

# Theosophy

IN AUSTRALIA

ISSN No. 1038-1139

June 2020

volume 84 number 2



**INSIDE** Re-viewing the Australian Landscape  
The Challenge of Our Day  
Environmental Awareness in the Holy Scriptures  
*Spectemur Agendo*: Let us be Judged by Our Actions

## INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

The Theosophical Society has its International Headquarters at Adyar, Chennai, India.

International President: Tim Boyd  
International Vice-President: Deepa Padhi  
International Secretary: Marja Artamaa  
International Treasurer: Nancy Secrest

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street, Surry Hills  
NSW 2010

Phone: +61 02 9264 7056

Fax: +61 02 9264 5857

<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au>

email: [tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au)



National President: Linda Oliveira

email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

National Vice-President: Sue Lee

email: [tsperth@iinet.net.au](mailto:tsperth@iinet.net.au)

National Secretary: Dara Tatraj

email: [natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

National Treasurer: Beatrice Malka

Education Coordinator: Pedro Oliveira

email: [education@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:education@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Editor: Linda Oliveira

email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Editorial Committee: Janice Scarabottolo,

Olga Gostin, Patricia Ossenberg, Ruth Holt

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

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

**email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)**

*Cover photo: Shutterstock. White Lotus, Nutt.*

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

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

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

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

**Published quarterly by: The Theosophical Society in Australia.**

## State Representatives:

Gaynor Fraser - SA/NT

email: [gaynorfraser6@gmail.com](mailto:gaynorfraser6@gmail.com)

Gerard Brennan - NSW/ACT

email: [gmj.brennan@gmail.com](mailto:gmj.brennan@gmail.com)

Sue Lee - WA

email: [tsperth@iinet.net.au](mailto:tsperth@iinet.net.au)

Helen Steven - TAS

email: [Helen\\_Steven@live.com](mailto:Helen_Steven@live.com)

Barry Bowden - QLD

email: [nemesisbarry@gmail.com](mailto:nemesisbarry@gmail.com)

Edward Sinclair - VIC

email: [president@](mailto:president@melbournetheosophy.org)

[melbournetheosophy.org](mailto:melbournetheosophy.org)



June 2020

Volume 84 no. 2

**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.

## CONTENTS

- 38 From the National President
- 40 Re-viewing the Australian Landscape
- 47 The Challenge of Our Day
- 51 Environmental Awareness in the Holy Scriptures
- 53 *Spectemur Agendo*: Let us be Judged by Our Actions
- 59 National Calendar of Events
- 60 Images - 2020 National Convention
- 63 Education
- 65 Call for Nominations: State Representatives
- 66 Incorporation of the TS in Australia
- 67 Theosophical Order of Service
- 68 Review
- 69 News and Notes
- 71 Section Directory

### 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

Linda Oliveira



Life has many twists and turns, but probably most of us did not imagine in our remotest dreams that humanity would descend so rapidly into its current crisis within the space of several short months, at the beginning of what otherwise seemed to be a promising New Year after our severe bushfires. It is one thing to learn of epidemics overseas which seem comfortably removed from our lives, but quite another to experience the reality of a pandemic in a much more immediate way. Each day we have been saturated with media updates – statistics, medical opinions, economic opinions, the latest on tightening or easing of restrictions, government measures to help sustain various sectors of our society, and so forth.

Undeniably, much general anxiety has been generated by this pandemic, manifested in many ways. Fortunately, though, numerous acts of kindness have also served as a reminder of our capacity to rise to the occasion in times of real adversity; humanity at its best.

In addition to helping mitigate the effects of the virus through right action, the student of Theosophy would be impelled to ask deeper questions. We are told, among other possible reasons, that the ‘why’ of this pandemic is because of the migration of the virus from the animal kingdom. Yet there is always a deeper dimension to any ‘why’ question. That is because the form of anything is always a manifestation of the consciousness behind that form. Is the heavy hand of karma telling us that we have been mistreating Nature for too long? When blue skies emerge in a hitherto smoggy place, there is a clear message. When economies crash globally, our interconnections are more keenly felt than ever, and previously opposed political factions work together for the best outcomes. We also become more acutely aware of our collective responsibility towards each other. Recent decades have witnessed a massive wave of communications technology, and a surge in global travel. Enforced circumstances in very recent times have served as a reminder that

we have forgotten how to live more simply; how to live well, in the more profound sense.

For those who have a feeling for the deeper significance of life, this new world in which we find ourselves has provided a possibly unprecedented opportunity to pause and reflect. While we might have missed the immediate proximity of friends and various family members, and perhaps voluntarily self-isolated, this global pause has provided more time, to simply *be*. For there is a world of difference between being on the one hand, and doing on the other. When normally routine opportunities are denied to us in a way which is beyond our control, there may be myriad reactions; and perhaps a sense of being somewhat overwhelmed at times. During such periods, though, it is beneficial to take stock of the many things for which we can be grateful, including the opportunities of this life which have led us to this point.

Society today is marked by a sense of expectation and even entitlement. But a human life is deeply precious and also requires internal attention. Time seems to pass remarkably quickly. Any opportunity taken to consider life more profoundly and reconnect with what is of fundamental importance must be beneficial. At these moments, it can be especially valuable to remind

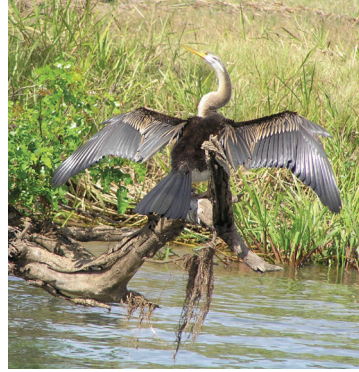
ourselves what is essential, what is truly important in life.

There is a deeper dimension of consciousness which is worlds away from the minutiae of daily life and which simply abides, regardless of external circumstances. It is enduring, unfragmented and harmonious, the bedrock of our being. Therefore, apart from its very real down side, this period has also gifted to many a special opportunity to slow down, reconnect with life's deeper dimensions, dwell on what is really important and return to greater simplicity; to experience the calm in the midst of a storm knowing that, as with all things in the everyday world this, too, will pass. This period may be one of the greatest opportunities in our lifetime to discover meaning for ourselves, directly. Out of this, hopefully humanity will arise in some measure kinder, more compassionate, more thoughtful and more considerate. In fact, this may be the silver lining within a dark cloud, one which is abundant with promise and wisdom.

It is fitting that the main items in this issue focus on the state of the world today, and our environment, the first article providing a stark reminder of our need to listen, to engage, remain open minded and acknowledge the unity of all life and all peoples: Theosophy in practice.

## Re-viewing the Australian Landscape: How Art and Science Un-earthed Ancient Wisdom

Olga Gostin



Cormorant at Kakadu National Park.  
Photo - Helen Lambert

This is a written version of a talk given at the 2020 TS. Convention in Melbourne when I addressed this theme by discussing several seminal paintings by European artists and presented visual references to Indigenous land management. Readers are therefore urged to refer to reproductions in the cited texts below, or, better still, to look at the actual paintings to which I refer. I have also taken the liberty of expanding the section on Indigenous firestick farming and land management in view of the devastating and unprecedented wildfires that have ravaged the Australian countryside from September 2019 through to February 2020.

Taking my cue from the 2020 Convention theme, ‘A Dialogue with the Universe: Science, Wisdom and Creativity’, I began by unpacking the definition of dialogue by the Macquarie Dictionary. This included several

meanings: a conversation between two or more persons; an exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue; a state of communication between parties in which cautious goodwill may lead to formal agreement; to carry on a dialogue, converse. Implicit to these definitions, in my understanding, is the recognition of a multiplicity of voices; a willingness to listen, to hear, to give respectful consideration to other viewpoints; and presumably, an expectation of response, or at least a right of reply. The relevance of this preamble will underlie most of the discussion below and the reader is invited to make their own connections.

### Early European Images of Aboriginal Australians

Against this background I referred to the earliest European image of Aboriginal Australians published in William Dampier’s 1698 *A New*

*Voyage Round the World.* In this black and white sketch, a group of sailors is depicted shouldering casks full of water to carry the scarce commodity to their ship that had run out of water off the Western Australian coast, near the present town of Dampier. A group of Bardi Aboriginals is depicted dressed in tattered cast-off clothing that had been 'gifted' to them as an inducement to carry the casks, which the Bardi had proudly refused to do. Dampier's assessment of this fleeting encounter with the benefactors that had led his men to fresh water was damning:

The inhabitants of this country are the miserablest people in the world... They have no sort of clothes...they have no houses...their only food is a small sort of fish, which they get by making weirs of stone across little coves or branches of the sea...I did not perceive that they did worship anything...

My next image was of the earliest Australian landscape on record, painted by Sydney Parkinson in July 1770 while Captain James Cook was stranded for several weeks near present-day Cooktown to repair damage on *The Endeavour*. The scene is of a tranquil bay surrounded by hills with *The Endeavour* beached, an ordered tent settlement nearby and a rowing boat in the foreground of the bay with uniformed sailors plying the oars. It is a scene of quietude and presumably

peaceful engagement with the invisible local inhabitants with whom the marooned English must nevertheless have engaged. The landscape shows treed ridges and alternating woody patches and grasslands. Cook describes the lifestyle of the Guugu Yumidhirr:

The Natives of New Holland ...are far more happier than we Europeans ...being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe... They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition...They covet not Magnificent Houses...They have all the necessarys of Life and they have no superfluities...

(Cited in R. Dixon, *Australia's Original Languages*, 2019: 36, 38).

## A Managed Continent

These contrasting evaluations of Indigenous lifestyles ironically persist to the present day and underlie much of the so-called dialogue in Indigenous affairs where the Indigenous voice nevertheless remains largely muted. For this reason I turn to the widely acclaimed work by Bill Gammage: *The Biggest Estate on Earth - How Aborigines made Australia*, published in 2011. Gammage's theme is simple and direct, as explicit as his title: Australia was a managed continent, created over millennia by Aboriginal

land management practices. Its orderly landscape as referred to and written about extensively by the first settlers and explorers, was strikingly reminiscent of English estates with alternating groves and grasslands, large shade trees and clusters of shrubbery reminiscent of the English landed gentry's meticulously managed parklands. Gammage quotes copiously from the diaries and letters of these explorers to bolster his argument that Australia was no unkempt wilderness but the product of careful land management.

To substantiate his argument Gammage reproduces paintings by John Glover (1767-1849) notably *Mill's Plains* in Tasmania (1832-4); Martha Berkeley (1813-99) *Mount Lofty from East Terrace* (c.1840) painted only four years after South Australia was settled; Joseph Lycett (c.1775-1828) *Aborigines hunting kangaroos*, *Aborigines spearing fish* and most importantly *Aborigines using fire to hunt kangaroos* (all c.1820). Many other artists are represented, and Gammage even contrasts some of the landscapes painted soon after European arrival with his own recent photographs of the same sites, notably the second cataract at Launceston, Tasmania and the crater at Mt. Eccles, Victoria where both later landscapes show much denser vegetation, no grasslands, and

indeed a sense of unkempt wilderness (see Gammage 2011: 37, 47). The theme of a managed landscape and one tended and actively used by its inhabitants is reiterated with important insights into complex plant and animal life cycles that Aborigines understood and managed to ensure long-term sustainability.



Kangaroo Grass - *Themeda triandra*<sup>1</sup>

Of particular importance in this managed continent was the widespread prevalence of kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) that provided a perennial source of grain that was laboriously ground into flour to make damper, and the abundantly cultivated yam daisy or *murnong* whose tuber was highly valued as a staple starch. Here again, the notebooks of explorers and early settlers comment on abundant fields of kangaroo grass, harvested and piled into haystacks, while yam daisy fields presented as though they had been ploughed as far as the eye could see



(Gammage Chapter 10). Gammage is at pains to enumerate the merits of kangaroo grass as an ideal staple well-adapted to Australian conditions. The deep-rooted perennial provides excellent summer fodder/grain, is pyrophyllitic and reshoots after burning. It does not require cultivation and needs no fertiliser (2011: 32-3, 108-111). Indeed, phosphates are lethal to native grasses that were displaced by introduced annual crops that require tilling, fertilising and weedicides. This is a far cry from the official depiction of Aborigines as merely foraging hunter-gatherers, ‘no better than kangaroos’ that prompted the wholesale annexation of the continent by the British on the grounds that Australia was basically ‘waste and unoccupied’.

The affirmation of Aboriginal Australians as long-term efficient land managers was also the theme of the 2019 Tarnanthi Exhibition in Adelaide entitled *Bunha-bunhanga: Aboriginal agriculture in the south-east*. Curated by Jonathan Jones, a Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi artist, the local language term celebrates the diversity and natural abundance of country as managed and nurtured over millennia by Aboriginal custodians. The exhibition endorses Bill Gammage’s representation of country and also focuses on colonial paintings as a springboard for discussion, notably those of Eugene

von Guerard (1811-1901). One of these, *Cattle Muster at Kangatong* (1856), captures what has been aptly called ‘cultural entanglement’ – the moment when the ancient landscape is penetrated by newcomers. Against a background of bright yellow fields of yam daisies, von Guerard depicts a herd of cattle being driven into the lush pastures in the foreground. History records that introduced hard-hooved cattle, sheep, goats, horses and donkeys trampled the fields of *murnong*, devoured native crops and set in motion the displacement of perennial native grasses. Another sketch dated 18 August 1838 depicts a group of women wielding digging sticks tilling what appears to be a large field – possibly the single most important confirmation of agricultural practices in Australia before European arrival.

But *Bunha-bunhanga* reaches out even further. Referring to Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu: Black seeds: agriculture or accident?* (2014) the exhibition shows how the First Nations peoples were making damper 30,000 years ago, well before the so-called Neolithic revolution of the Middle East. The displays not only feature the multiplicity of grains, fruit, seeds and tubers that were harvested locally, but also include implements that have hitherto proved enigmatic and been

ignored as everyday working tools: wooden shovels and oblong grooved stone-heads that could well have been hoe-like implements. Digging sticks, multi-functional woomera and ubiquitous grinding stones bear testimony to economies that were much more sophisticated than official reports of primitive hunter-gatherers – not that economic practices should in any way absolve the summary land-grab that occurred in 1788. What Gammage and Pascoe challenge is the premise that Indigenous Australians had no lasting engagement in owning, managing or cultivating the land. To emphasise the point, part of the *Bunha-bunhanga* exhibition displays excerpts from colonial newspapers boasting inventions such as the stump-jump plough, mechanised harvesting and the like. These newspaper cuttings are enlarged, pasted on the walls of the gallery and overlain by black ink sketches of yam daisies, kangaroo grass, bush tomato and other edible native crops. It is a powerful statement affirming what was here before 1788.

Bruce Pascoe expands this theme by expounding on the prevalence of aquaculture: the famous eel-traps of Lake Condah in west Victoria, featuring kilometres of channels made from carefully relocated blocks of basalt, and the famous stone fish traps on the Brewarrina River in New

South Wales and stone weirs along the Coorong in South Australia. He also engages with trading routes across the continent, the prevalence of large villages, tended cemeteries and even stone houses – all of which challenge the stereotype of primitive peoples that were supposedly rescued from a state of brute existence by the civilising mission of the colonial powers.

### Controlled Fire Management of Country

In conclusion and in view of the devastating and unprecedented ferocity of wild bushfires that stormed across all states of Australia over five months in 2019/2020, devastating eighteen million hectares and killing up to one billion animals plus thirty-four humans, I should like to expand on the crucial cultural tool that was developed by the First Australians over their 60,000 years of habitation in Australia. I refer to the practice of so-called firestick farming, or controlled fire management of country that gave rise to the parklands described by the first settlers. In a nutshell, this consisted of deliberate and systematic burning of country based on proven past practice: a detailed knowledge of seasons, weather patterns, plant flammability and succession, animal needs and human dependence on properly managed resources to

ensure long-term sustainability. This body of knowledge was embedded in traditional folklore and practical experience passed on from generation to generation as part of a holistic and interconnected life ethos where human, sacred and environmental aspects were enmeshed into a sustainable way of living, knowing and being.

Firestick farming practices naturally varied from country to country (using the term for local environment preferred by Aboriginal people). Nevertheless some common rules applied across the board: it was a deliberate, planned activity based on cooperative action. Burning off occurred in a cyclical pattern, dictated by local circumstances, and it was effected in a mosaic pattern; that is, some areas were burnt while adjoining patches were left untouched for a season or two, thus offering refuge to game driven away by fire. The importance of regular firestick farming on a rotational basis, was that it reduced fuel loads and resulted in low intensity and cooler burns – in marked contrast to the conflagrations that overtook Australia recently. Fires were vital to the regeneration of some pyrophyllic plants and enticed regrowth while the ashes provided soil enrichment. Importantly, as soon as the burnt parts regenerated, animals were attracted to the fresh meadows where they were

more easily hunted down. Gammage describes this practice as farming without fences.

Ironically therefore, when Europeans took over the management of country with a pyrophobic ideology, totally disregarding local knowledge and practices developed over thousands of years, the result was to *create a wilderness* where there had been a managed estate before. Specialists in fire management suggest that the fuel load today is ten times what it was in 1788, and that every doubling of fuel load results in a quadrupling of fire intensity. This is not to say that it is possible or even desirable to replicate pre-1788 environmental management practices. Demographic factors and lifestyle changes preclude that option from the outset.

### **Integrating the Best of Traditional Knowledge and Western Science**

But it does mean that there needs to be a serious and respectful engagement with Aboriginal custodians and local cultural knowledge with a view to developing a third knowledge system that would integrate the best of traditional knowledge and Western science. The time has come to engage in a true dialogue with the First Australians in the full and meaningful sense of that term as outlined at the

beginning of this article. Regrettably, there was little to no meaningful dialogue with the First Australians at the time of the European invasion, and very little effective, respectful engagement since, as testified by the recent rejection of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Amanda Jane Reynolds encapsulates the state of affairs in her poem *Grandmother Lore* (cited in the *Tarnanthi Catalogue* edited by Nicki Cumpston, 2019:189):

Taking her stick marking the earth/  
the spirit of sacred Country  
Taking her stick and marking the  
earth/songlines are awakening ...  
The whiteman came and didn't see/  
ask, respect or listen  
The whiteman came and didn't see/  
deeply connected living.  
The time has come to listen, hear and  
engage with the First Australians.  
May goodwill, respect and wisdom  
guide the ensuing dialogue.

### Endnote

1. [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d0/Themeda\\_triandra%2C\\_7th\\_Brigade\\_Park\\_Cherside\\_](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d0/Themeda_triandra%2C_7th_Brigade_Park_Cherside_)

### References

Cumpston, Nicki (ed), *Tarnanthi Catalogue*, Newstyle Print, Adelaide, 2019.

Gammage, Bill 2011, *The Biggest*

*Estate on Earth: how Aborigines made Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2011.

Pascoe, Bruce, *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: agriculture or accident?*, Magabala Books, West Australia, 2014.



Of mixed Belgian-Russian parentage, Olga Gostin did her undergraduate studies in social anthropology in South Africa before obtaining a scholarship to the ANU. Between 1963-5 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 programme for Indigenous Australians in 1973 and remained associated with it for the next 40 years. In 1992 she obtained her Master degree in Environmental Studies from Adelaide University. She remains passionately interested in social justice and environmental issues.

## The Challenge of Our Day

Phillipa Rooke



Image: Plato by Raphael <sup>1</sup>

This article is the pulling together of a few ideas and observations of what seems to me to be occurring around us. It is by no means comprehensive, but may in some small way contribute to a much-needed feeling of hope for our future.

We live in remarkable times at the beginning of the twenty-first Century. The past one hundred and fifty years have ushered in tremendous advances. We are still in the throes of great change. There are ongoing developments in the fields of science, technology, psychology and spirituality, and changes in human society and the natural world. These can lead to either the betterment or else the degradation of life here on our planet, and we are certainly seeing both effects currently in the clash and movement of energies on a scale which perhaps has not occurred before. The need for balance

to prevent continuing degradation is urgently required.

Our times are currently touted as being another 'Axial Age', the first having occurred around 500BC. At that time in history for a period of around three hundred years the direction of world consciousness is said to have shifted due to the teachings of Lao Tze, Confucius, the Buddha, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, to name a few. During that period human thinking was transformed. I think that in our time, a movement in the consciousness of the mass of humanity is occurring. Technology has provided the means, and a deepening of spirituality must provide the way.

James Gustave Speth, who helped form the Natural Resources Defense Council said:

I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity

loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.<sup>2</sup>

It is only in very recent history that the image of 'the blue dot', our beautiful little planet surrounded by vast dark space, has become generally known to humankind. For the first time, we can literally see ourselves in a more real perspective because the information abounding today about what we call 'space' allows us to better imagine our place in the cosmos. The general mass of humankind has never had this opportunity before. Due to the worldwide web, the inhabitants of this planet can now look out into vast space, and also look back to see the Earth from space. The wonder of these new revelations of the actual materiality of the universe has been shown to effect a change in the consciousness of individuals, and consequently in what could be called the 'world mind'. Due to science and technology we can now see our planet as being the one dwelling place of each and every one of us. The unity of life on Earth is now made real.



'our beautiful little planet surrounded by vast dark space'<sup>3</sup>

I would suggest that the opportunity we have right now is enormous. Old ways and ideas have to be discarded in order that a new way of being can come into existence. What we are experiencing on Earth now could be likened to the death throes of former times, and the birth pangs of a new and different way of looking at life. The sheer velocity of change would suggest this. This new way could perhaps be described as the bringing in of that 'new continent of thought' posited in the Mahatma Letters. Can we now assist these great waves of change? Let us ride the waves.

It is interesting that the population explosion has coincided with the increased velocity of change. There is a huge influx of incarnating souls,

also unprecedented in our history. If we would allow the idea that each individuated soul contributes to the One (that organic, homogeneous wholeness of life) in order for that One to experience its own nature, then it would seem that currently there is a huge drive by that One to gain as much experience as the planet will allow within its ability to support such large numbers of us, each individual being a point of experience.

There is a lot happening in this world of ours about which we can be justified in feeling pessimistic. Are we correct in being pessimistic? Do we want to contribute to, and thereby strengthen, such thought forms?

While speaking of population, one of the distressing aspects of life today is the dislocation of large numbers of people from their home and country. While not denying the pain and suffering so caused, perhaps this too can be seen in a different way when looked at over time. People in societies which are accepting displaced persons, are being confronted by different ideas about life, as those displaced from their own cultures become neighbours. Trouble and strife accompanies each successive wave of immigrants, then

with ensuing generations understanding grows and so does appreciation of the richness which is added to the overall culture. Cultures blend and integration occurs as we slowly become a world community, accepting changes, allowing differences, without fear.

There is a lot happening in this world of ours about which we can be justified in feeling pessimistic. Are we correct in being pessimistic? Do we want to contribute to, and thereby strengthen, such thought forms? Whilst not denying that we must do what we can in lessening our detrimental impact on the earth, we should not ignore that intelligence which is operating all around us. I give the small example of a patch of land in Tasmania. The fringe of the forest, if left to itself, sends out the plants required to prepare the ground for its expansion back into its former domain, plants which enrich the soil, and plants which protect young forest trees. In observing regeneration over several decades, one is aware of the beauty of this effective and intelligent process. Let us not discount the intelligence inherent in Nature, but know also that its time frame is different from ours. We, being part of Nature, have that intelligence within us.

We are at the cusp of the conversion of old ways of thought into new

ways of seeing. In our age of mass communication, it is heartening to see such a vast number of groups which are formed around the idea of furthering greater spiritual connections. So we must keep faith with each other, support one another, and be aware of that potential creativity of Intelligence within us. The need to strengthen our connection with the movement and energies of nature is imperative, so that the quality of our respective 'points of consciousness' can truly benefit the One. The focus of our effort for change, for transformation, must shift from the personal to the unitive. This, perhaps, is the great challenge of our day.

### Endnotes

1. Plato by Raphael, public domain
2. <https://ncipl.org/environmental-crisis-not-environmental-spiritual> (accessed 5/8/19)
3. NASA ESA /public domain



Phillipa Rooke is currently the President of Brisbane Lodge and has held the positions of National Vice-President and Queensland State Representative on the National Council. In addition to Brisbane Lodge, Phillipa has given talks at various Lodges and groups around Queensland, at National Conventions and at the School of Theosophy. Her current theosophical passions range through meditation practice, Eastern spiritual thought, and the ever-unfolding journey of discovery of the essential unity of all things, of which brotherhood in the First Object of the TS is an expression.

---

For centuries we have been spoon-fed by our teachers, by our authorities, by our books, our saints. We say, 'Tell me all about it, what lies beyond the hills and the mountains and the earth?' and we are satisfied with their descriptions, which means that we live on words and our life is shallow and empty. We are second-hand people. We have lived on what we have been told, either guided by our inclinations, our tendencies, or compelled to accept by circumstances and environment. We are the result of all kinds of influences and there is nothing new in us, nothing that we have discovered for ourselves; nothing original, pristine, clear.

*J. Krishnamurti, Freedom from the Known*



## Environmental Awareness in the Holy Scriptures

Robyn Telford



Frans Daniels on Unsplash

‘ “The whole earth has been created, as a place of worship, pure and clean.”

These words, simple and refreshing, draw our attention to the justified focus on the physical environment so relevant in the contemporary world.

“The world is green and beautiful and God has appointed you his steward over it.” ’

This comment reminds us of our sacred responsibility to the planet. Both sayings can be found within the teachings of Islam and both sayings originated from the Prophet Muhammad (Ziauddin & Malik, p.35).

References to the environment in sacred scriptures are often overlooked in the study of the world’s great religions. The direction within the two quotes above points to our responsibility to care for the planet as ‘stewards’ over it, and to relate to this Earth as a ‘place of worship’. In Islam, mosques are mainly centres of learning. Worship and connection to God (Allah) is not mediated by priests and not confined

within walls, but is determined more by regular times of prayer and meant to be a direct spiritual connection between the worshipper and God. Prayers can be offered anywhere in the great place of worship – the whole earth. The oneness of God – ‘There is no God but God’ – is a basic understanding within Islam.

Annie Besant pointed out the amazing social and spiritual impact of the Prophet Muhammad in a lecture published as *Adyar Popular Lectures* No. 20 in 1912 – ‘Beauties of Islam’. It is a concise but very informative document attempting to address some of the misconceptions about Islam, and her message is still relevant today. She highlighted the fact that so many religions are attacked by the forces of materialism and ‘scientific’ thought where such thought has no spiritual ideal (Besant, A. p.7). This practice of trying to comment on and discredit spiritual practices with rationalistic analysis is like flogging the cart after the horse has disappeared over the

horizon; like taking a flower apart, petal by petal, but still expecting to have the flower left.

It seems to be very disturbing for many people to have their familiar, comfortable thoughts and worldview challenged. Learning to view and feel the beautiful environment around us with new eyes can take time and practice, but the expansion of our consciousness in this way is well worth the effort. Fear of new ideas and of the unknown can trap a human mind. Freedom of thought is such a vital element in our lives if we really want to live fully. Media-induced fear is truly the new 'opiate of the people' in our contemporary world. In the West we have become so institutionalised and brainwashed by the status quo that many of us still see our living environment almost solely in terms of dollar value. However, it is okay to celebrate and connect with nature. It is our God given gift, alive with healing.

The Holy Q'uran is not the only sacred book to enlighten us of this fact. The Holy Bible of Christianity, beginning with Genesis, contains countless references to the gifts of the environment to humanity. Throughout the Bible numerous references are made to trees, fruit, vegetables, herbs, spices and various plants too numerous to mention.

We are spiritually and physically linked to our environment and to truly nurture our planet we need to reconnect with it, and appreciate its wonder and beauty. It is not just another tool to be exploited within political economic rationalism, rather, it is a fragile and precious gift that responds very quickly and with breathtaking beauty to harmonious and respectful nurturing.

### References

- Aslan, Reza, *No God but God. The Origins, Evolution and Future of Islam*, William Heineman, The Random House Group Ltd., London, 2005.
- Besant, Annie, *Beauties of Islam*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, (Chennai) India, 1969.
- Rogerson, Barnaby, *The Prophet Muhammad. A Biography*, Little, Brown, Great Britain, 2003.
- Sardar, Ziauddin & Malik, Zafar Abbas, *Islam. A Graphic Guide*, Icon Books Ltd., London, 2009.

[Robyn Telford](#) is a member of Brisbane Lodge and a semi-retired Secondary teacher whose special areas are modern history and English. She has completed a B.A. in Religious Studies, as well a Masters degree in Social Policy and a Master of Arts (Aboriginal Studies). A special interest of hers is finding common threads between the major world religions.

## **Spectemur Agendo:** Let us be Judged by Our Actions

Dianne Kynaston



Edith Dircksey Cowan 1900

*Spectemur Agendo* – Let us be Judged by Our Actions – is the motto of the Karrakatta Club of Perth, and was suggested by one of its founding members, Edith Dircksey Cowan. The foundation of this club reflected the growing political activity among the women of Western Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Karrakatta Club was founded in 1894 by members of the St. George's Reading Circle (whose membership of approximately 40 women, included Edith Cowan). Its objective was to bring into one body the women of the community for mutual improvement. Special engagement and advocacy were strong interests, and Club members championed local social justice issues affecting women.<sup>1</sup>

Edith Cowan was the first Secretary of the Club, and later the President, and she also created its motto, '*Spectemur Agendo*'. Edith was a member of the Perth Lodge of the Theosophical Society. Other TS members were also members of the Club, including Bessie Rischbieth.

In the following years there was a great deal of work done by members of the Karrakatta Club to provide assistance to women and children in dire circumstances, especially through campaigning for legislative changes. This work received a new impulse following the visit of the newly elected International President of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant, who toured the Australian Section in 1907. One of the first areas of work Annie had undertaken was the

formation of the Theosophical Order of Service in 1908, which she saw as a way for TS members to promote the First Object of the Society through service to the community.

While in Perth Annie called together a group of women from within the Lodge membership and the Karrakatta Club, and discussed in an informal setting ‘the possibility of setting up an organization devoted to “service to humanity”’, and she found ‘willing and interested listeners’.<sup>2</sup>

Edith Cowan took up the initiative, and together with Perth journalist and TS member, Muriel Chase, and Alice Adair, Secretary of the Perth Lodge, she called a meeting of a group of women to help form a new activist group.

On 25 March 1909, a meeting was held and ‘Edith outlined the sort of organization she felt was needed: broadly based, non-party, with a platform that could be accepted by women of “all shades of opinion” who were willing to work together to further the interests of women and children.’<sup>3</sup> Thus the Women’s Service Guild was formed, echoing the ideals of the TOS. In fact it was officially affiliated with the Perth TOS in 1910, though later became a separate organisation.

At the first meeting Gertrude Stanway-Tapp (another prominent TS Member)

proposed the following Objects:

1. To support from the standpoint of women any movements to protect, defend and uplift humanity
2. To be loyal citizens of State, Commonwealth and Empire
3. To seek public good and not personal advantage.

So, who were some of these extraordinary women who took part in the work of The Women’s Service Guild?

### **Edith Dircksey Cowan**

Edith Dircksey Cowan is the most prominent of the members. Born near Geraldton she had a difficult childhood, which gave her great empathy for the downtrodden, especially women and children. Her husband, to whom she had five children, worked in the Supreme Court, and through this avenue she saw first-hand the injustice of the legal system at that time.

Through the many organisations she belonged to Edith worked for many different causes, such as adequate medical care and social justice for both women and children. She campaigned for the building of the King Edward Hospital for Women and founded the Children’s Protection Society which led to the creation of special children’s courts. During the First World War

she collected food, clothing and useful items for the soldiers and was chairperson of the Red Cross Appeal Committee through which she helped the wounded. In 1920 she was awarded the Order of the British Empire for this work.

Apart from her effort in helping to get women the vote in 1899, she stood for parliament in 1920, and was the first woman in Australia to be elected, serving one term for the seat of West Perth.

She was a Justice of the Peace, a Freemason (being a member of the International Order of Co-Freemasonry which admitted both men and women), and was a representative at various women's conferences, including the 1925 International Conference of Women in the USA.

In 1934 the Edith Cowan Memorial Clock was unveiled at the entrance to Perth's King Park, and in 1975 an Australian postage stamp featured her portrait. In 1984 the federal Division of Cowan was created, and in 1991 the Western Australian College of Advanced Education was renamed Edith Cowan University. Her portrait has appeared on the Australian fifty dollar note as from 1995 and a plaque honouring her was placed in St. George's Cathedral, Perth, in 1996.

### Bessie Mabel Rischbieth

Bessie Mabel Rischbieth was born in Adelaide and raised by her uncle, W.B. Rounsevell and his wife (her uncle was a prominent theosophist in Adelaide). She married Henry Rischbieth, and they moved in 1898 to live in Perth. The driving forces of her life were social reform and the status of women.



Wikimedia Commons

Bessie Rischbieth circa 1930

Apart from her work through the Karrakatta Club and the Women's Service Guild, she was a foundation member of the Australian Federation of Women's Societies in 1921 and was its first President, holding office until 1942. She was editor for thirty years of *The Dawn*, the monthly journal of the Women's Service Guild. Bessie was involved with several other women's organisations and was the Australian delegate to the Pan-Pacific Women's Conference held in Honolulu

in 1928. She supported the activities of the League of Nations and was the 'alternative delegate' at the assembly in Geneva in 1935. In that year she was awarded the Order of the British Empire. She was also a Justice of the Peace.

In her later years Bessie Rischbieth took up environmental issues and waded into the Swan River with other protesters in 1963, the protest being against the filling in of a section of the river.

She was an ardent member of the Theosophical Society and has been described as 'the most significant theosophic feminist in Australia'. She was also a member of International Co-Freemasonry.

### Muriel Jean Eliot Chase

Muriel Jean Eliot Chase was a journalist and philanthropist. Through her friend, Sir John Winthrop Hackett, she became the editress of the *West Australian* in which she ran a Children's Corner as 'Aunt Mary', and appeared in other columns as Adrienne.

As Aunt Mary she enjoined her young readers to be as silver links in a chain of service (reminiscent of the 'Golden Chain' in theosophical circles). She founded the Silver Chain District Nursing Association, and with the funds she raised through the

newspaper, especially with help from the children, she was able to set up the nursing service which supported nurses going out into the community, especially the bush. This organisation still exists today.

She was a founding member of the Karrakatta Club, the Women's Service Guild, and the Women's Writers Club. One of her daughters, Sandra, assisted Geoffrey Hodson in his theosophical work, and eventually married him.

Muriel's obituary in the *West Australian* newspaper stated:

Of all the women of the state, none, it may safely be said, was so well-known and certainly none more widely beloved for her rare qualities of mind and heart.<sup>4</sup>

### Amelia Morrison Fraser Macdonald

Amelia Morrison Fraser Macdonald was born in Scotland, and emigrated to Australia with her husband, firstly to Sydney and then to Perth. She joined Perth Lodge, and in 1902 become its Treasurer. The Society's ideals of spiritual force, service, social reform, universal education and equal citizenship were her guiding principles. She was a founding member of the Women's Service Guild and was its Treasurer. Amelia was also a member of the International Order of Co-Freemasonry.

She was a principle figure in establishing the Kindergarten Union, the Western Australian Girl Guides' Association and the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. Amelia Macdonald supported the Workers' Educational Association, the Women's Immigration Auxiliary Council and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. A Justice of the Peace, she formed the Western Australian Women Justice's Association.

### Other Prominent Members of the Women's Service Guild

**Mary Martha Farrelly** was a committed member of the Perth Lodge. She was a social worker, diet reformer, an early member of the Women's Service Guild, and helped to establish the State Kindergarten Union and the Girl Guide Movement. Mary was a child welfare reformer and community worker.

**Gertrude Stanway-Tapp**, together with her husband, Percy Stanway-Tapp (a prominent artist), was a very active member of the Perth Lodge. Gertrude was also a founding member of the Women's Service Guild and proposed its Three Objects, being a founding member of its Executive Committee. Gertrude wrote the words of Hymn of Australia with Geo Stacy writing the music, her lyrics being very patriotic and idealistic. She also published

a number of articles and poems in theosophical magazines, such as *The Australian Theosophist*, *The Adyar Bulletin* and *Herald of the Star*.

Two other ladies of Perth Lodge deserve a worthy mention:

**Katherine Clutterbuck** (Sister Kate) was an Anglican nun and committed member of the Perth Lodge. She was concerned with the welfare of children, especially orphans, and later with Aboriginal children. Sister Kate was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1934 for her work in pioneering the cottage home system for orphaned children and a plaque in her name. was placed on 'The Way' – the commemorative walk in Perth. After her death the complex at Queens Park was renamed 'Sister Kate's Children's Cottages' and a creek in the area is named Clutterbuck Creek.

**Alice Adair** was the Secretary of the Perth Lodge, and a founding member of the Women's Service Guild. Around WWI she moved to our International Headquarters at Adyar, India, where she spent many years working in various departments, but especially with James Cousins (a prominent Irish theosophist and worker at Adyar who staged exhibitions of Indian arts and crafts). She wrote many articles on the topic of art in *The Theosophist* over a number of years.

There are also all the women who supported the above ladies in their work by attending meetings and rallies, networking, lobbying, writing letters, baking cakes, gathering clothing, and generally fighting for gender equality and social justice.

To quote from the book, *Women on the Warpath*:

... The Guilds were prominent among the many Australian first-wave feminist groups and Perth, the most isolated State capital in the country, was described by a visiting Victorian feminist as ‘the Mecca of the Women’s Movement in Australia’.<sup>5</sup>

The work of the Guilds, Clubs and other social movements appears as a reflection of the Theosophical ideals, especially that of service brought into practical application by a group of very passionate, articulate and hard-working women who were members of the Perth Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

### Endnotes

1. Website of the Karrakatta Club (accessed September 2019)
2. *Women on the Warpath*, Dianne Davidson, p.21 (see references below).
3. *Ibid.*, p.23.
4. [adb.anu.edu.au/biographies](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biographies) (accessed September 2019)
5. Davidson, *op.cit.*, back page.

### References

- Australian Dictionary of Biography* <http://adb.anu.edu.au> (accessed September 2019)
- Davidson, Dianne, *Women on the Warpath*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1997.
- Duzevich, Noël, ‘Bessie M. Rischbieth, JP, OBE, Champion of the Underprivileged’, *Theosophy in Australia*, June, 1998.
- Roe, Jill, *Beyond Belief*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1986. [trove.com.au](http://trove.com.au) – news (accessed September 2019)



Dianne Kynaston is a long-standing TS member who has served the Society in various capacities including President of Newcastle Lodge, General Secretary of the Australian Section, editor of *Theosophy in Australia* and President of the Indo-Pacific Federation. She is a former State Representative for NSW/ACT, a current member of the national Executive Committee and a National Lecturer for the Australian Section.



## National Calendar of Events



### Springbrook Centre, Qld (currently closed)

**Dates:** Fri 24 July - Sun 26 July 2020

**For TS Members and Non-Members**

**Theme:** 'The *Bhagavad Gitā*: a Yoga  
for the Mind & the Heart'

**Presenter:** Pedro Oliveira



Regrettably, this event has been cancelled due to **COVID-19** restrictions. If it can be rescheduled later in the year at one of our **TS** centres an announcement will be made.

### Next event, Canyonleigh Centre, New South Wales (currently closed)

**TBA**

## 2021 NATIONAL CONVENTION THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

for **TS** members

**Dates:** Sat 23 – Sat 30 January 2021

**Venue:** St. Catherine's on Park, Perth



Due to **COVID-19** restrictions and our duty of care towards our valued members, a decision about whether to proceed with the 2021 Convention will be made slightly later in the year. **TS** centres and members will be informed electronically and through *Theosophy in Australia*. We hope that it will be possible to proceed with our annual gathering.

# Images from the 2020 National Convention, Melbourne



Workshop Session



Shirley Ingham (left) and Valerie Jays, Adelaide



Lucille Crocker, Sydney (left) and Pedro Oliveira , Central Coast NSW



L to R: Tina Hentisz, Pat Williams and Wyn Sperrin, Perth



Sue Lee (National Vice-President) and Linda Oliveira (National President)



Featured speaker Dr Richard Silberstein (left) and Dr Victor Gostin



L. to R: Carmen French (Sunshine Coast), Rosanna Sheridan (Sydney), Ruth Holt (Tasmania) and Phillipa Rooke (Brisbane)



Helen Steven (left) and Marck Guimaraes (Hobart)



Hana O'Rourke (Perth)



Carolyn and Gil Murdoch (Sydney)



Dr Olga Gostin (Adelaide)

When you prepare food, do not see with ordinary eyes and do not think with ordinary mind. Take up a blade of grass and construct a treasure king's land; enter into a particle of dust and turn the great dharma wheel. Do not arouse disdainful mind when you prepare a broth of wild grasses; do not arouse joyful mind when you prepare a fine cream soup. Where there is no discrimination, how can there be distaste? Thus, do not be careless even when you work with poor materials, and sustain your efforts even when you have excellent materials. Never change your attitude according to the materials. If you do, it is like varying your truth when speaking with different people; then you are not a practitioner of the way.

Zen Master Dogen



## Education

Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator



**During the current pandemic, more online material than ever is being made available on the Section's Facebook page and website. Browsers can view the interesting selection of Facebook posts without belonging to Facebook. The following recent additions and more can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/austheos/>**

### **'How to Find Meaning During Difficult Times'**

Information about a webinar with Dr Ravi Ravindra for The Theosophical Society in America.

### **'The Science of Spirituality' by Ianthe H. Hoskins**

Ianthe H. Hoskins was for many years one of the foremost international lecturers for the Theosophical Society. She was more than once a Director of the School of the Wisdom, Adyar, and a faculty member of the Krotona School of Theosophy in Ojai besides addressing many annual Conventions of the Theosophical Society in England. We included an excerpt of her Blavatsky Lecture, 28 May 1950,

plus the link to the full text (courtesy of The Theosophical Society in America.)

### **The Departure of Damodar**

The young Damodar K. Mavalankar met the Founders of the TS, Col. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, in Bombay, after they had arrived there from the United States in February 1879. He soon became a loyal and dedicated worker for the Society and moved with the Founders to Madras in December 1882, when the Headquarters was established at Adyar. We included excerpts from Col. Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, Third Series (1883-87), chapter XVIII, in which he makes reference to Damodar's journey to Tibet.

### **Video: The TS Stream – Keynotes of International Presidents**

Pedro Oliveira, TS Education Coordinator

From Col. H.S. Olcott to Tim Boyd, the Theosophical Society has had a lineage of Presidents who presented the enduring message of Theosophy as a living Wisdom. This talk focuses

on the keynote of each successive President, who strengthened and prepared the TS for the next stage on its journey.

### **Video: Reincarnation – Ancient Wisdom, Modern Implications**

A presentation by Barbara Hebert, National President of The Theosophical Society in America.

### **Meditation Lessons**

Also included were a number lessons based on Adelaide Gardner's book *Meditation – a Practical Study*. They can be accessed through the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/austheos/menu/>

### **Video: ‘Who Are the Founders? Chaos, Plan, and Order in the Society’s History’, John Algeo**

Dr John Algeo was a former International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society and Professor

Emeritus of English at the University of Georgia. He was the author of several books and also for a number of years the National President of The Theosophical Society in America.

### **Video: The Road that Leads to the Heart of the Universe**

A presentation at the 130th Annual Gathering of the Theosophical Society in America by Ed Abdill in 2016.

### **Tribute to Mary Anderson, former International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society,**

who passed away peacefully in England recently. We have included her article on the ‘Diagram of Meditation’, attributed to HPB.

### **The article ‘The Quest for Meaning’ by Joy Mills**

Originally published in *The Theosophist*, March, 1981.



... the chief object of the T.S. is not so much to gratify individual aspirations as to serve our fellow men; and the real value of this term ‘selfish’, which may jar upon your ear, has a peculiar significance with us which it cannot have with you; therefore, and to begin with, you must not accept it otherwise than in the former sense. Perhaps you will better appreciate our meaning when told that in our view the highest aspirations for the welfare of humanity become tainted with selfishness if, in the mind of the philanthropist, there lurks the shadow of desire for self benefit or a tendency to do injustice, even when these exist unconsciously to himself.

*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*

## Call for Nominations - State Representatives



In accordance with Rules 19(1)(c) and 21, the current terms of office of the State Representatives for New South Wales/ACT (Gerard Brennan), Western Australia (Susan Lee) and Victoria (Edward Sinclair) will expire at the appointment of new State Representatives towards the end of 2020. 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 at the above address (including by email) no later than 5 pm on Friday 14 August. If in doubt regarding any of the requirements, or to obtain Form 8, please email the National Secretary: [natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au).

## The Incorporation of the TS in Australia a note from the National Secretary

Dear Fellow Members,

We have become aware of the fact that it would be advisable for the TS in Australia to adopt a new structure: that of a company limited by guarantee. Attitudes to risk and the level of litigation in society have changed significantly since The Theosophical Society in Australia was formed as an unincorporated association. The unincorporated association is an entity that is appropriate for organisations with relatively low values of assets and undertaking relatively low risk activities, such as small clubs. These days, even organisations much smaller than ours will more likely be set up as an incorporated association. Furthermore, the NSW Department of Fair Trading now adopts an upper financial threshold for what is appropriate for an incorporated association. As the assets of the National Society are currently beyond that threshold, the most appropriate entity for The Theosophical Society in Australia would be a company limited by guarantee. That is what we have been advised; and this advice has been accepted by both the national Executive and the National Council.

Incorporating the TS in Australia involves a number of steps, including the establishment of a new company, The Theosophical Society in Australia limited by guarantee, adopting a modern constitution consistent with our existing constitution (the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia) and compliant with all ATO & ACNC requirements. We hope that the new company can be known as The Theosophical Society in Australia, with permission to drop from its name the

word Limited, as has been the case with The Australian Section Theosophical Trust (a company limited by guarantee). That however remains to be seen.

The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd and The Australian Section Theosophical Trust would then, most likely, transfer all assets they hold in trust for the TS in Australia to the new company, including the investments, real property and the trade mark (the Seal or Emblem of the Society). Finally, we would change the trustee for the TS in Australia's Maple-Brown Abbott investments from the Foundation to the new company.

Each of these steps is quite involved. It is presently unclear at what stage the matter will have to be put to members by way of the relevant notices of motion. The members will of course have to approve a new constitution. We do not yet know when the new constitution would have to be presented to various authorities.

Given the fact that it is inappropriate for the TS in Australia to continue on for much longer as an unincorporated association, we members would have little choice but to accept the fact that currently the most appropriate structure for the Theosophical Society in Australia is that of a company limited by guarantee. Not only would this bring the TS into line with current best practice, it would greatly simplify the day to day business of the National Society, which currently must deal with three sets of accounts, and three sets of business matters, instead of what will eventually be resolved into the business of one entity.



## Theosophical Order of Service

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



### *Summary of the TOS Australia 2020 AGM*

The TOS 2020 AGM was held at St Mary's College on 23 January during the TS National Convention. 24 members were present and 6 apologies were received. Reports were presented by the National Coordinator and Treasurer detailing the business undertaken during 2019. Funds (totalling \$20,200) were disbursed during 2019 for:

- Syrian Refugee Project via TOS Italy \$4000
- Golden Link College \$2,500
- Pakistan scholarships \$4,650
- Pakistan Home Schools \$6,000, and
- The following funds were sent to TS India: Olcott Memorial School Adyar \$1,350, Animal dispensary, Adyar \$320, Women's welfare centre, Adyar \$230, HPB Hostel for boys \$1,100, Odisha girls home \$50.

Reports were also received and presented on the International TOS projects sponsored by TOS Australia. These were well received by the members present.

### *The National Team for 2020 are:*

- National Coordinator – George Wester
- National Secretary – Geoff Harrod
- National Treasurer – Dianne Manning
- Mentor – Jean Carroll
- Web site administrator – Geoff Harrod
- Facebook administrator – Heather Fisher  
– email: [tos.fisherh@gmail.com](mailto:tos.fisherh@gmail.com)  
(Contact Heather if you wish to promote or share some local activity.)



Committee at AGM

During the TS Convention TOS funds (\$497) were raised for Bush Fire Relief Projects. If local TOS groups have local Bush Fire community support projects they are contributing to, then TOS National will support the local funds raised \$1 for \$1 (up to \$3,000). Just contact the National Committee for details.

Our condolences and love go out to our long-standing TOS Canberra coordinator Janet Scarabottolo on the passing of her partner Tony Fearnside to higher service on 18 April. Finally, in this era of social isolation – if you cannot go out, go within. An opportunity to practise higher service through meditation.

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)

## Review ...

### *The Demon in the Machine* *How hidden webs of information* *are solving the mystery of life*

by Paul Davies

Penguin Books, Great Britain, 2020,  
pb, 251pp, \$19.01 (Book Depository  
Australia, May 2020).



Paul Davies is a Regents' Professor of Physics and Director of the Beyond Centre for Fundamental Concepts in Science at Arizona State University. The author of some thirty books, his many awards include the Templeton Prize and the Faraday Prize of the Royal Society. He is a Member of the Order of Australia and has an asteroid named after him.

Here is an excerpt from the Preface of Dr Davies' book:

The search for a 'missing link' that can join non-life and life in a unitary framework has led to an entirely new scientific field at the interface of biology, physics,

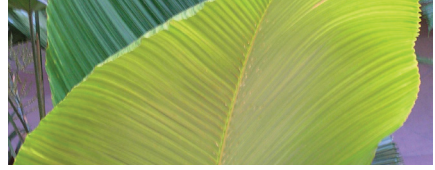


computing and mathematics. It is a field ripe with promise not only for finally explaining life but in opening the way to applications that will transform nanotechnology and lead to sweeping advances in medicine. The unifying concept that underlies this transformation is information, not in its prosaic everyday sense but as an abstract quantity which, like energy, has the ability to animate matter. Patterns of information flow can literally take on a life of their own, surging through cells, swirling around brains and networking across ecosystems and societies, displaying their own systematic dynamics. It is from this rich and complex ferment of information that the concept of agency emerges, with its links to consciousness, free will and other vexing puzzles. It is here, in the way living systems arrange information into organized patterns, that the distinctive order of life emerges from the chaos of the molecular realm.

This book provides an insightful new view on the nature of life by a distinguished scientist.

Pedro Oliveira

## News and Notes



### COVID-19 and the TS in Australia

*Activities around the Section:* Since the last issue of the magazine was published the activities of the TS in Australia have changed markedly. National Headquarters staff have been working from home, continuing to provide almost all of the usual support services to TS centres and members, except for some postal orders requiring an office presence.

In addition to the above, all TS centres around the Section suspended their activities during March. Some have been meeting electronically or else providing a members' e-newsletter during lockdown, apart from any other methods of contact with their local members.

All tours by the National President, the Education Coordinator and national lecturers have been suspended for the time being. The 2020 international lecture tour by Dr Elena Dovalsantos and this year's School of Theosophy were cancelled. The July event at Springbrook on 'The *Bhagavad Gitā*: a Yoga for the Mind & the Heart' has also been cancelled; however, if it becomes possible to hold this later in the year at

either of our TS centres, both of which are currently closed, members will be promptly informed.

We hope it will not be too long before regular activities start to resume around the Section. If any TS centres have queries in this regard, please contact the National Secretary.

*Theosophy in Australia:* We were able to complete the mail out of the March issue of the national magazine shortly before Headquarters staff were required to work from home. However, the national Executive Committee has taken a decision to make this June issue available online to our members with a limited print run for libraries, et cetera, in the absence of a clear indication of when full operations in the National Headquarters office, including mail outs, can resume.

### Transitions

We remember with affection two members who passed to peace recently: **Sally Gray**, immediate past President of Blavatsky Lodge: 29 February **Tony Fearnside, OAM**, past President of Canberra Branch and former member of the national Executive Committee: 18 April. A tribute to Tony,

on receipt of his Order of Australia award, appeared on page 27 of the March 2015 issue. Sign into the website and select View All at: [theosophicalsociety.org.au/magazines](http://theosophicalsociety.org.au/magazines).

### **Call for Nominations - National President**

Details appeared in the March 2020 issue of this magazine. Deadline for nominations: Friday 17 July.

### **Gifts and Bequests to Further the Work of the TS in Australia**

The Theosophical Society in Australia as we know it today is a product of well over a century of impressive service by many volunteers and officers, as well as the more tangible gifts and bequests received from both members and non-members. All gifts and bequests

are used carefully and responsibly to further the work and the Objects of the Theosophical Society in this country. The following form of words is provided for those members who wish to make gifts or bequests in their wills: 'To The Australian Section Theosophical Trust (whose registered office is Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010) to be held in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia'.

The Australian Section Theosophical Trust is a company formed to hold monies, investments, real or personal property in trust for The Theosophical Society in Australia.

Contact the National Secretary for further enquiries: 02 9264 7056

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

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

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

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

## Section Directory

Please check with TS centres when meetings will be resumed.

### Australian Section National Headquarters

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

### New South Wales

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

*Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:*  
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,  
Mayfield NSW 2304  
7.30pm 2nd Friday each month  
President: Tony Buzek  
Secretary: Dianne Kynaston  
Tel: 0452 633 132  
Email: [diannedeva@gmail.com](mailto:diannedeva@gmail.com)  
<https://newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>

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

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

*Northern Beaches Group, Certified 2/4/1996:*

Postal address and meeting address:  
c/- 31 Riviera Street  
Avalon NSW 2107  
2.00 pm normally 3rd Saturday each month  
Please email to confirm meetings.  
Coordinator: Nila Chambers  
email: [nilachambers@bigpond.com](mailto:nilachambers@bigpond.com)

### Queensland

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

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

*Logan Group, Certified 9/4/2019:*  
Meet: Meeting Room 2, Logan Hyperdome Library,  
Mandew Street, Loganholme, Qld.  
1st Friday each month, 9.00am - midday  
Coordinator: Christine Gwin  
email: [logantheosophy@gmail.com](mailto:logantheosophy@gmail.com)  
Tel. 0418 755 496

*Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004:*  
Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,  
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556  
Tel: 0417 873 481  
7.00pm Thursdays  
Email: [theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com](mailto:theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com)  
<https://sunshinecoast.theosophicalsociety.org.au/>  
President: Joyce Thompson Secretary: Jean Carroll

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

Meet: Hospice Board Room, 57b O'Quinn Street,  
Toowoomba QLD 4350.

Meetings on a Thursday evening once a fortnight at  
6.30pm.

Annual Springbrook retreat each Winter

Coordinator: Gayle Thomas

Secretary: Barry Bowden

Tel: 0438 331 885

email: gaylethomas8@gmail.com

### South Australia

*Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:*

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000

Tel: 08 8223 1129

Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au

www.theosophical.org.au

Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday of  
every month. Please contact Lodge for additional  
meeting dates.

President: Gaynor Fraser

Secretary: Ann Pritchard

### Tasmania

*Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:*

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)

https://hobart.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

Meet: 7.30pm Mondays

President: Helen Steven

Secretary: Berry Dunston

Email: helen\_steven@live.com

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

Meet: Scouts Hall, 1 St. Georges Square, East  
Launceston,

1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.00pm

Postal address: 28 Teggs Road, Gravelly Beach, TAS  
7276

email: launcestontheosophicalsociety@gmail.com

https://launceston.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

President/Treasurer: Franka Hughes

Secretary: Ruth Holt

Tel: 0418 346 526

### Victoria

*Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:*

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624

email: info@melbournetheosophy.org

https://melbourne.theosophicalsociety.org.au/

Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month

Acting President: Edward Sinclair

Secretary: position vacant

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

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,

Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday

of the month

(12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch + library -

1.30pm presenter + questions and comments)

Coordinator: Alice Oppen

Tel: 0439 563 313

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

Meet: Shop 6, Tower Place, High Street,

Wodonga VIC 3690

1st Tuesday each month

Library hours Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.00pm

Coordinator/Secretary: Denis Kovacs

Tel: 02 6024 2905

### Western Australia

*Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:*

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000

Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104

Email: tsp Perth@iinet.net.au

http://www.tsp Perth.com.au

Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays

President: Franco Guazzelli

Secretary: Victoria la Rondie

*Mount Helena Retreat Centre:*

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082

All enquiries to Perth Branch

Tel: 08 9328 8104

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

2184 Springbrook Road,

Springbrook QLD 4213

Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211

email: info@tsretreat.com.au

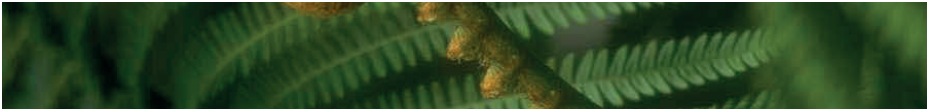
Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein

## *Freedom of Thought*

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

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

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



## *Freedom of the Society*

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

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

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



## **The Three Objects of the Theosophical Society**

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

~

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

~

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