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

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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



Welcome to another varied issue of *Theosophy in Australia*. Subjects covered include HPB's Diagram of Meditation and how it can help us deal with suffering; the timeless story of Plato's Cave; some Buddhist essentials; and ritual and the Theosophical World.

What is particularly apparent, as one reads through articles in the coming pages, is the tremendous reach of Theosophical principles across cultures and time. Theosophy neither started nor ended with HPB. Rather, she simply reintroduced Theosophy to the world very publicly, and at great personal cost. Even today, Theosophy would not be accepted by many people as being of particular importance, with the world groaning under the heavy hand of excessive materialism on the one hand, and one of its outcomes – extreme scarcity – on the other.

Comments by HPB in *The Key to Theosophy* attest to the fact that Theosophy is a lineage which has existed since antiquity, with incarnations in the East and the West.

For example:

The WISDOM-RELIGION was ever one, and being the last word of possible human knowledge, was, therefore, carefully preserved. It preceded by long ages the Alexandrian Theosophists, reached the modern, and will survive every other religion and philosophy.

The term 'lineage' implies a line of ancestry, heritage, even a birthright. Ethics have run through each manifestation of this tradition. Therefore, in an environment of what seems to be increasingly rapid change, Theosophy can become a steady foundation for a sane, thoughtful and 'other centred' approach to life. Various teachings promulgated by the TS are so familiar that words like 'karma', 'dharma', 'deva', 'samskara' and 'samsāra' all appear in *The Australian Concise Oxford dictionary*, and no doubt in many others around the world. Therefore in one sense, they have been diffused.

Has the work of the TS therefore been completed? Far from it! The TS needs to keep the principles, the many

specific teachings associated with Theosophy, and the spirit of enquiry, very much alive and focussed. Without such a spirit we may become like the men depicted in Plato's Cave, only perceiving shadows and impervious to a much greater world outside the cave – remaining as cave dwellers!

This Society still has a valid and meaningful role in the world. One risk with the very diffusion of these extraordinary concepts – excellent though this fact may be from our point of view – could be the tendency for them to be diluted and not very deeply understood. For example, while karma is freely mentioned in many quarters, most people probably do not understand its many subtle nuances, along with the strong responsibility that it places on each of us, as evolving souls and planetary citizens. In fact, although we perceive the outworkings of karma every day, the

intelligence behind its operations is an unfathomable mystery.

Then again, the relevance of the Society is underscored by humanity's ongoing problems and lack of cohesion as one essential race – the human race.

Dr Robert Ellwood has affirmed Theosophy as a profoundly positive and optimistic tradition,

for it says there is meaning and it can be known. This implies a real underlying relationship between human life, words, ideas, and the infinite cosmos, which in itself tells us there is nothing to be pessimistic about in the last analysis. It says this relationship can be discovered in the most deeply human of activities, asking the right questions in a spirit of real concern and wonder. (*Theosophy: A Modern Expression of the Wisdom of the Ages*)

Enjoy this issue.



A visitor to the National Headquarters in April. left to right: Pedro Oliveira, Dianne Kynaston, Dr Pablo Sender, Linda Oliveira

Till the Last Tear

Phillipa Rooke



Angkor Wat, Sam Garza.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

I was fortunate to participate in a TOS tour of Cambodia. What an amazing tour. We had some wonderful experiences! It was an eye-opening glimpse into a country trying to emerge from a tragic recent history, still suffering from a centuries old feudalistic mentality. Lovely people, friendly and helpful, but so much in need.

The great and crumbling remains of Angkor Wat were fascinating to wander through. The vastness of what was a great empire a thousand or so years ago was still awe-inspiring. The Angkor empire was ruled by a king whose word was the be-all and end-all. The common people worked to produce for those under whom they were placed. To a large extent though, the people of Angkor were accommodated with good systems of social infrastructure: irrigation for their crops, roads, et cetera. This same hierarchical social order is in place today under the

thin disguise of democracy. Today however, the people, most of whom are in rural areas, generally suffer from poverty. They do not have safe drinking water, lack entirely or else have minimal education, and have no sanitation and a very poor social infrastructure, unlike their Angkor predecessors. Access to medical facilities is beyond the reach of the average person. In the time up to and during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, two million citizens, including all the intellectuals of the country, had been killed. A whole strata of society which could have contributed informed opinions, moral and educational leadership, justice and judgment, had been wiped out. So much suffering! I returned feeling overwhelmed and saddened by the difficulties confronting Cambodia and its people.

However, for some months before travelling to Cambodia, I had been working with HPB's Diagram of Meditation. I would like to look at that

one aspect of Theosophy and how it can help us face the state of the world, maintaining balance in order to act.

The Diagram of Meditation – its Starting Point

The Diagram of Meditation is said to be a mere outline, the shading and colouring to be filled in by each who work with it. It starts with: *First conceive of UNITY by Expansion in space and infinite in Time.* If we can get even a small idea of this UNITY, it puts the present, us and our world into a very broad context.

In working with this statement, I prefer to make the nomenclature slightly different, working with the terms ‘infinite space’ and ‘eternal time’.

Let us look first at the concept of infinity with regard to space. When you think of the immensity of space with its millions of light years, it is impossible to have a true grasp of such distances. In 2014 astronomers detected a mysterious signal from the Perseus cluster, 240 million light years away. If it is that far away, then the actual reality of infinite space is totally inconceivable to the finite mind. The concept of infinite space can take in the seen universe, as well as the as yet unseen parts of the universe. There we

have the conundrum: infinite space, finite mind.

The concept of eternity with regard to time can be equally mind blowing, and mind eluding.

An informative analogy puts into perspective just the relative time of human habitation on Earth. If the Earth formed at midnight and the present moment is the next midnight, 24 hours later, modern humans have been around since 23 hours 59 minutes and 59 seconds. For one second. That is all! Our unfoldment has been exceedingly brief in the grand order of evolution but in order for ‘us’ to happen, a vast sequence of time was necessary to create the conditions for us to exist; seemingly unfathomable lengths of time.

Following on from the first statement of all space and all time comes the instruction, *Then meditate logically and consistently on this in reference to states of consciousness.* Anyone who has sat down just to focus on infinity with regard to space, and eternity in reference to time, will possibly know how such an exercise even momentarily changes our perspective of the here and now. You come back from that experience changed. It would seem that in working with this idea, we are forced to activate aspects of ourselves

which have not been awakened and are not part of our normal waking consciousness.

From this vast concept of all time and all space comes the realisation that the present is part of a much larger context, an immense process. We and the Ten Thousand Things are all part of this process and along the way, each tiny molecule has played its part in their unfoldment, as we must do now.

First Acquisition

Following these initial statements about UNITY, there emerge what HPB calls the ‘acquisitions’, of which there are three. These acquisitions, she says, must mould the normal state of our consciousness.

The first acquisition starts with: *From ... perpetual presence in imagination in all Space and Time ... originates a substratum of memory which does not cease in dreaming or waking. Its manifestation is courage.*

Can you imagine the mind that can maintain ‘perpetual presence in imagination in all Space and Time’? What would that mind look like, how would it feel, and how would that mind operate in the world? Perhaps it would be able to operate mostly beyond what

is considered to be normal waking consciousness.

This first acquisition ends with the statement, *With memory of universality all dread vanishes during the dangers and trials of life.* So perhaps the ability to keep in mind the universality of all Space and all Time can allow us to liberate our consciousness from the confines of *kama-manas*, attaining the realm where courage is manifested and fear has no place. It sounds to me like a recipe for true freedom.

Second Acquisition

The second of the acquisitions reads: *Continued attempt at attitude of mind to all existing things, which is neither love, hate nor indifference. Different in external activity to each, because in each the capacity alters. Mentally the same to all.*

This ‘love, hate’ and ‘indifference’ seem to apply to those personal attractions and repulsions which cloud our perception, muddying the foreground, preventing us from true seeing. Perhaps consequent to not seeing truly, right action is therefore impaired. The lens of our vision has to be cleared. To borrow from the Zen verses of the *Hsin Hsin Ming*:

When love and hate are both absent,
everything becomes clear and un-



Moyan Brennan.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

disguised. Make the slightest distinction however, and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart.

In attempting this attitude towards everything and everyone, again we need to employ a mind which is different from your average waking consciousness for ‘when love and hate are both absent’, there can be no distinctions and preferences. The ‘no-mind’ has kicked in, thus allowing one to be ‘mentally the same to all’.

From this mental attitude, she says, comes: *Equilibrium and constant calm. Greater ease in practising the ‘virtues’, which are really the outcome of wisdom, for benevolence, sympathy, justice, etc., arise from the intuitive identification of the individual with others, although unknown to the personality.* When we are not under the influence of our emotional attachments and preferences, we are then able to come to a state of ‘equilibrium and constant calm’. Thus the virtues are able to arise spontaneously, along

with the realisation that there is an underlying sameness – call it an inner divinity – in all creatures.

Third Acquisition

The third of HPB’s acquisitions reads: *The perception in all embodied beings of limitation only.* This results, she says, in *Criticism without praise or blame.*

We all struggle with our own particular combinations of imperfections which prevent us from ‘being’ in those higher states of consciousness; those states about which we may read and think we understand. So if we understand, why can’t we just BE there? Perhaps through acknowledging our own feelings of limitedness, we can come to recognise that this condition pervades humanity. Limitation will be there in differing degrees from person to person. So the behaviours that we observe in ourselves or another could be regarded as the results of those limitations from which we all suffer. HPB says that because we are subject to these limitations, no

one should be considered praiseworthy or blameworthy. So perhaps that ‘Criticism without praise or blame’ may mean simply stating the truth of a matter as clearly as we can see it at a given point in time. We are all ‘works in progress’ are we not?

The three acquisitions have been helpful in better understanding our troubled world and the place of the individual in it. The first one, ‘all time and all space’, puts our current epoch into context: a small speck in time and space. But nevertheless it is that ‘present’ in which we must operate. We cannot act properly now, if our vision does not go beyond the confines of this one brief life.

The second acquisition of an attitude which is neither love, hate nor indifference assists us in rising up out of the mire of personal feelings and seeing people and situations clearly. It lifts the veil on the way we perceive, allowing a calm and wise approach to life.

The third acquisition, *the perception in all embodied Beings of Limitation only*, allows the realisation of our own shortcomings, and provides the understanding that all beings are subject to past actions, and we all have a different dharma to act out. It

produces a deep and genuine non-judgmental attitude to all.

All of these acquisitions seem to aim towards a movement from the normal waking consciousness, with its head in the sands of the struggles and pleasures of life, and its myopic vision, to the realm of the higher mind – an unclouded vision where the virtues have free play, in the playground of all Space and all Time.

There is a second part to the Diagram of Meditation known as the ‘deprivations’, which I mention in passing only. These encourage the seeker to consider the unreality of the qualities of the individual personality, thus too directing us to the higher mind.

Suffering and Compassion

The Diagram of Meditation helps us to realise that we are all part of the vast play of the Universe, and that Cambodia is one embodiment of the suffering of this world. But having seen suffering, one must do what one can by seeing as clearly as possible, and responding as much as possible with the virtue of compassion, not emotional sentimentality. In Cambodia there are now people in their twenties and thirties who are consciously working for the betterment of their

country. They have the creative will, but not the funds. However, the people of more wealthy nations can, and do, help them to help themselves through donations.

It is important also, to look clearly at the tyrants of this world. They too, are subject to their karma, victims of the trauma of their past, muddying their immediate vision

With context, clarity and understanding gained from this one small aspect of the teachings of Theosophy, we can equip ourselves to better serve in the world. As *The Voice of the Silence* says:

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge ... its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves — that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men. (Fragment III)

For those of us who are serious about the spiritual life this is what it is about, isn't it? In a negative way, that 'mighty sea of sorrow' can inspire our search for some way to help humanity. I believe it is a matter of striving towards that superhuman knowledge, that space in consciousness beyond the fragmented mind which can sweeten the bitterness. The Diagram of Meditation can be of great assistance in this quest. In all Space and all Time that work must go on, 'til the last hot tear has been wiped from the eye of humanity.

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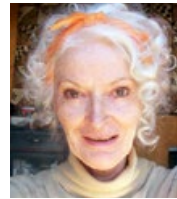
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This article is adapted from a talk given at the January 2016 Australian TS Convention.



Phillipa Rooke is the National Vice-President and State Representative for Queensland, and the immediate past Vice-President of Brisbane Lodge. She has been a TS member for twenty-two years. Her interest is in the play of the opposites we deal with in life in relation to the space beyond these, and also meditation and the search for true stillness.

Plato's Cave: Out of the World of Shadows into the Light

Lynette Muller



Mitch Featherston
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Plato's cave, composed by Plato in 360 CE, is an allegorical dialogue between his brother Glaucon and Socrates. It is narrated by Socrates to illustrate and compare the effect of education, or else the absence of it, on our nature. The allegory can also be viewed in the context of Plato's Theory of Forms. Various subsequent translators of the *Republic* suggested that many passages had a double meaning, because the dialogues gave a figurative meaning in addition to their usual literal understanding. Over time there have been many different translations of Plato's philosophy. During the first century of the common era, Philo of Alexandria wrote many commentaries on Plato's thought and his work has influenced Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. Another interesting aspect of Plato's philosophy was how the great Italian poet Dante Alighieri, a forerunner of the European Renaissance period, utilised and adapted the allegory of the

cave in his own poetry. The actor, poet and playwright William Shakespeare also used themes from Plato's allegories in various forms of his own literature.

Plato's metaphors, analogies and allegories, like the definitions of his cave's symbolism and figurative meaning, evolved a different interpretation over time. For example, the word 'allegory' (from the Greek *allos*, meaning 'other') became more frequently used in the early centuries of the common era and often referred to language that had some meaning which was additional to its normal or literal understanding. In the period of classical Athens during Plato's lifetime, it was common to speak in similes which were often described as having hidden or deeper meanings. Today, allegory is often said to be a sustained sequence of metaphors within a literary work. However in Plato's time his definition could be seen as relating to a single passage, or

even a name which was allegorical in a historical context.

Allegory of the Cave

As a means of illustrating his allegory of the cave Plato suggested:

I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or ignorance of our human condition as follows: Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off behind and higher up, a fire is burning and between the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain wall has been built.

Republic, Book Seven, 514a – 514b

At the lowest level of the cave wall were the forms of moving shadows. Sometimes these shadows have become virtual images, often being a creation of the prisoner's own mind. Any beliefs of the imaginary visions are not reality, as even the most impressive of them are of primitive and unreliable forms.

Many individuals living in the world of forms often see and hear objects which, in their perception, provide a basis for their belief in the spiritual realms. For example, the stars in the night sky

and the beauty of the natural world in all its manifested forms were totally unknown to the prisoners in the cave. It was only by the effort of ascending into the intelligible realm that human beings discovered the simple forms of letters, numbers, shapes and entities.

Imprisonment in the Cave

The cave dwellers in Plato's imagination were uneducated and ignorant prisoners, according to his philosophy. Unseen by them, the fire located at the rear of the cave was responsible for the shadows which they saw in front of them. This can be understood if, for instance, an audience in a picture theatre thinks that an image projected on the screen is a real and living being. Usually individuals are consciously aware that, in viewing any film, they are being manipulated by the movie production's fiction. This awareness of unreality was denied to the prisoners. They were in effect being constantly controlled, as their minds were continually being subjected to the distorted shadows projected by unknown puppeteers as they walked along the wall.

Departure from the Cave

A list illustrating Plato's allegories is presented here, from the top downwards:



Sunrise in Valencia.
Wikimedia Commons

1. the sun
2. natural things
3. shadows of natural things
4. fire
5. artificial objects
6. shadows of artificial objects
7. allegory level

In Plato's thought, these could be regarded sequentially as:

sun = the form or idea of the Good

natural things = ideas

shadows of natural things =
mathematical objects

fire = light

artificial objects = creatures of
imagination

shadows of artificial objects = the
illusions

allegory level = the allegory of the Cave, the analogy of the Sun and the analogy of the Divided Line. These three are characterised by the form of their esoteric nature of reality.

Putting forward his Theory of Forms, Plato suggested:

Suppose one of the prisoners is let loose, and they turn their head around,

look and then walk towards the fire ... these actions would be painful to them ... they would be unable to see ... and if taken to or freely allowed to walk up the steep and rugged path to the sunlight their experience would be unnerving because they would be made blind by the glare of the sun.

Republic, Book Seven, 516a)

Return to the Cave

However, making allowance for a gradual adjustment to sunlight and views of the natural world above the cave, the former prisoners' sight and sense of reality would be realised. Long forgotten aspects of their mind and soul would awaken, as from sleep. Motivated by altruism towards the less fortunate prisoners in the cave, they would return to their shadow world.

The return journey presents many challenges because, as Plato points out, travelling to the bright light of sunshine in the natural world, and then re-entering the darkness, will render these former prisoners almost blind. The dim realm of shadows will make them unsteady on their feet. In this condition of unsteadiness, their message of the natural world would be disregarded. Seduced by the familiarity of the shadows the prisoners would, if possible, forcibly remove these individuals and declare them as outcasts – despised.

As Plato often said to his audience, despite the efforts made by many individuals to enlighten their imprisoned audiences – in reality like the former prisoners’ pleas – their message of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful is rejected.

Knowledge of the form of the Good is not merely an awareness of the benefits and transient pleasures of ordinary existence, but a knowledge of the Theory of Forms. This belief was the foundation of Plato’s Philosophy. Plato, through his various dialogues and the use of Socrates as a literary device, promoted the form of the Good as an ultimate standard.

Other significant forms are those of true Equality, Beauty and Truth which can be attained through intuition, enabling the fundamental capacity of human reason to comprehend the true nature of Reality.

Symbolism

The symbolism of Plato’s Cave can be explained as follows:

1. The cave signifies a closed-minded approach to knowledge.
2. The people in the cave represent the community of the city state.
3. The shadows are the opinions of these men which are flawed.

4. The man who escapes the cave is the philosopher.

The Allegory of the Cave Elsewhere in Plato’s Works

The analogy of the sun which enlightens that which is intelligible within us, through the apprehension of Truth, and the analogy of the divided line which presents metaphysical views, are similar narratives to the ideas presented in the allegory of the cave. All three seek to explain the form of the Good within a human psyche.

In Plato’s *Phaedo* we find the imagery of a prison where prisoners were ‘fast bound in their body ... and instead of investigating [the] reality of themselves were compelled to look through the bars of a prison’. (*Phaedo*, 106b – 107a)

The allegory of the chariot in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, as painted on a particular Greek vase, shows a picture of the horses and the charioteer. The white horse is representative of the highest qualities to be found in humanity and the black one represents aspects of a shadow world.

The soul as charioteer controls the horses and the chariot, but without his guidance the vehicle will be like an uncontrolled force being driven to destruction.

Conclusion

The narrative of Plato's Cave is an allegorical and symbolic representation of the human psyche. The consciousness of the prisoners is transformed into that of a philosopher. The darkness, ignorance, and shadow world of their imprisonment are dispelled and replaced with a degree of Self-Realisation. In Plato's thought, his Theory of Forms can be viewed as a method of ascending beyond the world of illusion to the achievement of an ideal Philosophy, Knowledge and the light of Wisdom.

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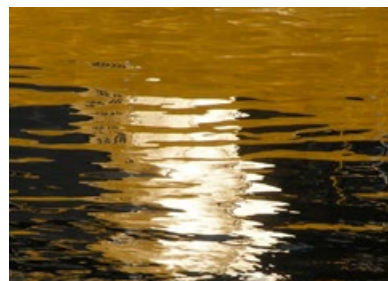
Plato's Myths

[Plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-myths](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-myths)

This article is adapted from a short talk given at the 2017 National Convention.



Lynette Muller joined the TS in Brisbane in 1970. She is currently the Hon. Secretary of Brisbane Lodge where she has run study classes on *Isis Unveiled*. Lynette has attended many sessions of the School of the Wisdom at Adyar and was an assistant to the Secretary of the School of the Wisdom for several years. Her B.A. includes a double major in ancient history and a major in religion, Eastern Studies. She is a volunteer tutor in the History of Philosophy (Ancient) for the University of the Third Age, Brisbane.



Creating Your Life: Buddhism Working Elements of the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths

Sue Lee



Mitch Featherston
Source: Wikimedia Commons

I am passing on teachings that have been given to me by my teacher Ajahn Brahm and other references:

- *In the Buddha's Words; discourses of the Buddha in his own words*, from the Pali Cannon, by Bikkhu Bodhi.
- *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Majjhima Nikaya translation by Bikkhu Ñanamoli and Bikkhu Bodhi.
- *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Digha Nikay, a translation by Maurice Walshe.

What are the essentials that a Buddhist has to include in his or her practice to make a success of life? And what does a Buddhist think success in life amounts to?

The last question is the most difficult, and it has to vary somewhat with the individual. I offer my own view on the subject:

- I hope I am leaving love behind me.

- I hope that any damage I have done in my life has healed or is healing, so that no lasting harm is done to anyone.
- I hope I have created a good foundation for my next life to be fortunate, so that I can continue the work wherever I find myself.

To achieve this I need to follow a discipline that, if followed diligently, does reduce the harm we cause and enables goodness and love to flourish.

The Buddha described the Noble Eightfold Path for us to follow.

- Right understanding
- Right thought
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration

Following the Noble Eightfold Path takes a lot of understanding so that

we can actually achieve. Take Right Understanding, for instance. It is fundamental to a Buddhist to understand that the root of existence is its inherent unsatisfactoriness. That was the Buddha's primary message. The heart of his teachings is the Four Noble Truths:

- The truth of suffering.
- The origin of suffering.
- The cessation of suffering.
- The way leading to the cessation of suffering.

The Truth of Suffering

The Buddha said: the root of suffering is seeking satisfaction in that which has no substance, and which will rot away.

A substantial part of the path is to analyse everything to the point where we can see that it has no substance. If you think about basic physics, you'll realise that nothing is actually solid: everything material is mostly space. This becomes evident in meditation.

We should also be able to notice the impermanence of all things, which means that attachment to them is always inherently unsatisfactory. It is self-evident that everything we have or create, everything we love and treasure, will end. The self we nurture, educate and believe in, will die.

As beings, we experience rebirth: each life is succeeded by another, sometimes in the same form, sometimes in another. Samsāra is the Pali name for the round of rebirth. The word means 'wandering on, an endless journey'.

Samsāra is without a beginning and without an end, said the Buddha. How does that work? My teacher Ajahn Brahm explained it thus: Space is curved, time is curved, the universe is curved. It does not end; it curves in on itself endlessly. Samsāra is a thing of the universe and likewise, it does not end.

The universe passes through cycles where material creation burns out: the universe then exists in a *jhana* (supra-mundane) state. After a period in this *jhana* state the universe causes material formation to appear again and a new age, as we would think of it, commences. This cycle of mundane (material) and supramundane (*jhana*) states continues endlessly.

Likewise, the beings that are travelling in time and in samsāra continue without ceasing. Our endless succession of existences continues unendingly regardless of cycles of the universe, whether mundane or supra-mundane. So the Buddha told us, as written in the *Majjhima Nikaya*. It is said that

the Buddha could remember 91 cycles of the universe that he traversed in *samsāra*.

The Origin of Suffering

The second Noble Truth is the Origin of Suffering. The Buddha said that craving is the origin of suffering – the desire for rebirth, clinging to existence, the desire for the next rebirth.

Suffering consists in the finding of pleasure in this, because everything we crave and cling to is impermanent: it will rot and fade away.

By the people's desire for things or sensations, and their desire to be rid of unpleasant things or sensations, deeds are committed that result in karma. The pain and loss caused by this can last many lives.

Ultimately the origin of suffering is rooted in the feeling that life and all its manifestations of reality is real and that we have to have it at all costs.

Our lives succeed each other endlessly and the word 'suffering' is used to describe it but Ajahn Brahm said that this translation from the Pali was not quite right: it actually means 'unsatisfactory'.

And the Buddha said:

'Which do you think is bigger: the stream of tears you have wept on your endless wandering, wanting what you have not, not wanting what you have – or all the water in all the oceans of the world?

Your stream of tears is bigger.'

And he said: 'What do you think is bigger: the streams of blood you have shed when you were beheaded for your many crimes in your endless succession of lives, or the water in all the oceans of the world?

Your stream of blood is bigger.'

We, the people, are stuck in endless rounds of lives – blinkered by delusion, shackled by want. Our lives end in old age, sickness and death.

If we can learn one thing it is the truth of this, and that there is a way out.

The Extinction of Suffering

The third Noble Truth is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving: its forsaking and abandonment, liberation and detachment from it. The steps for this are described thus:

- Through the total fading away and extinction of craving, clinging is extinguished.
- Through the extinction of clinging, the process of becoming is extinguished.

- Through the extinction of the process of becoming, Rebirth is extinguished.
- Through the extinction of Rebirth, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair are extinguished.

The Path to the Extinction of Suffering

The fourth Noble Truth is the Path to the extinction of suffering. So the Buddha outlined the Noble Eightfold Path, the path to the extinction of suffering, which is called the Path of Liberation: liberation from *samsāra*, from the continual round of Rebirth.

That first step on the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Understanding, is complex, but it leads to success in all the other areas.

Let us look at the others:

Right Thought

We have all heard it: ‘With our thoughts we make the world.’ Not only do we make the world with our thoughts; we make ourselves. Our thoughts are the product of the mind, the great deceiver.

The mind is the fundamental source of all being and becoming. We need our thoughts to create ourselves and every-



almsbowl, Thailand.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

thing that happens to us. We need our thoughts to bring ourselves back into being for eons to come.

To make this life good and enjoyable, the Noble Eightfold Path needs to be followed in thought as well as deed.

I am reminded of a visit to a village in north-east Thailand, remote from the tourist trail. Our boat drew up on a small beach and we scrambled up a steep bank of light grey loamy soil. It was a delightful place with small dwellings beautifully kept. The paths were neatly swept and on trees and beside doorways throughout the village there were little plaques with the Buddha’s sayings posted – such thoughts as ‘be kind, be gentle’, ‘follow the *Dhamma* and you will reach Enlightenment’, and so on.

All the houses were on stilts as they were throughout the whole region. The

bottom floors were open on all sides and the ground was usually covered with a rug. These open rooms were often furnished with armchairs and even a TV. Children's toys lay about and all kinds of items that make a home were lying there open to all.

No one stole. Everybody had such respect that no-one thought of locking anything away or stowing it somewhere at night.

One of our monks had built himself a hut when he lived there and we all went to pay respects to it.

I was left with a feeling of a piece of heaven on earth in this remote place. The people were so dignified and so good; obviously poor in material wealth but very rich where it counts. They had everything you need and nothing you don't need.

They lived the *Dhamma* and they posted reminders everywhere because they wanted to be constantly reminded of their spiritual path, and they wanted their children to be reminded at play. It pervaded their whole lives.

Right Livelihood

I am putting this one up the list of the Noble Eightfold Path. There is a set of prohibitions including such jobs as executing people or killing animals,

gambling or assisting others to gamble – choices to avoid. Livelihood should reflect purity in life.

Right Concentration

This is the last item on the list but I have brought it up in order to discuss the place of meditation, which of course leads to concentration.

To a Buddhist, meditation is the most integral part of the Path.

Why Meditate?

In meditation, stillness is found. In stillness, the perfect beauty of the mind is revealed: that which has always been with us but which is clouded by our thoughts.

Mind itself has a pure, radiant essence that is extraordinary to experience, yet the clatter of endless thinking clouds and veils it from us.

In meditation we seek stillness and in stillness, the true pure essence of mind is revealed. Then we catch a glimpse of that which pervades everything, yet is hidden from us. In this lies wisdom and clarity. Meditation clarifies the mind, and complicated matters become clear. Insights arise which dissolve tangled intellectual arguments and also, those struggles to understand the *Dhamma*.

There is a great dichotomy about mind. Its pure essence is experienced by true seekers as a radiant, joyful thing. Yet like a child it constantly seeks entertainment and chases after endless distractions, which is why meditation is difficult.

It sounds deceptively simple but all one needs is to keep the mind still long enough, and like a glass of cloudy water, all the extraneous stuff will drop out. Then the pure beauty of mind is revealed. This lends insight, and one's life becomes more harmonious because of the wisdom one attains. If we persevere, then the insights that arise help to purify our lives.

Once one's life has become more beautiful and harmonious, this leads to a reduction in the things that hinder meditation.

The Five Hindrances

The five classical hindrances are:

- Sensual desire. Ajahn Brahm says it's a wonder, how many people sit thinking about sex.
- Hatred and ill will. Many of us would deny this but resentments and anger towards others are very common and cause endless uneasiness and preoccupation.
- Sloth and torpor. Many people feel tired or dull. Concentration is poor,

energy is low. Make sure it is not too dark as it is natural to fall asleep when darkness falls. Choosing a good time of day for your body type is helpful, as is making sure you are not too hungry or thirsty. Deep breathing helps to reduce fatigue.

- Restlessness and remorse. Make a determination to meditate now and think later. No matter what you're worried about, it can wait. Surprisingly, a lot of life's troubles can be solved better after meditation.
- Doubt. Is this a whole load of nonsense?

The proof of the pudding has always been in the eating, not in the spin surrounding it. Buddhism does not make any claims.

If you try it and it doesn't work, you are entitled to give it up. However, it is worth giving it a concerted effort because it might turn out to be the love of your life and if you don't try you'll never know.

Living well makes meditation work better: it reduces the hindrances and creates harmony and good energy. The peace created by the goodness enhances the stillness, so your meditation improves.

Wrong thoughts and behaviour have the opposite effect, causing disruption and uneasiness. Meditation becomes more difficult: it can be like trying to stop a mountain current with your fingers.

A good meditation creates clarity of mind, harmony, happiness and strong positive energy that overflows into daily life, and is not confined to the meditation. This creates the energy to make good living easier and the insight to make wise decisions.

It can be seen that good living and meditation go hand in hand. They wind each other up. That's why Buddhism is a practice. There is no point in just studying it: it has to be lived.

The remaining steps on the Noble Eightfold path are:

- Right speech
- Right action
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness

You can probably see now why I left these last elements to the end: without Right Understanding and Right Concentration, the others are hindered. With them, they fall into place. More detail can be found in the *Majjhima Nikaya*.

To live a beautiful life as a Buddhist, one accepts all the components of the Path and puts them into practice.

Meditation leads to peaceful states in which the pure essence of mind is experienced as joy. Joy and peacefulness overflow into life and are not restricted to the meditation. It cannot be overstated that joy is a product of meditation.

May you find liberation from the endless wandering of samsāra.

This article is based on a talk given at the 2017 Australian TS Convention.



Sue Lee first joined the TS in 1978. She served as President of Perth Lodge and in several other positions. In 2016 she retired as Head of the Physiotherapy Department at a general hospital in Perth. She joined the Buddhist Society of WA in 1995 and attends annual retreats as well as the weekly meditation sessions. The numerous *Dhamma* talks she has attended over the years informs her knowledge of the Buddhist path.

Ritual and the Theosophical World

Dianne K. Kynaston



Xavier Caré - Wikimedia Commons CC-BY-SA

Ritual can be regarded as the ordered activity in our everyday life. We all have our own personal habits and routines, often guided by rules and social etiquette. However, there is a deeper dimension to ritual and that is the creation of sacred time and sacred space.

Traditionally, for the candidate passing through initiations, or the participation by those in attendance, such ceremonies can be seen as connections made between the soul, the personality, and the devas.

A number of forms of spiritual ritual activity exist, the following being some examples:

religious services, religious festivals, mantra chanting, prayer, meditation, yoga, t'ai chi, sacred dance, pilgrimages to sacred sites, spiritual healing.

These can take place both as group and individual activities. Each also has its own effect on the group and the individual.

All world religions have developed very specific rituals that both create and reflect a particular culture or set of teachings. For many people over the centuries participation in rituals and festivals has lifted them out of the humdrum of their everyday life, providing them with a feeling of connection with their community and with the unseen worlds.

Many rituals have a common connection such as the Christian Eucharist, which has its roots in the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Persia, with Mithraism (also from Persia), and with the Friday 'Sabbat' of Judaism. These may possibly go back further to ancient Egypt.

For the early Christians ritual may have been a simple ceremony of communion with one another, but over the centuries it developed into the grand ceremonies of both Orthodox and Roman Catholic faiths and the more streamlined format of the Protestants of northern Europe.

The potency or validity of a ritual or ceremony is said to be affirmed when it is created. Occultly, it is stated that in order for a ritual to be fully valid and effective its creation must be overseen by a Great Teacher or Adept who makes a link between the ceremonial form and the devic (angelic) world.

C.W. Leadbeater, in his book *The Science of the Sacraments*, described the inner effects of the Christian Eucharist ritual in which he saw a specific form being built on the inner planes. Powerful energies or blessings poured out from that form, not only into the church, but into the surrounding area, thus having a beneficent influence on all within its range.

In an article in the Liberal Catholic Church magazine *Communion*, in 1925, he described the effect of the chanting of the Gayatri – the Hindu chant to the rising sun. He described a white light coming down from the Solar Logos into the body of the chanter, and then spreading out in seven coloured rays into the world.

The point of such writings is to show us that effects are made on the inner worlds when we perform ceremonies and rituals. Science now shows us that there are all sorts of influences within Nature – influences that are unseen by our eyes, but are the results of specific actions which create effects. So, too, on the etheric, astral, mental and higher planes – specific actions and sounds create vortices and channels between the various planes of existence, through which higher energies and blessings pass into our world.

The T.S. Founders and Ritual

H.P. Blavatsky had a life steeped in ceremonial teachings. Her book *Isis Unveiled* contains a wealth of information on such teachings, especially for those with a Masonic bent.

It is possible that in the 1850s she was a formal member of the Carbonari – a secret organisation in Europe. Together with Albert Rawson¹ she was initiated into the community of the Druzes of Lebanon. In 1880 HPB and Olcott were formally admitted into Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism in the pansil ceremony performed at a large public gathering in Kandy. Colonel Olcott was also a high ranking Mason.

Theosophical Lodges

When the TS was originally founded it was created as a secret initiatory body. However, it was soon decided to present a bold face to the world and make the teachings gathered by the Society's leaders available to the public through lectures, publications, et cetera, and through the establishment of branches which were called lodges. However, to join one had to go through a very short ceremony and be entrusted with signs and passwords, so one can see that the TS was overshadowed by a Masonic background. As the Society grew very rapidly and reached out much further than anticipated, this quasi-Masonic approach was dropped. Today, in order to join, one simply has to be in sympathy with its Three Objects and abide by its Rules.

Connected Ritual Works

Within the Theosophical world there have been a number of ceremonial activities. The following list provides a number of examples:

- The Order of the Round Table – an international activity for youth, based on the legend of King Arthur.
- Temple of the Rosy Cross – a ritual created by Annie Besant in 1912, in London, but which closed at the beginning of World War One. A temple

was built for it in the grounds of old Krotona in Hollywood.

- The Krotona Ritual – a ceremony created in the early 20th century by A.P. Warrington in the U.S.A to herald the advent of the World Teacher.
- The Ritual of the Mystic Star – a ceremony devised by C. Jinarajadasa in the late 1940s to celebrate the coming of the Great Religious Teachers.
- International Co-Freemasonry – a Masonic Order created in France in the 1880s for both men and women. Although there is no direct connection with the Theosophical Society, many prominent TS leaders and members joined its ranks.
- The Liberal Catholic Church – a Christian church developed from the Old Catholic Church of Holland by Bishops Wedgwood and Leadbeater, in which the intent was on ceremony and not on dogma.
- Rite of the Planets – an activity of an astrological lodge formed in London.
- The Bharata Samaj Puja – a ritual of Indian congregational worship.
- The Order of the Golden Dawn – a Hermetic order whose founding members included a number of TS members such as W.B. Yeats.

So you can see that ritual and ceremony have their place in the world in general, and in the Theosophical world in particular. It is a method of making

connections with the inner planes, of bringing forth blessings and sustaining powers, and of working in cooperation with the devic kingdom.

Ritual is not for everyone – it depends on what Ray one is under. Some people find their expression in spiritual work through studying sacred writings or scientific facts, others in giving service, others again through devotion, et cetera. For those under the seventh Ray there is a strong focus on ceremonial work.

Memories of the Past

Finally, in an issue of the *Vahan* (a magazine published by the TS in England in the early 20th century under the editorship of G.R.S. Mead) there was an article on the Temple of the Rosy Cross which sums up a Theosophical approach to ritual. It stated:

In the Theosophical Society there are many who find the fittest expression of their highest spiritual emotions in stately and rhythmical ceremonial, men and women who in past lives trod the mystic measures of the solemn planetary dance, filed in long procession through the Temples of the gods, studied the symbolism of the Egyptian and Chaldean Mysteries and are haunted by memories of their past.

The Vahan, May 1912,
J.L. Wedgwood

Endnote

1. Albert Rawson (1828-1902) was an author, traveller, artist and Theosophist. An important figure in the early years of the Theosophical Society (TS), Rawson joined the Society in New York. It appears that he had wide ranging interests and studied law, theology and medicine. At the age of seventeen he had his first book, *Divine Origin of the Holy Bible*, published, quickly followed by *Stella* and other novels; Rawson, however, was primarily known for his landscape painting and engraving.

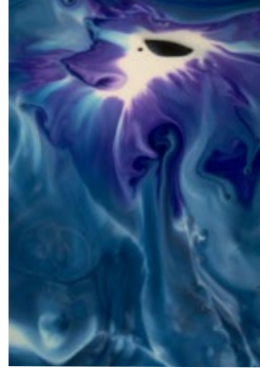
http://theosophy.ph/encyclo/index.php?title=Rawson,_Albert_Leighton



Dianne Kynaston was the General Secretary of the Australian Section and editor of *Theosophy in Australia* for eight years, and served a term as President of the Indo-Pacific Federation. She has also been an active member of Newcastle Lodge. She is currently a National Lecturer for the TS in Australia and a member of the national Executive Committee. Dianne's extensive travels throughout the world have included visits to many sacred places, including those in Tibet and Central Asia.

Desire and Spiritual Will

Pamela Peterson



At first glance this would seem to be an example of paradox. However, let us examine the topic in the context of the theme of our current School, ‘The Yoga of Theosophy’. It was suggested earlier that yoga is the stimulation of spiritual intuition destined to unite the parts – that is us, Divine sparks – to the whole, that is the Divine.

I call upon Annie Besant who, in her *Introduction to Yoga*, wrote: ‘Strong desire and strong will are two of the three faculties essential for obtaining success in yoga.’ What’s more, she added: ‘Desire ardently.’

Now this may come as somewhat of a surprise, as the word ‘desire’ does not enjoy the best reputation in our everyday world. Even the *Oxford Dictionary* defines it as: ‘that emotion which is directed to the attachment or

possession of some object from which pleasure or satisfaction is expected’. However isn’t attachment exactly what we, as TS members, are trying to avoid?

Nevertheless, is there anyone who has never desired something or some situation which they are sure will make them happy or satisfied? Of course, so often experience teaches us that this thing or situation, once acquired, brings only fleeting happiness, if any, only to leave us with great pain, distress and regret. Assuming that the total elimination of all desire is impossible, what then is the solution to the problem?

Let us now jump forward to the third of Annie Besant’s essential faculties for obtaining success in yoga, namely: ‘a keen, broad intelligence’. Such

intelligence is manifest in the form of discernment in the choice of the desire to be pursued. Our thought process comes into play at this point, firstly in the form of memory of the disasters resulting from previous bad choices, and secondly in imagining the possibility of suffering another bad experience by gratifying yet another unworthy desire. The same power of imagination allows us to envisage the benefits of making a good choice; hence the necessity to develop our mind and our capacity to think intelligently. As Annie Besant said: ‘You cannot control your mind if you don’t have a mind to control.’ In other words the onus is on the individual, first of all to determine which desires are worthy of pursuit. Of course that is not the end of the story.

What is the key to success in such a pursuit? The answer lies in the second of Annie Besant’s three faculties, namely: ‘a strong will’. Herein lies a further problem. So often the will is weak. Is this then an insurmountable obstacle? It need not be so. As in the case of a physical weakness, a weak will can be strengthened through practice. If necessary, our commitment

can be built up gradually, until it is no longer difficult to fulfil.

Is there a difference between desire and will? The answer is ‘yes’. Desire is evoked and directed from outside. When desire rules from within, it is called will. Is this, then, the spiritual will? Spiritual is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* as: ‘emanating from the higher faculties of the mind’.

Finally, to summarise the matter in the context of the theme of our current School: The intelligent choice to pursue ardently the worthy desire to attain the Yoga of Theosophy can be realised through the application of spiritual will.

Take your time. Hasten slowly. Enjoy the journey to your ultimate destination.



Pamela Peterson is the Secretary of Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney. She gave this short talk at the 2017 School of Theosophy.

Q and A



The answers below were given by the Q and A panel during the 2017 National Convention. Panelists: Sue Lee (Perth - facilitator and participant), Kevin Davey (Adelaide), Ruth Holt (Tasmania) and Gloria Yiangou (Sydney).

What has the study of Theosophy done for you, what effects has it had on your life?

KD: Theosophy has made a massive difference to me. The emphasis on an open mind in the TS is extremely important and has made me see things in an entirely different way. That is something I am very grateful for. It has been literally a life changer.

SL: It was great to meet a group of people who had a similar attitude to me because, back in the 1970s when I came across the TS, Theosophy was the kind of thing you could not talk about at work. To meet people who had a philosophical aura and a diverse spiritual attitude, in one place, was a great thing.

RH: Contact with Theosophy broadened my mind enormously. Other people in the TS had experienced similar things to me. I had previously always put these to one side, because it was not acceptable to speak about them.

GY: The study of Theosophy has given me direction. Whether it is the right

direction I do not know, but I am in good company! It has also given me a lifetime of study and work.

What are the biggest challenges for the human journey at this time?

SL: For me, meeting the challenges of ordinary life when things go wrong, and still keeping the precepts of Buddhism, is the challenge. Just when you think everything is going well, that is when something will go wrong! The challenge, then, is to do something good instead of responding with a knee-jerk reaction. Trying to be the best that I can is a challenge, but also one of the absorbing things about life.

RH: My biggest challenge is understanding the other's point of view.

GY: Perhaps the biggest challenge on the human journey is finding the inner Self in the mist of materialism.

KD: It is necessary to deal with environmental issues, which can otherwise be very destructive for our spiritual journeys.

National Calendar of Events



Springbrook Centre

arrivals **Thurs 27 July** – departures **Sun 30 July**

Theme: ‘Unfathomable Godhead: Exploring the Mysticism of Meister Eckhart’

For TS members and non-members

Presenter: Pedro Oliveira

Cost: \$150 members / \$180 non-members

Enquiries to: Education Coordinator edcoord@austheos.org.au

tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)

Springbrook Centre

arrivals **Thurs 19 Oct** – departures **Sun 22 October**

Theme: ‘Science and the Ancient Wisdom’

For TS members and non-members

Presenters: Dara Tatray, Pedro Oliveira and others

Cost: \$150 members / \$180 non-members

Enquiries to: Education Coordinator edcoord@austheos.org.au

tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)

2018 National Convention

Dates: Sat 20 – Sat 27 January

Theme: ‘The Quest for Truth, Science and the Spiritual Search’

For TS members

Featured Speaker: Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein, neuroscientist

Venue: St. John’s College, University of Queensland, St. Lucia

Cost: \$735 for 7 nights, subsidised price, single rooms with ceiling fans and shared bathrooms

Earlybird registration fee: \$20 if received by Thursday 31 August

All registrations received after Thursday 31 August: \$40

Deadline – guaranteed rooms for live-in registrants: Thursday 30 November

Enquiries to: Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary

email: tshq@austheos.org.au

Members are encouraged to register soon. We look forward to seeing you in Brisbane.



Next Canyonleigh event: TBA

Registration forms and further information about Springbrook and Canyonleigh events are at: [www.austheos.org.au/what's on](http://www.austheos.org.au/what's_on)

Call for Nominations - State Representatives



ELECTION OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE FOR TASMANIA, QUEENSLAND AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In accordance with Rules 17(1)(c) and 19, the current terms of office of the State Representatives for Tasmania (Helen Steven), Queensland (Phillipa Rooke) and South Australia/NT (Travis James) will expire at the appointment of new State Representatives towards the end of 2017. Accordingly, nominations are invited for the election of one State Representative for each of the named states. Of these, the State Representative for South Australia (Travis James) is not eligible for re-election.

Nominations may be made by a Lodge (Branch) in the relevant Electoral State, or by any two Members resident in the relevant Electoral State who have been Members in Good Standing for the two years immediately prior to the nomination. To be eligible for election as State Representative, the candidate must be resident in the relevant Electoral State, must have been a Member in Good Standing for the last three years, and have served for at least one year on the Executive Committee of a Lodge (Branch) by the time of the election.

The State Representative elected in each State will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in that 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.

A photograph of the candidate, curriculum vitae, relevant biographical data, and a personal statement by the candidate, which may, for purposes of distribution, be edited in consultation with the candidate, must accompany all nominations. All nominations should be on Form 8, endorsed with the consent of the Nominee, and reach the National Secretary no later than close of business Wednesday 20 September.

Copies of Form 8 may be obtained from the National Secretary:
natsesc@austheos.org.au

Theosophical Order of Service



Greetings everyone, the focus in this report is the successful Convention in Hobart.

This year we were fortunate in having three segments in the overall conference programme: Firstly, a presentation on 'Yoga off the Mat' linked to part of the Convention theme, Eastern Spirituality. This broadened out to altruism in action, where several of our national groups were able to show their varied activities and how they were able to raise funds to support their humanitarian works. Secondly, TOS ran a workshop titled 'Annie Besant, Service and Transformation' and our AGM was our final presentation.

Each year at our AGM members vote on our three national projects for our groups to work towards. This year we were able to introduce a new venture in supporting Syrian Refugees via the TOS in Italy. I don't need to remind any of you of the plight of thousands of families trying to escape the terrible civil war in Syria. Our Treasurer, Carolyn Harrod, gave an impassioned PowerPoint presentation with photos of refugee camp life. Consequently, the vote was unanimous in supporting this new undertaking. I am pleased to advise that within two weeks of this proposal being accepted, we at TOS National were able to forward A\$2000 to the Italian TOS. The response to this appeal has been

excellent and we are planning to top up this amount shortly. Our other two projects for 2017 are the continuing support of four Qandeel home schools in Pakistan, and the Golden Link College in the Philippines.

Our international president, Tim Boyd, suggested in conversation that we organise a group of 'Ozzies' to attend the International TS Convention at Adyar. This has been done and includes a twelve day tour around Southern India following the Convention, which will run from 31 December 2017 through 05 January 2018. Tour dates are 05 January 2018 from Chennai, returning from Kochi on 16 January 2018. This is a fundraiser with proceeds going to our national projects. For details please contact Jean Carroll, National Director: tos.australia@gmail.com

Have you ever wanted to visit the
Theosophical campus at Adyar?

Join the TOS group from Australia
to attend the 2017 conference.

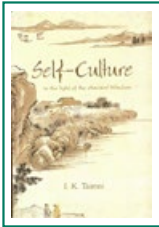
This will be followed by an optional
12 day tour around southern India.

All proceeds to
TOS humanitarian projects.

Contact tos.australia@gmail.com
or Jean - 0402805127

Review

Self-Culture in the Light of the Ancient Wisdom, Dr I.K. Taimni, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, India, (fifth edition, eighth reprint, 2016). \$10.00 plus postage from National Headquarters.



The word ‘culture’ admits several meanings, one of them being ‘the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively’. For many people it is connected with learning, scholarship, interest in the arts, science, and the overall progress of knowledge. Culture enables societies to change their structure, laws, and administration of public spaces, while exposing citizens to a wider view of life and human development.

In this book, an essential one for a student of Theosophy, Dr Taimni points to a much deeper meaning of the concept ‘culture’, which is not normally acknowledged by mainstream society:



the profound culture of the human Spirit, which he calls Self-Culture. The book is divided into three parts: Theosophical Basis of Self-Culture, Self-Discipline and Self-Culture, and Self-Discovery and Self-Realisation. According to the author, the cornerstone of Self-Culture is to understand the functions of every one of our ‘bodies’ – physical, emotional, mental, intuitional and spiritual Will – as well as knowing how to exercise control, purifying and cultivating these different vehicles of consciousness.

The author suggests that the Ancient Wisdom – the basis for Self-Culture – views this progress of integrating and perfecting the different aspects of our nature in a scientific way. As H. P. Blavatsky suggested, this tradition is the result of:

checking, testing, and verifying in every department of nature the traditions of old by the independent visions of great adepts; ... No vision of one adept was accepted till it was checked and confirmed by the visions—so obtained as to stand as independent evidence—of other adepts, and by centuries of experiences.

This is an excellent text for individual and group study. - Pedro Oliveira

News and Notes

2018 National Convention

The National Convention rotates to a different state each year. We hope to see many members from around the country at the next annual gathering, due to be held in Brisbane. See page 65 for more information.

2017/2018 School of the Wisdom

Information is now available about the School of the Wisdom sessions to be held at our International Headquarters in Adyar later this year and early next year. They are:

The Spiritual Path of the Theosophical Movement

Mr Jon Knebel, USA
20 November to 1 December 2017

Concept and Reality

Ven. Olande Ananda Thera
5-15 December 2017

Self-Transformation and the Spiritual Life

Vicente Hao Chin Jr.
8-19 January 2018

The Meditative Brain, a Challenge to the Digital Revolution

Dr José Foglia MD
22 January – 2 February 2018



These classes are specifically intended for members of the TS. More detailed information is available at: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

Please note that applications also need to be signed by the National President (see contact details inside the front cover) before being submitted to the International Secretary's office.

Visitors to National Headquarters

In recent weeks we have welcomed to the National Headquarters **Pablo Sender** (USA), **Lynette Muller** (Brisbane Lodge), and National members **Rosemary de Ruggerio** (Queensland) and **Wolo Guelting** (Blue Mountains). Also, a member from Denmark, **Svetlana Rasmussen**, enjoyed meeting members of staff and appreciated her introduction to the Campbell Library.

Transitions

Two members of Blavatsky Lodge passed to peace recently and are remembered with affection:

Alwyn Miechel (19 April), a former Lodge President, who joined in 1966
Bill Smith (1 May), a long-time devoted member who joined in 1956.



Tasmanian Seminar, Dr Pablo Sender [Pablo pictured in middle, front row]

Entitled 'The Illumined Mind - its Nature and Awakening', the weekend seminar held in Launceston, Tasmania during April, was truly marvellous and a deeply spiritual experience. Aided by a well thought out progression of content and opportunities to discuss each talk,

Pablo's easy manner and wealth of knowledge captured and held the attention of all. A beautiful energy was built into the atmosphere of the centre as the hearts and minds of the members were opened inwards to reach new heights and depths of understanding.

Denise Frost

Presentation to Canberra Branch Member



Tony Fearnside [pictured second from left above] is a past President of Canberra Branch who has served the Branch for many years. Tony was presented with a vase and a card by Branch members recently for his 'dedicated service over several decades to the Theosophical Society in Canberra and thanks for fulfilling

the many roles and responsibilities undertaken for the great cause of Unity and Freedom of Thought'.

Theosophy-Science, Auckland, 2016

Talks from last year's Theosophy-Science seminar in Auckland are now online on Youtube. A link to the talks is at:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=richard+s.berstein

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

Section Directory

Australian Section National Headquarters

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
www.austheos.org.au

Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
campbell@austheos.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:
Postal Address: c/- 53 Chataway Crescent,
Fadden ACT 2904
Meet: Friends Meeting House, cnr Bent
& Condamine Streets, Turner ACT 2612
7.30pm 1st Monday of month (Feb - May, Sep - Dec)
Emeritus Faculty ANU: 2.00pm 1st Saturday of
month (June - Aug), discussion group 2.00pm
3rd Saturday of month
President: Dr Grahame Crookham
Tel: 0490147020
email: tificrook@tpg.com.au
Secretary: position vacant
Newsletter Editor: Janice Scarabottolo
Tel: 02 6288 7656 email:janton@netspeed.com.au

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:
Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 2065
Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards
NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)
Telephone: 02 92676955 Fax: 02 9283 3772
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au
www.tssydney.org.au
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays
President: Marie McArdle
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
7.30pm 2nd Friday each month
<http://www.austheos.org.au/newcastle/>
President: Tony Buzek
Secretary: Jane Wilson

Tel: 0452 633 132
Email: gnlodgetheos@gmail.com

Blue Mountains Group:

Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains
Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),
Katoomba NSW 2780
Meetings every Monday, 2.00pm
1st Monday of month - Public Meeting
Subsequent Mondays - *Secret Doctrine* Study Group
Coordinator: Donald Fern
Tel: 02 4757 1910

Gosford Group:

Meet: The Narara Community Centre,
Pandalala Road, Narara NSW 2250
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month
Coordinator: Marianne Fraser
Tel: (02) 4339 7118, 0400 713 273
Email: 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/- 22 Laitoki Road
Terrey Hills
NSW 2084
8.00 pm 3rd Friday each month
Coordinator: Dianne Kynaston

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 Wednesdays, library open 6.30-7.30pm
President: John Harris
Secretary: Lynette Muller

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
7.00pm Thursdays
RSL/CWA Hall, 123 Poinciana Drive, Tewantin
7.00pm Fridays
President: position vacant
Tel: 0402 805 127
Email: theosunshinecoast@gmail.com
Secretary: Pam Walsh

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: Gayle Thomas
Tel: 0438 331 885

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: Kevin Davey
Secretary: position vacant

Tasmania

Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:
13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000
Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)
www.theosophicaltas.websyete.com.au
Meet: 7.30pm Mondays
President: Helen Steven
Secretary: position vacant
Email: helen_steven@live.com

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:
54 Elizabeth Street, Launceston TAS 7250
Postal address: as above
email: launcestontheosophicalsociety@gmail.com
www.austheos.org.au/launceston
Meet: Wednesdays 1.00pm, or else 7.30pm when
interstate visitors are speaking.
President: Jenny Haslem
Secretary: Ruth Holt
Tel: 0448 397 246

Victoria

Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:
126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
email: meltheos@bigpond.com.au
Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month
President: Ken Edwards
Secretary: Edward Sinclair

Mornington Peninsula Group:

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,
Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
of the month
(12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch - 1.30pm
Theosophy)
Coordinator: Alice Oppen
Tel: 03 5976 3815
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: tsp Perth@iinet.net.au
<http://www.tsp Perth.com.au>
Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays
President: Harry Bayens
Secretary: Carole Ann Webster

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

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

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

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

Freedom of Thought

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

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

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



Freedom of the Society

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

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

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

