

THEOSOPHY- SCIENCE GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 76

July 2015

Celebrating the life of Hugh Murdoch

Linda Oliveira, our National President, had informed us of the passing away of Dr Hugh Murdoch on Friday 8th May (White Lotus Day). His funeral was held on Friday, 15th May, at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Camden Valley Way, Leppington, NSW. Pedro Oliveira officiated at the service.

“Hugh would have been known to many of you and was the National Treasurer of the Australian Section for several decades. He gave a very substantial contribution to the TS over many years and will be remembered for the thoroughness with which he undertook his responsibilities, his great care about the well-being of our Society and his stewardship of the Theosophy-Science group.”

This issue of the Newsletter of our Theosophy-Science Group is dedicated to his memory.

EDITORIAL NOTES

This Newsletter is prepared by the Theosophy-Science Group in Australia for interested members of the Theosophical Society in Australia. The email version is also made available on request to members of the Theosophical Society in New Zealand and USA by the respective National bodies. Members in USA should contact tsa@theosophical.org, Members in New Zealand should contact: john@serion.co.nz. Recipients are welcome to share the Newsletter with friends but it must not be reproduced in any medium including on a website. However, permission is given for quoting of extracts or individual articles with due acknowledgement. Selected items appear from time to time on the website of the TS in Australia – austheos.org.au.

As the editor of this Newsletter and Convener of the Australian Theosophy-Science Group I hope to continue providing readers with news of our activities, past and future, as well as articles of general scientific and theosophical interest. I would welcome contributions from our readers.

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Numbers are the notes with which the symphony of the universe is written.

-- Adam Spencer

Hugh Murdoch - A review

**THEOSOPHY SCIENCE SESSION AT WORLD CONGRESS
Sydney, January 2001**

Theme for the session: *Theosophy-Science at the cusp of a new century.*
This took place on Thursday 18th January from 2- 3.30pm.
Dr Hugh Murdoch was in the Chair.

The introductory biography stated: "Dr Hugh Murdoch has been a member of the TS for 60 years and is National Treasurer of the Theosophical Society in Australia. He is Convenor of the Theosophy-Science Group and Editor of its Newsletter. His scientific career was mainly in both radio- and optical- astronomy. He is a Member of the International Astronomical Union. He retired some years ago from a senior position in the Astrophysics Department of Sydney University but maintains an interest in the subject from both a scientific and theosophical point of view."

In his introduction, Hugh Murdoch stated:

"I believe we should aim to apply the timeless fundamental concepts of Theosophy to the scientific issues of the day rather than revisiting century old battles. We should emphasise current ethical and environmental issues. Science has progressed enormously in the last century. First quantum physics and relativity; then an understanding of our solar system and of the vast universe of galaxies. In my lifetime; radio, television, transistors, lasers, computers, satellites, DNA and the genetic code to name a few. We need to recognise the role of modern science and its self-imposed limitations, not expecting all scientists to go beyond the strict limits of their science and embrace the mystical and eternal verities; but certainly we should celebrate those who do and there are many."

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A DECADE LATER:

Theosophy Science Newsletter N69 March 2011 was Hugh Murdoch's last newsletter under his editorship. Then, in December 2011, *Newsletter* N70 Dec 2011 reported the

RETIREMENT OF HUGH MURDOCH

Several months ago, Dr Hugh Murdoch phoned me and requested that I take over full responsibility for editing this Newsletter. His strength had been failing, and after a fall his daughter, Jean Dunstan, moved him into a nearby nursing home. He is in good health and well looked after. It is believed that he will be provided with a computer and have web access. Meanwhile his postal address is: c/- Camden Nursing Home,

As the editor of this Newsletter and Convenor of the Australian Theosophy-Science Group I hope to continue providing readers with news of our activities, past and future, as well as articles of general scientific and theosophical interest. I take this opportunity of acknowledging Hugh's inspiration and effort in creating and sustaining the Theosophy-Science Group in Australia and in producing this Newsletter over many years. Victor Gostin.



Hugh Murdoch impressions

Victor Gostin, Adelaide

As a teenager, I joined the Melbourne lodge of the Theosophical Society and attended the Young Theosophists meetings where Celia Novy warmly welcomed me.

Our discussions included much modern science and its relationship to theosophical themes. It was only at National Conventions where I met Dr Hugh Murdoch that we found much in common, especially our interests in cosmology and deep time evolution. Both of us agreed that our role was to present accurate science to the modern theosophical membership.

Symposium at Springbrook, 1997
Carl Sarelius, Hugh Murdoch, Richard Silberstein.

Hugh was in touch with several other interested scientists around Australia and with the London based group led by Dr Lester Smith, and with the Theosophical Research Institute in the U.S., led by Dora Kunz and Dr Ralph Hannon. As the London group was being dissolved, Hugh decided to formally organize our Australian Theosophy-Science Group, during a Sydney seminar in December 1983. *Newsletter* No1 (August 1984) reported the decisions to create this group, and *Newsletter* No2 (July 1985) summarized Richard Silberstein's invited talks in Krotona, California. Hugh Murdoch must be thanked for editing these newsletters that have been, over many years, an important communication medium for scientifically educated theosophists.

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From Richard Silberstein Melbourne

I learned of Hugh Murdoch's passing with mixed feelings. These included a sense of relief that he was no longer in pain or discomfort, sadness that I will no longer have the pleasure of sharing his company and wisdom at Conventions and Theosophy Science meetings and a sense of deep gratitude for his profound contributions in linking the Theosophical world view with contemporary scientific findings.

It was Hugh's initiative that led to the establishment of the Theosophy Science Group in 1984 and Hugh remained a major contributor to the Group in terms of articles and reviews in the newsletter as well as his thoughtful and deeply appreciated lectures and discussions presented to the Society and the Theosophy Science Group.

What I appreciated most about Hugh's contributions was his focus on demonstrating the links between core Theosophical concepts and some of the most recent scientific findings, especially in the fields of physics, astrophysics and astronomy. If we believe that certain core Theosophical concepts reflect a deep reality rather than merely a religious dogma, then we should ultimately expect a convergence between these core Theosophical concepts and a view of reality based on scientific findings. That is not to say that such a convergence is currently apparent. Hugh believed that a world view of reality based exclusively on current scientific findings is incomplete and very much a 'work in progress' that will continue to evolve over time. Conversely, while core Theosophical concepts such as the nature of consciousness are being validated by scientific research, Hugh believed that other notions included under the rubric of Theosophy have been clearly disproved by scientific research and should be discarded.

In the long term, I believe that Hugh's vision of a grand convergence between Theosophical core concepts of consciousness and the universe, and the scientific view of these domains is an inevitability. When this becomes more apparent, I am sure people will look back with deep appreciation for the contributions that Hugh and people like him have made over the years.

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Tony Fearnside, Canberra

My impressions of Hugh were formed at meetings of the executive committee that I attended and at conventions. Hugh held the position of National Treasurer for some 50 years and with advice from other knowledgeable members is widely credited with creating the Society's present solid financial position. Another achievement was setting up and establishing the Theosophy Science group.

Hugh seemed to value participation in academic deliberations much more than in mundane discussions that may have caused him to seem somewhat aloof, but two events at conventions stand out; they were concept-forming for me. One was the statement that he felt that he could never disclose his membership of the TS to his academic colleagues (remember that Hugh was active when scepticism was even more prevalent than today) which deprived him of any opportunities to discuss matters of theosophical interest with them.

The other, which doubtless others will recall was the screening of pictures from the Hubble telescope soon after they were released. I was captivated by the images of powerful fields of energy which to me were not dissimilar to pictures in Geoffrey Hodson's book *Kingdom of the Gods*, causing me to wonder if energy fields attract more and more energy.

Another of Hugh's legacies is a well written paper, *Isaac Newton – truth seeker* which is a pointer to his feelings about matters of interest to theosophists and can be seen on our TS web site, at <http://austheos.org.au/articles/articles-essays/isaac-newton-truthseeker/> .

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Brian Harding, Brisbane

It was with great sadness I learned of the passing of Hugh Murdoch. I remember receiving his TS-Science Newsletter almost from the day I joined the TS (1978) in Canberra, but strangely I never developed a working relationship with him until I moved to Sydney in 2005. There I attended his TS-Science Group meetings in the library at Blavatsky Lodge. I found Hugh ever-willing to discuss a variety science matters, especially those related to physics, a discipline he and I shared. He led the group always with a warm enthusiasm.

To meet a growing need, we worked together in drawing up firmer guidelines for the conduct of meetings and criteria for membership of the group. I remember Hugh being quite cross when I announced I was moving to Brisbane. He was somewhat mollified when I promised him I would start a group in Brisbane when I got there.

Hugh was a great scientist and a great Theosophist. I believe he was a key figure in the work of the Theosophical Research Centre in England long before I came on the scene. Edi Bilimoria notes that when the impetus behind the TRC faded, it was E Lester Smith (*Intelligence Came First*) who suggested that the torch be passed to Hugh in Australia.

Remember that the Master KH told A P Sinnett that “science is our best ally.” Sure, there are differences in detail, but Science and Theosophy have much that can be shared to their mutual benefit. Hugh’s deep knowledge of both has already been sorely missed and I believe we owe it to his memory that we of the current generation keep the torch burning.

Quote

“If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature. It cannot be unrestrained enjoyment of everyday life. It cannot be the search for the best ways to obtain material goods and then cheerfully get the most out of them. It has to be the fulfillment of a permanent, earnest duty so that one’s life journey may become an experience of moral growth, so that one may leave life a better human being than one started it....”

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. “A World Split Apart.” Commencement address delivered at Harvard University, June 8, 1978.

Additional note by Chris Pang Way

In talking about Hugh, one should always mention his wife, Elaine. She appeared not to be prominent in the TS Science side of Hugh's life but one had the impression that she provided a stable foundation for Hugh to be able to do the many things that he did.

Chris Pang Way, Atherton

Meeting Hugh:

A little while after I had arrived in Sydney a family friend phoned and encouraged me to join the TS. He also mentioned there was a TS Science group which probably would be of interest to me. (I was aware that some Theosophists had an interest in science, having read "Occult Chemistry" in my high school years.)

It was probably a few years after I joined Blavatsky Lodge (in 1979) that I went to a talk on astronomy by Hugh Murdoch which I thoroughly enjoyed, partly from Hugh's deep knowledge in the subject (astro-physics was his profession) partly from the spectacular slides he used to illustrate the talk and partly from the fact that astronomy was the first area of science that I had looked at extensively when I was in primary school. From that meeting Hugh introduced me to the TS Science group in Sydney and to the TS seminars/symposia which were held every three years at the time.

TS Science group in Sydney:

The meetings were organised by Hugh as were just about anything to do with TS Science in Australia at the time (Seminar/Symposium, Newsletter). Generally we met once every two months though sometimes it was longer. It was always a small group – I don't think we ever were more than six people and the meetings were normally held in one of the smaller rooms of Blavatsky Lodge or around a table in the Adyar Library. Topics of discussion were often from items that someone of the group had come across which was of interest to them or from a suggestion from the previous meeting or, if a new person joined the group, something on what work in science they were involved in.

TS Science Seminars/Symposia:

These were always very interesting due to the diverse areas of science covered by those attending. The first TS Science seminar I can recall attending was held at The Manor in Mosman, Sydney. It was notable for me in that Hugh, Victor Gostin, Richard Silberstein and David Lyness were amongst those who gave presentations and Edna Jenks and her team from Brisbane provided the meals. I think the next few seminars were also held at The Manor before switching to Springbrook as the venue. I believe that Hugh almost single-handedly arranged the early events and this was gradually handed over to Victor for the more recent ones. Hugh's absence, due to his failing health, from the last few seminars was distinctly felt, especially by those who had been to many of the earlier seminars.

approach to the work of the TS that is not widely shared. I miss you for that reason, quite keenly.

You missed the Pluto fly-by in less than a nanosecond of cosmic time, but you missed it nonetheless. It is interesting to contrast this event with the moon landing, which also took place in my lifetime. In 1632 Galileo Galilei suggested that 'If you could see the earth illuminated when you were in a place as dark as night, it would look to you more splendid than the moon'. And so it did, to Edgar Mitchell, and many others. Nearing the end of the Apollo 14 mission, Captain Mitchell had an experience that radically altered his worldview, and led to the founding of IONS (Institute of Noetic Sciences). It convinced him that the deepest mystery of the universe is consciousness: that empty space in which all lives and minds and things float. As stated on the IONS site (<http://noetic.org/directory/person/edgar-mitchell>), he saw 'that the beautiful blue world to which he was returning is part of a living system, harmonious and whole — and that we all participate, as he expressed it later, "in a universe of consciousness"'.

Seeing the photographs of the earth from space led Archibald Macleish to remark: 'To see the earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold — brothers who know now they are truly brothers' (*Riders on Earth Together, Brothers in Eternal Cold* available at <http://cecelia.physics.indiana.edu/life/moon/Apollo8/122568sci-nasa-macleish.html>).

While such insights and experiences have been vouchsafed some outer space travellers, the world has been turning to the space within but slowly: and as to knowing that we are one family, that penny hasn't quite dropped. It is too early to say what insights might emerge from closer acquaintance with Pluto, in the outer reaches of our Solar System, but me, I keep returning to the insights of the Chandogya Upanishad:

'... as far, verily, as this world space extends, so far extends the space within the heart. Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, both fire and air, both sun and moon, lightning and the stars. Whatever there is of Him in this world and whatever is not, all that is contained within it'.

I would like to leave you for now with a short essay composed by David Bohm for the memorial service of an old friend, which was then also read at his own memorial service. It is an echo, perhaps unconscious, of Krishna's speech to Arjuna on the battlefield depicted in the *Bhagavad Gita*. I found Bohm's essay in *Infinite Potential The Life of David Bohm* by F. David Peat (Basic Books 1997):

'In considering the relationship between the finite and the infinite, we are led to observe that the whole field of the finite is inherently limited, in that it has no independent existence. It has the appearance of independent existence, but that appearance is merely the result of an abstraction of our thought. We can see this dependent nature of the finite from the fact that every finite thing is transient.'

Our ordinary view holds that the field of the finite is all that there is. But if the finite has no independent existence, it cannot be all that is. We are in this way led to propose that the true ground of all being is the infinite, the unlimited; and that the infinite includes and contains the finite. In this view, the finite, with its transient nature, can only be understood as held suspended, as it were, beyond time and space, within the infinite.

The field of the finite is all that we can see, hear, touch, remember and describe. This field is basically that which is manifest, or tangible. The essential quality of the infinite, by contrast, is its subtlety, its intangibility. This quality is conveyed in the word spirit, whose root meaning is “wind, or breath.” This suggests an invisible but pervasive energy, to which the manifest world of the finite responds. This energy, or spirit, infuses all living beings, and without it any organism must fall apart into its constituent elements. That which is truly alive in the living being is this energy of spirit, and this is never born and never dies.’

With much affection,
Dara Tatray

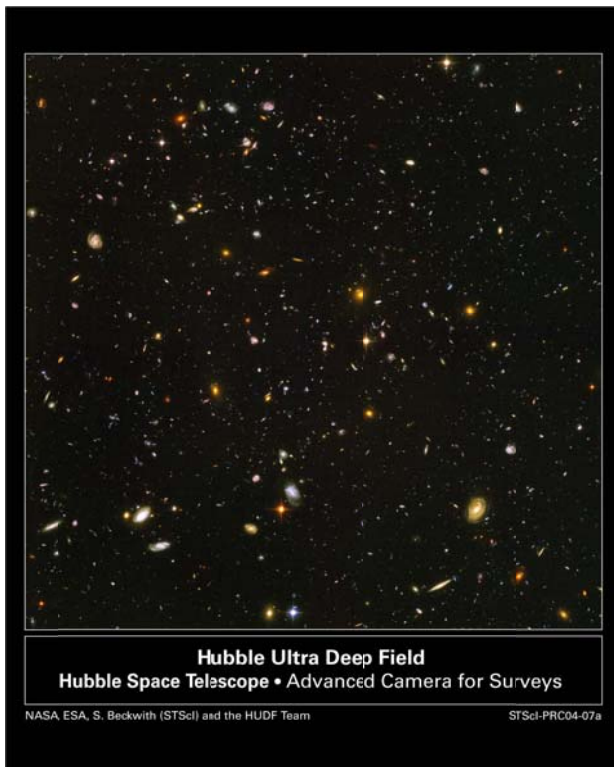
ASTRONOMICAL FRONTIERS

In the *CONVERSATION*, 24 April 2015, Tanya Hill presented a compendium of leading astronomers’ top choices of Hubble’s spectacular discoveries. Hugh Murdoch

had been deeply impressed and inspired by all the glorious images that kept on appearing, and many times he shared these with meetings of our Theosophy-Science groups. In remembering him and recalling his spirit, here is just one extract from this compendium.

Alan Duffy, Research Fellow at Swinburne University of Technology, wrote

“To the human eye, the night sky in this image is completely empty. A tiny region no thicker than a grain of rice held at arms length. The Hubble Space Telescope was pointed at this region for 12 full days, letting light hit the detectors and slowly, one by one, the galaxies appeared, until the entire image was filled with 10,000 galaxies



stretching all the way across the universe.

The most distant are tiny red dots tens of billions of light years away, dating back to a time just a few hundred million years after the Big Bang.

The scientific value of this single image is enormous. It revolutionised our theories both of how early galaxies could form and how rapidly they could grow. The history of our universe, as well as the rich variety of galaxy shapes and sizes, is contained in a single image.

To me, what truly makes this picture extraordinary is that it gives a glimpse into the scale of our visible universe. So many galaxies in so small an area implies that there are 100 thousand million galaxies across the entire night sky. One entire galaxy for every star in our Milky Way!"

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