

PHILOSOPHY · SCIENCE · RELIGION · THE ARTS

TheoSophia

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THEOSOPHY'S INSPIRING CREATIVE INFLUENCE

SPIRITUAL ART
**A History of Cultural
Transformations**

*Poetry as an Instrument for the
Unfolding of Consciousness*

TheoSophia



FREEDOM OF THE SOCIETY

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

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

Resolution passed by the General Council of The Theosophical Society in 1949.

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 all Life.

July 2018 General Council meeting of the Theosophical Society.

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

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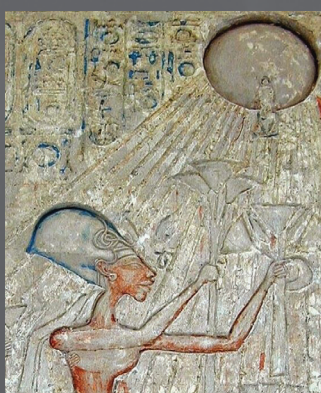


Cover
The Open Door
By Elizabeth Sell



THEOSOPHY'S INSPIRING
CREATIVE INFLUENCE

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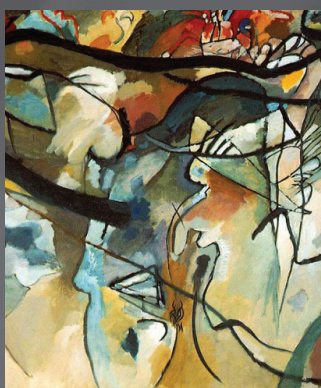


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CALL FOR TSNZ NOMINATIONS FOR TWO GOVERNANCE BOARD ROLES

Nominations will open on 2 August 2026 for two Governance Board roles. Information on the roles including eligibility, applications and nomination forms will be available online at that time:

<https://theosophy.nz/membership/section-election>

Nominations must reach the Returning Officer by 4.00pm, Sunday 30 August 2026 at 18 Belvedere Street, Auckland 1051.

*Art washes away from the soul
the dust of everyday life.*

Pablo Picasso

.....

*Imagination is more important
than knowledge.*

Albert Einstein



A National Section event

Immersion Weekend

8-9 August 2026, Auckland

Listening to the Soul Seeing the World with New Eyes

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking
new landscapes but in seeing with new eyes*

**Join us for a special weekend where we delve deeper into
the keynote principles underlying the Ancient Wisdom**

**Registration is open now - places are limited
Visit www.theosophy.nz/events**

ART AND THEOSOPHY

When I was young, I gained a Preliminary Diploma in Fine Arts, studied art further at Teachers' College and had a sell-out exhibition of my art work there before going on to include art teaching in my experience over decades. So, I was delighted when the *TheoSophia* Editorial Team requested two issues of this magazine be focussed on the place of Art in Theosophy.

Writing for this winter's art issue are Richard Sell (p.4), Donna Willard-Moore (p.10), Kathleen Hall (p.20) and Renée Sell (p.29). Recommended Reading (p.18) is also on this theme. John Algeo (p.23) and Pablo Sender (p.26) conclude their articles on non-violence and meditation respectively.

Graham Eden's retirement is reported on page 19. We wish him well with gratitude and appreciation for all his good work and gentle presence.

Feedback from both the Heart Workshop (p.14) and School of Theosophy (p.16) is inspiring while notices for Immersion Weekend (p.2) and Theosophy on-line Winter series (p. 18) may encourage your interest.

Stay safe this winter and draw warmth from your perusal of these pages as they direct our thoughts to the deeper meanings of art and theosophy.

Pamela Zane
Editor

editor@theosophy.nz

Contributions of poems or articles are welcome. Articles will be considered if up to 1,500 words, and sent as an email attachment to the editor. Note that *TheoSophia* articles will also be used in part or whole on the website: www.theosophy.nz

TSNZ YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/@theosophynz>

DANCE YOUR HEART OUT

Early morning
Light slowly creeps
Into spaces between thoughts
Daybreak shatters sleep's dullness

As the body prepares
To dance anew the day
The world its canvas
The breath its music

Feeling its inspiration
Each turn of the ball of the foot
Makes jelly of any attachment
The eyes constantly changing their fixation
The fixations become a blur

Knees bending as fluid gifts
Jump with controlled wildness
Bouncing off the support of flexible arms, torsos, legs
To spin into the embrace
Of the wooden floor

Rising
The warm-up reassembles the self
We are not meant to ever be the same.

Murray Rogers

DIARY DATES

2026

Theosophy Online Winter Series	
June 12	Swami Sarvapriyananda
June 28	Elif Kamisli
July 5	Donna Willard-Moore
August 8-9	Immersion Weekend
October 2-7	16th Triennial Conference of the Indo-Pacific Federation

Information can be found on our website under *events*:
<https://theosophy.nz/events>

FUTURE ISSUES

Date	Theme	Deadline
2026		
September	Art and Theosophy 2	1 July
December	Living in an Interconnected World	1 October
2027		
March	Healing	1 January

Contact the editor at editor@theosophy.org.nz or
visit our website for the guidelines: www.theosophy.nz

National President of TSNZ, Richard Sell continues on a theme...

Theosophy's Inspiring Creative Influence



The great Foundress of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky, in her last article, pointed out the importance of Art. She foresaw the future significance of this great creative force, which will help to build the coming world, as Art is the nearest bridge between nations. We should always remember this last thought of the great personality... ¹

Thus wrote Russian painter Nicholas Roerich in a letter to Dr Annie Besant in 1921 while living in Darjeeling, India. The Theosophical Society has attracted many great artists like Nicholas Roerich, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian and Hilma af Klint to name a few, who discovered fertile soil for their imagination in its spiritual ideation. Such attraction to the grand concepts of Theosophy is unsurprising considering artistic expression has always been a powerful component of human nature, transcending language, culture and time. In all sublime creative works we are presented with a unique language conveying the creator's meaning or vision beyond the ordinary. This is a language similar in shape to the upliftment experienced in majestic music which like an ethereal mist, also lays its light touch on the responsive Soul.

For the artist, creativity offers a channel for emotional release, especially when feelings are hard to express and can be a very cathartic experience. Beyond this "Art serves as a mirror reflecting an individual's thoughts and feelings ... this encourages self-discovery – a critical component of spiritual awakening ... whereby they can gain insight into their own beliefs, values and desires ... many spiritual traditions recognise art as a sacred practice that connects individuals with the divine or higher consciousness."²

Art in all forms can tell stories. It evokes layers of human emotion, memory, rebellion, trauma, spirituality, foretelling of the future; every facet of human connection and existence. The essence of all such experiences in life is distilled by the Soul and transformed into wisdom

after death, thus building our inner nature life after life, from which we may know directly, spiritual truths and experience spiritual awakenings.

When the link between Higher Self and its shadow, personality, has widened to such a point as to allow the intuitive faculty more uninhibited expression, we no longer need to always utilise the cumbersome process of reasoning of the lower mind to understand situations and higher Truths – the truth comes to us in a flash, like a lightning bolt in a fierce storm. A moving piece of Art also works in this way, conveying all in one scene, without words, without sound. It penetrates deep within the viewer and a response is evoked when the subject matter resonates profoundly with the observer. Perhaps the sheer beauty stupefies the witness for a moment, or the symbology captures the imagination, engaging the higher mind's attention. This too further develops the intuition and makes one more sensitive to spiritual influences. The link between art, intuition and emotions is very close.

At some level the appreciation of art, the perception of hidden meanings, attunes the viewer's mind and emotions with higher things, and therefore allows them to connect with higher vibrations – perhaps more easily than through most other forms and means. According to Kathleen Reiger, "...by the time of Madame Blavatsky's death in 1891, the teachings of the Theosophical Society and related movements had become so widespread and influential that artistic circles were beginning to reinstate spiritual enlightenment as a valid function of art. This came

in reaction to what was seen by many as the dominant but unfulfilling materialism of the age.”³

In the September 2024 issue of *TheoSophia*, the *Reflecting on Perfume of Theosophy* article explored some of the various forms of art and modalities of expression of Theosophy in painting, poetry, literature and sculpture. This continuation explores two well-known artists and their encounters with Theosophy – Reginald W. Machell (*June Issue*) and Florence Ada Fuller (*September issue*).

REGINALD WILLOUGHBY MACHELL (1854-1927)

Born on June 20, 1854, in Lincoln, England, Machell was a gifted painter who studied in Paris at the Académie Julian. At age 26 he returned to England and started a career as a portrait painter, eventually becoming a fellow of the Royal Society of British Artists and had works exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Machell joined The Theosophical Society after meeting H.P. Blavatsky in London, reportedly through a friend of one of his aunts in 1887. He painted the ceilings of Blavatsky Lodge, which he joined in December 1888, with symbols of the great religions and signs of the zodiac.⁴ He attended the meetings of Blavatsky Lodge at Lansdown Rd, London, where HPB was present on all occasions during his weekly visits, answering questions on the teachings of Theosophy and many other topics as well.⁵ When HPB moved to Avenue Rd, Regents Park, Machell did some interior decorating there at her request, and she soon suggested he have his studio in the same building.⁶ After meeting HPB his style became quite different from his old signature portrait paintings as Theosophy had by now a decisive influence on him.

After HPB's death (he designed the two feet high urn carrying HPB's ashes, now residing in Adyar), he painted *The Dweller on the Threshold*, which in Machell's own explanation portrays a man confronted with the shadow of [him]self outside the path.” Yet eventually, the initiate reaches “the vision of his own higher self – the knowledge of true occultism.”

In 1892, he became president of the Earls Court Lodge. Moving to Point Loma, California in 1900, he was involved in architectural ornament, painting wall designs and he carved furniture and screens. It is here that he carved the most beautiful huge doors called *Temple of Peace*, which survived the 1952 fire which destroyed the temple itself.

In one of the most recognised images in the theosophical movement is his painting *The Path* (over page), which in the artist's own words explains, “The PATH is the way by which the human soul must pass in its evolution to full spiritual self-consciousness.” It is believed to have been painted around 1895 and had been exhibited in various European venues before Machell brought it to California. Machell also constructed the frame for the painting in ornately carved woodwork. The work is very large – 6'2" x 7'5" [188 x 226cm].



Temple of Peace

In *H. P. Blavatsky's Collected Writings, Vol. XII* we read a description by the artist himself, explaining the symbolism found in this inspiring work...

“The supreme condition is suggested in this work by the great figure whose head in the upper triangle is lost in the glory of the Sun above, and whose feet are in the lower triangle in the waters of Space, symbolising Spirit and Matter. His wings fill the middle region representing the motion or pulsation of cosmic life, while within the octagon are displayed the various planes of consciousness through which humanity must rise to attain to perfect Manhood.”

At some level the appreciation of art, the perception of hidden meanings, attunes the viewer's mind and emotions with higher things...



The Path

At the top is a winged Isis, the Mother or Oversoul, whose wings veil the face of the Supreme from those below. There is a circle dimly seen of celestial figures who hail with joy the triumph of a new initiate, one who has reached to the heart of the Supreme. From that point he looks back with compassion upon all who are still wandering below and turns to go down again to their help as a Saviour of Men. Below him is the red ring of the guardians who strike down those who have not the "password," symbolised by the white flame floating over the head of the purified aspirant. Two children, representing purity, pass up unchallenged. In the centre of the picture is a warrior who has slain the dragon of illusion, the dragon of the lower self, and is now prepared to cross the gulf by using the body of the dragon as his bridge (for we rise on steps made of conquered weaknesses, the slain dragon of the lower nature).

On one side two women climb, one helped by the other whose robe is white and whose flame burns bright as she helps her weaker sister. Near them a man climbs from the darkness; he has

money-bags hung at his belt but no flame above his head, and already the spear of a guardian of the fire is poised above him ready to strike the unworthy in his hour of triumph. Not far off is a bard whose flame is veiled by a red cloud (passion) and who lies prone, struck down by a guardian's spear; but as he lies dying, a ray from the heart of the Supreme reaches him as a promise of future triumph in a later life.

On the other side is a student of magic, following the light from a crown (ambition) held aloft by a floating figure who has led him to the edge of the precipice over which for him there is no bridge; he holds his book of ritual and thinks the light of the dazzling crown comes from the Supreme, but the chasm awaits its victim. By his side his faithful follower falls unnoticed by him, but a ray from the heart of the Supreme falls upon her also, the reward of selfless devotion, even in a bad cause.

Lower still in the underworld, a child stands beneath the wings of the foster mother (material Nature) and receives the equipment of the Knight, symbols of the powers of the Soul, the sword of power, the spear of will, the helmet of knowledge, and the coat of mail, the links of which are made of past experiences.

It is said in an ancient book '*The Path* is one for all, the ways that lead thereto must vary with the pilgrim.' A beautiful version of *The Path* was created in stained glass at Leeds Lodge and forms part of the building.

In a later work, *Vision of the New Day*, Machell elaborated on *The Path*, where 'the enlightened Soul, the seer of Truth' should avoid being deluded by the Dual lure of learning and pleasure, and go straight to the appointed goal led by the light of the New Day.⁷

Didacticism* in Machell's work is also evidenced in his treatment of the Grail as a Theosophical symbol in "*The Holy Grail*" and "*The Castle of the Grail*." The artist explained that the real Castle of the Grail is the human body: "Man's body is the castle of the 'Holy Grail,' with its foundations in the shadows of earth, but in its highest regions it is a temple of spiritual light." The theme of the Grail returns in "*Parsifal*," portraying the hero while he, "resisting the seduction of Kundry (the lower nature), breaks the power of the magician Klingsor (the delusive force of evil) and liberates the soul from the prison of the body. Kundry dies at the feet of her redeemer, the higher self." This is a Theosophical interpretation of the story narrated in the opera "*Parsifal*" by Richard Wagner (1813–1883), a lifelong interest of Machell.⁷

[Reginald W. Machell's] work will surely again garnish future interest because of the highly inspirational symbology and keen insight into esoteric truths that he portrays...



Vision of the New Day



The Holy Grail

As different types of art became more fashionable this didactic form of art became less so, and Machell faded out of theosophical awareness and is now little remembered. Despite this, his work will surely again garnish future interest because of the highly inspirational symbology and keen insight into esoteric truths that he portrays. Occultist Geoffrey Hodson stated that “the new art will be definitely occult, mystical and spiritual. The new artists will feel continually toward formlessness.”⁸ Machell himself wrote on this appealing to the few, but the spiritual importance of such appeal is incalculable. “An artist who endeavours to express a mystical thought or a spiritual idea in a painting, is necessarily appealing to a very limited public; but it may well be that his appeal will stir a desire for knowledge in the minds of some whose intelligence is awake but untrained, and also it may find a response in hearts that yearn for higher things than their education has made them acquainted with.”⁹

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* Didacticism is a philosophical and artistic approach that prioritises the conveyance of instruction, moral lessons, or practical knowledge through literature, art, or design.

Acknowledgments:

Paintings by Reginald Machell, *The Dweller*, *The Path*, *Vision of the New Day*, *Holy Grail* and *doors Temple of Peace* are from The Theosophical Society, Pasadena, California.

Great ideas come into the world as gently as doves.
Perhaps if we listen attentively, we shall hear, amid
the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of
wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope.

Albert Camus

THE FOURTH PILLAR

Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society, clarifies more aspects of spiritual practice.

One of the somewhat paradoxical goals of spiritual practice is to become less self-centred. The results of this practice might be described as becoming ‘unselfed’. Expressed in simple terms spiritual practice focuses on diminishing the limiting influence of the personal self by shifting the centre of awareness to a Greater, or Universal Self. It is paradoxical because in order for this shift to take place there has to be an initial commitment of the unrefined personality to the process – a commitment to a future exaltation that to the personal self looks a lot like extinction. In its early stages one has no grasp of what it might mean to diminish the personal self, much less to extinguish it. Most people who come to a practice do not arrive at it with the idea of becoming less. The normal wish is to acquire more – more peace, more freedom from suffering, more renown, more knowledge, more love, more understanding, better relationships, better mental and physical health, and for some, more material wealth. One of the ironies of spiritual practice is that all of these desires can, and, for many, do, find fulfillment.

In the business world there is a marketing principle stated as, “It’s the ‘I’ in what you buy”. Simply put, the products and services to which we are drawn capture our interest because of how they make us feel. In the advertising world much of the focus is on appealing to emotional needs and desires. In our time it has become a ‘normal’ approach to living – normal in the sense that there is a broad consensus that material, or even psychological possessions can give satisfaction and happiness. “What’s in it for me?” is the prevailing, if unacknowledged, question for many – at least initially. This is a common state of mind that people bring when they begin the attempt to find clarity and peace. It is something J. Krishnamurti described as the workings of our “beastly little mind”.

I have great admiration for the genuine spiritual teachers who have appeared in our world, and for those among us now. It is a difficult task they willingly undertake – to utilise our undeveloped mind and personal desires as catalysts that lead to our progressive unfoldment into a Greater Life in which the personal imperceptibly transmutes to the Universal.

The difficulty real teachers face is a “How to...?” question. How to move us from small personal beginnings to a deeper state which they would describe as “Reality”. In the Bhagavadgītā Krishna makes the profound statement that “By whatever path people approach me, on that same path I meet them.” This is not a point of view that conforms to our usual ‘spiritual’ imaginings. For the normal spiritually engaged individual it is clear that spirituality is only accessible along certain lines that promote ‘purity’. While this is the general rule for most of us, when we examine the lives of the truly great spiritual people, we find that those who were considered the most debauched, immoral, negative and impure became not merely their disciples, but in many cases the most revered and respected teachers in their traditions. For Saint Francis his interaction with the ‘Prostitute of Damietta’ led to her conversion and sanctification. One of the more notable disciples of the Buddha was a man who was known as Angulimala. The name speaks about the inner potentials of even the most extreme and ‘evil’ among us. Angulimala was a mass murderer who collected the fingers (anguli) of his victims, and strung them into a necklace (mala). Although few of us find ourselves in such extreme conditions, the point is that the realisation of our deepest, truest nature is possible at every moment, regardless of our sense of limitation.

To be continued.



Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society was born in New York City and studied at Brown University then at the University of Chicago. In Chicago Tim joined the TSA in 1974 and co-founded a Theosophical spiritual community in Chicago’s inner city. They held classes on the Ageless Wisdom, meditation and healing and formed a business which helped stabilise neighbourhoods through the training and employment of local youth and creation of affordable homes. Tim has been involved in Theosophical work at many levels: from lodge member, to TSA president and president of the Theosophical Order of Service USA. He has spoken across the USA and every continent except Africa. Tim’s articles appear in journals around the world.

Donna Willard-Moore, artist, scholar and theosophist explores the subject...

SPIRITUAL ART

A history of cultural transformations

“A painting is not a picture
of an experience;
it is an experience.”

Mark Rothko

Helena Blavatsky wrote, “the universe is worked and guided from within outward.” Art might be understood as one of the clearest expressions of that process: an outward trace of inward belief. If we take that seriously, then art is not merely decorative, it is slow revelation, as humans/artists give form to inner perceptions. As artistic language evolves, so does culture and with it, our conception of the spirit and the divine.

A teaching quote for students: “Artists are the only people who can make a picture of something that does not exist in the physical world.” Thus, it was artists who first made images of the spiritual understandings and images from the spiritual world. This has caused art and spirituality to evolve in relation to each other. When art changes, the culture changes, thus when a new pictorial technique is discovered or created, it often changes culture as well as how people think about spiritual life.

Is it a dance or an evolution? Art changes or improves, or our culture changes because we have a new idea of how the spiritual world works, thus new images and artworks change how we the viewers think about the spiritual world.

EGYPTIAN ART

Bek, ‘master of the red mountain’ was personally taught by the king. Inscriptions on a stella refer to Bek as “the apprentice whom His Majesty taught”. Bek was essential in implementing the new, naturalistic Amarna art style, Akhenaten acted as a direct instructor in the artistic principles.

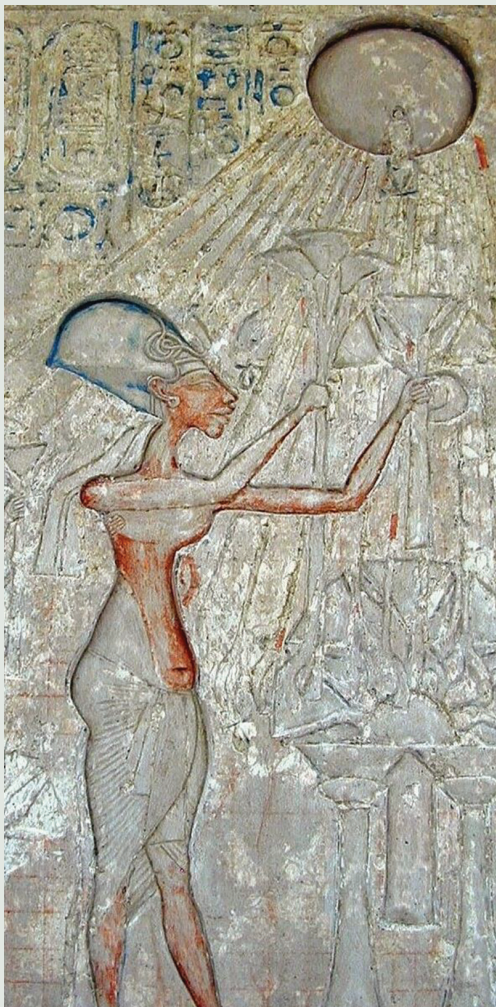
During the 18th dynasty, Akhenaten believed that there was only One God, Aten – the disk of the Sun which created and ruled all life. Thus, his artist had to record the world as it was and to respect what God/Aten had created.

The sun god Aten had made everything and art should record reality. “What you see” in reality – not what he saw as an idealised and false image. The idea of keeping power in the family by incestuous marriage resulted in serious genetic problems and Akhenaten had serious deformities, which made him quite ugly – as seen in his images.

Images here from Egypt show a group of three figures from the Old Kingdom showing Menkaure, his wife and the goddess Hathor 2514–2480 BC. All the figures are beautifully carved, in basalt stone. They are happy, smiling with what is called the archaic smile, as a way of being lifelike. It is a beautiful piece of art and they’re very happy and very certain that all the magic around them will give them the magical life in the land of the dead. However, the figures are never separated from the block of stone. There are no free-standing sculptures.

Later, a civil war was led by Senwosret III, or Senwosret 3rd – a Middle Kingdom pharaoh. Senwosret 3rd is not smiling, worried and perhaps not sure of his after-life fate?

The scene of the afterlife from the Tomb-chapel of Nebamun dates back to circa



Pharaoh Akhenaten adoring the Aten, the disk of the Sun



Menkaure with his wife, and the Goddess Hathor - 4th Dynasty, Old Kingdom, 2514-2486 BC.



The city built by the Pharaoh Akhenaten was named "Akhetaten". Meaning: The name translates to "Horizon of the Aten".

A Sculpture of Bek and his wife; Bek was head artist and construction planner of Amarna Period 18th dynasty – directly taught by Pharaoh Akhenaten "the apprentice whom His Majesty taught".



Face of Senwosret III, Middle Kingdom Pharaoh.



Tomb-chapel of Nebamun - dating back to roughly 1350 BC during the 18th Dynasty.



Sistine Madonna – by Raphael

Commission: 1512, commissioned by Pope Julius II for the Basilica of San Sisto in Piacenza.

Creation Period: c. 1512–1513 or c. 1513–1514.

Raphael created this work before the age of 30, near the end of his life (died 1520).

1350 BC during the 18th Dynasty. This illustrated that the afterlife was a wonderful magical continuation of their life in Egypt and this was the world's best place to live. Egyptian religions had a goal of continuing that wonderful life. Their art served to stabilise and perpetuate that vision of the afterlife.

GREEK ART

The art from ancient Greece is very primitive and the human figure awkward and clumsy. Then an artist named Kritios discovered 'contrapposto'. This recognises that muscles work in pairs. Always one paired muscle is in contraction while the other is relaxed. This gives the figure the feeling of being alive. The artist attained vitality through balance and no longer had to use the archaic smile to say, "I'm a living human being."

CHRISTIAN ART

As Christianity spread across the Roman Empire, ancient art skills were lost. Constantine the Great converted to Christianity in 312 CE and the Roman empire became Christian but artists feared association with pagan art or gods; thus, everything pagan was rejected.

Over a thousand years, Christianity transformed Europe, introducing cathedrals, churches, priests, monks and nuns through the Medieval ages.

In the 14th century, the Italian artist Donatello used 'contrapposto'. How was this discovered? They had been digging up sculptures from the Empire period in Rome. The world of Europe was Christian and artists could study and experiment. It was the Italian Renaissance.

No one remembered the old art. Christianity had new inspiring stories to tell, emotions and details to prove the reality of miracles and inspire the faith. An extraordinary diversity of styles, techniques and drama was introduced because Catholicism was soon to face a major rejection of Roman Catholic Church control – the Protestant Reformation.

Cherubs or baby angels appeared in Renaissance art, an example of Church traditions but they caused public opinion to shift. Baby angels in art, known as *putti* (singular: *putto*), originated as non-religious winged infants in ancient Greek and Roman art representing Cupid and Eros. St Augustine believed that children who died unbaptised were damned. This is not, however, official church dogma. The official position of the Catholic Church, according to the 1992 Catechism, the theory of limbo is not mentioned. The Catechism teaches that infants who die without baptism are entrusted by the Church to the mercy of God. See Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* of 1312 and unbaptised children in Limbo in *Map of Hell* from *The Divine Comedy*.

THE BODILY ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

BY TITIAN

The Assumption of Mary became an official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church on November 1, 1950. Pope Pius XII formally

defined this doctrine, declaring that Mary was taken body and soul into heavenly glory.

THE ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST

Caravaggio (Italian, 1571–1610, born in Milan) painted *The Entombment of Christ*, 1603–1604 – in oil on canvas. This has been a controversial painting. Yet it is precisely this non-idealised realism that collapses the distance between the sacred and the profane/human. The divine is no longer remote – it is immediate, embodied, tangible. Caravaggio got in serious trouble for this painting, with the church and the public! The feet of Christ had dirt on them!

20TH CENTURY ART

I was present in February 1971 for the opening of the Rothko Chapel. Most of the artists in Houston Texas who liked contemporary art were there. We're all saddened by the fact that Mark Rothko did not live to see the completed chapel but I think he would have enjoyed the evolutions it went through. For example, extra ceiling baffles were installed to soften the light, thus to make it more like New York City with its overcast clouds, than Houston Texas with its bright sunshine.

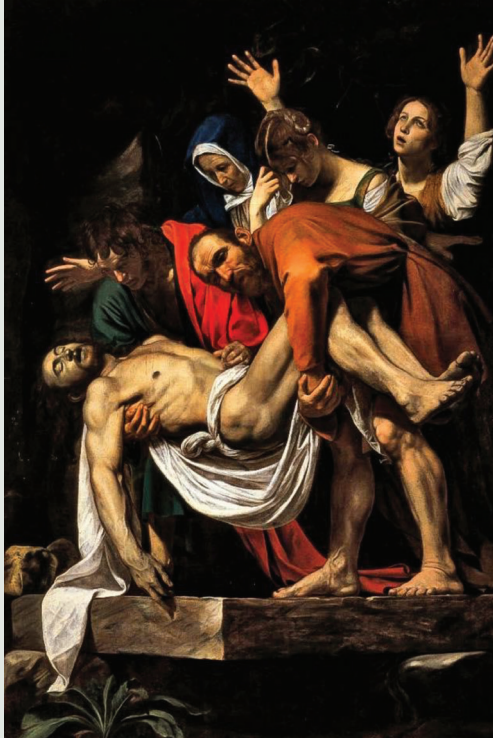
What interested me in the Rothko Chapel was the 14-painting pattern of a Roman Catholic Church. A central triptych in the front, standard side panels more triptychs then, a side panel and finally a rose window which was a large red-purple rectangular canvas with a darker purple central rectangle.

The paintings have an interesting optical illusion created by 'push pull' in abstract expressionist paintings. The surface appears flat yet simultaneously suggests infinite depth. One senses a recession into vastness, followed by an unexpected return. The paint feels like it's moving away from you creating a vast empty space. Then you look away and it rushes back to you – present – close by – intense. Sought directly, it recedes into abstraction, and space. Yet when one relinquishes that search, it becomes suddenly and intensely present. I cannot think of a better metaphor of the presence of God.

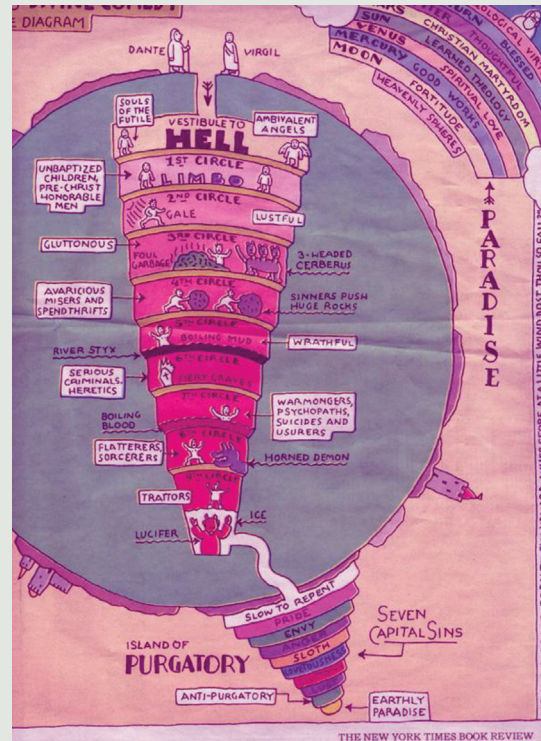
When you are looking for God the vastness of reality is present but when you're looking away it all rushes back and God is immensely present and close to you. For me, this oscillation functions as a profound metaphor for the experience of the divine. Rothko himself stated, "A painting is not a picture of an experience; it is an experience."

I'm not sure after considering this art, if it is an evolution. Art does help change things, but it is definitely not a dance – that would require more interaction. After writing this essay I think Art is a conversation.

New painting techniques are often accidents. Something happens on the canvas. It is new but the artist says – how did I do this? Can I do it again? It means something! Thus Chiaroscuro, invented by Leonardo da Vinci, changed all of art, and made the Mona Lisa smile.



The Entombment of Christ - By Michelangelo Caravaggio
(Italian, 1571-1610, born in Milan).



Donna Willard-Moore is a researcher and international presenter specialising in Integral Theory, educational development and art history. She became a New Zealand citizen in 2004 and discovered the Theosophical Society in 2010 – a turning point in her intellectual journey. Captivated by its depth of wisdom and exploration of universal truths, the Society became a place of inspiration, expanding Donna's perspectives and fuelling her commitment to lifelong learning. Donna holds a BFA, MA, and MFA (with honours) from the Universities of Houston and Missouri. She has taught at American universities, serving as an assistant professor at William Woods University.

HEART WORKSHOP COMMENTS

In February and March, the TSNZ National Section put on three workshops entitled *Opening Our Heart to Divine Love and Wisdom*. These were held in Auckland, Palmerston North and Christchurch. The workshops were over two days – Day 1, *The Heart: Doorway to our Soul and Higher Consciousness* and Day 2, *Awakening to the Divine Presence within the Heart*, which focused on the *Voice of the Silence* by H. P. Blavatsky.

We were fortunate to have two wonderful presenters, Nicky Bassett and Tony Petcopoulos from Australia, lead the inspiring workshops. Participants explored our heart's capacity to achieve higher states of consciousness and our soul's journey that leads us to becoming more open-hearted spiritual beings guided by love. Some comments from participants across all three workshops are:

- *Inspirational*
- *This was a particularly grounding and practical workshop*
- *I loved the practical exercises and meditation*
- *A really great workshop that suits any level – beginner to advanced*
- *Excellent content, really brought in Theosophy with relevance*
- *Magnificent*
- *It was a brilliant integration of theosophical spiritual principles with everyday living*
- *Nicky and Tony are such talented and heart centred facilitators, it really was brilliant*
- *Nicky & Tony ran the presentations/Teachings in such a pleasant easy to follow manner. They are inspirational lovely people.*
- *So much summarised wisdom and knowledge*
- *I liked the visual and audio and practical methods used, the warm atmosphere and personal examples helped build trust*
- *This was an incredible workshop, well worth attending*
- *This will be with me for the rest of my life*





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TSNZ School of Theosophy 2026

Extracts from all the positive feedback

Pablo and Michele Sender's presentations were easy to digest, concisely conveyed and incited a call to action to implement solid theosophical teachings in our everyday lives. The goal to embrace is that one day at a time we may aspire to be 1% further down the path, lighting the way for those around us by being the best example of living practice of these pearls of wisdom. I greatly appreciated their willingness to share their extensive depth of knowledge, which has helped me to feel that with daily practice I can make the light in my corner of the universe shine a little brighter.

Ritchie Marr

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The School of Theosophy was, once again, a deeply enriching experience — filled with thought provoking lectures, beautiful attunements, warm and friendly fellow theosophists, wonderful food and uplifting entertainment. For me, every aspect of it was perfect.

A special acknowledgement to Pablo and Michele Sender, who continue to stand among the world's finest teachers. Their depth of knowledge, their clarity, and their gift for illuminating the essence of teachings from some of the great Theosophists were truly superb. Their presentation style — guiding us beyond the words and into the living experience of higher understanding — was a powerful support in our shared effort to awaken Higher Consciousness.

My heartfelt thanks go to everyone who contributed to making this School such a memorable and inspiring gathering. Your dedication, care, and commitment to excellence were felt in every detail. Thank you, thank you, thank you. With gratitude and joy, I give the 2026 School of Theosophy a full five stars out of five.

Tim Parry

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Under the auspices of a lovely Auckland autumn, Pablo Sender delivered a very comprehensive and insightful overview of Higher Consciousness drawing upon streams of practice and insights ... The research presented included some primary source documentation on Madame Blavatsky's Diagram of Meditation from original documents which was a real highlight. Additionally, Michele Sender drew together the threads of Theoria in a complimentary manner by working with attendees on practical applications. As a pair, their flow and styles were so complimentary and fulfilled an important niche in supporting the efforts of Theosophists to implement core values of the Divine Wisdom with a well-researched approach to meditation and life. Evidently, the spirit of Geoffrey Hodson was most tangible over the school, as we studied near his home, many of his personal insights and contributions to theosophy in action.

Jarrod Ryder - TS Brisbane Lodge, QLD

.....

It is a pleasure to attend National Theosophical events. All have been superbly done - to the smallest details. This year's presentation stands out in the field of professional presenters that we have enjoyed in New Zealand.

Pablo and Michele Sender are working to clarify the framework language of the great founding minds from the earliest day of Theosophy. This is not retro simplification and clarification. This changed my understanding, it was wider and more inclusive.

Donna Willard-Moore

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A sense of unity consciousness, so carefully cultivated over the course of the week, can easily dissipate amidst the turbulence of cars, motorways and modern technology guiding me along unfamiliar roads to my destination, following the School of Theosophy.

Yet something essential remains — an inner stillness, an abiding presence of peace that acts as an anchor amidst the restless currents of the outer world. It is heartening to recognise that our personal story is not fixed or final but part of an unfolding process of self-transformation, shaped through awareness, reflection, and contemplation of the Ageless Wisdom and eternal truths.

Helen Dynes

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Pablo and Michele Sender took us on a remarkable journey, sharing many of the prominent Theosophical teachings of our founders and early leaders. I was impressed by their knowledge and ability to share and discuss these with the members present. I was inspired to dig deeper and strengthen my own journey.

John Vorstermans

'...the information provided, was both theoretical and practical. I enjoyed how Pablo and Michele's presentations complimented each other ... also lovely to catch up with people whom we love and appreciate... thanks to Richard, Renee and the crew at Vasantha House who do such amazing work in bringing about such brilliant events.'

Widge Rowden



Enjoying time together over lunch



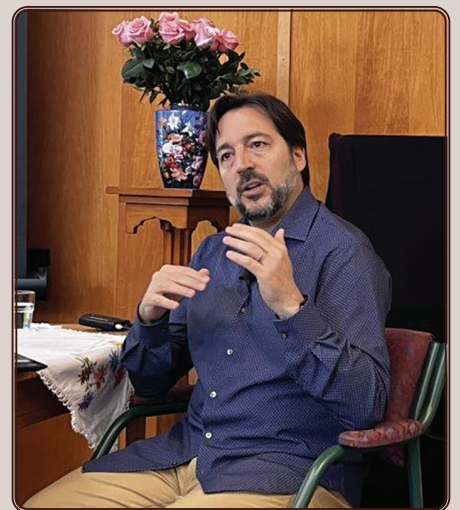
Michele Sender and Valentina Teclici



Pablo Sender workshop



Michele Sender



Pablo Sender



Richard Sell, Pablo and Michele Sender and Kirsty Morton



School of Theosophy 2026

Recommended Reading

The recent movie *One Fire* highlights the influence of Theosophy on modern art. Below is a small example of books exploring links and influences between Theosophy and art.

CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL: THE INFLUENCE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY ON AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS 1890-1934 By Jenny McFarlane

Jenny McFarlane explores the influence of Theosophy on a selection of Australian artists, including Jane Price, Clarice Beckett, Ethel Carrick Fox and Grace Cossington Smith. She highlights the experience of these artists in linking the visible and invisible worlds and using art to express a 'truth beyond the visible.' This book challenges conventional assumptions about early Australian Modernism and is interspersed with beautiful colour plates, including portraits of leading Theosophists. A fascinating and delightful read.

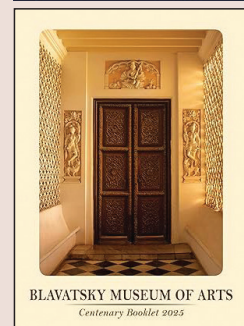
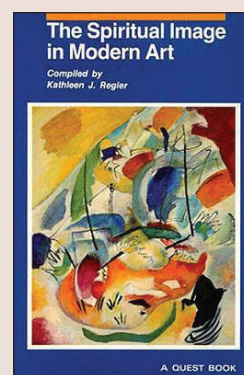
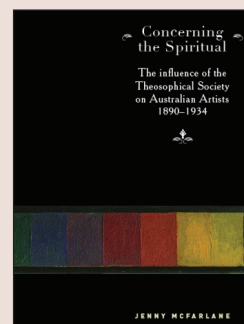
THE SPIRITUAL IMAGE IN MODERN ART Compiled By Kathleen J. Regier

This book is a compilation of essays about artists who were known to be spiritually inclined. The wide reach of Theosophical teachings among the art community of the late 19th century, especially the Nabi in Paris, caused a resurgence in seeing spiritual enlightenment as a valid function of art and was seen as a counterbalance to the dominant materialism of the age. Essays include Jackson Pollock's *White Angel*, Mysticism in London, and Gauguin's religion.

BLAVATSKY MUSEUM OF ARTS – CENTENARY BOOKLET 2025

Compiled By Elif Kamisli

This book was compiled as part of the Centenary of the Blavatsky Museum of Arts and the Sesquicentennial of the Theosophical Society. It represents a selection of works from the museum, curated by Elif Kamisli, with stunning colour plates, and descriptions. The collection includes well-known works such as *The Messenger* by Nicholas Roerich, and *Portrait of J. Krishnamurti as a Young Man* by Australian artist Florence Ada Fuller, as well as objects belonging to well-known Theosophists. This book is the next best thing to visiting the museum in person.



Theosophy Online ~ Winter Series

June & July 2026 via Zoom

June 12	Swami Sarvapriyananda	<i>What is Vedanta? An introduction to Vedanta and its foundational scriptures</i>
June 28	Elif Kamisli	<i>Theosophy and the Arts: From Early Influences to the Adyar Art Project</i>
July 5	Donna Willard-Moore	<i>Spiritual Art in the Western World: A History of Cultural Transformations</i>

THANK YOU GRAHAM

A valued colleague retires



Graham's grand entrance.



Graham with his paper gold watch.

Graham Eden retired as the National Section Treasurer on 8th April 2026. He had taken up the position in the mid-1980s, when Bill Johnston was the National President, and held it for over 30 years.

Graham was dependable and saw the job evolve from a cash book to MYOB and more recently, to Xero Accounting software, each a challenging new phase for him that he worked through, enabling both Management and Governance to receive regular reports.

Graham is a man of few words, unless it comes to finances. He always spoke out if he was unhappy with something under his care. His dry humour will be missed, as will his calm presence on the other end of a phone call or in an always polite email.

We have been fortunate to have someone with his skill and quietly efficient personality in our office all these years. We wish him well in his retirement.

Richard Sell



THEOSOPHY AND SCIENCE



THEOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

The motto of the Theosophical Society is "There is no Religion higher than Truth", a sentiment to which a scientist can equally well subscribe. 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.

For more, see: <https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/statics/theosophy-and-science>

RESEARCH RELEVANT TO THEOSOPHY

*Jacques Mahnich is editing a new series of Quarterly RRT (Researches Relevant to Theosophy) publications, starting January 2026. Vol. V N° 1 is devoted to a collection of research in the sciences and humanities. Future topics include: * Anthropology * Archaeology * Biology * Chemistry * Earth Sciences * Education * Health & Medicine * History * Philosophy * Physics * Psychology * Religion * Social Sciences * Space Sciences * Technology*

See also: <https://theoscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/RRT16.pdf>

A scholarly review to ignite thought and reflection by Kathleen Hall.

Theosophy and the Emergence of Modern Abstract Art

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a movement in art emerged that was a response to higher awareness of cosmic truth. Modern abstract art was the visible manifestation of spiritual ideals professed through the teachings of Theosophy and other wisdom lore. The artists of this movement were scribes who painted what words could not say.

Spirituality in abstract art began around 1890 and ran in parallel with a growing interest in mysticism and the occult. Many artists were becoming intrigued with spiritual writings, in particular with Madame Blavatsky's major work, *The Secret Doctrine*. Undoubtedly there were other influences, such as the works of Edouard Schuré, Jakob Böhme, and Emmanuel Swedenborg. But it was Theosophy that had the most profound effect on the emergence of modern abstract art and specifically on the founding fathers of the movement, Wassily Kandinsky, Frantisek Kupka, Piet Mondrian, and Kazimer Malevich.

Theosophy gave these artists a vista that became the fundamental groundwork of their spirituality. From this viewpoint, they believed they were able to see beyond and into the natural world, as well as gaining an understanding of the ancient wisdom and cosmic principles of our existence. This lofty vantage point elevated all four beyond this-worldly concerns and gave them a sense of divine sight into otherworldly realms. They stood in the doorway between two worlds, they were the messengers, and communicating this knowledge became the objective of their art.

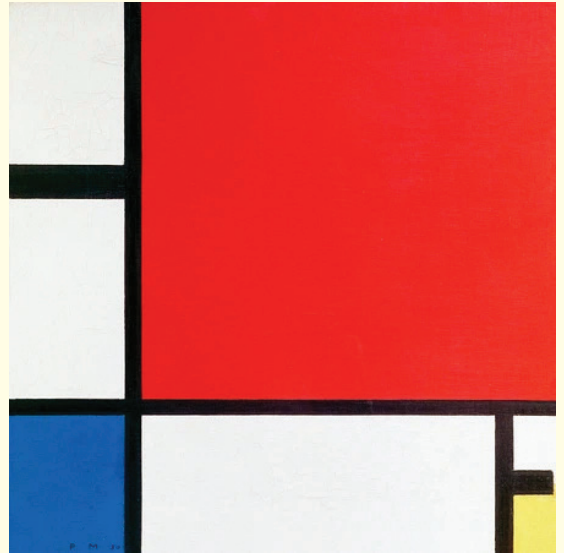
The language with which these artists translated their vision of one world into terms of the other was abstraction. To be successfully understood, that vision had to be presented in simple, relevant terms that could later develop and expand into complex structuring as it became more familiar to both the artist as teacher and the viewer as student. In its final form, it is outwardly simplistic, while intrinsically complex in its reduction of the divinely enigmatic.

It seems more than coincidental that four distinct artists, at about the same time in history, were all influenced by the teachings of Theosophy and manifested their spirituality through their art, which almost had no choice but to be abstract. The context of their work was not a familiar picture of visible reality, but a faith in things unseen. Visionary, prophetic, mystical, and deeply spiritual, Kandinsky, Kupka, Mondrian, and Malevich can be considered as initiates who came from ages past to teach the ancient wisdom in our time and in images appropriate to us. What they produced was a seam in the universe through which they were able to make the unseen visible so that we can catch a glimpse of the great mysteries of the cosmos.

All four artists first began in the Symbolist style. Their early work expressed representations of cosmic ideals in forms that were familiar and recognisable. However, the iconography of Symbolism limited the manifestation of universal concepts, and Kandinsky, Kupka, Mondrian,



KH Vassily Kandinsky *Composition v the Cultrium*



KH Vassily Kandinsky *Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow*

and Malevich all became increasingly aware of this limitation. Having experienced the extent of the Symbolist voice, they began to dig deeper into their Theosophical ideals and surfaced with new ways to say things.

The language that emerged was abstraction. Abstraction was a formless voice that dissolved the boundaries of the concrete object to allow the flow of cosmic light to spill forth onto an awaiting canvas, the site where the inner and outer realms of spirituality began a new creative evolution. Each artist was painting the canvas with their own particular brush, but all were dipping from the same paint pots of spiritual awareness.

Wassily Kandinsky was an avid student of occult and mystical teachings. Theosophy provided the main structure for his lessons in spirituality, but he certainly enriched his studies with other material. As his spiritual awareness evolved, so too did his art. Ideals that he was previously content to express in Symbolist form, later shed their casings as they expanded through abstraction. As Theosophical teachings on thought forms and the correlation between vibrations, color, and sound influenced his work, he began to rely very little on form. Shape, line, and color became his main tools for creating a visible image of unseen events in the astral world.

Frantisek Kupka approached the realm of the spiritual in art from a similar direction. He too began as a Symbolist painter and presented concepts found in the Theosophical teachings on esoteric Eastern religions and philosophies. As a Symbolist, these ideas seemed to be a representation rather than a manifestation of his spiritual knowledge. When he began to make the connection between the forces acting in this world as a microcosm of the macrocosmic forces in the universe, his work began to communicate a divine message. This is also when his paintings became more abstracted, evolving into works of sacred geometry.

Piet Mondrian, like Kandinsky, read extensively on spiritual concepts. His endorsement of Theosophy was distinctly acknowledged and he frequently made reference to it in regard to the content of his work. His ideas were first expressed as Symbolist art, then as he began to explore the use of colour as a means to project the inner being of an outwardly visible object, his work started to change. His sole objective became the reduction of form to simple contrasts of line and colour to signify the unity between opposites: male and female, static and

dynamic, spirit and matter. Geometric shapes and primary colours were to become his trademark, representing in simple terms the immensely complex spiritual structuring of the universe.

Kazimir Malevich was originally involved with the Russian Symbolist movement, but then began exploring Zaumism and the fourth dimension. In particular, the time and space concepts he studied came from his readings on P. D. Ouspensky, the Russian Theosophist. Eventually his work evolved into a greater manifestation of the fourth dimension and his Suprematist works began to follow a path that saw the dissolution of form into sacred geometry and Absolute “nothingness.”

The effects of Theosophy on the founding fathers of modern abstract art are unmistakable. Each artist—Wassily Kandinsky, Frantisek Kupka, Piet Mondrian, and Kazimir Malevich—manifested in his own particular style varying aspects of Theosophical ideals. All began with the symbolic representation of spiritual concepts, then out of necessity evolved into abstraction. It was an inevitable process. The familiar forms of the visible world were not able to express the cosmic realm. Only line, shape, and colour were of use to the artist as a language through which the voice of the universe could be communicated. It was perhaps an experimental translation of Divine concepts.

Theosophy was perhaps the most important spiritual philosophy to emerge in the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially in regard to the profound impact it had on the direction of modern art. Its doctrine of universal “brotherhood,” the study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies, and sciences, and the investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in humankind were not only timely in terms of a changing world, but unequivocally compelling to the artist as a seeker of Truth.

It was inevitable that some artists would turn their attention to spirituality at the dawn of the materialistic age of the twentieth century. That change came about, first, because the further humanity is removed from the natural environment, the greater is its need for a spiritual replacement and, second, because everything is as it should be.

Originally printed in the May - June 2002 issue of *Quest* magazine, USA.

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Kathleen Hall studied the modern abstractionists and their Theosophical connections while working on the thesis for her Master's degree, corresponding with a number of contemporary Theosophical artists, particularly Burton Callicott, Don Kruse, and Pamela Lowrie. She is a resident of British Columbia, and became a member of the Canadian Federation of the Theosophical Society as a result of her study.

Concluding words from the famed theosophist, John Algeo.

WHAT IS A HARMLESS RESPONSE TO HARM?

Part 2

One of the most difficult of all philosophical and moral questions is the problem of evil. Human beings have struggled with this problem as long as they have had minds to do so. In theistic religions the problem is put so: If God is both all-good and all-powerful, why does he permit evil to exist? *The Book of Job* in the Jewish scriptures considers this, as does the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton. *The Secret Doctrine* envisions no creator God of whom such a question can be asked. But the problem still exists. And in considering it, Helena Blavatsky suggests that what we call evil is as much a part of the nature of things as what we call good: thus when the Occultist says that the “Demon is the lining of God” he does not mean two separate actualities, but the two aspects or facets of the same Unity... that divine Homogeneity must contain in itself the essence of both good and evil. How can that be?

What we call evil is sometimes the impulse to diversity, to separateness, to matter, which is necessary for the universe to exist. It is the path of forth-going, *pravritti*, which leads to *samsara*, the great illusion. On the other hand, what we call good is the impulse to oneness, to union, to spirit. It is the path of return, *nivritti*, that leads to *nirvana*, the unity of all things. In this sense, evil and good

are relative to the position one has on the paths. Behaviour that is appropriate and good on the path of forth-going becomes inappropriate and evil on the path of return.

One implication of that view is that evil, including war and violence, has a place in the economy of the cosmos. That is a tough implication and an unpopular one. But it is a theme of the *Bhagavad Gita* and of Annie Besant’s World War I pamphlet on *The High Purpose of War*. In times of international conflict, it is tempting to seek justification for one’s own nation and to assume that God, or Dharma, is on our side – that we are good and our enemies are evil. But the fact that a truth can be perverted jingoistically does not make it less a truth.

Civilisations are built up, and civilisations must be torn down. The process of destroying and tearing down is often necessarily a strifeful and strident one. Thus, it is a very difficult decision to know when evil is filling a proper and necessary place in the world process, but it is a decision each person has to make.

At other times, what we call evil is a learning experience, a testing of the boundaries that hedge our behaviour. Just as children need rules and regulations, and need to know where those rules set

Our view
of war and
violence
must grow
out of our
view of our
oneness and
of the love
that unites all
humanity and
all beings.

the boundaries of acceptable action, so all human beings are constantly pushing at the boundaries of karma – testing the Great Law that governs the universe, to find out what it is.

In this sense, evil is our effort to find where we are and to discover those consequences of the inexorable law that teach us we have gone too far. When we lose our tempers, behave violently, or harm another, we are really harming ourselves, and the Great Law sees to it that we find that out. Karma is not punishment, but education.

To comprehend the great pattern that embraces and harmonises war and violence as well as peace and love, the demonic as well as the divine, we need a vision that stretches from the foundation of the world to its dissolution. Without such a vision, we can only trust that the Great Plan does in fact order all things. The 14th-century English mystic Dame Julian of Norwich was profoundly disturbed by the existence of evil in the world and in human beings. She put the problem to Christ in one of her visions, and he responded: “Sin is necessary but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” Even what we call evil has a necessary place in the economy of the universe, but all things work toward a final good.

It is upon such assurance from the higher self to the personality, from the One to the many, that we rely. To come back, then, to the question, how do Theosophists view specific acts of war and violence? That is a question only individual Theosophists can answer. The principles Theosophists can be expected to follow in viewing war and violence are clear enough – they are principles embodied

in *ahimsa*, in the Golden Rule, and in the last four steps of *The Golden Stairs*. But those principles must still be applied in specific cases. And they can be applied only by individual Theosophists, looking within to the dictates of the individual consciences – which are finally one conscience, as we ourselves are finally one. Our view of war and violence must grow out of our view of our oneness and of the love that unites all humanity and all beings. That is the love which, as Dante said, moves the sun and the other stars.

The world is now threatened by wars and violence. It has always been so threatened, but what is alarming today is the awful ability we have developed to wage war and inflict violence. However, violence is less what we do than how we do it – our motive and attitude. We can learn to purify our motives and better our attitudes only by making conscious, self-aware choices when we are faced with those difficult problems that have no obviously right solution. We must deal with moral ambiguity without succumbing to moral paralysis. And it is possible to learn how to do that by study, meditation and effort.

Right motives and attitudes are purely individual responsibilities. The world cannot be at peace until you and I are at peace within ourselves. But how, we may ask, can a few persons have any effect on the world. No one knows how great the effect is of even a few persons who live, or strive to live, at peace with themselves. A Kabbalistic tradition says that the world includes only a handful of perfectly just persons, but it is on account of those few completely just individuals that the world continues

to exist. If they ceased to be, so would all the rest of us. That tradition expresses symbolically a great truth. The peace and progress of the world depend on and grow out of the lives of those persons – however few their number may be – who lead lives of peace and wisdom and love.

As members of the Theosophical Society, we are called upon to lead lives of ahimsa, which means striving to join that small, select company of the perfectly just, those whom we call the Masters. We are called upon to become like them – rooted in the One Life. Our efforts in that direction, no matter how small, will eventually bear fruit. But the personal effort must be made. All of us must do what we can. As in the lyrics of a popular song: “Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.”



John Algeo (1930 - 2019) was President of the Theosophical Society in America from 1993 – 2002. He then served as Vice President of the International Theosophical Society in Adyar, Chennai, India until 2008. John had a distinguished academic career at the University of Georgia as a Professor of English language and linguistics, then Professor Emeritus. In 2014, Dr Algeo was awarded the Subba Row Medal for his significant contributions to Theosophical literature.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all [people]
are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator
with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life,
Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness

The Declaration of Independence – USA.

THE THEOSOPHICAL PATH OF MEDITATION



Pablo Sender concludes his exploration of the ancient practice.

PART 2

Feel that your
real Identity
is beyond
the body,
emotions,
and mind.

During this meditation the aspirant puts before his or her mental eye an ideal of perfection, embodied in the form of a holy or divine being. In the Theosophical tradition the object of meditation is usually a Master of Wisdom, or the Higher Self. But aspirants can also meditate on any deity, sage, or holy person toward whom they feel devotion.

For this meditation to be effective, it is necessary to be careful not to project one's own limitations, such as feelings of jealousy, partisanship, anger, or selfishness, onto the divine being as it will not be possible to get in rapport with the divine. Mahatma Morya warns about "the magnetism and invisible results proceeding from erroneous and sincere beliefs." Thoughts are living things, and when an aspirant holds a wrong belief, it "attracts millions of foreign influences, living entities and powerful agents around them" that block spiritual influences (Barker and Chin, 95).

Theosophists were the first in the West to talk clearly and openly about the Masters of Wisdom, more than a century ago. Today there are all kinds of incompatible ideas about them. For example, the New Age idea of Ascended Masters has features that differ in very important aspects from the Theosophical one. While this is a complex subject, basically the New Age treats the Master as if he were an acquaintance of ours, but endowed with supernatural powers so that one can ask him things for one's personal needs. Thus, in this view one can summon him, visit him whenever one wants, and so on, as if the Masters were just hanging out on the inner planes. Helena Blavatsky once wrote a letter to certain members who had begun to conceive of them in this way, saying that they were desecrating the Masters by doing this. She contended that the Masters regard this physical plane as an illusion and do not care much about the personality. Their work is mainly at the level of the developing Higher Ego, and they engage with the physical plane in a very limited way, and only if it is really necessary. Consequently, in the Theosophical view their personalities are not so important. The external attributes are taken just as the shadow of that magnificent state of consciousness that the Master really is.

To use the Master of Wisdom as the object of meditation, it is first recommended that one study about their nature as described in Theosophical literature. The first chapters of the book *The Way*

of the *Disciple* by Clara Codd can be a good place to start.

For this meditation you can proceed in two ways: Visualise the holy figure in front of you and concentrate your mind on the image with a feeling of love or devotion, or try to feel *one* with this being. If the feeling of devotion is not particularly strong, you may deeply ponder on the real nature of the divine being, while contemplating its image. If you are unable to form a clear and stable image, there are two additional options: either concentrate on the *feeling* of the holy presence before you, or meditate with your eyes open while looking at a picture, statuette, or symbol of the object of meditation.

Alternatively, the holy figure may be visualised in the region of the heart. Mahatma Koot Hoomi is reported to have said: “Your best method is to concentrate on the Master as a Living Man within you. Make His image in your heart, and a focus of concentration, so as to lose all sense of bodily existence in the one thought” (quoted in Blavatsky, 12:696). The heart is highly regarded in most spiritual traditions. Blavatsky wrote: “The Heart is the organ of the Spiritual Consciousness... [It] is the abode of the Spiritual Man, whereas the Psycho-Intellectual Man dwells in the Head” (Blavatsky, 12:694). The heart does not mean the physical muscle. It refers to a nonphysical centre situated in that region of the body through which we can contact spiritual consciousness. The figure can be visualised either in the cavity of the heart or just outside the body, at the level of the physical organ, where the subtler etheric centre is found.

MEDITATION ON THE SUBTLE BODIES AND BEYOND

A fairly good grasp of Theosophical teaching of the subtle bodies will greatly help the process of this meditation. According to Theosophy, besides the physical body human beings possess several subtle bodies: the emotional, mental, and causal. The physical, emotional, and mental bodies comprise the personal – or lower – ego. Beyond the personality there is the causal body, which is the vehicle of the individual soul, also called the Higher Ego. Even beyond the causal body there is the spirit or Monad, the divine spark in each person that is one with the universe. In his *Meditation on Life*, N. Sri Ram wrote:

The first object in meditation is to discover one’s own Spiritual Selfhood as distinct from the personal vehicle, physical,

emotional, mental, and the consciousness active within them.

So we begin with an exercise in dissociation seeking both to realise the distinction between the Immortal Spiritual Self and the mortal changing personality. We then come to realise that the Spiritual Self of man is forever an integral part of the Spiritual Self of the universe, the All-Pervading Supreme Lord. Man is One with God and through that with All that lives.

There are two general approaches to this type of meditation, which can be called ‘positive’ and ‘negative’. The positive approach seeks to generate the highest possible vibration in each body so as to progressively raise the level of consciousness. For example, first try to generate a sense of health and harmony at the physical level; next go to the emotional level and feel peace and love; and then go to the mental level and think of any spiritual concept that is appealing. Now go even further and picture yourself as being the Higher Ego in the causal body. Feel that your real Identity is beyond the body, emotions, and mind. Finally, try to realise that you are an inseparable spark of the divine fire, and dwell on the feeling of unity.

The negative approach, as its name suggests, is based on a process of negation. With this practice, try to realise that you are not the lower principles, leaving behind one body after the other. Since the physical body is not eternal, this cannot be your real Self. Do the same with your emotional and mental bodies, leaving behind emotions and thoughts. Finally, stay in the highest possible state without picturing anything, but waiting for the higher consciousness to arrive. This meditation helps generate the habit of identifying yourself with the higher. This should be complemented in daily life with an effort to perceive things beyond the personal point of view.

This article offers just an overview of a few methods of meditation recommended in the Theosophical literature. For further information and material you can visit the Website: www.dzyantheosophy.org

Taken from an article originally printed in the Winter 2011 issue of *Quest* magazine.



Pablo Sender joined the Theosophical Society in Argentina in 1996, and later stayed at the International TS Headquarters in Adyar, Chennai. Pablo is a microbiologist with a PhD in Biological Science. He gives lectures, classes, seminars and retreats around the world, in both Spanish and English. Pablo is visiting New Zealand to lead the TSNZ School of Theosophy this May – see page 2; also: <https://pablosender.com>



'A Union of those who Love, in the service of all that suffers'

From the Ukraine and more...

In this winter issue, we provide an update from Svitlana Gavrylenko from the TOS/TS Ukraine on the Ukraine Emergency Appeal Project that TOS New Zealand has been supporting over the past few years. Svitlana wrote, "Really we now have difficult time, but we stand, work, try to help those who need. We are very touched with your proposal for support. You may be sure that every cent was used for care."

Photos here show some of the ways the funds were used last year. It's inspiring to see Ukrainian members' various projects and their use of donations. They are grateful for continued support from TOS in New Zealand. If you have any queries or require any further information including being sent links from the report on projects, please reach out to us via email: tos@theosophy.org.nz

Reflecting the theme of Art and Theosophy, we offer a contribution by Renée Sell, Exploring Poetry as an instrument for the widening of Consciousness.

UPDATE ON UKRAINE EMERGENCY APPEAL – MESSAGE FROM SVITLANA FROM THE TOS/TS UKRAINE

In this update, we hear from Svitlana and the TOS Ukraine webpages. A group of dedicated service workers gather and distribute food to hospitals specialising in orthopaedics and traumatology for seriously injured war victims. With donated funds, TOS volunteers purchase and prepare food, pack it into individual containers and transport it in their own cars to the hospitals.

Svitlana wrote to us: "Sincere gratitude to all who contributed to this campaign to help people affected by the war. We thank our TOS colleagues from faraway New Zealand for their targeted financial assistance. How many more human destinies will this war damage? But Goodness and Love will prevail!"

There are many families suffering, displaced refugees who have had family members killed. One of the families TOS NZ has helped from the war ravaged Kherson region is now living in Odessa.

This is their experience and how TOS NZ provided humanitarian assistance: 'For the bright holiday of the Nativity of Christ, I really wanted to congratulate the family of internally displaced persons from the occupied part of the Kherson region. The father of this family died, and in the hands of mother, Elena Kazimova, three children remained, one of them is seriously ill. Now this family has found refuge in Odessa. Our Odessa volunteer Oleksandr Makarov, by prior agreement with the head of the family, purchased gifts for the family, as well as the necessary household goods and food. All of them are very grateful for their help, for their attention to their needs, responsiveness and compassion. "Our heartfelt gratitude to our colleague TOS from Odessa Alexander Makarov and all members of the TOS of New Zealand, who provided targeted financial assistance for these people affected by the war. Let mother and all children be healthy, joyful, well-learned, help Mom and each other, love their homeland."

There are many stories such as this on the TOS Ukraine website. The recurring theme is TOS volunteers demonstrating values such as compassion, altruism and love to probably thousands of people – theosophy in action. This they do from their hearts, they speak with real people in need and provide basic necessities for living that we in NZ take for granted – food, shelter, security. They support hospitals, take people into their homes and make arrangements for the care of others – so many women and children.

We also help with education in places like India and Pakistan. In other places, relief following devastating earthquakes or other disasters is given, but in this instance, we are dealing with the basics of life itself. There is nothing more fundamental than this, so our gratitude goes to the hard-working volunteers in Ukraine who undertake this much-needed altruistic work, motivated simply by their desire to help relieve the suffering of others, our fellow human beings. This is true service in action!



Poetry as an Instrument for the Unfolding of Consciousness

a reflection by Renée Sell

The impulse that gave rise to the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875, brought the Ancient Wisdom back to the modern world and found resonance among the creatives of that time and inspiration for a new way of being, a new world in many fields of the arts. Helena Blavatsky spoke at the time of '...the gradual decadence of true art, as if art could exist without imagination, fancy, and a just appreciation of the beautiful in Nature, or without poetry and high religious, hence, metaphysical aspirations!'⁽¹⁾

Helena Blavatsky's writings invite us to explore the Good, Truth and Beauty. In her words 'Theosophy is high ethics', and 'Beauty is a Garment of Truth'. When speaking of Truth she asks, '...is there such a thing as absolute truth in the hands of any one party or man? Reason answers, 'there cannot be.' There is no room for absolute truth upon any subject whatsoever, in a world as finite and conditioned as man is himself. But there are relative truths, and we have to make the best we can of them.'⁽²⁾

With this in mind, I would like to focus on poetry as an instrument for the widening of consciousness within ourselves in our everyday lives. It is the intuitive faculty that creates inspirational poetry and when we engage the power of imagination, we can rediscover the miraculous oneness and beauty of all life. Author and Educationalist George L. Trevelyan⁽³⁾ suggests that the poet is one who can crystallise into words the profound experience of identity and if we can take those words and engage and use our imagination creatively and lovingly, we may ourselves experience the 'vision of wholeness' in our souls. Poetry can become an instrument for widening the doors of perception of the invisible worlds. The goal being the spiritual awakening within, the upward progress of the Soul as a series of progressive awakenings. Poetry has an inherent capacity for liberation as does prayer, if rightly engaged, rightly understood, and deeply experienced.

I remember reading poetry when I was younger and the beautiful state this activity created in the atmosphere of my mind, yet this

activity dropped by the wayside as life got busier. Maybe we don't hear about these things enough because if we do engage and feel a beautiful poem through our imagination, or feel elevated through a genuine beautiful painting – it takes time and effort to create the space in everyday living in the first place and when sharing with others, it is still a subjective experience. This experience may touch one person but not another in the same way depending on the openness of the heart and acknowledging the uniqueness of each one of us.

There is a beauty in poetry and how it makes us feel. Words may fail to express what can come into play through this activity. This type of resonance is born in the heart and expands one's consciousness in the process. I have found reading just before bed, HPB's mystical gem; *The Voice of the Silence*, a truly magical gift we can give ourselves every day, in this busy and at times chaotic world. In raising our consciousness, we then in turn uplift the consciousness of the Whole of Humanity. HPB speaks of 'The Heart as the centre of the Spiritual Consciousness' and in terms of stages of development, '...but only when we reach that absolute Consciousness, and blend our own with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Maya [illusion]'⁽⁴⁾

Are we therefore not called to carve out a little space to renew spirit through Truth, Beauty and Goodness? Annie Besant had it right when she shared in her writings:

That is what I want you to help me in, to make the world beautiful for others.

References:

- 1) H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings XIII
- 2) Various quotes from H.P. Blavatsky
- 3) *Magic Casements* by George Trevelyan
- 4) *The Voice of the Silence* by Helena Blavatsky



Renée Sell, actively involved with the Theosophical Society's work for over 26 years is a former National Vice President of the TSNZ. She is President of Auckland HPB Branch and headed TOS NZ for over 19 years. Renée's emphasis continues to be on practical applications of the ancient wisdom teachings and sharing with like-minded seekers, the journey of theosophy.

Vegetarians Today

From the New Zealand Vegetarian Society, Margaret Johns outlines coming events to interest young and old.



The month of May each year sees the launch of the NZ Vegetarian Society Think Kind Competition for school students. Students up to Year 13 can choose any project to submit, such as an essay, a short film/video, a poster/mural, a scratch coding project, a speech or a dance, a school fundraiser, or a petition, etc., as long as the topic relates to being kind to animals. Every student who enters receives a certificate and a Hell Pizza voucher. The top ten finalists receive a prize pack and the overall winner is determined by a people's choice vote in October (World Vegetarian Month), and is announced on 1 November, World Vegan Day.

The entry that wins the People's Choice Award receives \$1,000 for their school. A huge variety of entries are received and last year's winner came from Palmerston North Girls' High School – Lori Boghossian produced a clever StopMotionAnimation about being kind to all creatures.

Why not encourage any students you know to get involved and enter, or talk to your local school about the competition and suggest it as a great creative opportunity for their students? More details are available on the website <https://www.vegetarian.org.nz/think-kind>

The world certainly needs all the kindness and compassion we can encourage at the moment, every thought, word and action, in fact every step towards a harm-free life, helps the world become a better place.

Remember the 21-Day Plant Based Challenge for a supported introduction to a plant based way of life, and there are also a huge number of recipes available on our website: <https://www.vegetarian.org.nz/veg-living/recipes>

RATATOUILLE! - a simple recipe to try (Serves 4)

- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 450g onions, peeled & chopped
- 450g red/green or yellow peppers de-seeded & chopped
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper
- 2 garlic cloves
- 450g aubergines
- 700g tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- 450g courgettes, cut into even sized pieces
- Chopped fresh parsley

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and put in the onions and peppers. Cover and cook, without browning for 10 minutes (low heat). Add the crushed garlic.

Cut aubergines into 1cm dice and add to pan with courgettes. Stir well, cover again and cook gently for a further 10 minutes.

Add tomatoes, salt and pepper, cover and cook for a further 10 minutes or until all vegetables are tender. Check the seasoning add a grinding of pepper and serve with chopped parsley on top.

Note: Two or three sticks of celery chopped into small pieces can be substituted for the courgettes. A 690g jar of Ceres Organic tomato pasta sauce can be used instead of chopped tomatoes. Tasty served hot or cold and also freezes well.

1) Recipe from Rose Elliott's Vegetarian Kitchen



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 lending library at TSNZ national office by contacting the librarian by email: library@theosophy.nz or telephone (09) 523 1797. The library is open on Wednesdays or by appointment on a Thursday.

Cost to members is the return postage of books. Non-members may join the library for a joining fee of \$50.

Vasanta House Accommodation

Short stay accommodation is available at TSNZ National Section, Vasanta House in Epsom, Auckland. Rates vary for members and non-members. The house requirements are vegetarian, smoke-free and alcohol-free. At certain times of the year Vasanta House is closed for events, Board and Management meetings etc. For bookings and more information please email the office at: office@theosophy.org.nz

*Art is the stored honey
of the human soul.*

Theodore Dreiser

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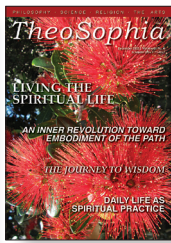
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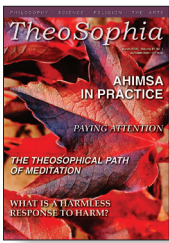
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Theosophy

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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A close-up photograph of a bumblebee in flight, positioned to the left of a pink flower. The bee is black and yellow with a white patch on its abdomen. The flower is light pink with five petals. The background is a soft-focus green and purple, suggesting a garden setting.

Words to reflect on from
Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

Nature gives up her innermost secrets
and imparts true wisdom only to them
who seek truth for its own sake
and who crave for knowledge
in order to confer benefits on others,
not on their own unimportant personalities.

Lucifer, Sept., 1890

Art enables us to find ourselves
and lose ourselves at the same time.

Thomas Merton



June 2026