



BELIEF ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Name: Dara Tatray

Date: 21 March 2011

Place: Theosophy House

Interviewer: Sue Andersen

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **SA:** This is Sue Andersen interviewing Dara Tatray on the 21st of March 2011 in Sydney for the City of Sydney's Oral History Project, Belief.

Thanks, Dara, for doing the interview this morning. I'm wondering whether you could begin by saying your full name and what year you were born in.

DT: Yes. My name is Dara ***** Tatray and I was born in 1959.

SA: And in Sydney?

DT: Yes, I was born in Sydney. My family's from Hungary but my parents met in Sydney, so I was born here.

SA: Right, right, and where did you grow up?

DT: In *****.

SA: And you were schooled in ***?**

DT: No, I was schooled in ***** but, yes, I was driven to school by mum every day, yes.

SA: Right. And what were your early sort of, I guess, spiritual and cultural sort of influences?

DT: Well, I wouldn't say I had any early spiritual influences. I went to a Jewish school. My parents are both Jewish and so as they were both more or less Holocaust victims they decided to send me to a Jewish school, which was in ***** and so I should have had a Jewish spiritual influence, I guess, but I really wasn't interested, so none of that particularly rubbed off on me, I'm afraid.

SA: Can I ask why, what was it that didn't interest you?

DT: Well, I don't know if it's because my family was more sort of socially and, well, ethnically Jewish rather than religiously and the school was not a particularly – it was not an Orthodox school, it was just everybody happened to be Jewish.

2.07 Well, it was a Jewish school but it was not a religious one really, although you could get a religious education and you would learn Hebrew and things like that but I think I was just not a very good student in the first place in general and there just wasn't anything about – it didn't seem like a very spiritual religion at that time to me not that I was interested in spirituality then but I was just there. It was a great school and I had a lot of fun but through no fault of the school's I didn't really learn anything or it wasn't just the religious side of things.

SA: Right.

DT: Yes.

SA: So, did your family practice – did you go to synagogue?

DT: No. We went to the synagogue on the high holy days, yes, so a few times a year we went to the synagogue, yes, but it was more a social occasion for me and for all the other kids, yes.

SA: Yes, O.K, that's given me a good understanding. So what led you to become involved in the Theosophical Society?

DT: Well, in about 1978 two friends of mine – well, just before 1978 the father of a friend of mine committed suicide and his aunty who was then a Pentecostal – no, who became later a Pentecostal but who

was at that time somehow attached to the Theosophical Society, she gave him a book or a booklet on theosophy to sort of help him through it or just because – I don't know if it had something to do with death and dying or I don't really remember what it was about. And then that after I met him he showed that to me and we were moderately interested and then started looking at some of the literature.

4.08 And I think the first thing that really interested me about theosophy or the Society was just the idea that there was sort of a purpose and meaning to life and that came through very strongly in the writings, whatever the topic was. I think the first thing that we read that was of great interest was something to do with thought power by Annie Besant. But it's not so much that I was interested in thought power at the time, it just seemed to be such a strong ethical and substantial background to this thing, so.

SA: So what is thought power?

DT: Well, I mean basically it's most likely scientific fact that thoughts are things and affect our reality and affect reality in ways that we don't really realise by creating an atmosphere all around us and everything begins in thought first. I mean, this building that we're in began in someone's thought, people who believe in God believe that the universe began in God's thought or even if you just think in terms of the intelligence behind everything in the universe everything begins first in thought. This interview began first in a whole series of thoughts and so thoughts are a creative force in that sense but also in many other ways and people don't realise, I think, what a powerful tool and what a powerful like time bomb they're kind of carrying around. So it's just really to do with the creative power of thought and with that the responsibility to be careful with one's thoughts.

5.57 And lots of religions teach things about the importance of motivation, that it's not just what you do that matters, it's your motive that perhaps is the most important thing and that comes down to thought too; like if you mean well you might stuff up but perhaps you've still done O.K. .

SA: O.K. So it was 1978, so you were really interested in the ideas of the Society.

DT: Yes.

SA: And what happened then, how did you progress with that?

DT: Well, we just started going to the bookshop which was then owned by Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney, the Adyar Bookshop it's called, which still exists. It's moved several times since then and when I joined the TS [Theosophical Society] it was in Castlereagh Street and was a

fantastic bookshop; it was like stepping into some other era of wonderful just all of metaphysics, philosophy, psychology, everything, all in the one room, basically. So we started going to the bookshop and then we learned that there were still meetings because it seemed like quite an archaic thing just remnants in a bookshop, and then we found that there were - - -

SA: The TS.

DT: The TS, yes.

SA: Right.

DT: - - - but then we found that they still, the TS still existed and people met so then we started going to meetings and some of them were quite interesting; the programme always varies tremendously but some of them were certainly very interesting and that's how we, you know – we didn't join, I didn't join for quite a few months, I didn't really think of joining. I think young people don't necessarily – I wasn't much of a joiner but someone who I respected very much just suggested it and I did it, so.

SA: And so what was the membership like way back then?

8.00 DT: In some respects similar to now, mainly older, so if you go to a meeting of the TS in Australia – it's not like that in every country in the world; South America and Italy have quite a young membership but in Australia it's pretty grey-haired unless they dye their hair. But I didn't notice that at first; it just seemed like a lot of very interesting people, interested in a lot of stuff that you don't find elsewhere and then gradually it became obvious that they were older. But that wasn't of concern to me but we were quite noted by the existing membership as "the young ones" so it was quite obvious that there was this – it was not that common for a lot of young people to join the TS then. Mind you, a lot of the people who are members of the TS now in their eighties joined when they were eighteen to twenty and they've stayed in the TS the whole time, so there was quite a large young Theosophist movement earlier on when really the TS was the only show in town as far as spirituality any alternative thought or even just metaphysics; anything outside the church, the only place was the Theosophical Society. So, for them, there was really no alternative as there are now. You know, you can go to meetings of everything now: Buddhism, Daoism, yoga, tarot, numerology, everything, whereas in those days the TS was the only place you could be exposed to anything other than what your church gave you.

SA: And so you think that because there's so much more on offer now that's why there's not the younger membership?

DT: Possibly, that's possibly one reason or maybe the fierce loyalty of these older members might be because they did everything within the fold of the TS all their social things.

9.59 You know, there was not this – it was a much more face to face civilisation fifty, sixty years ago than it is now; there was no such thing as sitting at home in front of the television or the internet which there is now. A lot of young people meet, as you know, via the internet a lot of the time, so they need a very strong reason to go to a meeting of the TS, something that they couldn't get on line which maybe we're not providing. But be that as it may I think to some extent it's out of our control that fifty years ago the TS was the one place that you could go for any related information, even on Buddhism. Although Buddhism came to the country in the late nineteenth century it was really in the TS that people first learnt about Buddhism also unless they happened to be Buddhists.

SA: And where were those early meetings? Were they around in the city of Sydney area?

DT: In Sydney. Well actually I should have looked this up before I did the interview because there were dozens and dozens of lodges - which is what the groups are called – in Sydney even in those days.

SA: So like branches within branches?

DT: Yes. Well, no, branches of the TS in Australia in Sydney. So now there's one, Blavatsky Lodge - which is on the second floor, second or the third floor of this building – but there were lodges in Mosman, there were lodges in all sorts of places. They would have been smaller but still there were a lot of places meeting and even in Sydney it's moved around quite a bit. It came to this building about twenty years ago, I think it was. We were in Walker Street in North Sydney for quite some time and in Bligh Street.

11.57 **SA: O.K. Maybe we should find out a little bit about the history of the Theosophical Society and how it started and who started it.**

DT: M'mm.

SA: Are you able to talk about that?

DT: Yes, sure. Well, it was founded in New York in 1875 by possibly about a dozen people but the three that you always hear about are Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge and Blavatsky and Olcott are often described as the founders but there were about a dozen people who for various reasons founded the Theosophical Society. Two years later the headquarters moved to India to Bombay and shortly after that a property was found

in South India in Madras on the Adyar River and since then that has been the international headquarters.

SA: So why did they go to India?

DT: Well there are various levels of reason given for this. Let's just say it was an intuitive decision. When they did go to India the TS was doing quite well in New York but when they went - there was this whole feeling then and has persisted, that light comes from the East; you know, there was this interest in Eastern philosophy and metaphysics and so on, so whether that was a part of the reason I'm not quite sure. But when they did go to India - and HP Blavatsky would say that they were really directed to go by their teachers, but let's just say it was an intuitive based decision. And when they got there the India of their day was very much - you know, Indian philosophy was quite downtrodden during the Raj and everything good was British pretty much, so it was quite suppressed and Blavatsky and Olcott were really two of a handful of foreigners who were in India, saying that "This is a gem of a civilisation and this is wonderful philosophy that has a lot to teach".

14.33 They were not the only ones but in those days the Theosophical Society was quite a powerful force culturally: anybody who was anybody was a member of the TS or associated with the TS; it's quite a different situation to now. So, the top scientists, the top inventors, you'll find a lot of intellectuals were members of the Society because a lot of the ideas that it sort of traded in or was interested in were really quite 'out there' and of interest to a lot of people. And also in the States, people may not realise that when the TS was founded in 1875 one in four Americans believed that you could communicate with the dead, so they were spiritualists, one in four Americans. And Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of Sherlock Holmes, he was a spiritualist and Sir William Crookes, the scientist, was a spiritualist and it was really quite de rigueur, you know. And the TS started off on a slightly spiritualist footing which Blavatsky later regarded as a mistake to emphasise that sort of, I suppose, what we would regard now as the sexy side of things, the stuff that would sell and she actually didn't believe that they were communicating with the dead but that they were communicating with some thought forms or whatever but she soon sort of stopped that.

16.06 But when Olcott and HPB met, it was actually Olcott was an investigator for the US government on fraud for the military and he was an agriculturalist and also he was hired by a newspaper - I don't remember which one - to investigate spiritualistic medium fraud. And he went to a famous farmstead in Chittenden, Vermont, the Eddy Farmstead, which was quite well known for a range of dramatic spiritualistic or mediumistic phenomena and he went there to investigate and that's where he met H P Blavatsky. So there was this sort of psychic side to the TS to start with but when they moved to

India a lot of that gradually fell away because in India there's quite a strong, long established understanding of spirituality that really downplays the psychic side of things as sort of like kindergarten stuff and dangerous and really beside the point when the goal is to do with enlightenment and things like that. So that was probably a good move for that reason as well.

SA: Right. So then they established themselves in India and then they just started branching out to different, other countries, is that right?

DT: Yes. It spread a little bit like wildfire – to use a cliché. I mean, if you think about the difficulty of travel and communication in those days and to think – I think the first lodge in Australia was founded in 1889, something like that, which was in Hobart and there's some lovely historical photographs in the Hobart lodge from that time - so from 1875 to say 1890 it had spread to quite a few countries, it had spread all over India and really started to revolutionise the Indians' self perception.

18.17 And people would be weeping at Colonel Olcott's talks because it was the first time they'd heard their philosophy treated not only with respect but with reverence, so it was quite a big thing. And then Olcott was the first president of the TS. The second one was Annie Besant who was a British citizen who moved to India as president of the Society and she became very involved in Indian politics and was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress. And in England she was quite a radical reformist and unionist and agitating for Irish freedom and all sorts of things and a women's liberationist and quite an interesting person in her own right and when she went to India she became quite involved in uplifting Indian society and was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, which is the Congress Party today, which actually started virtually at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Madras. And so Annie Besant has a fabulously positive reputation in India and when I first used to go over to the headquarters, if you got into an auto rickshaw or a taxi you just had to say "Annie Besant Society" and anybody would take you to the headquarters. And there are roads named after her and like one of my favourite places to shop is Besant Nagar. So the TS has had quite a substantial influence in India.

20.00 **SA: So how did they do that, though? I mean, were they lecturing?**

DT: Yes. Olcott did a lot of the work, travelling around the country, setting up camp to give a lecture and then interesting people in the subject. I think, though, it was just, an idea whose time had come more or less. You know, I think it was just – it was a lot of work for him because he would be travelling by bullock cart and sleeping rough and it wasn't anything like today. Even today, travelling in India's no party unless you're going first class but in those days it was just, quite a trial. So

he travelled very widely but a lot of people took up the ideas and ran with them.

SA: I mean I guess we haven't really even talked about the ideals really or the ideas behind this but maybe we'll just carry on with the history at the moment - so the word was spread through just going around the country. So just back in Australia then, why Hobart?

DT: Oh, I don't know, I'm sorry, I don't really know why Hobart. The charter was signed by Olcott; he had visited. It's possible that for some reason they just landed in Tasmania first, I really don't know. There wouldn't be a special reason for it; I don't think it would have been because Hobart seemed right or anything like that. You know, I think it would have been a geographical decision; maybe that's where the ships went or I really don't know.

SA: And how was the Sydney lodge formed and when was that, when was that formed?

21.53 DT: Oh, I don't have it with me but the Sydney lodge has gone through a number of reformulations and crises to get to its present shape and location. There was another lodge in Sydney which had sort of a conflict through which it split and has ended up in what we have today. So actually I don't – I've got the dates in my office, I didn't bring them with me.

SA: We can pause this recording if you like.

DT: O.K, actually it's in the magazine.

SA: Yes, just say when.

DT: Yes, well Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney was founded in the early part of the twentieth century, possibly in 1922, but whether there was an earlier lodge as well that had folded and this refers to the present one I'm not quite sure actually, but certainly in the early part of the twentieth century. The newest lodge that we have is on the Sunshine Coast, which is only about seven years old but now we've got perhaps a dozen lodges in Australia whereas in the past there might have been seven or eight just in Sydney with fewer numbers, lower membership but more spread out, probably due to the problems of travelling around Sydney which, you used to have to really go on some streets by bullock cart when the TS was founded here. So getting about was not so easy, so things were more sort of microised, I guess.

SA: So why in the centre of Sydney in Sydney?

DT: Oh, I don't know, there's no special reason. I mean, most of the TS centres have been set up in the centre of their city, probably to be more accessible to a larger number of people but these days you become less accessible; it's very difficult to get into cities and to park and, there are certain disadvantages about being in the centre of a city that there wasn't in the past, so I think it was just to be literally at the centre so that most people could find you and access the meetings and things.

24.23 **SA: And did you actually say what the membership was?**

DT: It's about twelve hundred and fifty around Australia at the moment, twelve forty five to twelve fifty and the membership of Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney is a little bit over two hundred, between two hundred and two hundred and fifty.

SA: I see, yes, O.K. Now maybe we should get onto talking about what theosophy is.

DT: Yes.

SA: I mean, what is it, what are the beliefs or ideas behind it?

DT: Well, the things that people might most commonly associated with theosophy, if they know anything about it at all, would be things like reincarnation, the idea of karma, spiritual evolution. I mean, well HP Blavatsky was the first intellectual in the modern west to propose the idea of a psychological or spiritual evolution against the Darwinian consensus which left consciousness right out of the picture. And I think that was inherently one of the most appealing things about theosophy to most people, the idea that there is such a thing as inner development or inner progress or a psychological change and that it's in our power, and also that it's sort of the destiny of the human being and that the human being that we see now is not the end result the end point of evolution, that's there's quite - - -

26.15 **SA: In a spiritual sense.**

DT: - - - in a spiritual sense, yes, and in fact that physically we're hardwired already for a much greater degree of sensitivity and intelligence than humans currently display. So there is this idea of inward progress to a state of enlightenment ultimately or what sometimes people used to call human perfection, which is a bit of a fraught term. So that's one of the most influential ideas and the Theosophical Society is regarded as the mother of the new age and it has a kind of uneasy relationship with a lot of new age stuff, which a lot of people in the TS think of as rather mercantile and maybe on the superficial side of things sometimes. But still the key ideas that were kicking around the Theosophical Society since 1875 are pretty much the foundation of the new age, especially karma and reincarnation

and the primacy of consciousness. And there are quite a number of the things that HP Blavatsky wrote about in the 1870s and 1880s which were regarded as very outlandish, a lot of them have been supported by recent developments in science, especially in physics, quantum mechanics and things like that; there's a whole new understanding of the ubiquitousness of consciousness, that consciousness is everywhere.

28.02

And one of the key ideas that you come across again and again in theosophical literature is the idea that there's no such thing as dead matter, that consciousness is everywhere and consciousness comes first and there is the idea in modern western science or the empirical method which is what we really think of as science, there is the idea that consciousness is a byproduct of the brain or that thought is an epiphenomenon of the brain and it's basically just a byproduct of physical processes, chemical processes, whereas the spiritual philosophies - and theosophy is one of them - that say the idea is that consciousness comes first, intelligence comes before the brain, which is more the transceiver the receiver of intelligence and the producer of it.

SA: So it's consciousness first and then it's kind of a cognition on a mental kind of level.

DT: Yes.

SA: Is that what you're saying?

DT: Yes, that the physical plane, material reality physically as we see it is the end of a long process of things which start off at a spiritual level and then at a mental level and then finally you get a physical expression - that's the general idea. It's a top down approach rather than a bottom up approach.

SA: So when you talk about consciousness, are you talking about - so it's not just personal consciousness that's everywhere, it's kind of everything has consciousness, is that what you're saying?

29.45

DT: Yes, that's a good question because there is a very different - most of the time when you use the word "consciousness", people have in their mind something like "consciousness of" an awareness of something, so "I am conscious of you and therefore I'm a conscious being" whereas maybe an amoeba will not be conscious of you and therefore it's not a conscious being. All right, so there's this very much subject/object model of consciousness in the west mainly whereas in a lot of eastern traditions consciousness is there before this subject/object relationship or subject/object divide arises, that for them consciousness is that which is beyond the subject and object divide, so it's something else. It's unfortunate that we just have the same word for it as what we think of as "my awareness of

separateness from you", whereas really consciousness is that in which all those subjects and objects float, it's something that we give a word for that we don't know exactly what it is. And science does that too with things like force and electricity and energy; they're three words for things that we all feel fairly comfortable using but in fact nobody knows what they are; they're words for things that we can see some of the effects of but nobody knows what they are and consciousness is like that. So metaphysics is not alone in this problem, that we sometimes give words for things that we don't actually – can't see or hear or feel but we know is there due to the effects. So it's a little bit like that but consciousness, it's not thought; probably I should have said that first: there is a difference between thought and consciousness and consciousness is that in which all thoughts float. And consciousness is primary, I guess, that's another idea that not only in a creation of the universe sense but also in a personal, if I can put it, empowerment sense.

32.06

Like most of us have been trained to think that or taught to think that the answer to everything lies in thought, that we're going to think our way out of a problem or whether it's a relationship problem or the problem of the environment, people will get together and think up a solution, whereas really one could argue that thought is the thing that made the problem in the first place and that the solution lies somewhere beyond thought. And this is where things like meditation come into it. You know, meditation when done correctly is a method of transcending thought and when you do that you actually touch the creative power of the universe, you know. And the other idea is that there was no god external to the universe who created the world and then left and we can pray to this god and hope that some prayers are answered and some will be and some won't be but basically that God created the universe and then left, there's more an idea that whatever it is that is responsible for everything to be is still here and now and that it's actually possible and it's a state of consciousness more than a being.

SA: So it's consciousness opposed to - - -

DT: Yes, rather than a person - - -

SA: Yes.

DT: - - - or a creator, a god. So there's a very strong feeling within the literature associated with the TS of more like an impersonal view of God, amounting to it being a state of consciousness and it's the same state of consciousness that a person could arrive at if they were enlightened, whatever that means. And this is a very strong tradition in Hindu metaphysics where all of the Upanishads have just one teaching which is the atman is Brahman, the innermost essence of the human being is the same as the innermost essence of the universe.

34.05 So when you contact that state you actually contact the same state as what we think of as God. You know, and if that sounds very arrogant - which of course to some Christian folk it would sound extremely arrogant if not devilish – it's not, because the personality, the me, can never reach that state I can never reach that state; it's only when the me is completely quiescent that I could be regarded as in that state, so there's no ego is ever going to get there. But that's really they're some of the ideas but I must say that they are, as I mentioned to you on the phone, none of these things – and there's many more – are treated as dogmas or beliefs in the TS and I can't guess what most of the members of the Society would believe - - -

SA: Of course.

- - - or what they would be interested in. Well, I can guess that most of them would be spiritually inclined, right, but they would be each following their own path pretty much, usually self constructed because otherwise if they wanted a specific teacher or teaching maybe they'd go somewhere else and one of the things that you find about the TS is it's very eclectic. But none of these ideas that I've mentioned are beliefs incumbent on the members, they're just things that you will find have been written about since 1875. And when HP Blavatsky started writing all of this down she was drawing on a huge variety of sources: platonic, Vedanta, like Hindu metaphysics, Buddhism, Daoist thought, the Kabbalah, all sorts of things.

36.04 And that's another thing that made theosophy and the TS so popular: it was like an introduction to a whole world of philosophy and metaphysics that you never knew existed, so it was like a gigantic supermarket in which all of the stock was philosophy and metaphysics.

SA: From a different range of other sort of religions, I guess.

DT: A huge range of sources, yes. But there is one thing that I would say that you can see a distinct continuity and that is that the word "theosophy" was first used in the west in the third century AD with the eclectic philosophers, the neo-Platonists of a particular school of Ammonius Saccas and he sought to reconcile the best of Plato and the best of Aristotle and he had like a threefold system of teachings. One was a belief in a divine reality substantial to the world. Actually, I might just refer to this here. Yes, one was a belief in an absolute, incomprehensible deity that was the fundamental principle in life. The other one was a belief in the human being's immortal nature.

SA: O.K.

DT: Immortal nature: that there is something in the human being inwardly that is equally immortal as that which has created this universe.

SA: So is that the consciousness that you were talking about?

DT: Yes, yes, it's a state of consciousness, yes.

SA: So that lives on?

38.01 DT: Yes, well there are possibly a number of things that may live on but this is something more substantial than what we normally think of as reincarnation because some people's idea of reincarnation is of something personal that lives on so that you are one person, that you were Cleopatra in a previous life, but it may not be that. You know, it may be that humanity just constantly incarnates that we go back into some sort of a soup bowl and then another dish of soup is dished out later on and all of the qualities of all of us maybe get mixed up in one big tureen. But I don't know, I don't really know how that works but what this is referring to is not so much reincarnation as something impersonal, immortal that you wouldn't identify as you from one life to the next; it's sort of bigger than that. But this was the sort of teaching, that there was this infinite universal something that the human being was essentially immortal and identical with what sometimes is called a universal oversoul, that universal element in life. And also in the third century there was this idea of theurgy or divine work, which entailed something like we would think of today as self realisation that you would actually realise that state or come to that state consciously.

39.49 So that was in the third century and then in the 1940s you have Aldous Huxley and the Perennial Philosophy – I don't know if you ever came across that book – and he had on page one, as it happens the most excellent definition of the perennial philosophy that I've ever come across and I realised when I was writing this leaflet that it was almost identical to Ammonius Saccas in the third century and I don't think it's because Aldous Huxley plagiarised this third century author, I think it's just that he was correct when he said that there is throughout time there has been this - what he called and others have called the perennial philosophy. It's called "perennial" because for obvious reasons it's been around forever and his three ideas were that there is a metaphysic that recognises a divine reality substantial to the things and lives and minds that make up our world - so that there is a divine reality substantial to everything - the psychology that finds in the soul something identical with that divine reality - so it's again the same as that third century metaphysic, the immortality of the soul, so there is something, the psychology of the perennial philosophy basically states that there is something in essence in us that is the same as the essence of that infinite universal – and the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the imminent and transcendent ground of being. So that's what he said was the essence of the perennial philosophy and I think indeed it is. And so that's him in the twentieth century, there's Ammonius in the third century and then in the nineteenth century there was HP Blavatsky

who was really a pioneer in saying that there is this philosophy that we've thrown out with the bathwater, with science and, you know. Actually, there were two things that she took a very firm stand against and that the Theosophical Society took a very firm stand against and that was scientific materialism and dogmatic theology.

42.04 You know, she was like an anti – and she gained a reputation not undeserved of being a kind of anti church fanatic. But she wasn't an anti-Christian, she was an anti church and there were probably some fairly good reasons. Being a rather colourful writer with a very fertile imagination and very little literary self control, she really let them have it and so at one stage a lot of the churches were very, very against the Theosophical Society and still are, not only because of HP Blavatsky but because of their fear of - some reactionary churches still have a fear of meditation and yoga and they think these are the works of the devil and any talk of self realisation or anything, thought power or whatever, really gives them the heebie-jeebies but they're reactionary. But she did get this reputation for being very anti church but she felt that – in my words – that we really had thrown the baby out with the bathwater and the baby was the perennial philosophy and a whole lot of other stuff and she was right; you know, we're starting to come back to that now with - - -

SA: You mean as a society we are?

DT: Yes. As a science we are as well. I mean, if you have a look at modern physics and modern biology and chemistry, it's remarkable how important consciousness has become in all of those fields. Even in biology which was quite reactionary until recently, there's a whole new field of epigenetics which talks about the control over the genes and that control is thought power.

44.07 And the argument is that the environment in which the genes live, which is not whether or not you live next to a nuclear reactor but the environment, internal environment in you in which the genes live is as important, if not more important than the coding of the genes themselves. So that's quite a new field in biology which unfortunately Richard Dawkins doesn't seem to be aware of. He speaks from another very old fashioned science and doesn't seem to take into account quantum mechanics or anything aside from his own version of biology that sells a lot of books.

SA: I've got so many questions. Also too I wanted to – I mean, maybe we can talk a bit more about the belief of the TS but also too, like if it's not about teachings, how do people get to all of what you were talking about divine reality, sort of enlightenment, sort of those kinds of things.

DT: Yes, yes.

SA: That's two questions there but - - -

DT: Yes.

SA: - - - but maybe we could pick either one.

DT: Yes. I think it's not so much the fact that there are no teachings or teachers offered in the Theosophical Society, I think it's just that the TS does not offer any specific teacher or teaching for its members to follow.

45.57 So within the TS you will inevitably be introduced to a lot of different teachers and teachings and there's no one who's going to tell you that this is the best one or the correct one because you'll find in fact that the same teachings exist – and incidentally they are freely available, you don't have to pay hundreds of dollars to go to a seminar. You'll find the same teachings or quite a similar raft of teachings via Buddhism, Daoism, the yoga philosophy, all sorts of things and so the idea is it's like an inquiry based society where the inquiry is sort of into spiritual sphere but there's no set road, there's no set road map or guide but it's not just an open inquiry, it's not philosophy in the pub, it's a bit more specific than that. And if we come back to the meaning of the word "theosophy" which is literally "divine wisdom", the curious thing about the TS is that its aim, I suppose, is to show the world that such a thing as theosophy exists – that's a quote from Blavatsky's key to theosophy – "to show the world that such a thing as theosophy exists" but theosophy's not really defined in the TS other than the literal meaning of divine wisdom, it's not even defined in the constitution of the Theosophical Society, it's up to the members to discover what theosophy is for themselves. And that's both a strength and a weakness because when you've got no one telling you exactly what the territory is it can really get quite pear-shaped and go off on any kind of a tangent maybe.

47.59 But you will find that over the hundred and thirty five plus years there are certain key things that have come up that have been explored. And the other reason to say that this is an inquiry based society, there's two reasons for that: one is that there is no dogma, there is no teaching incumbent upon the members; the idea is that we will all be looking into these things individually and together at meetings and at home but also if you study these teachings you'll find that they all come back to the importance of one thing and that is the state of the human being your internal state, your state of mind or heart if you like and where you're coming from. And to get that in order it takes a lot of working on yourself and nobody can do that for you, even if you have the best teacher in the world or the best statement about what theosophy is or what a healthy mind and heart is like, you still have to actually do the hard yards yourself. So it's a kind of a do-it-yourself society as well which doesn't mean that some of the members don't have their own teachers or teachings that they follow; they do, lots of

them do but that's an individual choice and they choose also to remain members of the Society and meet with people who have different teachers and teachings but all roughly what could be described as "spiritual", I guess. So with this idea of something to do with the transformation of consciousness would be like a major thing among the members of the TS.

SA: Can I just ask you what does inquiry mean, what is an inquiry based, what does that mean?

50.02 DT: Yes, O.K. So, yes, I suppose that's a big jargonish. If I say it's an inquiry based society, I contrast that with a teaching based society. So what we're doing is we have a huge range of teachings, there are a huge range of available excellent teachings about the spiritual life and how to live it and mind and thought and all of that and the idea in the TS is that we should be looking at all of that we should be exploring that ourselves rather than have someone teach us. So it's a learning based society, ideally, rather than a teaching based society – we're all students here.

SA: And so when you say "learning" it's actually an internal inquiry?

DT: Yes. It's not quite like learning a language or doing a course at university where there's a set curriculum that you follow. Firstly, the curriculum has been set by teachers that have existed for thousands and thousands of years, so the curriculum is available to everybody in and outside the TS. So there's no curriculum in that sense but also it's a different type of learning than when you learn a language or you accumulate knowledge because learning about oneself is different, isn't it? It's more to do with self observation or self awareness kind of thing.

SA: And so how do you do that, how do you inquire?

51.52 DT: Incidentally, this is just me speaking. If you spoke to another member of the TS they may say something else because although I'm the president of the TS in Australia I'm not the spiritual head, I'm the elected administrative head, you know. So this is my take on the TS and one of the things I'm trying to do in my job here is to bring this inquiry based aspect of the TS much more to the fore because I can see that over the decades some members have really forgotten that it is an inquiry based society. You know, it's not that easy to not have beliefs. I mean, the TS does not foist beliefs on its members but some of the members foist beliefs on themselves and on others and then you find people using the word "theosophy" in a very specific sense. Maybe when they use the word "theosophy" they mean the writings of Blavatsky and her followers but theosophy doesn't actually mean that; theosophy means "divine wisdom" and finding out about divine wisdom, not anybody's writing about it; really, that's what it means. But a lot of people do tend to concentrate on books

published by the Theosophical Publishing House as if that was theosophy but it's not. So not every member would be saying exactly this. Mind you, there's a great interest in the TS in Australia and exactly what I have been saying: like they do feel that there has been a problem and that they wish to rectify it so that's great. But how to do the inquiry and everything, that is a very difficult thing, that is not so easy because people don't get taught that at school they don't really get taught even to think that much, they get taught to memorise.

54.03 Some schools do try to teach people to think by teaching philosophy – it's becoming more popular in Australia – and they've found that actually the exam results have improved even in lower class suburbs when they've just introduced philosophy into the curriculum because it helps people to think. But there's much more than that, there's also learning not to think and that is really part of inquiry as well, learning how to observe oneself. In my personal opinion, the best teacher on that subject is probably J Krishnamurti who was a member who grew up in the Theosophical Society and then in 1929 went out on his own and did his own thing and gave lectures around the world till 1986 when he died. And he was very clear on the difference between thought and not thinking and the limited role that thought has and the importance of watching and awareness and observation. And I think that self inquiry has a great deal to do with that, watching oneself.

SA: Though meditation?

DT: Through meditation and in daily life and it's just studying, it's just once you find that a lot of the things that we think are facts about reality are just thoughts; even if I say "I'm Jewish", if you were to dissect a person you would not find a Jew in there or a Christian there, you'd find a human being of some kind. You know, a lot of the things that we cling to are just thoughts and just understanding that changes your perspective about hanging onto things a lot.

56.04 But really, this is just me talking about my beliefs because I can't say this on behalf of the Theosophical Society. In fact, I don't speak on behalf of the Theosophical Society, I just happen to be the administrative head of the TS in Australia.

SA: And the lucky one to do this interview.

DT: Yes, yes, it's in my job description to do this interview.

SA: Good, I'm glad you're doing the interview. So we were going to talk about more of the beliefs or - - -

DT: Yes.

SA: - - - did you want to expand on that more?

DT: Not really too much, just to say that Blind Freddy who goes to a meeting of the TS for a very short period of time anywhere in the world will immediately see that there are certain key ideas that keep coming up. You know, you'll often hear about reincarnation, karma, spiritual evolution, meditation, a whole lot of other stuff, vegetarianism a lot of things come up again and again at meetings in the TS but none of these are doctrines or dogmas of the Theosophical Society and all of the ideas that you come across in the TS are presented a little bit like a hypothesis to be investigated if you're interested and run with for a while and see how it sits with you. So there are these key ideas but they are not really beliefs on the members. When you join the TS all you are doing is you are agreeing, really that you agree with its objects, not that you agree to follow its objects but that you are in sympathy with the objects of the Society which are three.

58.00 One is to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, regardless of race, creed, sex, caste or colour – that's the first object of the Society. The second one is the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science and the third one is to study the powers latent in the human being and the hidden laws of nature. Now, you just say that you are in sympathy with those objects; you don't say you're going to run off and study the hidden laws of nature. The objects don't even say which hidden laws of nature because actually all the laws of nature that we don't know so far are hidden, so it's a pretty big object, but you are in sympathy with it. And no one who agrees to abide by the rules – which are just practical rules – and that they are in sympathy with the objects of the Society would be turned down as a member. So anyone can join if they're over – I don't remember what age – fifteen or something, otherwise their parents have to sign the form - and that's all there is to it. You just pay your dues which are pretty low, about forty dollars a year, as a national member and there is no more that you have to do than that; you just say you're in sympathy with the objects of the Society.

SA: O.K. How does the Society then keep afloat? I mean, that's a very cheap membership.

DT: Well, yes. The members' dues in Australia pay for very little, pretty much would cover the cost of the magazine and a couple of other things that get sent out. We're just very careful with our money, yes, very, very careful; we just try not to touch our investments and, you know. The dues just don't pay for very, very much so we run a tight ship.

60.05 **SA: So you've got various investments?**

DT: Yes, from the past, yes, yes. Yes, and we don't own a lot of property or anything like that. We have a couple of centres that we own and run but it's a not for profit organisation and we definitely don't make a profit either but it's a kind of a religious, spiritual, charitable trust.

SA: And do you own this building?

DT: This building is owned by Blavatsky Lodge Sydney that has its meetings on the second floor, its library on the third floor and rents out the first floor which is currently untenanted and the national headquarters owns the fourth floor.

SA: I see.

DT: So my office owns one quarter of this building.

SA: Yep.

DT: Yep.

SA: I see.

DT: It just happens that we're in the same building as one of our lodges.

SA: And so – I think you've already answered this question but I'll just ask it specifically because what I mentioned on the phone and it's probably a very silly question at this point in the interview but so you're not a religious organisation, is that right?

DT: We are a religious spiritual organisation but we are not a sectarian religion; we are not a religion but we are religious.

SA: O.K. And was it kind of about - yes, I was asking you about the beliefs.

61.55 DT: Well, I suppose if you were to say – we could say that we believe in the brotherhood of humanity and we believe just looking at the objects you could say that we believe in the brotherhood of humanity, that there is no real distinction between people, regardless of race, creed, sex, caste or colour, so it's a profoundly non bigoted society. Also as an organisation we believe that there is a hidden potential in every human being and that the ultimate destiny of every human being is to realise that potential and that it has a lot to do with the powers of the mind and consciousness. There is also a belief that the hidden laws of nature substantiate that that the hidden laws of nature and the hidden powers latent in man are actually the same thing, the same field of consciousness there, and that ultimately science and religion will walk hand in hand towards that infinite state. They may be approaching it from a different end of the spectrum but science and religion are both concerned ultimately with truth. It may be a different kind of truth but science needn't be that way; it's only been that way since the seventeenth century. Before then Plato was a scientist I would have been a scientist, a hermeticist was a scientist. You know, it's only since the seventeenth century that you see the

guy in the white lab coat whose beliefs are irrelevant to the experiment – that's a very new thing - so in days gone by and I suppose I believe that in the future science and religion will be once again one. And the second object comparative study of philosophy of religion and science, that when you look at the deeper side of many of the world's religions, philosophies and sciences you'll come to the same truths.

64.08 So they're kind of, I suppose, beliefs of the organisation on the basis of which we would be regarded as religious, definitely so, but not a limiting religion and not a specific religion. So there's nobody here who would tell you the name and shape of our god or whether there is a god. You know, for some of us it's universal consciousness, for some of us it's just some kind of impersonal god. Those beliefs are just individual beliefs of the members and they're kind of unpredictable but as an organisation we believe in the brotherhood of humanity and the powers latent in the human being.

SA: So when you were talking about enlightenment before, is that what, say, someone coming to the Society would be hoping to achieve?

DT: I think that most people who are members of the Society or are interested in it or go to its meetings or its bookshops or libraries, they are mostly interested in spiritual development, in consciousness change, definitely, and, yes, probably enlightenment. But there are plenty of organisations today who are selling enlightenment, I think quite wrongly. So if you want a quick fix or if you want a guaranteed result the TS is not the place to go because there's no one who's going to tell you "Well, if you do this seminar you will achieve such and such in such and such a time". However, that subject matter of enlightenment and spiritual evolution and everything is what you will find, just many different approaches to it.

66.10 **SA: So it's not sort of like a psychological, it's sort of like a psychoanalytic kind of approach, is it?**

DT: No, no, no.

SA: To self discovery or inquiry?

DT: No, not really. I mean, some people may go down that road at various stages maybe. Actually, psychology and psychoanalysis is one thing I've never encountered in the TS, strangely enough. It's more like psyche-ology, like soul searching than analysis. In fact, yes, if you were to follow the Kirshnamurti line you would find that analysis is definitely not the way to go.

SA: That's thought?

DT: Yes, not only because it's thought but it's also digging in the past rather than seeing what is just observing when you just see something it kind of tends to fall away. Finding out why it happened and who did what to whom may be, you know – I'm not saying there's no value in that but Ramana Maharshi, a South Indian sage who died, I think, in the 1950s and who's very popular in the TS, he had this saying that "When you throw out the garbage you just put it out, you don't have to inspect it". So if you know that the way you're currently thinking is let's say not helpful or in Dr Phil's [American TV talk show host] language, you know "How's it working for you?", if you know it's not working for you, you can just chuck it out or let it go, you don't have to analyse how it was constructed – I mean, that's one approach anyway.

68.03 But, yes, interestingly enough psychoanalysis and psychology in the ordinary sense is not something that you'll come across much in the TS. What you will come across is stuff like Jungian psychology and Jung's approach but especially his more metaphysical stuff, there's a lot of Jung in there - - -

SA: There is, is there?

DT: - - - a lot of interest in Jung, let me put it that way, yep.

SA: So would you have, say, some teachings in Jungian philosophy or not really?

DT: Not really, no, but a lot of people are interested in Jung. You know, that's really all, and the Jung Society rents our premises downstairs and I mean yes, people will be reading Jung a bit in the TS more than going through analysis and stuff themselves. I guess they take more a kind of a yogic meditation approach maybe, more than psychological.

SA: I guess I'm just sort of curious to find out how you might actually approach - - -

DT: Yes, yes. Yes, well actually the other thing is that there has been a tradition in the TS of lectures, giving and attending lectures, so that would be the main thing an observer from Mars would notice, that members of the TS go to lectures all the time, which is of questionable value. You know, once upon a time I'd say it was very valuable when this was the only forum for finding out anything but now we've found out everything; I mean, we all know enough to get on with things but we keep going to lectures. I don't but a lot of people do; I give lectures, so but I'm trying to move away from the lecture idea in the TS. But if you were to look objectively from above at what we're doing it would be giving and receiving lectures.

70.05 And there is a joke in the TS – it's not restricted to the TS – that there is a door leading to God and another door leading to a talk about God and all the TS people go to the talk about God. So that's a bit unkind, it's not quite true, and I think that there's a lot of value to be gained in thinking about these things again and taking a look at it again but yes.

SA: Yes. So I guess that's a good point to kind of talk about, how the society has changed here, I guess in Sydney. You were saying that earlier on there was a little bit of sort of a fracture and quite a change in approach to the Society. And then what other changes have happened over the years?

DT: Well, I mean the fracture that I spoke of was not so much a change in the Society in the sorts of things we're talking about, it was just a crisis in the Theosophical Society in a hundred and thirty plus years, so it's had more than its fair share of crises of one kind or another, especially around leading figures who leave, like Rudolf Steiner and people like that. You know, he was – you know Steiner – he was the National President of the TS in Germany and he had some conflict with the TS and left and started the Anthroposophical Society which is a great organisation, no problem with that. So there have been various crises on issues or personalities but as far as how the TS has changed, the TS changes very, very slowly. It feels like – I mean, you can see computers and stuff in our office and this office is pretty modern by TS standards but to some of us it feels like the Theosophical Society even in Australia has only just got into the twentieth century, not the twenty first century.

72.17 You know, so we're still very much a print based Society, a lecture based Society, an older Society and in other countries even like the international headquarters in Adyar is even – it's probably in the nineteenth century which is charming in its way. So things change very slowly here. One major change over the years is that we don't have the highly charismatic, flamboyant, very proactive leadership that we used to have in the form of Blavatsky, Olcott, Besant and whether that is partly responsible for I won't say declining membership but perhaps not the crème de la crème of society being members of it; that's one thing. Another thing I will say about the TS that has always been the case: it's a members' based Society, not a teacher based Society, so it's really the shape of the members that matters anyway, not the shape of the leadership. But, yes, we don't have people like Annie Besant here any more. If we did there'd be huge crowds; if there was another type of Annie Besant who was the greatest orator of her time there'd be a lot of people coming here.

73.47 So that's one change and other changes over which we just have no control, like the changing situation around us and so we really do need to find new ways of presenting theosophy and also new ways of presenting, new media for the presentation of theosophy, which is a challenge because things that require lifetimes or a lifetime of study

don't easily get conveyed in sound bites or in two minute You Tube clips so we have to find ways of utilising all these new resources or new media but still maintaining some kind of depth.

SA: Yes.

DT: So that's the challenge at the moment, I think.

SA: Yes, so to keep the membership alive?

DT: Yes, yes. I mean, this has never been a proselytizing organisation, it's never gone out with membership drives so there's nothing to convert people to but we also don't sell, it's a profoundly non mercenary or mercantile society which I'm very proud of; we give everything, almost everything for free. You don't have to be a member to attend most of our meetings, they don't cost anything. I mean, some groups charge a gold coin donation, if you can call it that, but because they're hiring the premises or just to cover some of their costs but we don't charge money for seminars and if you go to a school of theosophy at our centre at Springbrook you only pay two hundred dollars for a week of tuition and food and accommodation, so that doesn't cover the costs, really. So we're not in it for the money and we don't try and gull people either.

76.03 **SA:** So the relevance in a contemporary, urban environment, is there – I mean, obviously there is and you believe that but - - -

DT: Yes.

SA: - - - could you just talk about that?

DT: Yes. Well, I think when you - I mean, this is something I've been very interested in since assuming my office two years ago – when you clear away the unnecessary things that have attached themselves to theosophy and the TS, the subtle dogmas, the perhaps overemphasis sometimes on the writings of Blavatsky and Besant and other people published by the theosophical publishing houses, when you clear that away and you just are left with the key ideas which are not dogmas and the inquiry based society and the objects and the things that it has taken a stand against and for over a hundred and thirty five years, what you're left with actually is a fabulous product with a lot of contemporary relevance that I think would sell itself if only we just kept it clear of the dross that naturally accrues on things after time and also maybe with people not being quite so aware of the implications of their use of language and their assumptions and if we just clean it up a little bit more I think that there is still a need for people to come together face to face rather than just on the internet. There is still an interest among some people, just the average, intelligent Australian who is interested in spirituality and exploring

things with people of like mind without necessarily subscribing to any particular teaching.

78.02 I think theosophy has never – you know, will never attract hundreds and thousands of people but that's not what it was all about to start with anyway, it wasn't about getting a large membership; it was about influencing the culture of the time and it did that to a very great extent in the nineteenth century; a lot of its work has already been achieved. I mean, it was in the TS that karma and reincarnation were first spoken about in the west and now karma is in the English Standard Oxford English Dictionary. So it's done a lot and I think really what remains is just to consolidate itself as an inquiry based Society, a profoundly non-sectarian, non-dogmatic space, a safe and welcoming space, in which to explore anything and everything to do with human transformation. And, of course, in some other countries, in Australia, taking a stand for universal brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste and colour, we may not realise it here but there's not a whole lot of problems in that area in this country, really. I mean, there is some but in other countries it's even more relevant, so there's still work to do elsewhere as well. But I think in this country just providing a space that is welcoming to spiritual inquiry without taking money from you, without telling you that "This is the only way", I think that's really just the relevance of it.

SA: We should really also talk about the emblem of the Society because it's quite an interesting mix of - - -

80.01 DT: Yes, yes.

SA: - - - different symbols.

DT: Yes. The motto of the Society, "There is no religion higher than truth", that is an English translation and not the only possible English translation of a motto of one of the maharajas of, I think it was Benares, who gifted his family motto to the TS and it's Satyân nâsti paro dharmah and the word which we have here as "truth" is "Sat", which in Sanskrit means "Truth is one meaning but boundless existence is another". So you could say "There is no religion higher than boundless existence" the totality. And the word "religion" here, it's the Sanskrit is "dharmah" which is a far broader word than "religion". It could be "way", as in the Daoist way, it could be "meaning and purpose", all of that. So "There is no religion or way higher than the reality" so in other words our ideas about reality are not the ultimate thing and no idea about reality is important compared to the reality; you know, so "Don't get hooked on any idea about reality, keep moving towards the thing itself", so that's part of what the motto is and the emblem, I think, the seal or emblem of the Society, I think was actually designed by HPB based on symbols that meant a lot to her and other people at the time.

81.59 And at the top of the symbol there's the Sanskrit word "om" and below that is what in the west or certainly since WWII we see as the swastika which has been a controversial part of the seal, unfortunately, but it is an ancient Tibetan, Hindu and Buddhist symbol for primordial motion, really, and you'll see it on Hindu temples and Buddhist temples all over India and further north in India now. And then there is the symbol of the serpent eating its tail, which is like the other two symbols, also a symbol of transformation and unity and constant renewal because the snake is always shedding its skin. And then there's the interlaced triangles which unfortunately our Muslim members have some issue with sometimes, saying "Why have you got the Star of David and there's no Islamic symbol". I'm not sure whether it was really meant to be the Star of David or just interlaced triangles, the symbolism of which is just that one triangle, it's one object but one part of that triangle has the apex pointing towards say heaven and the other pointing towards earth, so there's the light and dark triangles and we are both of those because there are some aspects of the human being that are always completely spiritual and some that are always material, so we are both of those things.

84.01 **SA: So you're saying the material being the dark?**

DT: Yes, dark, not as in naughty or evil, but just earth.

SA: Yes.

DT: Yes, so pointing down and the other pointing up. And then there's the ankh at the centre of the symbol which is an old Egyptian symbol of resurrection like the Christian cross a little bit. So each symbol in fact really refers to renewal and transformation and the totality but I think it's very beautiful but it's also an arbitrary symbol; I mean it was just drawn by one human being, it was not divinely given to the Theosophical Society but it's like a brand let's say .

SA: So do you believe in something being divinely given? I'm not necessarily talking about the symbol I'm just - - -

DT: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, I think, yes, I do think but it depends what you mean by "divinely". I think that whenever we step out of the limited personal self we access that which we could call "divinely given". It's a state of consciousness, the divine. To me, the divine is universal, so that which is universally present everywhere in everything is divine and in fact if you look at modern science a lot of the descriptions given of certain elements in science are what we used to describe as God like non-locality and a lot of things about consciousness, things that we attribute to consciousness in science used to be attributed to God. So to me divine and universal are the same and that there is something in every atom that is universal and that is consciousness and that is divine but it's not thought.

86.09 And so it's like a lot of people say about the state of grace, that grace is always there but it's when you surrender that you actually receive it. That state of surrender is the same thing as going beyond thought; it's like when you give up and then something else comes in and I think most people have had experiences of that, whether they meditate or not, whether they've experienced something else but they may not describe it as divine or they might not describe it as universal consciousness. So I think that, yes, people and lots of people who are prophets or sages or whatever, either through consciously learning the art of meditation or just being born that way, they access these states and they have much more of a connection with the universal element of consciousness. There's a very, very useful teaching in India and that is that "Everything is consciousness and consciousness exists in four states" and it's a little bit like phase states of the one substance, like we've got with H₂O. You know, you've got water, steam, ice and whatever else is – three, O.K, water, steam and ice.

SA: Air?

DT: No, no, just water.

SA: Water.

DT: Water, it's the same substance which is water, steam and ice, it's exactly the same chemical composition, it's just in a different state and likewise consciousness: you can have thought and you can have something else. And in Hindu metaphysics there are these four states: there is the waking state which we're in now, there is the dream state which you go into when you're asleep and dreaming but also which you go into if you look at this microphone now with your eyes and you're getting sensory input from outside, that's the waking state.

88.11 If you close your eyes and you imagine that microphone, you're in the dream state because you're not getting sensory input from outside but you're replaying it or operating on previously inputted – that's the dream state and you can go through that when you're asleep and dreaming or now when you just imagine something or when you go through early stages of meditation you'll be all in that same state. And then there's a deep sleep state where all those sensory inputs are in abeyance and then there's a deeper state which is just called "the fourth state" in metaphysics and that is always there, it's just that we're not aware of it and that's that divine state. And they're just four states of the same consciousness.

SA: So is the light the same as the divine state?

DT: That's an analogy. I mean, that's a metaphor that people use, certainly, yes, yep. That's a very ancient metaphor and in Ancient

Greece and in India the sun was regarded as the metaphoric centre of the universe because it was the source of light, you know. But there's another source of light as well which is not physical light and it's a non-physical source and that's the same as enlightenment in a way, it's like the "Aha" light kind of thing, yes.

SA: O.K. Yes, I was just looking through my questions and I've kind of gone through most of them and I'm just asking whether there's things that we should be talking about to get - - -

90.01 DT: Yes.

SA: - - - a better understanding or more of an understanding?

DT: Not a lot, I think, but if you're looking at it from the point of view of it's a City of Sydney Oral History Project and you're looking at beliefs that have perhaps shaped the city or - you know, the Theosophical Society has had a very strong influence on the culture of our times, which is becoming more widely recognised by academics around the world and you'll find cultural references to theosophy in a lot of different places that you don't expect to see in literature and in cartoons - there's a Beavis and Butthead cartoon featuring Madame Blavatsky, unfortunately on MTV. But these ideas which I keep emphasising are not beliefs of the organisation but are ideas that are looked at by the members, they've been quite influential and it's mainly through the Theosophical Society that those ideas reached into what we now think of as the New Age. So as a kind of a cultural player in the city it has had a fairly substantial impact which is not widely recognised but when you look at the people who used to be members of the Society around the world, the top scientists, the top inventors like Thomas Edison, the top writers, the spiritualists, the intellectuals, you can see obviously that they - and Yeats, the poet - lots of poets, artists, Kandinsky, Scriabin, so many people who were sometimes just briefly and sometimes for longer members of the Society, you can see that these ideas have had quite a powerful impact on what I would call the sort of eternal counterculture the sort of perennial philosophy counterculture and the TS has been sort of a quiet player in that but it has had quite a substantial impact.

92.28 **SA: Great. O.K, well I think that's a good point to finish the interview.**

DT: O.K, thanks, yes.

SA: Thank you very much for time.

Interview ends