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

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

The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society

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

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

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

From the National President ...

Dara Tatray



Now and then there is a call to popularise Theosophy. I am not sure what others mean by that, but I would imagine that to popularise does not mean to water down or even necessarily to simplify. I should imagine that it means to make widely known. But in order to make something widely known we must first understand it. So before we attempt to popularise Theosophy let us make sure we know what it is.

There is in fact a most urgent need for a reality check in the Theosophical Society, which by imperceptible degrees may have accumulated certain dogmas of its own. Or at the very least, some of its officers and speakers may have begun to take for granted various ideas about Theosophy amounting to de facto articles of faith. If so, clearing them away would be a matter of priority.

It can reasonably be said that the core business of the Theosophical Society is simply to show the world that such a thing as Theosophy or divine wisdom exists. It might also be noted that divine wisdom is not that which is in the pages of *The Secret Doctrine* or any other book. Books may contain wise thoughts and enlightening facts, but as far as wisdom itself goes books don't contain it; they may at best remind the reader that wisdom exists and point in the direction in which it may be found.

Sadly, beginning with HP Blavatsky herself, the TS has muddied the waters considerably over the years, with the word Theosophy being used to refer to a number of teachings and ideas published by the Theosophical

Publishing House in its books. This is what the common usage of the word Theosophy in the TS amounts to. Anyone may test this assertion out for themselves by taking a close look at what is really meant by phrases such as “according to Theosophy” or “the theosophical worldview” etc.

By its own admission, the Theosophical Society does not exist to promote the works of authors connected with the TS but to assist in showing the world that such a thing as Theosophy exists. HPB did an excellent job of doing that, but if we now focus on her works, or on the authors who drew heavily on her works, we will have fallen into the trap of fixing our attention on the finger pointing to the moon rather than on the moon itself. If the Society wishes to avoid the appearance or the reality of becoming a sect—and if it is to have some currency in the world today—then it will have to shift its attention to Theosophy itself, rather than the various traditional expositions of it; and if we feel incapable of doing that then let us at least freely admit that we are a second-hand Society, a mob of re-hashers.

Ideally this is an enquiry based Society, with the enquiry being into the nature of divine wisdom and the way to it. If we just left it at that, without further embellishment, then I think the TS would make a valuable contribution to the progress of humanity.

It is not too late to rectify matters, and a reality check would really help. ☒

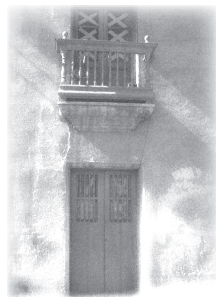
Right Education for the 21st Century

Professor P. Krishna
Annual Convention 2009,
Perth

The kind of individual we produce determines the kind of society we live in. A child is educated by the entire environment in which it grows, and that environment is determined equally by the parents, the teachers and the society around the child. It is not possible to bring a fundamental transformation in society unless the individual is transformed. This raises the question: what is our vision of education?

The aims may vary a little from country to country but, essentially, all over the world, education is aiming to produce a human being who is intelligent, knowledgeable, hard-working, efficient, disciplined, smart, successful and hopefully a leader in his or her field of endeavour. If one may most humbly point out, Adolf Hitler had all these qualities. The only thing he lacked was love and compassion. So what is there in our present day education to prevent the creation of a Hitler or of little Hitlers for that matter?

The Holocaust, perhaps the greatest crime of the twentieth century, was perpetrated in a country that had the best of science, art, music and culture of the kind we are aiming to inculcate through education today. So what is there in present-day education to prevent the recurrence of the holocaust? Indeed, we are perhaps at the brink of a still larger holocaust in which the whole of mankind may be eliminated from the face of the earth in a nuclear war. Are we ensuring that the power we produce will be used in godly ways and not in devilish ways? If not, then it is irresponsible to generate power.



The major challenges facing mankind today are not due to a lack of education. They are not created by illiterate villagers in Asia or Africa, they are created by highly educated and professional minds—lawyers, business administrators, scientists, economists, military commanders, diplomats and the like—who plan and run governments, organisations and businesses. So we need to look at the kind of education we are imparting. When you do that it becomes clear that we are producing lopsided human beings, very advanced in intellect but almost primitive in other aspects of life: top scientists and engineers who can send human beings to the moon but who may be brutal with their spouses or their neighbours; human beings who have a vast understanding of the way the universe operates but little understanding of themselves.

As an educationalist we must accept that when we impart knowledge it is also our responsibility to impart or awaken the wisdom to employ it rightly. Our present day education has not paid serious attention to that responsibility.

A DIFFERENT VISION OF EDUCATION

Keeping in mind what we have said so far, how should we modify our vision of education for the 21st Century? What kind of mind should we aim at producing? What values should we try to inculcate? The prescription would not be identical for all countries and different cultures may go about it in their own unique way, but the broad outlines can be stated as follows:

Create a global mind, not a nationalistic one

We are all citizens of one world and we share the earth as our common habitat. What affects one part of the world today is of concern to all of us. So we need to have a mind that feels for the whole world and not just for one country.

Emphasise human development, not only economic

Education must not regard children as raw material for achieving the economic progress of the nation. It must concern itself with the development of all aspects of a human being—physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual—so that he or she lives creatively and happily as a part of the whole. Goodness must be valued above efficiency.

Encourage inquiry, not conformity

It may be inconvenient for adults, but it is important that children grow up with questions rather than answers. At each age the questions will naturally be different but the ability to inquire and to learn for oneself is more important than to obey and follow unquestioningly what one is told to do. It follows that there must be no fear in our relationship with the child since fear kills inquiry and initiative.

Cultivate co-operation, not competition

The present emphasis in the world on individual achievement for fame is irrational and egotistic. We are all inter-related and inter-dependent and little that is really meaningful can be achieved alone and in isolation. Teamwork and the ability to work harmoniously with others are more important than individual achievement. Co-operation is the essence of democracy. One works not for personal gain or reward but for the welfare of the whole community, with love instead of arrogance. It is important that each individual does his or her best but it is not important that one should be better than another. We

are friends, brothers and sisters, not rivals. If something good happens to my brother I rejoice with him. The sense of competition that we are encouraging in children today leads to envy, jealousy and rivalry. It sows the seeds of division between human beings and destroys love and friendship. Therefore, it is evil. The importance we have given to winning gold medals is based on propaganda and illusion. Does it really matter which human being can jump one millimetre higher than all the others?

Create a learning mind instead of an acquisitive mind

The awakening of intelligence is more important than the cultivation of memory, both in life and in academics. If we give information to the child we add to his knowledge but intelligence is the ability to learn for oneself. What can be taught is limited but learning is endless. The greatest things in life are those that cannot be taught but they can be learnt. The feeling of love, respect, beauty, and friendship, cannot be taught but like sensitivity, it can be awakened and this is an essential part of intelligence. The ability to discern for oneself what is true and what is false is also intelligence. It is important to create a mind that neither accepts nor rejects an opinion or a view too readily, but stays with the question, "Is it true?"

Create a mind that is both scientific and religious in the true sense

Unfortunately we have divided the scientific quest from the religious quest of mankind and concentrated only on the former in the educational process. In fact they are two complementary quests: one for the discovery of the order that manifests itself in the outer world of matter, energy, space and time and the other for discovering order (peace, harmony, virtue) in the inner world of our consciousness. By mistakenly equating religion with belief we have created an antagonism between science and religion. Actually they are both

quests for truth into two complementary aspects of a single reality which is composed of both matter and consciousness.

A mind that is purely rational, scientific and intellectual can be extremely cruel and devoid of love and compassion. One that is only religious (in the narrow sense) can be overly emotional, sentimental, superstitious and therefore neurotic. We must therefore aim at creating a mind that is both scientific and religious at the same time—one that is inquiring, precise, rational and skeptical but at the same time has a sense of beauty, wonder, aesthetics, sensitivity, humility, and an awareness of the limitations of the intellect. Without this undeniable balance between emotion and the intellect, a mind is not truly educated. Understanding oneself (self-knowledge) is as important as understanding the world. Without a deep understanding of our relationship with nature, with ideas, with fellow human beings, with society, and a deep respect for all life one is not really educated.

The art of living

Education must concern itself with the art of living creatively, which is much vaster than the specific arts of painting, music or dance which we teach at present. We have equated the quality of life with the standard of living and we measure this in terms of the Gross National Product or the per-capita income of people. But is the quality of our life determined only by the quality of the house we live in, the car we drive, the food we eat or the clothes we wear? Doesn't the quality of our mind affect the quality of our life far more? A mind that is constantly worried, bored, envious or frustrated cannot possibly lead a life of high quality.

When we educate not for economic development but for human development we must concern ourselves with the happiness of the individual as a whole, in which physical well-being and comfort are a small but necessary part. Far more important is the

ability to work with joy, without comparing oneself with others. When we teach children to work for a reward and not for the joy of working, we teach them to separate work from pleasure. Such a mind is energized only when there is a reward, otherwise it lives in a state of boredom. The art of living consists in enjoying everything one does, irrespective of the results it offers.

A holistic development of all faculties

Virtue, which is the flowering of goodness in human consciousness, is a by-product of self-knowledge. It is not something that can be practiced mechanically like a skill.

Human consciousness has several faculties (capacities) and I have tried to group together words that we commonly use to describe them, into four categories. Many of these overlap with each other but those within a category seem to me to have a common basis and differ in a fundamental way from those in another category:

- * Intrinsic: Perception, awareness, observation, attention.
- * Thought-based: Knowledge, memory, imagination, reason, analysis, criticism, science, mathematics, language, concentration, intelligence (of thought), will.
- * Feeling-based: Joy, beauty, wonder, aesthetics, humour, art, music, poetry, literature, sympathy love, affection, compassion, friendship. Attachment, desire, fear, hatred, jealousy, anger, violence.
- * Beyond thought and feeling: Intuition, insight, vision, wisdom, silence, meditation, peace, harmony, understanding, intelligence (not of thought).

The above list is not exhaustive and one can add several other words to it. Nor are the categories exclusive, since thinking, feeling, and observation all go on simultaneously in our consciousness and also interact with

each other. So this classification is only for the convenience of discussion. In any case, education at present greatly emphasises the thought-based faculties and to some extent cultivates those based on feeling. For a holistic development of the individual it is important that there is a deep understanding of all the above faculties and they are developed in a balanced way. It implies that in order to cultivate one faculty we must not impair or damage another. This means one cannot use fear and punishment to make students work harder since that destroys inquiry, intelligence and initiative. One must not use comparison and competition as an incentive either since that destroys love and promotes aggression. One must not offer rewards since that cultivates greed and insensitivity.

What incentive then should we teachers use to make students learn? The challenge before us is to reveal the beauty of the subject to the child so that education becomes a joyous process and not a dreary task to be achieved somehow. If we accept that challenge then we must find ways to make education lively and interesting for the child. A good school is one where the children are happy, not the one which achieves the best measurable results in academics. The real responsibility of education is to reveal to the child all the beauty of life, and there is great beauty in art, in literature, in science, in mathematics, in music, in games and sports, in nature and in relationship—indeed in every aspect of life. We have a reasonably good idea of what it means for a tree to be in full bloom. But have we seriously inquired what it means for the human consciousness to be in full bloom? Must not education help us to discover that for ourselves?

DIFFICULTIES OF IMPARTING SUCH EDUCATION

There are several difficulties in imparting such an education. The greatest difficulty is that

we have ourselves not received the right kind of education. Therefore we need to question our methods and not merely repeat what our teachers and parents did. It requires us to be original, intelligent and creative. Our minds are conditioned into the old system, the old vision; therefore we are ourselves obstacles in the way of the new! One has to be acutely aware of this fact and therefore not just teach but also learn to break from the past.

In the new vision of education we are not only taking the responsibility to impart information and skills but also to awaken sensitivity and creativity, which are awakened in the child if there is the right atmosphere in the school and the home. It is our responsibility to create that atmosphere—an atmosphere of working co-operatively, with joy and friendship, working hard but without personal ambition or any sense of rivalry, an atmosphere of openness, of questioning, of inquiry, and the joy of learning together. Which means we ourselves must live and work that way. A child learns from what he sees actually happening around him, not from what we speak in the classroom. There are no short-cuts for imparting the education that we have described above. The child imbibes the values seen, not those that are talked about.

Intellectually we adults may know more than the child but in the larger issues of life we face the same problems, the same difficulties as the child—problems of boredom, worry, fear, habit, conflict, desire, frustration and violence. Therefore we need to learn along with the child, not merely teach. It demands great honesty, humility, sensitivity and patience. That is our difficulty—to be an educator who is willing to accept that challenge and not seek an easy way out. There isn't one. The deeper truths come to a reflective mind as insights that cannot be taught by another. One cannot do anything to create insights but one must not block them with an ambitious and overly active mind which has no time to stand and stare.

CONCLUSION

In presenting the vision of right education for the 21st Century I have drawn heavily from the life and work of Maria Montessori and of J. Krishnamurti, both of whom emphasised the need for educating the whole human being and not merely the intellect. Out of this vision, Madam Montessori developed certain methods and techniques for use with small children. But the techniques and materials she developed have meaning only when the teacher shares her vision of life. A school is not a Montessori school just because it adopts the use of those techniques and materials. The technique does not create the vision; it is the vision that creates the technique. It is important to come upon that vision of life and to actually live that way throughout life.

Unless education helps the student to do that it has very little significance. It means we must be students all our life, living with deep and fundamental questions. One such question is, what does it mean for a human being to live in harmony with the cosmic order?

The twenty-first century demands a total change in our outlook on life and our vision of education. ✦

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Sketch of tree ferns at the Springbrook Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, Queensland by Dr Victor Gostin, Adelaide Lodge.

With the Nature of Consciousness in Mind

Dara Tatray

Annual Convention 2009, Perth



It goes without saying that from a spiritual point of view our system of education is sorely lacking. And much more would be needed by way of renovating it than simply offering “spirituality” or “meditation” as an elective along with woodwork and cooking. That would give an entirely mistaken impression and perpetuate the current system which is based on the fundamental ignorance of the true nature of the human being and of life. In the Yoga tradition such ignorance, or *avidyā*, is the cause of all misery: it causes us to take the unreal for the Real, to see light where there is actually darkness and to choose death and bondage instead of immortality and freedom. By death I mean death in life, not death as usually understood. From the point of view of a liberated or enlightened person, most of us might be regarded as going about in a state of living death, imprisoned in the carapace of self.

The true nature of the unreal and the Real, darkness and light, death and immortality are perhaps the most important things to teach our children at school and in the home. But in the main, our systems of education are entirely lacking in this regard, with the consequence that, as a species, we hardly know which way is up. Anyone who has ever been tumbled by a large wave at the beach, only to find that when coming up for air the sandy bottom had been reached instead, will know something of the consequences of getting basic things quite the wrong way round.

Well in my opinion our education system, and the mindset it is designed to perpetuate,

has got something essential quite the wrong way; and that is basically which way is up. Far too much emphasis is placed on thoughts and not enough on attention and awareness. This would perhaps not matter greatly if awareness and attention were optional extras, possible electives in life; but they are in fact essential to our well-being as individuals and as a society. Awareness and consciousness are what subsume thought and infuse it with whatever intelligence it may possess. Akin to silence and meditation, attention is one of the ways to this essential awareness. If the Yoga Sūtra-s and other spiritual texts are anything to go by, the fact of the matter is that the spaces between thought are where intelligence, happiness and peace are to be found. The space between thought is what ensures the smooth running of our lives and the smooth running of our thoughts.

It is consciousness not thought which stops our lives being run off into the ditch time after time. And everybody would already know and understand this if we had been educated with the nature of consciousness in mind. Most of us, however, have not had the benefit of that education, so it needs to be pointed out that the word consciousness does not here mean consciousness of an object, or “consciousness of” in general—as is usually the case in Western philosophy. Rather, consciousness is what remains after all objects have been removed, negated or transcended. Consciousness is what is there before the subject/object divide arises. Consciousness is the medium in which all thoughts and

things float: the support of the universe, its beginning and end. Consciousness is the sacred which is to be found when thought is silent and it possesses many of the qualities normally ascribed to God: omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence among them. We all possess those powers within us right now; we are all living products of the powers of consciousness. Yet at the same time, every single thought each of us has is a movement away from that very consciousness: no matter how lofty that thought may appear to be.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

Is school the educator? Is the teacher the educator? Or is life, God or nature the educator? Education in the true sense means to draw out the latent powers and the innate knowing, and surely it is life, with all the experiences it throws our way, that draws out what is hidden within each of us either as latent powers or unexpected vices. That is to look at education in the very broadest or deepest sense, which was very well put once by Meister Eckhart when he wrote: 'Whether you like it or not, whether you know it or not, secretly Nature seeks and hunts and tries to ferret out the track in which God may be found'. The entire process of life is summarised in that statement. Beneath everything this is what is taking place: Nature or God is ferreting out the track/s in which Reality may be found, the track/s in which the awakened state may be found.

Of course there is still a role for education at school and at university, during which time many of us are given the precious gifts of reading and writing, and of interpreting the world. One is tempted to say that being able to read and write is essential to communication, and therefore to being human. In interpersonal communication being able to speak and to hear are useful as well, though not essential, as Helen

Keller and others have testified. But none of these things ensures that communication will take place. It is also essential to listen, an art few of us have mastered.

David Bohm regarded communication as the creation of shared meaning, not the transference of information from one person to another. Such communication is a profoundly creative act which can only take place when all parties involved are looking at the same thing at the same time with the same attention. Something truly magical takes place when two or more people come to a new understanding together. That magic, I believe, is inherent in consciousness.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

A number of scientists are now turning their attention to the subject of consciousness and its apparently miraculous powers. Indeed, a cluster of modern sciences are beginning to operate on the basis of a new paradigm. For the past few centuries science has looked at nature largely through the lens of the well known reaction equation $Mass = Energy$, with each quality being convertible to the other via the relationship $E = mc^2$. New research is attempting to expand this familiar equation to take into account consciousness, resulting in a new much more complex reaction equation $Mass = Energy = Consciousness$, with each unique quality being somehow convertible to the other.¹ The *how* is what is gradually being studied, but one thing is certain: as in the field of quantum mechanics—perception or seeing appears to play a pivotal or central role.

The subject of consciousness, attention, awareness and seeing arises in both science and religion. Their importance has been emphasised by a number of teachers, including the Buddhist scholar DT Suzuki, who once remarked that love flows from seeing reality as it is, and that not seeing reality as it is

creates fear and suspicion. His exact words were: ‘When the eye fails to see reality as it is, that is, in its suchness, a cloud of fear and suspicion spreads over all things that come before it ... love flows out of rightly seeing reality as it is’.² We might shorten this to say that love flows out of seeing rightly or out or right seeing. This is a tremendously important fact, if fact it be, because it pinpoints exactly where peace and order are to be found: not in any system of thought, not in any “ism”, religion or ideology, but in the actual act of seeing, whatever that may mean. Whenever the eye or the mind fails to see reality as it is, or simply fails to see—whenever there is an opinion—the eventual result is the spread of fear and suspicion. By contrast, love flows from seeing or awareness. That is what DT Suzuki taught and I think it is quite correct.

So the main thing to learn and to teach is that much of the time most people do not see reality as it is, instead we see but through a glass darkly, the glass being darkened by our opinions and thoughts. What is worse, these thoughts and opinions, including the things with which we identify, not only cloud judgement, they actually wreak havoc.

CONSCIOUSNESS AS PART OF THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Seeing and intelligence are part of the nature of consciousness; as are love and empathy. This consciousness is as much a part of the nature of the human being as is the physical body, our thoughts and our emotions. The word *buddhi* comes from the Sanskrit root from which Buddha also derives, and it means “awake”. *Buddhi manas* is the mind when it is facing towards or influenced by that which is always awake, namely, *buddhi*. *Buddhi* is the term used to describe the sixth principle of the human being, one of the “bodies” or the “powers” of the universal Self. It is part of the human constitution.

In this understanding, part of what constitutes a human being is always awake. That is perhaps why Ramana Maharshi used to say to his devotees: ‘you are already enlightened, just get rid of the idea that you are not’. Some have taken this to mean that there is no effort to be made, that everything is fine just as it is, or that we are fine just as we are. Clearly that is not the case otherwise human beings would not continuously be engaged in acts of war. Getting rid of the idea that one is not enlightened is no mean feat, because it entails freeing oneself from all ideas and from thought itself, which is not that easy. Or, we might say that it would be easy if that is what we desired, but it takes a lot of understanding and a great deal of maturity to reach the stage when freedom from thought is truly desired.

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

An understanding of the nature of consciousness might well form part of an enlightened system of education, which might equally be described as esoteric education in that it deals with the development or unfoldment of an inner knowledge and the unveiling of what might be thought of as the inner man. Jacob Needleman once pointed out that ‘... in its real root meaning, the term “esoteric” refers directly to ... [the] question of living according to great and true ideas’. Surely it is possible to conceive of a system of education which accords with great and true ideas about humankind. The western Liberal system of education was, in fact, conceived along great ideas, so that someone leaving university would be truly educated not only in how to earn a living, but also how to think nobly—hence the importance placed on the classics.

However, even at its best a Liberal education was based on a truncated view of the human being, with reason treated as our highest capacity and spirituality left out in the cold

as a subject of intellectual curiosity in the anthropology department, an optional extra for religious folk, and a matter of rarefied concern in the theology faculty. If we were to conceive of a truly liberated form of education we would have to take into account the existence of our latent powers: the existence not only of an inner knowledge, but of the inner man. As Jacob Needleman put it:

To speak of a hidden knowledge is also to speak of a hidden part of ourselves which is more truly ourselves than the personal identity which we acquire in society.³

Professor Needleman points out that modern philosophy does not recognise the inner nature, even when discussing the self, and nor does our system of education. The self in modern philosophy is restricted to thought, emotion and sensation: but the inner self is neither of these things. Rather it is something, some no-thing, which, we might even say, is always hidden by all the thoughts, emotions and sensations. An esoteric education or a spiritual education would ultimately speak to that hidden Self and call it forth into our awareness.

From an educator's point of view, the question arises: how do we communicate with that part of the human constitution that is almost always hidden from our awareness? To some extent art and music communicate with the hidden part of ourselves, although not necessarily with that which is most hidden. Perhaps it is through meditation or silence that we commune with the deeper aspects of ourselves:

just as it is in silence that we listen to music.

That would be part of education with the nature of consciousness in mind. But there is more. It would not be enough for our system of education to recognise the inner nature in its fullness and depth: to be well-rounded it must also take into account the fact that the "inner man" is not yet fully developed. It must also allow for and encourage:

... the struggle that is necessary in order for man to penetrate beneath the carapace of the surface personality... so that a relationship can be built between the inner and the outer elements of the human structure.⁴

This potential of ours exists as just that, a potential, an as yet 'weak impulse, faintly heard' and it is the task of the enlightened educator, or the guru, to 'speak to the inner man as a present weak fact and a possible future power'.⁵

That is the true talent of the educator. ✠

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1. This reaction equation describes the work of William A. Tiller, available at www.tiller.org
2. DT Suzuki, *The Awakening of Zen*, Boulder, Colorado; Prajna Press, 1980.
3. J. Needleman, *Consciousness and Tradition*, New York; Crossroad, 1982, p.154.
4. *ibid*, p.154
5. *ibid*, p.158



How Can Theosophy Transform the Mind?

Ruth Holt



I would like to answer this question or address the theme by taking you back to the 1940s and early 1950s, to an English family living in the north of London. The mother, a good Christian regularly attended the local, rather strict, Presbyterian Church, believed in total obedience to God's word (the Bible) and that one would go to heaven or hell when one died. The father, an atheist, believed that once one's life had run its course that was it.

To set the social scene, everyday society, as I experienced it, was not tolerant of other races or religions; or, for that matter, different denominations within the Christian faith, let alone other religions. Women were definitely the underdog. In hindsight, it seemed there was a concerted attempt in the 1950s to reverse the relative liberation of women that occurred during the Second World War when they took over many of the jobs traditionally held by men, who were either away at the front or engaged in the war effort. In the 1950s, things reverted to pre-War conditions, as far as women and the family were concerned. Women's magazines, at least in England, stressed that the husband was the head of the household and the wife's duty was to look after him first and the offspring second—her needs being relatively unimportant. An article entitled "The Good Wife's Guide" from *Housekeeping Monthly* (May 13, 1955) illustrates the point;

Don't ask him questions about his actions or question his judgement or integrity. Remember, he is the master of the

house and as such will always exercise his will with fairness and truthfulness. You have no right to question him

A good wife always knows her place

This was the social environment of my childhood. I was the eldest, born just before the end of the Second World War. Growing up in north London, three siblings joined me over a period of ten years. We children all attended the Presbyterian Church with our mother and were instructed in the teachings of this non-conformist Christian church, which of course, did not brook questioning. Actually, the highlight of Sundays for me was arriving home after the service to a delicious cup of creamy coffee my father used to brew us—often asking, tongue in cheek, whether our knees were sore.

At Sunday School, like the school education of the day, one learned by rote and the exercise of one's imagination was frowned upon. One didn't question authority in the home, at school, or at church, where the Bible was taken literally and not delved into. Worse still: from my observations as a child, what was taught at church was not mirrored in the actions of the congregation. So the lesson was, *do as I say not as I do*.

I recall from childhood, right through to my early teens, almost a fear of the future, which was never voiced. Although my first school report did say: "Ruth is inclined to be noisy". In England in those days it was not fashionable to display emotion; the stiff

upper lip prevailed. Between the narrow teachings of the Presbyterian Church and my father's uncompromising atheism I was confused, not knowing what to believe on the unspoken, deeper things of life. Death was never discussed, except in hushed whispers. I remember thinking at quite a young age, during one interminable sermon, that there had to be more to life than this. My father did however have a tremendous love of music and a wonderful connection to the natural world. I remember him teaching me to mend a plant by splinting the stem after I had trodden on it.

Then my grandparents started dying and I began to be frightened of losing friends and family. I became superstitious, meaning I had to do certain things three times and once for luck. Everything would be fine and stay the same if I kept to the middle of the pavers on the pavements: no walking on the cracks. This was very limiting behavior, but at least I did not have time to think about much else.

Around the age of fourteen boys came on the scene and from then on, thankfully, I was far too interested in them to bother too much about cracks in the pavement. At seventeen I met my future husband and at nineteen was hospitalized with a life-threatening condition. In hospital, close to death, I had an out-of-body experience. I remember being incredibly surprised that in fact "I" was separate from the body. Of course this could not be discussed—family and friends would have thought me completely mad. It was not until much later in life that I understood what had happened and that many others had experienced the same thing.

In 1965 our little family emigrated to Australia and settled outside Sydney. I was twenty one, with a child at heel and one on the way; and incredibly homesick. On reflection I seemed to respond to this by becoming the epitome of the 1950s wife as depicted in *Housekeeping Monthly*. As my two children grew up I juggled work and home as many

women then did, having little time for thoughts of inner things, but still fearful of facing my dear ones' mortality, and my own.

In 1978 my father suffered an enormous heart attack, and was brought back to life by the hospital staff. The nursing sister told us that when he was revived, he asked them why on earth he had been brought back: he was happy where he had been in a beautiful garden. This was not the revelation I expected from an atheist.

My first brush with the Theosophical Society came the year after we moved to Melbourne in 1971, when my mother-in-law invited me to go to a Melbourne TS enquirer's meeting. But for some reason it would be another ten years before Theosophy truly came into my life. Yoga had also been offered to me earlier in life, but it was not until the early 1980s that I took up Hatha Yoga as well as yoga philosophy and meditation classes. Our text book for yoga philosophy was *Self-Culture* by IK Taimni—my first introduction to Eastern thought. My teacher, Joy Spencer, was a member of the Melbourne TS, and regularly gave lectures on Sundays. It was she who introduced me to the comprehensive library, which I frequented almost daily in my lunch-hour—devouring the literature on Theosophy, various religions, philosophy and yoga. I was also a regular attendee at Elsie Innes' lunchtime meditation sessions on Fridays. What amazed me was that much of what I read reminded me of what I already knew. I'm sure many others have experienced the same thing.

The Society's Freedom of Thought statement, and the exhortation of Madame Blavatsky to question everything that she and everyone else said, was a far cry from the narrow conditioning of my childhood and my experiences of the Church. By contrast, here there was encouragement to delve deeply into the inner meaning of life, with the freedom to explore and arrive at one's own conclusions. At last, here was the meaning and purpose

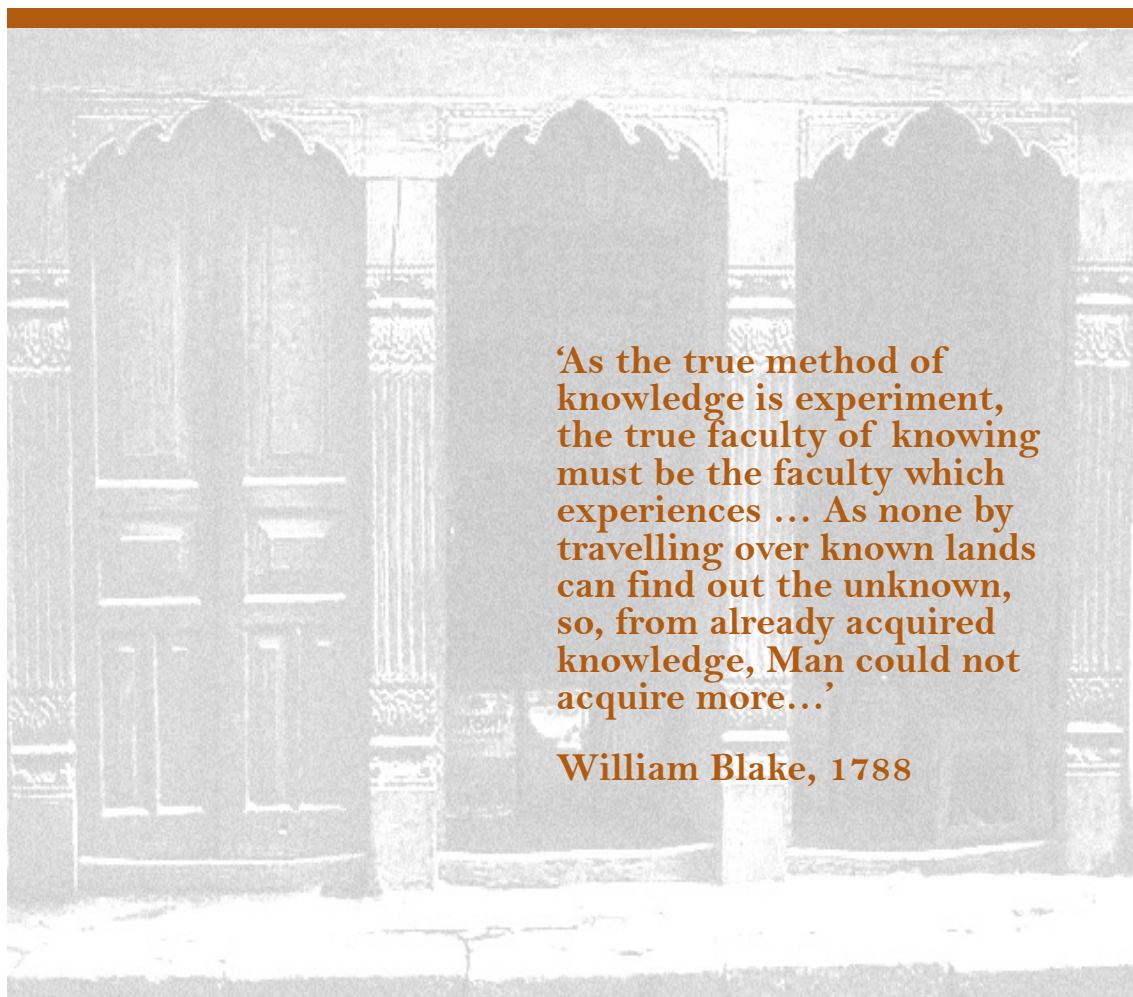
that as a child I had instinctively found missing in the church services. Suffice to say, Theosophy has well and truly transformed *my* mind. But of course, this is really only the very beginning of the story ...

I would like to leave you with some advice from HP Blavatsky in *Practical Occultism*, which has been particularly

useful to me over the past few years:

Do not read much. If you read for ten minutes, reflect for as many hours. Habituate yourself to solitude, and to remain alone with your thoughts. Accustom yourself to the thought that no one beside yourself can assist you ... ✠

Ruth Holt is the Secretary of Launceston Lodge and the State Representative for Tasmania.



‘As the true method of knowledge is experiment, the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences ... As none by travelling over known lands can find out the unknown, so, from already acquired knowledge, Man could not acquire more...’

William Blake, 1788

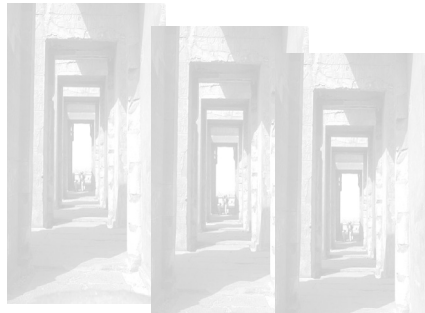
How Can Theosophy Transform the Mind?

Denise Frost

The question, “How can Theosophy transform the mind?” does not simply refer to a change in thinking, but a change that leads to a complete regeneration of the mind. It is a process in which the mind alters its present pattern of thinking, with old ways disappearing as new pathways are created.

Our mind is like a sack filled with various contents: information about the world around us; ideas about our relationship to the world; our needs, desires, possessions, beliefs etc. If we were to examine our mind we would find that it generally only works around the contents that are already in there, i.e. what is stored in memory. When we are thinking on any one thing, the mind tends to keep to the same line of thought. To arrive at a new concept or a different perception, the mind generally modifies the information that is already in place. There is some truth to the expression, “to be set in one’s ways”. In other words, the bag is kept closed, with thought moving within and around its contents. Rarely is the bag opened, and then only ever so slightly, to let something new in before it is once more made secure.

The process of transformation could be described as one in which the cord around the bag is broken, the bag is turned upside down, and its contents released. There is now an empty bag, in which new information can be stored, but the bag remains open in readiness to receive and there is freedom of movement for its contents. Mind is no longer static; there is a sense of liberation, rejuvenation and ever new possibilities. It could be likened to the process



of metamorphosis in which the earthbound caterpillar emerges from the cocoon in the freedom and beauty of a butterfly.

It seems to me, however, that before this can happen there must first be a stirring within the mind itself; a feeling of discontent with the status quo. Life is not as satisfying as it was and there may be aspects of it that seem irrelevant. There is a sense of something far greater to be achieved, even though we do not know what that might be. We have awakened to the inner voice, the voice of the silence. The mind has begun to look for something new.

But mind, being habitual, keeps looking in the same direction. Our minds are like the cave dwellers who, with their backs towards the light, believe the shadows on the wall to be reality. They long for something different but do not turn to face in the opposite direction, and so they remain in their cave. Like the cave dwellers, whose eyes are fixed on the shadows, our thoughts are firmly entrenched in old habits, desires and conditioning. We long for a new perspective, but continue to seek fulfilment in materiality (a change of occupation, hobby, a new direction in life) only to find that our feeling of discontentment is but briefly relieved.

Based on this scenario, I will take a piece of writing to illustrate how a few lines can bring about a transformation of the mind.

In 1823 some members of the Theosophical Society asked Annie Besant if she would write a meditation for the Brotherhood Campaign in South India. She felt that this was not

something she could do, as meditation, in her opinion, is an individual thing. However, one morning as she sat to write, the following “chanted itself” to her.¹

***O Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;
O Hidden Light, shining in every
creature;
O Hidden Love, embracing all in
Oneness;
May each who feels himself as one with
Thee,
Know he is therefore one
with every other.***

These words, in their succinct simplicity, are a synthesis of Theosophy, the Divine Wisdom, for they proclaim the truth of our being, the Life, Light and Love of the One Reality—the omnipresent and omnipotent Divine nature within. In its revelation there is initiated a response; we are empowered to change the way we think.

When the invocation is recited it acknowledges the existence of a ‘hidden Life’, a ‘hidden Light’ and a ‘hidden Love’, within ourselves and beyond our ourselves. Immediately the mind is brought to focus on something that is not apparent, tangible or objective—the mystery of the Logos—within us and yet beyond. It requires a complete turn-around of the mind as it must withdraw from what it knows, its outward projection, to focus inwardly on something unknowable.

This is not something that comes easily to the mind. For the most part, mind is in constant activity, forming likes and dislikes and seeking to satisfy desires; formulating ideas and then working to modify them. Our thoughts are constantly changing as our mind flits from one object to another (an object of nature, or a concept, idea, emotion). Inward focusing requires a calm, steady mind, one in which the attractions of the external world can be held at bay so that uninterrupted reflection can take place. The mind must be

trained to concentrate, to hold its attention to one thing; and when it strays, to be gently brought back to focus. The mind must become the observer of its own activity.

While the mind is focusing inwardly, attention fixed, something else is happening; the actual object of attention is invoked or called forth to resonate in us; in this case it is the trinity of Life, Light and Love, the One Reality. In this way there is established a communion of mind with our Spiritual Soul, a coming together from which there develops an intimate relationship. It could also be expressed as an infusion of mind with Soul in which the two become intertwined as in an inseparable partnership. Either way, the mind is raised to a higher aspiration and in so doing is carving a new pathway for itself.

Joy Mills describes Theosophy as:

... the cup from which one must drink deeply in order to be restored to one’s true nature, for it contains the Wisdom which alone imparts ultimate meaning to life and which must be assimilated and made our own if it is to become meaningful in existence.²

The ‘Invocation to the Unity’ takes the form of an invitation to drink deeply the essence of Life, Light and Love, and to assimilate them into every expression of our life; the realization that the same Divine Nature that is in me, also exists in every other person, and every other thing, and must shine forth in every action. This requires the richness of a deep understanding from which arises a sense of our own purpose: we come to know the truth of our being, our *dharma*. We begin to see our life played out before us. Mind becomes the silent witness of its movements and influence; both the knower and the known.

Naturally, this is a gradual process, for the mind must rid itself of all attachments in order to become desire-less. As N. Sri Ram wrote: ‘Whatever the gradations by which the One

becomes the many, by those same gradations the many have to become the One'.³ One by one, step by step, going ever deeper, the mind must detach from likes and dislikes, sensations, fantasies, possessions, attractions and aversions. This even includes our concept of love, for our attachments to associates, friends and family needs to be reviewed. This does not mean that we must give everything away or abandon our responsibilities. Rather, it is a change of attitude in which we see everything in a new light, one in which we are sensitive towards others and the world without becoming immersed in its affairs.

From this the mind develops clarity of perception in which there is an awareness of that which is 'Real' and that which is 'unreal' (merely a manifestation of thought). We learn to discriminate between the real and the fleeting, the true and the false, selfish and unselfish, right and wrong, important and unimportant: not just in our ideas, but also in our actions.

With attention fixed on the One Reality, the truth of our being, we become aware of the illusions of the mind's making, and the enormity of its influence on every aspect of our lives. There begins a process of negation, exquisitely illustrated in the following meditation:

**I am not this body; I am a
spiritual being of light.**

**I am not these emotions; I am a
spiritual being of light.**

**I am not these thoughts; I am a
spiritual being of light.**

When we recite these words, inwardly or out loud, we acknowledge the influence that the body, emotions and thoughts have on what is formulated in the mind. It brings each to the fore and we gently let them slip away. As a result the mind loses its self-righteousness, for our everyday mind always

justifies each thought and action. It becomes Self reliant. By this I mean that, cradled in Spirit, Truth and Love, mind now looks for wisdom and direction from within.

When attention is turned to any one aspect—Life, Light or Love—we invoke its power to unfold in us so that we may come to know the fullness of its potential. In the mode of the scientific inquirer we might ask: what is its essence, its absolute potential that I may come to know it? How might I release its expression in me?

Mind begins to seek out in our actions all that to which we can aspire—all that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is good. It looks for any aspect of our nature that complements rather than stands in contrast to this aim. Once again, this is not an easy task, for the mind is in the habit of comparing and contrasting one object with another, focusing on the differences, and attempting to balance them out with the weights and measures of thought. This is the source of agitation and tension. When one thing complements another there is implied a unity of action resulting in an enhancement of expression that would not otherwise be there; a bringing to fullness. All tension is gone when there is such harmony.

Another way may be visualisation in which the mind attempts to gain a sense of a particular principle, drawing out its innate nature. This is not the wild imagining of an idle mind, left unchecked to roam where it might. Rather it is a state in which the mind remains focused on its purpose, to be in accord with the One Life.

All the while the mind is discovering a new purpose. Rather than involving itself in life, it must now become the observer of every action, which includes thoughts and feelings, as they play out in daily life in our relationship with others and the world. Mind is now working from the centre, the I AM, our Divine inherent nature.

When the mind has become firmly fixed in this centre a transformation has occurred. The mind has transcended its “earthbound” tendencies and now operates out of its Divine nature, it is true Self. All movements quite naturally flow out from that centre bringing to the world all that is truth, beauty and goodness. Life as the dynamic, creative force of Unity; Light as the wisdom directing all actions; and Love in selfless service to others, have become manifest in us. What greater truth can there be, what greater beauty, what greater love, than that which comes from being in complete harmony with our Divine nature. The butterfly has emerged. It is in this harmony of expression that Brotherhood exists. ✨

References:

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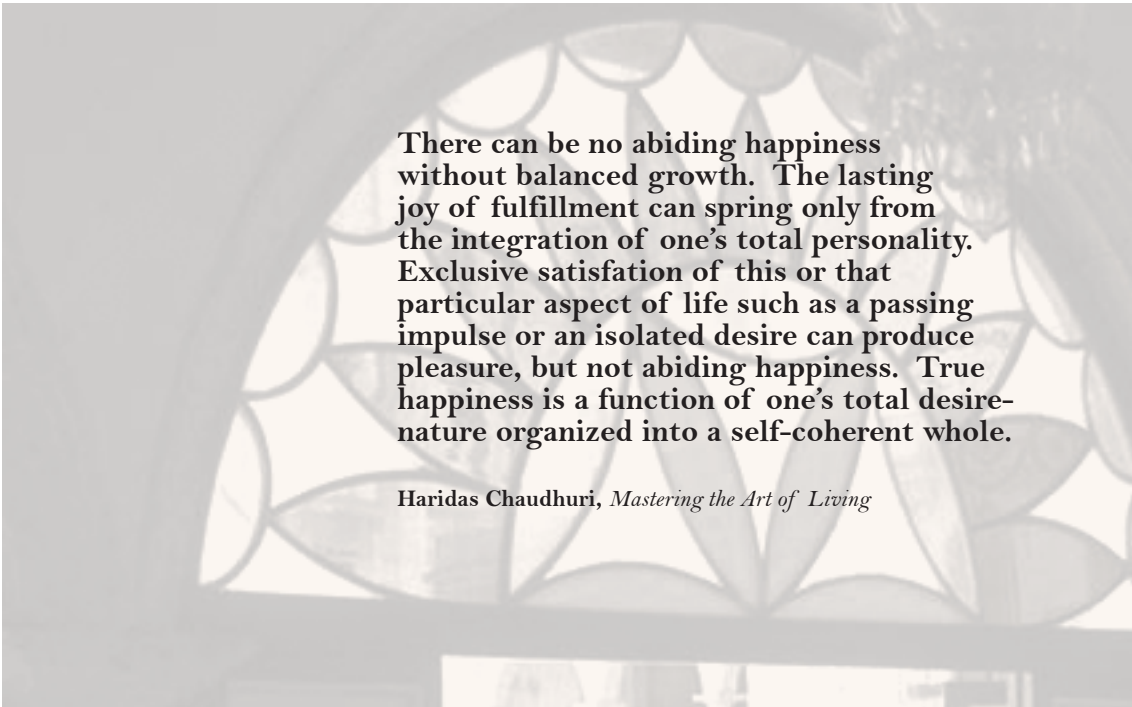
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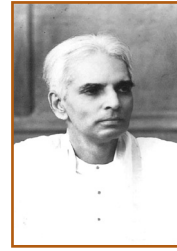


There can be no abiding happiness without balanced growth. The lasting joy of fulfillment can spring only from the integration of one's total personality. Exclusive satisfaction of this or that particular aspect of life such as a passing impulse or an isolated desire can produce pleasure, but not abiding happiness. True happiness is a function of one's total desire-nature organized into a self-coherent whole.

Haridas Chaudhuri, *Mastering the Art of Living*

Question and Answer...

N. Sri Ram



The fifth International President, Mr N. Sri Ram, answers a question in The Theosophist October 1973

Question: A number of members in India hold the view that there is little if anything in Theosophy that is not basically contained already in the Hindu religion. Could you kindly give us some of your views on this?

N. Sri Ram: It is perfectly true that the fundamental truths of Theosophy, the Divine Wisdom, are also to be found in what we call Hinduism. But actually Hinduism is a vast jungle of beliefs, practices, cults, systems of thought and so forth. Discrimination is needed to reject the chaff and to accept only those things which are of value in the vast system of Hinduism... It is not merely a religion, it is a religio-social system. Various practices have sprung up in course of time and have grown around the central Truth. So it was a work of importance to separate the central truths from the accretions and superstitions which had gathered around them. This is part of the work which has been performed by Theosophists, notably Dr Annie Besant.

Secondly, what might be called Divine Wisdom has two aspects to it. The one aspect pertains to the nature of man, the other to the nature of the Universe. You will find that although a good deal is said in the ancient books of India about the nature and constitution of man, though not always in very intelligible and clear terms, there is very little about the Universe. And you find in Theosophical literature not only an exposition of the nature, constitution and principles that are embodied in man but also

of the nature of the Universe and its genesis. There is the idea of evolutionary progress and there is an explanation or elucidation of the destiny of man in terms which are different from those you find in the Hindu books.

You find in the Hindu books that Liberation is the ultimate end. And many people understand by Liberation freedom from the stress and suffering and turmoil of life, so that they may get away from all this and become absorbed in the nature of the Deity, so as to escape suffering. That is the usual interpretation given to the word Liberation, the popular idea. There are also people who have discussed the question of union with the Godhead. What kind of union is it? Is there still duality in the union as there is between a lover and his beloved, who, though they may be said to be one, are still two? In the same way, does man become one with God or remain separate from God, loving him and worshipping him for ever and ever and receiving his grace? There are various theories about it.

But you find that in Theosophical literature there is a certain intelligible statement of the nature of human progress. I think that from that standpoint also, what we call Theosophy, or whatever is found in Theosophical literature, has a great value. It places before us, as on a map, the different stages of human progress, the process of evolution in general of which human evolution is a part.

Apart from this, even assuming that the fundamental truths of Hinduism, provided that they are rightly comprehended, are sufficient for anybody (I admit that), is there not a possibility of there being a different approach

to what is stated in the Hindu books? Every truth of a spiritual nature has several facets to it. It is a many-aspected Truth. Therefore you can approach it from many different directions.

You find in Buddhist thought, which developed also from the Hindu system, that the end of all is conceived to be *Nirvāna*. And *Nirvāna* is quite a different idea from the Liberation of the Hindus. But still we cannot say that this concept or truth of *Nirvāna* is not of importance or value. There is a different understanding that a person finds when he approaches these questions from the Buddhist point of view. There is the teaching of the Buddha that the whole idea of the self, the separate self, myself against you, different from other selves, is a myth, an illusion, merely a creation of the mind. Is that not new and illuminating?

So we see that we must not assume that all Truth has been delivered once for all into the hands of a certain set of people. Truth is immense, it is inexhaustible. So there is always the possibility of stating truth, or what we call truth, in a different form, or stating a different truth from what we understand by that word.

That is another distinction between what is the approach in Theosophy or in the Theosophical Society and that which we find

amongst the orthodox people of the different religions. The approach is one of inquiry, trying to find out, asking the question: Is this Truth, is this correct? It is the attitude of learning, not quickly coming to conclusions, of trying to find out the truth of the matter. It is good to have a mind that is discriminative, that does not fall for anything, that does not blindly accept and that does not exclude other statements from consideration. This constitutes the Theosophical approach. Has it not an extraordinary importance?

Theosophy from one point of view is really the synthesis of the Truth in Religion, Science and Philosophy ... And the attempt is to state all matters with which Theosophical writers have been concerned in precise, clear, intelligible, scientific terms. In the Theosophical approach we do not think that the Truth is the exclusive possession of any particular religion or school of philosophy. There is some Truth in almost every system of thought, even though it may be just a few grains. So in many ways, from many points of view, I think that Theosophy has much to say for one's consideration... To have a mind that is open, that is prepared to judge everything very carefully after considering all aspects of the matter, it is that, I think, which is important—*the attitude of the knower* not what is known. ☩

The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society

There exists in the Archives of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, India, a twenty-four page manuscript in HP Blavatsky's handwriting dated October 3, 1886. The title page is missing but the document has come to be known as The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society, an excerpt from which is below. It was written in response to charges made against Colonel Olcott and the running of the Society by Mohini M. Chatterjee, who, among other things, objected to the \$5 joining fee. So it should probably not be taken as a manifesto for the Society from one of its founders. It nonetheless makes some interesting points worth considering.

In order to leave no room for equivocation, the members of the TS have to be reminded of the origin of the Society in 1875...

1. Universal Brotherhood
2. No distinction to be made by the member between races, creeds, or social positions, but every member had to be judged and dealt by on his personal merits
3. To study the philosophies of the East—those of India chiefly, presenting them gradually to the public in various works that would interpret exoteric religions in the light of esoteric teachings
4. To oppose materialism and theological dogmatism in every possible way, by demonstrating the existence of occult forces unknown to science, in nature, and the presence of psychic and spiritual powers in man; trying, at the same time to enlarge the views of the Spiritualists



by showing them that there are other, many other agencies at work in the production of phenomena besides the “Spirits” of the dead. Superstition had to be exposed and avoided; and occult forces, *beneficent and maleficent*—ever surrounding us and manifesting their presence in various ways—demonstrated to the best of our ability.

Such was the programme in its broad features. The two chief Founders were not told what they had to do, how they had to bring about and quicken the growth of the Society and results desired; nor had they any definite ideas given them concerning its outward organization—all this being left entirely with themselves ... But if the two Founders were not told *what they had to do*, they were distinctly instructed about *what they should never do*, what they had to avoid, and what the Society should never become. Church organizations, Christian and Spiritual sects were shown as the future contrasts to our Society. To make it clearer:

1. The Founders had to exercise all their influence to *oppose selfishness of any kind*, by insisting upon sincere, fraternal feelings among the Members...; working to bring about a spirit of unity and harmony, the great diversity of creeds notwithstanding; expecting and demanding from the Fellows, a great mutual toleration and charity for each other's shortcomings; mutual help in the research of truths in every domain—moral or physical—and even, in daily life.
2. They had to oppose in the strongest manner possible anything approaching *dogmatic faith and fanaticism*—belief in

the *infallibility* of the Masters, or even in the very existence of our invisible Teachers, having to be checked from the first. On the other hand, as a great respect for the private views and creeds of every member was demanded, any Fellow criticising the faith or belief of another Fellow, hurting his feelings, or showing a reprehensible self-assertion...such a member incurred expulsion. The greatest spirit of free research untrammelled by anyone or anything, had to be encouraged....

Theosophy teaches *mutual-culture* before *self-culture* to *begin* with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the

same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of *mutual* development and progress in Theosophical thought may be best achieved. “Self-culture” is for isolated *Hatha Yogis*, independent of any Society and having to avoid association with human beings; and this is a *triply distilled* SELFISHNESS. For real moral advancement—there “where two or three are gathered” in the name of the SPIRIT OF TRUTH—there that Spirit of Theosophy *will be in the midst of them.* ☩

The Oversoul

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart, of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character and not from the tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand, and become wisdom, and virtue, and power, and beauty.



THE BRAHMAN BULL AND I...

Poppy Turner

About eighteen months ago I decided to try a different way of living. I had read enough and knew enough to know that absolute attention was required for clear perception. So I started. I de-cluttered my life. I pared it right back. I started to eat more raw food. I worked at really looking and really listening. I tried to remain relaxed, my mind empty but alert. I felt no fear, no need to know. I practiced this daily. Sometimes for just a few minutes, sometimes I was able to go for a lot longer. I worked on letting go and staying open.

Quite soon I began to experience some interesting ‘incidents’. These moments were subtle, beautiful, wispy, intangible. During them I was infused with a gentle joy, a gratitude, a wonder. I hadn’t experienced anything quite like this before. I didn’t know what to call them but at some deep level I understood them. Then one day I watched a DVD of Dr Ravi Ravindra. He gave me some of the language I needed. And this week he gave me a whole lot more.

I was tuning in more and more. Other incidents occurred. Each one etched itself in my mind; each one a gift. I started to develop an awe of the universe, struck by its grandeur. Gratitude spilt out of me. I felt life was a celebration. Today I would like to tell you about one such incident, which I have called “this moment”.

Fourteen years ago I attended two bullfights, one in Spain and one in Portugal. Both were macabre experiences which left me sad and very affected. *Los toros*, the bulls—amazing creatures—slain, lifeless, carcasses. Then

fourteen years later, two weeks ago to be precise, I was invited to go to Marabel, a tiny town in outback South Australia, where the annual bull “ride” was being held. Despite my Iberian experiences I felt compelled to go. Essentially it was the same set up—a bull ring, a big crowd, lights, loud speakers etc.

About 20 bulls and riders came and went. I was getting bored. Suddenly I sat up, alert, looking. A bull had entered the ring. No ordinary bull—a Brahman bull. It flicked off its rider as you would a fly. And then, instead of scurrying back to its pen like the others, he started strutting around the ring, enjoying himself: head held high, beautiful body, prancing proudly, round and around the ring taking in the whole scene. He exuded power: a truly majestic beast, totally serene but totally alert.

I instantly stood up in the crowd—in awe, in delight, in admiration to acknowledge the grandeur of this beast. HE SAW ME! He stopped. Came right up to me and looked me dead in the eye. In that moment, that brief transient moment, when our eyes/our souls met I was paralyzed. And then it was over. I felt elated and energized but totally at peace. Somehow this sacred beast had nourished me; and me him. I sat down again. I had experienced Interiority—a soul connection with the Brahman bull where nothing was said but everything was said.

A sacred moment, in freeze frame. In my mind, in my soul—forever. ✠

Student talk given at the 2009 School of Theosophy, Springbrook.



The Theosophical Society in Australia

Minutes of the 2009 Annual Convention Business Meeting

The Convention Business Meeting of The Theosophical Society in Australia commenced at 9.15 a.m. on Sunday 18 January 2009 at Trinity College, Perth. Linda Oliveira opened the Meeting and presented the scarf and badge of office to Dara Tatray.

CONVENTION CHAIR

The Meeting was then chaired by the National President, Dara Tatray.

ROLL-CALL OF VOTING DELEGATES AND PROXIES

In accordance with Rule 15(2) of the National Rules, the named voting delegates and the votes of the Lodges/Branches certified on Form 4 of the National Rules had to be received by the National Secretary two weeks prior to this meeting in order to be valid.

The roll call of the valid voting delegates was read out as follows:

Adelaide – Shirley Ingham; Blavatsky – Stephen McDonald; Brisbane – Noel Bertelle; Canberra – Peter Fokker; Hobart – Denise Frost; Launceston – Ruth Holt; Melbourne – Edward Sinclair; Newcastle – Hana O'Rourke; Perth – George Wester; Sunshine Coast – Betty McAllister.

OBSERVERS

A Motion was passed admitting Vicki Jerome from New Zealand as an Observer.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE 2008 CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING

The Meeting noted that the Lodges/Branches had voted at Lodge/Branch Convention Meetings to confirm the Minutes of the 2008 Convention Business Meeting held at St Mark's College, Adelaide on 13 January 2008, as published in the June 2008 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2008

It was noted that the National President's Annual Report for the Year ended 31 August 2008 as published in the November 2008 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, had previously been voted on and accepted unanimously in the Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meetings. The meeting expressed its appreciation and thanks to the former National President for her Annual Report and for the extensive work she has done.

NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2008

It was noted that the National Treasurer's Report for the Year ended 31 August 2008 as published in the supplement to the November 2008 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, had previously been voted on and accepted unanimously in the Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meetings. The meeting expressed its appreciation and thanks to the National Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and the Finance Committee for the extensive work they had done during the year.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2008, AND AUDITOR'S REPORT THEREON

The Financial Statements, Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 August 2008 and the Auditor's Report thereon were presented for comments or questions. It was noted that the Lodges/Branches had voted unanimously to accept the Balance Sheet, Income and Expenditure Account and the Auditor's Report as published with the November 2008 issue of *Theosophy in Australia* at their individual Convention Business Meetings.

BUDGET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 AUGUST 2009

The National Treasurer reported that the National Council previously approved the Budget at its meeting in June 2008, and that the National Council had authorised the Executive Committee to approve any subsequent necessary minor amendments after the completion of the annual accounts. The Budget for the current financial year, as published with the November 2008 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, was received at the Meeting and discussion was invited.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

The National Treasurer reported that, following the recommendation of the National Council, Storey Blackwood & Co., Chartered Accountants of Sydney, were reappointed as Auditors for 2009.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEWLY APPOINTED OFFICERS

(January 2009 National Council Meeting)The National Secretary reported that at its meeting of 15-16 January 2009 the National Council had appointed the following people to their respective offices for 2009

National Vice-President - Harry Bayens
National Treasurer - Marie Brennan
Assistant Treasurer - Beatrice Malka
Chair of Rules Committee - Donald Fern
Editor of *Theosophy in Australia* - Dara Tatray

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT RESULTS – National President

The National Secretary reported that Dara Tatray was elected National President for two years commencing from the 2009 Perth Convention.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT RESULTS –State Representatives for NSW/ ACT, Victoria and Western Australia:

The National Secretary reported that as only one valid nomination each was received for the Electoral States of NSW/ACT and Western

Australia, no ballot was necessary. As there were two nominations for the Electoral State of Victoria, a ballot was held. The following members were elected to office in the three Electoral States:

NSW/ACT: Hana O'Rourke

Western Australia: Harry Bayens(re-elected)

Victoria: Georgina Fode

The results of the Election were published in the November 2008 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*.

VOTE ON NOTICES OF MOTION

No Notices of Motion were received.

PLACE AND TIME OF NEXT CONVENTION

The Chair reported that the 2010 Convention would be held in Launceston at the Australian Maritime College, Launceston, between 16 and 23 January 2010. The next Convention Business Meeting will be held at 9:15 am on Sunday 17 January 2010 during that Convention

RESOLUTIONS OF GOODWILL

It was noted that postcards had been prepared for sending to friends in Australia and overseas with signatures from Convention delegates. The Members also extended their thanks to Linda and Pedro Oliveira for their hard work and dedication over many years.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Committee: The National Secretary reported that the following were appointed as members of the national Executive Committee for 2009: Dara Tatray - National President, Donald Fern - National Secretary, and Marie Brennan - National Treasurer (all ex officio) together with Beatrice Malka, Zehra Bharucha, Simon O'Rourke, Ken Edwards and Marlene Bell.

Melbourne Lodge: Thanks were noted from Melbourne Lodge for the new booklet 'Theosophy and the Zeitgeist'. There being no further business the Chair closed the Meeting at 9.55 am. ❀

Calendar of Events

National TS

Centres ...



Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook, QLD

Springbrook October Event

Presenter: Professor P. Krishna, India

Theme: 'Human Transformation and the Enquiring Mind'

Dates: October 6-11 2009, Arrivals 6th October Departures 11th October

Format: A mix of talks and interactive dialogues

Professor Krishna is Honorary scientist and Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi and in charge of the Krishnamurti study centre at the Rajghat Education Center in Varanasi, India. He retired from work as a professor of Physics at Banaras Hindu University at the behest of J. Krishnamurti who had asked him to look after the Rajghat Besant School in 1986. Professor Krishna is an engaging speaker, who brings to his presentations a passion for education, science and society.

Registration Forms included with this Issue.

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

Sunday November 8 2009

Theme: 'The Sacred Depths of Consciousness'

Format: Talks and dialogues

Presenters: Dara Tatray and Edi Bilimoria

This day-event will explore evidence from philosophy, science and art to suggest that Consciousness contains sacred depths. Does Consciousness itself possess some of the qualities normally attributed to God, such as omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience?

Registration Forms will be sent out with the September Issue.

2010 Annual Convention, Launceston, Tasmania

Theme: 'Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy'

Keynote Speaker: Edi Bilimoria

Venue: Australian Maritime College, Launceston, Tasmania

Date: Saturday 16 January to Saturday January 23, 2010

Registrations forms and further information will be available with the September Issue

Visitors are asked to respect the National Council's policy of vegetarian food, no alcohol, no non-medicinal drugs and no smoking at the Section's Springbrook and Canyonleigh Centres.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE ELECTION OF STATE REPRESENTATIVES
FOR EACH OF THE ELECTORAL STATES OF
Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia/Northern Territory**

In accordance with Rules 17(1)(c) and 19, the current terms of office of the State Representatives for Queensland (Paul Robb), Tasmania (Ruth Holt) and South Australia/Northern Territory (Patricia Hale) will expire at the appointment of new State Representatives towards the end of 2009. Paul Robb, Ruth Holt and Patricia Hale are all eligible for re-election.

Nominations are invited for the election of one State Representative for each of Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia/Northern Territory. 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 last two years 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, a curriculum vitae, relevant biographical data, and a personal statement by the candidate, which may be edited as necessary for distribution 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 11 September 2009.

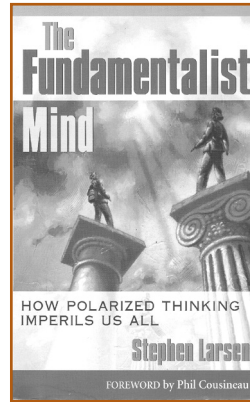
Copies of Form 8 can be obtained from the National Secretary, The Theosophical Society in Australia, 4th Floor, 484 Kent St, Sydney NSW 2000, or from your Lodge/Branch President or Secretary.

Reviews...

The Fundamentalist Mind How Polarized Thinking Imperils Us All

Stephen Larsen

Quest Books, 2007,pb, R.R.P. \$39.95



Among the dangers we face in this pivotal time in our history is that of fundamentalist thinking, involving rigid, obsessive and divisive beliefs.

Fundamentalism is something we all express, a psychological habit, related to our longing to reduce the complexity of the world to a few simple rules and certainties.

We live by myths—the stories we tell ourselves to illuminate our world. These are present in all religions, and also in secular culture. Larsen sees fundamentalism as a culture-mind which confuses metaphoric symbolic thinking with something concrete, and which confuses myth with historical events. Myths and metaphors lead the mind by implication, and inspire and nourish our inner being. However, taken literally, they lead to righteous certainty and the belief that everyone else is wrong. Larsen describes fundamentalism in religions such as millennium-focused Christianity which looks forward to the End of Days, and varieties of Islam. These insist their holy books are fact, not inspired myth. He also finds it in scientism, where theories become sacred; in medicine where the “magic bullet” belief makes doctors mainly dispensers of drugs; in therapy techniques where lack of success is labeled as “client resistance”; and in some spiritual beliefs which are rigid in ascribing causes. It is not the content of a belief but the way that it is held

which makes it fundamentalist and divisive. The old-guard of each fundamentalism is terrified that their world is being blown away, and so they hang on with rigidity and a false certainty. They become blind and antagonistic to everything else. With our world becoming more global, beliefs are no longer local and collisions have a larger effect.

Fundamentalism exploits our susceptibilities to authority, to obsession and to ritual. As a pioneer in neurofeedback, Larsen links this with the limbic system’s effort to run for safety when frightened. He points out the desirability of a fluid and flexible brain, which can readily switch between states, rather than one which is overly coherent, or frozen. When information is not exchanged between the two brain hemispheres, the result can be a blocking of whole areas of our experience, a marker of fundamentalism.

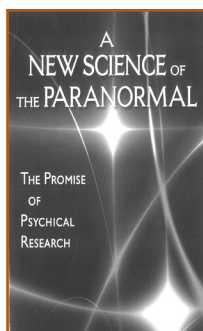
I recognised my own fundamentalisms as I read, and was grateful for Larsen’s tools for managing our natural tendency toward certainty. As we develop into higher levels of emotional and cognitive awareness, we move from an obedience orientation to one of recognising universal principles and the interconnections between all. As we evolve we move beyond simple dualistic conceptions of good and evil, us and them, to a more

complex view which allows uncertainty and even mystery. Complexity and flexibility are needed to be comfortable in the brotherhood of humanity, and the ability to hold our beliefs both deeply and lightly.

Larsen's book is a rich smorgasbord of his thoughts and explorations in a range of areas around the theme, including a final chapter of his ponderings on "natural religion". It is a good read. Stephen Larsen is a Professor

Emeritus of psychology at State University of New York, a psychotherapist and a pioneer in the use of neurofeedback. He has studied mythology with Joseph Campbell and is the author of *The Mythic Imagination* and co-author of *Joseph Campbell: Fire in the Mind* and *The Fashioning of Angels*. ☒

Reviewed by: Rosanne DeBats



A New Science of the Paranormal: The Promise of Psychological research

Lawrence LeShan

Quest Books USA, 2009,pb

133pp, R.R.P.\$ 29.99

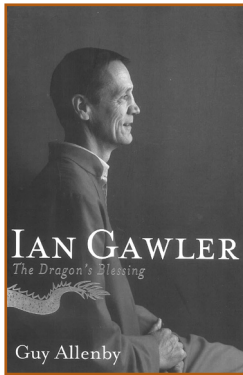
Lawrence LeShan's body of work spans psychotherapy, mysticism and health. *A New Science of the Paranormal* surveys the facts that have emerged in paranormal research over the past one hundred years or so, facts which stand in (usually) mute evidence against the prevailing worldview, which has been fashioned largely on the foundations of scientific materialism. These facts include specific concrete information obtained by way of telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition. LeShan argues, quite cogently, that they do not violate scientific laws or principles, but only contradict our image of reality. Indeed, a growing body of scientists and philosophers would be inclined to argue that the prevailing image of reality contradicts current scientific laws and long-standing scientific principles.

Unfortunately, the majority of scientists tend to ignore the sign implicitly placed over the entrance to the halls of science which reads, in LeShan's words:

*Dangerous and Unstable structure
Undergoing Major Renovation
May be torn down at any moment
for complete rebuilding*

Any TS library wishing to update its section of books in support of the third Object might well consider adding this one to its collection. ☒

Reviewed by: Dara Tatrav



Ian Gawler
The Dragon's Blessing

Guy Allenby
Allen and Unwin, 2008, pb 342pp
R.R.P. \$35.00

It is now more than 30 years since Ian Gawler was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma and was told that he only had a few weeks to live. Guy Allenby has written a rich and full account of Ian's spiritual search and journey through healing—physically, then emotionally and spiritually. What I like most about the book is the way in which it captures Ian's humanity and the paradoxes of his character, allowing us to feel the truth of his humanity and marvel at his achievement.

The author and his subject met at a meditation retreat, led by the great Tibetan Dzogchen master Sogyal Rinpoche, at Myall Lakes in NSW in the mid-90s. The two of them quickly found a rapport sitting on the grassy edge of the water, talking about life and the world. Ian, then nearly 60 years old and Allenby, a journalist from Sydney in his early 40s: both with a passion for making a difference in the world.

Ian's accomplishment on the most basic level is of recovering from a severe medical condition that no one had recovered from before. He then worked with people tirelessly, for over 25 years, in order that they too could experience their own potential. In the process, he helped bring meditation to the attention of mainstream medical practitioners and their patients. At the same time, he has lived a rich and full family life whilst achieving a level of spiritual accomplishment.

The title of the book recalls the story of

a boy named Quentin, who was taken by his mother to Ian for help, having been diagnosed with a brain tumour at the age of 12. Quentin was very talented artistically, and drew a number of pictures with Ian, related to questions around his illness.

One particular drawing showed what Quentin described as the Dragon, who had left the lake he had always lived in, to seek out the help of the Emperor, because the lake had become polluted. The Dragon told the Emperor that the fishermen had polluted the lake with all their activity and their fishing nets were getting caught in his scales and making it extremely uncomfortable for him. He wanted the Emperor to make the fishermen change their ways, or he would kill them in his fury. The pictures go on to reveal the fascinating relationship that Quentin had with his illness, from which he died many years later. Ian still has on the bookshelf in his study, two beautiful glazed clay models made by Quentin of a bull and a camel. He speaks of him with tenderness and admiration. The metaphor of transformation and spiritual awakening, so beautifully expressed by Quentin in his drawings, inspired the use of the Dragon as the title of this biography.

Ian has been a member of the Theosophical Society for more than 30 years and stayed at Adyar in Chennai several times during his recovery. ☒

Reviewed by: Ruth Gawler

NEWS and NOTES

Website

After much renovation in style and content, and considerable de-cluttering of both, the Australian Section's new website has now been uploaded, with new material about Theosophy and the Theosophical Society reflecting our attempt to find factual ways of presenting the Society to the world of today. A number of Lodges are taking advantage of the opportunity to place information about their programmes and activities on the website. We have been averaging around 305 visits per month this year.

Campbell Library

The renovation of the Campbell Library is proceeding apace. One internal dividing wall has been removed, improving the layout, appearance and workability of the room. A new office has been created for the Education Coordinator, and the archives moved into what used to be the Education Coordinator's office. Last year the Indological section was given an overhaul with a number of new acquisitions, and the same is about to happen to the small section we have on science. This will be developed to reflect developments in science and consciousness research, as well as psychic research. The Campbell Library is known worldwide and provides a valuable service to the public and to the TS.

The Third Object Project

The world is a very different place than when the Objects of the Theosophical Society were formed. We can now purchase intentional chocolate on the internet, blessed by monks with the prayer or intention:

Whoever consumes this chocolate will manifest optimal health and functioning at physical, emotional and mental levels, and in particular will enjoy an increased sense of energy, vigor and well-being for the benefit of all beings.

Gimmicks aside, this is not an insignificant development. It reflects a definite trend towards a growing understanding of the power of intention. This is just one example of the changing thought-environment in which we live. For this reason, it might be useful to trace the trajectory of developments in psychic research, and the general attitude to these matters, from 1875 to the present; so that we can see where the world sits in regard to the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in the human being. I am hoping that this research will culminate in a monograph or substantial essay on the topic, which will list key experiments or theories, particularly those with some scientific merit. I would be grateful for any input from members who may be aware of significant developments in research that may be of relevance. Please email the *National President* if you know of any serious books, websites, university departments or laboratories dedicated to psychic research, healing research or anything of that kind.

Canyonleigh

A successful two-day event at Canyonleigh put paid to the theory that people will not travel to Canyonleigh for the weekend. The *Gītā* event was full to overflowing, with four people on the waiting list, and participants from Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Malaysia. However, we are still going to trial a one-day event in November and see what the response is to that.



The Old Man Tree at Canyonleigh. This tree was struck by lightning some time ago and has since worn this evocative expression. It looks much more life-like in colour.

Convention Theme

As will be seen on our events page the theme for the National Convention in Launceston 2010 is *Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy*. Art has been placed first not only because it is something of a road less travelled in terms of how Theosophy is presented by the Society, but also because some things are better said with music, poetry and visual imagery than with words. During a talk on grace and transcendence, the philosopher Gabriel Marcel was asked to define his terms. He replied: "I see I cannot define it in your terms gentleman, but if I had a piano here I could play it for you" (cited in LeShan, *A New Science of the Paranormal*). It is hoped that the Convention will also focus on Theosophy as divine wisdom, and to show the growing imprint of divine wisdom in science and philosophy.

2009 Perth School of Theosophy

Perth Branch will be holding its annual School of Theosophy at its Mt. Helena Retreat Centre from October 3-October 10, 2009. The theme is 'An Introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*'. The School will be led by Simon O'Rourke, Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney, a long time student of *The Secret Doctrine*. The cost of accommodation and all vegetarian meals for the week is \$300.

In memoriam

A member of the Society since 1975, Charles Hulley passed away on the 12th of April. Charles was Senior Vice-President of Coca-Cola in South-East Asia until his early retirement at the age of fifty-one, when he launched himself into a new life of study, philanthropy and patronage of the arts. Among his many and varied achievements we might note that he was the Inaugural Chairman of the Curran Foundation from 1984 to 2008, and President of the Jungian Association. He authored a biography of the artist Ainslie Roberts, two books on Aboriginal mythology, a science fiction novel and, with John Lind, a documentary, *Beyond the Dreamtime*. Charles was a benefactor of the Theosophical Society offering many volunteer hours to the work of the Australian Section and a tremendous expertise in financial matters. Charles Hulley was received into the Catholic Church shortly before his death.

Rogor L'Estrange Phillips also passed away in May this year. He was a member of Launceston Lodge and is survived by his wife, Joyce.