

## **All Written Comments: (all districts included)**

### **National**

#### **Relationships**

- I am concerned about the TSA President and VP; there has been no open response from them about the controversy from international elections/ Florida group alleged closing of their group. TSA and International Board should be open and share the process with all members of the world. The issue created with the Betty Bland letter for the international voting was not ever addressed by her or the TSA board. I think the biggest issue facing the TS, that breeds this type of mentality, is that only individuals who can pay for themselves to live and serve the TSA, are the only ones who are willing and able to be leaders of the TSA, and also in individual groups/lodges. Young people and working class are usually not able, even though willing, to work and serve the TSA. Good luck and I think divine order is best and divine order prevails.

- Better communication with Adyar and about the linkage with them would be helpful. I would also like to understand more about the study centers like the one in Ojai.

#### **Policies**

- I am disappointed in the Winter 2010 issue of TOS, USA. The letter from the President talks about 'human induced global climate change' and that seems to be a cornerstone of the magazine. That comment is based on poor science and hot politics. I do not think it wise for us to support any side of a scientific debate or political conclusion.

- The TOS is a big supporter of PETA, which has a reputation of a fringe organization. I belong to the Humane Society for the ethical treatment of animals. Is it possible to support the humane treatment of animals and not go so far to the Left?

- In general I think outreach beyond the Society is important; it is an age of inclusion and cooperation, as well as transparency. Study needs to be integrated with practice. I am not sure how much interaction can be expected with 'government'. I would not wait for the rest of the TS (international) chapters to come along. Do the work here and now, cooperating as best you can, but not waiting to move ahead. Vision, understanding and concrete action are mutually supporting. Blessings.

#### **Need for Education**

- It would be useful if there were concomitant offerings for children. This would help those of us with families to participate more readily.

- I would like to see the TSA modernize its teaching, having as a foundation the principles of Theosophy, but more relevant to those who are turned off by traditional organized religion. There is a large audience out there who wander about everyday life. They are not interested in religious history or philosophy. They want ways that make their life meaningful and relevant. Each event should end with a reference to the Theosophical principle underlying it, thus tying current needs with the teachings, and allowing for further in-depth study of Theosophy if desired.

- I appreciate more online and home thru mails study projects. I study on my own a lot and feel we need to connect with all groups more especially the various different Theosophy groups like Pasadena, Krotona school, London group International, and Madras India. We should offer more projects that can be accomplished by computers and maybe even through voice conference calls and seminars.

- I would like to have the ability to ask questions and/or be pointed in an efficient direction by someone who is extremely well thought out and further down the path. A semi-structured but custom designed course of study would be of great benefit.

## **Membership/ Marketing**

- I find that working too closely with a 'group' can be a cause of distraction to my goals of study, service and meditation.

- love the TSA and try to keep my membership paid to use and support the library. The website is great and useful for members and research as well as outreach. Short interactive media rich presentations geared for socializing would interest me.

- There should be more lodges and retreat centers so people in out-of-the-way places can have more choice.

- Taking the problem of declining membership, e.g., an adaptation of the behavioral ABC method might be helpful. Letter A stands for antecedent behavior. Here we could ask, what happened before our membership began to decline? Letter B stands for behavior, in this case is a decline in membership, and C stands for the consequences resulting from a lack of membership. This could be anything from financial to a failure to live the TS's three objects. Solution to such a problem requires objective analysis (probably quantifiable in most cases) and the development of a plan with a desired outcome. When we watch a problem using this model, we swiftly make changes in the desired course of action. More importantly, it helps us when we cannot objectively see the real problem at hand. This model used regularly in the behavioral science with good results. Though this explanation is not complete, it is just one at problem solving. Thank you for your hard work at the Board.

- I am a member of the Study Group in Binghamton, NY. I would also appreciate knowing of any future groups in northeast Pennsylvania.

- I search for a society of intelligent questioners, with a history of study that has led to the directed thoughts of the seeker having the fewest new problems.

- There needs to be more acceptance of members who also study other related esoteric traditions, such as Alice Bailey, I Am, etc, in addition to Theosophy. The attitude of paranoia directed towards these members has caused us to be banned from membership in local groups.

- advertise meetings, lectures, and events in Newspapers; Study the cause of problems of conflicts and disagreements in politics and society and become aware of how some people attempt to solve those; Invite religious academic experts to offer discussions on topics of general societal/ religious interest.

## **Programming**

- The TSA in Wheaton is such a valuable asset, from the programs to the incredible library, to the Quest Bookstore. Offer more experiential programs where learning has the most impact. Keep reaching the public at large as there is lots of hunger to find meaning and purpose in life.

- If the TSA local groups want to remain cliques, then they can only blame themselves if folks do not want to become affiliated with them.

- As Unitarian Universalist, I find the TS valuable in expanding my spiritual awareness. Would love to see more programs with cutting edge philosophers (e.g. Rupert Sheldrake's several years ago). Advertising to UU churches might help in increasing TS membership.

- I do live within 30 mi of TSA, Wheaton, but whether I would attend depends on the program. I have attended programs at TSA if I feel moved to attend. Am proud TS member and enjoy the library, book store, and grounds very much in an informal way.

- The TSA should focus on presenting 'real' Theosophy and the sort of people who should form the 'core' that the First Object mentions will be attracted to the TSA. The current effort to broaden the TSA into a catch-all 'new age' organization is misguided.

The National officers should concentrate more on having the TSA present the 'real' Theosophy and less time on organizational and political matters.

There is a local group in my area, but their meetings conflict with another regular engagement, so I do not attend. In any case I prefer personal study to the watered-down offerings of the group.

- More opportunities for more esoteric study groups with more emphasis on metaphysics.

### **TPH / Literature**

- Enjoy receiving course materials by mail, webinar lectures, TSA electronic bulletins; read Quest magazine cover to cover and use book reviews for selecting books to purchase. I am receiving excellent care and service. I am member-at-large by geography. Don't spread too thin on so many activities. Focus on basic mission at gradations of ever higher quality and select a short list of additional activities. Cooperation on projects with other organizations of progressive nature yields little long term benefit. Continue to be cordial to them but do 'your own thing'.

### **Leadership**

- I have been on/off member but would like to address the question about directing fundraising campaigns to the general public, foundations and government agencies. Having worked in nonprofit development for 10 years now, my experience is that it would be difficult to develop a successful fundraising campaign targeted to the general public, foundations and government agencies. The more effective approach would be to build the organization's visibility and availability and market membership. People give to organizations that they perceive themselves to have a stake in. For spiritually based organizations, that generally means there must be some sense of relationship. Few foundations support the type of work the TSA does, unfortunately. The organization's spiritual orientation automatically disqualifies it from government funding, except for programs that would provide direct services.

I am delighted to see the consideration of more attention to practice as well as study. I always thought this was a weakness in the Society. I think you have been doing a wonderful job of leveraging technology to teach and conduct outreach.

- The next step for the TS would be to re-appear on the public stage. We are living in a spiritual desert ravaged by years of political religious oppression and public indifference. However, a voice in the wilderness would be a good thing. Richard Smoley recently commented in an issue of Quest that a new cause to attract public attention and membership would help revitalize things. I agree. There are a lot of new age, Gnostic and other spiritual movements stirring. If the TS could develop a theme and a program to promote a spiritual issue or educate the public on the idea of spiritual evolution, everyone would benefit.

### **Reasons for being Members-at-large**

- under my care giving situation, I would not be free to attend a study group even if it were close enough.

- I use a bicycle instead of a car. Therefore, I will remain at large for the foreseeable future. I thus depend on resources sent directly to members.

- I am a clergyperson in a conservative church ... I could not participate in a Lodge or group. I would lose my job. Sad but true.

- If the group followed the study guidelines similar to those published online, I would have no problem joining a local group. As a relatively new member of the society, I think it is important to have a structured approach to learning and absorbing the information. So for me, it depends on the study topics, lectures and practices of the group.

- If there was a group near me, I might participate, but it would depend on who else is part of the group and how well they/we function together. I have been a member for over 50 years. Above all, the TSA needs to focus more on real Theosophy instead of various 'new age' disciplines.

The TPH should concentrate on publishing house and as such cannot be considered an 'asset' to the Society. Most of the questions do not seem to address the true purpose of the Society, i.e. Theosophy!

The TOS is a wonderful organization, but it should remain a separate entity from the TSA, as originally established by Annie Besant. The TSA itself should not engage in service projects, but be supportive of TOS. Instead of regional conferences, it would be good to return to the old practice of having a national speaker program, and/or some kind of outreach like the one created by Dora Kunz, of 'regional representatives' (which was very effective). The TSA should give more support to the regional federations.

- I do not attend any regional activities because my health is not good. I believe the TSA goals are important and I look forward to my newsletters and Quest catalogs.

- I might attend a local group if it were convenient, but not likely, as in the past I have usually found the social aspects boring and the spiritual aspects not inspiring. My main connection with the TS is through its publications, and the role it played very early on in my seeking. I feel it launched me well, and hope it does that for others...the library, magazine, books—these are what I value most.

- Attending a group meeting would depend upon the time of day.

- As a member that participated in a group in the Midwest, I would like to connect with a group in the Northwest. I live in Eugene and am unable to find other Theosophists in Eugene, OR (even from the national office). If a group was within 30 min, I would love to participate. The group in Portland is 1-2 hours away.

- In reference to whether I would belong to a group if accessible, my relationship would depend on my perception of the group meeting my spiritual growth needs. It is important to study and learn.

Better communication among TSA staff and administration has been an issue for some time not to mention the membership being given a very scripted view of the TSA workings. Request for this type of information is about 7 years too late to be effective unless projected forward by the new administration.

- Actually my response to question re: participating in a group would be 'maybe'. I am a new member and have appreciated 'Quest' magazine and the web-based resources. Also, I have ordered a few books. I enjoy being 'connected' to this organization this way and spiritually and have yet to feel compelled to move this connection in the direction of personal relationship. That may be, in part, because I already have a church community and other communities I am engaged in – though they do not feed the Theosophical parts of me! I am intrigued by the retreats and programs offered but never have enough cash to make such trips possible (and also have competing claims on my time and resources.) All that to say, keep it up! Despite my seeming lack of participation, I consider the Society a great resource on the journey and feel benefited by it. Thanks!

### **Comments about the Surveys or the Visioning Process**

- I joined the Society 2 weeks ago. I need to experience more before offering an opinion.

- Thank you for the opportunity to share. Best wishes with your endeavors.

- I believe the study opportunities and information made available by the TSA has a place in the world for those who seek and can hear. I sincerely want TSA to continue and this questionnaire is curious since it makes me feel like we are in serious financial and leadership trouble. Is this so? I would like TSA to have a stronger

relationship with the service arm of the organization, but how are you defining service? I for one have been serving the greater community for most of my adult life and feel it would be acceptable for the TSA.

Q24: I do believe in cooperation between members and national staff. But I need some clarification. Is it staff who may not be cooperating with members or is it the Board of Directors? If staff can't cooperate with members – they should be terminated. If it is the Board, well they need to follow the members or step down. I understand the ramifications of this statement having been with an organization that closed after 30 years of service to the community. I am pondering what the TSA would be like if you had grant and fundraising reports to write?

## **Miscellaneous**

- We appreciate your hard work and efforts.

- Truly wish I was more involved, but it often feels like TSA is very remote and far away. Somehow other than the mission statement I do not seem to connect very well and not sure why that is. Looks like a lot of effort is being made to connect with everyone and that is a very good thing. Keep up the good works.

- Q7: I believe the TSA must be known to those attracted to the ideas and responsibilities associated with a 'nucleus' rather than a society at large. Q13: Leadership, at all levels of the TSA, should be held accountable for specific leadership deliverables that coincide with and enhance the goals and objects of the TSA. Q16: The TSA must help humanity assume its rightful responsibility as the cause of its issues and not try to mislead humanity by teaching them to be good victims (of themselves). Q17: I have been a financial professional for 26 years. I may be one of only a handful that not only reads, but even knows how to read the annual financial statement when it comes out. It has been obvious from the annual statements that an accountant's perspective is driving the financial effort rather than that of an investment professional responsible for the results. The policies and procedures and investment management methods incorporated by the TSA are what determine its financial success and viability. People beget people, money begets money. Q18, 19, 20: The wild, out of control stuff that goes through the Theosophical community website suggests that the argument made many years ago for closed meetings still has a place. The public should have a place to rant and ramble, but meaningful open communication at all levels of membership is strongly lacking and should be greatly improved. Q22: I have followed the transformation of the Quest as well as the genre of new publications coming from TPH. There is a very definitive undertone of the need to compete as a 'publisher' rather than a need to contribute as a vehicle of Theosophy and an asset to society. This is the result of the TPH leadership. Q24: The Board needs to better understand the function of its membership and the role membership plays in the organization and the execution of the mission of the TSA.

Q26, 27, 28: The TSA should be selectively supportive of membership efforts in these areas rather than making them a function of the TSA itself. For Q28, has A. Besant reincarnated in the TSA and started the TOS campaign again? Are the arguments made by HPB outdated? This dialogue is the best example to date of the TSA losing sight of its role and place in the developing consciousness of humanity. Am lifetime member and have chosen to follow the path of member-at-large (the local level of leadership does not know what to do with its available membership resource).

- would really like to meet members who live in the Snohomish WA area – How can this be done?

- I lived in Glen Ellyn, IL. I was fortunate to be near the TS in Wheaton. I attended several weekend retreats, the Thursday evening meditations and talks. Now I live in Sisters, OR. I have become a member of the Episcopal Church, but if the TS were here, that would be my church. Recently, I heard the Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori speak in Bend, OR. She is an amazing woman, she could be a theosophist. She spoke of the declining enrollment in all churches across the U.S. except for the Four Square types...Coffee shops are filled on Sunday mornings, but churches?? When I was working I always said that I would join a church that gave the option of sitting meditation on Sundays rather than the regular service. To sit quietly with others

nurtured my soul and spirit. I wonder if more opportunities for group meditation followed by a coffee hour would be a way that the TS could be of service to the community. Our coffee hour after the Episcopal service has been a very powerful way to connect with people. Blessings to all of you.

- I am new to Theosophy and I discovered it through a friend who gave me a copy of Quest magazine. I am 100% in agreement with the society's Three Objects. I am also a Unitarian Universalist. I believe the two organizations have mutual goals.