were then collated and will filter down to our various groups worldwide. Consequently, all members will be able to participate in this creative and far-sighted exercise to take the TOS forward. An amazing vibrancy developed and I felt truly blessed to be participating.

Carolyn Harrod gave a superb overview of the TOS international web site. I encourage all of you to look closely at this site as there is so much information from setting up groups, to ways to raise funds, ideas for events, information on theosophical style funerals, and a host of other essential and practical information for TOS national groups: www.international.theoservice.org

Members expressed their gratitude to both Diana and Carolyn for their futuristic approach to this conference. For information on TOS Australia go to:

www.australia.theoservice.org

Jean Carroll, National Coordinator
TOS Australia

Australian delegates in this photo include National TOS Coordinator Jean Carroll, Sunshine Coast (3rd from left at front); Carolyn Harrod, Brisbane; Dorothy Bell, Mornington Peninsula; and Dianne Manning, Brisbane.



Annual Index

Annual index	127	Niedjie, Bill: Tree (poem)	22
Annual Membership Analysis	118	Novy, Celia: A Vegetarian Lifestyle	106
All the Problems are Caused by Me: Brian Parry	15	Oliveira, Linda: Theosophical Insights and Our Global Village	35
Animals and Theosophy: Beverly Champion	69	Oliveira, Pedro: Can a Theosophist be a Christian? 11 On the Watch-Tower: Radha Burnier	2, 66
Ātmagitā; Geoffrey Barborka (poem)	74	Ossenberg, Patricia: Thoughts (poem)	51
Barborka, Geoffrey: Ātmagitā (poem)	74	Parry, Brian: All the Problems are Caused by Me	15
Be Still and Know: Helen Steven	44	Politics and World Peace (from the Archives): Peter Bowden	47
Bowden, Peter: Politics and World Peace (from the Archives)	47	Q and A	60, 90
Burnier, Radha: On the Watch-Tower	2, 66	Result – Election of State Representative	32
Can a Theosophist be a Christian?: Pedro Oliveira	11	Reviews	30, 94
Champion, Beverley: Animals and Theosophy	69	Rites, Norms and Positive Deviance: Olga Gostin	79
Convention 2014: Advertisement	119	Rooke, Phillipa: Unity	87
Convention 2014: Agenda for Business Meeting	92	Scarabottolo, Janice: Convention 2013 – A Personal Perspective	56
Convention 2014: Programme	120	Science and Holistic Consciousness: Brian Harding	75
Convention 2013: Annual Business Meeting Minutes	52	<i>Secret Doctrine</i> as Spiritual Practice, <i>The</i> : Pablo Sender	4
Convention 2013 – A Personal Perspective: Janice Scarabottolo	56	Section Directory – Inside Back Cover	
Convention 2013 – Snapshots	58, 59	Sender, Pablo: <i>The Secret Doctrine</i> as Spiritual Practice	4
Education	29, 61, 91	State Representatives, Call for Nominations (Qld, Tas, SA/NT)	55
Evolution and the Intelligence of Life: Victor Gostin	103	State Representatives, Election Results (Qld, Tas, SA/NT)	122
Fearnside, Tony: Trees and the Third Object	19	State Representatives, Election Result (WA)	32
From the Archives:		Steven, Helen: Be Still and Know	44
From the National President	3, 34, 67, 98	Tatray, Dara: Let's Not Forget About Theosophy Itself	40
Letter from Launceston Lodge member	23	Theosophical Insights and Our Global Village: Linda Oliveira	35
Gospel of Thomas, The: Richard Larkin	99	Theosophical Order of Service	126
Gostin, Olga: Rites, Norms and Positive Deviance	79	Theosophical Society and the United Nations, The: TOS	88
Gostin, Victor: Evolution and the Intelligence of Life	103	Thoughts: Patricia Ossenberg (poem)	51
Guidelines for Conduct, TS in Australia	68	Tour – International Speaker Dr Pablo Sender	26
Harding, Brian: Science and Holistic Consciousness	75	Tree (poem): Bill Neidjie	22
Hawthorne, Mark: Letter from 1912	23	Trees and the Third Object: Tony Fearnside	19
Indo-Pacific Conference, Triennial, November 2013: Advertisement	27	Triennial Indo-Pacific Federation Conference, The	27
Larkin, Richard: The Gospel of Thomas	99	Unity: Phillipa Rooke	87
Letter from 1912: Mark Hawthorne	23	Vegetarian Lifestyle, A: Celia Novy	106
Let's Not Forget About Theosophy Itself: Dara Tatray	40	Viewpoint	62, 124
National Calendar of Events	28, 57, 93, 123	Winslow, Diana Gracey: The Theosophical Society and the United Nations	88
National President's Annual Report	108	Zahara, Joseph: Zen Buddhism (from the Archives)	83
News and Notes	31, 63, 95, 128	Zen Buddhism (from the Archives): Joseph Zahara	83

News & Notes

2014 Tour – Ed Abdill, USA

We look forward to welcoming Ed Abdill from the USA to Australia in April/May next year. Ed will visit more than half of our Lodges/Branches and will also conduct the morning study classes at the annual School of Theosophy to be held in late April (see page 123.) An itinerary of his tour will appear in the March 2014 magazine.

Appointment of National Lecturers

At its mid-year meeting, the National Council appointed the following members as National Lecturers for the Australian Section in 2014:

Barry Bowden
Dr Brian Harding
Dianne Kynaston
Richard Larkin
Simon O'Rourke

If Lodges/Branches are interested in any particular speakers please contact the National President, who arranges the national speakers

schedule, directly. Requests will be fitted in where possible, taking into account the spread of speakers around the Section.

Voting on Notices of Motion, National Members

National members may vote on the Notices of Motion which are being mailed with this magazine. Please contact the National Secretary for details:
natsec@austheos.org.au

New e-Bulletin

The first e-Bulletin was emailed in September to over 350 members and has met with some very positive responses. If you would like to receive these Bulletins (six or more per year) from the National Headquarters, please send your email address directly to Gil Murdoch: web@austheos.org.au

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.



Left:
Mid-year seminar at Launceston organised by Hobart Branch and Launceston Lodge. Guest presenters: Acting Education Coordinator Pedro Oliveira and National Lecturer Dianne Kynaston

Right:
Members of Perth Branch during a visit by the National President in the second half of the year.



Section Directory

Australian Section National Headquarters

4th Floor, 484 Kent Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 0163 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
www.austheos.org.au
Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
campbell@austheos.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

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

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:
2nd & 3rd Floors, 484 Kent Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: 02 9267 6955 Fax: 02 9283 3772
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au
www.tssydney.org.au
Meet: 2.00pm Wednesdays
President: Stephen McDonald
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
8.00pm 2nd Friday each month
(excluding January)
Study group (members) confirm dates
with Lodge
http://www.austheos.org.au/newcastle/
President: Melanie Ball
Tel: 02 4948 1733 - please leave message

Blue Mountains Group:

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

Gosford Group:

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

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

Northern Beaches Group:

Postal address: c/- The Manor,
2 Iluka Road, Mosman NSW 2088
Meet: c/ Dawn Kagan,
2/78-80 Alexander Street,
Crows Nest NSW 2065
8.00 pm 3rd Friday each month
Coordinator: Dai Trandang
Tel: 0438 357 522

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:

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

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:

355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000
Tel: 07 3839 1453
Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au
www.theosophyqld.org.au
Meet: 7.30pm Fridays
President: Phillipa Rooke
Secretary: Phoebe Williams

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
7.00pm Thursdays
President: vacant
Tel: 07 5441 7658
Email: joyglynn@bigpond.com.au
Secretary: Joyce Thompson

Toowoomba Group:

Meet: 49 Lindsay Street, Toowoomba
1st Wednesday at 7pm and 3rd Sunday at
2:30pm each month
(Meditation 1pm & Study Group at 1:30pm)
Annual Springbrook Retreat each winter
Coordinator: Barry Bowden
Tel: 0427 751 464

South Australia

Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: 08 8223 1129
Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au
http://www.austheos.org.au/adelaide
Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday
of every month. Please contact Lodge for
additional meeting dates.
President: Marlene Bell
Secretary: Francisca Tyssen

Tasmania

Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000

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

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

54 Elizabeth Street, Launceston, TAS 7250
Postal address: 66 Flinders Street,
Beauty Point, TAS 7270
email: rmholt@gmail.com
www.austheos.org.au/launceston
Meetings: Wednesdays commencing
7.00 pm for meditation, followed
by meeting at 7.30 pm
President: Tony Harrison
Secretary: Ruth Holt
Tel: 0448 397 246

Victoria

Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
email: meltheos@netspace.net.au
Meet: 2nd, 3rd and 4th Tuesdays, 6.00pm
President: Kari Torgersen
Secretary: Ken Edwards

Mornington Peninsula Group:

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

Wodonga-Albury Group:

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

Western Australia

Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:

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

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

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

Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Qld

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

