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**INSIDE** From the National President  
Towards Tomorrow and Beyond  
Ancient Wisdoms in a Modern World  
Culture and identity – On being, belonging and becoming  
Reflections on Springbrook Retreat

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**June 2022**

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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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### Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

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

## From the National President

Stephen McDonald



One of our least known International President's was John Coats. This may be because he was in office for a relatively short period of time. His sudden death resulted in a truncated period during which to make his mark on the Theosophical Society. Nevertheless, his oratorical skills and remarkable observations of the world are pertinent to current global events. With this in mind, a feature article for this edition of *Theosophy in Australia* is a reprint of an abridged talk that he gave on his Australian tour in 1974. His sentiments are still so relevant to today's problems and some of the answers that Theosophy provides.

Our first national event at Springbrook in over two years was held in April. There were 18 students and 4 presenters attending the School of Theosophy. Since that occasion, I have received several emails with positive feedback and gratitude for arranging the School. It would not have been possible without the contribution of Linda and Pedro Oliveira and the help of Simon O'Rourke. I wholeheartedly thank each of them. I also thank the

students, whose enthusiasm and active participation contributed to the success of the School and the spirit of the event. One of the younger participants has contributed some reflections on his first personal and insightful account of a School of Theosophy and staying at Springbrook Education and Retreat Centre in Queensland.

The next event at Springbrook in October will be a seminar with a psychology theme. Entitled *Ancient Wisdoms in a Modern World*, the sessions will be led by Berry Dunston and Gayle Thomas. We plan to provide a few days in a peaceful setting to engage in a practical exploration of ourselves and our relation to the world around us from a Theosophical perspective. It is the first time (that I am aware of) that there has been an event like this at Springbrook and it promises to be a special occasion. As an introduction to some of this work, Berry Dunston, who is a trained and highly experienced counsellor and psychotherapist, has contributed an article for this edition of the magazine. It provides a little background to some

of the ideas that will be explored at the seminar. The advance details about the event are in the Calendar of Events section of this magazine. We also have a complementary article by Olga Gostin entitled 'Culture and Identity: On being, belonging and becoming.

I have just returned from visiting Adelaide Lodge and had the opportunity to inspect the venue for our next National Convention to be held at St Mark's College at the University of Adelaide. This delightful facility will provide an ideal location for a week-long adventure exploring the theme of Theosophy and Science. Professor Emeritus, Richard Silberstein has agreed to be the keynote presenter and will head up an impressive team of speakers,

workshops and activities. This event promises to be a captivating and enlightening event. More information and registration details are in this issue of the magazine. Please register your early interest in attending.

As Australia reawakens after a long period of repose and uncertainty, I sense a desire among our members to re-engage with old friends and to share the gems of the Ageless Wisdom, which Theosophy presents to the modern world. In the coming months, there are several opportunities planned by the national headquarters, and by lodges/branches and groups around the country to facilitate a renewed enthusiasm for the work of the Society. Let's support those initiatives by participating in this work once again.

### ***The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches***

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

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

## Towards Tomorrow and Beyond

From the Sixth President of the  
Theosophical Society (1973 – 1979)

John Coats



Today I would like to put forward the idea that the Theosophical Society was founded not only for the early days but for this century. [We might add, for the 21st century.] It seems to have been intended that we should be part of an opening door to a consciousness based on the Oneness-principle which was relatively unheard of in the Victorian era in which the Society was founded. Brotherhood was to be the manifested expression of that Oneness.

At present we are undergoing a change from the past to the future and our task seems to be to maintain a kind of steadiness during the turbulent transition taking place in all fields of human experience and which is marked by a state of confusion amounting to panic, where people waste a great deal of energy clutching at straws and attaching themselves to all sorts of unlikely possibilities: even on the fringes of the Theosophical Society.

When I speak of *steadiness*, I am thinking of the person who comes through this problematical period maintaining a reliance on what in

theosophical parlance we might call basic principles.

### Life is a River

In all this confusion, surely it is our task in the TS to maintain such steadiness. I do not mean conservatism, which suggests unwillingness to change. Rather am I thinking of a deep flowing river which moves steadily from its early beginnings up in the mountains, all the way to the ocean. We tend to cut off the flow of this river which is life, into locks.

We like our own particular little lock; we feel comfortable in it, and do not want the gates to be opened. We are afraid of what new things will come if we plunge into the river. Many of us are like this, and it affects our



Mahablipuram photo by Karthik Easvur



theosophical work. But the river does not stand still, it does move, and it moves with a certain direction, a sense of where it should be going.

### **Open-Mindedness**

Don't let's live in our own little lock. Let us try to be very open-minded. What do we mean by open-minded? We talk about it often enough, in the Golden Stairs for example. Do we not mean a mind that is open to everything and everybody?

An open mind is in contact with what is happening, with the moment. At least that is how it seems to me. After any TS meeting, A may say to B, "what was the meeting like?", and B may reply, "Well, all right, you know, nothing new." Now the question is, does B have an open mind in saying that? I think not. If you are in contact with the moment, then you could hear the same lecture twenty times. As the stars move in their course and nothing ever stands still, so, if you live in the moment, it will always be different.

I think we have to give up all sorts of notions and ideas and habits and traditions—even theosophical notions—in order to get to something broader. We have got to make some kind of sacrifice, some kind of renunciation, if we are really going to get anywhere at all. Of course, the whole purpose of getting anywhere is to be more useful, and this is really the

only thing that makes it valuable.

We have the tremendous renunciation of the Lord Buddha, the Tathagata, the supreme renunciation of Nirvāna, until all humanity can enter in. What kind of renunciation can I make/can you make? Whatever it may be, I feel some sort of renunciation is demanded of every one of us, which means giving up many things we may have considered necessary, that we have thought normal, that other people feel are usual in life.

### **Our Raison d'être**

The Society was started with very strict aims in view: 'The Chiefs wanted a genuine universal fraternity started, an institution which would make itself known throughout the world, and arrest the attention of the highest minds.' You will recall that they stated they had not broken the silence of the ages for unimportant things, but to bring about a brotherhood of humanity. That is our reason for existence. Not simply that we should benefit ourselves.

We may not know precisely for what reason we have been brought together into this Society, but we hope that we may be able to do what we came to do in this particular time of transition; and that we may have the ability to respond to certain ideas.

The whole purpose of having a lodge is to work through it so that it is in

touch with what is going on around it, and so that it can arrest the attention of the highest minds. I rather doubt that we are doing this. As one of the Masters said:

Theosophy must not merely be a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics epitomised in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical and has therefore to be disencumbered from useless discussion.

Have we done this? Are we known throughout the world? We are not. If you ask the average person in the street in any big city you will find they have never heard of Theosophy. Can we be said to be doing our job of making it available to everybody, if nobody knows what it is? Our Lodges are not there just so we may have some fun once a week. If life is flowing in a lodge, it may be a sanctuary where members recharge their lights, but its prime purpose is that of a lighthouse. We have, therefore, to make sure our lodges are in good order, and that the light is flowing freely.

### The Purpose of a Lodge

What is the lodge to be then? It may be intended as an instrument, but it must be an instrument that is used. It has to be something through which the work is done. Is not that what a nucleus is? A nucleus has to nucleate, if there is

such a word; it has to both attract and transmit.

A lodge is very like an individual. Many individuals are seeking what I may call discipleship. They are looking for something, perhaps a deeper experience, and they hope to become more useful in the work of those who brought our Society into being. I feel that the lodge can be a sort of disciple, and many of the rules that apply to the one, apply to the other.

The guru-chela relationship and attitude could be expressed in the lodge, in the same way that it may be in the life of an individual. Just as an individual may begin the day with a meditation, which is a kind of dedication, it is a good idea for lodges to do likewise, whether it is a few minutes' silence or an actual pronouncement of a dedication. However, I do not think this necessarily applies to public meetings, where it may work in the wrong way.



Raking from Momoyogusa—Flowers of a Hundred Generations (1909) by Kamisaka Sekka. Original from The New York Public Library. Digitally enhanced by rawpixel. Free CCO image.



Whatever practice is employed, we must allow it to be meaningful. When I say, O Hidden Life vibrant in every atom, I must have time to think that the whole room and every member, whether I like everyone or not, is also full of those atoms. There is nothing between us at all, in that homogenised field of atoms, including the chairs and the lights and everything else. We are all one at this atomic level. There is no question that basically we are One, whether we like it or not. It is only when the atoms start building up other forms that we feel separated; but basically, we are One, the hidden life in every atom.

These words should bring us to a realisation of our Oneness, and we should have time to think what it means. I can only explain what it means to me. You probably have your own ideas about it. The hidden Light shining in every creature: I know that from the very beginning I associated it with the Egyptian teaching of looking for the Light, following the Light. Thou art the Light; let your Light shine. You find the Light within yourself, and this is the Light within every creature, in the heart of everyone, or in the heart centre, of everyone.

Now let us take the hidden Love embracing all in Oneness. I used to live in Vienna, and in the summer, I would go swimming in the Danube,

in one of those excellent places arranged in such a way that there was something for everyone. The whole wonderful place was like a maze of many compartmentalised areas. There was one where you kept your bicycle, another where you could go for a cup of coffee, another to do exercises, yet another where boys kicked footballs around, and still another where there was space for sunbathing. It seems to me that love embracing all in Oneness would be a knocking down of all these barricades which compartmentalise us, a knocking down of all the hedges that we put up against people, and in the process, helping us to get rid of our hang-ups and our inhibitions and so on. Love does that: it won't have any hedges, it won't have any fences, it won't have any walls. It knocks them all down, embracing all in Oneness.

### **Complete Commitment**

Readiness to renounce was part of Annie Besant's character. It made her ready to do anything at any moment. Am I ready to do anything? I don't know, and perhaps the test has not come. But it will, if we are willing; and it will mean giving up something that we cherish and consider important. Are we really ready to leave, as the Masters have said, our world and come to theirs, whatever that may mean? Am I ready to do that if the opportunity comes?

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Forsake all and follow me'. That may be symbolic of course: it may mean forsaking the world of the mind and coming into the world of Buddhi. However it be interpreted, there is a feeling of completeness involved in it, completeness of commitment to something new and different, and being truly humble. That is one of the most difficult tasks. It is relatively easy to pretend to be humble, but to be truly so is another matter.

Then there is self-initiated helpfulness, which is not waiting to be asked by somebody else, but watching, seeing, and then stepping in to do whatever is needed, even in small things. And what of fearlessness, also referred to in the Golden Stairs? We can only have fear when we do not know ourselves, apart from the little fears that come from the animal elemental—it does not want to be burned—but I am not talking about that kind of thing. I am talking about the things which so often impede us in life because we are nervous and afraid of what other people will say and think and do. No one can touch you, no one, just as no one can improve you or change you, except yourself. So, fearlessness is one of the characteristics we must have, and naturally have, when we know ourselves.

The disciple, it seems to me, is not cleverer than everyone else; but more

useful. When Jesus said I must be about my Father's business, should we not also say that? I think that would be quite a good motto for us too, in the theosophical world. It means, I think, a willingness to go on whatever happens, no matter what obstruction, what difficulty, what inconvenience, what sickness.

### **The Oneness of Life**

The universality of the Oneness is the central theme, the main plank, of our platform. H.P.B. calls it 'an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude'. Nevertheless, she does make the attempt, which I believe has a broadening effect on our minds. This idea of a boundless infinitude which is everywhere is not new to us, but perhaps we can let ourselves flow out with the idea and feel more at one with each other as a result.

It is all that is, all that ever was and all that ever will be, the fountain of everything, an inexpressible source, an ineffable source from which everything flows forth and into which everything finally returns, all atoms, all gods, all worlds and everything on them and in them. Boundless life, boundless space,

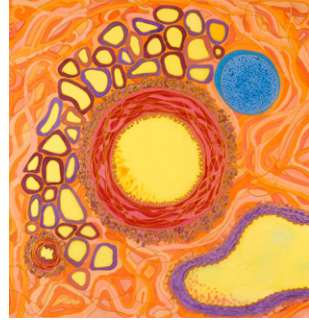
boundless duration, frontier-less and beginningless and without limiting extensional dimensions of any kind because it contains them all. How can you describe this indescribable THAT?

It is what we essentially are as individuals and collectively, call it cosmic intelligence and you will not err, but it is not only the intelligence of a solar system or of a galaxy or of a thousand million galaxies but all these and infinitely more. Nothing manifested, however vast, can ever approach the end of it because it has no end. It is all energy that is, it is all substance that is, it is all destiny that is— everything at all times and in all places and everywhere. How can you give a name to THAT?

To me that is almost like a meditation. We can try to deeply understand that THAT is all there is and there isn't anything else, although we have to work with its myriad manifestations. Somehow in our feebleness and inadequacy we are called to make it real to the world in which we live. There can be nothing more important. With this in mind, let us find more ways and means of great efforts, great self-sacrifice, to make this concept of Oneness available to others.

*Edited from the unrevised notes of the President's address to the Australian Convention held in Sorrento, Victoria in*

*1974, a version of which was published in Theosophy in Australia August 1974. Quotes were not attributed in the original.*



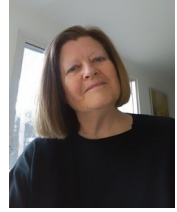
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## Profile

JOHN COATS was International President of the Theosophical Society from 1973 to 1979. He served as General Secretary of the English Section of the TS from 1941 to 1946. Later he served as President of the European Federation of the TS from 1959 to 1968. He worked in the family business (the famous Coats cotton mills in Paisley, Scotland) and later on the London Stock Exchange. In 1932 he met a complete stranger in a café who talked to him about the teachings of Theosophy. As a result of this chance encounter, he joined the Society and became devoted to its work. Known for his affable manner, John Coats travelled widely all over the world spreading the message of Theosophy.

## “Ancient Wisdoms in a Modern World”

Berry Dunston



The “Ancient Wisdoms” I am referring to in this article are the rituals, entities, stories and symbols created by ancient cultures, predominantly to help create cohesive communities. These practices, pictorial forms, stories, myths and legends provided shared meanings and established values to help make sense of the world and many of them remain relevant today. Our Australian Aboriginal cultures provide both ancient and modern examples of how these ancient expressions can still be related to in a modern world. These symbolic aspects of people’s experience came into being and were important in supporting people to form cohesive communities. At a time when the majority of people were not literate, this use of shared symbolic meanings was particularly important in developing the sense of ‘belonging’ within societies.

Many of the symbols and stories created by different peoples over millennia, live on and are now seen as the foundation upon which different religions and cultures were

generated. Many are still used today to provide ways of making sense of our human experience. These ‘traditions’ became important for many reasons. To generate a sense of belonging within a community and to achieve some control over people’s behaviour by establishing what is, or is not, acceptable.

Some traditions allowed certain people to become dominant or of ‘superior’ importance and able to rule over others by being given the right to assign meanings to things. Each of these motivations for the use of story and symbols can be seen as having a meaning-making purpose in the lives of both individuals and communities, both in ancient times and still today.

If we see the stories and symbolic representation of deities and other images through this lens, it becomes evident they may be used as keys to unlock and gain an understanding of different cultures and human behaviours – both ancient and modern, religious and secular – they may also be seen as the origin of “law and order”.

Being born into a family deeply embedded in Theosophy meant I learnt about different cultural and religious expressions from early childhood. Time spent with TS members from around the world, including Krishnamurti, John Coates, Radha Burnier, Jim Perkins and Irina Tweedie – who was my Sufi meditation master and a member of the TS in London, as well as many Buddhist teachers, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama – whose teachings I have attended both in India and Australia, has given me a variety of perspectives on Ancient Wisdom traditions. It became obvious to me that many apparently different teachings, myths and symbols could be understood as being about the same things. The writing of Carl Jung, particularly his use of symbolic

archetypes in dream interpretation, helped me to make this connection about the symbolic languages of ancient cultures.

These connections have supported my work as a counsellor and psychotherapist, to help people become aware that humans are essentially “meaning making beings” and that we all need to reflect and become conscious of the meanings we have assigned to things, as so many of our meanings are unconscious assumptions and can inform our behaviour either positively or negatively. Even though we are often not consciously aware of how or why we have assigned a meaning to something, that meaning can still directly impact our behaviour. This can be seen when our behaviour is expressed defensively or reactively, even though there is no evident cause for this.

Only when it is understood that we can act on unconscious impulses, not only on those we are conscious about, can people make sense of how they assign meanings to things and then behave in ways which are reactions to these meanings, even when the meaning is not one we are consciously aware of.

We can also assume we understand the meaning of a symbolic image, when it originated with a completely different meaning from the one we now assign to it. The serpent is an



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example. We may see snakes as terrifying evil animals out to kill us, as in the Christian tradition. Whereas the serpent depicted as a ouroboros is a symbol of the natural cycle of destruction and regeneration.



Manasa the Snake Goddess by Jamini Roy

Another example of how symbolic forms can be confusing for us is evident in ancient Buddhist visual depictions of wrathful deity figures expressing fierce and terrifying facial expressions and behaviours. Rather than intending to show strength or as needing to fight to gain power, which is how some people understand these figures, these depictions of forceful passion were mostly intended to demonstrate the energy and determination needed to destroy our internal obstacles to the teachings of the Buddha and the Dharma. These obstacles are frequently self-generated yet we may not be conscious of how they are dominating our thinking and feelings. If we can see these wrathful deity images as telling us we need to

be aware of when we must turn this level of determination and energy on our own inner obstacles, we may find this helps us to calm our behaviour and develop peace of mind.

In 1938 Carl Jung, the Swiss founder of analytic psychology, travelled into India and later interpreted these symbols of deities as telling us we need to reflect, and make our own unconscious meaning-making conscious, if we want negative patterns of behaviour to shift.

In order to understand human behaviour and our meaning making patterns, we need to start at the time of birth, or even before. Everything a baby experiences is utterly bewildering for them. This is why all babies need to experience being ‘mirrored’. This mirroring is done through eye contact and playfully making sounds similar to the ones they make and responding to their gestures with similar gestures. This back and forth playful ‘mirroring’ helps them feel seen and heard and starts the brain development telling them “I am seen, I am heard, I exist”. Giving babies warm and tender attention leads to them being able to feel safe and secure. Recent studies in brain development clearly show how babies need to have their presence acknowledged by having their existence reflected back to them in this way, in order to relax and



focus on what is happening around them without anxiety. Mirroring their behaviour with a smiling face and gentle touch tells them “I’m safe”. This allows them to be aware and to learn.

Many people did not feel as safe as they needed to in infancy, in order to experience this sense of “Secure Attachment”, or as I prefer to call it, “safe-containment”. We all need this for our brain to develop without experiencing trauma. This sense of feeling ‘safely contained’ is what genuinely engaged relationships provide, not only for babies, also for adults all throughout our lives. We often call this type of relationship “love”. Where a person experiences this quality of safe-containment relationship for the first time it supports them in reflecting on the meanings they have carried, for example about their value or ‘lovability’. By doing the work of making their unconsciously held meanings and sense of self-worth conscious, they are embarking on the journey Carl Jung referred to as “individuation”. Allowing themselves to be consciously who they are, not trying to be who they feel they “should” be, according to another’s imposed values.

So many people spend their lives trying to be the person someone taught them they should be in order

to be good enough, right, respected or lovable. This is because they had symbols, myths and beliefs as to what is good or right, imposed on them by someone, or often by a religious culture. Yet it is only when I can differentiate between these imposed beliefs and my own knowing about who I am and how I choose to ‘be me’ and express my values, that an ‘authentic self’ can emerge and be expressed in how I live my life. Reaching this destination is what Jung meant by “individuating”. Frequently we only embark on this journey and individuate when some disruption or crisis occurs in a person’s life. Such disruptions are often seen as unfair, terrible or unjust – however this can be reframed and seen as it providing an opportunity to review my meaning making, reflect on my sense of self-value and maybe find a new way to make sense of things. By reviewing the imposed values of their family of origin; the imposed myths of organised religion; or the belief systems of their modern experiences of cultures and their structures, from a church one attends, to a football club, school or office – all these entities support certain values and assign meanings. If we take on what they tell me I have to believe and be, to be approved of or included, we set up a self-fulfilling cycle for ourselves. Disruption of this feedback system

provides an opportunity to reflect on the meanings and values imposed on us.

If we can become consciously aware of our own sense of these meanings and gain some sense of the impacts on me of those values, beliefs and demands being imposed, we can make a conscious choice as to how I see their meaning now and how I choose to relate to them! This is what I call “taking up residence in the self” rather than being what has been projected onto me that I should be, in order to make others “like, accept or love me”. Being what another demands I be for their benefit, without regard to the impact on me, is not “love”.

This journey to being and feeling free to express my authentic-self requires self-compassion and a degree of courage, allowing a degree of separation from all that has been imposed on us in the form of a religion, or frequently the demands made on us to meet another person’s needs.

Sadly, many people hang onto their childhood constructs and resist questioning them, possibly due to fear of loss of a childhood belief system which represents some level of ‘security’. Undertaking such a review may feel like a denouncing of parents, teachers or clergy.

If differentiating my own knowing means denouncing others who are

important to my sense of belonging, it can even mean I will resist becoming my authentic adult self.

Reviewing childhood experience and why I chose to believe what I was taught, rather than challenge it or the people who imposed it on me, may reveal memories of trauma impacts. While this can be very hard and painful to acknowledge, it can also be freeing if you are able to consciously work through these memories, see the impacts of them and heal these wounds rather than defending against allowing them into conscious awareness. Many people find Bessel van der Kolk’s book, “The Body Keeps the Score” very helpful in relation to this journey.

By reviewing the collective myths taken on in childhood, e.g. the need for me or my parents to be seen as ‘ideal’ or perfect, may allow me to find something even more precious. Being allowed to become a reflective vulnerable and courageous human being, who is on a journey of exploring and finding my ‘authentic’ self.

The “message” is that most things, such as belief systems, symbols and myths, do not always have an inherent meaning. Meanings are assigned or ascribed to them by people who may or may not be conscious of the job this meaning making process is doing. It may be intentional or it may not. It may be an innocent wish for you to

share the meaning for something that they hold dear and precious; or it may be a component of coercive control. We just need to be aware the meanings for things can change upon conscious reflection and review.

Frequently when we reflect on the meanings we assign to things we may see that perhaps we have projected that meaning into it – it is not actually inherent to the thing. This awareness can be very liberating, as it means we can freely reframe the meanings for things where meaning is not inherent – it is symbolic.

Understanding this allows us to review the way the religions of the world have been presented and the symbolic meanings or “truths” of religions and cultures as presented to us by others, can be reviewed in the light of our own lived experience.

If we see the stories, sculptured forms and drawings from what we now call ‘ancient wisdom’ traditions as symbolic representations, we can reflect on the meaning of these “ancient wisdoms” using a different lens. For example, if we see them as depicting problems people have needed to deal with and as providing suggestions as to how to understand and overcome them, they take on a new value. This value is focussed on the stories and symbols as offering ways for learning. Today, we can

make our previously unconsciously assigned meanings for these stories and symbols conscious and informed by our modern understandings. Rather than playing out an ancient or unconsciously assigned meaning for things and getting caught in a web of negative behaviours resulting from this meaning, we can see the ancient drawings, sculptures and stories as powerful symbolic expressions created for some purpose, whether in ancient or modern times.

Another aspect it is important to consider is that much of the symbolic language we use today originated at times when the vast majority of people could not read or write. In Western culture we now take these literacy skills for granted as the primary way to learn and “know” the meaning of things. We need to reflect on this assumption and see that reflective exploring of our feelings and our unconscious meaning making is a far more meaningful and authentic way to connect with self, with others and with the value or meaning of things.

### **Footnote**

Literacy is defined as the ability to use printed and written information to function within a society, to achieve our goals, develop our knowledge and potential.



Photo by Mr TT on Unsplash

## Profile

**BERRY (BERENICE) DUNSTON** is President of the Hobart Branch of the Theosophical Society.

Back in the 1970's Berry worked in a Sydney art gallery doing oil painting restorations and restored the portrait of Madame Blavatsky, which now hangs in Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney. She later became a University Lecturer at University of Technology Sydney. Not long before moving to Tasmania in 2005, she became a Clinical Counsellor and Psychotherapist.

Berry is a third generation Theosophist whose grandmother, Elsie Hindhaugh, drove Annie Besant from Melbourne to her home in Camperdown Victoria in a horse drawn carriage. Berry's mother, Cecily Adams, was President of Blavatsky Lodge Sydney for many years and Berry was Vice-President of Blavatsky Lodge alongside Celia Novy. Berry remembers all the old Blavatsky Lodge rooms, from Bligh Street, Sydney then North Sydney and later when it moved again into the city along with the Adyar Bookshop.

## Culture and identity – On being, belonging and becoming

Olga Gostin



*Adapted from a talk presented to the Theosophy-Science Group in Adelaide in June 2022*

### **Defining culture and identity: a state of being**

As a social anthropologist, engaging with, and understanding culture is the basic tool of the trade. Sixty years on, I can still rattle off my undergraduate definition of culture as comprising *'all the beliefs and practices, including language, technology and material aspects, that are acquired by an individual through the process of socialisation, both formal and informal, in a particular social environment, that is, as a member of society'*. By socialisation, I mean all forms, of imparting knowledge and values to members of a given group, starting from the earliest stages of infancy to adulthood and beyond. Broadly speaking this includes all forms of education, both formal and informal. Some societies take matters in hand and steer individuals through well-defined stages or rites of passage where they acquire knowledge and learn the rules of conformity and

'proper' social behaviour from childhood into adulthood and old age. Identity and individual idiosyncrasies are largely subsumed by the greater cultural imprint through the process of rigorous socialisation. Against this background, one can better appreciate the affirmation of First Nations People for the respectful recognition of their distinctive way of *being*, their unique way of *knowing* and their special way of *doing*. All are embedded in the twin concepts of culture and identity.

These are broad definitions indeed, but a useful if somewhat contentious starting point that allows us to differentiate say, between Zulu and French culture, or to identify First Nations cultures as distinct from the 'majority' Australian culture with its oft invoked 'core values'. Cultural traits like dress and ritual often carry (mistaken) assumptions about identity and intent, as witness the controversy over 'ethnic' = Muslim women wearing the hijab or burka in Australia in the 90s and especially after the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York. Castigating wearers of facial





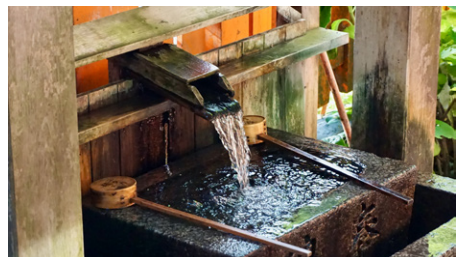
Unknown artist, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Martin Kober, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

covering and associating them with ‘terrorism’ was almost normalised until COVID-19 converted most of us into ardent supporters of the masked face. Within Christendom there are similar codes embedded in certain gestures, like the Sign of the Cross whether with open hand (Catholic and Anglican), three fingers (mainstream Orthodox) or two fingers (Russian Old Believers), and whether moving from left to right shoulder (Orthodox), or vice versa (Catholic/Anglican).

The point I am making is that cultures are infinitely diverse and complex, and are eminently given to facile generalisation, stereotyping and/or misrepresentation. It was fascination with this unique human attribute, that prompted American anthropologist Ruth Benedict to write her [in]famous *Patterns of Culture* (1934) in which she claimed to identify distinct cultural traits that allegedly characterised different Native American peoples: some aggressive, others peace-loving; some moderate, others exuberant or narcissistic. Later, in her controversial



Or Fushimi, Kyoto, Japan Photo by Karen Chew on Unsplash



*Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) she identified apparent contradictions within Japanese culture: gentility and refinement on one hand, versus regimentation and aggression on the other. She underlined this apparent contradiction as *the* distinct attribute of Japanese culture.

From culture, I now move to the equally complex concept of identity that my Macquarie dictionary defines simply as *the state of being oneself and not another*. It encompasses the notions of individuality and personality and addresses our innate desire to define ourselves in relation to others. I have no background in psychology, but one could argue that given the pervasive influence of culture and its entrenched position in the process of *socialisation*, identity is to a large extent defined by and/or constrained by cultural parameters. Conversely though, if one's identity (as say an LGBTIQ+ person) is not accepted by the broader community, there can arise serious disjunction within an individual's sense of self, identity and/or culture.

The contentious relationship between culture and identity dominated American anthropology at the turn of the 20th century. It was this debate that Margaret Mead set out to resolve in Samoa: is individual behaviour/personality a matter of genetics/

**nature**, or is it dictated by culture/**nurture**? While Mead's work has been vigorously contested by Derek Freeman (1983), the **nature/nurture debate** remains a source of ongoing interest and study, notably of the character of identical twins separated at birth and brought up in different socio-cultural environments. More recently, we see the nurture equation pushed by the Han Chinese in Xinjiang Province, intent on the re-education/re-socialising of the Uyghur people in massive detention centres. And of course, in our own recent past it was official Australian government policy until the mid-1960s to forcefully remove First Nations children of mixed racial descent from their natal cultural environment and to relocate them in institutions where they could be socialised into a different (Anglo-European) culture, mind-set and identity. So crudely, yes, there **is** a link between culture and identity – even if it is a connection that led to profound identity crises among members of the Stolen Generations.

### Unravelling the definitions

However, as anticipated earlier, the definition of culture is itself fraught with assumptions and ambiguity. In any society, but more manifestly in a country like Australia that actively (and proudly) defines itself as multicultural, it begs the question: who identifies

the so-called dominant/mainstream culture and its defining attributes or core values? Whose **knowledge** is privileged; who wields the **power** to define the cultural traits that will define the nation; whose authority is **centred**; whose position and cultural precepts are **marginalised**? In a word, which group(s) in a multicultural society authoritatively unfold and/or impose the grand narrative of the nation, embedding stereotypes about settlement/invasion and so-called ‘core national values’, while the culture and values of other groups are ‘othered’? Think of it!

If these considerations are confounding enough, there is the added conundrum that cultures are inherently adaptable and capable of, if not predisposed to, change. It has always been thus. Archaeological and historical evidence stretching across millennia testifies to our human insatiable curiosity and capacity to adapt to environmental, social and existential challenges. Therein lies real hope for future generations – if only the process of change would be driven by positive forces of mutual adaptability, inclusivity, equity and respect.

The same reservations apply to identity – whichever way we define that slippery term and its relation to culture. Just like cultures, identities

are complex, multi-layered, adaptable, given to change – and open to manipulation and/or discrimination by others. In current sociological jargon the key term is intersectionality – the way that different aspects of one’s identity may singly or in combination provoke prejudice, discrimination and compound inequality. Think of the pressures on a migrant, a refugee or a so-called boat person; a woman, an aged person, a person of colour or one with disability. There are so many variables to intersectionality. Identity is like elastic, it stretches, contracts but, I would argue, remains essentially defined by the past socialisation experiences of the individual. And yet, and yet... think of overt identity markers like dress, gender, skin colour, language – never mind underlying covert cultural attributes. Often, it is these outer traits that trigger/inhibit interaction based on assumptions about their meaning. Have you ever asked someone with a heavy accent, wearing a hijab or full chador, or of a different skin colour to yours, what is their country of origin? Is this not tantamount to ‘othering’ that person and imposing/requesting an explanation for that particular trait or identity? Have you perhaps been disconcerted by the response ‘I’m a third generation Australian’? The same othering applies to fair

skinned First Nations people whose identity is routinely challenged and denigrated (see Heiss 2018). Note also, that while skin colour may not be relevant to say, an Indian in India, or an African in Africa, it may become disproportionately important as an identity marker after migrating to Australia. It is worth remembering too, that gender, transgender and related issues became controversial in the 2022 Federal elections following the transgender-phobic assertions of a candidate. Similar clash of values and/or presumptions about what is acceptable or not apply to dress codes, eating conventions, speech patterns and so on. For example, in December 2021 I completed giving a U3A course on Aboriginal Australia to recent migrants, members of the Russian Women's Association. Stereotypical and 'othering' views of the First Australians were the norm, and it took a protracted COVID-interrupted course stretched over two years to unpack some prejudices, or at least to offer an alternative perspective.

## Belonging

While I was preparing this talk, the Migration Museum in Kintore Avenue ran an exhibition run by the Russian Women's Association. Entitled *Belonging*, the exhibition featured 12 mature-age women photographed in



Chromolithograph by Armand Theophile Cassagne (Public Domain) *Georgie au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Alexandre, roi des rois, 1417-1442.*

their Adelaide home environment, each identifying a material object (vase, pair of shoes, doily, ikon etc) that spoke to them of their Russian heritage and/or former Russian homeland. The whole exercise was searingly moving as it underlined the uprooting of individuals from their physical and cultural background and their adoption and adaptation to Australia as migrants. I was struck by the endurance and courage of these folk, and inevitably thought of the similar journeys of dislocation forced on the Stolen Generations children. I do not want to push the analogy too far as of course, there is no equating voluntary migration with enforced removal from one's family and cultural roots in one's own country. A common denominator nevertheless remains: the loss of place and culture and with it, the need to forge a new identity under alien, sometimes hostile circumstances.

In the end, it seems to me, the whole issue about culture and identity boils down to one thing: the need to *belong*, the imperative of *belonging*. At first, the term suggests a notion of having arrived, of being grounded, of having found roots, of having reached one's destiny, in short – of belonging. But the term can also be conjured differently: to resonate with a more subtle, covert connotation: a yearning implicit within it; to be in a state of longing; or to *be longing*. It seems to echo a primeval chord: a search or yearning for some elusive something, a restlessness within, a spiritual unslaked thirst if you want. David Tacey makes the point in his *Edge of the Sacred* (1995) and *ReEnchantment* (2000), that all non-Indigenous Australians whether recent migrants or First Fleet descendants, are consciously or unconsciously searching to find their identity in this country. And they are ever foiled by its murky, hidden history, the deafening silence surrounding the initial invasion, and the ever-shifting terms of co-existence with the First Nations People. The historian Henry Reynolds has made the same claim in his *This Whispering in our Hearts*, as has Peter Read in his book *Belonging* (2000).

For Tacey, this yearning for identity and search for embeddedness within this continent can only occur through engaging mindfully and respectfully

with the cultures and spirituality of the First Australians. It is also the point of Norman Habel's *Reconciliation* (1999). Obviously, such engagement can only occur meaningfully at the invitation and on the terms of the First Australians themselves. And it is a source of wonderment that this invitation to shared belonging remains open despite the offer being officially rebuffed again and again – the latest being the peremptory rejection of the Uluru Statement from the Heart by PM Malcolm Turnbull in 2017. For First Nations people, however, (with some notable exceptions e.g., some members of the Stolen Generations) belonging is not an issue – they have always belonged on what always was, always will be, Aboriginal land. For them, though, the issue is *becoming* – how to achieve their best and forge a shared future with the invaders of the last 2½ centuries, based on mutual recognition, equity and respect. It is the theme of Stan Grant's *The Australian Dream: Blood, History and Becoming* (2016) written before the rejection of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Despite its blatant failures to fully embrace its cultural diversity, Australia continues to project itself as a successful multicultural society. Some analysts have contrasted the American and Australian versions

of multiculturalism by resorting to a culinary analogy: the US version is rather like a stew where the various immigrant cultures ideally integrate into the dominant culture, whereas Australian multiculturalism is rather like a tossed salad where all the component parts remain distinguishable. The recognition of cultural diversity is well entrenched in various government portfolios specifically related to promoting and sustaining multiculturalism in Australia. This is best expressed in the cultural and identity implications of the chorus of the Seekers' well-loved song, written in 1987 and which was so prevalent in advertising jingles before the 2019 and 2022 federal elections: *We are one, but we are many/ And from all the lands on Earth we come/We'll share a dream and sing with one voice:/I am, you are, we are Australian.* In mid-2022 SBS added its own simple inclusive multilingual acknowledgement: *We, us, together, all connected.* And from Eurovision 2022 in Turin, Italy, the catchy refrain from Magical Myka: *I can be brown, I can be blue... I can be pie in the sky, I can be anything you like.* If only!

### **Concluding remarks on becoming**

Reflecting on our complex and infinitely varied human journey, I often think of the observation of the first cosmonauts, looking down at planet

Earth from the moon, an orbiting capsule or from the International Space Station. Overwhelmingly, their reaction was one of wonderment at the uniqueness of our blue planet, adrift in the intense darkness of space. For many, this view of Earth evoked a new sense of identity, transcending geographical borders, cultures and distinct nationalities. Some spoke of an epiphany, a new consciousness and awareness of our common humanity. In a sense, the cosmonauts were articulating that intense yearning within all of us, that aspiration that would have us *become* that which we yearn to be: at one with all, and all embraced within oneself. This is a journey that we each *can* undertake, an option open to each and every one of us. The requirements are basic: an awareness that we are both *being* (rooted in culture, identity) and *becoming* – seeking to transcend the narrow confines of *being* and *belonging* through a greater consciousness and willingness to accept the moral responsibility of *becoming* a different self, subsumed by the all-encompassing Oneness.

To achieve this, we must mindfully and deliberately embrace our fellow humans as equal members of the universal brother/sisterhood in which we earthlings are one. I defer to the guidelines of theosophist Joy Mills:

“Listen, then to the march of the future. All its possibilities are here today, as they were present yesterday. Not in time, but in consciousness must the journey be taken. Not in some distant place, but in the space of human heart, must come the realization that all life is one.” (1975/2008:34). In the end, I suppose, culture and identity are but external trappings; what we long for and become is a matter of internal consciousness and personal volition. It is anchored in the words of an ancient sage: *The Present is the Child of the Past; the Future begotten of the Present.*

I wish you well on your onward journey of exploration.

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## Profile

Of mixed Belgian-Russian parentage, DR OLGA GOSTIN did her undergraduate studies in social anthropology in South Africa before obtaining a scholarship to the Australian National University. From 1963-65 she did research into resettlement and cash cropping among the Kuni of Papua, obtaining her PhD in 1968. A post-doctoral exchange at Moscow State University honed her interest in syncretism and cultural change. She was part of the foundation of Australia's first specifically designated tertiary program for Indigenous Australians in 1973 and remained associated with it for the next 40 years. In 1992 she obtained her Master's degree in Environmental Studies from Adelaide University. She remains passionately interested in social justice and environmental issues. Olga has been a dedicated member of the Theosophical Society since 1970.



## Reflections on Springbrook Retreat

Grant Dale

Member of Hobart Branch



It was so good to have the time to really invest myself wholly in study and contemplation, and to do this alongside new friends and colleagues who were tuned into the same goal. This was my first time attending The Theosophical Society Retreat Centre in the beautiful Gold Coast hinterlands at Springbrook, Queensland.

At 7:30 am early-risers would assemble for a short morning meditation (attunement) held in a bright and auspicious hall with its high circular window. Over the next few days, I would often fix my gaze on this window while contemplating the discussions at hand.

Each day we delved into H.P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* (VOS). Pedro and Linda presented selected verses to guide us into the text's array of symbol and metaphor; 3 Fragments, 3 Halls, 7 Portals, 2 Paths, 3 Vestures; intertwined symbols that need time to unfurl, which they did as discussion flowed freely. The wisdom in the text wasn't only to be apprehended intellectually; it was 'for the daily use of Lanoos (Disciples)'.

As I looked around, we seemed authentically to be a hall of Lanoos. Removed from the hectic world outside we could not only begin to understand the content of The VOS but also, as a group, embody the truth of unity expressed so lovingly and honestly by Blavatsky.

In the afternoons, Stephen and Simon led sessions in which we discussed and practiced skills required for effective presentation and speaking. I discovered that holding love and service as the foundational impetus for delivering presentations could be a game-changer in regards to dealing with nerves. They continue to fade.

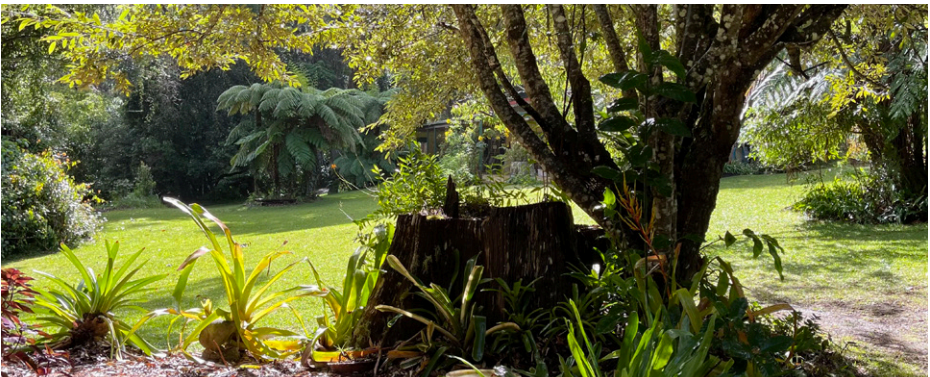
There was also plenty of time to enjoy the Jurassic settings of the hinterland. One day a few of us visited a grand waterfall that cascaded into a lush, deep valley. It was spectacular. I was struck by the absence of Pterodactyls.

From the first to the last meal an abundance of amazing food and genuine hospitality nurtured our 4-day community. Breakfasts, snacks, lunches, dinners, desserts... all vegan/

vegetarian and my annoying *gluten-freeness* was totally accommodated. Thank you to Hannah and her mother, Kay, who did the wonderful catering. It's definitely cooler in the mountains. Of an evening the glowing wood stove provided a warm background for conversation and laughter. One evening we were even treated to impromptu flute and poetry. Thanks Michael and George!

After one session on *The VOS*, I drifted into the very peaceful library. I found an old photo album from the nineties

that documented the initial building stages of the Centre. There were lots of members chipping-in. It struck me that the smiling togetherness captured in these photographs seemed just the same as the atmosphere of the group I was now a part of. The experience I was sharing here with new friends was just one instance in a whole history of solidarity. A huge thank you to the Theosophical Society and everyone involved. I'm so grateful to have been led to this really special meeting place.







Participants at the recent School of Theosophy

## Call for Nominations – State Representatives

State Representatives play a vital role by representing and liaising with Lodges/Branches, Groups and National Members in their electoral area, gathering information, views and questions to be shared at the bi-annual meetings of the National Council. State Representatives have the responsible role of policy making for the National Society. The position requires time and dedication preparing for and participating in meetings. As a society we are grateful that members are able to provide this special service to our organization.

In accordance with Rules 17(1)(c) and 19, the current terms of office of the State Representatives for NSW/ACT (Gerard Brennan), WA (Sue Lee who resigned in 2021 and John Davey who filled the casual vacancy to the end of the term), and VIC (Edward Sinclair), will expire at the appointment of new State Representatives towards the end of 2022. Accordingly, nominations are invited for the election of one State Representative for each of the named states. All sitting State Representatives are eligible for re-election this year as none have yet served three consecutive terms.

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 on Friday 23rd September 2022.

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

## National Calendar of Events

### 2023 NATIONAL CONVENTION

#### For TS members

**Dates:** Wed 25 January – Wed 1 February 2023

**Venue:** St Mark's College, University of Adelaide

**Theme:** New Frontiers for an Ageless Wisdom: Exploring the powers latent in humanity

**Featured Speaker:** Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein



A very popular and engaging speaker, Richard Silberstein is a long-time member of the Theosophical Society. The title and role of Professor Emeritus at Swinburne

University, Melbourne, was conferred upon him in 2014. His long and distinguished career there spanned forty years of service, which included roles in teaching, research, management and services to the scientific and broader community. He developed Steady State Topography (SST), a new and unique method for imaging brain function. Richard will be featured twice on the Convention programme, including a discussion on his latest research work.

**Accommodation (subsidised) Rates:** \$700 for 7 nights, standard single rooms (or \$770 for airconditioned rooms). This tariff includes all meals and morning and afternoon tea. Both room styles have shared bathrooms. For those travelling together, a limited number of two- and three-bedroom apartments are available at a similar



cost. There are also a limited number of single rooms with ensuite facilities. Please email us for further information about these options.

If preferred payment may be made in 2 or 4 equal instalments. For further information, please contact the National Secretary, Gayle Thomas, [natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au) or on (02) 9264 6404.



**Earlybird Registration Fee:** \$20 if received by Wed 31 August 2022. All registrations received after 31 August are \$40.

**Registration Forms:** are available from our website – [theosophicalsociety.org.au](http://theosophicalsociety.org.au)

**Registration Deadline:** for guaranteed rooms, live-in registrants – Wed 30 November 2022.

**Enquiries:** Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary – [catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Early registrations are encouraged. We look forward to meeting you in Adelaide.

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## SPRINGBROOK EVENT – OCTOBER 2022

**For TS Members and Non-Members**

**Dates:** Thurs 27 October – Sun 30 October

**Theme:** ‘Ancient Wisdoms in a Modern World: a contemporary exploration of the stories and symbols that bring meaning to our lives’

**About:** Making sense of our human experience can bring meaning to our lives. These sessions will help us become conscious of the meanings we have assigned to things and the effect it has on our behaviours. Reflecting on the reasons for our thinking and feelings may help to calm our behaviour and bring peace of mind.

**Presenters:**

**Berry Dunston** – is President of the Hobart Branch of the Theosophical Society.

She was formerly a University Lecturer at the University of



Technology Sydney. Not long before moving to Tasmania in 2005, she became a Clinical Counsellor and Psychotherapist.

**Gayle Thomas** – is National Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Australia. She worked as a Chaplain of Theosophy in the hospital and hospice sector in Queensland. Spiritual Care dovetails nicely with Berry's practice, as it facilitates the exploring of an individual's story. Through selfless listening a safe space is provided and the person listened to can express their sense of the world and where they have found their own strength and spirituality.



**Cost:** \$180 (members), \$220 (non-members) – includes all sessions, accommodation, catering and airport/station transfers.

**Enquiries to:** Stephen McDonald  
pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au  
or (02) 9264 7056.

## Theosophical Order of Service

*A Union of those who Love  
- in the Service of All that suffers.*



### The TOS Australia – May 2022 Update.

Hi to All, I hope everyone is keeping well.

#### International News:

Some extracts from a recent communication to TOS International from TOS Ukraine.

“Dear Sister Nancy,

As you know, the war situation in our

country is now very difficult. We have prepared updated information about possibilities to help Ukraine. Please see the attached document. Every one of our TS members does all they can the best at this situation and we will be happy to feel the support and understanding of our Brothers and Sisters. With best wishes and joy of cooperation, Svitlana Gavrylenko.”

And from the attached document:

This letter is addressed to members of the Theosophical Order of Service. We know about your powerful Good Will Energy and the power of collective thought. Join our meditation for peace in Ukraine, with the reading of the Universal Prayer every day to the 8-12-8 pattern, according to your local time zone. We also invite you to join our 21 minute meditation every day at 21.00 (9pm) to protect Ukraine and help all the victims. We know about lots of your prayers and meditations initiatives and are very grateful to your support.

Please see our TOS blog:

[ukr-tos.blogspot.com](http://ukr-tos.blogspot.com)

and our FaceBook page:

[www.facebook.com/theosophy.in.ua](http://www.facebook.com/theosophy.in.ua)

### Local Australian News:

Two of our TS/TOS members reached out to us during the Lismore floods. Local members Marcello and Margaret arranged for TOS Australia to provide petrol voucher support to the Koori Mail Flood Relief Hub. The Koori Mail, a locally run national indigenous newspaper whose offices were also destroyed in the floods, was providing major support to the local community recovery. The petrol vouchers were to provide fuel for generators needed to supply emergency power to the local community.

Margaret advised: “This is gratefully accepted as so many people were made destitute in the last 2 floods. Thank you all very much!!!!”

That’s all for now.

Loving best wishes to ALL.

Be Safe, Be Well, Be HAPPY.

Cheers, George Wester

National Coordinator

Email: [tos.australia@gmail.com](mailto:tos.australia@gmail.com)



*“My deeds must speak for me, for words are too poor”*

Annie Besant

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## News and Notes

### **TRIBUTE – Georgina Fode (9/02/1946 – 25/04/2022)**

After fleeing from Croatia to Italy in 1956 with her family, Georgina migrated to Australia in 1958. In her twenties, Georgina with her husband, ran a successful food business in Melbourne for many years. Seeking a new path in life, Georgina joined the Melbourne Lodge of the Theosophical Society (MTS) in 1990, where she formed the Melbourne branch of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), and introduced a Mandala Group, both of which she ran successfully for 20 years. During this time, she pursued what she termed “the esoteric essence of Theosophy” through her involvement with the Esoteric School of Theosophy.

Georgina became the National TOS President in 1997; a position she held until 2003. She also served the MTS in many positions, such as a director on the board of MTS, a popular presenter on various topics, and the caterer for many events that occurred over the years. Georgina never forgot her roots and cherished her son Gordon, his wife Sandra, and her two grandchildren Carla and Emilia;

she was always there for them when needed. Through the many adventures we had together, Georgina taught me the deeper meanings of Love, Respect, Commitment, and Freedom.

**Edward Sinclair**



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### **ADVANCE NOTICE**

### **15th Triennial Conference of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the Theosophical Society**

**Dates:** Sat 12 November to Tues 15  
November

A 4-day online event hosted by the Malaysia Selangor Lodge

**Theme:** ‘Finding Joy Amidst Uncertainty’

**Details:** TBA

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## An International Gathering of Young Theosophists at Naarden June 2022

This year, in June, an International Gathering of Young Theosophists will be held at the beautiful Naarden International Theosophical Centre in the Netherlands. It will be an occasion for young members to meet, study, find ways to make Theosophy relevant and get more involved in the work of the TS. Tim Boyd will participate in the event. The programme will include panel talks, study groups, workshops, volunteering activities, etc.

**President Tim Boyd will participate in the programme.**

**Dates:** 3 to 7 June 2022

**Location:** International Theosophical Centre in Naarden (The Netherlands)

**Prices:** 40€ registration fee + 60 / 40 / 0 € for accommodation (single room / double room / camping), full board for 4 days

**Participants:** TS members, under 41 years old

**Registration:** Will open in February 2022

**Promotional video:**

[https://youtu.be/MqMy\\_GYHeTc](https://youtu.be/MqMy_GYHeTc)




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## 147th International Convention of the Theosophical Society

**Dates:** Sat 31 December 2022 until Thurs 5 January 2023

**Details:** An in-person convention is planned to occur at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, India in December. The details will be announced later this year.

## Section Directory

It is advisable to check in advance to confirm resumption of meetings.

### Australian Section National Headquarters

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street,  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404  
Fax: 02 9264 5857  
Email: tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au  
Web: theosophicalsociety.org.au  
Campbell Theosophical Research Library:  
Email: catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au  
www.facebook.com/Austheos/

### Australian Capital Territory

*Canberra Group, Certified 16/11/2019*  
Meet: Friends Meeting House, Crn. Bent and  
Condamine Streets, Turner  
2- 4 pm, 3rd Saturday of the month  
Coordinator: Gordon Herbert  
Tel: 0466 464 064  
Email: canberratheosophicalsociety@gmail.com  
Secretary: Barbara Harrod  
Tel: 02 6254 1415

### New South Wales

*Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:*  
Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 1590  
Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards  
NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)  
1.00pm Wednesdays + many others activities (see  
website for full program)  
Telephone: Reception: 02 9267 6955  
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au  
Web: sydney.theosophicalsociety.org.au/  
President: Rosanna Sheridan  
Secretary: Pamela Peterson

*Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:*  
Meet: Uniting Church Morrison Room, 29 Highfield  
Street, Mayfield NSW 2304  
2.00 pm, 3rd Saturday of the month  
President: Howard Gregg  
Secretary: Tony Buzek/Tel: 0452 633 132  
Email: anthonybuzek61@bigpond.com  
Web: newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

*Blue Mountains Group, Certified 13/5/1997:*  
Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains  
Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),  
Katoomba NSW 2780  
Due to Covid meetings are currently suspended  
Acting Coordinator: Jessica Gemmell  
Email: tsbluemountains@gmail.com

*Gosford Group, Certified 11/11/1997*  
Meet: The Narara Community Centre,  
Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250  
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday of the month  
Coordinator: Vivien Wareing  
Tel: 0429 088 995  
Email: vivienwareing@hotmail.com  
Secretary: Roni Ostergaard  
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

*Northern Beaches Group, Certified 2/4/1996:*  
Postal address and meeting address:  
c/- 31 Riviera Street, Avalon NSW 2107  
1.30 pm 1st Saturday of the month  
Please email to confirm meetings  
Coordinator: Nila Chambers  
Email: nilachambers@bigpond.com

### Queensland

*Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/11/1895:*  
355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000  
Tel: 07 3839 1453  
Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au  
brisbane.theosophicalsociety.org.au  
Meet: 7.30 pm Wednesdays, bookshop  
and library open Monday and Friday 10.30 am – 2.30  
pm and Wednesdays 6 – 7.15 pm (see website for  
other events)  
President: Bruce Cassidy  
Secretary: Dianne Manning

*Logan Group, Certified 9/4/2019:*  
Meet: Please contact Coordinator for venue  
Monthly 1st Friday 9.30-12 md + 1st Thursday  
5.30-7.30 pm  
Tel: 0418 755 496  
Coordinator: Christine Gwin  
Email: logantheosophy@gmail.com

*Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 14/10/2003:*

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,  
 Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556  
 Meetings: 7.00 pm Thursdays except last Sunday of  
 the month at 2 pm there is a guest speaker (various  
 venues)  
 Email: theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com  
 President: Kerry Oldfield  
 Secretary: Jean Carroll/0402 805 127

*Toowoomba Group, Certified 10/7/2007:*

Meet: East Creek Community Centre, 43 Kitchener  
 Street, Toowoomba QLD 4350  
 Thursday 6.30 pm once a fortnight.  
 Annual Springbrook retreat each Spring  
 Coordinator: Barry Bowden  
 Tel: 0427 751 464  
 Email: nemesisbarry@gmail.com

**South Australia**

*Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:*  
 310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000  
 Tel: 08 8223 1129  
 Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au  
 Web: adelaide.theosophicalsociety.org.au/  
 Meet: 10.30am 4th Saturday. Science Group 7-9  
 pm every 2nd Thursday. (Please contact Lodge for  
 additional meeting dates.)  
 President: Kevin Davey

**Tasmania**

*Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:*  
 13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000  
 Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)  
 Web: hobart.theosophicalsociety.org.au/  
 Meet: 7.30pm Mondays  
 President: Berry Dunston  
 Secretary: Patrizia Bini

*Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:*

Meet: Salvation Army, 111 Elizabeth Street,  
 Launceston  
 1st Wednesday of the month at 1 pm and  
 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm  
 Postal address: 28 Teggs Road, Gravelly Beach,  
 TAS 7276  
 Email: rmholt@gmail.com  
 Web: launceston.theosophicalsociety.org.au/  
 President/Secretary: Ruth Holt  
 Tel: 0448 397 246

**Victoria**

*Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:*  
 Meet: 1st Flr., 234 Flinders' Lane,  
 Melbourne VIC 3000  
 Tel: 03 8638 9007  
 Email: info@melbournetheosophy.org  
 Web: melbourne.theosophicalsociety.org.au/  
 Meetings: every Saturday from 1.30 pm  
 President: robert@melbournetheosophy.org  
 Secretary: Stephen Fiyalko

*Mornington Peninsula Group, Certified 8/2/2000:*

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,  
 Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday  
 of the month, (12.00pm meditation + library – 1.30pm  
 presenter + questions and comments)  
 Secretary: Elizabeth Ramirez

**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  
 Web: tsp Perth.com.au  
 Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays  
 Library: Tuesday 6 – 7.15 pm and  
 Saturday 10 am – 2 pm  
 Acting President: Wyn Sperrin  
 Secretary: Sue Lee

*Mount Helena Retreat Centre:*

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

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

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



## *Freedom of Thought*

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

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

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



## *Freedom of the Society*

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

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

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



## The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

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

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

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