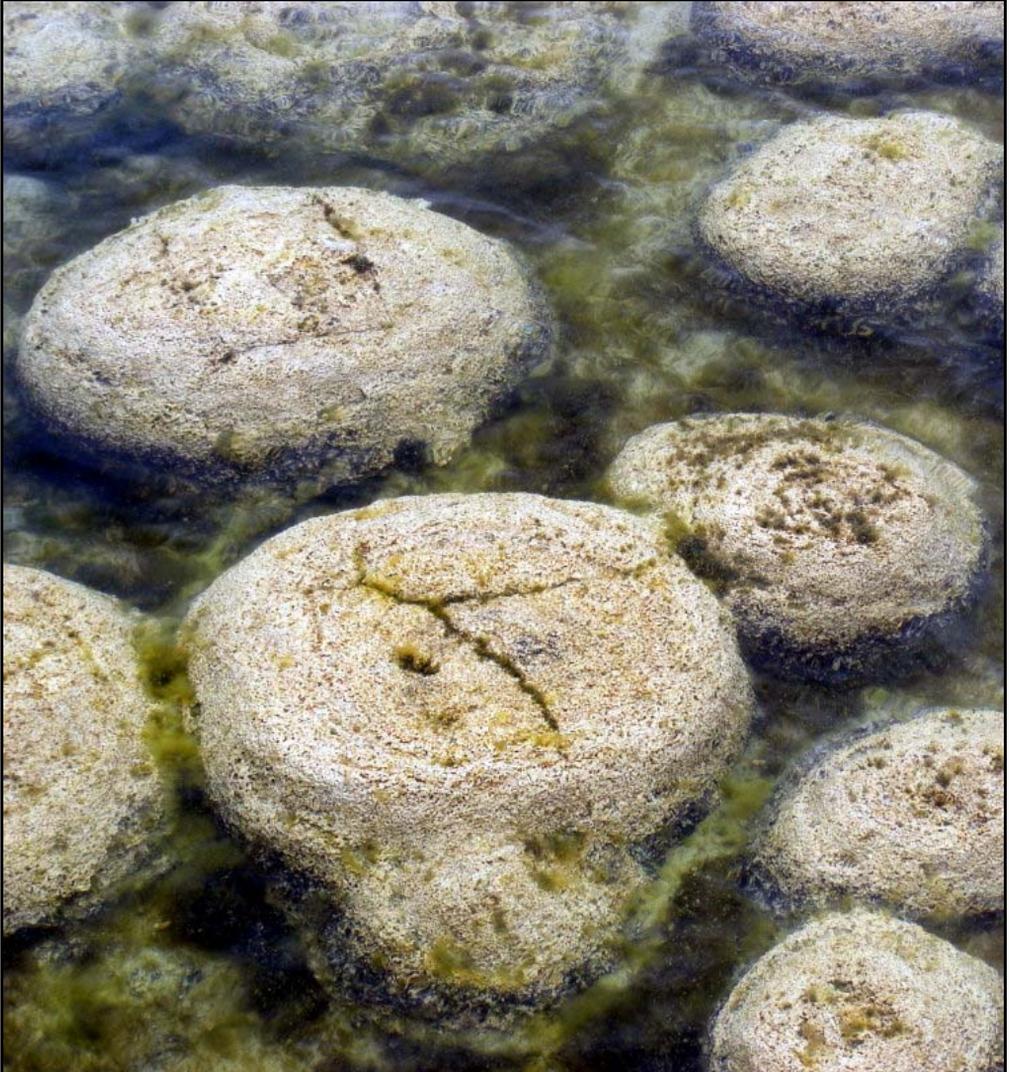




Contact

The members' newsletter of the Brisbane Theosophical Society

2009 Issue 1 – January-February-March



Thrombolites – 'living rocks' – See page 14

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NOTE new website address:
www.theosophyqld.org.au

Brisbane Theosophical Society

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Tel: (07) 3839 1453 (library times) Fax: (07) 3831 3692
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BOOKSHOP & LIBRARY: (Closed on Public Holidays)
Monday – Thursday 10:30 am to 2:30 pm
Friday 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm & 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm

The programme of Lodge meetings is enclosed and is also placed on the Lodge website which will always be the most up-to-date source of information. Whenever there are changes to the programme an email circular is sent to all people who have given us their email address.

The Theosophical Society has no official statements of belief. It encourages members to seek the truth by various avenues, but always subject to respect for others. All views expressed in these pages are entirely those of the authors – not of the Society.

President's Notes ***Noel Bertelle***

Do you remember when we waited, anxious and concerned, anticipating that the world's computers might malfunction; banks swallow up our hard-earned money and aeroplanes drop from the sky? And if such a catastrophe did not eventuate on cue, we had both the foresight and the breath-taking audacity to plan giant fire work displays, magnificent concerts and countless parties and celebrations to usher in a new millennium – albeit a year too soon! Yes, that was our introduction to the year 2000.

Now, nine years later, as we start the year 2009, we don't have quite the drama of a technological implosion to occupy our minds, but we do have a notable increase in other dramatic distractions such as the very prominent and misleading ten second news-grab, the insidious and oh so gratuitous political spin, the aggressive 'in-your-face' prominence of more and more over-night 'famous' people saturating the media and of course, lots of other readily available sense gratifications to take our minds off whatever it is we are trying to achieve in our lives. It is so easy to be caught up in the sensational world of Maya, watching time pass in just another blink of distraction.

So here is the challenge: Let's not be tempted into joining the long and seemingly dominant parade of the spiritually unknowing, because as students of Theosophy we really do have a choice – no; it is really more of a duty – to be among the leaders preparing the way. There it is; that can be our New Year's resolution; the one we get to keep in this wonderful and potentially great 2009, to do our best to set the example by leading the spiritual life which others may then see as worthy to follow.

As you read this issue of Contact, you will note that the programme for the first couple of months of the year should be both interesting and informative. Among other highlights, it features the welcome return of Ravi Ravindra, who will conduct the March *School of Theosophy* at Springbrook. His Friday night talk at our Brisbane Lodge, March 20, should not be missed!

The annual National Convention of the Theosophical Society in Australia was held in Perth in January. It was great to see so many Queenslanders in attendance, and so far from home. I asked Lynette Muller to prepare a short report on Convention activities for this issue of Contact.

The new Brisbane Lodge Executive Committee was elected by the members at the AGM in December and are listed inside. I must say I look forward to working with each of them during 2009. I extend a special welcome to our two new Committee members, Tina Fiedler and Angela Read.

A new theosophy group recently started in the Brisbane suburb of Redcliffe last year. As they had previously met on a Friday evening it was difficult to give them a great deal of support. They have now changed their meeting night to Wednesday at 7.15pm and will convene at the Redcliffe Cultural Centre in the Onada room. If you live on that side of town you might like to attend meetings, particularly during their early formative period. For more information, contact Paul Robb by phone: (07) 54942638, or by e-mail: pactinbliss@aapt.net.au

And now my very best wishes to everyone for a Peaceful, Prosperous and happy year – Noel Bertelle

Karma – Fact or Fiction?

by Dr. K. Arunachalam



KARMA, exoterically, is simply and literally *action*, or rather an *effect-producing cause*. It calls for no explanation, for, day in and day out, each and every one of us produce effects as a consequence of action. No one can remain, even for a moment, without being involved in some sort of action or motion. Action is not confined to any type of physical act. It includes thought, which is the precursor of action. During the waking stage there is constant movement of thought. In other words every moment is characterized by the presence of the movement of thought. The whole universe depends on this constant movement of thought. Since thought is the precursor of action we are in constant action. Modern day physicists have proven that matter exists because of the constant and ceaseless movement of subatomic particles. If these movements were to stop there would be a total collapse of the universe. Everything would cease to exist. In this sense, the living and vibrant universe disappears if action ceases.

In the *Bhagavadgita*, chapter 3 verse 24, Krishna says; *If I should cease to work, these worlds will fall in ruin and I should be the creator of disordered life and destroy people.*

St Thomas put it this way: *As the production of a thing into existence depends on the will of God, so likewise it depends on His will that things should be preserved; hence if He took away His action from them, all things would be reduced to nothing.*

The above two quotes refer to the fact that action is a necessary part of life in this world. Whatever the type of work, it is the life force of the universe. It is similar to the breathing that takes place to maintain the life of any living thing. The effect of action is the maintenance of the world. If we substitute the word *Karma* for the word *action* then Karma is the cause of the maintenance of the world. It is as simple as that.

But is it as simple as that? There is the unerring equation of cause and effect. The famous axiom, *Every action has an equal and opposite reaction*, brings to this equation a different

perspective. Take for example if one was in a surge of anger and slapped another person, the immediate reaction of the other person would be that he would give a slap in return. As in the Old Testament the statement *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth* is quite obvious. This is the basic understanding of the theory of action and reaction through which there is the method of establishing a state of balance. There is no argument nor is there any judgement. It is purely a reaction to an action. If there is no further action both parties retire to their original states. There is neither gain nor is there any loss. If however the injured party does not take any action at that instance, it is possible that there may be a plan in the mind of the injured party to take some action at a future date. One may be caught unaware of the original cause when the return action is effected and the pain may be equal to that one had initially caused. This we may call the *Grass-Root* reaction which is basic and does not require any deeper explanation. As time passes on, the incident may be forgotten and we may even become good friends. A degree of equilibrium has been achieved. Let us take it a little further. If the community cuts down the trees and pollutes water on which we depend, there will be suffering. The cause may often go unnoticed for there is no judgement involved. One follows the other as effect follows the cause.

The *Bhagavadgita* in chapter 3 verse 3 says : *In this world a two fold way of life has been taught by Me, the path of knowledge for men of contemplation and that of works for men of action.*

The two paths to liberation from the bondage of the earthly life are that of **contemplation** in which the object of meditation is the direct knowledge of the very essence of the Divine; and that of **action** in which there is the total renunciation of the fruits of action to the Divine. Karma thus takes a different meaning in that when there is total renunciation of the fruits of action, action becomes non-action. There is thus cessation of Karma. Karma thus is not involved the equation mentioned earlier. Esoterically Karma becomes an important aspect of the Law that governs the path to liberation.

It is accepted that the soul begins the journey from its inception, and continues to its end, in which it merges with the Source. During this journey there is a continuity of births and deaths. This journey lasts until such time as the sum total of the equation of cause and effect becomes zero. At this stage the individual has paid all dues and further action becomes non-action. So long as there is a desire for the fruits of action there is no freedom from rebirth.

The two modes of life are of equal value and the path of action is compatible with liberation.

Karma is action which moves the world in its various functions -

Grass-Root reaction – Community Reaction – Judgement and Justice – Law of Harmony – Reincarnation – The Journey – Law of Necessity – Karma the Guiding Principle of all Living Beings – The End of Karma.

It should be observed that the word *Karma*, as such, only indicates action and has nothing to do with its resultant effect. .But the term *Karma Yoga* would be more appropriate when one wishes to observe the real significance of one's action in life. It involves the observation of the law which governs the path to liberation. Therefore the term Karma is used in that context to be inclusive of the effects caused by works/action whatever the intents were.

In the situations created by the stresses and strains of modern day living there is a tendency for many to believe that some actions cause pain and suffering. Therefore some believe that to abstain from action that causes pain would be the best attitude. But abstention from action can never result in peace for action is compulsory. So instead of refraining from action one has to understand the value of every action and not obstruct the natural impulses of one's nature.

ASTROPHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

Hidden implications of the new discoveries

By David Allan

Brisbane Theosophical Society talk, June 2008,
after a TS Science Seminar talk, Springbrook, May 2008

To commence this discussion can I ask you to reflect where we are situated as intelligent beings contemplating the physical universe around us?

The answer is we can look around us, we can look down and we can look up - or rather we can be content with viewing our everyday world or we can contemplate the microscopic world or we can gaze outwards or upwards into what one might call for want of a better name, the macroscopic world.

What happens when we look down? Well from our human level we pass down through the level of insects through the world of semi animate crystals and animate body cells to the level of the molecule and the atom. Also in relatively recent times we have been able to look into the composition of the atom itself. The furthest that scientific instruments have been able to probe so far is to particles about 1/100 the diameter of the proton within the nucleus of an atom.

This is the world of electrons, neutrinos and many other strange particles. It also appears that the further we delve into the basic makeup of matter the less structured and stranger it becomes. The physicists of the late 19th century had atoms neatly packaged into basic building blocks of protons, electrons and neutrons and there was consensus in the scientific community of the time that everything of importance had been discovered and that only mopping up remained. However this turned out to be only the start of the real search and by the end of the 20th century an array of bizarre small particles had been discovered such as quarks, leptons, mesons and hadrons.

Moreover, further study of the behaviour of the sub-atomic world led to new discoveries and laws which have a distinctly metaphysical flavour, such as Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle which basically says every time we observe the sub-atomic universe we change its intrinsic properties. In a similar metaphysical vein was the strange interdependence of small separated particles and their knowledge about each other's movements, where there should be none.

These phenomena are predicted by the mysterious equations of quantum mechanics which explain many observable outcomes of sub-atomic experiments but are conceptually incomprehensible to our normal way of thinking. The laws of the sub-atomic world just don't seem to work at our human scale of existence. Popular books such as *The Tao of Physics* by Capra reflected on the metaphysical relevance of this sub atomic world.

In short, the sub-atomic world exhibits properties which in our human terminology would be described as clairvoyant, bizarre and scientifically impossible. Fortunately for our sanity these properties don't occur at our level of existence – or at least in our understanding of it. If they do occasionally occur, they are extremely difficult to verify by scientific tests and are thus ignored or rejected as fraud. Nevertheless the fact remains that at these different scales of being there exist two scientifically established worlds that have vastly different properties of existence.

Now let's turn away from this microscopic world and with our scientific spectacles on, look upwards into what I might term the larger cosmos or astrophysical world. I'll spend a lot more time on this since it is the main subject of my talk. In fact, sit back for a while and prepare yourselves for a venture into to the fascinating world of astronomy and astrophysics.

Let's look up from the level of our continent, Australia, past the level of our planet Earth into that of the solar system. This is centred on a fairly average star we call the Sun. This is in fact only one of about 400 billion stars in our galaxy which we call the Milky Way. Our galaxy is now known to be one of countless galaxies in the universe.

We tend to take such knowledge for granted without realizing how much we know compared with past generations. I won't go as far back as Galileo who was persecuted for claiming that the earth rotated around the sun and not vice versa. However even in the early part of the 20th century astronomers were similarly situated to the physicists who considered that the atom was the basic element of nature.

With the astronomical telescopes then available it was thought that our galaxy, the Milky Way, was the whole extent of the universe and that the many faint misty patches - they were called nebulae after the Latin word for clouds, were luminous gas accumulations. As telescopes and astronomical photography became more advanced into the mid 20th century however it was revealed that most of these faint nebulae were in fact island universes in themselves and our Milky Way was only one of millions of them.

They then became known as spiral galaxies and our much reduced place in the known universe became harshly apparent. We are only a minute part of an average sized spiral galaxy in a universe inhabited by countless other galaxies not only spiral but sometimes elliptical and sometimes with bizarre shapes as though they were colliding with each other or being torn apart by immense internal or external forces.

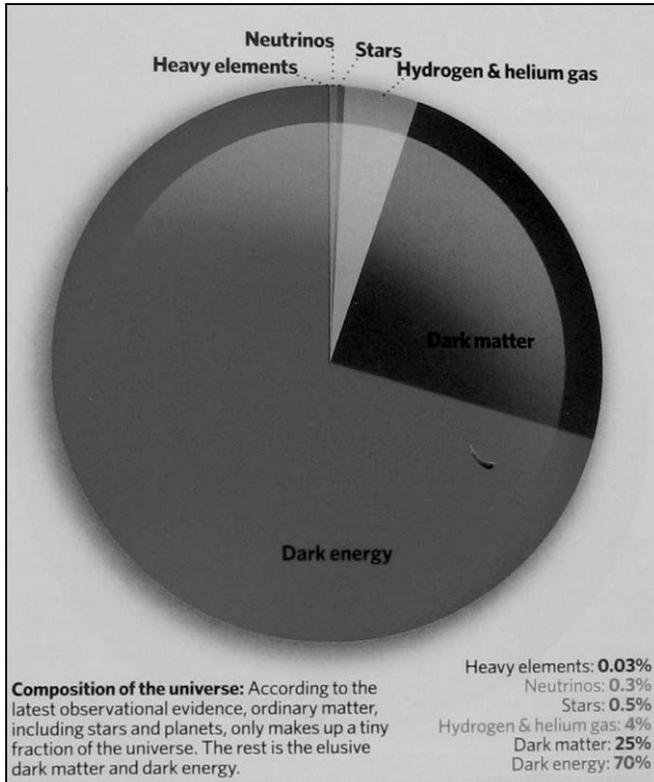
As the power of giant telescopes and spectroscopes increased well into the 20th century it also became possible to determine the immense distances that the faintest external galaxies are from us. The spectroscope has also revealed that the galaxies furthest from us in all directions were also moving rapidly away from us; in other words the universe is expanding at a rapid rate. In fact it has expanded so far that the furthest visible galaxies are about 10 billion light years away. What does this mean in terms of distance and as an indicator of the size of the universe? Well one light year away is the distance it takes light to travel at its speed of 300,000 km per second over a period of one year. Since the closest star is 4 light years away every time you look into the starry sky you are looking into the past. It is in fact very difficult to conceive the size of a universe in these terms. But I shall return to this point a little later.

It is probably a good time now to catch our breath and reflect on the vast distances in scale which the human intellect, aided by our developed scientific tools, has been able to physically or conceptually visualize. From the smallest level we know, to the largest, it has been said that the known world stretches over 40 orders of magnitude. What is also fascinating is that as we study the lowest and the highest levels of magnitude from our level of being the stranger are the behaviours of the phenomena exhibited – at least to our normal senses. The sub atomic world we have already seen to be an area where many noted scientists can see some common ground between scientific findings and what we would term metaphysical concepts.

However when we review contemporary views of the larger universe this relationship does not yet appear to have been made. It seems to me that our real understanding of the macro universe lags our real understanding of the micro-universe by several decades. This is probably because some of the most bizarre phenomena of the macro-universe have only surfaced in the last decade or so. So we live in exciting and privileged times in this sense.

Theoretical astrophysicists are still at the stage of trying to fit ever stranger scientific models to recently observed phenomena. So we have the weird situation where mainstream astrophysical science is studying concepts such as parallel universes because of the strange mathematics of String Theory, which in a similar way to Quantum Theory, accounts for much astrophysical phenomena but is incomprehensible to the human mind.

So we now finally arrive, after a lengthy preamble, to the core of my subject today; *Astrophysics and Metaphysics – hidden implications of the new discoveries*. My aim now is to draw your attention to connections between astrophysics and metaphysics that have not yet been made (or at least acknowledged) by scientists – or even by most metaphysicians for that matter.



Firstly however we need to backtrack to the discovery of the expanding universe of galaxies. Few of you would not have heard of the Big Bang theory, which is the cornerstone of modern cosmology, just as Darwin's theory is the cornerstone of evolutionary theory. However the Big Bang is of much more recent origin and until the weight of scientific evidence finally came over to its side, had to contend with other theories such as the Steady State theory of the universe. The Big Bang theory states in essence that the universe started out with a massive explosion from an infinitely small point at zero time 14 billion years ago.

Metaphysically speaking the concept has some relevance, particularly to those of a traditional religious bent since it could be related to the singularity in time when God created the universe of maybe the expulsion of Adam & Eve from the Garden of Eden. However it does not match particularly well with the Hindu tradition of Brahma breathing out and in or the eternal nature of God in certain beliefs. In fact the famous maverick physicist Fred Hoyle, the main proponent of the Steady State theory could never come to terms with it philosophically and it was his derogatory name for the rival theory as a Big Bang which eventually stuck. (He once said he should have copyrighted the name and he would have made a fortune).

A conceptual concern of Fred Hoyle was what happened before the Big Bang. Theoretical

physicists have indeed found this very difficult to tackle as Einstein's General Relativity Theory breaks down at the precise moment of zero time. Nevertheless there are speculative scientific theories being worked on to address this. According to one proposal, what took place 14 billion years ago was not a Big Bang but rather a Big Bounce in what may have been an endless series of such events stretching back into the infinite past. This starts to resemble the Hindu tradition of Brahman who is said to breathe out the universe and then breathe it in.

However such theories are premature and the only scientific evidence that might support some sort of contraction of matter blasted out by the Big Bang is the presence of mysterious objects called Black Holes. Black holes have been acknowledged for several decades. They are predicted theoretically by Einstein's General Theory of Relativity and have been deduced by observations of the centres of galaxies, including ours, where matter behaves in a turbulent way, as though it is being sucked into a black hole of nothingness where even light can't escape. To this day however scientists know little about Black Holes and any further metaphysical meaning is something I might leave you to ponder about.

The solid fact remains that the Big Bang theory is underpinned by three evidently solid pieces of evidence, so is currently overwhelmingly accepted. The three are: the cosmic background radiation left after the Big Bang; the composition of the elements of the universe; and the red shift in the spectra of the galaxies, seeming to confirm the expansion of the universe.

Most scientific efforts nowadays are devoted to anomalies that are appearing in the standard Big Bang model and tweaking it to suit. However in the last several years this tweaking has rather taken on the dimensions of a solid wrenching. In effect one can see an analogy between the Big Bang theory's current status and the realization a century ago that discovering the essential components of the atom was only the start of the search. And the more one delved into it the stranger the observed behaviours became. In the same vein to the sub-atomic universe some fascinating metaphysical implications are emerging.

The first anomaly concerns the Cosmic Microwave Background radiation (or CMB), the first of the three scientific pillars supporting the Big Bang theory. This is the low level microwave radiation theoretically left over after such an explosion, which was actually discovered a few decades ago. Very recently however a close examination of some of its characteristics has shown the unthinkable – it irrefutably seems to have a solar system alignment. For example, certain characteristics of the CMB appear different viewed from the northern and southern hemisphere and in the direction our solar system is moving through space.

So far, the explanations put forward to explain this rely too much on unlikely coincidences - not viewed comfortably by mainstream science. It almost seems as though the CMB has an existence dependent on where our viewpoint is, or as was discovered in the microscopic world, observing something alters its position in space - but what a ridiculously unscientific thought – that's getting close to some sort of bizarre metaphysical concept!

But now I want to move on to the most interesting things I am going to talk about and on which I'll dwell at some length. These are the scientific discoveries of Dark Energy and Dark Matter; and it is here where the metaphysical implications of the new discoveries in astrophysics really become fascinating.

SUMMARY SO FAR:

The first part of this talk looked at the vast distances of scale that modern mankind has discerned in the universe; from the strange world of sub-atomic particles to the larger cosmos now revealed in the largest telescopes. Central to the larger universe is a cosmology based on the universe's origin in the Big Bang explosion 14 billion years ago. In the micro universe of small particles, metaphysical implications are readily discernable and tentative implications can also be drawn from the concept of the Big Bang and some of its outcomes. In the last decade

or so however, very strange differences have appeared between scientific models based on the Big Bang theory and astronomical observations. This final part of the talk focuses on the most interesting of these anomalies, whose existence has been attributed to what has been termed Dark Energy and Dark Matter, where the metaphysical implications of the new discoveries in astrophysics really become fascinating.



Dark Energy arises out of the greatest surprise which has confronted the scientific establishment in recent years. This relates to the expansion of the universe after the Big Bang. Earlier astronomical findings backed by theoretical studies indicated a period of rapid expansion after the initial explosion. This was expected to be followed by a slowing up as gravitational forces caused a deceleration in the rate of expansion of the universe. However as astronomers looked further into the future, into the more distant realms of the universe with more powerful telescopes and spectroscopes, they made a startling discovery – and this has only been within the last decade. The rate of expansion is actually increasing, which defies the known laws of gravity.

To explain this in some way cosmologists had to introduce some new force dispersed throughout the universe which would accomplish such an effect. They called this Dark Energy.

However, even before the introduction of Dark Energy, astronomers had been puzzled by missing gravitational mass within the universe and it became necessary in the 1990's to introduce the concept of Dark Matter. A major anomaly existed relating astronomical observations to the physics of the structure of the spiral galaxies. It was calculated that their tight spiral structure and speed of rotation could not be explained by their observable matter. The mass of the visible stars and gases was far too low. Something else in the galaxy must also be exerting a gravitational force to keep the structure rotating around its centre. Otherwise the stars would have been flung out into deep space.

Furthermore, distant galaxies viewed in telescopes group in clusters and there wasn't enough gravitational mass in a galactic cluster to hold the clump together at its known separation. Hence the concept of Dark Matter was introduced to explain the missing mass.

The term 'Dark' refers to the fact that this mysterious material does not emit radiation in the wavelengths visible to our eyes or to our existing scientific instrumentation.

A further surprise was that when the figures were added up, it was found that Dark Energy and Dark Matter together comprised approximately 95% of the material in the universe. It is estimated that Dark Energy comprises 70% of the universe, Dark Matter 25 %, gaseous and

other material 4.5% and stars a mere 0.5%. That is to say, the visible universe is approximately one two hundredth of the mass of the invisible universe. One point to note here is that according to Einstein's famous equation, matter and energy can be interchanged under certain conditions, which may also apply to this mysterious material.

I'll have to add a footnote here. For a small minority of scientific investigators the concepts of Dark Matter & Energy are just too much to swallow and an alternative theory has been developed called MOND. MOND stands for Modified Newtonian Dynamics. Essentially what MOND says is that if Newton's & Einstein's laws of gravity don't work on the galactic scale lets change them accordingly to suit the observations. So we have two laws of gravity, those that work within the solar system and those that work only on the grand scale of the enlarged universe. By some exotic tweaking of MOND it is possible to do away with the concepts of Dark Energy and Dark Matter. However the Darks are still overwhelmingly accepted by mainstream astronomers and cosmologists so I won't dwell any further on this approach.

In fact there is a lot of research going on at the moment to try and detect Dark Matter. One major experiment uses the latest and greatest atom smasher near Geneva. It's called the Large Hadron Collider and it's the most powerful particle accelerator ever built. It's a circular tunnel 27 km in circumference in which protons are accelerated by electromagnets to enormous speeds before colliding with each other. After the collisions, scientists examine the small particle debris for some of the strange and elusive particles predicted by theoretical physics.

One of these elusive particles sought is the massive Dark Matter particle. It is speculated that Dark Matter cannot be seen because the energy levels and frequencies are too high in the spectrum for us to see. It is hoped that the much higher energy levels of the Geneva machine be enough to release some Dark Matter particles. An analogy is that we can't see radio waves but we know of their existence through their resonance with radio receivers. Dark Matter is a more extreme example of this and only exists from our perspective in a shadow world which hardly interacts with our level of existence. However at a galactic level it has a powerful influence through the gravitational force.

To illustrate how much space there might be for matter other than the visible it's necessary to realize how small is our visible universe compared with the vacant spaces. If our sun was a grain of sand, the nearest star would be another grain of sand 30 km away and our galaxy the Milky Way with its 400 billion stars would roughly encompass the orbit of the moon. Galaxies themselves tend to cluster much closer together than individual stars and within an area 10 times the orbit of the moon there would be several small galaxies of our local group

Further clues are provided by some outcomes of String Theory, the currently leading edge scientific theory of everything which predicts the existences of parallel or shadow universes and also that every fundamental matter particle should have a corresponding massive shadow particle. The well known theosophist, author and scientist K. Taimmi, wrote about such a likelihood in the 1970's from statements by early theosophists and psychics such as Besant and Leadbetter about etheric matter interpenetrating physical matter. Taimmi, who was a distinguished research chemist said, "The difference between the sizes of particles and wavelengths can be enormous and one system can remain within another without any common ground between the two, and therefore without the inhabitants of one system knowing of the existence of the other inhabitants".

Of course once such a key is provided, some metaphysical meanings can be postulated. One can now contemplate an actual environment which would support other psychic matter and higher energies or dare I say an astral or spirit world, without serious pangs of scientific conscience –although one would have to be rather courageous to do so to an audience of astrophysicists. Other things also fall into place, for example the immensity of this dark universe and its energies. Also the difficulty in crossing over from our universe due to the vast

differences in energies involved - and the infrequency of such interchanges – one might postulate that occasional apparitions such as ghosts may be fringe inhabitants of such an alternate universe.

One can speculate endlessly. I wonder whether it offers a rational explanation for astrology – where there is otherwise no rationale. Many of us have been mystified by a strong correlation between a person's birth chart, which includes his sun sign, eg Taurus or Gemini, and his or her overall personality. It occurs to me if a person's time and location of birth coincided with some periodic alignment of this mysterious dark material then a scientific basis for some astrological influences could be postulated.

But if you want to delve into some deep speculations about this dark universe you could refer to a couple of books by a writer called Jay Alfred in the Brisbane Lodge library. I think this name may be a *nom de plume* as I have found it very difficult to find anything about him. However he is well acquainted with theosophy and science judging by his books. He believes that this shadow universe is almost certainly a plasma universe. You might be surprised to know that while uncommon in our close by molecular world, plasma on a universal scale comprises about 99% of our visible universe.

What, you may now be thinking, is plasma. The best common example of a plasma object is a fluorescent lamp. Other more natural effects are the aurora borealis or Northern Lights. The sun and the stars are balls of plasma. Essentially a plasma environment is one where there is enough energy to break up the attractive forces within an atom and allow the components to separate into positively or negatively charged soups of positive or negative plasma.

If the dark matter universe is a plasma universe there must be very high energy levels involved and no doubt in a plasma world there are also gradations in levels and the fineness of the plasmatic material. I would be surprised if this doesn't strike a metaphysical chord in a group of theosophical minded people. And if one believes in the existence of non physical bodies accompanying our physical one does this also explain the auras some people claim they can see or the images or dismembered leaves etc of Kirlian photography?

Maybe they are composed of plasma material residing in a sea of dark material. As I suggested there may be as many variations in the qualities and energy levels of this other world as there are in our minute molecular world and different forms of beings if we want to take the next step. In effect we are close to being able to postulate a scientific hypothesis for the spirit worlds so comprehensively ignored by mainstream science.

The writer I referred to lets his insight or imagination venture into several postulated interfaces between this plasma world with ours, even to the extent of shadow plasma planets and levels of density or shells within our planet incorporating what we would call heavens or hells. This is highly speculative but I was intrigued to see the lead article of a recent issue of a mainstream Astronomy magazine discuss the possibility of Dark Stars within Dark Matter.

Apparently a team of US cosmologists have just developed a theory on how Dark Matter globules from the early stages of the Big Bang congealed into Dark Stars. I guess the next question then is if Dark stars why not Dark planets? Does this also offer an avenue to speculate on the occasional appearance of possible phenomena from such dark planets - maybe flying saucers? I don't know so I won't venture any further down this avenue.

The last astrophysical mystery I will touch on before finishing up is the accelerating expansion of the universe. I mentioned this earlier in conjunction with Dark Energy, which has been called the major astrophysical discovery of the last decade. But what does it mean – essentially scientists have no idea and even the metaphysical author I cited earlier skirts the topic. It is only apparent on a universal scale, whereas Dark Matter is apparent on a galactic scale.

It's a huge mystery and we can only speculate – however we have more latitude to speculate

than the scientist. What do you think? Does it mean for instance that the furthest away galaxies that are accelerating fastest to who knows what are in a more advanced state of development physically and spiritually? They are certainly subjected to greater Dark Energies. Or is the whole astrophysical scenario as presented now just part of a larger perspective we are not privy to. Certainly we live in a very privileged time in terms of cosmological – and also I believe – metaphysical discoveries. One can only say 'watch this space'.

I think I shall leave it at that as I have probably thrust enough astronomical science on to you. I hope I have accomplished my aim however - to draw to your attention to hidden human implications in the exciting new discoveries in astrophysics, implications barely contemplated by mainstream science.

Yet in one way there is a certain logic in it. I started talking about the metaphysical implications of the bizarre sub-atomic world, which are now accepted by mainstream science even if the word 'metaphysics' would be avoided. As the scale of things becomes vastly larger, it is apparent that behaviours also become very different from those in our everyday world.

Somewhat metaphysical you might say!

The Theosophical Society in Australia National Convention

17- 24 January 2009 - Trinity College, University of Western Australia, Perth

Theme of the Convention: Education, Society and Transformation.

Guest Speaker: Professor P. Krishna.

Professor P. Krishna is a life member of the Theosophical Society in India and has given presentations for the TS in local, national and international locations. At present, P. Krishna is Head of College of the Krishnamurti study centre at the Rajghat Education Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation India in Varanasi. A Professor of Physics at Benares Hindu University (retired), and from 1986-2002 Rector of the Rajghat Education Centre and Principal of the Rajghat Besant School, he continues to write articles and books on issues relating to the teachings of J. Krishnamurti. As a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation, he continues to be involved in its activities.



Overview of the Convention Programme

On Saturday evening at 7.30pm many TS members from around Australia, gathered in the meeting hall for the commencement of the 2009 Australian National Convention. Also present from abroad were members from the Indian, New Zealand and German Sections. The National President, Mrs Linda Oliveira, welcomed the Guest Speaker, Professor P. Krishna, and read the Greetings which had been received from many members of overseas sections who had been unable to attend this event. Anticipation and harmony were evident, with joyful reunions between old friends and the happiness associated with making new friends.

Sunday morning commenced with Yoga provided for members who wished to start their day with a 'physical workout' prior to the silence of the Morning Attunement. A healthy breakfast

was provided by the staff of Trinity College before members gathered for the Official Opening of the Convention at 9:15am. A highlight of this meeting was the Inauguration of the Incoming National President, Dr Dara Tatray, who filled the casual vacancy created by the retirement of the current National President, Linda Oliveira, who has been appointed as the Vice President of the Theosophical Society and will be taking up residence in the Adyar TS Compound.



Queensland members at the Perth Convention

In the afternoon, the Guest Speaker, Professor P. Krishna presented a public talk on *The Scientific and Religious Quest for Truth*. In it, he compared the different approaches to enquiry in the scientific and religious arenas and highlighted the challenges of enquiry into religious questions. CD recordings were made of this talk and others on the Convention programme. They will be sent to all Lodges for their libraries and for the benefit of members unable to attend.

On Monday 19th convention participants enjoyed talks given by Linda Oliveira and Dara Tatray. They later had the opportunity to choose among workshops on *Education and Transformation*, *The Enduring Relevance of Sikh Wisdom*, and *Theosophy, Creativity and Transformation*, all of which involved them in inquiry and discussion. The evening presentation saw Pedro Oliveira showing Images of *Our Theosophical World* and some TS members were surprised to see photos of themselves on the wide screen.

On Tuesday morning Pedro Oliveira spoke on *The Adepts Dream* and challenged us to focus on the purpose for which the Masters founded the Theosophical Society. This was followed by a talk, *Right Education for the 21st Century*, presented by Professor P. Krishna, in which he proposed that the focus of education should be the development of an inquiring mind and the ability to make decisions based on compassionate, humane values.

In the afternoon, the Perth Branch of the Theosophical Order of Service organised a panel of speakers on the topic, *Transformation in Society*. The panel, Bheena Sewnarain, Rhonda Phillips and George Wester described examples of altruistic service that are leading to social transformation – the Alternatives to Violence Project, the work of a Catholic Order of Nuns, and TOS projects in India.

Another panel of Brian Wood, Hana O'Rourke and Anna Robb concluded the afternoon with an exploration of the topic, *What is Theosophical Education?* The first two speakers described what they saw as the foundation of theosophical study, while Anna shared some of her classroom experiences as a teacher of young children.

Wednesday has been traditionally a day for the local TS members to organise an outing and the Perth Branch ensured that Convention delegates had a delightful and varied day of

relaxation. We began with a visit to the Mount Helena Retreat Centre for morning tea in the forest, followed by a picnic lunch by the beach at Hillary's Boat Harbour. After an opportunity for paddling and strolling we had a 'drop in' opportunity to see the library, bookshop and meeting hall at the Perth Branch and to share afternoon tea with local members. The evening was made comfortable with a cool sea breeze and delegates thoroughly enjoyed the lovely voices of the young singers who provided us with a *Night of the Classics*.

On Thursday the programme began with short talks on *How Can Theosophy Transform the Mind?* presented by Denise Frost and Ruth Holt. This session was followed by an interesting and lively interview with Noel Duzevich, a member of long standing in the Perth TS who has held a variety of positions with the society.

The Theosophical Order of Service AGM in the afternoon provided opportunities for Presidents (or in their absence a delegated TOS member) of TOS groups to present their annual report of activities during the 2008 year. Examples of service activities included volunteering in aged care, ESL migrant education, workshops to assist with the Home School programmes in Pakistan, environmental projects and blanket knitting.

In the late afternoon session, *Working Dynamically with TS Groups*, Paul Robb and Betty McAllister provided the audience with bold and bright ideas based on their experiences in the Sunshine Coast Lodge and in starting a cluster of local groups. They challenged TS Lodges and Branches around the country to make Theosophical ideas widely available at a local level.

Friday began with an exploration of *The Role of Service in Transformation* by a Panel consisting of Georgina Fode, George Wester and Harry Baynes. Again, the speakers used examples from their experiences to illustrate the way in which selfless service goes hand-in-hand with inner transformation. These talks were followed by interactive Workshop sessions. The interesting topics – *Highlights from the Key to Theosophy* by Simon O'Rourke, *Therapeutic Touch* by Shirley Tolhuis and *Approaches to Meditation* by Noel Bertelle made the choice difficult.

A happy and relaxed session at 4.00pm witnessed an invitation to the 2010 Convention to be held in Launceston, warmly felt thanks to the TS Section and Perth Branch for their organisation of a thought provoking convention, their generosity and hospitality and the official closing of the 2009 Convention.

Saturday 24th January was a time of farewells as delegates gathered their belongings and made their departures.

Report by BTS delegate, Lynette Muller

Cover picture – Thrombolites

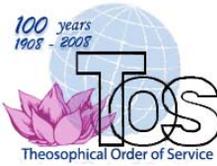
'Living Rocks' - Lake Clifton, south of Perth, WA, is one of the very few places on earth where Microbialites grow. Thrombolites are the major type there. These micro-organisms photosynthesise calcium carbonate in the lime-rich lake to make a rock-like material. They grow about 1mm per year. Microbialites were more common 600 million years ago, and are among the oldest living organisms today, as well as being in essence a bridge between the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. The largest ones shown here are about 800mm diameter.

Photo by G Harrod – taken after the Convention

Brisbane Theosophical Society Executive Committee 2009

PRESIDENT- Noel Bertelle
VICE PRESIDENT - Phoebe Williams
TREASURER - Phillipa Rooke
SECRETARY - Patricia Ossenberg

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:
Elina Juusola-Halonen
Tina Fielder
Angela Read
Dennis Armstrong



T.O.S. news

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Email: lynnettermuller@yahoo.com.au
President: Lynette Muller Vice-President: Tina Fielder

Annual General Meeting Report

The Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 6 December, 2008. The office bearers for 2009 are: *President: Lynette Muller, Vice-President: Tina Fielder, Secretary: Carolyn Harrod, Treasurer: Karen Cipressi.* Lynette Muller continues as the TOS Representative on the Brisbane Theosophical Society Committee.

TOS members work in a number of areas, choosing ones of particular interest to them. The areas of service are: community service and education, healing, environment, animal welfare and peace. For information, talk to one of the committee or visit the website, www.theosophyqld.org.au

Many thanks to all who donated at the AGM appeal for the Anglican Women's Refuge at New Farm, and thanks to the Brisbane TS which matched the donation. We will continue to support the Refuge with donations of products for women moving to longer-term accommodation.

Meetings in 2009

Planning meetings will be held every two months, generally on the 1st Saturday of the month from 10.00 to 11:30 am in the T.S. rooms. All interested people are invited to attend.

Meeting dates in 2009 are: Saturday 7 February (7.30pm at Springbrook), Saturday 28 March (note change of date), Saturday 6 June, Saturday 1 August, Saturday 3 October and Saturday 5 December (AGM).

Group activities date claimers

Tree Planting at Moorhen Flats

1st Saturday of every second month. All interested members and friends are invited to join in an afternoon of planting and maintenance at the Moorhen Flats Environmental Area. We work from 2pm to

5pm and meet on the corner of Deshon Street & Turbo Drive, Woolloongabba. Please bring gardening tools, hat, sunscreen, a cup and something to drink. Food is provided. Dates: 7 Mar, 2 May, 4 July, 5 Sep, and 7 Nov.

Working bees at Springbrook Theosophical Retreat Centre

We are holding the first working bee for 2009 from 10.00am Saturday 7 February to 2.00pm Sunday 8 February.

A second working bee is planned for 3 & 4 September, prior to the Brisbane TS Meditation weekend.

For more information contact Carolyn Harrod on 3378 8534.

Events in 2009

The Brisbane TOS has events planned throughout the year, including craft workshops, a one-day peace workshop and a morning tea for older TOS and TS members. Look out for details in *Contact* and on the TS website.

The first event of the year is a **fundraising painting workshop**

Have fun, create a T-shirt, meet friends and contribute to TOS projects in developing countries!



This TOS painting workshop will be held in the Brisbane Theosophical Society basement (355 Wickham Tce) on **Saturday 14 March from 10.00 am to 2.00pm.**

Cost: \$10.00 (50% of this will be donated to TOS charities). This fee will cover the cost of a child's or adult's T-shirt and the printing materials used to decorate it.

Drinks and a snack will be available.

To register, talk to Lynette Muller at the TS or phone Tina Fielder on 3217 0040.

The Theosophical Society

A worldwide body whose primary object is to promote Universal Brotherhood. The Society imposes no belief upon its members, who are united by a common search for truth. Its constitution declares three objects:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in the human being.

The Theosophical Society has no official doctrine. All philosophies, religions and methods of spiritual practice are within its scope of interest but not endorsed. Material published in this journal therefore does not carry any endorsement or represent any official viewpoint of the organisation.

The Motto of the Society is ***There is no religion higher than Truth.***

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