

THEOSOPHY DOWNUNDER

Newsletter of the Theosophical Society (Pasadena) Australasian Section
No: 111 December 2013



“The beach rustles with the noise of broken coral as gentle waves lap at the beach on Fitzroy Island just off Cairns, in tropical Far North Queensland. Not too long ago these coarse remnants were delicate corals resplendent with beautiful colours, and future days will make them but grains of sand. The cycles of life and death and renewal roll on like the waves and tides” – photo and caption by Stefan Carey, Melbourne, Australia.

CONTENTS

Spiritual Voyagers – based on comments by G de Purucker.

Australian News.

Pay It Forward – Amanda F. Rooke.

Pilgrimages: the Mystic Journey – Jennifer Pignataro.

International News.

From Desire Mind to Compassion Mind: Part 2: How Can We Manage Desires? What the Major Religions Have to Say – Andrew Rooke.

Book Reviews:

The Esoteric Tradition – G. de Purucker - New 3rd & Revised Edition.

Odsmal: the Unseen Reality - Guðrún Kristín Magnúsdóttir.

Odyssey of Your Soul: A Voyage of Self-Discovery - Elizabeth Clare Prophet.

From Our Readers:

Asylum-Seekers: a Test for Compassion – the Choice is Ours – Roza and Margarita Riaikkenen.

The Swastika – Left or Right? – a quote from Dr G de Purucker.

Now for the Good News – Heathclyff St James Deville.

The Search for ‘Me’ – Don Shepherd.

Obituaries: Joop Brakel, KittyBijl, and Klara Baer.

SPIRITUAL VOYAGERS - based on comments by G de Purucker.

The theme of this issue is ***Pilgrimage***, the sometimes dangerous and demanding journey to a holy place that a person may undertake perhaps, once in a lifetime. Have you ever thought that we are all really spiritual pilgrims even though we stay safely at home in our daily routine life?



Stepping outside of home, take a walk in the park and be refreshed with the sights and sounds of nature – trees, grass, people taking dogs for a walk happy in the natural environment away from the stresses of city life for an hour or so. Have you ever considered that from the point of view of Theosophy, the very atoms of each rock, plant, animal, and person you see are spiritual consciousness centres, or *Spiritual Monads*, on their own vast pilgrimage to self-awareness?

The spiritual monads of kingdoms below the human are said by Theosophy to be more alike to each other than the more spiritually self-conscious and therefore more individualized monads of the higher kingdoms of life – compare minerals of different kinds, plants of different orders, genera, etc., animals of different species, families, etc. – with the individuality apparent in humans. Yet at their heart, they are like us humans, all spiritual monads travelling through space and time struggling to express themselves more fully as their spiritual monad's 'vehicles' become more greatly individualized.

The spiritual monad doesn't transform into the higher kingdoms of life. It enters each kingdom, or classroom of life, when it has learned the lessons of the previous class and when it needs a more developed 'vehicle' suitable for the next class higher up. It always retains its inherent individuality or '*swabhava*' which it brought into this universe at the very beginning of this vast journey – the same for us!

We are all Spiritual Voyagers in Space and Time on an eternal pilgrimage of greater understanding and individuation.



If we are all spiritual voyagers on a Cosmic Pilgrimage to greater understanding and Individuation – how can we all end up working together and become as One?

The kingdoms of life higher than the human are more faithful to the sweeping essential nature or '*swabhava*' of their respective Spiritual Leaders or 'Hierarchs' (also called in Theosophy, 'Silent Watchers') than we are in the human kingdom.

These higher kingdoms are becoming more fully self-conscious divine or spiritual egos – Co-Creators with Nature – and thus their subservience to their Spiritual Hierarch is a glad and willing one – compare with beings below the human which are blindly and unconsciously submissive to their respective kingdom Hierarchs/Gods because they have not a sufficiently evolved sense of *Egoity* to become intellectual rebels against Nature as men so often exhibit.

Thus the Monad evolves – starting with unselfconsciousness – then assertive self-consciousness as a Man – then transformation of rebellious self-consciousness so evident amongst humans now, into divine and Buddha-like self-forgetful subservience to, and co-operative endeavour with, the divine will of the 'Silent Watcher' of our human Hierarchy.

How can we measure up to this challenge in our daily lives here and now? There is an old Christian saying: "**Not My Will But Thine be Done**" – not the will of the ordinary, selfish mentality that we mostly live within, but rather, the will of the Inner Divinity, which guides and leads, urges and impels us to live better constantly – that is the way forward!

*This article is based on comments by G. de Purucker in his **Studies in Occult Philosophy**, available as a printed book from our Library or free online at:*
<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/soph/sop-hp.htm>

“...the Sacred Pilgrim is voluntarily exiled from his home as long as he is entombed in material life together with his "child" who does not yet recognize his true nature. The child must traverse the roads and byways of life marked for him by the wheel of rebirth

that he keeps turning by his never-ending generation of causal acts and the reaping of their effects. This "cycle of necessity" will continue until he is able to rise from the "roofed-in cave" -- enmeshment in the matter-side of his nature. In the meantime, the divine element in us waits, and waits . . ." – I.M.Oderberg – *The Sacred Pilgrim in Greek Thought – Sunrise, November 1977* available online at:

<http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/world/med/my-imo2.htm>

AUSTRALIAN NEWS

Meetings in Melbourne December 2013 through April 2014: all held at the Theosophical Society (Pasadena) Library Centre, 664 Glenhuntly Rd., South Caulfield, Melbourne (Tel: 0400942613) on Saturdays commencing at 2pm. The Centre is open between 1-6pm the day of the meeting. **PLEASE NOTE: ALL MEETINGS NOW START AT 2pm NOT 2.30pm.**



Sat. December 7th, 2013, 2pm: Fiction as a Pathway to Spiritual Understanding: *Azlander-Second Nature* – Gabrielle Brunsdon.

Study Group – Sat. December 14th, 2013, at 2pm: Psychism.

Sat. Feb. 1st, 2014, 2pm: Group Souls, Soul Groups, and Soul Mates: Do They Actually Exist? – Andrew Rooke.

Sat. Feb. 15th, 2014, 2pm: Study Group: The Two Paths.

Sat. March 1st, 2014, 2pm: The Druids – Heathclyff St. James Deville.

Sat. March 15th, 2014, 2pm: Study Group: The Paramitas.

Sat. April 5th, 2014, 2pm: Common Sense – Tony Downey.

Sat. April 19th, 2014, 2pm: Study Group: H. P. Blavatsky and The Theosophical Society.

The Study Groups are based on Grace Knoche's book: *To Light a Thousand Lamps* (2001) available in print from our library and free online at:

<http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/gfk-lamp/lamps-hp.htm>

Wednesday discussion group: at the TS Pasadena Library Centre 664 Glenhuntly Rd South Caulfield Melbourne. In association with The University of the Third Age (U3A) a series of lectures and discussions concentrating on comparative study of the religions and philosophies of India and Asia and Basic Concepts of the Ancient Wisdom including Universal Brotherhood; After-Death – What?; Dreams and the Astral World; Reincarnation; Karma; etc. Commencing in February on each Wednesday from 10.30am -12.30 and running through to October. Further information is available from Tony Downey on 9459.5067.

Email Addresses: in future years we will be sending this newsletter by email, so if you have not already done so, could you please send your email address to the Editor at: andrewrooke@hotmail.com

New on our website: our website is at www.theosophydownunder.org Recent additions to the 'Theosophy Downunder Library' section of the website are the following articles: Two articles by Nivard Vas - *Vedanta: a mystical Eastern philosophy* and *The Development of the Esoteric Tradition in the West*;

The Melbourne Library: we have a large collection of printed books and magazines at our Melbourne library and online via our website. These are available for loan at our meetings or online books are available anytime. New books in the library include: *The Esoteric Tradition* – G. de Purucker - *New 3rd & Revised Edition*; *Odsmaal: the Unseen Reality* - Guðrún Kristín Magnúsdóttir; *Odyssey of Your Soul: A Voyage of Self-Discovery* - Elizabeth Clare Prophet; *Supernormal: science, yoga, and the evidence for extraordinary psychic abilities* – Dean Radin; Two books by Dr Michael Newton – *Journey of Souls*, and *Destiny of Souls*; *Why Buddhism?* – Vicki McKenzie; *Egypt: the world of the pharaohs* – R. Schulz; *A Search in Secret Egypt* – Paul Brunton; *The Revealing Word: a Dictionary of Metaphysical Terms*; *Synopsis of Psychiatry* – Kaplan and Saddock.

‘The value of life can be measured by how many times your soul has been deeply stirred’ – Soichiro Honda.

PAY IT FORWARD – Amanda F. Rooke.

A friend told me about the new concept of ‘Pay It Forward’. If a friend buys you a coffee, rather than my buying one for the friend, I buy one for someone else.

This has a great affinity with the Law of Karma (action and reaction), and with the concept of merit through good works (known in Hinduism as ‘Karma Yoga’).

One day these ideas coalesced. A lady I know had made dinners for the elderly and those living alone, year in, year out, and had also prepared soup and bread meals after church on Sundays for the congregation. Unfortunately, this lady developed cancer but thankfully she underwent successful treatment.



She said to me, with a tear in her eye and a wobble in her voice, “And did you know, when I came back home, my freezer was stocked full with food!” The parishioners still bring her soup and biscuits. And with them, we remember the Biblical story, that if you meet a starving man, you don’t give him a profound spiritual discourse, you give him what he needs - a meal. Then you have the opportunity to discover what the Bible means when it emphasizes the ‘more than bread alone’ aspects of such compassionate acts. – **Amanda F. Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.**

For a heart-warming story on how the ‘Pay-It-Forward’ movement is now spreading around the world, please see: <http://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/family-life/hashtag-ajo-is-paying-it-forward.html>

In my case Pilgrim's Progress consisted in my having to climb down a thousand ladders until I could reach out my hand to the little clod of earth that I am. - Carl Jung.

PILGRIMAGES: the mystic journey – Jennifer Pignataro

Let’s start with a definition of the key term, ‘Pilgrim’, and later we will consider why a pilgrimage may be undertaken, and an overview of some of the great pilgrimages conducted by adherents of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. Furthermore, the five stages of a Pilgrimage will be explored. At the conclusion of this article there will be an examination of some of the deeper elements associated with the pilgrim. There will be a consideration of how the experience of pilgrimage will inevitably change the pilgrim from within and without, and that the five stages of a pilgrimage, assists in such a transformation.



According to Wikipedia, “a pilgrim, from the Latin *peregrinus*, is a traveller (literally one who has come from afar) who is on a journey to a holy place. As we will see during the course of this article, there are various reasons why people would embark on one.

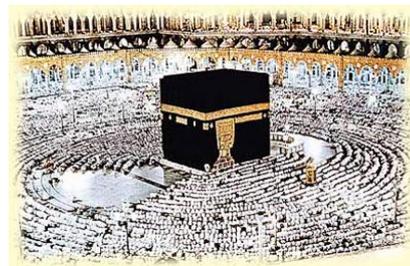
Secular pilgrimages: In modern times, pilgrimages are more secular than religious, the following are but some of the cultural/historical pilgrimages which are made: Graceland, home of Elvis Presley; Auschwitz Concentration Camp; Gettysburg Battlefield; Pyramids in Egypt; Jim Morrison's (lead singer of 1960s music group 'The Doors') grave in Paris; Ground Zero in New York; and the Gallipoli Battlefield in Turkey.

Motivations may be some of the following: Understanding of an event; seeking closure of a traumatic event; being physically present at the grave/house location/memorial of a person/event; the attraction of the Power of Place, and perhaps, a desire for life-changing experience.

Religious pilgrimages: Religious motivations may be for some of the following: A period of exile to seek closer communion with God/Divine; A break from the mundane world; Penitence; Petition for a miracle/cure for an ailment; Spiritual rejuvenation /purification/transformation; Lured by apparitions/miracles (Power of Place), and again, the desire for life-changing experience

There are many religious traditions which feature a pilgrimage to a place of special, spiritual significance. Usually, the devotee of a particular religious persuasion makes it his goal in life to make the great journey to the site he views as most reverential and sacred.

Islam: Those of the Islamic faith would make travelling to Mecca as a major life goal. 'Hajj' is Arabic for pilgrimage, which is considered to be a religious duty to be conducted at least once during a Muslim's lifetime. The Hajj is made to the birth place of Muhammad. At Mecca in Saudi Arabia is Masjid al-Haram, or the Sacred Mosque. This is the birthplace of Muhammad. The Mosque can accommodate up to 820,000 worshippers during the Hajj period. A number of rituals are performed over a week at the site to symbolise the lives of Ibrahim (Abraham and his wife). One of the rituals involves the Ka'ba. This is a cubical structure which is representational of where Abraham offered his son Ishmael as a sacrifice to God. The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia has kept records listing the numbers of pilgrims since 1920. In that year the number of pilgrims totalled 58,584, by 2010 it had grown to over 3 million people per year.



Hinduism: for Hindus, a once in a life time pilgrimage to the Ganges (Ganga) is the objective. The Ganges is the most sacred river to Hindus. The religious significance of the river takes place in late May or early June when Hindus celebrate the, 'Avatara', or the descent of Ganga from heaven to earth. The 10th day of the waxing moon of the Hindu calendar is considered to be the most auspicious day to be in the river. It is believed that for those who bathe in the waters of the Ganges River on this day, that there will be the remission of all sins and the action will bring about the liberation from the cycle of life and death, or plainly, the cessation of reincarnation. The largest pilgrimage in the world is the Hindu pilgrimage held every three years in different cities in India. It is estimated that over 100 million people visited Kumbh Mela in 2013 – the largest peaceful gathering in the world!

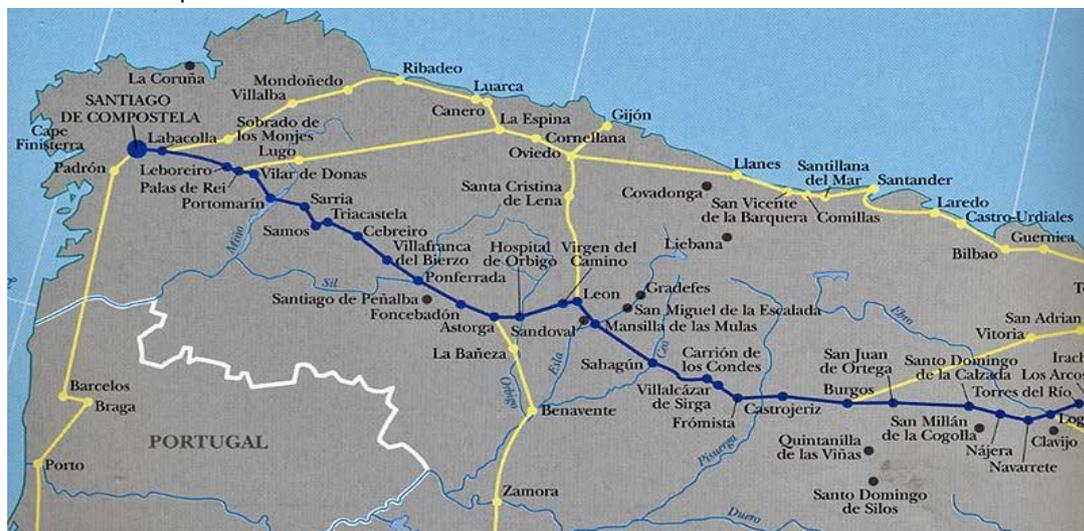
Christianity: along with the pilgrimages undertaken by the Christian monks in the third century to the East, by the fourth century in the West under Constantine, Christians began to visit in the footsteps of Jesus Christ:

“...as a form of devotion that engaged the entire being - the body as well as the spirit - the pilgrim was removed from his familiar environment. The person who had decided to endure the difficulties and suffering of the road, wished to be sanctified. Exiled, a stranger to those he met, the pilgrim's long march was a form of asceticism and penitence, aiming for purification and salvation of the soul, perfected by the contact with the holy places....During the high Middle Ages, the holy places of Jerusalem and the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome were the most popular pilgrimage sites of the West. The custom of bringing palm

branches back from Jerusalem gave the pilgrims to the Holy Land the name, 'Palmer's', while those returning from Rome were known by the term, 'Romieux', in France..."

After the 'invention' from the Latin, meaning 'to find', the relics of the apostle James the Greater in Galicia in the 9th century, Santiago de Compostela became one of the three principal Christian pilgrimage sites of the West...to go on a pilgrimage was, above all, to reach a sacred place, sanctified by the passage of Christ, the memory of a saint, or the presence of relics, where divine grace was likely to be manifested more than in any other place, particularly through miracles". *The Roads to Santiago de Compostela*. MSM, 1999, France: pp. 52-53 and pp. 52- 53.

For Christians, travelling to various holy sites in Europe, particularly the Vatican in Italy, Lourdes and Notre Dame in France, and in the Holy Land with the various sites such as Via Dolorosa, Sea of Galilee, and the site of Jesus' first ministry was the ultimate goal, yet for others it may have been a journey to Santiago de Compostela. With reference to Santiago de Compostela, Compostella means "Field of Stars" and the route retraces a path along the constellation of the Milky Way from the centre of the galaxy to the star Sirius. It is believed that this is the path of transcendence.



The road to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, one of the great pilgrimages of Europe.

In England up until the Middle Ages, the 'Pilgrims Way'- was the path to the shrine of Thomas A'Becket in Canterbury in Kent. Thomas A'Becket was also known as St. Thomas of Canterbury. There is the famous *Canterbury Tales* written by Geoffrey Chaucer at the close of the 14th century, about the personalities and experiences of the pilgrims; of which we have all come to recognise some fairly striking characters! This pilgrimage started from Winchester in Hampshire to the shrine of Thomas A 'Becket at Canterbury in Kent. Thomas A' Becket was canonised in 1173. Until 1538, his shrine was the most important in England outside of Rome. Thomas A'Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170 and was considered a saint and martyr by both Catholics and Anglicans. The historian William Coles Finch has stated that up to 100,000 pilgrims travelled to visit the shrine each year. However, other historians dispute such an estimate as accurate records were not kept to validate this number.

The experience of pilgrimage: Increasingly, much is being researched into the experience of a pilgrimage for both the individual and groups of pilgrims. Researchers have analysed that generally there are five stages of a pilgrimage. Additionally, a transformation occurs for the pilgrim, and in fact, most pilgrims largely undertake a pilgrimage because of the very fact that they wish to be transformed and altered via the experience of it. The five stages of pilgrimage are:

1. Pilgrim commits to making the journey

2. Pilgrim is involved with preparatory rites, ritual bathing, altering physical appearance – shaving head, fasting, abstaining from sexual relations.
3. Collecting evidence of the pilgrimage, ie. gaining a part of a religious relic, or verification of journey such as the ‘passport’ which is stamped on the Camino.
4. Arrival at destination, making appropriate preparations to enter site, or sacred location.
5. Conduct at the sacred site such as praying, chanting, singing, bell-ringing, etc.

The transformational nature of the pilgrimage experience ultimately brings about a change for the pilgrim. The pilgrim has a new identify both in relation to society and the cosmos. The ritual of undertaking the journey, undergoing each of the five stages of the pilgrimage, empowers the pilgrim. Such empowerment is incredibly healing. The empowerment alters the pilgrim’s consciousness.



The pilgrimage is a metaphor of life. The pilgrim endures the physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, individual and political trials and tribulations of life. The pilgrim has had the unique experience of being removed from familiar surroundings, the distractions of the mundane world and is transformed on every level. This is an unconscious process. It is no different for any of us today, when after returning from an amazing travel experience, views life and home, work and family with a much altered perspective.

It is this alchemical process, where the pilgrim, through the accumulative experiences on the path is changed. It is a mystical and mysterious exercise. It is a deeply moving, life-changing encounter with self, society and the pilgrim’s sense of the divine, his God.

Today with the advent of affordable air travel, more and more people are making their way to the pilgrimage of their choice, whether it be a religious pilgrimage, or a secular pilgrimage, each pilgrim is on a quest for transformation. – **Jennifer Pignataro, Melbourne, Australia.**

Desires become good desires only when we are pure. We have good desires and they become fulfilled by ‘fair winds in our sails’. – Gudrun Kristin Magnúsdóttir.

FROM DESIRE MIND TO COMPASSION MIND: Part 2: How can we manage Desires? What the major religions have to say - Andrew Rooke.

[With this issue we continue a three-part series on the transformation of Humanity’s current emphasis on ‘personal desire’, to being more ‘other centred’ compassionate people. This is said by most religions to be the core challenge to Humanity at this point of our spiritual evolution - Editor]

Social and Legal Methods: Given that our attachment to Desire for materialism can cause a multitude of problems (and let’s not forget, some advantages too!), how does society deal with Desire. The traditional way has been through outright punishment with



physical force and repression imposed by social and religious conventions. Both of these externally imposed controls come with a host of problems such as burdening the judicial system/overcrowded jails though to all the psychological horrors of repression seen in our psychiatric hospitals and catalogued by psychiatrists such as Freud. At the



other extreme, we are witness to the indulgence of Desires allowed by our modern free-thinking society, again with all the problems we see on the TV news and in the health-care system. In the final analysis, most of us seem to learn to curb our desires by endlessly repeating our mistakes until we learn better by suffering the results, ie. banging our stubborn heads against the proverbial brick wall!

Religious Methods – External Controls – Christianity and Islam: Mostly monumental religions have conspired with governments to control Desires by the use of fear based on concepts of divine judgement and retribution. Such religions impose prescriptive rules based on revealed scriptures such as The Holy Bible and The Holy Quran. Fear as a method of control takes many forms including after-death retribution – Satan and Hell. Fear of a monumental religious organization and legal system such as Shariah Law and social ostracism. Fear of being categorized as an outsider, or non-believer, and all that can mean for the quality of life. Fear related to the all-pervasive power of guilt and the attraction of the confessional. Many religions promote the idea that only the power of faith and surrender to an external God can overcome innate human failings manifesting as Desires.

Control of Desires according to Buddhism: quite the opposite approach has been advocated by Buddhism and Hinduism from India, and Taoism from China. These religions, and many other philosophies based on them, seek to strengthen our internalized control of Desires arising from attachment to materialism.

Buddhism looks to the source of Desires described as the Four Noble Truths:

1. 'Attachment' or 'Thirst' ('Trishna') for the objects of sense is the real cause of suffering and heartache in the world.
2. "Attachment' can be made to cease by:
3. 'Living the Life' conducive to breaking attachment to materialism by:
4. Application of the 'Exalted Eightfold Path'.



Along life's journey it is inevitable that we all encounter the 'Three Awakening Sights' – Disease, Old, Age, and Death – which eventually will cause us to realize the necessity of breaking the cycle of suffering through attachment to desires and thus to apply the Exalted Eightfold Path being:

Wisdom: 1. Right Views. 2. Right Intentions.

Morality: 3. Right Speech. 4. Right Action. 5. Right Livelihood.

Meditation: 6. Right Effort. 7. Right Mindfulness. 8. Right Concentration.

Further, Buddhism provides practical mechanisms called the six 'Paramitas' (Perfections) which are necessary qualities to achieve liberation from the Lower Desires. These are: Generosity, Ethical Discipline, Patience, Joyous Perseverance, Meditative Stabilization, and Wisdom. In the words of the great Tibetan Buddhist spiritual teacher, Tsong-Kha-Pa, explaining the Paramitas:

"Why should we develop these particular qualities along the Path of spiritual learning? To achieve the aims of others for spiritual understanding you must first help them with material goods as they won't appreciate spirituality if they have an empty stomach! Since no benefit will come from **Generosity** accompanied by harmfulness towards living beings, you need **Ethical Discipline**, which has great purpose for others; this is the state of desisting from harm to others and the causes of harm. To bring this to its full development, you need **Patience** that disregards the harm done to you. You need to develop the ability to fix your mind on your ideals so you need to develop **Meditative Stabilization**. Calmness and single-mindedness in the service of others lead to **Wisdom**. None of this is attainable by laziness, so you need **Joyous Perseverance** in pursuit of wisdom through service to others and so this

quality is the basis of the other Perfections.” [These comments are based on Tsong-Kha-Pa’s *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*].

A tall order you might say! Let’s sum it all up with a little story from the Buddha’s life which could apply to all of us: “A man asked The Buddha: “I want Happiness”. Lord Buddha said: First remove ‘I’ – that’s Ego. Then remove ‘Want’ – that’s Desire. See now you are only left with – ‘Happiness!’”

Control of Desires according to Hinduism: The central message of Hinduism is to be ‘Non - Attached’ to the result of our actions, and to materialism. Instead we should do the best that we can in any given situation and trust to the reality of the Law of Karma as to the outcome, and accept whatever happens. As they say in India “Manushya Yatram Bhagvan Kripa” – “A man/woman should try and then the God(s) will bless you”. The spiritual ‘flow-chart’ for achieving non-attachment is indicated by Lord Krishna in the Hindu religious classic, The *Bhagavad Gita* (The Lord’s Song) where he says to his student, Arjuna: “A person who attends to the inclinations of the senses eventually becomes absorbed in them at the expense of pretty much everything else. From this Absorption in the Senses is created Passion; from Passion – Anger; from Anger – Delusion; from Delusion – a loss of Memory and Discrimination; from the loss of Discrimination – the Loss of All!”



The great Hindu Indian statesman, Mahatma Gandhi, put this exalted advice in a more down-to-earth way when he encouraged us to - ‘make a straight line’ from our Desires, through our Thoughts and subsequent Actions, for he said:

Your Beliefs become your Thoughts,
Your Thoughts become your Words,
Your Words Become your Actions,
Your Actions become your Habits,
Your Habits become your Values,
Your Values become your Destiny.



Managing Desires according to Taoism: Taoist sage, Lao Tzu, affirms that people that take less will always have more. People with insatiable desires end up becoming obsessed with the object of their “affection” which tends to throw their energies, and their thought processes, out of control. To Lao Tzu, greed without limits constituted the worse of the vices. If you work towards being content with what you have, you would find that you already have enough to be happy. One can easily reach Peace of Spirit when you limit the amount of desires to manifest in your life. Lao Tzu says: “The sage does not hoard. The more he helps others, the more he benefits himself, the more he gives to others, the more he gets himself. The Way of Heaven does one good but never does one harm. The

Way of the Sage is to act but not to compete.”

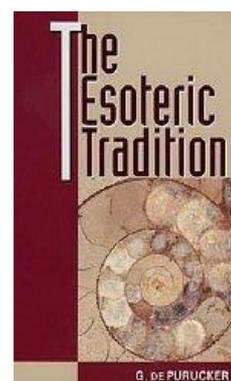
But how do you get to this point of detachment from desires when modern society is pushing indulgence constantly? It all seems so overwhelming! Taoism advises that it is always better to deal with facts and situations while they are small, before they become bigger and more difficult. If one is planning to reach a big goal, one should establish a series of small steps that would guide one safely to the destination. This is essentially the principal of ‘Kaizen’: progress through small increments. As Lao Tzu says: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” – **Andrew Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.**

Next Issue: Managing Desires - some theosophical perspectives.

Desires dictate our priorities, priorities shape our choices, and choices determine our actions – Dallin H. Oaks.

BOOK REVIEWS

***The Esoteric Tradition* by G de Purucker New 3rd & Revised Edition. Published by the Theosophical University Press, 2013. 6 x 9, 708 pages (single volume), bibliography, index. US \$27.00 paperback. ISBN 978-1-55700-217-4**



H.P. Blavatsky pointed to the fundamental concepts of *The Secret Doctrine* as comprising the principles of an ancient wisdom existing long before the dawn of history. Underlying and seeding the world's spiritual traditions, it is this doctrine and wisdom-teaching which G. de Purucker unfolds in *The Esoteric Tradition*. This new edition offers a broad, yet detailed introduction to theosophy, synthesizing philosophy, science, and religion in a way that enables the reader to see universes, worlds, humanity, and all nature as different aspects of one evolving cosmic pattern. And throughout the tapestry runs the thread of altruism and service as the way towards bettering all life. Topics include: what theosophy is and is not; the origin and structure of the universe; karma and reincarnation; cycles of human evolution; processes of death and rebirth; good and evil; divinity and the Hierarchy of Compassion; avatars, Buddhas, and Christs; mediums vs. mediators; the esoteric schools and the great teachers of mankind — these and much more contribute to the panorama of *The Esoteric Tradition*. Available in print from our online bookshop through Amazon books, our library in Melbourne and free online at: <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/et/et-hp.htm> and in PDF ebook versions. – from the *Theosophical University Press Catalog, Pasadena, USA*.

Óðsmál - The Unseen Reality: Understanding allegory and symbolic language of the myths and ancient poems: the science of consciousness in Heathenry – an illustrated dictionary on Norse and Germanic myths and poems, by Guðrún Kristín Magnúsdóttir (Göia goði). Published in Iceland by: Freyjukettir, 2013. ISBN: 9789935409843. Available from Amazon online bookstore, free as .PDF online at www.mmedia.is/odsmal/odsmal, or from our Melbourne library.

Imagine that it is a summer's day down at the beach and you are swimming along happily. Seagulls fly above; other swimmers and surfers play around you. All of a sudden the thought strikes you – all this hectic activity on the surface, but what's holding it all up? What am I actually swimming in? Then you look down at the water and make the brave decision to put your head under the waves and discover a whole new world down there supporting you as you swim blissfully along on the surface of appearances. *Óðsmál - the Unseen Reality* is an attempt to draw our attention to the existence of the unseen spiritual reality supporting this manifest world, and the moment of transcendence when we decide to plunge below the waves and explore this fascinating new world.

Guðrún is from Iceland, and has had an amazing life experience travelling in Europe, working in the theatre and the arts, and along the way has been strongly influenced by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement. All these influences come to bear in this new book with expert analysis of Norse myths, legends and epics such as *The Edda* and *The Hávamál* which are explained and compared with Sanskrit terms and



etymology. Throughout the book is illustrated in colour with Guðrún's own spiritual explanatory pictures, and the reader is referred for more explanations to websites and especially her series of short YouTube videos on many aspects of ancient Norse wisdom available on the YouTube search box by typing *Goiagodi* – getting: *Iceland Heathenry Chatter*. It is especially recommended for readers of this book to look at these videos to gain a deeper understanding of the author's understanding of this fascinating subject. The new

book, the websites, and the videos certainly provide a deep understanding of the subject initiated way back in 1985 by our own Theosophical Society International Headquarter's staff member, Elsa Brita-Titchenell, in her excellent book on theosophy amongst the ancient Norse, *The Masks of Odin*, which is available in print from our library or free on the net at: <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/odin/odin-hp.htm>

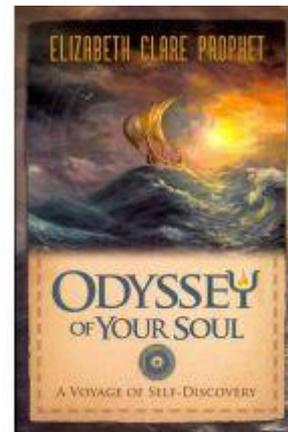
Unfortunately, contemporary films such as the blockbuster *Thor*, and especially video games like *Warcraft* and *MaxPayne*, have given the public generally a distorted impression of the Norse mythology. If we were to believe such a distorted view which began from the time of the Roman invasion of Celtic lands 2,000 years ago and was reinforced by the persecution of Paganism by the Christian church and now the video games of today, then we would say that the ancient Norse believed in warlike Gods and beautiful Goddesses with questionable morals. Nothing could be further from the truth as Guðrún explains that the Gods, Goddesses, and many other concepts of Norse mythology stand for profound ideas when properly understood. As the modern day science of quantum physics confirms, the world of matter that we take for reality, arises from a universal sea of energy in which we are immersed, of which we are actually made, and what we actually are as nothing else is – this is the 'Great and Holy Void' of Norse mythology, in their language – *Ginnungagap*.

We are on the Path to understanding this mysterious 'unseen reality' eventually through transcending our current view of reality and realizing self-consciously that we are all the Oneness. This book is an encouragement in this direction, but as Guðrún emphasizes, it is not enough just to read about 'Ginnungagap' – one must experience it by transcending. This experience enables our living a life consistent with an understanding of the unseen reality including helping others in appropriate ways to this understanding so we can all work together to mitigate the inner causes of the outer suffering we witness everywhere in our world.

The book not only deals with high philosophy but has practical advice on eating, reverence for animals on their evolutionary path, family life, gender equality, religious dogmatism, and many other issues of the daily 'reality' for most people today. This book is recommended for those with an interest in Norse mythology, Paganism, Heathenry, Asatru, and the science and processes of Consciousness. – *reviewed by Andrew Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.*

Odyssey of Your Soul: A Voyage of Self-Discovery by Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Summit University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-60988-025-5 284pp:

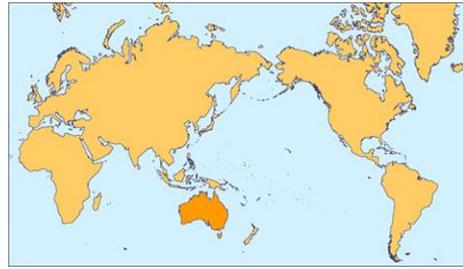
This is an extremely interesting book that takes the reader on a journey to self, using Homer's *Odyssey* (written before 11th cent. B.C.) for its guide. Each chapter looks at one of the journeys undertaken by Odysseus after the Trojan Wars. Odysseus' sets out with 144 men but after his journey he returns to his wife, Penelope, alone. This is an insightful book in the way that it weaves the trials of Odysseus' journey with that of our own spiritual life; his strengths and weaknesses reflect our own strengths and weakness. As such, by reading this epic Greek poem, we are guided into our own inner journey. Odysseus is a Hero of sorts, and who doesn't like a Hero! And his Heroism can make of us Hero or Heroine. I felt myself understanding more about why I am who I am as I read this book and reflected on the qualities that each part of the journey displayed. There are numerous exercises that, if attempted, will certainly cause a shift to occur in your thinking if not your daily life. I highly recommend this book, even if only to gain a deeper appreciation of Homer's *Odyssey*. Although, saying this, there is so much more to be had from *Odyssey of Your Soul* – *reviewed by Heathclyff St James Deville, Melbourne, Australia*



If you think that you are too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room! – Anita Roddick.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

World Survey of Religious Belief: a survey in 2012 by the WIN-Gallup organization of the religious beliefs of 50,000 people in 57 countries around the world indicates that 59% of people surveyed say that they are religious, 23% not religious but not willing to say that they are atheist, and 13% convinced atheists. Most people who list themselves as 'Atheist' are located in China (47%) and Japan (31%) and Western Europe (14%).



Australia's results were 37% religious, 48% not religious but not atheist, and 10% convinced atheist. The most religious countries in the world are in Africa with Ghana topping the list at 96% and Nigeria 93% with Australia coming in at number 51 of 57 countries at 37%! Worldwide, since 2005 religiosity has dropped by 9% whilst atheism has risen by 3%. It seems that despite the immense impact of technology and an emphasis on worldly affairs, the 21st century overwhelmingly espouses a religious faith and atheism is in a minority. The complete 25 page report on this survey is available at: <http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf>

Mental Disorders are the Leading Cause of Non-Fatal Illness Worldwide: reflecting the frequent turmoil in the thought life of Humanity in this age of Kali Yuga, mental and substance use disorders are the leading cause of nonfatal illness worldwide, with a global disease burden that trumps that of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diabetes, or transport injuries, new research shows. A team of investigators from the United States and Australia found that in 2010, mental and substance use disorders were the fifth leading contributor to death and disease worldwide and that at 40%, depressive disorders account for the largest proportion of this burden. The researchers found that mental and substance use disorders were the leading cause of 'Years Lived with Disabilities' worldwide. Depressive disorders accounted for 40.5% of 'Disability-Adjusted Life Years' caused by mental and substance use disorders, with anxiety disorders accounting for 14.6%, illicit drug use disorders for 10.9%, alcohol use disorders for 9.6%, schizophrenia for 7.4%, bipolar disorder for 7.0%, pervasive developmental disorders for 4.2%, childhood behavioural disorders for 3.4%, and eating disorders for 1.2%.

At the Day of Judgement, we shall not be asked what we have read, but rather what we have done – Thomas a'Kempis.

FROM OUR READERS: please write with your views on Theosophy or related subjects to the editor at: andrewrooke@hotmail.com

Asylum-Seekers: a test of compassion – the choice is ours: *A major issue for Australia and many countries around the world is how to handle the increasing volume of displaced peoples, refugees, or asylum-seekers. Asylum-seekers fleeing persecution, warfare, and the effects of climate-change in their own countries are often perceived by Australians and by many countries around the world, as a threat to the local economy and even stability of the surrounding countries to which they flee for sanctuary. Asylum-Seekers over the whole of Australia's recent history have been an important part of building the Australia we know. But - what of the future? As Roza and Margarita Riaikkenen point out...the choice is ours:*

Australia's persisting hard line towards the plight of asylum seekers can be seen as one of the riddles of our times. Its constancy shows that it is probably connected to the other problems of humanity, as it seems to contradict basic ethical and spiritual beliefs on which most people base their lives.

For those who accept karma and reincarnation, it should be clear that by rejecting a desperate plea for help they are sowing seeds of karma which will make them to experience a destiny of being rejected. For Christians and other followers of the Golden Rule: "whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them", it should be natural to answer a call for assistance. Atheistically inclined humanists and followers of most of other religions and spiritual teachings also have similar rules in their moral codes.

Despite these proclaimed convictions, most of humanity again and again is hesitant of how to treat those who come to their shores being desperate to find asylum. These people come to



us out of desperation, bringing with them the most precious treasure they have – their children – and a will to work and contribute.

It seems to us that this hesitation is rooted, like many other problems, in the lack of humanity's understanding of its inherent unity. We are used to divide people as "us" and "them". We then see "them" as impostors encroaching upon our lifestyle which belongs and should belong only to "us".

A boat loaded with Asylum-Seekers arrives off the tropical northern coast of Australia.

Humanity has already made its first determined steps into outer space. Now we can observe our Earth from the perspective of the vastness of space. The Earth from space is like a beautiful blue 'marble' hanging perilously in the surrounding blackness of space. From this viewpoint, the Earth is a tiny blue dot in the immensity of space, yet it is the only home for all of us. At the same time, humanity has developed common ecological, informational, economic, political and cultural problems, which it is able to solve only from the standpoint of unity.

Our common home, the Earth, is now in transition. It experiences climate change and cataclysms; many of its resources are getting scarce; humanity is beset by different sorts of conflicts. As a result, any of one of us as reincarnating beings, or of our descendants, may appear in a situation resembling the situation of current asylum seekers. We still have a choice: to insist on our division from the rest of humanity and therefore prepare ourselves and our children karmically for a future of mortal conflict for the last morsel of scarce resources. Or rather, we can expand our consciousness and start solving all the problems in unity.

For a start, we could stop seeing asylum seekers as "them", and instead of using our resources towards sending them to detention camps, where their mental and physical health inevitably deteriorates, apply these resources thoughtfully and creatively for their accommodation in Australia.

Australia still has huge undeveloped territories, and a rich history of multicultural immigration, which developed it into the beautiful country we all know. With modern technologies, determined labour and a creative approach, everything is possible. And who knows, in the situation of planetary changes, these developed new territories may become an important source of supply and centres of life for all people of Australia. It is only our choice that decides how everything will turn out – ***Roza and Margarita Riaikkenen, Melbourne, Australia.***

The Swastika: Left or Right? A member kindly sent us the following email in response to the recent interest in the pages of our newsletter in the ancient Swastika symbol:

"...I noticed one of your reader's thoughts on the right and wrong direction for the swastika. The following from G de Purucker may be helpful:

"In using the symbol of the swastika, in which direction should the arms be bent, to the right or to the left? Please explain its significance when one finds it with the arms bent either one way or the other. Is one aspect good and the other malevolent?"

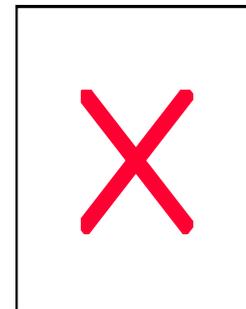
There is really no significance whatsoever — at least for present-day purposes — in which of the two directions the arms of the swastika may be bent over. H. P. B. in the beginning used

them one way, and in her later work she used them with the arms bent in the other direction; and I do not think that either form was deliberately chosen. It just happened to be drawn in the one or the other way each time. The value of the swastika is in its larger structural significance; and the way in which the arms are bent is of very little present-day significance.

However, answering the question more particularly: Suppose that we have the arms of the swastika bent towards the right, signifying that the swastika runs or turns to the left. Now this could possibly mean that the swastika is moving on the left-hand path; but it could also mean that the user is moving from the right-hand in order to help unfortunates on the left. Or, take it moving in the other way, from left to right. Someone here might say that this form signifies that the swastika is on the left-hand path and that it is trying to move towards, in order to injure, someone on the right-hand path; or one could say equally well that the user is on the left-hand path and is moving out of it into the right-hand path.

So, you see, as there are a number of different interpretations, that either way may be considered right, the matter reducing itself to a merely personal preference. Most of us prefer it in the form which we use when printed on most of our books and pamphlets, and usually in our seal (of the Theosophical Society).

The points of mysticism involved with regard to triangles are quite different, because here there is a very ancient and quite definite significance attached to the way in which the apex of the triangle points. If the apex of a triangle points downwards it signifies a falling or descent from spirit into matter, i.e., an attraction to the matter world; contrariwise, if the apex points upwards, it means a rising towards the sun or into the spirit, just as the flame of fire rises upwards and vanishes in a peak or point. The interlaced triangles do not signify the desire of anyone to move in either direction, however, but this figure merely picturates Nature's two perpetually opposing energies: the spiritual energy rising upwards, and represented by the triangle with its apex upwards; and the material or descending energy or energies going downwards, represented by the triangle with its apex pointed downwards. When these two triangles are thus conjoined, they are called Vishnu's, or sometimes Siva's, seal or symbol, or what the Westerners sometimes call Solomon's seal.



Of course I do not deny that with regard to the swastika, it is possible that careful and accurate archaeological research might prove that one of the two forms in the distant past was preferred by our own School; but this, I fancy, would not be very easy to prove, and it is only as a possibility that I point it out. At the present day I would not criticize anyone for having the bent ends of the swastika pointing in either direction, because one can find a good significance in either way, and an evil significance in either way. The real meaning of the bent arms of the swastika is motion, i.e., motion forwards, which means progress, evolution, combined of course with the other symbolism of the crossed lines, the vertical and the horizontal.

The three joined running legs which form the coat of arms of the Isle of Man are the same mystical idea of progress in one direction or another under another form, and a very graphic form, too. This interesting and curious symbol consists of three legs all running in the same direction at high speed and connected at the hip parts; and the distances between the three legs are equal around the circle, which means that each leg is separated from the other leg by an angle of 120 degrees, although the circle itself is not shown in this coat of arms or emblem — unless indeed the circle may be taken as being the periphery of the seal on which the symbol is engraved.”

Now for the Good News: *Sick of seeing bad news stories all the time in the media?*
Heathclyff St. James Deville has written with a positive perspective on the TV News:

“... Around the world people are becoming more and more motivated and making their voice heard. There are so many campaigns that you only have to think of an issue of concern to you

and jump on the Internet to find one that you wish to help resolve. Sometimes I think we are fed so much negative information that it can make us depressed and can turn us away from helping – ‘*It’s all so hard; so gloomy.*’ That is right but only to a degree. So please, get behind an issue that is impacting negatively on people, animals and/or the planet, and BECOME INVOLVED. Let’s not turn away for when we do – another positive voice is lost from assisting to decrease to negative, and thus, more people and animals suffer in the outcome. In the meantime, learn about the issue that speaks to you – and try to take on board any suggestions that may be suggested by a group that is highlighting the concern ...” - **Heathclyff St James-Deville, Melbourne, Australia.**

For those interested in the ‘Good News’ stories that often don’t find their way onto the front pages of the newspapers, why not try visiting “The Good News Network” at: <http://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/>

I searched for God and found only myself. I searched for myself and found only God - Sufi Proverb.

THE SEARCH FOR “ME” - Don Shepherd

Standing on the rooftop deck of our new home watching the bright orange light of the sun extinguish itself into darkness behind the western sky overlooking the mountains, Kenneth, my son, asked me the age-old question, “Who am I?”. Years before, I had posed the same question to a *dear* friend who, disregarding the best of my answers, kept pushing me one step



further all the while knowing that any definition of the self necessarily took one endlessly one step steeper into the foothills of his own being. When my son reiterated the question, I realized that each one of us, at some point in life conflicted by so much variety of feeling in his own nature, *must* ask this question and thus the search for “me” does not lead back to myself but to *ourselves* in the plural sense. My search is *their* search and so the search for “me” transforms into a study of the ocean of life that is common to all of us.

The view from Don’s rooftop in Las Vegas

In this ocean of life there is a stream of thoughts shared by each human being. This stream of thoughts, usually leading to a less-than-heroic approach to life, is generally seen as the inadequate “me”—we are so afraid living as it but too afraid to let it go since it is the only life process that we have known. But we have to let it go. When we let it go, we see that there is a grandeur of our lives—a life process—that does not come from the inadequacy of “me” but from our freedom to choose *how* we are going to live each day in the way that we envision it.

Plunging deeper into the ocean of life to find the source of this freedom to choose *rightly* that gives us majesty in our daily lives, we notice that the inadequate “me” with its variety of feelings and random thoughts disappears. When thoughts stop, the ideal “me”—a vast uninterrupted continuity sensed as the objectless-ness of *Space*—arises. Actually, “arises” isn’t the right word for in the perceiving of this state beyond the conceptual elaboration of fleeting and impermanent thoughts it becomes clear that the emptiness of Space was always there; it was always self-existent. And it becomes just as clear that the perception that allows Space to be perceived actually belongs to the nature of Space itself rather than any outside inadequate “me” seeing it. Thus, Space is two things: resting and seeing. And in the seeing of Space (with the ending of thoughts) one becomes Space itself because the quality of seeing belongs to *it*. This is the ideal “me”—resting and seeing but without self-identification in relation to anything in the phenomenal world—which is an effortless, illuminated knowing beneficent to others simply through the strength of its presence working in our lives, distinct

and transcendent from the variety of feelings of the inadequate “me” and yet making itself known as that mysterious unseen force that allows us—with nobility and grace—to choose how we are going to live each day in the way that we envision it.

Ironically, the search for “me” ends with both the inadequate “me” and the ideal “me” disappearing. Since the inadequate “me” appears through the power of the ideal “me”—thoughts emerging from Space—without ever being a part of the actual nature of the ideal “me,” it is impossible for the inadequate “me” to actually exist. Therefore, it disappears as a possible definition of myself. As for the ideal “me,” it is beyond a personal self; its resting and seeing is completely impersonal and thus it is actually a “not-me.” I cannot define myself in terms of a negative or non-existent and so it too disappears as a possible definition of myself. If both options are discarded, then what is left in answering the question, “Who am I?”

What is left is the wisdom of a dear friend who purposely evaded giving an answer to the question because he knew it was the journey that mattered; it was a journey of gradually giving up the “me” as we shed our thoughts and encountered our own emptiness—a condition in which nothing can be grasped as *myself*, a condition shared *by all* when the *time is right*.

With that thought, Kenneth and I, leaning forward on the railing edge of our shared rooftop deck, watched the sun slip behind the darkness. – **Don Shepherd, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.**

Theosophy Downunder is issued three times per year in April, August, and December and is edited by Andrew Rooke. We can be contacted at the Theosophical Society (Pasadena) Australasian Section, Library Centre, 664 Glenhuntly Rd., South Caulfield, Melbourne, Victoria 3162, AUSTRALIA. Tel: 0400942613 Email : andrewrooke@hotmail.com; World Wide Web homepage at: <http://theosophydownunder.org> Current and many back-issues to the year 2000 are available from our website. ISSN: 1835-5595 (print) and 1835-5609 (online).

Our International Leader is Randell C. Grubb.

OBITUARIES: Joop Brakel and Kitty Bijl: Two long-standing members of the Dutch Section, father and daughter, Joop Brakel and Kitty Bijl, passed away following illness on August 20th. Joop was a dedicated and beloved member of our theosophic family having stood firm through the years supporting the work. Together with Henk and Laura Vink they established the present Theosophical Library Center in Holland moving the existing library from their private home to a publicly available library centre where the theosophical work continues to blossom. Both Joop and Kitty leave a legacy of graciousness, loyalty, and love for all with whom they came in contact. The Dutch Section has lost two powerful contributors to the Work, but what a great example such 'quiet heroes' were and are to us who work for the same cause so far away on the other side of the world. Adieu, and travel safely on your wondrous pilgrimage amongst the stars.

Klara Baer: Distinguished member of the German Section, Klara Baer, passed to greater light on September 8th in Munich, Germany. In thought and deed the ideal of Brotherhood and Service were ever present in her life. Her love of Theosophy drove her to sponsor the work envisaged by HPB and her Masters in every way. Quiet and unassuming in her theosophical commitment she will always remain a great example to members who carry on her work in Germany and around the world. We look forward to the future when we shall once again pick up the threads of the Work we all love so dearly – until then “Auf Weidershen” dear friend of Theosophy.



