

THE THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY
IN CANBERRA

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The Theosophical Society in Canberra is not responsible for any statement in this newsletter. Views expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Society or the Editor.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The following extract is from the diary written by Peter Fokker's father in a Japanese prison camp on the island of Java. He died there in November 1944, but had been able to keep his diary right up to that time - friends smuggled it out after the war and gave it to Peter's mother. Henny Fokker is transcribing from the original and translating it to English for future generations.

FROM STORIES MY FATHER WROTE

The Djojobojo, whose name translates to *Keeper of the Crocodiles* lived somewhere around the year 1135 and was a prince of a kingdom located in central Java. He eventually abandoned his royal life-style and withdrew to the jungles of Java and became an ascetic. In the forests he had a vision which enabled him to foretell the future of the Javanese people. Java had by then increased in population to become the most densely inhabited island of the archipelago and the interest in his predictions revealed the yearning of the Javanese to be the masters of their own destiny.

Djojobojo saw a future with the demise of the Hindu religion on Java and the rise of Islam. He saw Java being split into four kingdoms or sultanates, and the coming of an 'albino buffalo with cat eyes' - the Dutch who remained there for 350 years. He saw trading ships moving by secretly powered engines, railway trains moving by means of water and fire riding on steel roads, *grobaks* or bullock-carts moving by their own power and driving on paved roads even in the mountains. He saw coins made from gold, silver and copper with a hole in the centre. He saw two queens ruling. During the rule of the first queen, Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, the *orang tjebol* the 'short man' or 'dwarf' - the Japanese army conquered the kingdom, but left after a short time, having caused mayhem and destruction. The kingdom was then given another name by the *orang tjebol* - Indonesia. After the *orang tjebol* left there was a short period of war when the sons of the kingdom ruled. Afterwards the government was handed over to the *keboh boelit* or indigenous people. According to the predictions, in 2050 someone will declare himself *Ratoe Adi* or rightful king and will chase the foreign influence from the kingdom.

This mediaeval story struck a chord with my father, who was imprisoned in Java by the Japanese in the 1940's. He yearned for freedom, but was still able to commemorate the 67th birthday of the Theosophical Society on a beautiful tropical moonlit night 17 November 1942 in the camp. He wrote *Omnia Vincit Amor* or love conquers all, still believing in it. He dreamed of celebrating the 80th birthday of the Theosophical Society in Adyar and thought that George Arundale would have passed away by then and that perhaps Rukmini Devi would be the International President.

(Continued on page 3)

Notes for members and friends



2010 Convention

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The 2010 TS convention will be held from

Saturday 16 to 23 January 2010 at

Maritime College—Launceston
Tasmania.

Theme: Divine Wisdom in Art, Science and Philosophy

Guest speaker: Edi Bilimoria, TS Education Coordinator

Registration forms were in the September issue of *T in A*.
and the convention programme will be published in the
November issue of *T in A*.

Springbrook 6-11 October

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Please note that Dara Tatray and Edi Bilimoria will
present the Springbrook Event from 6—11 October.

(Due to unavoidable circumstances it will not be
presented by Professor Krishna.)

**Human Transformation and the Enquiring Mind
At Springbrook Centre, from 6—11 October**

Canyonleigh 8 November

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At Bolitho House, Tugalong Road, Canyonleigh

Sunday 8 November

The sacred depths of Consciousness

Talks and dialogues—A day event exploring evidence
from philosophy, science and art to suggest that
Consciousness contains sacred depths.

Presenters: Dara Tatray and Edi Bilimoria

Registration forms were in the September issue of *T in A*.

Events in other TS lodges

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When visiting other States, check out the website of
other TS Lodges. You may be able to fit in a visit to a
Lodge/Branch seminar or talk which would be well
worth the visit. Addresses are at [http://
www.austheos.org.au/tsia-australian-directory.html](http://www.austheos.org.au/tsia-australian-directory.html)

(Continued from page 1)

Radha Burnier is related to Rukmini and is our present International President. So he got something right, but still could not know the future as well as Djojobojo predicted in 1135.

Welcome to our spring Newsletter.

Peter Fokker, President.

Note: Professor D. Hinloopen-Labberton wrote about this story in 1923. He was the first Secretary of the Theosophical Society on Java. He later worked for the US army during World War II translating Japanese into English.

SATURDAY DISCUSSION GROUP—15 AUGUST 2009

Evolution in music and spirituality—facilitated by Colleen Grafton-Green

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was sound. But in the beginning, before there were instruments of any form, was the Voice. The first form of devotional sound was by song – the Voice. Then came the instruments. King David had his famous harp and there were those inglorious trumpets which made the Walls of Jericho fall.

What then is the reason for music? Colleen who is an expert in Western music, which is a very small part of world music, talked about how the quarter-tone of Indian music affects the mental body; the third tone of Egyptian music affects the emotional body and the half tone of European music affects the physical body.



Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

In Western music, single-line music came first - with no harmony. Then came two lines, which supplemented each other, and then on to polyphony which has many lines - consisting of two or more independent melodic voices. A famous example of this music is that of the Italian 16th century composer, Palestrina, with his use of several harmonising lines.

Music started off as being horizontal, but with the advent of polyphony the lines merged and made harmony. Bach and Handel started to get 'vertical' and, when we arrive at the classical, this is where the vertical really started. With its use of harmony, Western music diverged from other music.

By the time we get to Mozart and Haydn we come to the classical period when orchestras were becoming bigger and louder. The harmonic structure would later begin to break down until, in the 20th century we lost our harmonic sensibility. Was modern discordant music meant to be temporary? It could be that it has the effect of breaking down rigid mental patterns

We learned that vibrations can also affect the human body, and some can be dangerous. In ancient times modes had a structural and spiritual significance; these would have an effect on the listener. We discovered that Bach, Beethoven and Mozart also had this system. Bach, for example, was very particular about the key he used, applying different keys for different moods. For example, *A Flat Major* makes one think of death and judgement. But all of this was lost – and is now being rediscovered!

We know that the sound of music does have an effect on humans and that its life energy affects the way we feel. The real purpose of music could be to show us something celestial and mysterious.

ANCIENT RELIGIOUS TEXTS OF INDIA

TALK BY SWAMI SRIDHARANANDAJI - 6 JULY 2009 AT CANBERRA TS

The Vedanta group to which I belong was initiated by Swami Vivekananda after he had returned to India from a tour of the USA and Europe, having addressed the First Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893. The Organisation was started in India in 1897 and is known there as Rama Krishna Mission and Ram Krishna Matt. The Mission is the philanthropic part of the movement and the Matt is the monastic side which builds up the character of young boys who want to dedicate themselves to the monastic life.

TS members will be interested to know that Swami Vivekananda and Mrs Annie Besant were contemporaries. They met several times. (*See page 7*)

Since its founding in 1898 the Organisation has grown to world wide status with nearly 150 registered centres and more than 350 groups - to keep alive the spirit of Vedanta and how the spirit can be practised in everyday life for social wellbeing. This is how I like to introduce the Organisation.

Today there about 2000 totally dedicated monks working all over the world. Many of those have grown old and infirm and one third of the total - those in the 35 to 75 age group - are the working core of this organisation.

I was sent to Australia in the year 2000. When we set up our centres outside India we do not call ourselves Rama Krishna groups – when Rama Krishna mission and Rama Krishna Mutt work outside India, they are registered as a Vedanta Centre, Vedanta Group, Vedanta Movement or Vedanta Society.

The word *Veda* literally means wisdom, or knowledge. We acquire wisdom and knowledge by interacting in this world through our five sense organs - our intellect comes into play and we acquire information, coordinate this in our brain and say “*Yes, I know. I know through seeing, through hearing; through smelling.*” That is one avenue of knowing.

There is another avenue of knowing, that is: *I know. I am. I exist.* For example - you are in a small room with no trace of light, no sound, no smell, no taste to put on your tongue and no breeze on your skin. The five avenues of acquisition of knowledge are at zero capacity in that room. Without your five sense you are spontaneously aware of your own existence, your Amness, without using your five sense organs.



Swami Vivekananda

To say that we have one avenue of acquisition of knowledge by only five senses is not correct. I am; my awareness of my Amness; my awareness of existence is fundamental knowledge from what all other knowledge develops. This is called knowing through revelation. It is revealing to me that I am. Who is this I? Am I this body? If we read the whole gamut of religious literature spread over several thousand years, we find that our ancestors were alert to their surroundings in nature - that they were observers of nature and admirers of natural phenomena. Because of their capacity to observe and their ability to acquire information through the five sense organs and because they then collated and tabulated this information they could see and understand the principles involved in the movement of external things, as for instance, the sunrise, and the waxing and waning of the moon

The land mass which extended right up to the border of today’s Iran - to the Vindhya Hills in India (not the peninsula, but the upper portion) and included Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, was known as Aryānām, the land of the Aryans.

The land where those Aryans lived was so fertile and the bounty of nature was so generous that they could have worked only three to four months a year and lazed away the remaining portion of the year. But not being lazy creatures, and having enough to survive on, they looked around the world in which they lived. The first indications of Vedic literature showed us they were observers of natural phenomena - they had the time, the energy, and the leisure and were goaded by their inquisitiveness to know why and how of everything.

They wrote down whatever was revealed to them, in the ancient Sanskrit language, which was different to the Sanskrit we know today. In that language we can see the first statements or experiences as expressed by our ancestors. The Aryans were amazed and surprised at how things happened around them. As observers of natural phenomena they graduated into appreciators, admirers, and then they showed their gratitude for the bounties of nature which kept their bodies and souls alive.

Moreover, the country had a cyclic, almost clockwork season – the summer monsoon, autumn, winter, spring. They observed the phenomena in nature and by observing the structure and routine movement taking place in nature they concluded that there must be a supreme intelligence which makes all of this move in a pattern. They came to the rational conclusion that there must a supreme being with infinite powers, infinite energy, infinite capacity. Why? Because the cosmos was infinite in dimension. If the creation is of infinite dimensions, the creator must be greater than its creation - sheer commonsense logic. When they were looking outwards, we find in the scriptures that a group came forward to say “You are watching external nature with great diligence and enquiry. But the natural force is working in me. I have light, I am living, I have my emotionality, I have my ingenuity, I have my indomitable will; these forces of nature are also working in me.”

A group of learned people was earmarked to tackle the questions *Who am I? What am I? What relations does this 'I' have with the cosmos and with the supreme being?* We find two distinct thought processes developing, starting with natural phenomena, slowly being carried on with a desire to know, to understand.

One group was interested in the sources of external nature, and how to understand them, since understanding a source can lead to managing that power. The other group wanted to learn about the human mechanism and the human psyche. Thus we find the Vedic literature prospering in both directions. They had no tools or implements - no instruments except their capacity to understand, to collate, to coordinate and to come to a rational logical conclusion. The resources available to them were their own talents. And the talents, as we know even today, were rationality, emotionality, ingenuity and indomitable will - the four instruments that humans still possess today.

These are the four tools with which human beings have prospered and which have been used in our progress from the dawn of civilization to the present time: the tools of human ingenuity human will power, human emotion and human rationality.

As a knife is occasionally sharpened to enhance its cutting power, they understood that they had to enhance their own cutting power, so to speak: their rationality, their emotionality, their ingenuity and their unstoppable will power. They had to develop the capacity to pierce through the curtain of ignorance: *I do not know, I do not understand*. Why do I not know? Because there is a limitation in me that stops me from knowing things properly.

We find that those outstanding thinkers were slowly trying to develop a methodology which would sharpen and purify these four faculties to the extent that what *I do not know* shrinks into

nothingness. This is the goal which they set for themselves. There must not be anything in this world beyond comprehension. I must hone my faculties, sharpen them purify them, make them absolutely penetrative so there is no area which is dark for me. And the research of managing the forces of external nature and the forces of internal nature of the human psyche went hand in hand.

The groups who had concentrated their attention on the forces of external nature became concerned about how the quality of life could be improved; thus the concept of medical care, medical and dietary sciences developed. A portion of the Vedic literature was diverted towards the science of keeping a human being healthy and effectively active. We also find the germs of astrology, astronomy and meteorology. Vedic literature now had two different avenues of questioning.

We find the précis of Vedanta philosophy through a prolonged well cultivated culture and with a disciplined approach. It will not be not revealed to you as you are today. It will be revealed to you when you have sharpened, honed, polished and perfected your attitudes, so there is no dissipation of energy which this biophysical entity generates. Vedanta is a climax of this knowledge where we have come to the conclusion that this *I* is nothing else but the concept of the spirit, the holy ghost, the essence known as the Divine. And who am I? I am a part of the divine, and the more I purify myself, the more I come out of the bondages of my misconception and identity with which I am not, I unfold my faculties and ultimately I say, *I and my Father in Heaven are One*.

Essentially we are that spirit known as the divine. Vedanta gradually excels in this psychological process, teaching you how to evolve into that revered wisdom of one-ness with the divine. Vedanta is a process of evolution and there is no cast iron system on how to reach that goal. As time changes and the borders of material sciences break we can work with our ingenuity on how to reach that goal.

After the *Vedic* period, the period of evolution of Indian thought was known as the period of *Sruti*, meaning to hear. At that time there were no writing instruments or printing presses, with the revelation being recited by the person to whom the mystery was revealed, in verse and poetry. Everything was retained by memory, with the wisdom being passed from generation to generation and each new student experimenting with this exercise, through his own ingenuity, appeared to achieve that goal. That is why in India, there is no limit to the way you reach your goal, according to capacity and likes.

It is not a personalised religion centralised around a person, it is a collective wisdom of a society which raised intellectual giants. They could pierce through the curtain of not knowing and that is what Vedanta is all about.

Today we are inheritors of a vast literature rotating around the wisdom of spiritual unity of the whole cosmos; we are the inheritors of that unity and if we can experience that unity our life leads to endless undisturbable peace, tranquillity, joy and ecstasy.

(Borrow the tape of the Swami's talk from our library.)

**Listen to Swami Vivekenanda's speech at the Parliament of World Religions
in Chicago in 1893 at You Tube key in the URL
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHgkOs9ZFvM>**

Dr. Annie Besant, Representative of Theosophy at the Parliament of Religion – Chicago, 1893

(on meeting Vivekenanda)

“A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrupt — such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Off the platform, his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race — the representative of the oldest of living religions, surrounded by curious gazers of nearly the youngest religion. India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her envoy and her son. He brought her message, he spoke in her name, and the herald remembered the dignity of the royal land whence he came. Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

On the platform another side came out. The dignity and the inborn sense of worth and

power still were there, but all was subdued to the exquisite beauty of the spiritual message which he had brought, to the sublimity of that matchless truth of the East which is the heart and the life of India, the wondrous teaching of the Self.

Enraptured, the huge multitude hung upon his words; not a syllable must be lost, not a cadence missed! ‘That man, a heathen!’ said one, as he came out of the great hall, ‘and we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us!’”

<http://www.vivekananda.net/ReminiscenesOnSwami/AnnieBesant.htm>



Annie Besant



Parliament of the World's Religions

3 TO 9 DECEMBER 2009 - MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Since the **Parliament of the World's Religions** was first held in Chicago in 1893, it has been held at various locations world-wide - Capetown, South Africa; Barcelona, Spain; Monterey, Mexico; and from 3 to 9 December 2009 it will be hosted in Melbourne, Australia.

The Parliament will run for seven days with approximately 450 events including keynote addresses, seminars, conferences, debates, performances, concerts and exhibitions, all focussing on seven major themes:

- Healing the Earth with Care and Concern
- Indigenous People
- Overcoming Poverty in an Unequal World
- Sharing Wisdom in Search for Inner Peace
- Securing Food and Water for All People
- Creating Social Cohesion in Village and City
- Sharing Wisdom in the Search for Inner Peace

Among the list of illustrious speakers will be His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama.

For registration, or general information on the Parliament, visit the website:
<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/>

A Canberra TS member will be there, among other theosophists, including Betty Bland, National President of the American Section who will assist in running one of the stands.

GRAHAM CROOKHAM EXPLORES THE INFLUENCE OF THEOSOPHY ON ART – MONDAY, 3 AUGUST 2009

At one of the Saturday afternoon TS discussions earlier this year, we explored the brochure *Theosophy and the Zeitgeist* (the spirit of our time), which presents the influence of theosophy on music, literature, art, science and social concerns. As I noted that the section on art included two references which I have in my home library I decided to explore the topic and would like to share with you a portion of that exploration.

The first reference was to a major exhibit, showing the influence of Theosophical and allied ideas on modern art – *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* – presented in Los Angeles, Chicago and the Hague in 1986/87. The second was a manifesto published by one of the giants of modern art, Wassily Kandinsky, namely the 1912 text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*¹.

Countless generations of artists have been intrigued by the mysteries offered by spiritual writings and belief systems. In the 1890s interest in the occult and mysticism fused with the genesis of abstract painting, then in its embryonic form. Kandinsky in Germany, Kupka in Czechoslovakia, Malevich and others in Russia, and Mondrian in the Netherlands created a pure abstract vision that embodied their involvement with esoteric thought. Their legacy was spread by many of their contemporaries to subsequent generations of artists who found new means to unite abstraction with mystical concepts, thereby creating meaningful images.

The exhibition *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* focused on this issue, demonstrating that the genesis and development of abstract art were inextricably tied to spiritual ideas current in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The exhibited art reflects a desire to express spiritual, utopian or metaphysical ideals that cannot be expressed in traditional pictorial terms.

Hidden Meaning In Abstract Art

The turning point for abstract expressionism occurred when its artists abandoned “trying to paint Art” and “decided to paint... just to PAINT”. The gesture on the canvas was a gesture of liberation - from Value. The canvas began to appear as an arena in which to act – rather than as a space in which to reproduce or “express” an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture, but an event.

The crucial role of theosophy in the emergence of non-representational art becomes increasingly clear. In a seemingly endless stream of publications, Theosophy provided artists with a wealth of artistically exploitable ideas and images. Most important was the interpretation of the spiritual as being formless in a physical, but not an absolute sense.

“The world reverberates; matter is living spirit. The universe is a single, living substance; mind and matter are *also* one; all things evolve in dialectical opposition, thus the universe comprises paired opposites. Everything corresponds in a universal analogy, with things as above as they are below; imagination is real; and self-realization may come by illumination, accident, or an induced state. The mystical-occult believer has direct access to the source. There is no need for intermediaries or authorities, as in organized religious institutions. Reflection becomes a commonly sought, private activity.”²

Among the theosophical ideas was the notion of vibration as a force producing all the shapes of the visible as well as the invisible world. In theosophical aesthetics, the work of art is in its own way a thought form, shaped by the artist’s thought vibrations and transmitting these vibrations to the beholder.

Sacred geometry: symbolism and early abstraction

For artists like Kupka, Mondrian, Malevich and Kandinsky, the purification of natural into abstract forms implied the proposition that geometric configurations function as paradigms of spiritual enlightenment. In this, Blavatsky must be considered a major synthesizer of numerological and geometric symbol systems.



In theosophical texts, the vertical line stands for male spirituality leading heavenward. Kupta's *Vertical Plane* series, all imply upward movement consistent with the principle common to artists' continuing activities as a medium and to the theosophical idea of ascent from the world of matter to that of spirit.

In Paul Ranson's *Christ and Buddha* 1891, (left) it seems likely that the five stylized lotus blossoms were meant to suggest the theosophical association of five with such connotations as microcosm and human intelligence, while the cross in any form connoted interaction of matter and spirit and thus represents an "image of the absolute".

HILMA AF KLINT (mediumistic)

Af Klint was evidently inspired by the evolutionary theories of Blavatsky, but she transformed them in her art. She was not able to discuss how and why she came into contact with the persons or forces that she referred to as her "gurus" or "guides", but they gave her a task to fulfill through her art: in 1905 she promised her guide that she would devote one year exclusively to painting a message to mankind. She fulfilled her promise in 1907/08. She always stressed that she was a tool for her guides and that her hand was lead by them – being constantly surprised by the results of her unconscious activities and unable to explain them.

PIET MONDRIAN (geometric)

For Mondrian, primary forms are those which are most removed from physical reality. As Plato put it "God geometrizes". Or as Madam Blavatsky put it; "Dots, lines, triangles, circles and finally spheres – why or how? Because such is the first law of nature, and because nature geomatizes universally in all her manifestations."



Mondrian: 'Woods near Oele' (1908)

His *Woods near Oele* contains such a studied opposition between the ascending lines of the tree trunks and the horizontal of the ground plane, that male-female, spirit-matter polarity may be assumed. This doctrine influenced Mondrian. Mondrian accepted the theosophical idea of the higher, ethereal planes penetrating the physical world, on whose surface the spiritual is thus reflected. For that reason the artist has to look "through the surface", which is possible because even as we behold the surface "the inner image is formed in our souls".

KANDINSKY (vibration, colour, music)

Kandinsky's 1912 publication *On the Spiritual in Art* is perhaps the most influential doctrine by an artist of the 20th century. The publication began the equation of abstraction, expressionism and mysticism in the minds of critics and the public, and Kandinsky is universally acknowledged as the father of abstract art. For this publication he was heavily indebted to Blavatsky and Theosophy.

His early efforts to free himself from the representational mode of painting were deeply influenced by Besant and Leadbeater's book *Thought Forms*. Kandinsky's paintings were very much a product of his close reading of these theosophical texts, and anthroposophical writings by Steiner and of the visual impression made by their illustrations.

From theosophy, Kandinsky took on the principle of vibrations. He believed that human emotion consists of vibrations of the soul and that the soul is set into vibration by nature. Words, musical tones and colours possess the psychical power of calling forth soul vibrations... they create identical vibrations, ultimately bringing about the attainment of knowledge. Kandinsky's expressed purpose was "to produce vibrations in the beholder, and the work of art is the vehicle through which this purpose is served.... Finer emotion consists of vibration, vibration shapes the work of art, the work vibrates, and the soul of the beholder is set into vibration".



Colourful ensemble

Kandinsky believed that spirit was in no way distinct from matter and the evolving world of natural forms. He believed that the concrete world embodies the spirit and that the concretion, or work of art, embodies the spiritual to be found in man and nature. This divine self awareness is predicated on the confrontation and interaction of contraries, whereby the undifferentiated One can manifest itself through division into two, revealing each aspect of itself in terms of its opposite.

In 1935 Kandinsky acknowledged that the universal laws of the cosmic world "are also the inner laws that govern the imaginative process through which unique works of art come into being. The artist, as micro cosmic creator, must actually experience these laws of nature in the creative process if he is to produce a genuine work of art. Spiritual energies reveal themselves in discrete, materialized forms in nature, and the physical universe, which includes man's artifacts, is the means through which the divine spirit may make itself manifest. With each new instance of materialization, the divinity discovers yet another facet to its limitless potential."

MYSTICISM, ROMANTICISM AND THE FOURTH DIMENSION

Ouspensky wrote "Nobody ever saw matter, nor will he ever – it is possible only to think matter. It is an illusion accepted for reality. It is the incorrectly perceived form of that which exists in reality. Matter is a section of something; a non-existent, imaginary section. But that of which matter is a section, exists. This is the real 4 dimensional world."

Blavatsky described the relation of man's astral soul to the world soul as follows "He is in it, as it is in him, for the world pervading element fills all space, and is space itself, only shoreless and infinite." (*Isis Unveiled* 1877)

By the beginning of the 20th century, the primary interpretation of the 4th dimension was an idealist philosophical interpretation of it as a higher reality beyond 3 dimensional, visual perception. With the transition to 4D consciousness comes a radical reversal of what had been seen in the 3D world as real and unreal or logical and illogical. In the 4th D, is the discovery that time and motion, as understood in 3D, has been mere illusions produced by inadequate perception of 4D extension. Only in the 20th century would abstract artists (like Malevich and Theo van Doesburg) succeed in depicting a gravity free, directionless space.

MARCEL DUCHAMP: ALCHEMIST OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Marcel Duchamp borrowed specific ideas from alchemy, but also made esotericism the essential basis of his iconography, expressing specific alchemical motifs both pictorially

and textually. A key work of Duchamp's career *Tu' um* was commissioned by a committed and outspoken adherent of theosophical beliefs (Katherine Dreier), and was designed to fit a space over her bookcase, possibly to complement the texts gathered below it.

NATURE SYMBOLIZED: AMERICAN PAINTING

Raymond Johnson founded a Transcendental Painting Group in Mexico in 1938. The group was influenced by Theosophy and Kandinsky. Johnson recalled that he experienced mystical sensations in 1929 and began a period of really abstract painting.



Nature Symbolized 2:
Arthur Dove

The group included Lawren Harris whose works appear strikingly spiritual—amazingly cosmic and symphonic and serve as manifestos about spiritual vibrations and the connections between above and below.

Arthur Dove's 1910 paintings are abstractions of organic process, visions of cause and spirit rather than outline and surface. They are creative inspiration in the spiritual experience of the natural world. The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable.

CONCLUSION

Experiencing art as well as creating it involves a process ultimately opposed to communication as it is understood now. Authentically spiritual abstract art does not so much communicate as “induce an attitude of communion and contemplation”. It offers an equivalent of what is regarded as a part of religious life: a sincere and humble submission to a spiritual object, an experience which is not given automatically, but requires preparation and purity of spirit. It is primarily (in this art) that such contemplativeness and communion with the work of another human being, the sensing of another's perfected feeling and imagination, becomes possible.

The most significant abstract art today reflects an inner conflict between the socially encouraged will to conventional communication and the personal will to spiritual experience.

Alfred Jensen - It is necessary to find that lever of consciousness which will change a blank painted fabric into a glow, perpetuating itself into the memory. Only when “the spectator himself, growing more intent on the colour vibrations, learns to discount the surface, (so that) the whole painting ceases to be, as a concrete thing”, does its *mystical* or *spiritual* character, its *transcendental beauty*, become evident.

¹ See website at <http://www.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/phil%20of%20art/kandinskytext.htm>

² *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* - Maurice Tuchman, published by Los Angeles County Museum of Art

For reasons of space, Graham's paper has been abridged. The full length paper will be sent to anyone, on request. Among other items, the complete version explains Kandinsky's colour theory in detail.

Barbara Harrod, a stalwart member of the TS and of the newly formed TOS group in Canberra will be spending time at Adyar to work at TS Headquarters. All our best wishes go to Barbara for this new project and our thanks for her long running assistance, support and friendship.

LIBRARY NEWS
THE OBJECTIVE OF THE LIBRARY IS TO SUPPORT THEOSOPHICAL STUDIES

The library is open before Monday night meetings and librarian, Henny Fokker, is available to assist at other times. The Librarian's current list features the topic of reincarnation.

Reincarnation explored - John Algeo

ALG 1

In this exploration of people having many lifetimes, John Algeo comments on some of the questions most frequently asked. Who believes in reincarnation? What reincarnates? Our physical body? Our emotional or our mental body? Our Consciousness? How long is it between lifetimes? Where will I be born next time? Why do we reincarnate?

Reincarnation - Annie Besant

BES 89B

Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 to 1933, was described as a 'Diamond Soul' for she had many brilliant facets to her character. As a spiritual teacher she inspired thousands of men and women all over the world. She was an outstanding orator of her time, a champion of human freedom, educationist, philanthropist and author with more than three hundred books and pamphlets to her credit. This volume was the second in a series of Manuals designed to meet the public demand for a simple exposition of Theosophical teachings.

Coming back: The science of reincarnation – A.C. Bhaktivedanta

BHAK 1

Life does not begin with birth or end with death. Exactly what happens to the self after leaving its present body? Does it enter another body? Must it reincarnate forever? How does reincarnation really work? Can we control our future incarnations?

Reincarnation explained - Chris Butler (Jagad Guru)

BUTLE 1

Explains the who/what/how/why of reincarnation, plus questions and answers on reincarnation.

Reincarnation: The hope of the world - Irving S. Cooper

I.COO 3

Published in 1918: the Theosophical Society considered it as its duty to present the vital truth of reincarnation free from misconceptions and superstitions.

Reincarnation: The Phoenix fire mystery - Joseph Head and S.L. Cranston

HEA 1

An East-West dialogue on death and rebirth from the worlds of religion, science, psychology, philosophy, art, and literature, and from great thinkers of the past and present.

Reincarnation, fact or fallacy? – Geoffrey Hodson

HOD 5A & HOD 22

An examination and exposition of the doctrine of rebirth.

Twentieth century question – Reincarnation - Theo Stanley Hughes

HUG 2

Into whatever part of the world you are born, whatever circumstances you have and whatever you inherit and adopt from the race, nation, organization or family to which you belong, you, as an individual, cannot be explained by any combination of these. Two people can have some or all of these in common for the same period of time and yet be obviously different in character, temperament, habits, interests and achievements.

**You can borrow audio CDs of the Theosophical Convention held in Perth
in January 2009 from Henny.**

**TS SUBS FOR THE YEAR ARE DUE—IF YOU STILL HAVE TO PAY, KINDLY CONTACT
TREASURER, TONY FEARNSIDE**



The Theosophical Order of Service **Representing theosophy in action on a daily basis.**

The TOS was founded by Annie Besant in February 1908

What we did with our funds

In August we sent \$180 to the National TOS; this had been collected mainly from our small box at the Monday meetings. \$150 of this was for sponsorship of a girl student attending the J S Cambridge Secondary School in Karachi. Bazla is now 16 and we have had the fortune of sponsoring her for some years. Canberra TS sponsors one student but anyone who wishes to do so, could sponsor individually. As mentioned, the yearly amount is \$150 per student. Many students finish their schooling and go on to get a university degree (as did the other student we sponsored) and are able to improve their lives and those of their families.

The remaining \$30 was sent to the Pakistan Home Schools project which gives an education to children who would otherwise be deprived. This project trains women to teach a small group of students in her home and provides the necessary equipment. See the Pakistan TOS website at <http://www.tospakistan.com/> for more information on this project. Our funds are now depleted and we are relying on more contributions to keep up the sponsorship.



Birthing kits for Afghanistan

In a recent TOS Australia newsletter, news item told how Perth TOS has been providing Birthing Kits to Afghanistan through SAWA (Support for Women in Afghanistan). In the villages of Afghanistan childbirth can be a life-threatening experience. Often routine medical examinations are not allowed by male doctors to monitor pregnancies and there are few women doctors. Lack of hygiene can pose a serious threat; in Afghanistan a woman dies during childbirth every 28 minutes.

A birthing kit has been developed that consists of a 1sq metre plastic sheet for the mother to lie on, a piece of soap, two rubber gloves, three gauze squares, three cord ties, two plastic clamps and a sterile scalpel blade, all contained in a small press-sealed plastic bag. The total cost is one dollar, enough to save one woman's life through clean conditions during childbirth. Thousands of kits have been delivered in 2007, 2008 and the first half of 2009, and thousands more will be delivered in the future.

Wrap with Love squares

If you enjoy knitting, you could contribute to the Wrap with Love project by knitting a few squares (25 x 25 cms in 8 ply yarn/wool using 4 mm needles, in garter stitch). Blankets of the brightly coloured squares were distributed during the Victorian bushfires and the Queensland floods, and were sent to Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Highlands of Papua New Guinea, Mongolia and many other countries.

SOME LOCAL NEWS

- We have started our monthly TOS meetings with a very small group. The meeting will be held after the study group on the third Monday of the month. *Janice*

**THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN CANBERRA
PROGRAMME**

| | | | |
|----------|--------|----------------------|---|
| Monday | 12 Oct | Joy Miller | My Dreaming (a personal journey) |
| Saturday | 24 Oct | Excursion | Visit to Sunnataram Forest Monastery, near Bundanoon (full day) |
| Monday | 2 Nov | Brian Parry | Blavatsky and Krishnamurti |
| Monday | 23 Nov | AGM | Annual General Meeting |
| Monday | 7 Dec | Brenton Phillis | Egyptian wisdom and its influence |
| Sunday | 13 Dec | End of year function | End of year function |

Information on future talks will be in the next newsletter

Our public meetings are usually on the **first Monday of the month at 8.00pm** and discussion group meetings are usually on the **third Saturday at 2.00pm**.

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are at the **Friends Meeting House**, at the corner of Bent and Condamine Streets, Turner.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME, PLEASE BRING FRIENDS.

Gold coin donations are requested at our meetings

We rely on these donations to cover the cost of renting the Friends Meeting House for the evening and they are sincerely appreciated.

The Theosophical Society in Canberra, through the Australian Section, is part of the world-wide Theosophical Society which has its headquarters in India. The Australian Section publishes the quarterly *Theosophy in Australia*, arranges annual conventions, schools and retreats and facilitates a network of regional lodges and branches. Members of the Canberra Branch receive a newsletter, and have access to a library of over 1,000 books as well as audio cassettes and video tapes. The Canberra Branch arranges monthly public meetings, workshops, study groups, occasional activities for members and discounts at the Adyar Bookshop in Sydney.

Annual fees for the Theosophical Society in Canberra:

Single: \$50, **Couple:** \$90, **student/pensioner*:** \$40

Joining fee: \$5, **Associate member:** \$10, **Friends donation:** (suggested) \$20

Library: no charge for members; \$10 for non members (reimbursed on return of book).

* Number of concession card required: as per National Executive Committee minutes of July 2004