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TheoSophia

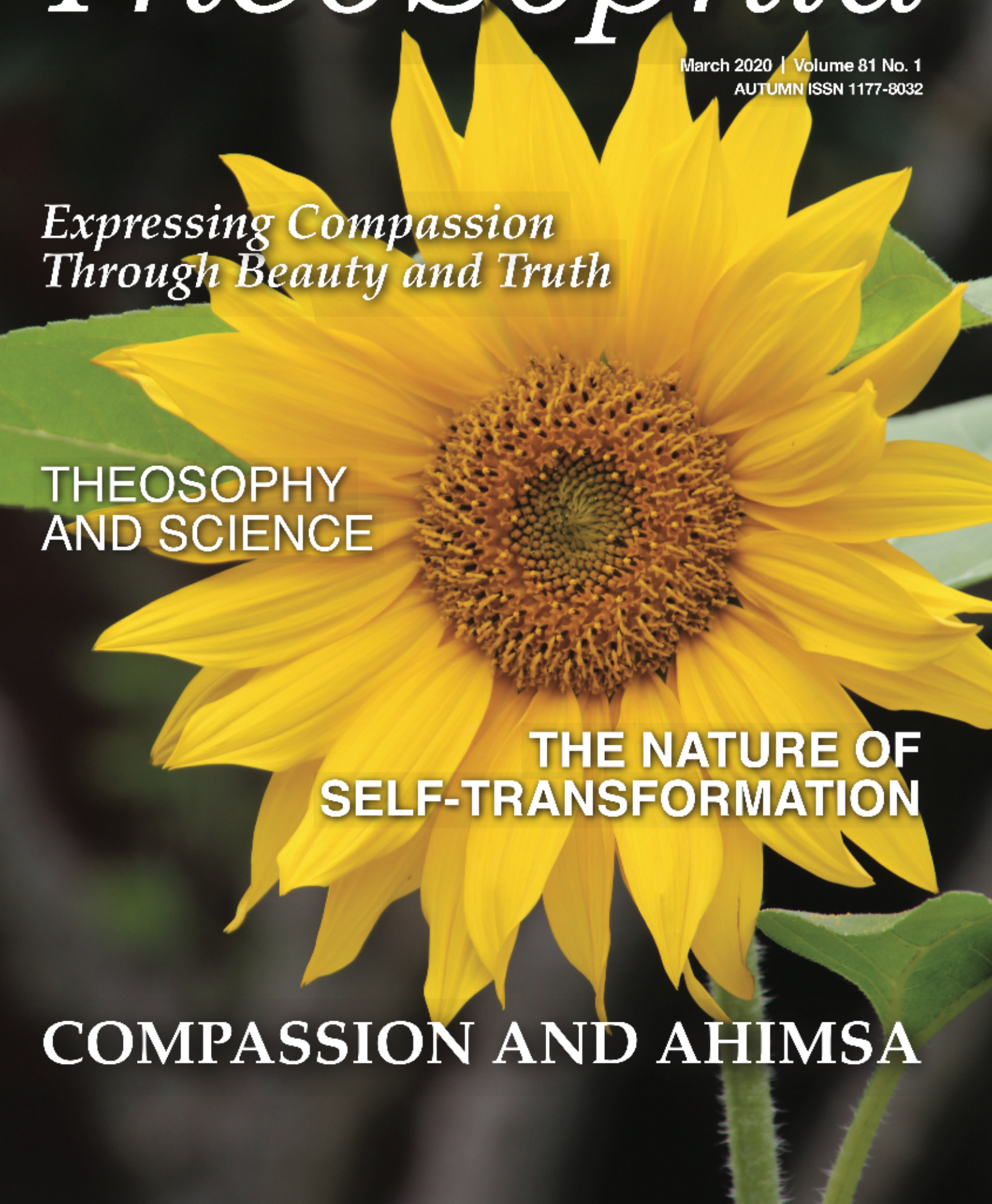
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*Expressing Compassion
Through Beauty and Truth*

THEOSOPHY
AND SCIENCE

THE NATURE OF
SELF-TRANSFORMATION

COMPASSION AND AHIMSA



TheoSophia



TheoSophia is the official magazine of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand.

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THE MISSION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission is to serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation and the Unity of Life.

July 2018 Naarden meeting of the TS



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By Richard Sell



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Letters to the Editor

THE FIRST OBJECT

Regarding the wording of the First Object – see *TheoSophia*, December 2019, perhaps it could be:

To nurture the transforming body of a Universally Aware Beinghood with discernment, understanding, compassion, humility and steadfast forbearance in Truth and Wisdom.


Jacob Jonker
AUCKLAND

BROTHERHOOD

'Brotherhood' is a perfectly viable word that doesn't need changing. Pandering to the fads that boil to the surface of the cauldron of society, is unwise. In 100 years all the hoopla of the confusion of the sexes will be forgotten. But brotherhood will still be a noble concept.

Richard Robb
Paris, Tennessee, USA

INTRODUCING



WWW.THEOSOPHY.WORLD
A NEW RESOURCE CENTRE FOR ALL THINGS THEOSOPHICAL

theosophy.world is a resource centre dedicated to helping you find what you are looking for. As a new online resource, material is building all the time.

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Theosophy World
RESOURCE CENTRE

A National Section sponsored event: Autumn School of Theosophy

Studies in the Wisdom Tradition

Led by John Vorstermans and Renée Sell

From Friday 8 May at 7.30 pm to Monday 11 May 3.00 pm

At National Section - Auckland Theosophical Centre

Studies focus on the teachings of the Wisdom Tradition including:

- Theosophy and Buddhism
- Samkhya and the Wisdom-Religion
- The Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*
- The Original Sankaracharya and his teaching

We will discover how the heart of each of these traditions awakens an understanding that has transformed many who have studied them deeply and lived them. We will learn how they relate to Theosophy today.

For further details see: <https://theosophy.nz/events> Email: office@theosophy.org.nz

Compassion and AHIMSA

TheoSophia's Autumnal theme is *ahimsa*, a Sanskrit word for non-violence toward any living being as a philosophy of life. It is a key precept of Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism. We have linked it to compassion, a virtue in demand in these challenging times. *The Golden Rule*, revered by many religions: Do unto others... (p.26) is tied to these ideas, as we reflect on respect for all life.

Topical articles are by John Vorstermans (p.4), Barbara Hebert (p.8), Sushma Webber (p.15) and Erwin Bomas (p.20). Tim Boyd writes about the value of Theosophical Teachings (p.6), Vicente (Vic) Hao Chin Jr describes Self-Transformation (p.10), and I reject suffering (p.27).

Books by Geoffrey Hodson and John Sell are featured (p.16) with a special review by Warwick Keys of David T. Bruce's latest work (p.17). Notice of the Autumn School of Theosophy is with letters to the Editor (p.2), Science is discussed by theosophists (p.18) and we have feedback and photos from the TSNZ Convention 2020 (p.24).

Concern for all life is especially relevant now as our planet endures climate change. We note blinkers on and short-sighted choices made by some leaders. Appalling outcomes such as devastation wrought by fires in Australia, New Zealand and around the world, prompt us to ask: what can we do to help? As concerned individuals, we can make compassionate choices emboldening governments, companies and organisations to accelerate action countering climate change. Our future, and that of posterity, depends on the response of the world's climate – and its citizens.

Pamela Zane Keys
Editor

TOGETHER

We came together without a trace
of fear, to form a base,
one might say we formed a soul,
a condensed unit to guide and serve the whole.

With core biases soon shorn,
and divisiveness foresworn,
we explore the overt and the hidden,
the latent and the forbidden.

Humanity's truths, laws, fondest beliefs,
we expose, find sound, or flawed, released.

Lorraine Alston

DIARY DATES

March 29	TheosoFest – Auckland, HPB Lodge Open Day 10am-4pm
May 8-11	TSNZ Autumn School of Theosophy
May 8	White Lotus Day – honouring H.P. Blavatsky
May 23-24	President's Forum
August 28	Induction Day
August 29-30	Immersion Weekend

Check for updates and details of these events: www.theosophy.nz

FUTURE ISSUES

Date	Theme	Deadline
June	<i>Meditation</i>	1 April
September	<i>The Pilgrim's Journey</i>	1 July
December	<i>Theosophy in Action</i>	1 October

Email: editor@theosophy.org.nz

New Zealand's National President of the Theosophical Society, **John Vorstermans**, looks at an ancient precept which recognises the underlying unity of life.

AHIMSA

The Theosophical Society is a modern-day expression of the Wisdom Tradition, the source of today's religions and philosophies. This universal Wisdom Tradition came from ancient India, 'the sacred land of Āryāvarta.'¹ The Wisdom Tradition predates the ancient Vedas of India. It is said to be the source of truth, the remnants of which can be found by careful sifting through religions, beyond the dogmatic shield of outer layers.

... we affirm that, if Egypt furnishes Greece with her civilisation and the latter bequeathed hers to Rome, Egypt herself had, in those unknown ages when Menes reigned, received her laws, her social institutions, her arts and sciences, from pre-Vedic India; and that, therefore, it is in the old initiatrix of the priests – the adepts of all the other countries – we must seek for the key to the great mysteries of humanity.¹¹

In the Theosophical Society today, we search for these keys to unlock mysteries of humanity. The keys have been lost to time as sacred texts were continually translated by the uninitiated who did not possess the correct knowledge. Humanity lost touch with the keepers of this Wisdom Tradition which was replaced by the dogmatic religions of our time. With the introduction of the modern Theosophical Society some insights into this Wisdom Tradition, through original publications by Theosophy's founder, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, such as *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, brought together hard to find material on the subjects from around the globe. These publications also hinted at deeper truths to be uncovered by the reader once a firm understanding of

the *Three Fundamental Propositions* in *The Secret Doctrine* proem had been understood and employed in research.

Though comparative study of major religions and mythology, we can find some of the keys. One of these is: Respect for all life. Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism have a key precept in common: *Ahimsa* (harmlessness, non-violence or respect for all life). Violence or causing harm, the opposite to *Ahimsa* (*Himsa*), creates an endless loop of conflict, pain and suffering until we learn and understand how cause and effect are tied together.

In Christianity similar ideas are presented in the life story of Jesus, such as in the parable of the Good Samaritan who helps someone who is not of his faith or beliefs, teaching us to help another in need, without prejudice and to do to others what we would want done for ourselves. There is also the story of the woman accused of adultery and condemned to be stoned to death until Jesus challenged those who had not sinned to throw the first stone. Of course, there was no such person who had not sinned.

Parables are stories which can be understood in many different ways. They have multiple meanings which can be unlocked if the key is known. There is also allegory, where the character in the story represents each one of us on our spiritual journey or pilgrimage. For example, the story of Jesus can be read as the spiritual journey of each one of us with the challenges we must face on our own journey, not literally but rather framing the mystical meaning of the story. Characters in the story often represent qualities we must



Ahimsa signifies an attitude and mode of behaviour towards all living creatures based on recognition of the underlying unity of life.

achieve along the way. The crucifixion can symbolise the struggle between human ego or personality and the soul.

In the case of *Ahimsa*, it is through its study that we come to realise the importance of life. Through Theosophy and some fields of science we learn that everything in the universe has consciousness to some degree. We then realise the importance of respecting evolving life forms. Dr Taimni in his commentaries in *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*ⁱⁱⁱ says:

Ahimsa does not mean merely abstaining from murder, but not wilfully inflicting any injury, suffering or pain on any living creature by word, thought or action.

Ahimsa stands for the highest degree of harmlessness, often found only amongst saints or sages. Yet it is a quality that we must all cultivate from an early stage on our pilgrimage. *Ahimsa* signifies an attitude and mode of behaviour towards all living creatures based on recognition of the underlying unity of life.

When we consider *Ahimsa* in our own lives, we often find ourselves putting stumbling blocks in our way, saying that in this case or in that case it is not practical. Each situation in life is unique and requires careful consideration or reflection on everything we think and put into action. To develop *Ahimsa* – *harmlessness*, we need to keep a strict watch over our minds, emotions, words and actions, each of which can cause harm, pain or suffering to another. With practice, our harmful habits will eventually show themselves, allowing us to deal with them, as all pilgrims must. Through this process, we gradually transform, as awareness is the first step to any sort of change in ourselves.

The result of this development is a person with high qualities of love and compassion in their nature. This love is a binding power, and when in the presence of a person who has this quality, we find that they are automatically filled with confidence, love and respect for themselves. For one who practises harmlessness, there is always a careful watch over the mind; in that way we can be sure that whatever we say does not harm another. If telling someone a truth will cause that person hurt, then unless it can be put in a kind and sensitive way, it is better not to say anything.

This harmlessness also extends itself to our social life and interactions. Are we respecting differences in gender, practising equality, not participating in spreading gossip about others and being non-judgmental of others who are doing their best on their pilgrimage, while having respect for their understanding, whatever their social, religious or cultural conditioning? In relationships, respect for each other is essential if we want to create a life of harmony. When two people come together, it is important to respect the journey each is taking rather than force the other to take the same journey. In true love, there is no judgement; rather, there is acceptance and support.

Another aspect of harmlessness is its effect in work situations. Does our work promote harmlessness in our dealings with our colleagues and customers? Is our product harmless to the environment, was it ethically produced and distributed? Does our work have a harmless impact on ourselves as well as others? Is our work environment safe and do we respect those with whom we work? Are there other aspects to consider? Often in business, economics outweigh social consequences. Are we happy in our work? We do well to choose very carefully.

To conclude, a short quote from Swami Vivekananda:^{iv}

If a man or woman is able to obtain the ideal of harmlessness to others, before them even the animals, which are by their own natures ferocious, will become peaceful. The tiger and the lamb will play together before the Yogi. When you have come to that state, then alone you will understand that you have become firmly established in *ahimsa*.

..... ❖❖❖

REFERENCES

- ⁱ *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky, Vol. 2, 1st ed., 1888. p.584
- ⁱⁱ *Isis Unveiled*, H. P. Blavatsky, 2 Vols., 1st ed., 1877, Vol. 1, p.589
- ⁱⁱⁱ *The Science of Yoga*, I. K. Taimni, Book II, Sutra 30.
- ^{iv} *Raja Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda, Book II, Sutra 35.



The Value of Theosophy's Teachings

Seeking and questioning can lead to a deeper understanding of theosophy, claims International President, **Tim Boyd**.

Recently I was in California for a program. It was a public conversation between Michael Murphy and me. Michael has led a remarkable life and is a brilliant man. Although he is the author of a number of books that have been influential in the field of contemporary spirituality, he is probably best-known for his role in founding California's Esalen Institute. Ever since it was started in 1962, Esalen has been a force in the Western world for developing the teachers and the conversation about human potential and peak states of human experience – what the TS would describe as the “powers latent in humanity.” Most of today's prominent teachers of contemporary spirituality have made their way through Esalen's doors at one time or another.

It was a two-hour conversation that could have gone on much longer. One fascinating feature for me was that although the evening was sold out, it was an audience that did not have more than a passing familiarity with Theosophy or the Theosophical Society. As is necessarily the case for anyone exploring contemporary approaches to spirituality, many of them had come across the TS or its literature, but for a variety of reasons felt it was not enough. Some of them had been turned off from their study of Theosophy by the difficult Victorian English that was common in our early literature. Others, who had studied a little more, ran into difficulties correctly understanding the sometimes complex and challenging concepts involved.

During the question-and-answer part of the evening, a gentleman asked me a couple of probing questions. He was a man who clearly had delved into a study of the TS's history and at least some of its teachings. His first question called attention to a number of prominent people who have left the TS to pursue other approaches to the Ageless Wisdom. He pointed to Rudolf Steiner, who left to form the Anthroposophical Society, taking with him most of the German Section of the TS. He brought up the separations of J. Krishnamurti after disbanding the Order of the Star, of William Quan Judge, and others. After outlining some of the history of these highly regarded people, he asked, “For an organisation that promotes unity, truth and brotherhood, how can you explain so many schisms?” From the manner in which the question was framed, it was clear that it was not merely about TS history, but was about the credibility of the TS in advancing some of its high ideals. I got the impression that my questioner had already made up his mind.

My response to that question can be found in the *Adyar Theosophist*, April 2015, “The River Delta.” But in brief, it was that there is no individual or organisation that can fully contain the wisdom of the ages. The individuals involved in the various schisms were, like H.P. Blavatsky, subject to the influence of their personalities, but were also sincere and intuitive people who had been affected by some profound insight into the Ageless Wisdom. The fact that they developed their own vision and organisations made it possible for a broader audience to be exposed to different aspects of the wisdom teachings.

The gentleman's first query called into question the TS's credibility as an organisation. His second question targeted the teachings. In his introduction to the question he pointed out that the most substantial teachings of Theosophy are credited to the Mahatmas, the Masters of Wisdom. The actual question was, “Since nobody has ever seen or spoken to

H.P. Blavatsky described Theosophy as “the accumulated wisdom of the ages, tested and verified by generations of seers.”

these Mahatmas, isn't it stretching credulity to present these as authentic teachings?"

As someone who frequently speaks to groups of people, over the years I have found that during question-and-answer sessions often people ask leading questions – those that walk you through the person's beliefs or knowledge, eventually leading you to the answer that confirms those beliefs. These are always wonderful opportunities to "step outside of the box" and see things from a different point of view.

Although my questioner was exaggerating in saying that nobody had seen or spoken to the Mahatmas, it was not a huge departure from the facts. In the history of the TS, approximately 24 people received letters from the Mahatmas, and only eight actually saw them physically.

Because this was an audience that had limited exposure to the teachings of the Ageless Wisdom, I began by going through a basic description of the idea and process of spiritual evolution which supports the existence of those highly evolved beings

described as Mahatmas. I noted that in the normal conception of the chain of being there is a progressive unfoldment of function and consciousness from the mineral kingdom to single-celled organisms to plants, to animals, and then humans. In conventional thought, humanity is where it ends, with the next step beyond us being God, or, for the religious, angels or their equivalent. This gap in the spectrum of consciousness does not accord with the rest of the natural world. From the Theosophical point of view, the Mahatmas are the next stage in the human evolutionary process.

I added that H.P. Blavatsky described Theosophy as "the accumulated wisdom of the ages, tested and verified by generations of seers." Individual testing and verification are essential.

My answer to the questioner, then, went something like this: whether or not someone accepts this view of spiritual evolution does not really matter. What is important is the value of the teachings.



Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society was born in New York City, studied at Brown University and University of Chicago and joined the TSA in 1974. He co-founded a Theosophical spiritual community. They taught the Ageless Wisdom, meditation and healing and formed a business helping stabilise neighbourhoods through training, employment and building affordable homes. Tim has worked as TSA President and US President of the TOS. He has spoken across every continent except Africa.

The focus of this issue of TheoSophia is *ahimsa*. This word, familiar to many who tread the spiritual path, derives from the Sanskrit: to cause no harm or do no injury. *Ahimsa* is to have respect for all life and to avoid violence. National President of the TS in America, **Barbara Hebert**, carefully considered this uniting quality after TSA board discussions on the place of veganism in the Society.

Ahimsa in Practice

The pioneering effort of many in moving from a meat diet to an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet was monumental 75 to 100 years ago. Today many believe that maintaining an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet is simply not enough and that as pioneers in the spiritual movement, we need to move away from all animal-based products. This is an individual decision, and it is hoped that a discussion regarding *ahimsa* will be valuable.

The First Object of the Theosophical Society is to encourage a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. This object, clearly defining that all are welcome to join the Society, certainly relates to other human beings. However, it also points to something much deeper: the unity of all life and the spiritual evolution of all beings through the various kingdoms of nature (mineral, plant, animal, human, and beyond). This unitive nature of all beings lies at the heart both of our First Object and of *ahimsa*.

Joy Mills, late president of the TSA, in an article entitled *Purpose of the Society's Objects*, published in the November 1996 *Theosophist*, wrote:

Does not the First Object lead us to examine our own conduct, our own reactions, our own relationships with others and with all forms of life, to see whether we have come even close to the realization of the true nature of brotherhood based on an absolute knowledge of the unitary nature of all existence?

This concept, shared in Theosophical teachings, reminds us that all life is one. This is the basis for the First Object: we, and everything around us, are expressions of the One Life – or whatever we may choose to call it.

Some might say, "I wish I could experience the Ultimate Reality," or "I wish I could experience God." Because our world is illusory, we believe that we are separated from the Ultimate Reality, but that is not entirely true. Take a moment and look around. Everything you see is the One Life; all of the things you see – your family, friends, strangers, trees, animals, flowers, birds, insects, rocks – are expressions of the Ultimate Reality made manifest in this phenomenal world. We are looking at aspects of the One Life. We are looking at God. And we are surrounded by it every minute of every single day, if we would only recognize it.

Since all beings in existence in this material world are expressions of the One Life, aren't we compelled to have an attitude of respect and nonviolence for the life within those beings, whether plant, animal, human, or other? If we are to take our Theosophical principles to heart, this is a subject to be contemplated deeply.



We may wonder, which comes first: a recognition of the One Life in all beings or *ahimsa*? Then we may wonder, what difference does it make which comes first? One will eventually lead us to the other.

As we act in accordance with *ahimsa* toward other creatures, we are respecting and recognizing the One Life that is expressed in all forms in this physical world. By doing so, we transform our consciousness. We are practising altruism and thus doing the work of this great organization to which we belong.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky writes, as have many others, that the true work of the Theosophical Society is altruism. Altruism can be defined as the selfless concern for the well-being of others. In Theosophical teachings, altruism focuses on service to humanity and to all emanations of the One Life. But there are so many who are in need and so many ways to help. How do we decide upon an altruistic path?

Because of our principle of the freedom and autonomy of all members, there is no one specific altruistic action that the organization of the Theosophical Society will identify. Each of us must choose in our own way, guided by our own passions and interests, how we will help others. However, if we look a bit more deeply, it quickly becomes clear that one way in which each and every member of the Theosophical Society can, in addition to other altruistic acts, serve humanity is to facilitate the raising of consciousness.

Raising the consciousness of humanity – what a gargantuan task! How do we even begin? In order to change the consciousness of humanity, we must first change our own. We may call it self-transformation, self-regeneration, expansion of consciousness, or anything else, but whatever we call it, we must change ourselves so that we can change the world.

Assuming that the Theosophical teachings regarding the unity of all life are accurate (and, of course, I do make that assumption!), then it stands to reason that as one part of the whole changes, the rest must change as well, even if it is a minuscule change. It is much like putting a drop of dye into a container of water: the colour of the water changes, even if just a tiny bit. Through this process of self-regeneration, self-transformation, or expansion of consciousness, we continue to add small drops of dye until eventually the colour of the water in the entire container has been changed. In such a way, as we change ourselves, we change the world.

Changing ourselves and hence transforming the world

is an act of altruism in which all of us can partake. This raising of consciousness is, in a way, an act of *ahimsa*. By undertaking this arduous process of self-regeneration, we promulgate respect for life and nonviolence towards ourselves and therefore toward all beings. In this way, we are truly living a Theosophical life.

These thoughts bring us back to the original topic of our discussion – veganism. As we gather information, contemplate the various aspects of the unitive nature of all life, and consider dietary implications, each of us will make personal decisions about diet as we move forward. These decisions will likely be based on our own understanding of our place in the world and our role in living altruistic lives. I wish us all well in our contemplative journeys.

First printed in the Spring 2019 issue of *Quest* magazine in the USA. Adapted and reprinted here with kind permission. Reference: Barbara Hebert "Viewpoint: *Ahimsa* in Practice" *Quest* 107:2, pp. 10-11.



Barbara Hebert, Ph.D., National President of the Theosophical Society in America, is Director of the South-Eastern Louisiana University Counselling Center and is a Licensed Professional Counsellor. A third-generation theosophist, Barbara has been involved in local, regional and national office. Theosophy provides the guideposts through which she endeavours to live her life.



Tui photos by Renée Sell.

The Nature of Self-Transformation

International theosophist, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr describes preparation for the spiritual life within the self-transformational programme.



The self-transformation program is an approach to self-integration, which serves as a foundation for effective living. It is also an indispensable basis for long-term interpersonal, societal and global peace, as well as a necessary preparation for the spiritual life.

Self-transformation consists of four aspects: Review of our personal map of reality, Clarification of our values, Self-mastery, and Transcendence. Each aspect is an essential part of the whole. When one is missing, the transformation process is not fully integrated. Internal sources of conflict and discordance will continue to be present. The fourth aspect, transcendence, usually comes later in life to most people. But its beginnings can be found when we clarify our values and self-mastery aspects.

REVIEW OF OUR PERSONAL MAP OF REALITY

We are products of our conditionings, which include specific reaction patterns to given stimuli, such as to sounds, objects, individuals, professions, animals, memories, situations. I use the word 'conditioning' to refer to the set of behaviours and thought patterns that have been acquired – often uncritically – from experience, including beliefs and attitudes. Thus we use it here in a broader sense than how it is commonly used in psychology (classical and operant conditioning). Cultural attitudes and religious beliefs, for example, would be part of such conditionings, to the extent they have been implanted by society into the mind of the person. How we behave, how we feel, how we think, our attitudes, likes and dislikes, our beliefs and outlooks – all these are the fruits of conditionings. We pick up and acquire these conditionings as we grow up, starting from the womb. Conditionings constitute our worldview, our map of reality. Our attitudes and fears, the college courses we choose, the husband or wife we select, our favourite foods, the leisure we prefer – these are but the results of long causal chains that originate from basic conditionings. And these determine the quality and meaning of our life, our happiness or our unhappiness. They determine our destiny.

Unfortunately, our conditionings are not well designed. We acquire them unsystematically and often unconsciously, resulting in unwholesome reaction patterns, such as fear and prejudice, that make life miserable and ineffective, and beliefs that are wrong, particularly those that border on superstition. An example is Edna, an industrious secretary, who was always short of money and often needed the financial assistance of relatives and other people. When asked whether she had any savings, she said she had none. Asked why she did not save, she said that her mother had prohibited her from saving. The mother told her that when a person has savings, misfortune comes to one's life. She did not see that when misfortune actually came, they had to borrow from the savings of others. As children, we do not have a choice in these conditionings. Our elders and our environment, such as school, TV and media, imposed them upon us. We are, in effect, victims of our conditionings. When we do not review them, we continue to be helpless victims throughout our lives.

The transformation process must therefore review all these conditionings, and it must start with our worldview, our understanding of what life is all about. For example, our worldview about the purpose of life is greatly determined by our parents. We grow up exposed to what is significant to our parents – the profit and loss of a business, problems in the office, fear of committing sins, the need to go to church every Sunday. Day by day, what we see and hear from our parents and elders constitute the bricks and stones that build the edifice from which we look out into the world. When this edifice is constructed with windows that have distorted glass panes, we then see life distorted, and we become ineffective in dealing with it. Our solutions do not work, because we cannot understand the problems. Because we cannot deal with the problems of living, we complain that life is cruel, unfair, fearful or oppressive. Then we behave defensively or withdraw or toughen ourselves by becoming aggressive or being bullies.

This tangled and convoluted network of conditionings is difficult to see and difficult to undo. The average person walks through life carrying out almost unconsciously the patterns of such conditionings – living and behaving according to the grooves etched since infancy. In a profound sense, we are asleep. We move like robots and automatons, dutifully carrying out the confused programming in our psyche.

... we identify so much with the values of our culture that changing our values seems like changing ourselves.

Transcendence
... is a realisation
of our full
potential
of what
we can become.

The first stage to enlightenment is to be aware that we are moving mechanically, according to pre-established conditioned patterns. As opposed to most human beings, the Buddha, the Enlightened One, when he was asked, "What is the difference between yourself and other people?" replied, "There is no difference between me and other people except that I am awake." This continuous review of our personal map of reality is a never ending process.

CLARIFICATION OF VALUES

After we have reviewed our conceptions about life, then we must clarify two things: the principles upon which our actions will be based, and our priorities. This means we must clarify the values that we want to guide our life.

Values are objects or principles that are worth pursuing. They are worthwhile, hence called values. It is worthwhile to have inner peace; hence inner peace is a value. There are three kinds of values:

- **Universal or Core Values.** These are valued by all human beings either 1) because of the intrinsic nature of the values or 2) because of the very nature of our being human. For example, truth as objective reality (as distinguished from truthfulness) is sought for its own sake, because it does not make sense to pursue unreality unless we are psychologically unbalanced. The intrinsic nature of truth makes it a universal value. On the other hand, there are values that are sought universally due to our human nature. Happiness, for example, is sought by all human beings because we are psychologically and biologically constructed that way. No one deliberately pursues unhappiness. Even masochists pursue self-satisfaction.

- **Social and Cultural Values.** These values change according to time and place. Reviewing them is extremely important in freeing ourselves from conditionings. Many of these values are unconsciously acquired; they are unquestioned and tend to dominate our outlook and thinking. In many ways, we identify so much with the values of our culture that changing our values seems like changing ourselves. This is a decision that we must face, for many of these social, cultural and religious values are obstacles to wholesome growth, psychologically and spiritually. Some of what are called religious values belong to this

category, while some belong to the universal values category.

- **Personal Values.** These are what is worthwhile to an individual and will differ from person to person. One person may value solitude, and another may appreciate company. One person may give supreme weight to family matters, whereas another to career. It is important to understand that inner peace and social harmony are not attainable when cultural, social and personal values are contrary to universal values. Thus, a fundamental principle in self-transformation is that personal values must be brought into alignment with universal values. But to do so, we must understand the validity and worthiness of universal values. Although, logically, values should precede self-mastery in our consideration, I have learned from experience that people find it difficult to appreciate the integration of universal values into their life unless they have dealt with conflicts within themselves.

SELF-MASTERY

If we have an inkling of what is worth pursuing in life, can we actually do it? Can we climb the mountain of our dreams and not just dream about it? Or is it too difficult? Are there too many obstacles? First of all, we need to see that the principal obstacle to pursuing our vision is ourselves. It is not circumstances, or other people that make the journey hard. We are our worst enemies. We have the potential to transform our lives into our highest ideals. However, we often get trapped in the fundamental mistake of blaming outer circumstances for our failure. The failure always comes from within. Self-mastery is a crucial key in the self-transformation process. It is the most important step that leads to change. With it, we can gain insights about our own nature and the internal dynamics of our psyche and body. At the root of self-mastery are two important ideas: Self-awareness and freedom from unwholesome conditioning.

The first one is the key to the second. The second one is the key to liberation. To attain self-mastery, we have to look at certain aspects of the personality, such as: anger, fear, resentment and hatred, automatic reactions, moods, depression and loneliness, needs and self-centredness. One area that needs special attention in our

discussion of self-mastery is effectiveness in relationships. Aside from dealing with our conditionings, it is essential for us to learn fundamental approaches to effective relationships.

TRANSCENDENCE

The pinnacle of self-transformation is the discovery of our higher nature – our true nature. This realisation frees us from the prison of the personality or the vehicles that we use. As mentioned above, the personality is essentially a product of conditionings, and we are virtually prisoners of such conditionings. The discovery of that which is beyond the personality is the key to freedom. When mystics speak about liberation or moksha, of being awake, of being self-realised, they refer to this transcendent freedom. It is a journey worth pursuing, because otherwise we are wallowing in this prison.

The true motivation for self-transformation is inner discontentment, the ‘divine discontent’ that mystics speak of. It is a yearning that does not arise from our conditionings, but rather from the flowering of an inner nature that transcends the outer personality. It is divine because it emanates from our spiritual nature rather than the conditioned desires and ambitions. When our motivation is merely to become better or to ‘improve’ ourselves or to be ‘more successful or effective,’ then the impetus for transformation will be short-lived. It will stop when we cease to feel the pressure of the problems that goaded us to improve ourselves, even if we have not really improved ourselves.

Transcendence refers to an expanded state of awareness and experience that goes beyond the ordinary levels of doing, feeling and thinking. It is a realisation of our full potential, of what we can become. But it also brings us beyond mere self-mastery to a fuller understanding of the nature of life and of the cosmos. Through it, we cease to be prisoners of this world-cage in which we typically find ourselves. The transcendent consciousness is the true integrating factor within us. When it awakens, we become aware of an inner compass that guides our life, and we are then able to determine which conditionings are wholesome and which ones are not. This consciousness also becomes aware of conflicts and is the inner judge of how such conflicts should be resolved. Prior to its awakening, the destiny of the personality is determined by external conditioning, and conflicts are resolved by the conditioning (e.g. fear, desire, beliefs, resentment) that is stronger. But when this higher consciousness is awakened, it can diminish the control of these conditionings.

True inner peace is rooted in the awakening of the transcendent within us.



The spiritual life is not separate from the worldly life

True inner peace is rooted in the awakening of the transcendent within us. This insight is well proven by the independent experiences of sages over thousands of years. But it does not mean withdrawal. Transcendence is not a rejection or a rebellion. We have simply grown beyond the current limits of our understanding. We continue to appreciate and apply the usefulness of our previous understanding but in the new light of this wider understanding. Just as when we outgrow our childhood toys, we do not reject them. We are free to play or not to play with them, but they no longer play a central role in our lives. We see them as they really are, rather than as treasures that we must guard with teeth and fists, as we did when we were children and not willing to let go of them or even lend them to others.

To most people the most relevant aspects of self-transformation are: review of our personal map of reality, clarification of our values and self-mastery. This is natural. The fourth stage, transcendence, is something that has to emerge spontaneously. It is not something that can be forced. Working on the first three, however, will nurture and induce the emergence of the fourth.

SPIRITUALITY AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION

Many people ask: Is it necessary to work on physical, emotional and other psychological factors in order to pursue the spiritual life? The answer is: Yes, it is. The reasons are straightforward and should be obvious, but for some reason many people who aspire to what they think is the spiritual life often choose to ignore the need to attend to their worldly being. In effect, they choose the way of suppression and denial, which in both the short and long run become obstacles to the transcendent life. Conflicts or weaknesses in the personality draw the consciousness to these levels. We identify with these issues through attachment.

Two kinds of preparation are needed for the spiritual life. The first is purification, the second is structure building. Purification is the cleansing of the unwholesome conditioning in the personality, such as fear, guilt, resentment and proneness to anger. Structure building is the strengthening of our capabilities for dealing with the complex circumstances in life. Timidity denotes a weak psychological structure. Assertiveness is a healthy structure. Primacy of will over habits is healthy. Chronic laziness is not; it means that the outer vehicles are not well integrated with our higher nature.

Spirituality is not disconnected from physical or psychological experiences. The spiritual life is not separate from the worldly life. When there is weakness in one facet, it affects the other. Self-transformation, therefore, has a dual thrust: the transformation and purification of the outer personality and the awakening and strengthening of the inner self. This dual thrust assumes a third aspect: the harmonious interaction between the higher self and the lower self, making the lower subservient to the higher.

Condensed from *The Process of Self-Transformation* by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Quezon City, Philippines.



Vicente Hao Chin, Jr is Past President of the TS in the Philippines and the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS. He is founder and Chairman of the Golden Link Schools that envision the integration of self-transformation and learning and has led the Self-Transformation Seminar in the Philippines, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Australia and

New Zealand. Vicente is an author and edits the *Theosophical Digest* and the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*. He compiled, edited and published *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*.

Theosophical Digest



The *Theosophical Digest* is a quarterly magazine which condenses wholesome articles on meditation, comparative religion, Ancient Wisdom, art of living, health, science, theosophy, spirituality, philosophy and more.

The compact format of short articles, snippets and humour from authors around the globe makes the *Theosophical Digest* a great read for short relaxing interludes at any time. These books also make great gifts – perhaps as a subscription to an organisation, or someone you know who would appreciate some thoughtful inspiration in a busy world.

Subscriptions in New Zealand are \$25 annually, and the magazine is sent out quarterly. Back copies of individual Digests can also be ordered for \$5 each, and are subject to availability. The *Theosophical Digest* is published by the Theosophical Publishing House in the Philippines and reprinted in India.

To order an annual subscription, or for back copies and internet banking information, email Maureen Paterson with your contact details including address and phone number at thedigests@gmail.com or post a note to Theosophical Digest, Box 183, Kaeo 0448 or phone Maureen on 09 405 1653.

AHIMSA Compassion in Action

Sushma Webber discusses reasons behind a vegetarian life choice that encourage putting theory into practice.

'Be very tender to little children, yet more tender still to all who err – knowing little of the wisdom; and tenderer still to animals that they may pass to their next pathway through the door of love rather than through that of hatred. Cherish, too, the flowers and trees. You be all of one blood, one source, one goal. Know this truth and live it.' – *an Elder Brother*

The Sanskrit word 'Ahimsa' is translated as 'non-injury', 'non-killing', 'non-violence', 'harmlessness'. The world's major religions emphasise compassion and the interconnectedness of all life. The essential doctrine of *Ahimsa* has been taught in modern times by philosophers, teachers, scientists and religious leaders such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Merton, Lanza del Vasto, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, M. K. Gandhi and H.H. the Dalai Lama. *Ahimsa* has been championed by leaders of the Theosophical Society beginning with one of its founders, H.P. Blavatsky, followed by Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, George S. Arundale and his wife Rukmini Devi Arundale, to name a few. Rukmini Devi Arundale was instrumental in promoting legislation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in India and later set up the Animal Welfare Board of India. She was Vice-President of the International Vegetarian Union for 31 years.

In New Zealand, 1930s and 1940s, some members of the Theosophical Society (TSNZ) got together and formed Animal Welfare Groups under the Theosophical Order of Service. In 1943, the New Zealand Vegetarian Society (NZVS) was formed. Geoffrey Hodson, renowned Theosophist, was invited to preside over the first meeting. He stated that his personal interest in the formation of the Society was in helping to bring about, through vegetarianism, an improvement in national well-being: physical, mental and spiritual.

By October 1943 the invitation to TSNZ members to join the newly formed NZVS received a good response and membership increased to 180. In old issues of *Theosophy in New Zealand* (now *TheoSophia*) one finds articles on vegetarianism, vegetarian recipes, information on the activities of the Animal Welfare groups and the NZVS.

Why this interest in animal welfare by the members of the Theosophical Society, not only in New Zealand, but also worldwide? Annie Besant, in a pamphlet on *Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy*, states:

Theosophy regards man as part of a great line of evolution; it regards man's place in the world as a link in a mighty chain, a chain which has its first link in manifestation in the divine life itself...

We are also morally responsible for the evolution of our brothers and sisters in the meat and other related industries. As Annie Besant points out: "Every person who eats meat takes a share in that degradation of his fellow-men; on him and her personally lies the share, and personally lies the responsibility." As Geoffrey Hodson writes:

The perfect man is the embodiment of Divine Love and Compassion, is a healer and friend of all that lives. The continuing practice of animal slaughter must stultify the spiritual development of mankind.

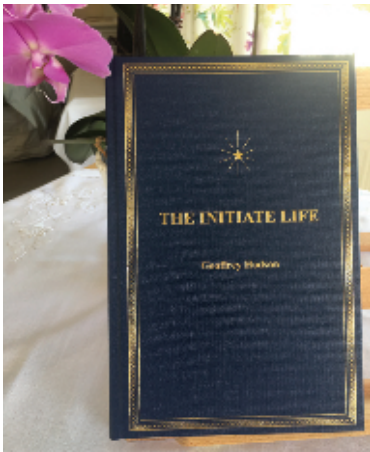
According to the Theosophical world view, everything in the Universe is evolving towards its final goal of perfection and that evolution begins from the mineral, plant, animal and human kingdoms. Hence, animals are considered as our younger brothers and sisters having an equal right to life and completing their journey of evolution.

..... ◆◆◆



Sushma Webber first visited Sri Ramanashramam aged five. She is inspired by Ramana Maharishi's teachings, adding the dimension of silence to her study of Theosophical literature. Sushma, originally from India, has lived in New Zealand since 2008. With a Master's degree in Art History, she is the President of the Wellington Branch of the TS.





The Initiate Life *A Guide to the Path of Hastened Unfoldment by Geoffrey Hodson*

The Path of Hastened Unfoldment is one of Geoffrey Hodson's key teachings and this new book, compiled from his talks and study notes, contains material on this very subject. It is relevant for the serious student, aspirant, disciple, or initiate. While many of the talks were addressed to Theosophical Society members and audiences, the message of the Ancient Wisdom and the Path of Swift Unfoldment is applicable to all humanity.

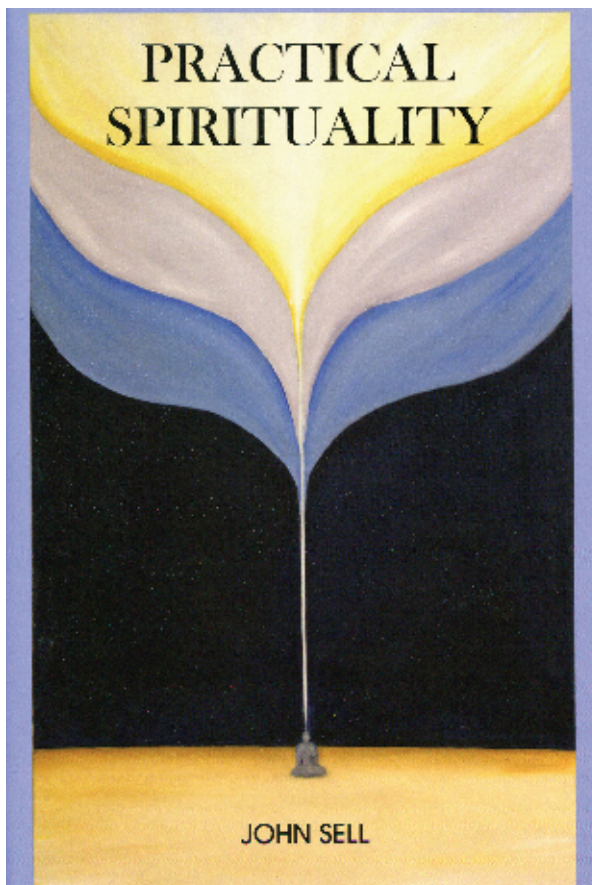
Geoffrey Hodson is acknowledged the world over for his near lifelong dedication to spreading the Ancient Wisdom, Theosophia, and for his depth of knowledge of its multifaceted aspects. He was so highly regarded that wherever he travelled, people sought his counsel and were guided by his unique insight.

Order online at: <https://theosophy.nz> Email: nvp@theosophy.org.nz

Book cost: NZD \$85; free postage within New Zealand extended for 2020; postage overseas: NZD \$40

The Theosophical Publishing House, Auckland (2018).

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY Selected Works of John Sell



Two of John Sell's qualities that come through this book are his sincerity and his ability to engage the reader... This is evident in every chapter, providing uplifting support as the reader delves into what are often difficult and complex issues on the path to self-understanding and personal transformation.

Practical Spirituality also contains a useful article by Elizabeth Sell [who edited the work] titled *Service: A Dynamic Challenge*, that focuses on the importance of committing ourselves to practical activities that are of lasting value to both the local and world communities. In addition to illustrations by John Sell and Lionel Taylor, *Practical Spirituality* contains full-colour reproductions of rare paintings by Elizabeth Sell that are as beautiful as they are inspiring.

Practical Spirituality: Selected Works of John Sell offers a wealth of useful, step-by-step teachings of Theosophy that will challenge, inform and inspire. In addition to being important to the library of every theosophical lodge or study centre, this will be a 'core text' for individual students wishing to expand their insight, compassion and understanding of life's mysteries.

Extracts from review by Nathaniel Altman in the American TS magazine *Quest*, Fall 2019.
See complete book review on line at www.theosophy.nz/

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SERVING A HIGHER PURPOSE

Theosophy for a Meaningful Life

By David Bruce

A SPECIAL BOOK REVIEW BY WARWICK KEYS

Anyone who thinks Theosophy is not practical will find this book a revelation. It presents clear guidelines for spiritual living in the 21st century.

This is a quote from the foreword by Michael Gomes, one of the world's most distinguished scholars of Theosophy, commenting on David Bruce's timely book, *Serving a Higher Purpose*.

David Bruce, a long-time third generation Theosophist is the current National Secretary of the Theosophical Society in America. His informative work will be welcomed by many Theosophists, both old and new. Its attraction lies not only in the content, but in the layout and the brevity of the text. It is a book that the reader can pick up to be inspired or to learn something from in a compact and very readable form. There are no longwinded tracts, simply brief essays written to stimulate or give cause for reflection. The essays are frequently less than a page in length. This allows the reader to dip into the book for insights or comment, or to provide food for thought.

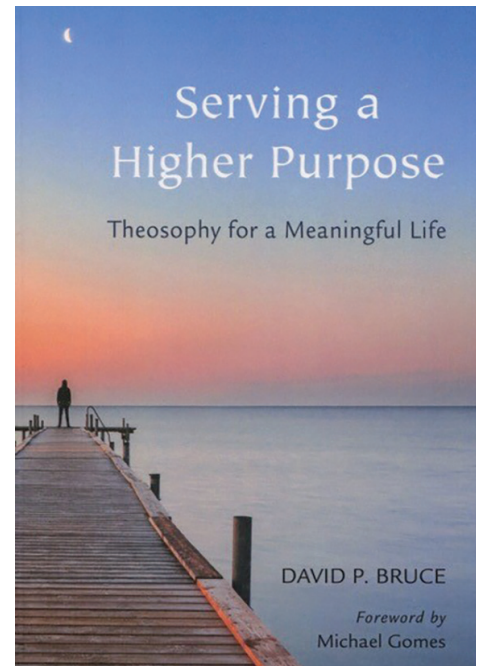
Bruce challenges readers with a number of powerful declarations in his book. For example:

Why should our life bring forth weeds when it can instead be a source of delight and inspiration, not only to us but also to others?

It is one thing to assert that human existence has a purpose, but quite another to articulate what that purpose is.



Warwick Keys, TSNZ past National President and life-time member of Theosophy Whanganui, is a long-time theosophical student, TSNZ national speaker and meditation teacher with a background of research, writing, business, national politics, history study and photography. Warwick has a deep, lifelong interest in ancient civilizations, especially Egypt.



A scan through the chapter and section headings helps make the book easy to navigate. Perceptive and helpful comments on Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, one of the classics of theosophical writings, open up new vistas for the eager student and throw light on statements that are sometimes difficult to grasp. Another chapter on *The Secret Doctrine* suggests that when reading that hefty tome, "don't hesitate to take an occasional detour onto the backroads, where the mystery of the unknown awaits" – sage advice from the author.

Serving a Higher Purpose is not a primer for newcomers to theosophical teachings, but it certainly helps clear away cobwebs from forgotten corners or material previously consigned to the 'too hard basket.' In this respect this small volume is helpful for both new students of the theosophical teachings, the jaded theosophist needing fresh stimulation, and for well versed TS members, who may have thought they knew it all.

Serving a Higher Purpose is a book to keep handy, perhaps on your bedside table, where it is immediately available for a 'dip' before you turn off the light, or, if you are like me, handy for a short read in the middle of the night – something to 'chew on.'

David Bruce's book is a down-to-earth guide for living theosophy in this world, at this time.

Serving a Higher Purpose: Theosophy for a Meaningful Life by David P. Bruce, Foreword by Michael Gomes, Publisher: Quest Books 2019, ISBN 978-0-8356-0945-6

Theosophy and Science

The motto of the Theosophical Society is: There is no Religion higher than Truth
a sentiment to which scientists can equally well subscribe,
claims the Theosophy-Science Group

The theosophist and the scientist are both engaged in a search for Truth. However the scientist seeks for truth at the physical level whereas the theosophist is concerned more specifically with spirituality and therefore seeks for all-embracing Truth at a deeper level, as taught by the religious mystics throughout the ages and sometimes expressed as the Ancient Wisdom.

The scientific and mystical modes of search are complementary rather than antagonistic. Physicist Fritjof Capra has said that science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science but we humans need both. Yet many scientists, perhaps even the majority, do not see the need for any deeper truth than that which can be obtained by objective scientific procedures. Others wish to have some involvement with religion but are discouraged by fundamentalist religious teachings that are inconsistent with well-established scientific knowledge. Nevertheless many of the greatest physicists, for example: Newton, Einstein, Schrödinger, Pauli and Bohm, have seen the need for deeper spiritual understanding.

Physicists are concerned to understand the fundamental laws of physics that govern the material world of our everyday experience. Cosmologists, concerned with the origin of the universe, question where the fundamental laws come from and what determines them. Is there some deeper cause behind the laws? To many scientists this question is irrelevant but to others it is important to probe such fundamental questions. Physicist Paul Davies, on pondering these questions, says that he can believe in a form of Deity which he describes as “an impersonal creative principle or ground of being.”

Where does Theosophy fit in? The word Theosophy means Divine Wisdom and was chosen by the co-founders of The Theosophical Society in 1875 as best expressing the teachings they wished to promote, based on the Ancient Wisdom tradition. This is also known as the Hermetic Tradition or the Perennial Philosophy, said to have been passed on by various sages throughout the ages. Helena Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, accordingly entitled her magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine* but she also gave it the subtitle, *The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, thus recognising the importance of all three disciplines as potentially contributing to a grand synthesis.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS

Blavatsky enunciated three fundamental propositions. The first of these envisages the existence of “An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle – One Absolute Reality which precedes all manifested, conditioned Being.” This is a noble attempt to describe the indescribable – an absolute impersonal Deity transcending the Universe, but also immanent throughout the Universe. This is a concept of Deity which can appeal to a scientific mind that does not wish to believe in a seemingly capricious personal God, but is dissatisfied with scientific materialism that denies the existence of anything subtler than the gross matter which can be manipulated in scientific experiments. Paul Davies’s concept mentioned above is in effect a simplified version of this proposition.

Blavatsky’s second proposition affirms “the absolute universality of that law of periodicity ... of ebb and flow which physical science has recorded in all departments of nature.” She sees this exemplified in the alternation of night and day, sleeping and waking, life and death, and so on. She regards this ebb and flow as a fundamental Law of the Universe. This is self-evident to scientists whether or not they would give it the status of a fundamental law.

The third proposition affirms “The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-soul.” This is the basis of the Society’s first object which concerns the recognition of fundamental unity of all peoples, with its concept of Universal Brotherhood. While this goes beyond much of orthodox science, it nevertheless finds an echo in the subtle interconnectedness of everything in the universe as expressed by quantum physicist David Bohm, who actually derives this idea from his theoretical investigations in quantum physics. Thus we can contemplate the essential unity not only of all humanity, but of all life, and indeed of the Earth itself as in the Gaia concept, and beyond that the whole vast Universe. Similar ideas are expressed by biologists, Reaney, Kauffmann and Birch.

SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

Science has been extremely successful during the last century in explaining the material world, in understanding the nature of the atom and exploring the universe at large. From not knowing there were such things as galaxies, we have now discovered a

vast evolving universe of galaxies like our own Milky Way, each with its billions of stars, evolving over billions of years. We have explored the planets of our solar system and debunked the concept held by many one hundred years ago that at least some of those planets were sufficiently similar to Earth to harbour human life. We now hope to find possible intelligent life on planets around other distant stars. We have discovered DNA and developed the whole science of genetics far beyond what could have been dreamed a century ago. Through studying ancient rocks and their fossils, we have built up a detailed picture of the evolution of our planet and indeed of life's physical expression.

Science is also having considerable success in discovering how the brain works but is quite unable to explain the nature of consciousness. Scientists regard this as 'the hard problem'. On the other hand, there is much valuable material on consciousness in theosophical literature. Again, biological scientists are expert at studying living forms but that is a far cry from understanding the true nature of life. Theosophical literature concludes that there is much more to ensouling life than its physical expression.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SCIENCE AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The Theosophical Society promotes freedom of thought, and members are encouraged to use their own judgement and discrimination on all matters philosophical, scientific and religious. Many scientists have found inspiration and insight in theosophical ideas, and members of the Society have always included scientists, some quite prominent in their fields. Over the last 125 years, many theosophists have expressed their views concerning scientific matters. Sometimes these have stood the test of time, or have indeed shown prescience of current scientific knowledge. Other views, however, have not been corroborated by subsequent discoveries, and have been superseded by current knowledge.

Theosophical leaders from Blavatsky onwards, and especially Annie Besant, have stressed the need for ongoing research and review while keeping alive the noble ideals of the fundamental concepts. The above matters are freely debated within The Theosophical Society. Well may scientists and theosophists share the motto: "There is no Religion higher than Truth".



SUGGESTED READING

- Intelligence Came First, Second Edition*
Lester Smith
- Ancient Wisdom, Modern Insight*
Shirley Nicholson
- Music of the Mind*
Darryl Reanny
- Feelings*
Charles Birch
- The Mind of God*
Paul Davies
- Healing Gaia: Practical Medicine for the Planet*
James Lovelock
- The Rebirth of Nature*
Rupert Sheldrake
- The Spirit of Science*
David Lorimer, Ed.
- The Theosophy-Science Group
- Theosophy in Australia* website [www:https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/science_groups/science-related-articles](https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/science_groups/science-related-articles)



Erwin Bomas shares his thoughts on showing compassion as a way to oneness.

Expressing Truth and Beauty Through Compassion

In the *Tao Teh King* (verse 81) Lao-Tse says: “Truthful words are not beautiful. Beautiful words are not truthful,” giving us a small excuse to start a bit ugly.

If you look at the world right now, at the disharmony, inequality, inhumanity, *avidya* or ignorance and think of the truth and beauty of the Theosophia, the Divine Wisdom that is our inheritance and which holds all the answers to the world’s problems; if you have these two perspectives in mind and if you are honest, you must admit that we have to do a better job. By we, I mean the Theosophical Movement as a whole. I say this without disregard or disrespect for the sincere work that is being done.

HOW CAN WE DO A BETTER JOB?

Firstly, compassion is the expression of truth and beauty. The question that soon follows is: how do we express truth and beauty through compassion? We can be very much inspired by beauty, for example: the beauty of nature in a sunrise over the mountains, the myriad stars of our Milky Way, or a lotus flower in full bloom and great works of human culture in art, music or architecture like the famous Lotus Temple of the Baha’i in New Delhi.

My home, the Netherlands, has a rich culture of painting with famed masterpieces sometimes depicting universal meaning or symbolism, such as the famous 17th century painter, Rembrandt’s *The Philosopher in Meditation*. Another 17th century example is from painter Johannes Vermeer: the *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, also called *The Mona Lisa of the North*. Vermeer’s paintings are full of sacred geometry. A more modern Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian from the last century, was also a Theosophist. With his art he tried to inspire the viewer with teachings from *The Secret Doctrine*. There are endless examples of inspiring beauty, of musical harmony or beauty in literature.

If we take the beauty of art as an example, there are three steps: firstly, the artist has an idea of beauty, receiving some form of inspiration. Secondly, he/she tries to express the inspiration in a material form, for example by creating a painting, a sculpture, a musical symphony or a design. Thirdly, an observer perceives the work and experiences something.

THE ORIGIN OF BEAUTY

To find the origin of beauty you can ask yourself: where does the original idea or inspiration come from? The answer, according to the Theosophia, is that you can look at three different hierarchical levels, visible and invisible: the spiritual world, the mental world and the material world. The spiritual world is the cosmic picture gallery containing symbolic ideals or original archetypes at an abstract level. These spiritual and symbolic ideas are transformed through the mental plane and the astral light. We receive thoughts and feelings from the mental plane that also leave an impression on the human brain at the material level. These impressions are further communicated by

Beauty in nature and art makes us identify with something bigger...





Compassion is
the expression of
truth and beauty
and the sole
motivation for
anything in life.

us in the material world. If the artist is able to translate inspiration in a pure form and the observer is on a similar level, the observer might even resonate with the original idea. There are some characteristics of beauty that inspire almost universally:

- Beautiful nature, art or music show a certain harmony. There is a harmonious interrelation between the parts and the whole. Think of the arrangement of flower petals, the use of complementary colours in painting or the Indian raga music that is tuned to the season, time and atmosphere.
- Beauty in nature and art also express the imperishable, like the golden ratio, universal symbols or eternal motives such as the inner struggle that is used in literature, for instance in the Bhagavad Gita, but also in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or in *Harry Potter*.
- Beauty in nature and art makes us identify with something bigger, it expands our consciousness, inspires us, uplifts us and opens us to the universal in ourselves.

BEAUTY OMNIPRESENT, ETERNAL, BOUNDLESS AND IMMUTABLE

In the end, all outer, manifested beauty is transitory, and will perish. That is why true beauty is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable. Outer beauty is only a reflection, a manifestation of beauty and therefore the expression will never reach the ideal. So there are three levels of beauty:

- 1) BEAUTY per se, in capitals: universal, eternal and infinite.
- 2) Beauty with a capital B: the highest expression of the universal beauty.
- 3) Outer beauty: transitory and part of the pairs of opposites.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Does not the same hold true for Truth? We think so. Absolute Truth is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable. It is the "One absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being" as so beautifully put in the prologue of *The Secret Doctrine*. The real Tao cannot be named, Allah cannot be depicted.

We can distinguish the same three levels here: first, universal truth or absolute truth. Secondly, the highest expression of truth is Truth with a capital T and thirdly, our personal truths. We see the same applies for the perception of truth as for beauty. We tune in on the world of ideas. Depending on our focus and orientation, on one of the seven aspects or a mix of these, we resonate with these ideas and form our relative perspective on truth.

However, we are always a receiver and sender at the same time. We communicate our ideas even if we do not express them as words. Those ideas are received by others depending on their focus and orientation, emotional, intellectual or idealistic. In the same way that we value beauty each according to our level of perceiving, we value truth each according to our level of understanding. We could say: as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so truth is in the mind of the thinker. Because we each have our own perspective on truth, some claim that therefore the truth or absolute truth does not exist. This postmodern idea is actually a misunderstanding of TRUTH with capitals. This general lack of vision on the universality of truth leads to a lot of chaos and conflict, such as fake news. Understanding however that truth is boundless, eternal and immutable implies very important things: 1) As the truth is boundless there can only be one, because there are no two boundless principles possible. Although some try very hard to convince others of their version of the truth and try to force their opinions on others through modern media, the one truth will ultimately triumph. 2) As the truth is boundless our understanding of it can and will always, further develop. We should never mistake our truth for the TRUTH. If we would recognise that all we

know is a limited understanding of the truth, we would be much more modest about our opinions. Knowing that we can never understand the entire boundless truth in its fullness prevents us from dogmatism, crystallisation and fanaticism. 3) As part of the boundless, we are in essence the boundless, so we have all the potential to progress in our understanding of the truth. We will get closer and closer to IT as we unfold our inner being.

To clarify: we used three levels before, but as we define the truth as boundless we know that it is a simplification. You might say all inspiration comes from our inner Teacher, the inner bodhisattva. If we are able to identify with this inner Teacher, that is our highest Truth with a capital T. That inspiration comes from the inner Buddha and we can reach the stage of identification with our inner Buddha. Then we have reached a higher Truth with a capital T. Beyond that, there is the level of what you might call our inner Divinity or God.

Following this line of the Hierarchy of Compassion, the link never ends and goes on to the Heart of the Universe. If we really understand the essence of Truth and the essence of Beauty, we see Oneness. We will never reach the absolute truth as it is boundless and we can always climb higher. But, if we resonate on the highest, the Buddhist-Atmic level, on whatever step of evolution we are, we are a link in this golden chain of Hermes and become a channel of inspiration ourselves, messengers of Truth with a capital T. We can now conclude that:

- true BEAUTY is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable;
- the TRUTH is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable;
- TRUTH and BEAUTY per se imply ONENESS.

If we see Truth and Beauty per se, we see Oneness, we identify with the One, with the whole. If we identify with the whole, our thoughts and acts will be always in line with the whole. Compassion is the expression of truth and beauty and the sole motivation for anything in life. Compassion then becomes the highest law of conduct, as Blavatsky expressed in her *The Voice of the Silence*: it is the Law of Laws. By expressing truth and beauty we are the instrument of this Law of Laws.

This is how the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion works. Identifying with Oneness, the one Truth, Beauty or Theo-Sophia, our Wisdom Teachers chose to share their wisdom with all living beings. Compassion is their one motive, their rule of conduct, their law – to spread their wisdom. To share their wisdom in its purest form, they identify with us, to bring us the essence of what we need to help ourselves. Before and during the time of the Mystery Schools they taught sciences, philosophies and forms of art as part of the Wisdom-Religion or Theo-Sophia. In modern times they send messengers such as H.P. Blavatsky to spread Truth and Beauty through compassion, all with the goal of uplifting us to their level and beyond.

How do we express Truth and Beauty through compassion? It is worthwhile to look a little closer at the great teachers of mankind, the messengers of truth and beauty like Buddha, Lao-Tse or Plato, to see how they worked.

LESSONS FROM THE MESSENGERS OF TRUTH AND BEAUTY

They spread their wisdom in the most durable and compassionate form by showing us how to find truth and beauty within ourselves. Once we are awakened to the inner wisdom we can find all solutions to life's riddles ourselves. Secondly they brought wisdom in its purest form, going back to core principles of teachings, they built upon and referenced traditional teachings, to show their universality. The Buddha did this with Hindu tradition, Jesus with Jewish tradition, Plato with Pythagorean teachings.

If we think and act compassionately, we spread wisdom in its purest form...





Adapting presentations to their time and culture, they used contemporary language, examples and metaphors, without sacrificing original meaning and intent.

By the awakening of their inner faculties, their buddhi-manas, the messengers created a direct link with the Hierarchy of Compassion. They gave up their own progress in order to help us in our evolution. When we resonate with their compassion and wisdom or Theo-Sophia, they enable us to tap directly into the same source. They help us with accelerating our self-directed evolution or, in other words, by initiation. As we are inspired by the truth and beauty of the TheoSophia, the Divine Wisdom, the highest knowledge of our hierarchy, understanding Oneness, we uplift the whole.

OUR DUTY AS THEOSOPHISTS

How to express truth and beauty through compassion and fulfil our duty as Theosophists? Of course we can follow the example of our teachers exactly.

We develop a clear vision on how to solve the problems of today and share our knowledge, not out of feeling sorry for others, but by resonating with their highest aspects. When they connect with their inner wisdom, they know what is right. If we do our job well, we awaken the buddhi-manas of others and by doing so they can become channels for inspiration.

In our everyday life, are our thoughts and acts in line with the whole? For some, Oneness means identification just with their own family, for another it implies identification with a city or country and another is able to see and act for the Oneness of humanity. If we think and act compassionately, we spread wisdom in its purest form; first by example, and if necessary using words. At the core of TheoSophia – of all great religions and philosophies, are basic axioms, three fundamental propositions or seven Jewels of Wisdom, such as the teachings of reincarnation and karma. These are principles that suffice to find solutions to all problems in life. Our job is to translate these simple and beautiful ideas into modern language that fits our time and culture, in order to awaken others to truth and beauty. We need each other to do this job, to give Theosophy its place in the minds and hearts of people. If Theosophists join forces, we can do a better job.

Theosophy offers more than enough to solve all the world’s problems. We have the knowledge needed. Let us work together to spread the Truth and Beauty of Theosophy in today’s world!





Erwin Bomas is a member of the Theosophical Society at Point Lama, the Netherlands. He organises conferences, gives presentations, facilitates groups, and sets up newsletters and websites. Erwin believes that Theosophy can save us from the ignorance that leads to suffering.

One Heart ★ One Breath ★ One World

Feedback Extracts from TSNZ CONVENTION 2020...

What a lovely venue – mature trees, idyllic peace, spacious individual rooms, comfortable beds, enough mild walking exercise to allow full enjoyment of the wonderful array of meals! Those attending were friendly and welcoming to newcomers and old friends alike.

Each speaker flowed on from the previous speaker's session, forming a seamlessly linked presentation of the central theme: 'One Heart, One Breath, One World.' Even the local speakers continued the theme – and what interesting people they were! Members who gave talks were enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and our overseas speakers, Nancy Secrest and Dr Deepa Padhi, were absolute gems, with apparently endless, compassionate energy and ideas for practical application of their theosophical knowledge.

I found this year's Convention to be a resounding success, leaving me feeling the better for having attended, with a take away overall effect of joy and positivity.

Susan Skarsholt

..... ❖❖❖

Thank you organisers for a wonderful Convention... The setting was idyllic, the accommodation very comfortable with pleasant walks to the dining and Convention rooms, amazingly delicious food ... and very enjoyable guest speakers! The theme of the Convention was perfect. Talks dovetailed beautifully, each leading into the next. Speakers were all very articulate and subject matter well researched and presented. A most enjoyable, informative and uplifting time was spent with extended and extending 'TS family'.

Margaret Johns

..... ❖❖❖

...Absolutely delighted with the whole experience of the 2020 National Convention. The quality and variety of the guest speakers who shared their knowledge and insight on their chosen topics left me with so much to think about – for a long time to come. The fellowship I experienced amongst participants was warming and the facilities were just lovely. Thankyou so much for organising such a successful event.

Susanna Roskilly

..... ❖❖❖

My first convention attended and greatly appreciated. It was so good to meet members from afar. Really, everything was good and people seemed to blossom. We had a lovely time together.

Marshall Hope

Words are not adequate to describe the experience of convention this year. How blessed was I to be able to attend? I have attended 4 in the last 5 years and this has to be the best by far. The quality of material shared was exceptional, all the speakers were outstanding as well as the attendees who had their own pearls of wisdom to share. It was an experience that will help me on my journey of self, leading to my light shining brighter for others to see and hopefully want to learn and grow themselves. To top that off, the food was amazing. A big thanks to John and Renee for pulling it all together, again.

Sue Harrison

..... ❖❖❖

It was a privilege to attend ... excellent facilitation, delivered with honesty and transparency ... beauty: the environment, flowers, musical presentations and delicious food ... wonderful and varied presentations ... importance of Self Transformation ... gems and techniques to help us in this process. Dr Deepa Padhi and Nancy Secrest – two truly inspirational women, with their lives and commitment to Meditation, Study and Service – demonstrated the meaning of living Theosophy... Seeing so many young people at the Youth Convention in India recently, gives us great heart for the future.

Trish Lynch

..... ❖❖❖

We members of the Theosophical Society find pleasure and inspiration in conventions, congresses, seminars and workshops but are perhaps not always aware of the tremendous work that goes on behind the scenes to ensure their success.

At this year's convention in Hamilton, I often thought of those who set up the programme, corresponded with the participants and special guest speakers, organised the afternoon outing, the evening entertainment, who negotiated with the administrators of the accommodation and the cooks (who handled our dietary preferences so brilliantly)... I also thought of the volunteers who arrived ahead of time to check countless practical details, help set up display tables and information boards, welcome us warmly and remain available from dawn till dusk. I can't even begin to name all those involved in this splendid, uplifting convention and so will just thank you all from the bottom of my heart. With my fraternal affection, I say "Au revoir".

Michel Chapotin from Paris, France.

..... ❖❖❖



Chris Hensley and Nancy Secret



Dr Deepa Padhi



Meal-times were special



Donna Kerridge led a walking workshop on local native plants and their uses



Nancy Secret



Nancy Secret, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, Richard Sell, Deepa Padhi and Renée Sell.



Silvia Soto-Bussard and Michel Chapotin



Barbara Zanarb and Kirsty Morton



Enjoying Hamilton Gardens



Found in the archives of the TS in New Zealand...

The GOLDEN RULE

The unity of Source of all the main religions and Spiritual Paths is demonstrated through the universal Golden Rule as taught in sacred texts:

CHRISTIAN

Matthew 7:12

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

JEWISH

Talmud, Shabbat 31a

What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law: all the rest is commentary.

ISLAMIC

Sunnah

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

BUDDHIST

Udana-Varga 5:18

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

TAOIST

T'ai Shang Kan Yin P'ien

Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain and your neighbour's loss as your own loss.

BRAHMAN

Mahabharata 5:1517

This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.

CONFUCIAN

Analects 15:23

Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others what you would not have done unto you.

ZOROASTRIAN

Dadistan-I-dinik 94:5

That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself.

SUFFERING IS OPTIONAL

Pamela Zane Keys asks if this is a burden that we can avoid?

Discovering that suffering is optional, has helped me through not only the dengue fever I had when I realised this truth, but also through subsequent dengue relapses, mastectomy, coronary artery stent, skin cancers and eye injections. Part of the good that has come out of these experiences is the learning; for example, that suffering is a choice.

After a visit to India in 2009, I was found feverishly shivering, teeth chattering. Our doctor requested blood tests and recommended a tropical disease specialist who verified dengue fever. Time and bed rest were the only cures. About 390 million people contract dengue fever through the Aedes mosquito each year, mostly in Asia and the Pacific. The symptoms of dengue include: high fever, fatigue, nausea, headaches, pain in joints, muscles and eyes, itchy rash, insomnia and nightmares. These developed over time and I felt cursed.

One night, as I tossed in bed, I prayed desperately for help. It came to me then that I saw this as a 'curse'. I imagined those whom I had hurt, affronted, or made resentful, cursing me, perhaps without realising the power of their thoughts. Wracking my memory for what I knew about cursing, the Gospel advice of Jesus: to love your enemies and 'bless those who curse you,' came to mind. I needed to do some blessing.

Sitting up in bed, I began visualising people in my life to bless, often grouping them to make the job manageable. Family, including extensions and 'exes', childhood friends and foes, professional colleagues, church people and more... I blessed them all. Before being able to bless some wholeheartedly I had to do some forgiving and sometimes ask for forgiveness for myself.

In the morning, I made an amazing discovery. While the symptoms were all still there, *the suffering had stopped!*

Suffering is an optional extra, I realised. Now I just had the disease. Suffering had gone, even while my body remained ill. I felt free. The Buddhist saying: 'Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional' was unknown to me back then. However, the realisation of this truth means that suffering does not need to be an integral part of illness, pain, stress or fear. Reflection, meditation, or mindfulness can lead to this understanding. It is about separating out the suffering from the cause. We can stop making things worse through our emotional and mental responses. Suffering is a passive, victim-like reaction while blessing, I discovered, is active and transformative.

By way of prayer, I had stumbled on the awareness that suffering can be excluded through blessing. Blessing helps me to set aside momentarily my own situation and think of others, which paradoxically, helps me. Mentally I say: 'Bless this doctor and all those helping her.' Since blessing those working with radiology, anaesthetics, needles, stents and scalpels, scary and upsetting experiences have become bearable; sometimes, even interesting.

Blessing like this is now part of my spiritual practice. Blessing creates a mind-and-heart-set more powerful than fear, pain or suffering.

Suffering really is optional.



Author, Pamela Zane Keys is the editor of *TheoSophia*. With a background in education, dance, drama, art, religious studies, psychology and writing, Pamela follows a mystic path and is a lifetime member of Theosophy Whanganui.



Renée Sell, National Coordinator for the Theosophical Order of Service in New Zealand, is encouraged by the TSNZ 2020 convention and the work of the TOS here and overseas...



This year is off to a great start after the 2020 National TSNZ Convention. It was helpful on our spiritual journeys and we had a lot of fun. We delved deeply into topics like 'what it is to serve' with discussions about genuine love and empathy and how this develops an inclusive consciousness and leads us to look within. We had TOS sessions and later a Canterbury Branch visit with speakers, Nancy Secrest and Dr Deepa Padhi. At HPB Lodge, Auckland we had a lively discussion panel. If you would like to discuss ideas or TOS activities for your group, email me at tos@theosophy.org.nz

PHILIPPINES - GEOFFREY HODSON SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

The Geoffrey Hodson Scholarship fund is now able to support four tertiary students, thanks to the skilful management and hard work of Beth Olivan, Rekha Nehar Shardar and Mary Grace Arboleda. The four students are:

- Justine Dela Vega is a first year student of Golden Link College, enrolled in a Bachelor of Secondary Education Majoring in General Science. He is hard working and determined to complete his college studies. Justine is very service oriented and volunteers for extra tasks regularly. He lives with his mother and five siblings in Malaria, Caloocan area. Justine has been chosen as part of the scholarship program because of his qualities and character. Justine hopes to become a teacher one day.
- Joy Candice Menesis is a first year GLC student and has enrolled in a Bachelor of Secondary Education Majoring in General Science. Joy Candice is very thankful for her scholarship and knows she would not be able to pursue her studies without it. Joy Candice lives with her parents and four siblings in Laforteza, Caloocan area. She is hard working and has no hesitation in helping and serving others.
- Kaye Diaz is a second year GLC student enrolled in a Bachelor of Secondary Education Majoring in English. She has been studying at GLC since senior high school with a grant from GLC. She is an active volunteer and speaker in the school and wider community. Kaye lives with her parents, four siblings and extended family. Kaye has a passion to teach young children, a curious mind and a kind heart.
- Bianca Polley is a second year GLC student enrolled in a Bachelor of Elementary Education Majoring in General Education. Bianca wants to inspire children to pursue their dreams and nurture them with love and compassion. Bianca is the youngest of six children. She lost her father when she was two years old. Her mother has raised the children, working as a care giver. Despite much hardship Bianca wants to do the best she can for her family. She is grateful for her scholarship and considers herself blessed. Bianca serves others wholeheartedly.

It is both heart-warming and moving to read these students' letters. They are extremely grateful and committed to their studies and making a better life for themselves and their families. They are all open to giving back to the school that they have grown up in and caring for others. If you are interested in reading the letters, please contact me for copies. Thank you to all in New Zealand who have donated and been part of this scholarship fund that will go on in perpetuity.



Philippines GLC students



The TOS group met in Hamilton: Vicki Jerome, Nancy Secrest, Michel Chapotin, Dr Deepa Padhi, Diana Dunningham Chapotin and Renée Sell.



The informal discussion panel at HPB Lodge.



Dr Deepa Padhi speaking in Christchurch



Canterbury Branch Vice-President Susan Kaschula gives gifts to speakers



Robin de Mandeville of the Canterbury Branch

There is no other in this world. Each is a separate form, but One Spirit lives and moves in All.
Annie Besant

RAFFLE RESULTS FROM THE TSNZ CONVENTION

A beautiful framed painting donated by Elizabeth Sell was won by Nancy Secret. Carol Collier from Hamilton won the *Secret Doctrine* boxed book set, and Gloria Henderson from Wellington won the *Practical Spirituality* book by John Sell. All funds raised by these raffles go toward *The Empowerment of Women* projects that TOS in NZ supports in India.



Presenting the TOS Elizabeth Sell art work raffle prize with John Vorstermans



TOS raffle prize winner Gloria Henderson with Renée Sell.

To help contact:

RENÉE SELL

Phone: **09 523 1797** or
email **tos@theosophy.org.nz**

WebSite

tos.theosophy.org.nz

Or write to

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Vegetarians Today

From the New Zealand Vegetarian Society,

Margaret Johns encourages a move to meatless meals...

For the start of the new decade, the NZ Vegetarian Society challenged New Zealanders to Go Veg for the month of January, 2020. Being a quiet month, this challenge got mentioned in the news on *NewsTalk ZB* and even had coverage in the Summer morning talkback. This provoked some fairly predictable hostile reactions from people horrified at the suggestion that they should go meatless for a month along with comments that without meat their meals would be bland and boring. I wondered if this objection came from people who do not cook themselves or do not use spices, herbs and other seasoning to give meals interest, colour and zing. However, the opportunity to sign up for Go Veg did offer others the chance to give the suggestion, and the reasons behind it, consideration. Even if they did not sign up to *Go Veg for January*, the seed might have been planted for them to try cutting down on meat consumption and having meatless meals more often this year.

Reasons for taking up a veg~n diet include ethical, humane and environmental considerations and changing the perception of animals as strictly food related, to one of animals as individual beings with emotions and feelings like any other beings on this planet is important for people to understand the necessity of moving away from a meat-based diet. We need to put aside

old thought patterns and gently and kindly persuade others to also change their thinking by offering viable alternatives. Compassion for ALL life is a crucial part of our evolutionary journey, treading the Path. A healthy life-style includes non-processed wholefoods cooked from scratch, plenty of vegetables, fruit and legumes as well as sensible exercise, right thought and intent, and a good balance between work and leisure.

The NZ Vegetarian Society volunteers and staff work hard to provide good nutritional advice and information along with tasty recipes for anyone wishing to try meatless meals. They provide good support for those wishing to Go Veg, either via the website or in person, and new members receive a special New Member's package giving them lots of useful information and suggestions. Members also receive a quarterly magazine which provides up to date interviews, informative articles and delicious recipes, and a monthly E-Newsletter with what's happening in their area along with access to interesting articles from around the world.

Here is a recipe from the NZVS *Home Tried Favourites* recipe book which I tested this Christmas. Young and old found it very tasty:

TOFU SAUSAGES (makes 8)

- 1 onion, grate or chop finely, or cut into quarters first, if using a blender
- 2 tsps savoury yeast
- 2 Tbsps soya sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tsps oregano
- 1 300g block tofu (firm tofu gives a firmer mixture when forming the sausages)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1½ cups rolled oats or breadcrumbs
- Flour or fine breadcrumbs

1. Place all ingredients except the rolled oats into a blender. (Alternatively, mash tofu in a bowl, then add ingredients as listed.) Mix well.
2. Add in the rolled oats/breadcrumbs.
3. Allow to stand for 30 minutes minimum, which helps the flavour to permeate and the mixture to firm up. (I put them in the fridge overnight.)
4. Make into sausage shapes, dip into the flour or breadcrumbs and fry over medium heat in frying pan with a little oil. (My grandchildren preferred the sausages rolled in breadcrumbs rather than flour, but I found them tasty either way.)

Serve with steamed vegetables or a mixed salad.



More recipes, information and the NZVS revised and updated *Home Tried Favourites* recipe book, are now available from www.vegetarian.org.nz

Vasanta House Library



Books can be ordered from the library at TSNZ national headquarters by using the postal facility available and contacting the librarian at email: library@theosophy.org.nz or 18 Belvedere St, Epsom, Auckland 1051, or telephone 09 523 1797 (Saturday afternoons).

Cost to members is the return postage, non-members may join for \$10.

Vasanta House Accommodation

Casual accommodation is available at TS National Headquarters, Vasanta House in Epsom, Auckland. There is a range of rooms: single, double and bunk rooms with and without en-suite plus kitchen and laundry facilities. We welcome those in sympathy with the TS Objects and willing to abide by vegetarian, smoke-free and alcohol-free requirements.

For bookings and more information please contact the office 09 523-1797.

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Cost: \$2.50 each or \$2.00 if bought in quantity

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Send to: Theosophical Order of Service, c/o Richard and Renée Sell, HPB Lodge, Theosophical Society, 4 Warborough Avenue, Epsom, Auckland 1051. (Please refer to issue *TheoSophia* March 2007, Vol. 68 No. 1 inside back cover for samples.)

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Theosophy

Theosophy is the body of truths which form the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guides its evolution.

Theosophy puts death in its rightful place as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching one to know the spirit as oneself and the mind and the body as one's servants.

Theosophy literally means divine wisdom: *theosophia*. Theosophy illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions, by unveiling their hidden meanings; thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone who is willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high and to work perseveringly, is welcome as a member and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

From *Exploring the Mysteries of Existence* published by The Theosophical Society - <http://theosophy.nz>

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Members' meetings: Sundays 2.00pm
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The Meaning of Theosophy

The term *theosophy* is derived from two Greek words: *theos* – divine and *sophia* – wisdom. However, Theosophy is not some system of thought proscribed by a deity ruling from on high, but the Divine Wisdom that dwells potentially and universally in the human spirit, unfolding gradually through the process of evolution. It is this Divine Wisdom within us that stirs our desire to discover who we are and to answer the other big questions.

Theosophy was first used in English in 1650 for the teachings of some ancient sages, and was later applied to the thought of Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus, who founded the Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism in Egypt in the early third century after Christ. For them Theosophy was the divine knowledge that explained the experiences initiates had in the Greek Mysteries. The term was later used by the Protestant mystic Jakob Böhme, the early Swedenborgians in England, and other 17th and 18th century writers on spiritual subjects. It has also been applied to such schools of thought as Pythagoreanism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Alchemy, Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, as well as to the teachings of such philosophers as Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64), Paracelsus (ca. 1490-1541) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600).

Theosophy embodies principles that have been known and taught by the sages of the past all over the world. It has been called by many names:

- In India it is called *Brahmavidya* – The Wisdom of Ultimate Reality or *Sanātana Dharma* – The Eternal Teaching.
- In Judaism it is called *Kabbalah* – That Which Has Been Received.
- In China it is called *Tao Hsueh* – The Teaching of the Way.
- In Islam it is called *Sufism* – The Way of Those Who Wear Wool (the 'pure' or the 'wise').
- In Christianity it has been called *Prisca Theologia* – The Ancient Thought about Divine Matters.
- It has also been called the Wisdom Tradition, the Perennial Philosophy, the Secret Doctrine and the Ancient Wisdom.

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When we recognise that unity of all living things, then at once arises the question – how can we support this life of ours with least injury to the lives around us; how can we prevent our own life adding to the suffering of the world in which we live?

Annie Besant



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