Khippam Vayama- Strive earnestly

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS THEMES IN THE

LIFE OF FL WOODWARD.

By
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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania
History & Classics

April, 1999.

No. of words: 99,210 (without footnotes)
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Michael Powell

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Khippam Vayama- Strive earnestly
Cultural and Religious Themes in the Life of FL Woodward.

FL Woodward, born in Norfolk in 1871, was inspired by the late nineteenth century fascination with Buddhism, mediated by the influential Theosophical Society, to volunteer himself for service in the Society’s Buddhist educational mission to Ceylon. Woodward formed Mahinda College, Galle, into the premier Buddhist institution in southern Ceylon with considerable influence on the Buddhist Revival and the nationalist movement. Woodward’s promotion, through the school, of ‘Protestant Buddhism’ with its emphasis on laicisation and access to the Buddhist Canon, to which he personally contributed, helped establish the shape of twentieth century Sinhala Buddhism. His strong promotion of national culture, and particularly use of the vernacular, also contributed to the religio-linguistic shape of twentieth century Sinhala nationalism, though not necessarily in a form with which Woodward would have approved.

While Sinhala Buddhism and nationalism readily absorbed those aspects that furthered its aims, it decidedly rejected Theosophical accretions and moderation which ultimately compromised Woodward’s continued presence. He retired to Tasmania to devote the last thirty three years of his life (1919-1952) to editing and translating the Pali Buddhist Canon and providing a Concordance, a work of considerable, if obscure, scholarly importance.

FL Woodward has the prismatic qualities of a subaltern life that sheds light on social and religious transformations of the late nineteenth century within an imperial paradigm, and illuminates the parallel aspects of personal and cultural formation. Consequently, this is not a definitive biography but a study that appropriates Woodward’s endeavours to examine a number of disparate historic and cultural themes, that would not be considered in this particular configuration but for the fact that Woodward lived them.

Woodward’s presence in both Ceylon and Tasmania presents as an odd tale of eccentric existence on the periphery, but far from being atypical, Woodward exhibits identifiable nineteenth century themes, albeit themes that inhabit the margins and decentred aspects of his times:

1 Khippam Vayama pandito bhava (Strive earnestly, become wise)- from the Dhammapada; also chosen by Woodward as the motto for Mahinda College, Galle, Ceylon.
the exploration of alternative religiosity—Buddhism and Theosophy—with its subsequent impact on culture and politics, was a significant subtheme of nineteenth century endeavour.

The contribution to education in Ceylon, while unusual for its Buddhist inflection was within the context of nineteenth century imperial endeavour, an obverse emulation of missionary activity.

Retirement to Tasmania, far from a departure to the periphery, was part of a pattern of Anglo-Indian settlement that shaped the demography of Tasmania until the middle of the twentieth century.

The attraction to editing and translating Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, to which Woodward's contribution was considerable, represents an extension of nineteenth century fascination with philology and textual criticism.

Woodward's attraction to Buddhism and Theosophy, an alternate religiosity that appears eccentric, demonstrates a perennial religious questing which, Winnicott shows, resides within the centre of cultural formation. Said's examination of the interface with the Other on the cultural plane is aligned with Winnicott's psychoanalytic examination of the relationship of Self to Other at the personal level to offer a means of exploring the imperial experience, and in particular, the personal interest in religious ideology emanating from the Other.

Woodward's experience brings together the religious encounters of the nineteenth century with the present fin de siecle, illuminating the fascination with alternate religions, cults and niche beliefs by the middle class and educated, and the persistent contrast of the rational and irrational. Woodward's life and ideas while apparently eccentric, are, in fact, within the ordinary impulses of his time, though what the character of Woodward reveals, is that within apparently peculiar faith, resides a voice able to transcend the content of belief to touch the lives of others with thought and meaning.

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Acknowledgments.

In the production of any work, it is difficult to adequately acknowledge all those who have assisted in its completion. Despite care, one inevitably omits those who deserve mention, and for any such omission, I apologise in advance.

In the first place, I would like to acknowledge my supervisors Dr Tom Dunning and Prof Campbell Macknight for their time, patience and friendship and to thank the University of Tasmania for the Research Scholarship that has made this thesis possible.

In Launceston, I would like to thank Mr RJ Dalgleish of Shield Heritage, Solicitors, for access to the file of FL Woodward; Dr Eric Ratcliff, for his insight and advice; Mr John Clark for information on his family’s connection with FL Woodward; and Dr Dan Huon for his advice and interest.

In Hobart I would like to thank Leila McIntyre (Brady) for her considerable personal knowledge of Woodward and her willingness to share her understanding; Freda Williams, also, for her knowledge of Woodward and willingness to share her memories; Evelyn Heyward for material she retained of Woodward; Nigel Heyward for sharing his memories and his deep respect for Woodward; Justice Edward Butler for sharing his childhood memories of Woodward; Prof Michael Roe for advice and direction; Geoffrey Stillwell for his extraordinary knowledge of Tasmanian history and where to find information; Douglas Lockhart for many conversations that developed the themes of this thesis; and Dr John Colman for his interest and unusual ‘finds’.

In Adelaide, I would like to thank Dr Michael Roberts, University of Adelaide, for his advice on Sri Lanka, and particularly Galle, and his invaluable advice on references.
In Canberra I would like to thank Dr Primoz Pecenko of the Faculty of Asian Studies, South & West Asia Centre, Australian National University, for his valuable advice on Pali translation and the invaluable connections I made through him; Dr Percy Samara-Wickrama, for his help and contacts in Sri Lanka with the Old Boys Association.

In Sydney I would like to thank Dr Peter Masefield, Visiting Scholar in Asian Studies at the University of Sydney, for his continuing support, interest and expertise on Woodward and Pali translation; the staff at the Manor for their assistance and access to some of Woodward's early texts; Mr John Cooper for his encyclopedic knowledge of things Theosophical and for copies of articles and books by Woodward; Prof Jill Roe, Macquarie University, for her advice, warmth and kind understanding; Dr Neville Symington for providing valuable insights in conversation and through his writings; Dr Craig Powell for his insightful discussions, encyclopedic knowledge of things analytic, and ability to conjure references at will; Mrs Pandita Gunewardene, for her access to material in her possession and advice on her husband’s monograph on Woodward; and Tiddy Wijeratne for establishing contacts with the OBA in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka I would like to thank Dr Vinnie Vitharana for his advice, hospitality, and access to his valuable collection of Woodward’s letters, old copies of Mahinda College Magazine and his own manuscript on the school’s history; Dr Wimaladharma, for his hospitality and kindness, obsession with cricket, and for the help of the Old Boy’s Association; Dr KDG Wimalaratne, Director of the Sri Lanka National Archives for access to vital material and the valuable assistance of his staff; Mr Albert Edirisinghe for his generosity, kindness and hospitality; Mervyn & Mangala Samarakoon, for their kindness and hospitality; Mr Albert Witanachchi for his interest and knowledge of Woodward; Mr Jagath
Dahanayake, in Galle, for his hospitality and assistance with arrangements with the school; Cadmus and Mr PK Gilbert for conducting me about Mahinda College; Mr Panditaratne in Kandy for his hospitality and kind assistance at the University of Peradeniya; Mr Punya Arambewela of the Mahinda Club for support and assistance; Dr WA Wiswa Warnapala MP, Deputy Minister of Education & Higher Education for his assistance and fond memories of Tasmania; Mr David Richie, Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, for his interest and assistance; and Dr AT Ariyaratne of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, for his inspiration and unfailing kindness.

In **England** I would like to thank particularly, Dr Mark Allon for his remarkable kindness and thoughtfulness - without his help and knowledge of the Faculty of Oriental Studies Library and its mine of IB Horner and PTS letters, this work would be considerably less detailed; Dr Margaret Cone, Cambridge, for her advice and expertise; the Director, Ms Cathy Ansorge, and staff of the Faculty of Oriental Studies Library, Cambridge University, for access and assistance in trawling the IB Horner and PTS materials in their archives; Mr David Young, Archivist, Christ’s Hospital, Horsham, for assistance, advice and access to the archives of Christ’s Hospital; Lt Col Stevenson for access to his private collection of material and files belonging to his grandfather, Lord Chalmers; Mr Nicholas Rogers, Archivist, Sidney Sussex College for access to the College archives.

In **conclusion**, I would like to thank my family and my business colleagues, Phillip and Roslyn McDougall and Joe Siggins for their patience, and for keeping our business going while I was otherwise preoccupied.

Michael Powell
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"Bhatkawa" The home of FL Woodward, Rowella

The Tamar River from Woodward's study

Woodward's study (east) looking over the Tamar

Woodward's study (north side)

Woodward's childhood home. Saham Toney

Anglican Church, Saham Toney

Kessingland Church (Robin Brown & son)

Galle Fort, Ceylon, from ramparts
The Chapel, Stamford College - The original classroom where Woodward taught.

FL Woodward, Launceston

FL Woodward

Sidney Sussex College 1810

The Rowella Store & Post Office

FL Woodward
Old principal's quarters (now school office).

Old Mahinda College in the Fort, Galle

The Old Gate, Galle Fort, Sri Lanka

Mahinda College, Galle, Sri Lanka

Olcott Hall, Mahinda College Galle

Old Principal's quarters, Mahinda College
Are We Fit?

Left: Toiler of the Sea (*Karava*)
Right: Toiler of the Soil (*Goyigama*)

Photo of blackboard drawing 1998
Helmsmen of the Past

Mr. F. L. Woodward & Staff in 1912

FL Woodward & Staff 1912

Anagarika Dharmapala

Mahinda College Scouts

The Manor Taylor’s Bay Sydney
The original 2GB broadcasts were from the garden shed.

Blavatsky & Olcott

Olcott, Besant & Leadbeater
Pali Text Society

Journal of the
Pali Text Society
1920—1923

Edited by
Mrs. Rhys Davids, D.Litt., M.A.

London
Published for the Pali Text Society
By
Humphrey Milford
At the Oxford University Press, Amen Corner, W.C.
1923
Rowella: Places & Dramatis Personæ
A. Frank Lee Woodward: translator- “Bhatakawa”
B. Charles Bothwell Brady & family: Warden, orchardist- “Waterton Hall”
C. Woodward’s first home, “Chartley”
D. Alexander North & family; architect & orchardist- “Holmlea”
E. FW & A Harris & daughter: Store keeper Rowella
F. H Heyward and family: engineer & orchardist- “Trehgana”
G. Claude Clark: orchardist- “Fairhaven”
H. Waterton Dam
Each night when Evelyn goes to bed,  
At ten or t’wards eleven,  
(Pop-eye and Olver earlier—  
One’s four, the other seven—  
They cannot stand the awful strain  
That kinks and twiddles Evelyn’s brain—  
Histry, Geog and sewing (plain),  
The Trossachs and Loch Leven . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
Well, as eight lines above I said;  
As soon as Evelyn gets to bed  
She takes the pigtails off her head,  
One’s brown, the other yellow,  
(But this you must not tell o)  
And hangs them on the rail instead;  
And lays the pillow on the bed, her  
Her head upon the pillow;  
While at the end her feet stick out  
(This is a certain cure for ‘out)  
Close to the window-sill—o.  

As soon as she has gone to sleep  
Out come the mice and squeak and peep,  
And up and down those pigtails run;  
They spend the night with lots of fun.  
They climb up by the pigtails brown,  
They think it is the way to town;  
And come down by the yellow.  
Well I’ve no room for any more,  
If I am here the scene to draw—  
So ask another fellow.  

O.B.
TASMANIA

For the Anglo-Indian

For Details of Map See Hobart Reverse
LAND FOR

ORCHARDING PURPOSES

HOME FOR

ANGLO-INDIANS

Extensive Proposition in the Great Tamar Valley, Tasmania.

REPORTS on Suitability of Land for Orcharding purposes by well-known Experts: Mr. R. JNO. SCIFLEET ("Ploughshare" of Launceston "Examiner") and Mr. JOHN OSBORNE, Jun., (Government Horticultural Expert).

INTRODUCED by F. A. EDGINTON, REPRESENTING Messrs. Edginton & Henty, General Managers for Orchardists,

CIMITIERE STREET, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA.

Printed at "The Examiner" and "Weekly Courier" Offices, Launceston, Tasmania.
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Orchard Agents and Attorneys
Launceston—Tasmania

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E. G. YOUNG, Cr. Cameron and Tamar Streets.
THE TAMAR VALLEY
AND
RIVER TAMAR.

Main Roads
Motor Roads
Rough for Motors

Orchards Planted shown thus

TOWNS. Table of Distances from Launceston.

WEST SIDE.

Launceston to Rosenva... 11 Miles
Ester... 17
Beaconsfield... 25
York Town... 25
Kobe Bay... 61
Glenroy... 83
Winkleigh... 23

EAST SIDE.

Launceston to Craighurn... 24 Miles
Ester... 49
Hads... 45

JETTIES. Table of Distances from Launceston.

WEST SIDE RIVER TAMAR. (Native Miles)

Freshwater Point... 8.0
Rosevans... 13.5
Blackwall... 19.88
Fauclcy Beach... 15.94
Swan Point... 18.84
Supply... 20.5
Deviot... 25.5
Salamon... 35.94
West Bay... 76.8
Beauty Point... 35.80
Bowen's... 37.60
Chambe Point... 37.90
Kello Bay... 37.94

EAST SIDE RIVER TAMAR. (Native Miles)

Dulston... 8.18
Windermere... 19.3
Woodlawn... 15.94
Hillwood... 16.0
Craighurn... 20.0
Bay View... 31.0
Belt Bay (Proposed)... 36.9
Whart... 38.9
George Town... 38.31

Copied from Official Map of Roads and River. October, 1813.
7. The Bull Transcended

Astride the bull, I reach home.
I am serene. The bull too can rest.
The dawn has come. In blissful repose,
Within my thatched dwelling I have abandoned the whip and rope.

Comment: All is one law, not two. We only make the bull a temporary subject. It is as the relation of rabbit and trap, of fish and net. It is as gold and dross, or the moon emerging from a cloud. One path of clear light travels on throughout endless time.

8. Both Bull and Self Transcended

Whip, rope, person, and bull—all merge in No-thing.
This heaven is so vast no message can stain it.
How may a snowflake exist in a raging fire?
Here are the footprints of the patriarchs.

Comment: Mediocrity is gone. Mind is clear of limitation. I seek no state of enlightenment. Neither do I remain where no enlightenment exists. Since I linger in neither condition, eyes cannot see me. If hundreds of birds strew my path with flowers, such praise would be meaningless.
9. Reaching the Source

Too many steps have been taken returning to the root and the source.
Better to have been blind and deaf from the beginning!
Dwelling in one’s true abode, unconcerned with that without –
The river flows tranquilly on and the flowers are red.

Comment: From the beginning, truth is clear. Poised in silence, I observe the forms of integration and disintegration. One who is not attached to ‘form’ need not be ‘reformed’. The water is emerald, the mountain is indigo, and I see that which is creating and that which is destroying.

10. In the World

Barefooted and naked of breast, I mingle with the people of the world.
My clothes are ragged and dust-laden and I am ever blissful.
I use no magic to extend my life;
Now, before me, the trees become alive.

Comment: Inside my gate, a thousand sages do not know me. The beauty of my garden is invisible. Why should one search for the footprints of the patriarchs? I go to the market place with my wine bottle and return home with my staff. I visit the wineshop and the market, and everyone I look upon becomes enlightened.
Glossary.

*Attha-Sil:* the eight precepts taken by an *Upasaka* (lay devotee)

*Ayurveda:* indigenous medicine

*bhikkhu:* monk or priest

*Burgher:* of mixed race

*dagaba:* dome-shaped reliquary

*dana:* charity, alms-giving

*deva:* a god

*Dharma or Dhamma:* Buddhist doctrine and belief.

*Durava:* toddy-tappers caste

*Goyigama:* cultivator caste

*Jataka:* stories of the Buddha’s former lives

*Kalpa:* a vast period of time; aeon; part of an ongoing cycle of progress and decline

*Kachcheri:* headquarters of district administration

*Karava:* fisher caste

*Mahayana:* the Buddhism of Tibet, China & Japan

*Mawatha:* road

*Metteyya Buddha:* The Future Buddha; also *Maitreya*

*Moor:* common term applied to Muslims in Ceylon

*Mudaliyar:* honorary ‘native’ title

*Muhandiram:* assistant to Mudaliyar; honorary ‘native’ title

*Nikaya:* Buddhist sect

*pañña:* wisdom

*pansil:* The five basic precepts of Buddhism

*pansala:* temple schools

*Parittas:* Buddhist chants of protection and well being.

*pirivena:* monastic colleges

*poya days:* days aligned with the moon’s phases; religious holidays

*puthujjana:* the ordinary ignorant person

*Salagama:* cinnamon peeler caste

*samsara:* the cycle of birth, death and rebirth

*sangha:* order of Buddhist monks

*Sasana:* Buddhist dispensation

*savaka:* (literally, ‘one who has heard’); a person who has entered the Buddhist Path

*sila:* morality

*Tamil:* Hindus; mainly in the north

*Thera:* lit. ‘Elder’; a senior monk

*Theravada:* the Buddhism of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand

*Upasaka:* lay devotee

*upasampada:* higher ordination

*Vesak:* full moon day in May marking the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment & death

*vihara:* Buddhist temple

Abbreviations

*BTS:* Buddhist Theosophical Society

*OSE:* Order of the Star in the East.

*PTS:* Pali Text Society

*TS:* Theosophical Society; an abbreviation used and favoured by the Society itself

*SPR:* Society for Psychic Research.

*FOSL:* Faculty of Oriental Studies Library, Cambridge University

*SLNA:* Sri Lankan National Archives

Terminology

The term *Sinhala,* is the preferred term today to apply to both the language and the ethnic Buddhists of Sri Lanka.

The earlier use of *Sinhalese* to describe language and ethnicity is retained in any quotation.

The terms *Sri Lanka* or *Sri Lankan* are used only in a modern context. In general the term of the period, *Ceylon* is used to describe the country.

The term *Ceylonese* is used to refer to any indigenous person then living in Ceylon irrespective of ethnic origin.

Unfortunately, because of the limitations of available fonts, most diacritical marks in Pali have been omitted. This may, rightly, offend Pali and Buddhist scholars and I apologise in advance.
PREFACE

[Eccentricity] may even....be the Ordinary carried to a high degree of pictorial perfection.¹

Over fifteen years ago, in a previous occupational endeavour, I met a visiting Sri Lankan monk who told me the story of the revered ex-Principal of Mahinda College, FL Woodward, who had retired to an apple orchard in Tasmania to translate Buddhist scriptures. The story struck me as amusing, odd, and particularly Tasmanian. Where else would such a tale be washed up on a shore; a translator of Buddhist scriptures, in an apple orchard, among people at that time, struggling to be more English than the English? The story remained with me, nagging at my interest, till the opportunity arose to explore it further.

Woodward was a difficult task as he left little evidence behind. He has taken me to Sri Lanka, among people of generosity and kindness, to work and wander archives, schools, and museums, and to visit towns where he lived and worked. The people I met in Sri Lanka altered my perspective, taught me to see in their way and tempered my arrogance. Their efforts have not been entirely successful, though, since no matter how I attempt it otherwise, the view of Woodward that emerges is still unmistakably Western, as he was himself.

He has also taken me to England, to his birthplace at Saham Toney and to Kessingland, both still unmistakably rural, where he lived as a child. I have walked the now abandoned rail link with Watton, along the shores of the mere, through the churches and houses he knew, and along the Norfolk coastline where the fishing boats were once hauled up the shores.
The journey through his childhood and youth took me through the archives of the Christ’s Hospital, The Guildhall, London, through Somerset House and then to Stamford, Cambridge and Sidney Sussex College. In Cambridge the archives of the Faculty of Oriental Studies proved an unexpected mine of letters hidden among material from the Pali Text Society and the papers of IB Horner, and that helped inordinately to flesh out Woodward’s skeletal remains.

What has emerged from walking in the footprints of my quarry, as Manning Clark advised, is a story more complex than a simple tale of eccentricity. It has been a journey through gathering respect for a man of indisputable qualities that deny the judgement of some of his more outlandish beliefs. On examination, many of those beliefs and ideas participate in a definite pattern of nineteenth century inquiry and flirtation with the irrational, and this has obliged me to look more closely at the nature of religious and belief formation, and the seminal work of Donald Winnicott. This has denied this work the title of biography. Instead, I have taken the life of FL Woodward to exemplify his time and place, to bring together themes and places that that would not considered together except for the fact of his living.

As a result, I have divided the thesis into two most unequal parts, an exploratory Prolegomena, followed by a detailed examination of the life and work of FL Woodward. This examination relates his life to the historical context and issues adumbrated in the Prolegomena.

---

The Prolegomena examines the historical context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the cultural values and beliefs that shaped the period. The pervasive interest in occult exploration that occurred in the face of scientific Positivism focuses attention on the nature of ‘irrational’ belief, the way subjectivity pervades thinking, and the cultural and psychological boundaries of accepted thought that were challenged during this time. An analysis of this fertile borderland leads to the work of Winnicott, whose examination of the borderland of ‘transitional experience’ lends explanation to the mechanisms of belief formation and throws light on the exploration of alternative ‘niche belief’ in both the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. Such theoretical constructs as those advanced by Winnicott partake of their own explanation and can never be definitive; they are neither true nor false, only useful, which is the criterion by which they may be judged.

The attraction to occult and religious alternatives, like Buddhism, in the late nineteenth century invites examination of the Theosophical Society for its considerable influence. It dabbled in occult ideas, like astral travel, reincarnation and ‘channelling’ past ‘lives’, which continue to attract attention, and was one of the first groups to look seriously at Buddhism in the West. Significantly, it was dominated by the educated and middle class, a characteristic that has marked modern exploration of niche belief. Less analysed, has been the occasional cultist aspects of the Theosophical

2 I have coined the neutral term ‘niche belief’ to avoid the pejorative inference and implied madness of ‘cult’, or the schismatic inference of ‘sect’. The emergence of so many ‘niche belief’ systems today is too widespread for such dismissal.

3 Winnicott’s insights are generated, by his own definition, from ‘transitional experience’. Thus his explanation emanates from that which he hopes to explain, which is a logical closed loop. The usefulness of his theory, however, is not diminished by this impediment; it simply joins a long queue of other constructs with similar impediments. It also suggests such constructs are ‘biographical’ and, like dogs of thought, return to their owners for confirmation.
Society, with its adventism, chosen initiates, and cult narrative which are perennial aspects of niche belief formation. In his adherence to the Theosophical Society, FL Woodward was not only guided in his beliefs and his historically significant work in Ceylon, by the Society, he also represented that educated middle class constituency that was attracted to its many ‘progressive’ causes.

The nineteenth century flirtation with unreason in the period after 1880, which has so much in common with, and has fuelled so much of, late twentieth century New Age enthusiasm, is, when analysed in terms of Winnicott’s concepts, as much a part of the perennial questing and creativity of human endeavour, as are science, politics, history or other elements of social construction. The fact that some of the products of this endeavour have generated ideas and beliefs that sometimes disturb and perplex is only to suggest the process in itself does not always discriminate. After all,

Dreams are like dragon’s teeth. Sometimes they spring up flowers. Sometimes armed men.⁴

The second part of the thesis looks more closely at the life of FL Woodward. His early life in England is viewed in the context of the religious challenge of the time, the reaction to Positivism, and the growth of alternative belief. On a personal level, his adolescent ‘distress’ is examined as a ‘creative illness’ that appears as a ‘reaction formation’ leading to beliefs obverse to origins. His interest in Buddhism and Theosophy was not particularly unusual for the period, though for Woodward, it was a ‘conversion’ that released a creative flare that was

consumed in his important educational work in Ceylon. His promotion of a laicised Buddhism with a nationalist inflection, in the South, the traditional cauldron of Lankan activism, had a significant effect on elite formation and the values carried into Independence.

Woodward’s journey to Tasmania followed the familiar path of colonial retirement, though his choice of occupation, translating Buddhist scripture, was unusual. His work in this area contributed significantly to scholarship but was important, also, in making works of the canon available to a public both in the West and in Sri Lanka. His life in Tasmania attracted attention, not for his work, but for his undeniable benevolence, his unusual grace and goodwill, and his humour. Returning to the Winnicott’s analysis, however, rescues Woodward from dismissal as benign eccentric. His beliefs, when examined, reveal a rich intensity that transcends the content, to present an enactment of considerable compassion, saintly disposition, and the demeanour of a natural mystic.
INTRODUCTION

The story of Frank Lee Woodward is a Tasmanian tale yet entirely Other. From the moment of invasion and dispossession, the story of Tasmania has been of other landscapes, other places, other people; landed lives and alien thought settling uncomfortably within an unfamiliar landscape. The lives lived within its coastal outline, along the veins of its estuaries and among the fragmented hills and valleys of its dissected landscape, were often lives earnestly constructed elsewhere, dreams to be founded in a place only imagined. But Tasmania is a landscape steadfast to its own design, a place of great melancholy and sadness, animated by silent light, green and golden, sifted through leaves. It has shaped dreams to itself, fulfilled some in ways unexpected and denied many, leaving the residue of their stories.

Tasmania, like many peripheral places and antipodean corners of the world, has acquired its share of oddities, like adventurer, convict and one time self proclaimed ‘King of Iceland’ Jorgen Jorgenson² or Ikey Solomon, arch thief, receiver and model for Dicken’s character of Fagin. Even the Establishment attracted its colourful characters, like the Lt. Governor, Col. Thomas Davey,³ whose disregard for convention was notorious, or the roistering parson and first colonial chaplain, Rev. Robert

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¹ Khippam Vayama pandito bhava (Strive earnestly, become wise)- from the Dhammapada; also chosen by Woodward as the motto for Mahinda College, Galle, Ceylon.
² While in Iceland he imprisoned the governor and proclaimed himself sovereign. After an eleven week reign he was arrested by the British and gaol. See Robinson, JM. Historical Brevities of Tasmania (Hobart: Tourist Bureau, 1937) p45-47.
³ Smith, C. Tales of Old Tasmania (Melbourne: Rigby, 1978) p13. Various, ‘Mad’ or ‘Drunken’ Davey was made Lt. Governor in 1813 and was recalled in 1817.
Knopwood. Tasmania also acquired many content to live in obscurity, recluses that gravitate to the margins, eschewing the metropolitan centres and intellectual hives of neoteric activity. Relevance and recognition were not for them factors in pursuit of their intellectual or other obsessions. The story of Frank Lee Woodward appears at first sight to lend itself to such a characterisation; another tale of eccentricity and non-conformity.

A young man of 32, Woodward left England in 1903, at the height of Empire, to become Principal of Mahinda College, a Buddhist high school in Galle, Ceylon. After sixteen years at the helm of school he built into one making a significant contribution to Sri Lankan social, commercial and political life, Woodward retired to Tasmania, to an apple orchard on the Tamar River, to spend the remainder of his life editing and translating the scriptures of the Southern Buddhist (Theravadin) Canon. It was an odd merger of location and occupation, but he was a man of simplicity and purpose, charm and compassion, who maintained an aura of grace that affected many with whom he had contact.

His story, though, begs immediate questions. What moved the man to an interest in Buddhism at a time when Christian missionaries abounded and every proper English child, at some time, dreamed of going forth with the Word to succour suffering Hottentots? Even granted his interest in Buddhism, what possessed him to live in such anonymous remoteness in Tasmania to engage in such extraordinary exertions, of interest, it seemed, only to a small coterie of academics?

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4 I have maintained language and descriptions of the time and have only altered usage when appropriate.
The story of Woodward's life seems an unusual conjunction of time, place, and purpose, and his endeavours to have been a task of Casaubon\textsuperscript{5} proportions and apparent futility. One could retire from a superficial overview of the man with such a representation - an amiable, eccentric non-conformist who did much to add 'colour' to his district - and in this way dismiss both the life and the endeavour. Yet rarely is any life irrelevant, for it is never that easy to escape the ties of one's time. No matter where anyone stands in relation to the cultural remainder, everyone in some sense voices their historical time and place for ".....every actor...in the human drama, whether principal performer or simple spear carrier, is prompted to read assigned parts."\textsuperscript{6}

By decentring historical discourse from essentialist summation and generalisation, voices of particularity emerge to give human form to discourse. They have stories to tell which endear their times and lives. They rarely exist as carriers of change and have minimal impact on events that might be termed historical. However,

The aspirations of an age usually tells us more about its inner life than do its surviving achievements. Relatively few people contribute in any individual way to those products of civilisation that are lastingly apparent to succeeding generations. Art, architecture, literature, government, even commercial prominence are achievements of a small minority in any population. The ideals and ambitions that animate that minority, however, may be much more widely shared.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5}I refer to the character in Middlemarch not the historical personage parodied by Eliot.
\textsuperscript{7}Clausen, C. "How to Join the Middle Classes, with the help of Dr Smiles and Mrs Beeton." American Scholar Summer 1993 p1.
It is often within the stories that surround people’s lives, stories that form part of personal mythology, that tell of their inner and outer lives, of Self and Other. They are numinous, revelatory.

...[S]ince everyone belongs to a class with certain predictable styles of thought and conduct.....the portraits the psychoanalytically informed historian may draw of individuals can throw welcome new light on their class and their time.6

While, on the face of it, Woodward appears as some amiable eccentricity, pursuing arcane studies of minor Victorian and Edwardian relevance in the peaceful remoteness of Tasmania, further examination discloses patterns that place him within a wider field of behaviour and endeavour. Woodward’s choice of Tasmania as a place of abode, becomes less remarkable in the light of the now largely forgotten path of Anglo-Indian settlement, investment and retirement. His interest in Buddhism, far from being an obscure attraction, formed an important sub theme of nineteenth century intellectual exploration, often mediated by the eccentric endeavours of the Theosophical Society. The reach of this organisation went considerably beyond the bounds of its membership and its influence persists to this day in a continuing interest in a “New Age” religiosity that can “embrace 50 mutually exclusive and contradictory beliefs without suffering neuronal meltdown.”9

Exploration of Woodward’s interests and endeavours always seems to begin in non-conformity and end in uncovering a pattern conforming in some way to the themes and sub-themes of his times - not necessarily within the cultural mainstream, more an aspect of demi-monde existence, but nevertheless participating in the wider cultural values and ideas of the

period. His decision, for instance, to take up the role of Principal in a Buddhist school in Ceylon seems contrary to the imperialist impulse, yet on closer examination, it still forms an essential outcome of nineteenth century orientalist endeavour and imperialist ‘service’. Even Woodward’s bachelorhood shares in a significant social phenomena of the time, reflecting an aspect of late nineteenth century masculinity. Woodward no-where escapes his times. Nor should he.

Woodward’s consuming interest in religious exploration, which upon examination reflects too, the preoccupation of the period, poses particular problems for the historian. Examination of Buddhism and other eastern faiths as part of a social movement of the time grants an historical relevance, although historians baulk at any examination of the religious impulse itself, perceiving it within the realm of psychopathology and peculiarity. Yet the persistence with which humankind participates in religious exploration draws it within the sphere of human motivation, which is the engine of history. Seeing Woodward’s religious interest as simply participating in some odd social movement avoids any imperative to examine the impulse and its connection to human motivation and intellecction; and it allows one to dismiss the content, and heap it in among other eccentric elements of belief and behaviour.

‘Eccentricity’ has an endearing charm but it is a normative characterisation which harbours a diminution of the endeavour rather than elevating it into consideration. Woodward lends himself to such ease of dismissal as a charming eccentric and amiable recluse requiring no further attention, however not only does he participate in the wider social and intellectual impulses of his age, that in themselves deserve examination, he both transcends and reflects his times.
Woodward’s endeavours form a structure for consideration of a number of disparate elements of late nineteenth and early twentieth century values, beliefs, vocation and patterns of living. His life provides a framework that draws these aspects into particular constellation, though beyond that there is nonetheless a particular numinosity that attaches to the man, for as Storr acutely observes “There is a charisma of goodness, as well as a charisma of power.” And Woodward exhibited a charisma of goodness.

He may have been attracted to ideas and beliefs that have to a large extent passed out of consideration, Theosophy and its Ascended Masters, Baconianism and its ‘Elizabethan conspiracy’, yet he also obviously transcended the content of his belief, genuinely to affect people’s lives - his ideas assumed an in-dwelling that renders the detailed content irrelevant, but the effect, immeasurable. His value lies in his living that privileged many and persists into the present. And it is that aspect of religious exploration that is significant in order to arrive at Woodward’s ‘importance’.

It may be the fear of every life to arrive at the portals of death and reflect that the passions of one’s existence are as disposable as dandruff, that the effort was of immense futility and disinterest to a new generation. Woodward would find such an observation incomprehensible. His life was an invitation to live one’s convictions with both passion and compassion. He accepted the notion of ‘reversible merit’,11 that the accumulated virtue of lives lived with devotion and compassion, added immeasurably to the worth of the world.

11 Woodward, FL. The Buddhist Doctrine of Reversible Merit (Colombo, 1911)
He believed in well-lived lives, "for I think that to do what one likes to do is the human aim of life, and if you are not doing what you like you have missed the profit of this birth."\(^{12}\) A well-lived life, however, in Woodward’s estimation, was a life committed in some sense to the service of others, ideas unfashionable in a sceptical age, yet they are values worth revisiting for their archaeological content that reveal our past to our present selves, and possibly point some path worth travelling.

While Woodward’s life was principally interior rather than within events, yet it was lived with an intensity of affirmation. He required no remembrance or elevation, and would be amused at the difficulty in piecing together his life. His greatest claim is that he lived, that he turned within himself the thoughts of his times and possibly touched some few who were enriched by his living.

for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts, and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{12}\) Letter FL Woodward to JP Gunewardene, cited in Gunewardene, DHP. *F.L. Woodward: Out of his life and thought* (Colombo: private publication, Wesley Press, No date, but probably late 1960s) p60. This short work of 80 pages, reads more like hagiography than biography and contains many errors, however it is historically important and contains a large number of Woodward’s letters to his students which is of inestimable value since most are now lost. I am also grateful to Mrs Pandita Gunewardene, widow of DH Pandita Gunewardene, for her assistance.

PROLEGOMENA
Positivism, Irrationality, and Belief Formation:
The Nineteenth Century Conjunction with the Present.

Uroboros.¹
“The common end of all narrative......is......to make those events, which in real or imagined History move in a straight Line, assume in our Understanding a circular motion- the snake with its Tail in its Mouth.” -Coleridge, Letter to Joseph Cottle 1815.

There has always been a particular attraction to the fin de siècle, a mix of impatience with the undeniable passing of an era and anticipation - or dread - of the one to come. There is of course no particular significance in the closing of a century since the beginning and end are no more than arbitrary reckonings, and what is ending is merely a convention of time. Yet people think in blocks of time as they do in blocks of space, in order to ‘picture’ themselves in relation to something else, to grant perspective. As the fin de siècle of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries move into conjunction, like some planetary alignment, it tempts auguries of comparison and significance, even though the dissimilarities are probably as considerable as the similarities.

Looking back from the end of the nineteenth century, one pauses at the close of a century of awesome change. The birth of industrialism, deemed, without exaggeration, as a Revolution, was the gift of the eighteenth century fin de siècle, a transformation that severed the new century from the past, unleashing unimaginable forces of social and economic difference on to the nineteenth century. Industrialism altered the nature of nineteenth century European and, ultimately, international society in a manner even more substantial than anything in the twentieth century, for, despite the litany of monumental and catastrophic events the

¹ The mythical symbol of the snake or dragon with its tail in its mouth.
present era has endured, it remains, in the main, a continuation of the
nineteenth century industrial impulse.

At the threshold of the new millennium, however, humanity seems poised
at the foreseeable end of industrialism, at the close of two centuries of
unique transformation. As history is observed through a rear vision
mirror, the shape of this much touted new era of information will be
defined and decided by others, though many of the ‘signs’ and portents
are already beginning to appear, suggesting alteration to entrenched
trends. Thus it would appear, that the rich seam of Adventism,
millenarianism and New Age enthusiasm that gathers at any time of
critical transformation, particularly at the fin de siècle, has been
generously endowed with ‘evidence’ of the ‘Coming’ times.

The ideas, beliefs and energies of Woodward’s endeavours were formed
at the cusp of the fin de siècle, cast by the social preoccupations of the
previous 25 years, and formed in the hope of the future coming times. It
is impossible to comprehend and assess Woodward without
understanding the assumptions of his historical context, and since his was
a life of spiritual endeavour, without understanding the source of such
inspiration of the spirit. Such consideration, far from simply an historical
narrative, becomes a human narrative that reveals a continual questing
that pervades, too, the present fin de siècle, to the hopes of some and
annoyance of others. The seeds of Woodward’s era continue to sprout in
our own, even if the yield is not to everyone’s taste.

2If the new science of ‘chaos theory’, particularly Lorenz’s ‘strange attractors’ and the abrupt
alteration to hitherto stable patterns, has any relevance or analogy in social and economic modelling
these changes may be more suggestive than idle speculation. The application of scientific models to
social ‘science’, however, has had a chequered history- they remain analogous, not necessarily
The awesome change and rapid transformation endured over the period of nineteenth century industrialisation, endowed the Victorian age of Woodward’s youth, with a particular anxiety, and whether the observers of the period were “partisans of the new or its troubled critics, people characterised their century as a century of upheaval”, an attribute that those of the late twentieth century imagine, in their narcissism, to be theirs alone. The unreasonable assault, constancy and perplexity of change was no less for those of the late nineteenth century. The principal difference was ideological, for while the nineteenth century clung, even in dark moments, to a naïve and optimistic view of Progress and the inevitability of Improvement, the late twentieth century has lost even that solace.

The roots of belief in meliorating Progress and evolutionary change were in the Enlightenment, though there are Hermetic antecedents and an ancient Greek pedigree. Assumptions of Progress and Improvement form part of a collection of ideas that echoed through the nineteenth century, altering and assuming fresh shape and resonance. The Darwinian theme of Evolution expounded in the *Origin of Species*, for instance, was no more than a codification of what “many had obscurely felt”. It also demonstrates “how much science is a part of the ‘climate of opinion’ of its day,” and how often it harbours assumptions without empirical foundation.

Darwin’s theory though, shaped much of late nineteenth century science and society, confirming an existing view of Progress and Improvement, of nature (and society) inexorably impelled through an inevitable unfolding

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3Gay Cultivation of Hatred p425.
of events and change. It is not surprising, therefore, that Progress in its Darwinian manifestation was soon taken from its descriptive scientific context and applied by Spencerian apologists to 'prove' a collection of social prescriptions. Nor is it surprising that the themes of Evolution should take up residence in 'progressive' peripheral religious inventions like Theosophy that conjured evolving ‘root races’ moving towards a spiritually perfected humanity.

Darwinianism was seen as marking a symbolic turning point in the consolidation of scientific Positivism. Even the declining forces of literalist religion and piety offered little refuge or respite from the forces of science and the subsequent Secularist fall-out. Darwin’s secular significance, though, outshone his science. Darwinianism rejected anthropocentrism more emphatically than had the Copernican heliocentric cosmos, though more recent science has subjected humanity to even further indignity by defining evolution as no more than “random motion away from simple beginnings,” rather than an impulse “towards inherently advantageous complexity”. At least Darwin allowed, within evolutionary change, the comforting possibility of Improvement.

With Darwin, rational scientism was seen to occupy the intellectual centre, though the degree to which it colonised the periphery is arguable. Certainly scientism was a public relations success in that it became the predominant language of explanation in the late Victorian period, though it takes time for ideas to transcend language and colonise thinking. The adoption of a language of rational scientism did not necessarily displace

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underlying adherence to contrary modes of thought, and sometimes it was appropriated for less than secular purposes.

Colonel Olcott, the indefatigable organiser of the Theosophical Society, illustrates the way the dispassionate language of science could be adopted for occult ends. Seeking an explanation for his curative powers, for the sensational faith healings he performed during his 1882 visit to Ceylon, he rejected "divine influence" as "charlatanism," preferring a rational, "strictly physiological explanation" of 'nerve auras' passing between himself and the patient whose 'mesmeric fluid' was in 'sympathy' with his, much as electricity was conducted. He admitted his thesis was conjecture but believed that proceeding upon this "hypothesis would be to bring psychopathy within the domain of positive science," which he believed would no doubt confirm his thesis in time.

The Occult, Science, and Psychology.
However reasoned and soberly couched, from the present perspective, Olcott's explanation is naïve and his optimism misplaced, although, within the later nineteenth century milieu, it was not all that outrageous. The optimism, that science would confirm the intuited beliefs of Progressive people, was held by many more conventional scientific minds than Olcott's. It is also easy to forget that what today appears as conventional science has sometimes quasi occult origins, that even

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10Olcott, HS. *Old Diary Leaves- Second Series 1878-1883* p407. Also cited in Prothero p108. The 'explanation' owes much to the highly occult ideas of Mesmer, which stripped of their occultism, added much to the understanding of hypnotism.
Darwin's evolutionary theory embodied Hermetic assumptions, which gave familiar form, if not demonstrable evidence, to the mind of his time.

Through the Renaissance, "Hermeticism...had been a reputable....part of the intellectual universe"\textsuperscript{11} and though discredited and displaced by Cartesian and Newtonian mechanism during the seventeenth century, it enjoyed a resurgence, in altered form, in the decades after the 1780s, in Coleridge and the \textit{Naturphilosophie} of Shelling. Significantly, this revival coincided with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution with its concomitant social dislocation. Again, as with the spirit of revival at the end of the nineteenth century, it was in reaction to what were seen as philosophies of a dismal and mechanistic science. The esoteric ideas of this revival, of a universe as "a plenum of opposed yet mutually attractive quasi-sexual forces", fed back into scientific thought "some of the most productive hypotheses of nineteenth century and modern physics,"\textsuperscript{12} such as Michael Faraday's concepts of polarity and lines of force in electricity, as well as modern field-theory.

The counterpoint of Hermetic ideas and sober science has been more productive than is ever likely to be admitted. Hermetic and occult ideas are the obverse of science, a daemon self, and as such, often the necessary and fertile imagination, and seed of science. That is discernible, for example, in the pioneering psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Jung which are accepted today as rational conventions of thought, except in behavioural and cognitive psychology. Psychoanalysis,

\textsuperscript{11} Abrams, MH. \textit{Natural Supernaturalism: tradition and revolution in Romantic literature}. (New York: Norton & Company, 1971) p170

\textsuperscript{12} Abrams \textit{Natural Supernaturalism} p171.
however, "was actually born in a climate of occultism, retained its gnostic affinities"¹³ and has not altogether surrendered those affiliations.

Freud engaged in what today would be regarded as highly suspect science. He used potent drugs, with less than judicious discrimination, and hypnosis to unearth 'repressed' memories, a dubious methodology.¹⁴ Freud exhibited, according to his biographer Ernest Jones, "an exquisite oscillation between scepticism and credulity"¹⁵ when it came to matters occult. He accepted telepathy,¹⁶ the occult significance of dreams,¹⁷ clairvoyance, numerology, and he avoided particular ticket, telephone and room numbers. While this is peripheral to the substantial theory built on Freud's work, it is nonetheless a flirtation of mind that cannot be ignored, particularly as Freud saw himself firmly within the Positivist tradition, and saw no place for nebulous 'mysticism'.

I restrict myself to the observation of phenomena and I refrain from any application of metaphysical or philosophical considerations.¹⁸

Freud's problem was his theories were predicated on controversial premises concerning the nature of mind, particularly the concept of an 'unconscious', a matter of conjecture to this day. The psychoanalytic pioneers risked credibility in scientific circles and knew it, which accounts for the odd way Freud was translated into English. Strachey, Freud's English editor, deliberately rendered Freud's conventional

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¹⁴See- Crews, F. "The Revenge of the Repressed" The New York Review of Books 17 November 1994 pp 54-60. This methodology has been revived more recently, producing bizarre legal cases of sexual assault based on 'recovered memory'.
idiomatic German into Latinisms; thus “das ich”, the I, is rendered as “the Ego”, “das es”, the It, as “the Id” and so on. Freud, who was fluent to the point of conducting analysis in English, never questioned it; no doubt he felt it did his ‘cause’ no harm. All of this unnecessarily obscurantism seemed intended to wrap his theories in scientific respectability, not unlike Olcott’s appropriation of scientist language, and not unlike the private languages of some modern fields of academic endeavour.

Jung, Freud’s early protégé, delved even more into complex occult and Hermetic belief. He was influenced by the Theosophist GRS Mead, Blavatsky’s one time secretary, and saw, like Mead, his scholarly exploration as a path to spiritual understanding and wisdom. Crews, an acerbic critic of psychoanalysis, makes the observation that Jung’s concepts of ‘collective unconscious’ and ‘archetype’ presuppose some Lamarckian transmission, or how else could one “tap into the memory bank of the entire species.” Without any such means, Crews contends, he is entitled to dismiss Jung’s useful means of understanding as “occult constructs”.

Certainly Jung entered some strange paths. After 1913 he cultivated a trance technique he called ‘active imagination’ and entered a visionary state wherein he communed with the figure of a wise old man, Philemon, who acted as his spiritual guide. These were not simple conjurings, for

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20 Crews “The Consolation of Theosophy II” p42. The Lamarckian view that acquired characteristics can be inherited - which was discounted by Darwin - may prove to have some validity. The Australian biologist Ted Steel, in his *Somatic Selection and Adaptive Evolution: On the Inheritance of Acquired Characteristics*, proposed that the so-called “Weissman’s barrier” can be breached, and genetic information can pass from somatic to germ cells and thus to the next generation. It may remain a rare occurrence and Darwinian natural selection is far from overturned, but a view such as this may lay some genetic foundation for a ‘collective unconscious’ or experiential ‘memory’ within
Philemon and other visionary figures “insist upon their reality”;\(^{21}\) they were “things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves, and have their own life”;\(^{22}\) an observation that presages the later work of Donald Winnicott on the enhanced reality of ‘transitional experience’.

Crews rejects Jung’s spiritual and intellectual ‘guide’ as not unlike “the ascended ‘masters’... engaged by Blavatsky,”\(^{23}\) an overdrawn comparison. Nevertheless, these were extraordinarily dangerous experimentations, tarrying at the edge of commonsense, and, Jung acknowledges, not unlike “the stuff of psychosis... found in the insane”.\(^{24}\) Jung, though, leaves a cogent account of what Ellenberger would describe as a “creative illness”;\(^{25}\) and what Jung himself called his nekyia or “night sea journey”.\(^{26}\) The experience undeniably influenced his theoretical ideas and cannot be readily dismissed, for Jung appreciated, more than Blavatsky, where such material appropriately resided. When considering his ‘fantasies’ he questioned their source and nature and concluded they were within the special realm of imagination.

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\(^{21}\)Noll The Jung Cult p210. Despite the insistence on reality, the name is oddly generic. “Philemon” simply implies a ‘friend’ or ‘guiding personage’, though the figure is borrowed from Faust. Also see Jung Memories Dreams and Reflections (New York: Fontana, 1971)

\(^{22}\)Jung, C. Memories Dreams and Reflections (Fontana) p207.

\(^{23}\)Crews “The Consolation of Theosophy I” p43. Crews is being somewhat literalist for Jung does ascribe to Philemon a special kind of reality distinguishable from ‘ordinary’ reality. He is able to say of Philemon “At times he seemed to me quite real, as if he were a living personality.” Memories Dreams and Reflections (Fontana) p 208.

\(^{24}\)Jung, C. Memories Dreams and Reflections (New York: Vintage 1966) p188.


\(^{26}\)Jung borrows the term from Leo Frobenius Das Zeitalter des Sonnengottes (Berlin, 1904) and uses it frequently in his Symbols of Transformation (New York: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, 1976)
"What am I really doing? Certainly this has nothing to do with science. But then what is it?" Whereupon a voice within me said, "It is art." 27

In the pioneering endeavours of Freud, Jung and the early psychoanalysts, there is certainly much that is open to question, and much that accords more with the occult than with scientific dispassion. One must accept Crews' judgement that "Jung, Freud, and Blavatsky were all closer to one another than any of them was to Darwin or Pavlov." 28 However, this is not to say the resulting psychoanalytic construction was a useless, or even dangerous, occult edifice, otherwise it would have wreaked havoc on their patients. Instead, Crews caustically comments, its renders their clients "only more cheerful, self trusting, and tedious at parties." 29

Crews' dismissive attempt to link Jung and Blavatsky in occult comparison actually offers potential insight into their late nineteenth century world. While the Theosophical Society claimed to be without fixed dogmas, it nonetheless adopted Blavatsky's beliefs gathered from Egyptian, Tibetan and other sources. Of central importance, were the Mahatmas 30 of the "Great White Brotherhood", 31 the 'ascended masters' to which Crews referred. These teachers or gurus, living on a spiritual

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27 Jung Memories etc (Fontana) p 210. And while 'art' is subjective it is nonetheless conducted as a rational discourse with an 'audience' that mediates the work.
28 Crews "The Consolation of Theosophy II" p43.
29 Crews "The Consolation of Theosophy II" p44.
30 The common use of this term among the Theosophists led to its application by Annie Besant, then President of the TS and founding member of the Indian Congress movement, to the activist 'Mahatma' Gandhi.
31 'White' in this sense implied 'purity' not skin colour.
plane in the Himalayas, were able to communicate directly with followers and acolytes via cryptic written messages.32

This latter aspect was to lead the organisation into controversy when an investigation by the British Society for Psychic Research (SPR), led by Australian, Richard Hodgson - a friend of Alfred Deakin - claimed that much of the phenomena surrounding the materialisation of letters from the Mahatmas was fraudulent, a claim still much disputed today.33 The SPR was a society of eminent figures, including Ruskin, Lewis Carroll, William James, Balfour, Freud, Jung and Henri Bergson, who were interested in the scientific investigation of psychic phenomena, though to appreciate what that meant, requires the SPR be placed in context.

The ambivalent faith and awe of new discoveries in the later nineteenth century, "made the world of science open and receptive to new hypotheses",34 and the largely untouched field of mental events saw the pioneering work of Freud coexist in relative harmony with the exploration of psychic and occult phenomena, a fact Crews tends to see as sinister rather than within an historical context. The use of the term 'psychology' at that time, for instance, was "appropriated by the most disparate groups"35 including occult, spiritualist and esoteric investigators. Far from the margins that they inhabit today, these views, for a time, held a 'respectable' position in the arena of scientific exploration, which is where the SPR enters the picture.

32 I have seen one of these missives (thanks to that tireless researcher of all things Theosophical, John Cooper). Strangely, the note is written in Victorian copperplate handwriting in purple indelible pencil (common in the period), thus, it would seem, maintaining a certain 'cultural relevance'.
35 Hynes The Edwardian Turn of Mind p138
The founders of the society were so impeccably acceptable, so very Cambridge and well born, that they carried their position with them, even into a seance.36

The intellectual experimentation, encompassing reach and eclecticism of scholarship in the late nineteenth century makes the exploration of psychology, Theosophy, Buddhism or psychic phenomena appear prosaic, rather than peculiar, and makes the world that Woodward inhabited less eccentric than it might appear at first. While he may be seen as having communed uncomfortably with the ‘irrational’, his mode of thought is historically unremarkable. Paradoxically, as the surface certainty of science increased, underlying uncertainty compounded, not least because as knowledge increased it extended the areas “where the human mind could see doubt”.37 Doubt seeds the search once more for certainty, if not in the realm of unfettered scientism and dour rationality, then in the realm of irrationality.

**Rational and Irrational.**
The terms ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ demand some caution given their manifold meaning and normative intent. To assume that religion, for instance, resides entirely in the realm of the irrational is to deny that “[r]eligious or magically motivated behaviour is relatively rational behaviour”.38 Even Olcott’s explanation for his healing powers, may be quite properly regarded as rational. In this use of the terms, the distinction is simply between logically ordered discourse and that which is not, irrespective of the truth of the premises.

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36 Hynes *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* p141
However, the terms 'irrational' and 'rational' serve a more complex purpose and may be as much cultural as descriptive. The application of the terms to the broad distinction between subjective knowledge and that which is empirically derived is a cultural preference derived from a Positivist social ascendance, yet human beings rely substantially on introspective and subjective assessments of an external world. People use ordinary, commonsense, and subjective words like ‘love’, ‘loathe’, ‘feel’, ‘fear’, to explain and interrogate both the personal and external environment.\textsuperscript{39} Without it, everyday interaction with the world would not be possible, yet there remains a materialist suspicion, even hostility, not only to “consciousness and introspection but to inwardness and the inner life as well.”\textsuperscript{40} There is, within the depths of materialism, a “terror of consciousness” that derives from “the essentially terrifying feature of subjectivity”.\textsuperscript{41}

This materialist hostility and rejection appears not simply methodological, but psychological. The highly subjectivist analysis of consciousness proposed by someone like Jung invites a terrifying introspection and subjectivity which is intolerable. The solution is to draw a sufficiently narrow ring around the problem to exclude the inconvenience of subjectivity. A materialist or physicalist conception of the cosmos that reduces mental concepts to physical ones and confines reality to empirical content solves the threat of subjectivity and the terror of consciousness by defining it out of consideration. There is, of course, sufficient subjective nonsense and ‘irrationality’, occult and otherwise, to give credence to such a position.

\textsuperscript{39}Pataki, T. “Psychoanalysis, Psychiatry, Philosophy.” \textit{Quadrant} April 1996. p57.
\textsuperscript{40}Pataki p62.
\textsuperscript{41}Searle, J. \textit{The Rediscovery of Mind} cited in Pataki p62.
Despite materialist and Positivist apprehensions, subjective knowledge does not necessarily equate to superstition and ‘irrationality’. It is, however, sufficiently difficult to evaluate, to present problems of persuasion. As Jung intuits, it is much like art, and while there is ‘good’ art and ‘bad’, there is no consistent means of determination, though there are nevertheless ‘good enough’ tools of discrimination and evaluation, otherwise the ‘occult’ accusation Crews levels at psychoanalysis would have overwhelmed its efficacy long ago. Whatever the indeterminacy of subjective knowledge, human consciousness relies as much on subjectivity, imagination and intuition as it does on rational faculties and objective knowledge. Without such knowledge, as Winnicott42 astutely observes, there would be no art, no literature, in fact, no culture.

Weber, a sociologist with an insistence on ‘objective’ scholarship, nonetheless recognised the subjective nature of human behaviour and observed “that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun”. These subjective ‘webs of significance’ are essentially cultural, from which the anthropologist Clifford Geertz takes culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.43

‘Significance’ and ‘meaning’ are powerfully subjective, value laden terms. Even ‘interpretation’, while hopefully conducted, as Weber certainly thought possible, as a reasoned and orderly deliberation, is predicated on subjective cultural assumptions that draw on intuition and imagination, on sources that partake of the ‘irrational’.

If culture determines 'meaning', then it also determines language like 'rational', 'irrational', 'objective' and 'subjective'. Cultural acceptance or rejection\(^4^4\) becomes the overarching arbiter of what is 'rational' and, chameleon like, the terms often ape one another. Ideas of acceptance or orthodoxy may masquerade as rational, yet be assumed by another generation to be quite the contrary. A flat earth evidenced by rational, commonsense pre-Copernicans became to another generation an absurd naïveté. The scene can shift such that one moment's extreme irrationality, fundamentalism or apocalyptic vision is another moment's quiescent foundation of 'sound' values and cultural commonsense. As Storr suggests, an idiosyncratic belief system shared by a few adherents would be regarded as 'irrational', even delusional, but "[b]elief systems which may be just as irrational but which are shared by millions are called world religions".\(^4^5\) Beliefs have a way of assuming meaning or madness depending on advocacy, time, and place, as the debate over modern economic 'rationalist' orthodoxy attests.\(^4^6\)

The apparent re-emergence of New Age and occult thinking in the present \textit{fin de siècle} appears to many commentators like Phillip Adams\(^4^7\) and Carl Sagan,\(^4^8\) as a retreat from reason and a resurgence of superstition. As Adams expresses it, "pseudo-science and gimcrack religiosity of the New


\(^{4^6}\)See Ralston Saul, J. \textit{Voltaire's Bastards- The Dictatorship of Reason in the West} (Toronto: Penguin, 1993). Ralston Saul argues cogently that far from 'rational', modern 'rationalist' economics is prescriptive and ideological.

\(^{4^7}\)Adams, P "So Gullible, You Wouldn't Believe It" Weekend \textit{Australian Weekend Review} June 22-23 1996, p2.

Age are hotter stocks than IBM or Microsoft." He is more troubled than his optimistic antecedent William Lecky, who in 1865 heralded the demise of superstition, yet it is nonetheless a view that locates Adams and Sagan within the same Positivist and materialist lineage. While their concern that society may be experiencing a renewed descent into the 'irrational' is not without foundation, it may be no more than acknowledgment that Progress towards some secular and rational ideal has always been over optimistic, that the assumed triumph of scientism has ignored the persistence of the 'irrational' in personal and cultural formation.

The descent into unreason in late twentieth century society has led to a proliferation of niche beliefs that place rational orthodoxy in doubt, a process Robert Hughes has described in forbidding fashion. Hughes quotes from the prescient and apocalyptic vision of Auden’s *For the Time Being*, where Herod reflects on the grisly task of massacring the Innocents and wrestles with his conscience. He knows however, if the Child is allowed free then,

> Reason will be replaced with Revelation. Instead of Rational Law.... Knowledge will degenerate into a riot of subjective visions......

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51 Hughes, R. “The Fraying of America- When a nation’s diversity breaks into factions, demagogues rush in, false issues cloud debate, and everybody has a grievance.” *Time Magazine* Feb.3, 1992. pp82-87. While I cannot speak with certainty, Auden would have grown up with the ubiquitous presence of Theosophy and, being drawn to psychoanalytic theory initially and Left politics in the 30s, would have felt its peripheral influence and observed the potential of its mode of thought. The Christmas oratorio *For the Time Being* was written in 1944, at a time of social tumult and Auden’s personal move towards Christianity. If Auden was writing about the ‘future’, he was no doubt writing with more than an eye on the present with all the elements that have ‘matured’ in our times.
52 Hughes p 82.
In Herod’s vision of a descent into unreason, the new cosmogonies will impose on society “epics written in private languages” echoing a distortion of values that ranks the “daubs of children” along with those of acknowledged merit. It is a society where philosophers and statesmen are ridiculed and replaced in societal estimation by a “New Aristocracy... of hermits, bums and permanent invalids”, the “heroes and heroines of the New Age”.

As Hughes points out, what Auden’s Herod ‘saw’ was America of the twentieth century fin the siècle, “right down to the dire phrase ‘New Age’”. It is a society “obsessed with therapies and filled with a distrust of formal politics, sceptical of authority and prey to superstition.”

It is a society of purgatorial post-modernism which has become both prescriptive and descriptive of its world, a way of viewing that accords equal validity to various clamouring voices and beliefs, where accepted orthodoxies are overturned. The postmodernist plethora of niche belief systems jostling for attention marks the end of hierarchy. In a parody of democratic enthusiasm, structures have flattened and been accorded equal authority. In this world everyone receives a merit certificate and a chicken stamp for behaviour.

It seems extreme, however, to place the blame for such societal turbulence on the intrusion of ‘irrationality’ into mainstream thinking, on a symptomatic movement of ideas and values, usually reserved for the margins, into the realm of orthodoxy. The tension between ‘rationality’ and ‘irrationality’ has always fuelled the engine of change, creativity and societal re-evaluation. It may be more appropriate to see the upsurge and interest in unorthodox views and the spread of niche belief as a symptom
of societal alteration, not necessarily as a cause. The end shape of this alteration cannot be foretold, despite the surge in fascination for prognostication, because symptoms do not shape conclusions. The characteristic of this societal alteration is not so much the clash of 'rational' and 'irrational', but the challenge, change and displacement of known boundaries.

**Boundaries and Borderlands.**
The nineteenth century was an era defining boundaries. Within Europe, the surge of nationalism saw the dissolution of old, and the establishment of new boundaries, and from within their newly delimited confines the nations spilled over into the realm of the *Other* to set new boundaries and spheres of imperial interest. What was defined was not just new boundaries but a new sense of selfhood, national and personal, a formation that required distinction from the *Other*. National, ethnic or communal identity "is contingent and relational", defined by social and territorial boundaries distinguishing "the collective self and its implicit negation, the other". 54 People usually decide who they are, by reference to who and what they are *not*, rather than by objective criteria like language, culture or race.

The sense of Britishness, for instance, was not a function of a shared geography, rather they "defined themselves.....in conscious opposition to the Other beyond their shores." 55 To that extent 'Britain' was an artificial construction based on shared externality, first focused on a Catholic and

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53Hughes p82.
55Colley p 316. Colley makes the observation that the defeat of French interests in Canada provided the American colonists with an impetus to shift the focus of threat and opposition to *Other* on to the
powerful France, and later on the collective concerns of empire. This pattern of defining national identity was an important imperial export which altered colonial identity formation. The nascent nationalism inspired among subjugated people, such as colonial Ceylon, was really an imperial emulation as artificial, and often more so, than the artificiality of Britain itself.

The period of national formation and imperial expansion which saw the redefinition of geographic boundaries, was echoed culturally in the examination of accepted boundaries of belief and value. It was discernible in the music, drama and art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century where the boundaries of acceptance were radically challenged: definitions of light and colour were defied by the Impressionists, reality by Surrealists, meaning by the Dada-ists. In politics the accepted boundaries of participation and articulation came under siege and ultimately altered to uncomfortably accommodate proletarian, feminist and middle class aspiration. In the realm of belief and religion, the boundaries of orthodoxy similarly experienced challenge and alteration, and the emergence of niche beliefs like the Theosophical Society in the late nineteenth century was a part of that wider cultural formation and interrogation of boundaries.

The nineteenth century challenge to accepted cultural boundaries has spawned a social plurality in the late twentieth century that has left personal boundaries ill defined. This has offered a unique invitation to personal freedom and liberation, which if one attends to the liturgy of colonial authority. Thus the end of French threat in Canada was crucial to the formation of national identity and the emergence of colonial opposition.
popular culture, would appear to have been embraced with ideological enthusiasm. However, while the lack of defined boundaries is potentially liberating, it is also as Fromm⁵⁷ has argued, an area suffused with anxiety, frequently provoking an 'escape from freedom' towards an authoritarian unfreedom, in essence, towards certainties and structural boundaries, despite popular rhetoric to the contrary.

To Fromm, German Nazism was a fearfully typical 'escape from freedom', but the exploration of alternate religiosity frequently may fulfil the same function of personal surrender, absorption in the Other and its imposed boundaries. The various modern religious fundamentalisms tend to be overtly inclined to authoritarianism and much New Age enthusiasm, like the Rajneesh of the 1970s and 80s, engaged in the contradictions of libertarian rhetoric and authoritarian enactment.

Boundaries remain contested borderlands between the Self and Other, 'frontiers' of potential chaos and disorder as well as areas rich in creativity, which is why the perennial images of 'the American West' have retained their potency, why the 'frontier' remains the Hollywood archetype of the struggle between chaos and order. The 'frontier' was also an area of great promise, creativity and renewal, as communitarian movements from the settlement of America attest, attracted as they were to some new arena of opportunity to begin again. The frontier, the borderland, was the place where boundaries literal, metaphorical and psychological, were questioned, giving rise to both positive potential and potential chaos.

⁵⁶Colley p322, citing Bayly, CA. Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830 (London: Longman, 1989) p3, notes that by 1815 one in five of Britain's male population was in uniform, such was the focus of threat.
Given over one hundred years of the mantra of 'freedom' applied to everything from art to politics, and clothing to tampons, it is hardly surprising that there is little respect offered to boundaries of behaviour and thought. The corporatisation of libertarianism and the idolatry of individualism by the extreme Right, particularly in America, have parodied freedom, which Fromm rightly identifies as, not 'freedom from' boundaries, but as 'freedom to' enact within boundaries. As Hughes alludes, values have been overturned and reversed; despite the rhetoric of personal freedom, it is difficult "to find another period of such absolute conformism in the history of western civilisation". Where the boundaries are confused, anxiety moves in, and the solutions of unreason and unfreedom, both political and religious, follow.

The rich contradictions of borderlands and boundaries, with their chthonian emotions, their abundance of creativity and potential chaos, freedom and tyranny, merit closer examination. Analysis of this arena may lend some understanding to the motivations of a person like FL Woodward, and the cultural currents that surrounded him, a means of deciphering the powerful sub-themes of occult 'irrationality' in both the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. In this, the work of the British psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott, offers the most constructive contribution and insight.

**Winnicott: Self and Other.**
The emergence of *Self* and *Other*, according to Winnicott, is sourced in infantile splitting wherein the child begins to perceive the world (originally essentialised about mouth and breast, need and greed) not as

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58 Saul, John Ralston Voltaire's Bastards p497.
an extension of itself as a *subjective object* or *archaic self-selfobject*,\(^{59}\) but as separate and divisible, as a *not-me phenomenon*\(^{60}\). This perception of separation induces a recognition of a distinction between *Self* and *Other* and with it a sense of isolation that induces fearful rage and attempts to re-incorporate the *Other*. These are seminal psychic experiences which colour the manner in which individuals organise connection with the world. In the borderland between *Self* and *Other* there is, as Winnicott described it, an arena of ‘transitional experience’ wherein arises the potential not only for personal but for cultural resolution. Nevertheless, the polarities of separation and incorporation form one of the dynamics of personal and culture tension, an experience that Said described culturally and Winnicott psychologically.

Said’s *Orientalist* paradigm\(^{61}\) of an impulse towards imperialist incorporation, reflects culturally, *Self/Other* psychological impulses, but then psychically significant images and metaphors tend to ‘lift into life’ and manifest through analogous motifs on a conscious level. For instance, in a grotesque caricature, the carriers of much of the imperial European ‘dark’ side of the psyche were people who were themselves black, but then psychological motifs are often expressed in puns and parody that mock both subject and object.

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\(^{60}\)Winnicott, D. “Creativity and Its Origins” in *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971)

The emergence of *Self* and *Other* is not a singular psychic event but a pattern of emerging and evolving realisation from an original state of infantile inflation of deific omnipotence where, "[t]he child experiences himself quite literally as the centre of the universe."\(^{62}\) The imperialist impulse is an embodiment of such intention and is thus essentially infantile and regressive, full of manipulative intent and incorporation. When France recommenced nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll in 1995, Australia and New Zealand protested that, if the process was safe, it ought properly be conducted on metropolitan French soil, but as the French Minister expressed it, "I say Mururoa is France. There is no way to see it a different way."\(^{63}\) The incorporation allows of no distinction.

As the imperialist impulse originates within the dynamics of *Self*/*Other* relating, so too do religious and cultural impulses. Freud accepted art as a form of sublimation,\(^{64}\) but his contempt for religion is palpable; it is dismissed as illusion,\(^{65}\) and consigned to a pejorative, Mephistophelian realm of unreality and delusion. Winnicott\(^{66}\), on the other hand, embraces the term, describing the rich intermediate region between *Self* and *Other* as a field of *illusion*, yet he does not use the term in a derogatory way, as Freud frequently does.

If Freud wished to rule out illusion and to destroy it, Winnicott wished to foster it and to increase man’s capacity for creatively experiencing it.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{64}\)Freud, S. *Civilization and its Discontents* Standard Edition (London: Hogarth, 1953.)


\(^{66}\)Winnicott, D *Playing and Reality*

\(^{67}\)Meissner, WW. *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) p 177. Meissner is one of those unusual persons who as a Jesuit and psychoanalyst straddles two usually incompatible worlds.
For Winnicott, *illusion* is a "necessary force in human psychic development"\(^{68}\) contributing to involvement in the world of experience. However, Winnicott’s use of the term *illusion* is a curious one. To most, it implies some kind of diminished reality and yet Winnicott implies a positive and enhanced reality. Unravelling the force of Winnicott’s use of *illusion* opens religion and culture to an interpretation that glimpses the transpersonal possibility of human endeavour, that nourishes mental and spiritual health and allows humankind to act, create and envision beyond its biological constraints.

Winnicott’s use of the term lies in its origin - *illusion* derives from the Latin “illudere”, “in-play”, and the essence of object\(^{69}\) relations is the play and inter-reaction that imparts meaning and connection. This is the area of culture and creativity for “civilisation arises and unfolds in and as play”.\(^{70}\) Huizinga adds sociological detail to Winnicott’s psychological insights to demonstrate that play invades most human activity. Whatever the cultural endeavour, whether art, religion or sport, a ‘play-ground’ is defined with “spatial separation from ordinary life”,\(^{71}\) and the activity enacted within those boundaries defined by rules and rituals. This elevates ‘play’ into *supra* ordinary experience, which is intense, absorbing and ritualistically ordered to promote social grouping. These qualities of play hold good whether it is war or law, sport or religion, poetry or philosophy, politics or historical research. The intention of play, of human performance, is “a *stepping out* of common reality into a

\(^{68}\) Meissner p164.

\(^{69}\) “object” used here is inclusive of all relational elements external to the *Self* that are either animate or inanimate, human or otherwise.

\(^{70}\) Huizinga, J. *Homo Ludens* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1949) from the Forward and also p46. Huizinga wrote this highly original book in 1944 and it remains an insightful work.

\(^{71}\) Huizinga p19
higher order." The field of illusion in Winnicott is the ‘play-ground’ of interaction that occupies the intermediate space between Self and Other. Winnicott’s use of the term illusion emphasises not only the etymological origins, but the extraordinary transpersonal aspects, the “stepping out of common reality into a higher order” that characterises the intermediate area of ‘transitional experience’.

‘Transitional objects’. Winnicott, known for his aphoristic asides, stated that there was “no such thing as a child”\textsuperscript{73}, meaning the infant is defined initially by the undifferentiated connection with the mother, but it cannot persist in such omnipotence and the reality of frustrated needs intrudes on its magical world. The shift towards reality inevitably brings to the child frustration but,

[f]rustration can teach the child to perceive, adapt to, and test reality, but only out of this sense of unique fulfilment flowing from the conjunction of magical wish and attuned response, can he learn to love reality.\textsuperscript{74}

The child begins to pacify itself by sucking on fingers or other objects like soft toys or a blanket, and this represents an initial step, a transition, in separating from the maternal matrix and sensing objects as Other, as “not-me” possessions. These ‘transitional objects’,\textsuperscript{75} which inhabit the intermediate space between Self and Other, emerge from interaction and ‘play’, creating command and connection that extends the child securely into the world. They become intensely personal, subject to both affection

\textsuperscript{72}Huizinga p13  
\textsuperscript{73}Fuller, P., \textit{Henry Moore- an interpretation} (London: Menthuen, 1993) p69 citing Winnicott. Fuller has been a significant advocate of Winnicott’s concepts and their application to art appreciation.  
\textsuperscript{74}Meissner p167  
\textsuperscript{75}Winnicott, D. \textit{Playing and Reality} p5
and aggression, and with a vitality of their own that makes them resonant and numinous.

Over time, ‘transitional objects’ lose their particularity and “become diffused”76 over the intermediate area, between Self and Other, where illusion is a precondition for the adequate appreciation of reality. In adult life the element of illusion “remains the basis for playing, creativity, and the appreciation of culture”77, inherent in art or religion.

The personal meaning of the interpersonal relationship, or object relationship, throughout life, always depends to some extent on illusion, and the workable illusion derives from one’s experience of the responsiveness of an environment that has been optimal to the development of a stable and vital self.78

The numinous aspect of ‘transitional objects’, formed from an illusion which shapes the appreciation of reality in later life, makes Jung’s Philemon - which “insists on its reality” - less peculiar than Crews would wish. Winnicott makes religious exploration meaningful, and adds it in among all aspects of intellectual and cultural endeavour, not something sui generis.

If illusion, though, is defined by its etymological origins in ‘play’, then the application of this analysis to the understanding of Victorian religious exploration is apt indeed, for no period of history seems to had such an obsession with the notion of play.

76Meissner p166
78Bacal p196
‘Of course you needn’t work, Fitzmilksoppe,’ Punch portrayed one headmaster saying to a prospective pupil, ‘but play you must and shall.’

The importance of shared illusion
Huizinga described ‘play’ as a conditional aspect of human society and Winnicott, as a corollary, similarly asserts that in adult life, shared illusory experience, is the “natural root of grouping among human beings.” Games and ‘play’ forge alliances and ‘teams’ which are invariably held together by shared beliefs and attitudes, so the illusory experience extends not only to the formation of community but also to modes of belief. Belief derived from shared illusion grants entry to community and a sense of connection and normality. Human beings are inescapably social animals and all the intellectual prowess and illusion of individuality cannot avoid that, for after all, ‘individualism’, far from being individual, is nothing more than a shared illusion of post-Enlightenment western society.

The significance of shared illusion and belief is best illustrated by contrast. Since ‘reality’ is sourced in illusion, acceptance, for instance, of demonic encounters in a tribal culture may be very sane, but not in common western society. Such beliefs may form part of the shared illusory experience in the former, but not of the latter society where such belief may be seen as a sign of ‘madness’. These shared illusions are Geertz’s cultural ‘webs of significance’ that impart meaning and purpose.

The emergence in the late nineteenth century of a number of groups of niche belief, like Theosophy, with sufficient shared adherence to attract respect, means they cannot to be dismissed simply as “mad”, or cultist,

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80 Winnicott Playing and Reality p3
though that is not to say elements of madness and cultism may not have been manifested.

What may constitute ‘madness’ or cultism emerges when a person “puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own”.\textsuperscript{81} The more the group invests in a charismatic leader with the task of defining belief, and the more it shelters within narrow boundaries, the easier it is to impose a dysfunctional \textit{shared illusion} and the more it will tend to descend into madness.\textsuperscript{82}

Similarly, traditional societies, subject to the imposition of missionary zeal or simply the onslaught of western culture (which harbours its own set of rich transitional symbols from its own \textit{shared illusion}), can find the devaluation of traditional transitional objects and symbols so profound that they become socially debilitated and prone to the diseases of anomie, alcoholism and decline of social cohesion.

This is where, in Ceylon, the efforts of the Theosophical Society and its ‘servers’, like Woodward, were important. While their ideology was fundamentally formed elsewhere,\textsuperscript{83} it resonated with the indigenous symbols of Buddhist \textit{shared illusion} being revitalised. By integrating Buddhism with the tools of western education, they instigated a diffusion

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  \item \textsuperscript{81} Winnicott \textit{Playing and Reality} p3
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Thus groups like the ‘Jim Jones Cult’ in Guyana that poisoned hundreds in apocalyptic annihilation, deliberately isolated itself physically from its American roots to sustain belief.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Obeyesekere argues that Olcott’s Buddhism was fundamentally formed by the interface with Sinhala Buddhism in Ceylon, whereas I would suggest that the key elements of Protestant origin and western orientalist preconceptions of what Buddhism ‘ought’ to be were much more formative than any Ceylonese influence. He basically came ‘ready armed’. See: Obeyesekere, G ‘The Two Faces of Colonel Olcott: Buddhism and Euro-rationality in the Late Nineteenth Century’ in Everding, U \textit{Buddhism and Christianity: Interaction East and West} (Colombo: Goethe Institute, 1994) pp32-71.
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and energetic reaffirmation of cultural symbols and identity that did much to repair the damage of imperial and missionary activity.

**Transitional Experience.**
The intermediate realm between *Self* and *Other* is not static, not a state of ‘being’, but, as Winnicott declares, a state of ‘experience’, of adaptation and re-examination of external reality. Transitional experience emanating from the intermediate or transitional environment of *illusion* retains a magical quality that engenders connection and meaning - “It is through illusion ... that the human spirit is nourished.”\(^{84}\) Like interactive play, ‘transitional experience’ is creative and often realised in “religious and artistic pursuits”,\(^{85}\) which confirms why Jung, questioning his disturbing experiences, immediately apprehended it as like art.

Winnicott was intrigued by psychoanalyst Marion Milner’s encounter with ‘immediately perceived reality’, of being ‘struck’ or ‘seized’ by perceptual illumination. She observed two jugs on a table and with a fluid ease, perceived, not the practical objects, but the way the edges of the objects vividly interacted with each other in space, what painters mean “by the *play* of edges”,\(^{86}\) which again is the creative intensity of boundaries and borderlands. This experience is frequent in artistic pursuit and has similarities with the religious experience, for the “creative faculty of a people as in the child....springs from this state of being seized.”\(^{87}\)

Writers, composers and painters frequently “describe how new ideas ‘come to’ them as solutions to artistic problems, often after long periods

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\(^{84}\)Meissner p 177  
\(^{86}\)Fuller *Images of God* p 243.  
\(^{87}\)Huizinga p16 quoting from Leo Frobenius
of playing around with different possibilities.” Science too, far from the myth of laborious induction, is littered with stories of creative ‘seizures’ that have solved intractable problems. For example, in 1865 Friedrich August von Kekule, Professor of Chemistry in Ghent, was dozing in front of the fire when he had a vision of chains of atoms coiling themselves into snakes eating their own tails, a vision which led to his discovery of the ring structure of organic chemistry. The intuitional illumination of the transitional world often leap-frogs the logic of the literal world. It harbours a curious power, conviction and certainty, a creative energy engendering a magical quality that assists the individual to transcend common obstacles, whether creative or physical, in everyday life.

Winnicott’s concept of ‘transitional experience’ derived from the field of illusion and creative interaction of the Self and Other brings together the disparate origins of cultural formation, from crass capitalism to sublime art, from inspired faith to practical science, from law to war. It is the foundation of a reality that endows our energies with meaning and our efforts with purpose. It also places ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ within the same bounds of human discourse, as counterpoints in creativity. Within that understanding, it is difficult to pejoratively dismiss religion or unusual beliefs as beyond consideration, to simply categorise them as ‘irrational’ or perceive them as outside the realm of historical discourse. Winnicott’s concepts allow us some tools of understanding to take into an examination of some of the occult and other sub-themes of the late nineteenth century.

The Nineteenth Century and Unreason.
In the 1880s Europe experienced,

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88 Storr *Feet of Clay*...p71.
one of those movements of the mind that history perceives but cannot easily analyse or define. It has something to do with a reviving sense that the world holds mystery...More a breath of spirit than a reasoning of intellect.89

It was a movement that led people like WB Yeats, poet and incorrigible mystic, to consider himself,

a voice of what I believe to be a greater renaissance - the revolt of the soul against the intellect - now beginning in the world.90

Far from novel, this new ‘beginning’ represents one of the recurring polarities of western culture; the contrast of reason and inspiration, classic and romantic, the tension between Appollonian and Dionysian impulses.91 The manifestation of this reviving intellation of the 1880s, founded on intuition and imagination was naturally, diffuse. It is, however, discernible in the art of the Impressionists, in the philosophy of Nietzsche and Bergson, in the poetry of the French Symbolists and that of Yeats, in the work of Huysmans and the rich literary reaction to Zola’s naturalism, and in the music of Bruckner and Wagner.

For those at the vanguard of this tilt at the known boundaries of convention and consciousness, it was experienced as ‘progressive’, even revolutionary, though from another perspective, it was also an intellectual reaction to the sterility, cold clarity and arrogance of Positivist certainty. However it is characterised, it has undoubtedly endowed and ennobled us

89Chadwick Secularization ... p239.
90Murphy, W. Family Secrets: William Butler Yeats and His Relatives (Syracuse University Press, 1995) p389. Yeats was profoundly influenced by Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society which he joined in 1887 (though not for long), and was later led into involvement with the Order of the Golden Dawn which also attracted such sinister ‘magicians’ as Alistair Crowley.
Nietzsche, F The Birth of Tragedy; and the genealogy of morals [trans: F Goffing] (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956)
with intellectual property of enormous value. The period after 1880 may have experienced “a breath of spirit”, but it may also be seen as a period that “witnessed an outburst of the most extravagant irrationalism”, the roots of which were discernible from the late 1840s.

By the mid nineteenth century, the growing anxiety over societal change, along with developing intellectual and artistic trends, produced “a widespread flight from reason”, the most interesting facet of which was the revival of the occult. There seems a general consensus among historians that this ‘revival’ began in 1848 with the disembodied noises and rappings of the Fox household, in the heart of New York state’s ‘burned-over district’. Responsibility for the subsequent spread of ‘Spiritualism’ and mediumship cannot be entirely ascribed to the Fox family, rather to the receptivity of the times. After all Spiritualism was hardly new. From John Dee’s Elizabethan necromancy to the Shakers with their mediumistic trances, glossolalia and ‘Indian’ spirit guides, the clichés of Spiritualism tread a well worn path to the ‘other side’.

While the Fox girls were found to be a fraud, this does not disqualify membership of the paranormal, rather it adds persecutory piquancy. The rabble rousing persecution the Fox girls attracted did not harm their cause. The fortunes of nineteenth century movements like Primitive Methodism, Anglo-Catholicism, Secularism and the Free-Thinkers can be gauged by

93Webb pxiii.
See also Ryan, M. *Cradle of the Middle Class- the family in Oneida Country, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
the attention of the mob. They “advanced swiftly during the age of rabbling” and declined, “more or less, with the end of mob attack.”96

The Spiritualist phenomena grew, penetrating the walls of royalty and respectable society, and persisted well beyond the Edwardian period. It spawned sizeable sub-themes, not least of which was the Theosophical Society founded by Blavatsky and Olcott who, significantly, met while ‘investigating’ another outbreak of phenomena in 1874, again in the ‘burned-over district’. Olcott97 had been sent by a New York tabloid to investigate the sensational apparitions at the Eddy homestead in Vermont. Blavatsky’s presence was less accountable, though her participation in some of the occurrences suggests possible collusion.98 Whatever the truth, the conjunction of the able publicist and organiser, Olcott, with the ‘mysterious’ and intelligent Blavatsky was to be fortuitous, leading to the formation of the Theosophical Society, a significant vehicle in the formulation of a systematic occult doctrine, more sophisticated than simple Spiritualism.99

While there is considerable disagreement over the socio-economic appearance of past patterns of religious enthusiasm,100 Spiritualism, and

96 Chadwick p92. And it remains true- if you want a book to sell, get it banned.
98 Webb in The Flight from Reason, suggests, without the offer of evidence, that the phenomena of Eddy Farm were later proved, surprisingly no doubt, to be faked.
99 Prothero 38ff. Prothero shows how Olcott and Blavatsky attempted a controversial shift of Spiritualism from a simple manifestation of ‘spirits’ of the dead, to emanations from occult messengers from the ‘other side’.
100 See, Cohn, N. The Pursuit of the Millennium- revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages (London: Paladin, 1970)
earlier religious revivalism, seemed to take root among the poor and those suffering social dislocation, whereas Theosophy was largely the preserve of the rising educated and middle class, a group no less socially dislocated.\textsuperscript{101} This middle class attraction was not without precedent. In the 1840s ‘burned-over district’ around Rochester, there were European Utopian Socialists of a similar background, secular communitarians with ideas modelled on Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. These communities were usually short lived and, while they were highly idealistic, they were founded not on traditional religious fervour but on secular thought, often though, with occult tendencies.\textsuperscript{102} The people involved in these experiments were generally not “credulous country people but rather urbanites, and religious liberals”,\textsuperscript{103} educated and middle class, in the main, though the attraction to these ideas and those like Spiritualism “cut a surprisingly long and wide swath across lines of region, class, ethnicity, and gender”.\textsuperscript{104}

An explanation for the repeated occurrence of “socialists and occultists running in harness”\textsuperscript{105} lies in the same ‘questing’ impulse, the same

\textsuperscript{101} Ryan, M. \textit{Cradle of the Middle Class- the family in Oneida County, New York 1790-1865} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) Ryan’s meticulous study demonstrates the altered configuration of middle class society over the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The rise of the middle class was at the cost of its previous social position and thus was essentially a profound social dislocation with all the anxiety that such involves.

\textsuperscript{102} Owen in later age became a convinced Spiritualist, confounding his Secularist supporters. Fourier’s metaphysical belief in the law of Attraction or Association, of cosmic bonds that hold the universe in harmony, has a counterpart in occult theory. His communitarian views derived from a attempt to harmonise with these forces by forming ‘phalansteries’ (communities) of not more than 1800 people.


\textsuperscript{104} Prothero, S. \textit{The White Buddhist} p21.

See also Owen, A. \textit{The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990). Owen suggests a wide spread social interest in Spiritualism while recognising the majority were upper working and middle class.

\textsuperscript{105} Webb p222.
Utopian and often millenarian aspects of belief, the same reforming zeal. People like Annie Besant,\textsuperscript{106} President of the Theosophical Society on the death of Olcott in 1907, epitomise this complex interleaving. A remarkable woman, she began as the wife of a conventional parson, left him to become a Free-Thinker and Radical, progressed through feminism, fighting for birth control and the rights of women workers, thence to Fabianism and finally to Blavatsky’s Theosophists. The contradictions are only apparent - the consistency is with ‘questing’ and belief on the margin. What is notable about those like Besant is their middle class origin. “Lawyers, doctors, and journalists were all represented among the founders [of the Theosophical Society] and this sort of educated, professional person would remain....the main constituency of the society”.\textsuperscript{107}

It is the participation of the middle class and educated in ideas on the social margin - what Webb terms the “Progressive Underground” - that projects the Theosophical Society and its many acolytes, like FL Woodward, into significance, and establishes a connection with the \textit{fin de siècle} of the twentieth century and recent New Age excursions, like the Rajneesh movement, for example, of the 1970s and 80s. The Rajneesh were the quintessential social science experiment. In narcissistic absorption, they studied themselves, identifying participants as overwhelmingly educated, middle class and young.\textsuperscript{108} What is equally significant is that many emanated from the “caring professions” of social

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\textsuperscript{106}See Nethercot, A. \textit{The First Five Lives of Annie Besant} (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961)

\textsuperscript{107}Prothero p49.

\textsuperscript{108}Fitzgerald, Frances. \textit{Cities on a Hill- a journey through contemporary American cultures} (London: Picador Pan Books, 1986) p264. In the early 1980s, the average age was just over 30yrs, 80\% were from middle or upper middle class backgrounds, 83\% had attended university - two thirds had bachelors degrees and 12\% had doctorates - and most were white and Protestant. There was also a significant Jewish component which is also discernible in other cults.
work, psychology, and counselling; 11% had postgraduate degrees in psychology or psychiatry.  

This latter aspect is disproportionate to anything observable in mainstream society and begs some explanation. Participants in this and other movements are ‘questing’, seeking both explanation and purposeful existence, which is the initial attraction of counselling and ancillary studies. In a less secular era they may have been attracted to the ministry, or the many ‘progressive’ causes of Theosophy, which offered to people like Woodward, the opportunity to ‘serve’ in a context of certain and fervent belief. As Woodward observed, the cure for “deep discontent with life, is to do good”.  

The problem with those who enter middle class occupations that do ‘good’ is, I believe, that they are often not so much “caring” as “interfering” professions, often ‘colonising’ the Other for ulterior ends. The concurrent nineteenth century expansion of middle class influence domestically, and imperial influence abroad, may be entirely coincidental, but both shared a tendency to appropriate the Other’s capacity for self determination, a propensity for social engineering, however idealised. Similarly, it may be entirely coincidental that the social sciences, like anthropology, sociology and psychology, also emerged in the same

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109 Fitzgerald *Cities on the Hill* p 275. Another 11% had bachelors degrees in these fields.  
110 Gunewardene *FL Woodward*. p84.  
111 See McCalman, J. *Struggletown* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984) McCalman offers an insightful description of the imposition of middle class ‘correct’ child rearing habits on the working class of Richmond (Melbourne) in the early part of the twentieth century and which largely led to the abandonment of breast feeding and preference for ‘more hygienic’ bottle feeding. Such misinformed, but widespread, societal imposition, harboured other less obvious agendas such as an underlying prudery and Victorian attitudes concerning discipline and affection. The controlling aspects of bottle feeding were to be preferred to the undisciplined aspects of ‘demand feeding’ by the breast. Similar general adoption in Australia of circumcision for males- an almost universal practice until quite recently- has more to do with attitudes of Victorian prudery, ‘cleanliness’ and fears of masturbatory excess than to genuine medical concerns, though these agendas get buried in what simply becomes accepted practice.
period, and while undoubtedly they represented earnest attempts at descriptive science, about what 'is', they also tended to be prescriptive, prone to ideology, and what 'ought' to be.

Social sciences harbour contradictions in pursuit of understanding. The attempt to 'understand' naturally employs the tools of analysis, of 'naming', and such dissection has the effect of reducing the object observed to its prosaic parts and de-powering the thing named, depriving it of its curious resonance. This is intuitively recognised in Christian theology; when Christ [Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30] is confronted by the man 'possessed', He 'names' the demons, hastening their departure. In a sense, this has been the means of psychotherapy ever since; to 'name' the elements of psychopathology and deprive them of their sway upon the individual.

The contradiction for those often drawn to the field of psychology is that while they wish to 'name' the aspects of human behaviour, they tend also to be questing for something 'unnameable', something beyond the sum of the parts. The therapies that emerged in reaction to Freud's psychopathological model, and that coalesced around people such as Maslow, Fritz Perls, Alexander Lowen and Carl Rogers, were attempts to look to human 'potential', to move from the analytic to the experiential, to experience the 'unnameable'. It is not without significance that those attracted to the cult of Rajneesh in the 1970s and 80s had their roots in these streams of psychological exploration.

The mastery of Bhagwan Rajneesh, was his extraordinary narcissistic capacity to reflect back on adherents their own modes of thought, allowing these to become, not of their own 'named' understanding, but
from outside, from some mysterious external 'other'. In this, Bhagwan Rajneesh resembles a Winnicottian 'transitional object' carrying the magic and mystery of the Other in order to make whole a Self denied mystery by its own analytic endeavours. It is difficult to live a satisfactory 'myth' if one has analysed and 'named' its purpose through anthropological or sociological endeavour; for personal mythology to become 'livable', it must assume some other unnameable guise.

The attraction of Rajneesh to the young, educated, middle class was in its ability to transcend formal learning and to conjure ineffable, unnameable mystery. Despite rhetoric about finding 'potential' within, a 'useable' myth emanates from without, is greater than the individual, and is unanalysable. To the narcissistic young attracted to Rajneesh, their new faith was an ultimate self absorption, returning to them, through their guru, affirmation of all they assumed was true, and despite the rhetoric of freedom, couching its enactment in an authoritarian and manipulative structural manifestation. It ultimately and sadly confirmed the confined form of their own potential rather than any higher self.

While the Rajneesh was decidedly cultist this was not readily apparent in its formation or even later manifestation. It takes time to become obvious as cults are contradictory and present plausible facets of themselves for scrutiny. The Theosophical Society similarly had a capacity to present genuinely benign, if eccentric, facets, while withholding others from view, usually under the guise of sacred secrecy. Nevertheless the Theosophical Society did shelter cultist tendencies which align it with modern cult occurrence, though this tendency is observable in most niche belief, at some time. Christianity initially resembled such a pattern - Adventist, paranoidal, certain of its possession of truth, insistent on radical 'born
again’ transformation, and blessed with an extremely adverse public reception. Even Buddhism, which presently enjoys a positive press in the West,\textsuperscript{112} “[i]n its day....suffered very much the same sort of reception that is now being endured by the new religious movements”.\textsuperscript{113} That both Christianity and Buddhism appear today more innocuous, is due to their shift into established orthodoxy where some of their more radical doctrinal positions have been ejected, diminished or become so accepted as to appear benign, though there is always a tendency to return to those intense formative moments, as Christian and other fundamentalisms attest.

The inclination to cultism in the Theosophical Society is observable in one of its more unusual digressions, a sub-movement centred on belief in the advent a Coming World Teacher, a new Christ or Buddha. This was the invention of CW Leadbeater, a charismatic figure who held considerable influence under Besant’s leadership, though he had been forced to resign from the Society in 1906 after accusations of sexual abuse of young boys.

In 1910, Leadbeater used his ‘clairvoyant powers’ to announce the ‘discovery’ of an ‘exceptional’ personage in the form of a young Indian boy, Krishnamurti, who was to be the Coming World Teacher.\textsuperscript{114} A new sub organisation of the Society was established, the Order of the Star in the East (OSE), which grew steadily world wide, despite setbacks, such

\textsuperscript{112}\textit{It is difficult to define this interest but an aspect resides in the rejection of any concept of ‘God’ Who has received an exceedingly poor press since the mid nineteenth century. One of the requirements of ‘questing’ souls today is a faith without the discomfort of ‘God’; this Buddhism supplies admirably.}

\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Masefield, P “The Muni and the Moonies” Religion (1985) Vol. 15 p 158. Masefield takes aim at the benign image of Buddhism to demonstrate from within its scriptural foundation that it exhibited many ‘cultist’ traits at its inception.}

\textsuperscript{114}\textit{Given the earlier controversy it is surprising his interest in the young Krishnamurti did not arouse greater suspicion, though a later court case over custody of Krishnamurti again aired these accusations in that peculiarly euphemistic Victorian way.}
as the controversy that erupted in Sydney when Krishnamurti visited in 1922. The OSE attracted considerable attention particularly when it constructed a Greek amphitheatre at Balmoral point looking out through the Sydney Heads, whence, Sydney rumour had it, the new Messiah would walk on water to announce his ‘return’.

The rumours of marvellous happenings and a glorious Coming continued, but in 1929 Krishnamurti dramatically announced dissolution of the OSE, firmly declared he was no Messiah, and urged his followers to find their own path. It was a stand apparently breathtaking in its honesty and sincerity, turning his back on adulation, wealth and power, to become a simple peripatetic teacher. In effect he became a World Teacher, but not quite in the way intended, though the world of spiritual endeavour is rarely as it seems. More recently it has emerged that Krishnamurti dissolved the OSE, at least in part, as a way of quarantining the substantial assets of the organisation in his own hands, ably administered by Rajagopal, and despite the image of ascetic and celibate, sustained a long affair with Rajagopal’s wife, amongst others.

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115 Roe, J. *Beyond Belief- Theosophy in Australia 1879-1939* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1986). This is a singularly valuable work and Roe offers an excellent overview of the controversy that split the Sydney TS, over accusations of sexual impropriety, again levelled at Leadbeater. The truth of these accusations is difficult to ascertain in the atmospheric prudery of the time, though it seems that Leadbeater engaged young boys in group masturbation in the vaulted basement of the Manor, practices excused as ‘spiritual’ exercises. See:-


An elderly member of the TS I interviewed at the Manor (the HQ of the Esoteric Section of the TS in Sydney), where Leadbeater held sway, described the many gatherings of the TS on the wide porch at the Manor and how Leadbeater would sit prominently on the porch always with several of his ‘boys’ gathered on either side of him.

116 See Roe, J. “Three Visions from Balmoral Beach” in Roe J. (ed) *Twentieth Century Sydney* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1980). The site is now occupied by a very prosaic block of flats, though the view remains suitably impressive.

117 Rajagopal Sloss, R. *Lives in the Shadow with J Krishnamurti* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991) Also Yglesias, H. *The Saviours* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). This intriguing novel is quite obviously a very veiled biographical piece about Krishnamurti and gives an interesting insight into his attachment to young women who formed a significant aspect of what he called the “process”, a
In creating the World Teacher mythology, after his initial ‘discovery’, Leadbeater wove an extraordinary serialised tale describing the past lives of a code-named hero, Alcyone, a thin disguise for the young Krishnamurti. These stories seem to have evaded close scrutiny by writers on the Theosophical Society, probably dismissed as being altogether too far fetched, but in fact, they are quite illuminating; the content reveals important values and the work overall presents as a modern cult narrative. In this, as in its decidedly middle class complexion, the Theosophical Society presages important aspects of modern niche belief.

The stories capture an atmosphere of ‘higher’ purpose and ‘noble’ striving, with an added edge of ‘heroic’ intent, set in the past eons of the various ‘root races’ that were part of the evolutionary view of human spiritual development to which the Society subscribed. They were ‘Boys Own’ adventures of heroism and noble deeds, for “In no other age were men so often told to take ‘the great ones of the earth’ as models for imitation”.119

Each person within the Adyar inner circle was given a code name - Leadbeater was Sirius, for example, and Woodward was Lignus - and each episode was greeted with earnest anticipation, as Leadbeater

kind of hypnotic mediumistic spiritual faint - or maybe it was simply a wonderful way of entrenching their regard and affection. I doubt if it was as conscious as that, though there is no doubt he loved women and sought a rapport that aligned with his intense yearning for a mother image. Krishnamurti cannot be simply dismissed as a charlatan. His religious pastiche of Buddhist and Hindu theology adhered in an interesting way and he no doubt was a very able, even hypnotic speaker, though his writings (which are usually transcriptions) tend to meander.

118Besant, A & Leadbeater, C W The Lives of Alcyone Vol.1 & II (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical publishing House, 1924, facsimile reprinting by Health Research, California, 1985). Besant is always given credit before Leadbeater but the work was almost entirely the fabrication of Leadbeater.

119Houghton p 305.

120While some of the personages are known and identified many are not, and I am indebted to John Cooper for this information.
managed within each tale to promote and demote characters within a hierarchy. Each story had a small central cast and was concluded by a complex genealogy of relationships, and herein lay the clues as to whether one had been 'promoted' or not. Woodward never achieved a role of any significance in the Lives of Alcyone. He was the perennial 'spear carrier', one of the "Band of Servers" as Leadbeater and Besant described them.\textsuperscript{121} It is doubtful, though, that he cared. He was, as one who knew him well,\textsuperscript{122} a perennial observer and comfortable with remaining on the periphery.

The Lives, despite the avowed racial tolerance of the TS, contain significant underlying racism. There is reference to 'root races', their 'purity' and the need to 'strengthen' them by experimental cross breeding, to 'improve' them by the noble example of Aryanism. It would seem a parody of later Nazism, except that the language of eugenics was common in the period,\textsuperscript{123} and enacted into law in some US states well before it became the language of Nazi Germany. This kind of thinking, though, leads naturally to an emphasis on a select few, the 'evolved initiates', not unlike the Elect of God in Christianity, and not unlike the cult tendency to grant adherents some unique place in the cosmos.

In the Lives of Alcyone, not only is Krishnamurti, in the guise of Alcyone, the continual hero, but throughout the eons of adventures he is accompanied by his guide and mentor 'Sirius', who is none other than the

\textsuperscript{121} Besant, A & Leadbeater CW Man: Whence, How and Whither - a record of clairvoyant investigation (Adyar, Madras: TPH, 1971 originally published 1913.) Originally published as "Rents in the Veil of Time".

\textsuperscript{122} Personal interview with Nigel Heyward who was given responsibility under Woodward's estate for cataloguing his books.

author and ‘medium’ of these tales, Charles Leadbeater, ‘discoverer’ of
the new ‘World Teacher’ and otherwise ‘prophet’ of the piece. As in
most cult mythology, the leader is usually in some prominent relationship
to the Centre, if not the Centre, and there is often a ‘revealed’ text that
binds the cast of adherents to its tale of heroism and unfolding purpose.

The Lives is a work of cult cohesion, and though not in the class of John
Smith’s Book of Mormon, it had the same unconscious purpose - to bind,
define and direct adherents of the faith, as ‘revealed’ by a leader or
prophet. Leadbeater’s Lives fulfilled the role of a niche belief narrative,
but in doing so, revealed much of the underlying values and anxieties of
the times. A sample will suffice.

In one story, the “Vampire Goddess”, dwells in a cave at the base of a
‘needle of rock’ which smelled foul, ‘like a charnel house’. She was an
eight foot Lemurian (one of the many ‘root races’ that preceded the
present), a dark blue and luminous giantess, unclothed except for a
necklace of gleaming stones, a sinister smile and an intoxicating musky
smell. She is accompanied by misshapen goblins and demons and
employs magnetic powers to lure young men to her cave as husbands to
her enthral. Once in her powers she drains them of life.

In the Lives gender could alter alarmingly, an indication of the sexual
ambivalence and androgyny that prevailed, and in this story Alcyone is
female. Eventually (s)he goes forth to rid the land of the Lemurian
giantess, immune to the allure of the creature, whose magnetic powers
only affect men, and draws ‘her bow to the head of the arrow’ and fires,
killing the giantess. Immediately the demons are released to their true
shape, as men. As one relates,
I was brought here under her awful spell and all that was unclean and animal within me was stirred into mad riot for a whole month I ministered to her monstrous lusts and it seemed to me one long mad whirl of pleasure in time she drew all life from me she has kept herself alive feeding upon the life of men [who] were wan and shrunken and nerveless now like deformed and stunted children, warped and gangrenous, rotting in death while still alive.

After the demise of the giantess, the cave, the swamp and the forest are cleared and a road made through them.

Even a modest knowledge of psychoanalysis makes this tale decipherable. Misogyny prevails; it is women who take men by ‘magnetism’ and drain them of life by sexual demand. Women are fearsome, devouring creatures that represent all that is primitive and foul. Eliminating the ‘swamp’ paves over the place with ‘civilisation’. It says much about Victorian sexual repression and much more about Leadbeater’s own sexuality and his acknowledged distaste of women, though ambivalence towards women and sexuality is one of the themes of Victorianism. Women were seen as either delicate persons of goodness and sensitivity that deserved elevation to some worshipful pedestal or as creatures of carnal disgust, since no ‘nice’ woman would welcome sexuality beyond duty.

The Lives reveals not only Victorian values and aspirations, but reveals too, within the Theosophical Society’s ‘high minded’ middle class sobriety, a tendency to cultism, linking it inescapably to the present

124 Leadbeater Lives p86.
125 The story is told by the TS against itself; that on the road to Paradise there is a fork in the Path with one sign saying “To Paradise” and another saying “To a Theosophical Society Discussion on Paradise”. The joke seems more painfully accurate than anyone would willingly admit.
decline of hierarchy and proliferation of ‘New Age’ niche belief. The fact that the Lives is still in print today, albeit in a cheap facsimile edition, is testimony to a continuing appeal that extends to other Leadbeater oddities, including ‘clairvoyant’ chemistry. It is testimony, as well, to the persistent influence of Theosophy and its beliefs in ‘astral travel’, communication with the Masters, reincarnation, and ‘channelling’ of past ‘lives’, all part of its vocabulary plundered from occult archives and bequeathed to modern devotees of the occult and “New Age”.

This ‘modern’ familiar feel to things Theosophical extends to descriptions of life, in the 1920s, at the Manor, the main centre of Theosophical Society activity in Sydney at the time. One member of the TS from that era, told of going to services at St Alban’s, and recalled the acute shock of locals seeing young people wearing casual free flowing cotton clothes and sandals on their feet. What is more, they lived together communally at the Manor where they received instruction and ‘spiritual’ training. It was much like the 1960s pre-visited. Sydney was a significant TS centre in the 1920s, with over 2000 members and its own radio station, one of the first licences to be issued. In anticipation of the present, Leadbeater became an early ‘media evangelist’, and though recordings of his talks...

126 Leadbeater, CW The Astral Plane (London: TPS, 1915) now issued by Vesanta Press, 1984. Following on Leadbeater’s work on occult chemistry were a number of ‘serious’ attempt to reconcile with conventional science. See Smith, EL, Slater, VW & Reilly G. The Field of Occult Chemistry Transaction of the Physical Science Research Group of the Theosophical Research Centre (London: TPH, 1934)
127 It was Leadbeater who applied the term ‘New Age’ to the advent of the World Teacher, though he was certainly not alone in the use of the term. An influential and ‘radical’ Edwardian magazine devoted to art and literature was titled “New Age”.
128 St Alban’s, near Central Railway, was the main venue of the Liberal Catholic Church, another of Leadbeater’s ‘occult’ creations, which was neither catholic nor liberal. People would travel by ferry from Taylor’s Bay to the Quay and then by tram or train.
129 The station was called Radio 2GB, after Giordano Bruno the martyred mystic of whom Besant was supposedly the re-incarnation. It broadcast from a still extant shed at the bottom of the garden in the grounds of the Manor.
today sound wooden and stilted, his restrained oratorical English tones gave a vision of safe Victorian respectability to TS ideas.

The fervent interest in spiritualist and occult beliefs in the late nineteenth century and the commensurate rise in New Age philosophy, originating in the 1960s, that has blossomed into a significant social expression in the late twentieth century, bears comparison. Both present as periods of significant transition, anxiety, and reaction to the juggernaut of technology and where technology, science and empirical explanation expand, 'irrationality', it seems, stalks their wake.

While some commentators observe this phenomena with alarm, in the history of human endeavour, the adherence to unusual beliefs has never been far from events. In may be as benign as Australian prime-minister, Alfred Deakin's interest in spiritualism and Theosophy, "invoking a Higher part of himself to guide his judgement";\textsuperscript{130} as strange as the Canadian prime-minister and statesman, Mackenzie King, summoning his deceased mother to seances when considering matters of state; or as somewhat sad as Gladstone moving anonymously among the prostitutes of London to do "good works" and later flagellating himself for the impurity of his thoughts.\textsuperscript{131}

All those that move in events frequently bring with them values and transpersonal beliefs that colour decision making in ways that may surprise (or alarm) the average observer.

\textsuperscript{130}Gabay, A. \textit{The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin} (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p186
\textsuperscript{131}Worse, unusual beliefs can inhabit pure scholarship. All the microfilmed parish and school records I have used in this research were produced by the Mormon Church, who make these valuable records available to the public and to researchers. They, on the other hand, use these records to quietly 'convert' all these past personages into the Mormon Church! Woodward would be delighted to have been made a Mormon and given a 'rightful' place in heaven. It's a numbers game, here or in heaven, it seems.
There can be no escaping the fact that in our nominally empirical, technology-driven age, the creativity and initiative of many significant achievers has been bound together with transparently absurd beliefs and practices.\textsuperscript{132}

The apparent presence of 'transparently absurd beliefs and practices' in many lives does not become obvious until they present formally in some organisational form, though this is rarely the limit to which such beliefs extend. The Theosophical Society, for example, disproportionately influenced and participated in the cultural currents of the late nineteenth century, and while

\[\text{[t]he majority would never belong to [such organisations], ....they served to show what was happening in a much more diffuse fashion in the society around them.}\textsuperscript{133}\]

The Theosophical Society had a remarkable sway, and the activities of those like Frank Lee Woodward who inhabited their ideas have a "prismatic quality"\textsuperscript{134}, a means of refracting light to reveal constituent elements and hues of meaning.

**A Prismatic Life.**

Frank Lee Woodward lived the last thirty three years of his life on a small apple orchard on the banks of the Tamar River, near Launceston, Tasmania, absorbed in the task of editing and translating a considerable portion of the *Tipitaka*, the Southern Buddhist (Theravadin) Canon\textsuperscript{135} and


\textsuperscript{133}Fitzgerald Cities on the Hill p19 Fitzgerald was referring to groups like the Rajneesh and Falwell's Christian fundamentalists but her comments relate to any marginal organisation or philosophy.

\textsuperscript{134}Fitzgerald p19.

\textsuperscript{135}The *Tipitaka* ("Triple Basket") is the canon of the Southern [Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Vietnam] or Theravada school of Buddhism. While it is held in common with the Mahayana or Northern school of Buddhism [China, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia], it has been expanded by additional Sanskrit commentaries. The Pali *Tipitaka*, based on a powerful oral tradition, was committed to
the *Atthakatha* (the canonical commentaries), as well as contributing significantly to the monumental task of providing a concordance. The *Tipitaka* is some eleven times the size of the Christian Bible\(^\text{136}\) and Woodward edited over 3,000\(^\text{137}\) pages of critical text, a substantial contribution, as well as providing translations to much of this.

His most important contribution, from the point of view of the general public, was his comprehensive anthology of Buddhist scriptures, *Some Sayings of the Buddha*\(^\text{138}\) [1925], an influential text, which for many in the West was a first introduction to Buddhist scriptures and ideas. Miss IB Horner, a later President of the Pali Text Society was able to observe in a letter to Woodward in 1952 that “Your ‘Some Sayings’ [is] still in great demand.”\(^\text{139}\) An example of this influence can be seen in Marie Byles, pioneering feminist, environmentalist, animal welfarist and the first practicing solicitor in New South Wales,\(^\text{140}\) who was influenced to explore Buddhism after receiving a copy of Woodward’s *Some Sayings of the

writing in India between 500 BCE and the early Common Era. While the arrangement of the texts varies with particular schools, it is generally divided into three sections: the *Vinaya Pitaka* (“Basket of Discipline”) which relates to monastic regulation of the *Sangha* or community of monks; the *Sutta Pitaka* (“Basket of Discourse”), the sermons and ethical and doctrinal discourses of the Buddha; and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (“Basket of special or further Doctrine”), accepted only by the Southern School, is a metaphysical elaboration of doctrinal material from the *Suttas*. The *Atthakatha* are a series of Commentaries on particular canonical writings in the *Tipitaka*. Woodward was responsible for translating (into English) and editing (Pali into Roman text) a substantial proportion of these texts.


\(^{137}\) I am grateful to Dr Peter Masefield, a Pali scholar familiar with Woodward’s work, for this assessment.


\(^{139}\)Letter from IB Horner to FL Woodward March 15, 1952. [Shield Heritage, Solicitors, Launceston: file of FL Woodward]

\(^{140}\)A Miss A. Evans was admitted as a barrister in 1921 but never practised.
Buddha. She went on to write herself on Buddhism, *Footprints of Gautama the Buddha*, and acknowledged the assistance of Woodward, “one of the leading Pali scholars” who was “indefatigable in answering questions up to a few weeks of his death”.

In his efforts, Woodward was an early pioneer, one of the small band of enthusiastic scholars and orientalists that gathered about the Pali Text Society, unfolding to both scholars and an interested public reliable English translations of Buddhist Pali texts. The Pali Text Society, founded in 1881, was the inspiration of TW Rhys Davids who “laid sure foundations for the early interpretation of Buddhism without the ..... confusion hitherto prevalent.” Rhys Davids envisioned an ambitious program of translation, based on the successful undertaking by Max Müller of the fifty one volume *Sacred Books of the East* series begun in 1875, and to which Rhys Davids was a contributor. Far from a neutral scholarly exercise, however, the “sure foundation” he established for the interpretation of Buddhism was profoundly textual, “defined, classified and interpreted through its own textuality” and in the selection of text, decidedly Theravadin.

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141Byles, M. *Many Lives in One* ML MSS 3833 box 12 (13) p.134. This is Byles unpublished autobiography, held in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Byles represents the persistent profile of those drawn to such esoterica. She represents the recurring theme of activism on many fronts, among Victorian and Edwardian ‘progressives’. It is not surprising she joined the Theosophical Society though fairly late in the piece [9 March, 1959- Certificate in box 12 (13) ML MSS 3833] when the TS was well beyond the peak of its influence.

142Byles, M. *Footprints of Gautama the Buddha- the story of the Buddha his disciples knew, describing portions of his ministerial life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, 1986, originally published in 1957) p7. This is an interesting but very individual interpretation of Buddhism.

143*Dictionary of National Biography*, 1922-1930. Entry on TW Rhys Davids, written by Lord Robert Chalmers, Governor of Ceylon 1913-1916 and himself a contributor to the PTS.

This bias influenced the perception of Buddhism in the West as principally Theravadin well into the middle of the twentieth century, which coincidently aligned with the kind of austere Protestantism which many were both escaping and rediscovering in obverse form. The emphasis was on texts, and on the accuracy, priority and authenticity of such texts, which has little to do with meaning. It was an attraction to pure philology, much akin to nineteenth century Latin and Greek scholarship, where the object of attention was an 'extinct' language that could be summed up and described without interference by current usage. Pali also was a literary language confined to texts which apparently offered similar attributes.

These became essential sources for anyone studying Buddhism, comparative religion or the psychology of religion, and the program of translation, begun by scholars like Woodward, continues to this day. It was a pioneering contribution to the shape of western orientalist understanding, influential beyond the readership of such specialist scholarship.

In countries with a Buddhist tradition like Sri Lanka, these English translations of the Pali Text Society became a primary source of lay access to the Canon. Sinhala translations were late in appearing and when they did, were translated into classical not demotic Sinhala, which continued to restrict lay access. English was the language of the elite who were the principal leaders and advocates of the Buddhist Revival and the Nationalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The growth of the English-medium Buddhist schools initiated by the Theosophical Society in Ceylon was critical to the promotion of the Buddhist and nationalist causes, and people like Woodward who built
Mahinda College, Galle, into the leading Buddhist educational institution in the South were a much underestimated and important influence in the promotion of a laicised Buddhism - the so-called 'Protestant Buddhism' - and the formation of an English educated elite with a nationalist bias.

Woodward's contribution stands within the nineteenth century orientalist context, eddying among the currents of cultural formation, in both the west and in Ceylon. In his educational endeavours and in his pioneering work of translation, he laboured on the intellectual and geographic periphery, yet his efforts reached into surprisingly diverse aspects of nineteenth century culture. While Woodward's life in Ceylon reveals a unexpected cultural importance, he never sought or wanted renown. What he sought was a life removed from events, an interior life that turned within him the thought and philosophy of Buddhist resolve, with more than a few Theosophic accretions. It is a difficult history to explore, since historical discourse thrives on mayhem and upheaval while the life of a solitary does not manage much of either. Yet his was a voice attuned to a time and a place, and what is revealed is not so much a 'history-from-below', but as I have begun to show, a 'history-from-within', the exploration of an Interior as uncharted as the steps of any Livingston.

It is, by nature, a history of ideas, their origin and unfolding, that reveals within Woodward's time and context impulses that arch over into the present, that illustrate a perennial questing for the ineffable, for the unnameable, but also for purpose and meaning. One can ask all the justifiable questions: Why did he become a Buddhist and Theosophist, with all its crank accretions? And why did he not tip over into its cult

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145 I am indebted to Janet McCalman for this thought and phrase, offered at a speech delivered at the Launceston Queen Victoria Museum 3 August 1996.
excesses? Why did he go to Ceylon? Why retire in Tasmania? Why take up Pali translation? But whatever the question, the answer always begins with the quest for understanding.
FRANK LEE WOODWARD-
A PRISMATIC LIFE.
ENGLAND

Manual of a Mystic

When Frank Lee Woodward’s sister heard he had become a Buddhist she is reputed to have expostulated, “What a lot of rubbish this talk of Frank becoming a Buddhist; there ought to be a law to make everyone Church of England!” The story illustrates a number of aspects of the man and his times. It tells of the rigid censoriousness of Victorianism, that teetered often on the edge of absurdity, and tells too of the wry humour of the man, one of his centrally redeeming attributes, who told the story against himself. Woodward’s punning humour, his love of absurdity and the way he deflated self seriousness, is recognisably Victorian, but as Gay acutely observes, the task of humour is to control anxieties, to master threats, “increasing their distance and reducing their dimensions.” The Victorian age was one of significant anxiety and if humour somehow salved the day, then what it eased is revealed and, inevitably, revealing.

The story also tells of the extraordinary interest in Buddhism at that time, principally mediated by the Theosophical Society, which links the fin de siècle of the present century with that of the nineteenth, making Frank Lee Woodward, though a subaltern voice, one that amplifies his times and to an extent our own, a Manual of his times if not of mystics.

1 Manual of a Mystic was one of the first translations completed by Woodward [1916]. It was a manuscript outlining, in cryptic and arcane language, practices intended spiritually to advance the acolyte, though it assumed the guidance of an experienced guru, since some of the practices were regarded as ‘dangerous’.

2Heyward, N “A Buddhist Scholar” Platypus (University of Tasmania literary magazine) 1952, p21.

Early Life
Frank Lee Woodward was born in Saham Toney, Norfolk, England, on 13 April 1871, which is not without significance for his later life in Ceylon, as it is also the Sinhala New Year’s Day. Woodward was the fifth child (and third son) of an Anglican curate, the Rev. William Woodward and Elizabeth Mary Ann (née Lee), who like most at that time set forth a quiverful of offspring, in their case eight in all. Beyond the few facts Woodward provided on his life, in the Mahinda College Magazine, little is known of his origins, for as Gunewardene accurately observed, Woodward “was always modest in writing or speaking of himself, and on the rare occasion when he did so, he exercised considerable restraint.”

Woodward’s father, the Rev. William Woodward, whose own father was a hatter from what appears a modest lower middle class ‘trade’ background, seems to have married relatively well when he took Elizabeth Lee as his wife on 5 September 1861, at Edmonton parish Church, Middlesex. He was not without some means, having property returning £57pa, but she appears to have come from a more elevated

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4 Source: Saham Toney & Kessingland Parish Registers of baptism, marriage and burial. The parish registers indicate Woodward and seven of his siblings were born in Saham Toney, an eighth in Kessingland.

Clara Helen [DOB 16/5/1864]; Charles Bracebridge Hopkins [28/9/1865]; William Edward [25/8/1867]; Agnes Elizabeth [17/8/1869]; Frank Lee [13 April 1871]; Alice Lee [12/12/1872]; Arthur Reginald [12/12/1874]; & George Christie [18/12/1876] at Kessingland.

Note: Alice and Arthur were born on the same day, 12th December and George not far off, products, obviously of a spring flush. Also both Frank and Alice acquired the maiden name of their mother, a common Victorian habit.

All the entries are by Woodward’s father and show care to note both date of birth and Christening—mostly only the Christening were noted for other parish children. Woodward’s file [Shields Heritage, Launceston] contains a letter from George in Durban, South Africa [Feb 2, 1952] with ‘chat’ about family and their age—about Arthur, who was still working as a parson in Somerset—and says, “We all seem to hang on, you must be 81 or 82.”

I am indebted to Robin Brown, local historian at Saham Toney for this information and other general advice on the district.

5 Mahinda College Magazine April 1919 Autobiographical sketch by Woodward.

6 Gunewardene p5.
middle class social position, with a modest private income of £20 pa\textsuperscript{7} from her father, Goodale Lee, described on her marriage certificate as a "gentleman",\textsuperscript{8} with all that such a Victorian description implies. Modest though his background was, the Rev. Woodward was proud he was "of Puritan stock",\textsuperscript{9} born in Huntingdon, East Anglia, the birth place of Oliver Cromwell. He harboured an admiration for the Puritan Protector which was shared by FL Woodward, who refers to Cromwell as the "greatest of Englishmen".\textsuperscript{10}

This Cromwellian connection has some additional significance as Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, the college which FL Woodward attended, was also Cromwell’s, a grisly reminder of which is the interment of Cromwell’s severed head near the present Chapel.\textsuperscript{11} The only other significance of the obvious regard for Cromwell may have been theological, for the nineteenth century was a period of debate and tension between evangelical and High Church forces represented by the Oxford Movement.

That the Rev. Woodward assumed regard for Cromwell, with all the sub textual significance that such adherence would have implied in the public domain, possibly indicates an evangelical tendency with its attendant rigidities. Huntingdon whence the Rev. Woodward originated, had, according to mid century religious surveys, a strong concentration of

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\textsuperscript{7} Christ’s Hospital Records Guildhall London Ms12,818A/145.
\textsuperscript{8} Marriage Certificate of Wm & Elizabeth Woodward. Guildhall London Ms12,818A/145.
\textsuperscript{9}Wijeratne, T, Dantanarayana, D. & Samara-Wickrama, P. [eds] A century of Memories- an anthology celebrating the centenary of Mahinda College (Sydney: private publication, 1995) p25. Because much of this is based on the memories of a later generation, it contains some inaccuracies about Woodward.
\textsuperscript{10}Gunewardene p5.
Particular Baptist and Wesleyan Methodists,\(^\text{12}\) which implies both a tendency towards non-conformity and literalist religious enthusiasm. Whether these elements influenced the Rev. Woodward and shaped his theology remains speculation, but if it did, his curacy at Saham Toney, which was under the auspices and ‘gift’ of Oxford’s New College, may have presented some tension with a prevailing Tractarian and Pusey-ite influence. It may partly explain why he remained sixteen years at Saham Toney before he gained the substance and respectability of a ‘living’ of his own.

Parishes and their ‘livings’ existed under a system of patronage which required some political manoeuvring to secure, and the job of curate would have been paid out of the ‘living’ of the Rector who would have expected the curate to perform all the day to day tasks of the Parish. The obvious difference in the splendour of the Rectory and the simplicity of the curate’s cottage at Saham Toney indicates the difference in station accorded the respective offices.\(^\text{13}\)

According to *Crockford’s Directories*, William Woodward\(^\text{14}\) is recorded at St Bees, presumably a religious teaching establishment, in 1853, and he was made a Deacon in 1854 and a priest in 1855. He was curate of Dawley Magna in Shropshire (1854-1856) and at Morville, Shropshire (1856-1860) before moving to Saham Toney, Norfolk, where he was to reside for sixteen years (1860-1876). In 1876 he was made Rector in his own right at Kessingland, a coastal fishing village just south of Lowestoft.


\(^{13}\) Both are now in private hands, and while the curate’s cottage has been added to, it remains a modest flintwork cottage some distance from the Church. On the other hand the Rectory, next door to the church, is an imposing 17th century brick building.

\(^{14}\) Source: *Crockford’s Directory* of the Anglican Church in England.
in Suffolk, moving there when FL Woodward was four. In 1890 the Rev. Woodward moved as Rector to Catworth between Huntingdon and Thrapston, a much better ‘living’, and remained there until his death on 25 January 1912. He was buried along side his wife at Catworth, leaving the not inconsiderable estate of £16537/6/9.16

Woodward’s life at Saham Toney was profoundly rural - even today it is hardly a thriving centre - and he remembered from the age of two a “pleasant home in the country”, wandering about the large garden and nearby fields. The village is in the middle of the Breckland district, a ‘breck’ being originally a piece of land that was temporarily cultivated then allowed to revert to heath when the soil was exhausted (until the efforts of Coke of Norfolk introduced crop rotation). This is not the ordered, lush landscape of Kent but a more subtle heath land, less kind to farmers, but abundant in wildlife like grebe and pochard, with grasses like the thyme leaved ‘speedwell’ and spring vetch as well as wildflowers like ‘great mullein’, and the stunning ‘vipers bugloss’.

It was a landscape that appealed to Woodward and he loved the countryside, the historic buildings and the people and customs. As a young man he roamed the countryside becoming intimate with the unusual geography of the ‘broads’ near the coast with their Dutch windmills, and the heath, mere and pingos18 of the Breckland; even in later life, he

15 Shield Heritage: File of FL Woodward. Letter from Rosemary Welstead (niece) to FL Woodward, and daughter of his sister Alice, 18/1/52. She mentions visiting the grave of FL Woodward’s parents at the Catworth church cemetery.
17 Mahinda College Magazine, April 1919. Also Gunewardene, p1.
18 These are an extraordinary pattern of large ponds and swamp formed after the ice age - freezing of the soil formed uplifts which collapsed on thawing into a pock marked landscape that filled with water to form a network of ponds and shallow swamps.
retained books and maps on the region. The open heath lands of the inland were the sites of extensive rabbit warrens and the warreners in the smocks gathered at the back of the church - in appropriate class distinction - would have been familiar to the young Woodward. So denuded from overgrazing by sheep and rabbits had the countryside become by the early nineteenth century, that extensive pine forests were planted about the time of the Napoleonic wars and they remain a feature of the landscape today.

The church in Saham Toney where Woodward’s father preached and the house where he was born, are examples of flint ‘flushwork’, a common feature of building in Norfolk [see Illustrations]. The elaborate pattern of ‘diaper work’, flint embedded in mortar, creates an odd ‘ginger bread house’ effect and point to the historical significance of the region as the principal area (around Brandon) for the supply of military flint up until the 1850s when percussion weapons supplanted flintlock rifles. The flint knappers of Norfolk, who suffered the inevitable ‘knappers rot’ (a form of silicosis leading to pulmonary tuberculosis) produced vast amounts of flint (in 1806, some 365,000 gunflints a month) but only 13% of the mined flint became gunflints, 34% was used for building and the remainder was waste (and later used as rail ballast).

The structure of society was at that time still rigid and hierarchical, with the squire in Saham Hall perched on the pinnacle, surrounded by a layer of rich professional educated men, the rector, retired army and naval officers occupying the largest houses of the district like Whaite Hall,

Broom Hall, Park Farm, and Saham Waite Farm. Beneath them would be yeomen farmers with a hundred acres or less, then beneath them, lower middle class shopkeepers. Below that were skilled workmen - blacksmiths, millers, thatchers, shoemakers, grooms and such like - with the lowest rung of the ladder occupied by agricultural labourers, (who accounted for 75% of the male population), and the (invariably female) domestic servants. There was a further sub-stratum of paupers - a term not as pejorative as implied in today's usage - and the elderly and impoverished who occupied the almshouses and village workhouses.\textsuperscript{21}

The curate’s position in this social hierarchy was ambivalent, though not without considerable authority at this time when the Church was at a peak of social significance, though it slowly declined through the later nineteenth century. He would have occupied a social position somewhat below the Squire and the village Rector, though in a decidedly subservient position to the local gentry. He stood in for the Rector in his absence and it is clear from the church records at Saham Toney that at one stage, the Rev. Woodward took all the baptisms, weddings and funerals. The position of curate was that of a ‘dog’s body’, which required balancing the interests of the squire, bishop and rector, all of whom profoundly influenced the eventual appointment to charge of a parish.

There was also the problem of ‘competition’ because East Anglia was a significant site of non-conformity and Methodism. At one stage there were four Wesleyan chapels, the Wesleyan Methodist chapel in the village, the Saham Waite Methodist chapel, the Saham Hills Primitive Methodist chapel, and the United Free Methodist chapel, all of which

\textsuperscript{21} Source: local historian Robin Brown, Woodcock Hall, Saham Toney.
would have substantially dented the potential Anglican congregation and influenced an evangelical style of religious worship.

The strong presence of non conformists forms a significant backdrop to Woodward’s early life. While today such groups are perceived as conservative, at that time they represented a radical assault on both social and religious orthodoxy. The Primitive Methodists or ‘Ranters’, were even viewed with apprehension among other non-conformists, and their chapels were frequently the organising venues for early trade union formation among agricultural workers. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was, indisputably, “a period of agricultural crisis” and depression after several generations of plenty, and was marked by “numerous bankruptcies, lower rents and untenanted farms”. The social upheaval, agitation and dislocation that this created was substantial - ‘chapel’ unionism thrived in an atmosphere of tension and discontent exacerbated by the introduction of machinery like reapers and binders that hastened the decline of the huge rural labour force in the period after 1870.

While the young Woodward was probably barely aware of the changes taking place about him as he grew up, they were nonetheless significant and pervasive, and in a sense, absorbed through the skin. The economic constraints imposed by rural depression altered the social fabric. The

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Many of the saccharin scenes of romantic Victorian rural painting - decaying mills and overgrown cottages - far from ‘romantic’, were evidence of the significant decline and decay of rural life, a point lost on the artists and their urban clients.
24 Horse drawn rakes that mechanically both formed windrows and turned the hay - a task universally loathed among farm labourers - and reapers and binders which cut and bound oats, barley etc. for winnowing or chaffing, reduced the demand for harvest labour by a staggering amount. Photos from the era show teams of 30 or 40 manual labourers contrasted with a half dozen gathered about a reaper and binder.
squire was restrained from exercising his traditional role of social benefactor, with all the manipulative and social regulatory power that such duties of the squire entailed. Outsiders of urban wealth, without traditional family connections and social commitment, snapped up bargains on a depressed market and moved in, undermining and rearranging the local power structure.25

All these social alterations took place against the declining influence of the established Church - the other 'arm', along with the squirearchy, of rural social order. Questions of theology, as well as questions concerning the social influence of the Church with its conspicuous wealth, led to a significant decline in its authority in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is not without significance that Huxley's term 'agnostic' dates its coinage from 1870,26 a time of conscious questioning of religious adherence.

FL Woodward grew up in a critical period of social change that questioned traditional social order, and religious and social values. It also saw a decline in rural significance, and a shift from the Tory gentry, whom his father served, to the rising middle class whose values and influence probably more accurately represented the family's interests and origins. Theirs was a world of uncertainty, transition and social alteration, the very factors that consistently recur in people who are attracted to the exploration of religious alternatives.

Saham Toney stood within the flow of these events and changes, and while somewhat removed from the centre, it was not without colour and

25 This occurred even more substantially after the first World War.
historical contribution. There is one odd connection with Tasmania in the
person of Robert Knopwood²⁷ (1763-1838), the roistering rector and first
chaplain of early Hobart, who originated from Threxton and who was
appointed to the parish of Saham Toney and Watton which is only a short
distance from Threxton. Somewhat further away is Thetford, the
birthplace of Thomas Paine, who profoundly influenced nineteenth
century political culture through publication of the *Rights Of Man*.

Thetford was also the home of Prince Duleep Singh, Maharaja of the
Punjab. In 1848 the British annexed the Punjab and in 1849 the Maharaja
resigned his sovereign rights and property (including the Koh-i-Noor
diamond) to the Crown in exchange for a pension. He purchased
Elveden, a few miles south of Thetford in 1863 and transformed it into
extraordinary oriental splendour, with walls, pillars and arches of the
central domed hall covered with intricate Indian ornamentation. It would
have been impossible to have grown up in the area and not to have been
aware of this mysterious eastern apparition of splendour, a piece of
imperialism in the middle of Norfolk.

The currents and influences of Woodward’s childhood present formative
elements of character and personality. Born into the bosom of the
Anglican Church, he was to see in his life, it questioned, criticised and
slowly lose its authority, which was, after all, the authority of his family,
of his father and his father’s Father. In the religious context of Saham
Toney, he lived also in the contrast and fervour of non-conformity, in the
shadow of radical social and religious reconstruction. Whether conscious

or otherwise these were to be the constituents of his own life, where he made himself over in religious thought and outlook, away from his roots, but never far from their influence.

Woodward’s memories of his childhood in Saham Toney, however, are of small things remembered, of Whalebelly’s mill near his house whose sails turned with a rhythmic roar of air and creak of cogs. The neighbours had their flour ground by Whalebelly (with the inevitable name of Jonah) and each housewife baked the unrefined coarse flour into loaves. Old Norfolk dialect “still prevailed in our village”, Woodward recalled, and pronunciation made understanding awkward. Woodward tells of his father when first appointed curate, attending the village school. The children were lined up and his father asked one little girl, “What is your name?”

“Mary Ann Waab...y.”
“Speak up child.”
“Mary Ann Waab...y.”
“What does she say?”
Another little girl [obviously trying to articulate ‘correctly’ and not drop her ‘h-es’]: “Please, sir, she say ‘Mary Hann Whalebelly’”

The tale says much of the shy embarrassment of essentially peasant children confronted with substantial figures of Church and authority, and the embarrassment of their parochial speech. Woodward grew up with the odd inflection and vocabulary of Norfolk dialect and remembered asking “Wade, the ancient gardener, who used to scythe the grass on our

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29 Woodward “I remember Whalebelly’s Mill......”. p 369. I have modified this a little to make the nineteenth century humour more obvious.
lawn”, for an explanation for a heap of broken snail shells on the path and received the reply, “‘Tsowt but a mavis a-knappin’ a dodman” (‘Tis nought but a thrush cracking a snail). These were the sort of figures that surrounded the childhood of middle class Victorian children - a cook, gardener and nurse or nanny. In one way they were odd formative influences. For middle class Victorian families, the principal formative personalities were decidedly working class, even if themselves, earnestly ‘respectable’. They were links too, to peasant beliefs and superstition.

Woodward recalled his nurse Eleanor Hinds saying to him in later years, with affection, that he was an even child that “niver shruck [cried] nor wailed” but he also remembered her impressing on him tales (still today part of local folklore) of the “Wailing Wood” of Peddars Way that ran past the village, where the ghosts of two robbers who murdered innocent Babes in the Wood, were supposed to reside. And other superstitions, like belief in witchcraft and the efficacy of spells, were always at hand.

Woodward recalled the row of almshouses (still extant) for old pauper women of the district, and his father ministering to them as part of his duties as curate. His father would tell a story of one old lady, a Maria Thurstan, complaining of a neighbour troubling her with bewitchment for, “No sooner do I put the kittle on the fire than there come - bang! And all the smook an’ soot come down the chimbley. Now they do say that if yer can git some dragon’s blood and spread it on the throsher (threshold) that’ll cure ’em.” His father, to humour her, attended the chemist in

Woodward “.. Whalebelly’s Mill.....”p 370.

Woodward “.. Whalebelly’s Mill.....”p 371. The story probably derived from a mix of fact and the undeniable gift for storytellers - seagulls would nest in the Saham mere and their mournful cries were heard in the village requiring explanation.
Watton who concocted a red coloured brew. He presented it to the old woman who accepted it gratefully and applied it assiduously with gratifying results.

It would be demanding too much of the evidence to suggest that Woodward’s later acceptance of occult belief drew upon his childhood experience, nevertheless he grew up in a world that, despite its rationalist certainty, accorded good humoured respect to the beliefs and superstitions of local people. Saham Toney was a place, like most sites of early childhood, of great intensity and power, if not occult, then certainly psychological.

One such figure of archetypal power in Woodward’s early life was his godfather, an elderly parson, who Woodward frequently referred to as the link he had to the previous century, a way, in a sense, he was able to span three centuries and three eras; a figure, in other words, of monumental dimension. Born in 1789, just after the French Revolution, Woodward’s godfather, the Rev. Bartholomew Edwards, Rector of Ashill village, two miles from Saham Toney, was an awesome figure of antiquity to the young Woodward. He would arrive at Woodward’s house in an “ancient ‘barouche’ with coachman and footman, with arms folded, both in livery on the box, and Thomas, the butler, tophatted in the ‘rumble’ or dickey”, 32 which must have been an impressive entrance.

As a young boy his godfather, “who was a bit testy because I was not given his name”, would teach him Latin and “box my ears with my Latin

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grammar" when hearing his lesson. It is significant, given his pedagogic upbringing, that Woodward went on to achieve well in Latin and received prizes both at school and university in the subject. His godfather was obviously a stern and awesome presence, that stamps a substantial figure of conforming authority on Woodward’s world as a child. He remembered, as a child of four, sitting in the ‘parson’s pew’, just inside the screen and near the lectern, and listening to the old man, then 85, reading the lesson from Job. He came to the bottom of the page, reading, “And Job answered and said.....”, and then turned over several pages that had stuck together. Finding they made no sense - flipping pages back and forth without success - he exclaimed aloud in annoyance, “What does the fellow say!?" and slammed the book shut with a loud, “Here endeth the lesson!”

This curmudgeonly character, prone to impatience and irascibility, is echoed in his father. Woodward told the story of his father at a Christening asking, “Name this child” and the mother, of simple labouring stock, responding shyly, “Lucy, Sir”.

His father, who was hard of hearing, was shocked at what he thought he heard and said loudly. “Lucifer! Lucifer! What sort of name is that for a child! ‘John’, I baptise thee.”

“Please Sir,” replied the puzzled mother, “it’s a wench.”

“Well then, I baptise thee, ‘Mary’.”

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33 Woodward “I Remember Whalebelly’s Mill........” p370
34 This version of the story is told by Leila Brady, from her recollection of Woodward’s version, but Woodward gives a different version in an article in the East Anglian Magazine. It was obviously too good a story to remain unembellished. The East Anglian Magazine version has the mother offer the name “lo” (a local Norfolk version of John).
The story illustrates the position of power occupied by the parson, who without thought, disregards the (mis-heard) wishes of the mother. It is Victorian patriarchy and arrogance rampant, heedless of the sensitivity and needs of others. Woodward’s memories are tempered by softer images; of travelling with his father in the slow moving train (the line now abandoned, but still able to be followed) and the train stopping so passengers and enginemen could gather nuts in the woods along the track. Or once when he lost his cap, blown from his head that had been thrust out the window of the carriage, his father instructing the guard to stop so they could amble back along the track to retrieve it.

Though he recalls his time in Kessingland (from 1876-1878) as a satisfying period in his young life and wrote of it later as a time when he “delighted in the sea” and spent his time “in drawing, painting and music”, Woodward seems to dwell on his critically formative years at Saham Toney. Kessingland was a modest ‘living’, the parishioners being principally fishermen, working their boats along the grey and somewhat uninteresting, Norfolk coast line, and dragging them up the beaches against the tide that recedes, it seems, almost to Holland. Even today there is little to merit the village; the Church is less substantial than Saham Toney, the countryside is drab and the village small. It was not a prime ‘living’ like Lowestoft, the substantial port a few miles up the coast, and while the Rev. William was to send his son to the highly

"‘What did she say?’ asked my father. ‘Please, sir, she say Hiho’. My father hastily: ‘My good woman, it’s the name of a heathen deity.....John I baptise thee. But then the mother spoke up: ‘Please, sir, its a wench.’ " [p372]

Frankly I do not grasp the humour of this, and there are frequent examples of 19th C humour that simply elude me and many others as well!

35Mahinda College Magazine April 1919.
regarded 'Bluecoat School', Christ's Hospital, then in heart of London, part of the reason rested on finance.

**Schooling at Christ's Hospital.**
The habit of the English in the nineteenth century, and to this day, of sending their children, at the tender age of eight, to a boarding school for ten or so years of disconnected upbringing and detached relating, remains one of the great cultural mysteries. This “spawn 'em and spurn 'em” approach was simply the norm and excited little comment, but finding a suitable depository did present real difficulties. Christ's Hospital, an ancient institution of repute that sported such alumni as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb and William Farrar (the inventor, in Australia, of rust free wheat) was, in fact, for the poor children of small business folk, stationmasters, ministers, ex-naval personnel and the 'genteel' poor.36 The Petition for entry was to the “charity to Widows, Orphans and Families who stand in need of Relief [to be] Educated and Maintained among the other poor Children.”37 It had been established as a refuge for the poor at the time of the Reformation and was originally granted a charter by Henry VIII and Edward VI.38

Woodward was sponsored by The Hon. Rt. Rev. JT Pelham, Lord Bishop of Norwich, one of the Presenting Governors of Christ's Hospital, who had the right to sponsor a number of children each year.39 He was, of course, the Rev. Woodward's superior, the person who had given him the 'living' of Kessingland, and a very useful connection, for there were no

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36 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12818/18 Children's Register 1873-90. From an examination of the records, these are recurring occupations of the parents of children at the time. The designation as 'poor' though did not attract the deep shame it later acquired.
37 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations.
38 Pearce, EH Annals of Christ's Hospital (London: Menthuen, 1901)
school fees at that time at Christ's Hospital. Woodward was admitted on 15 March 1878 on the Petition of his father, Presented to the Governor's of Christ's Hospital. The Petition reveals much of the family's circumstances.

The estate of the Rev. Woodward, when he died in 1912, was a modest but not inconsiderable amount for the time, so it is difficult to tell whether he was writing his case, for the entry of his son in 1878, to fit the criteria requiring a plea of poverty, or whether his circumstances were genuinely more straitened at the time. The picture, though, that emerges from his Petition is almost Victorian-heroic: he had a "delicate wife" and eight children to support, as well as an aged and infirm relative and invalid sister. Out of a 'living' put down at £420pa, which "is yearly of less take owing to the sea making encroachment on the land", he had to pay the pension of the previous Rector of £140pa, as well as rates and taxes of about £107. This left an income of about £327 made up of his 'living' of £273 as well as this wife's income of £20pa and interest from property of £57, a modest income for a 'gentleman' of the time.

While the Rev. Woodward's tale of penury seems to have secured his son's position, FL Woodward did not commence immediately because, on two occasions, ill health prevented his taking the school's entrance examination. His father wrote to the school with genuine concern that his son, and others in the family, had whooping cough. The illness was prolonged, and resulted in a secondary illness, hard cysts developing

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39 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations.
40 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations.
41 Certainly the coast is subject to erosion but why this would impact on the living is not clear.
42 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations.
under FL Woodward's jaw, which required lancing and removal, leaving a permanent scar. A lengthy period of recuperation ensued and the Rev. Woodward wrote again that the boy was still under treatment but "does not cough now and goes out in the air and does his lessons at home as usual."44

This was obviously a continuing frailty because Woodward's father takes particular care to note on the school's health questionnaire, that, "If he takes cold, he suffers from a sort of croup which generally attacks him in the night", which sounds like a distressing childhood asthma. This attention to issues of health was no idle matter - perusing the archives of the school at that time presents a number of occasions when children died at the school from various illnesses that, today, would not be necessarily life threatening.46

Until FL Woodward went to school he had been tutored at home mainly by his father and godfather. The pride the Rev. Woodward obviously felt for his son is readily discernible in his correspondence with the school and is unusually disclosing for the time. When queried as to whether his son had sufficient elementary education to pass the entrance examination, the Rev. Woodward is emphatic- "quite so- he is advanced for his age- especially in Latin"47 The strong bond between Woodward and his father was no doubt intensified by continued early tutoring and strengthened too, by the ready accomplishment and fulfilment of expectations by the

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43 Gunewardene p3.
44 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations.
45 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations.
46 Archives Christ's Hospital, Horsham: Archivist David Young.
47 Christ's Hospital Records Guildhall London: Ms 12,818A/145 Presentations. Note on questionnaire 15 September 1879- Rev. Woodward's emphasis.
younger Woodward. The background of illness, the ever present spectre of mortality, no doubt also strengthened the bond between father and son.

This appears a formative relationship that seems in no way overshadowed by his mother, whose “delicate” condition seems to have confined her to the shadows of the family and a stereotypically Victorian role as a remote ‘saintly’ companion. The special nature of the relationship with Woodward’s father is also evidenced by the fact that he left FL Woodward his gold watch and chain in his Will - the only particular object left to any of his sons.48 While the watch today is ubiquitous, then, a fine gold fob watch was a valuable heirloom of some sentimental significance, and an indication of the high regard by the legator of the legatee.

While FL Woodward was admitted on 15 March 1878, because of ill health, he was not “clothed” until 17 September, 1879. This particularly archaic tradition remains to this day where the boys assume the distinctive garb of Christ’s Hospital, a long blue coat, yellow ‘kersey’ or smock and yellow stockings to the knee. Woodward’s scholastic success was immediate and he won the Latin and English prizes in his first term at school and continued a proficiency that led, in his fourth and fifth years, to further English and Latin prizes. In his “last year in school (1889) [he] won a School Exhibition, a gold medal and prize for Latin hexameter verse”.49

Woodward though, did not show the same interest in sport in his early years, partly as a result of previous illness and partly, Woodward

49 Gunewardene p3.
suggests, from "lack of proper nourishment" at the school.\textsuperscript{50} His opinion seems well founded: breakfast consisted of bread and dripping, and milk; lunch, a joint of meat, potatoes and a small piece of bread; and evening supper at 6pm consisted of bread and milk, or bread and cheese, and small beer,\textsuperscript{51} hardly a recommendation for English cooking, or adequate nutrition. This was a not untypical Public School of the day: wards of 40-45 boys, a ‘settle’ (iron box) at the end of their bed for private possessions, and the whole overseen by Dames and Nurses, with a Beadle to enforce discipline, all recognisably Dickensian.

Games in the school at that time were organised by the boys themselves, and football, ‘Hall-Play’, was played on a gravel and asphalt pitch, making it hazardous indeed. Woodward discovered, however, at fourteen that he had some athletic ability and by his last years at Christ’s Hospital he began to be mentioned in the school paper, \textit{The Blue}, for his athletic contribution in Rugby and soccer - a somewhat heated issue in the school at the time as to which code to favour - and in cricket, rowing, chess and athletics.

He even began by 1888 to get some muted attention for his prowess in football where, obviously because of his size (about 5'10"-6'), he played front row forward in the First Fifteen (senior team)\textsuperscript{52} and in April 1889 he received a football ‘cap’ for his efforts.\textsuperscript{53} In athletics in the same year Woodward gained a 2\textsuperscript{nd} in the High Jump; 3\textsuperscript{rd} in the 440yd; 2\textsuperscript{nd} in the class 1, 120yd Hurdle; 2\textsuperscript{nd} in the Long Jump; 1\textsuperscript{st} in throwing the cricket

\textsuperscript{50} Gunewardene p3.
\textsuperscript{51} Hamilton, \textit{H The Christ’s Hospital Book} (London: 1953) p205-6. Small beer was a low alcohol brew.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{The Blue} Vol. XVII No. 2 November 1888 p37 & No. 3 December 1888 p64.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{The Blue} Vol. XVII No. 6 April 1889 p132.
ball (67yd) - which was dismissed as “very poor” compared with the Public School record of over 106yd - and 1st in putting the weight (28'6") - which at least was described as “very fair but Woodward could probably have added another foot”.

He also appears in the Rowing Club’s Class I “Fours” in the position of stroke and weighing in at 10'7 lb. 54

The Rev. Woodward’s ambition for his son was considerable and assumed emulation of his own path through university and into the ministry and Holy Orders, a common Victorian paternal expectation. He met the first of these expectations by becoming a “Grecian” at the school, a term Gunewardene seems to mistake as the singular ‘head boy’, 55 whereas, in fact, the term referred to those senior boys in the school preparing for university entry. The position was nonetheless regarded with some awe within the school community as “quite a class apart; very superior persons indeed”. They even assumed a special gait known as ‘spadging’; “a longish stride with a drop of the whole body in the middle of the pace. The graciousness of their movements was much enhanced by the voluminous swaying of their coats”, 56 which were longer than underclassmen.

The privileges of “Grecians” were substantial; they had their own study and a private ‘nook’ or HQ in the Head’s house, they ate together apart from underclassmen, and had better food and better beer. There was a particular esprit and code of behaviour that went with the office; they were looked upon “as a kind of god [but] they were never aggressive

54 The Blue Vol. XVII No. 7 June 1889 p162-4.
55 Gunewardene p4.
towards us, the lower fry”57, and did not engage in the bullying or 'brassing' of lower classmen.

In essence they were part of an elite 'brotherhood’ with their distinctive badges of dress, gait and cant that held them together and separated them from other mere mortals - no different, in fact, from the present day symbols of southern Californian youth culture. The nature of egalitarian 'brotherhoods’, however is their contrast with patriarchal hierarchy, separated from the power of the fathers who, as the myths of Uranus, Cronus and Zeus portend,58 are as castrating in their demands as the mothers men prefer to blame, for the myth of the sons’ rebellion against the fathers is a “supra-historical archetype; eternally recurrent; a myth; an old, old story.”59

Despite the elevated and valorised position of Grecians in the school community, with all the allusion to classic antiquity, the years 1888-1889 were, for Woodward, a period of great mental "distress".60 He was 18-19 years old at the time and was reading widely, questioning and engaging in intense reflection and discussion with his fellows. Inevitably, given the forces then at work, the issues would have involved questions of religion, ones that would have gone to the heart of the relationship with, and authority of, Woodward’s father. It was unquestionably a period of profound adolescent doubt and melancholy, an intense period which Woodward also recognised as generating, in that melancholic intensity, a painful pleasure as well as despair - “the essence and charm of that

56 Hamilton The Christ's Hospital Book p 234.
57 Hamilton The Christ's Hospital Book p 235.
unquiet and delightful epoch [of adolescence] is ignorance of self as well as ignorance of life.”

Undoubtedly sexual tension formed part of that despair, exaggerated by the then not uncommon ‘ignorance of life’, but it was principally subsumed and sublimated beneath an intense personal introspection and doubt of personal worth and purpose. It was obviously a period of substantial disjunction and disconnection from his milieu - some of the signs of classic depression - which left him in a meaningless and purposeless world, a “square peg in a round hole”, as he put it.

It would be dismissive, however to simply characterise this as ‘depression’, for it presents more as a melancholy than a melancholia. Further, the experience was tied to personal definition and necessary individuation - a separation from the demands of the father and the establishment of his own direction and vocation. Woodward clearly saw the experience in positive, even noble terms, echoing the grandiosity that often accompanies such experiences, and saw it as common among those who ‘think and reason’ - “it is just a token that one has evolved beyond the rank and file of humanity”. Being a narcissistic bi-polar experience it is one that exhibits opposite extremes, from profound worthlessness to the grandiosity of a ‘special’ favour bestowed on those who experience it.

It was clearly a defining experience in Woodward’s life that left him with a deep sympathy and empathy for young people entrapped by similar experiences. He saw it as a defining moment that established a personal

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60 Gunewardene p4.
‘self’ capable of engaging the world profitably and with authenticity. But in order, as Brown says, “To make in ourselves a new consciousness” one must become conscious of symbolism, for,

Symbolism is the mind making connections...rather than distinctions (separations). Symbolism makes conscious interconnections and unions that are unconscious and repressed. Freud says, symbolism is on the track of a former identity, a lost unity: the lost continent Atlantis, underneath the sea of life in which we live enisled. 63

While Woodward’s ‘dark night of the soul’, was principally about isolation, disconnection and distinction, the business of remaking consciousness and its symbolic forms may require a longer gestation, and takes more than, as Woodward suggests, the simple establishment of a new interest, vocation or enthusiasm. In many respects Woodward’s period of “distress” assumes the shape of what Ellenberger has described, appropriately, as a “creative illness”, 64 an experience characterised by profound isolation, self absorption and distress, out of which arises a transforming certainty of a particular insight or truth. This certainty of belief tends to persist throughout the remainder of life as does the tendency to remain an isolate, which is certainly true of Woodward.

‘Creative illness’ has characterised the development of a considerable number of recognised figures like Freud, Jung, Jesus and the Buddha, 65 but as Storr points out, it has also afflicted some considerably less illustrious figures, including many modern day gurus and charismatic

63 Brown, NO. Love’s Body p82. The reference is to Freud’s “Interpretation of Dreams”
64 Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious p447-8.
65 Freud experienced profound depression out of which arose some of his most seminal work as did Jung, though his was almost a psychotic episode. For Jesus the Temptation in the desert, and for the Buddha, the realisation of illness, decay and death, preceded their mission in the world.
assemblers of sects, whose certainty borders on the bizarre. Then again there are those of that experience who are of simple goodness, who seek no disciples and who, ‘...by their fruits shall ye know them,’ 66 for ‘Genuine virtue is usually unobtrusive’.67

The occurrence of such transformational ‘creative illnesses’, where a “new insight strikes like a thunderbolt”, tends to be in the early thirties or forties, though sometimes “the revelatory answer comes gradually”.68 Woodward’s experience was obviously much earlier, involving issues peculiar to adolescence, and certainly not precipitating psychosis or messianic tendencies. Nevertheless it is significant that Woodward eventually began his ‘vocation’ in Ceylon at the age of 32, at the age that seems to mark for many of that experience, the beginning of a ‘mission’. For Woodward, it would seem the journey from illness to certainty was somewhat lengthy and the period from late adolescence to his early thirties should be seen in him as a nurturing apprenticeship of thoughts and ideas that were later to take more concrete shape.

In this journey, it is interesting to note that the metaphor Brown suggests - exploring the tracks of a ‘former identity’ - became for Woodward, in his belief in rebirth and former lives, a very concrete version of that metaphor, emanating from his Theosophy and Buddhism, which, ironically, included belief in a literal Atlantis. This is frequently the manner in which deeply felt symbolism and metaphors are reified and assume concrete form in ‘real’ life, like a pun or play on words made literal and lived out.

66 Mathew 7:20.
67 Storr, A. Feet of Clay pxii.
Woodward's educational and sporting achievements were modest, and well short of the 'brilliant' academic accomplishment often implied of Woodward among his old pupils from Ceylon. In the Speech Day of 1889, Woodward plays no recognised part, yet this was the time when the elite of the Grecians delivered orations in Latin, Greek and English and were given the undivided attention of the whole school. In the Oxford and Cambridge Examination Board results of that year, Woodward only secured a pass and gained no distinction. This is no diminution of Woodward's abilities; brilliant academic attainment does not necessarily imply imagination or an interesting character, in fact they are often counterindicated. Woodward emerges, however, as a person of intelligence who had to dedicate himself to the task of attainment and did not expect success without effort.

In sport in his final year, though, Woodward was increasingly mentioned in a hearty, congratulatory way, which indicates, not only greater participation, but acceptance and inclusion. At Hertford, on 19 November 1889, the Rugby First Fifteen played a staunch game and though "our forwards were considerably lighter...[they]..were seldom overpowered, thanks especially to the energetic play of Woodward." And against Godolphin School at Herne Hill, on 23 November 1889, "our opponents kicked off and shortly afterwards Woodward made a good catch in front

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68 Storr Feet of Clay pxiv.
69The Blue Vol. XVIII No. 1. 1889.
70The Blue Vol. XVIII No. 2. November 1889, p15.
71The Blue Vol. XVIII No. 3 December 1889, p64.
of goal from which the kick by Turner was successful." Stirring stuff indeed.

Cambridge: Sidney Sussex College.
From Christ's Hospital, Woodward tried first, unsuccessfully, to gain entry to Oxford, where an older brother was at Balliol. A year later, however, at nineteen, he gained a £40pa Foundation Scholarship to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, one of the smaller and lesser known colleges, which tided him financially from 1890 to 1892. In 1892 and 1893 he was awarded a £45pa Lovett Exhibition, intended for sons of graduate clergymen intending to take Holy Orders, which probably indicates Woodward's intentions at this stage of his life.

Woodward took up residence at Sidney Sussex in October 1890, in rooms, according to tradition, next to those that once housed Cromwell, though it would seem, according to the College archivist, that if all the rooms that were supposed to have been inhabited by Cromwell were put together it would constitute a modest hotel. The College at that time was quite small, only 58 students in 1890, and was known as a 'reading' (academic) college as distinct from those of a sporting inclination.

It also had suffered a reputation in the previous decade as a college known for the eccentricities of some of its Fellows - inclined to pranks like serving dinner guests with a roast leg of donkey - but Woodward plunged into the camaraderie of College life, joining the rowing and

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72 The Blue Vol XVIII No. 3 December 1889, p 65.
73 Personal Correspondence with Nicholas Rogers, Archivist, Sidney Sussex College 17 July 1992.
74 Gunewardene p 5.
75 Conversation with Nicholas Rogers, Archivist, Sidney Sussex College May 1997.
77 Scott-Giles CW Sidney Sussex College p103.
Rugby with enthusiasm, despite the paucity of 'men' to swell the numbers. His rowing efforts were not blessed with much success, though he was obviously a key participant, even coaching the Sidney eights in 1891. 78 Given his weight, which ranged from 10½ to 11½ stone (65-75kg) during his stay at university, he assumed the number five or six position, where the strongest rowers are placed in the eights, and though the team improved over his time at Sidney he was never selected for the Oxford Cambridge race. 79

In athletics too, Woodward was "doing wonders at weight-putting" 80 (shot-put) and was made captain of the Sidney Rugby team in 1893. 81 He also participated in the debating at College 82 as well as maintaining a sound academic record, winning the first year Classics Prize in 1891 83 and the College Prize for Latin Essay. 84 His musical talents were also recruited for the post of Chapel Organist 85 though this does not necessarily signify outstanding accomplishment as the chapel organ at that time was notoriously inadequate, and used mainly to accompany hymns. Woodward put this purpose to good use, however, and was known to appropriate Gilbert and Sullivan as his voluntary in chapel, parodying the

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78 The Blue Vol. XX No. 3 December 1891.
80 The Blue Vol. XIX No. 2 p44.
81 The Blue Vol. XX No. 8 July 1892 p167.
83 Cambridge University Calendar 1891, p749.
84 Gunewardene p5.
85 Venn, JA. Alumni Cantabrigienses part II, vol. VI (Cambridge: 1954)
Also personal correspondence with Nicholas Rogers, Archivist, Sidney Sussex College 17 July 1992.
tone of sacred music by playing themes from Gilbert and Sullivan at
funereal pace, a classic inclination of organ humorists.

Woodward obviously retained affection for his time at university, and in
later life even obtained an 4\textsuperscript{th}-x-3\textsuperscript{rd} aerial photograph of Cambridge to
dissect the changes that had occurred: "I can’t make out how they lodge
and feed 6000 men at Oxford and Cambridge." The atmosphere was
certainly more personal in his day and full of the usual undergraduate
pranks. He recalled when Gladstone stayed with the Master of Selwyn, a
number of students wrote to every barber in Cambridge, requesting they
attend at 8:00am the next day to have the honour of shaving the Rt. Hon.
W Gladstone: "At the appointed hour every hansom cab in Cambridge
drove up, each containing a barber fully armed.""9

Woodward in later years followed the issue of women’s advancement at
Cambridge with some fascination.

I congratulate you females on getting another Professor at
Cambridge- Perhaps we will see a female Vice-Chancellor stalking
down the streets- heralded by Girton and Newnham silver
pokerites- Well, Oxford has no female professors! But London has
[female] Professor of German...Greek...Geography...History...
Economics [2]... and Philosophy.... - Seven!!90

He brought to his discussion with IB Horner, Pali Text Society President,
an unusual historical perspective. He remembered that in the early days

\begin{footnotes}
\item[86] Heyward, N. \textit{A Buddhist Scholar-} notes on the life of F.L. Woodward Esq. and extracts from a
broadcast by the author over Tasmanian radio station 7ZR early in 1954. p4.
\item[87] Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 7 September 1949. (FOSL). In a earlier letter (20 June 1949) it
expanded to 4x5.
\item[88] Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 20 January 1950. IB Horner Collection (FOSL)
\item[89] Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 30 March 1944. (FOSL)
\item[90] Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 12 March 1945 IB Horner Collection (FOSL). Woodward
obviously keenly followed the issue and could name each of the female professors at London
University.
\end{footnotes}
of Newnham, where Horner was later appointed, women could only visit men’s rooms if “accompanied by some senior (dragon) of the College.” As for visits by men, even by the brother of a student, that was not permitted, for as Miss Clough, who Woodward described as “head ogress”, observed, “The brother of one is not the brother of all.” He remembered too, as a student, stopping to watch the “young things” scrabbling at hockey “in long skirts and viciously hitting each other over the shins. (such langwidge!)”

Despite the obvious enthusiasm for College life and academic accomplishment, when Woodward came to the finals of the Classic Tripos, he achieved only a lower second class honours degree. While in later years he facetiously remarked, “I thought that I might have got a First Class but was consoled by the thought that all really first class men take a second class”, it was an arguable defence for a surprisingly poor result. He seems to have decided not to enter the ministry, despite his Lovett scholarship for those entering Holy Orders, but whether his result was intended to subvert his father’s desire and intention for his future, remains speculation.

Constrained in his choice of career, teaching was probably one of the few options available, and certainly not one particularly valued at the time, though he claims he “always intended” entering the profession. While little evidence is available upon which to judge, his university results and

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91 Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 5 October 1942 (FOSL).
92 Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 27 January 1949 (FOSL). I assume Miss Clough was an early warden of the College.
93 The hierarchy of results ranged from Firsts, Upper Seconds, Lower Seconds, Thirds and fail, so his result equated a bare pass.
94 Gunewardene p5.
95 Gunewardene p6.
career choice were not an auspicious beginning. Teaching at that time - and until recently - was often a refuge for the less than competent, as well as a range of misfits and those marking time, who had few other options. There were many, too, who were genuinely dedicated and motivated, but where Woodward fitted among all these possibilities is difficult to say. Given the experience of his 'distress' at Christ's Hospital, a certain amount of indecision about purpose and direction may well have characterised his endeavours at that time, and spurred his questing and questioning, which, to a degree, teaching afforded him an opportunity to pursue. It was, as he observed, a "means of learning" as well as a "means of service".96

**Teaching.**

Woodward's first teaching post was as an Assistant Master at Overdale School, Rugby, a preparatory school, though he taught there for only a few months before taking up the position of classics master at the Royal Grammar School, Worcester, where he remained from 1894-96.97 Worcester was obviously congenial and Woodward entered the spirit of the community. He rowed the City Boat, "to victory at many a regatta"98, a somewhat greater success than at Sidney, and continued his interest in Rugby football, playing for Worcester and the Midlands Counties. Woodward maintained his fascination with rowing and even later in life he remained eager to offer his 'expertise' to the young, oblivious to the fact that techniques and equipment had vastly altered.99 But while he dedicated himself to school and sport, it was in the vacation period that

96 Cited in Gunewardene p6
97 Venn Alumni Cantabrigenses p574. Gunewardene incorrectly suggests the school was Rugby Preparatory.
98 Mahinda College Magazine April 1919.
Woodward renewed himself, escaping to ramble the countryside or cycling "in all directions, sketching, studying architecture".  

With the invention of the ‘safety’ cycle with pneumatic tyres and chain drives, it was a fashion in the 1890’s - before motor vehicles had criss-crossed the English countryside with macadamised ley lines - to cycle and tramp about the countryside recreating a lost and romantic rural England, which, if it ever existed, had been crushed by depression and the machinations of urban commerce. For Woodward, though, it was a recreation of childhood shades and colours, redolent odours and a comforting, encompassing isolation. It was a satisfaction with nature he retained all his life; whether in England, Ceylon or Tasmania; it was always to some rural interior that he retreated.

In 1897 Woodward left Worcester to teach at Crondall School, Farnham and then at Westgate-on-Sea in 1898, before taking up the position of Second Master (Vice-Principal) at Stamford School, Lincolnshire where he remained from 1898 to 1903. Stamford was an ancient school that had once been a significant centre of learning rivalling Oxford, but at the time of Woodward the school was quite small, five masters and never more than sixty students, that offered an individually attuned tuition that would be envied today.

99 Interview with Nigel Heyward.
100 Mahinda College Magazine April 1919.
102 Venn Alumni Cantabrigiense p574. Gunewardene p6. Gunewardene omits mention of Crondall and Westgate, neither of which seem to have been very large. Almost no recorded information is available on them, neither now being in existence.
It was a methodology that inevitably forged close relationships between pupils and masters, an aspect Woodward certainly valued and cultivated in the educational programme he initiated in Ceylon. One of the friendships initiated at Stamford that became one of lifelong importance for Woodward was the connection with EM Hare who later not only resided as a tea planter in Ceylon but also joined Woodward in his interest in Pali, translating a number of works for the Pali Text Society and collaborating with him in compiling the Pali Concordance. He was a pupil of Woodward’s, only ten when Woodward left for Ceylon in 1903, but it was to prove an enduring friendship and collaborative partnership.

The nature of the teaching programme at Stamford, and the principalship (1884-1906) of the Rev. Dr DJJ Barnard, seemed to have influenced Woodward’s educational style and later educational philosophy. Barnard was a “remote and stern figure” who, though strict, “was always kindly and helpful when approached.”104 His words from Speech Day 1887 could well have been those of Woodward, when he suggested that students “came to the school not to be crammed...but to learn how to learn”.105 Students were encouraged to work on their own, to cultivate self discipline and self reliance, an aspect recognisable in Woodward’s own style.

Barnard also regarded Classics as an important vehicle of learning; Classics and mathematics, he remarked at the 1892 Speech Day, “do sharpen the intellect...do train the mind...do exercise the brain so that it may turn to any subject that it will, and they should not be assailed simply

104 Deed A History of Stamford School p66.
105 Deed A History of Stamford School p62.
because they are of no actual use in counting house or office."\textsuperscript{106}

Relevance, as Woodward later emphasised, was not as important as intellectual flexibility, which, he felt, Classics provided adequately. Barnard’s influence is detectable in Woodward, and though his views were not unique at the time, they certainly represented, then, an odd mix of traditional and ‘progressive’, not unlike the manner in which Woodward was to present. While probably anathema to present day educationalists, these ‘old fashioned’ views retained a commitment to the mental discipline necessary for intellectual success.

\textbf{Philosophic Preoccupation.}

While developing his educational views in this period, Woodward also pursued a private exploration of philosophical values, a continuation of the questing and questioning that characterised his outlook and behaviour from his time at Christ’s Hospital. Central to his thoughts at that time were the works of the Stoics and particularly, the \textit{Meditations} of the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius (CE 121-180). Again, this was part of fashionable reading at that time where every good publisher’s catalogue provided an elegant series of miniature classics, and there were “very few of these in which the \textit{Meditations} failed to make an appearance.”\textsuperscript{107}

While Zeno’s Stoic philosophy advocated the creed of Materialism, Monism and Mutation,\textsuperscript{108} in its Roman form, its emphasis was on the moral aspects of Zeno’s teaching, which defined philosophy as ‘striving after wisdom’, and stressed rational, temperate behaviour, “just and

\textsuperscript{106}Deed \textit{A History of Stamford School} p65.

virtuous dealings, self discipline, unflinching fortitude, and complete freedom from the storms of passion". The aphorisms of the *Meditations* encapsulated these aspects and echoed the restrained, repressed preoccupation of Victorians with manliness and sound moral discipline.

This moral rectitude and self improvement through the acquisition of wisdom was a continuing feature of Woodward’s thought. Even the eventual motto Woodward chose for Mahinda College, Galle, in Ceylon—“Khippam Vayama, pandito bhava” (Strive earnestly, become wise) though taken from the *Dhammapada*, owes as much to the *Meditations* as it does to Buddhist thought. Stoicism was very much a pantheist belief, with God immanent in all things, and its affection in the hearts of Victorians indicated the estrangement from traditional belief that was so much, too, a part of Woodward’s struggle with faith.

Woodward’s admiration of Marcus Aurelius was immense, in his later Theosophical beliefs even regarding him as a *Bodhisattva*. Marie Byles said of Woodward that he liked “to think of Marcus Aurelius as the third Buddhist Emperor”. In his view, “Nothing is so grand in all literature as the great Stoic Emperor, faultless and lonely, in his great position.” It is a characterisation wherein Woodward himself is detectable. He saw

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108 The view that everything, including thought and time had material substance, that everything ultimately reduced to a single unifying principle (monism), and that everything was perpetually altering into something different (mutation).

109 Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* p10.

110 Bodhisattva: a compassionate and enlightened being; one who refuses entry into Nirvana in order to assist all sentient beings.[principally a Mahayana Buddhist emphasis]

111 Byles, M. “Marcus Aurelius and the Misunderstood Stoics” *Vedanta and the West* July-August 1951, p109. Mitchell Library- Marie Byles Collection ML-MSS 3833-10(13). The first Buddhist emperor was Asoka of India, the second, in Woodward’s view, was Shotoku, who brought Buddhism to Japan.
Stoicism as the faith "for those that suffer" and "when I was years in the dark, before I got out, I found my greatest comfort, in these deep thoughts" of the Meditations. The allusion to his continuing 'suffering' and 'distress' during this period is indicative of the fact that his angst was not swept away after the 'distress' of Christ's Hospital, and that his questing continued.

A further amplification of this preoccupation is also able to be found in Woodward's affection for Tennyson's In Memoriam, a work that remained his constant companion and which he knew by heart. He always made his pupils read the poem and regarded it as the "chief literary work of the century and the deepest philosophy". While interest in Tennyson's archetypical Victorian verse waned in the early twentieth century, a resurgence of attention has led to some 'revisionist' views particularly of In Memoriam. Written after the death of Tennyson's dearest friend Hallam, attempts have been made to place a homoerotic construction on the work but as Kolb suggests bluntly, "The idea of anything approaching physical involvement is absurd", a view Rosenberg supports. The work was definitely pre-Wildean, written at a time of accepted 'romantic friendship' and unselfconscious affection between men.

112 Cited in Gunewardene p7.
113 Cited in Gunewardene p78.
114 Http:///www.flinders.edu.au/topics/Morton/Victorians/Tennyson _InMem_discussion.htm
116 See Hyam R Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991.) The present day homoerotic preoccupation, which intrudes into any discussion of masculinity, requires constant clarification, unfortunately.
*In Memoriam* is principally a poem of grief, religious doubt and despair that strikes at the heart of the Victorian crisis of faith. It was written when Charles Lyall’s *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) presaged the overthrow of anthropocentric views of nature, later confirmed by Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. An elegy of doubt and suffering loneliness, the poem struggles for resolution, faith and purpose, for hope and comfort. Interestingly, it also toys with the term ‘type’, in the sense both of the biological evolution of species, and, Christian typology, the popular Victorian theological view that Old Testament laws, events, and people divinely prefigured the appearance of Christ^117^ - a form of deciphering and decoding the Biblical subtext to reveal confirmation of Messianic arrival.

The poem confirms the spiritual anguish Woodward suffered in his youth and early manhood, and the issues of doubt and faith that characterised that angst. It also anticipates the Theosophical preoccupation with the presumed aeons of evolving ‘root races’^118^ towards an idealised ‘type’, a reflection of the hierarchical arrangement of races based on assumed levels of ‘civilisation’ that prevailed in Victorian and imperial thinking. And it presages too, Woodward’s later fascination with Baconianism^119^ and decoding textual ciphers and codes. Far from oddities, both racism by hierarchical superiority and biblical typology were aspects of conventional Victorian thinking, and theological typology, in particular, would have been more than familiar to Woodward.

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^119^ The belief Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare and others.
While care should be taken in attributing the term ‘racist’ to nineteenth century behaviour, since it was largely unconscious and culturally assumed, it nonetheless pervaded Theosophical doctrine and particularly the theory of ‘root races’, despite the Society’s universalism and avowed support of Indian and Ceylonese self determination. Leadbeater’s *Lives of Alcyone* illustrates this tendency but his own behaviour said far more. During the Society’s turmoil in Sydney, Leadbeater took refuge in the home of TS member Gustav Kölleström, a Swedish immigrant. Leadbeater once put his hand firmly on the shoulder of Gustav Kölleström, and said in all oratorical seriousness, “Kolleström, some day you may have the good fortune to be born in another life as an Englishman”, which for the intensely Tory Leadbeater was the acme of races and an obvious compliment.

Woodward tended towards the Victorian values of austerity and restraint, which were reflected in his regard for Plato which he read and re-read in the original Greek. It was certainly from Plato that he derived his elitist attitudes, and confirmed his adherence to austerity and the denial of physical comfort and bodily indulgence “in order to give the ego an easier passage out”, presumably, in order to rise to a higher ‘plane’ of existence.

As he was to write to a Sinhala student many years later,

120 *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p1497. The term ‘racialism’ did not appear in general parlance until the 1907. The appearance of neologisms generally arise from the conscious need to satisfy the expression of a conceptual apprehension, so one can generally assume that when general consciousness of an issue reaches a ‘critical mass’ vocabulary will arise to satisfy the need to express it, much as Huxley’s coinage of ‘agnostic’ arose to meet the perceived need for an intermediate term between deist and atheist.

121 Oscar Kollestrom, Gustav’s son and then a young boy, was implicated in the sexual scandal surrounding Leadbeater in the period 1916-1922. Gustav later was ordained in Leadbeater’s Liberal Catholic Church, a Theosophical sub sect.

Those that suffer from loneliness and poverty are really the happiest [as] it means that the Higher Self has undertaken this sorrow as a course of training. There is always an emergence into light if you only endure.123

This Calvinist inclination, which became so over emphasised in Victorian attitudes that it became a focus of parody and ridicule, is easy to dismiss in an age obsessed with self indulgence, but in Woodward’s enactment it was never unctuous piety but always tempered with moderation and humour.

Plato also introduced Woodward to one other view which he recognised as familiar and immediately self evident, the ideas of rebirth and metempsychosis. This was a crucial apprehension that led Woodward naturally into Theosophy and thence Buddhism. Stamford was an active centre of Theosophy in the late 1890’s and he eventually joined the Society in 1901,124 a decision that had a liberating effect on Woodward, one he described as the most important of his life, a ‘Saul to Damascus’ experience, that opened him to a sense of arrival at a ‘truth’. He began to study the then orientalist inclinations of the Theosophical Society, Hinduism and Buddhism, and found “At last ....satisfaction in the teachings of the Buddha”,125 though he never viewed it in anything other than a Theosophical manner, which differs significantly to orthodox Buddhism.

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122 Personal interview with Norna Kölleström Morton, sister of Oscar and daughter of Gustav Kölleström, May 1997. The story obviously both amused and appalled the family for its arrogance and quite unconscious racial superiority, delivered without any thought of offence.
124 Theosophical Year Book 1938 p223. Gunewardene states, p9 that Woodward joined the TS in 1902. It is not an immense discrepancy but I would tend to favour the accuracy of a TS publication.
125 Cited in Gunewardene, p10.
Woodward’s attraction to the idea of previous births found confirmation and elaboration in Theosophy. He believed he had previously been associated with members of this inspired brotherhood in other lives, preparing “the world by brotherhood for the coming of Maitreya[sic]”\textsuperscript{126} (the Buddha-to-Come). The work of the TS, he saw, was to prepare for the coming of the Maitreya by fulfilling the task of reconciling religious and political differences. Woodward regarded it as “the greatest privilege in the world to be having a share in this work. Not for 2000 years can such a change occur again” (presumably because of the particularly fortuitous planetary alignment and time in the particular \textit{kalpa} or aeon.) When Woodward wrote about the \textit{Metteyya} he wrote with a feeling and conviction otherwise absent from his writings, almost with a passion. His construction of the world inspired by \textit{Metteyya} was one based on “compassion for all” where people “seek the welfare of others, forgetting self.”\textsuperscript{127}

The new inspiration instilled in Woodward by his discovery of Theosophy led him to write to Col. Olcott, the then President of the Theosophical Society offering his services and “help in his great work.”\textsuperscript{128} Olcott had no hesitation in taking up Woodward’s offer, such was the need, even desperation, for people of ability to assist in the many educational and other projects of the TS. He wrote offering Woodward the principalship of Mahinda Buddhist College in Galle, Ceylon, and Woodward’s response was immediate.

\textsuperscript{126}Cited in Gunewardene, p10. Woodward here uses the Sanskrit term, which is spelled variously, not the Pali term \textit{Metteyya}, which use I will employ in preference for consistency.
\textsuperscript{128} Vitharana Ms p16-17.
Would I come at once? It was March 7, 1903. I considered the matter and replied by return mail that I would come. So I threw up my post at Stamford at half-term and left home on July 6th and arrived at Galle on August 1st.129

A Pattern of Response.
In attempting to decipher Woodward’s experience leading to his adoption of Theosophy and Buddhism, there is a dual context, cultural and personal. On the cultural level there was a reaction to nineteenth century Positivism and its erosion of religious certainty that unleashed a questing for alternative spiritual and mystical experience that was, as Chadwick has observed, quite particular to the period after 1880.130

On a personal level Woodward, the son of an adoring father inclined to invest his child with high expectations, struggled to define himself and release his own potentiality. This is in no way to suggest Woodward’s father, though obviously powerful, was other than a genuinely good person. It is simply to suggest that the awesome power of the father presents problems of activating individual creative authenticity in the son. This process involved not only a reaction to the father but to the father’s Father, a daunting task indeed. Woodward’s period of melancholy and ‘distress’ in his last years at Christ’s Hospital, with its affinity to ‘creative illness’ and arrival at apprehended certainty, seems to have persisted until his early thirties and his discovery of Theosophy and Buddhism that in turn defined a personal ‘mission’ and a burst of creative energy that was to have a significant effect on education and cultural formation in Ceylon.

129 Cited in Gunewardene p11.
130 Chadwick, O The Secularization of the European Mind p239.
A psychoanalytic interpretation, as proposed, is not a claim of 'truth' or definitive explanation, simply an attempt to provide a narrative that orders events in a manner that makes 'sense'. They remain tentative hypotheses which are inevitably incomplete, but such is true of any theory, scientific or otherwise, for as Henri Poincaré said bluntly, even scientific theories are "neither true nor false" but merely useful, by which I assume he meant they either order events into something comprehensible or not. And it remains a useful way of relating the personal to the cultural, of recognising that the personal is ultimately societal.

There is in Woodward's doubt and reaction to his father's world, in the way he came to stand in distinct contrast to his origins and influences, an aspect much like a 'reaction formation', though there is no necessary inference of neurotic dysfunction. The central aspect of 'reaction formation', as defined by Anna Freud, is that the mechanism of reactive behaviour is essentially unconscious. It may be in combination with behaviour which is formed in conscious reaction to aspects of upbringing, parental authority or trauma, but the core of the behavioural formation is nevertheless unconscious. How it presents, however, is often as an obverse of the elements that precipitate the reaction, behaviour or belief where the individual continues to move to the same 'music' but the 'words' are both different and distinctive; a form of what Jung termed "enantiodramia" or passing over into the opposite.

Prothero, in his definitive study of Woodward's mentor, Col. Steel Olcott, provides a different analogy to establish a very similar concept.

132 See Anna Freud The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence (London: Hogarth Press & the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1961, originally published 1939) This remains the definitive study of this area.
Borrowing from linguistics, he describes Olcott's Buddhism as a 'creolisation', where the 'lexicon', the outer form and 'vocabulary' of Olcott's new found faith, is Buddhist, but the inner form, the 'grammar' and 'syntax', are largely Protestant, and the 'accent' is decidedly Theosophical. He makes the observation that "individuals seem to be almost as insistent about clinging to the inherited grammatical form as they are comfortable with adopting new vocabularies". This vivid and useful analogy could equally apply to Woodward, and captures that aspect of 'reaction formation' wherein the individual seeks a new expression but retains, however deeply buried, the core source of the precipitating reaction - the way it carries simultaneously its old and new shape.

Olcott had origins too, in conforming Protestantism and found a creative freedom and liberality in the considerably greater heterodoxy of Theosophy. Commentators like Obeyesekere have difficulties with Prothero's analogy and its theoretical application in cultural studies generally. It may not always travel well - for example, when considering the Buddhism of Olcott's protégé Anagarika Dharmapala - but it remains a particularly useful analogy, in the sense Poincaré emphasises.

An interesting example of the kind of 'reaction formation' being proposed with respect to Woodward can be found in the figure of Henry Wallace, the unusual, radical vice-president to Roosevelt, and keen Theosophist. As Crews suggests, Wallace was "Freed by Theosophy from the

confining Presbyterian obsession with individual sin” and was thus able to act with both autonomy and authenticity, to unleash his “zest for good works without impediment”.135 Wallace’s biographers, White and Maze, suggest too, that paradoxically, without Theosophy, Wallace may not have emerged as such a practical activist: his esoteric beliefs liberated him from the paralysing constraints of his Presbyterian upbringing.136 The necessity, however, was that Wallace “surpass the non-conformist righteousness of his forebears ... by adopting a still more heterodox creed than theirs”137 Woodward’s father, too, harboured a religious non-conformity that possibly propelled FL Woodward towards the more heterodox creed of Theosophy. This non-conformity Woodward adopted with some relish, an aspect his later friend in Rowella, Tasmania, CB Brady, expressed with some frustration, when he suggested Woodward only seemed to believe in things no-one else believed.138

Crews, with Wallace, suggests a ‘reaction formation’ that stands in contrast with origins, but is achieved by extending the heterodoxy of origin into an even more heterodox area able to be creatively inhabited. This analysis rests well with any consideration of Woodward or Olcott, and with Prothero’s ‘creolisation’ analogy. In considering Yeats, however, the ‘reaction formation’ presents as a distinct contrast: Crews suggests Yeats was drawn towards magic and Theosophy by the intense rationalism of his father who argued persuasively against organised

135 Crews, F. “The Consolation of Theosophy” The New York Review of Books 19 September, 1996. p30. What is noteworthy, is that Crews is an implacable foe of psychoanalysis yet in effect employs the concept of ‘reaction formation’, unnamed and unacknowledged to develop his quite cogent thesis.
138 Personal interview with Leila Brady, CB Brady’s daughter.
religion. To this degree Yeats represents the widely sensed reaction to Positivism and scientific certainty experienced in the late nineteenth century. The importance of the occult and Theosophy to Yeats was in the establishment of “his autonomy, and Theosophy aims its lessons precisely at self development.” It is this appeal to self development that also accounts for the appeal of Buddhism in the West, where in contradistinction to the soteriological emphasis of Christianity, Buddhism places the responsibility for salvation on the individual.

There is in this soteriological emphasis an aspect of the ‘twice born’, of being ‘born again’, made over into more authentic existence, over which concept Christianity does not hold a registered patent. James’ metaphor of the ‘twice born’ also finds a concrete representation within Woodward’s philosophic ideas in his strong attraction to the Platonic and Buddhist belief in rebirth and metempsychosis which to him was immediately apprehended as familiar and inherently ‘right’. And so it should, for no feature of Christianity, particularly non-conformist and fundamentalist Christianity, is so soteriologically urgent as that one should be ‘born again’, another example of a ‘reaction formation’ where an obverse belief is substituted. This is further illustrated in Woodward’s attraction to belief in a Metteyya Buddha, the Buddha-to-Come. The similarity to evangelical Adventist beliefs of a Second Coming are

139Crews “The Consolation of Theosophy” p30. my emphasis.
140See James, W. Varieties of Religious Experience- a study in human nature (New York: Penguin, 1982)
141Woodward complained bitterly in a letter to IB Horner [Cambridge FOSL] about refusal by a Sri Lankan Buddhist publication New Lanka [see FN 127 above] to publish an article he had written on the Metteyya Buddha, putting it down to their Theravadin prejudice (against Mahayana ideas). In fact the article was later published
obvious and demonstrate the manner that ‘reaction formation’ mirrors its origins.

For Crews, the examples of Wallace and Yeats, suggest to him a core explanation for how “otherwise discerning people have subscribed to such preposterous ideas”\textsuperscript{143} - why it is that occult ideas about lost continents, interplanetary visitors, angelic hosts superintending the universe, are “countenanced or actively embraced by well educated and otherwise discriminating people”.\textsuperscript{144} While some alarm is expressed at this tendency, the explanation often resides in ‘reaction formation’ and the character formation necessary for individuals to function adequately, creatively, and with autonomy, and is thus not always, or entirely, negative.

Crews has raised an important issue, for despite an unprecedented level of secular education, which nineteenth century thinkers believed would eradicate superstition and irrational belief, such belief continues to attract considerable attention from the middle class and educated to this day. It seems, as the level of education, and proportion of society educated, increases, so too does the attraction to ‘irrational’ belief, in fact “it could be said America is the most ambitious alternative society ever”.\textsuperscript{145} Publicly available education, one of the grandest experiments in social engineering, has been successful in spreading secularist thought. It has

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\textsuperscript{143}Crews “The Consolation of Theosophy” p27. He is referring to some of the more peculiar Theosophical beliefs advanced by Blavatsky such as her suggestion the “Lord of the World” had dropped to earth from Venus.

\textsuperscript{144}Crews “The Consolation of Theosophy” p29.

left, though, a void, and since nature abhors a vacuum, it has been filled by marginal and niche belief which enjoys unprecedented attraction among 'educated and otherwise discriminating people'. The roots of this attraction lie in the nineteenth century and is illustrated in personalities like FL Woodward.
Finding the Familiar:—
Buddhism and Theosophy in Victorian England.

The attraction of Buddhism and Theosophy in the nineteenth century appears founded on aspects of cultural and personal reaction: on the cultural level, there was reaction to the sterility of secularism that shifted interest into its opposite; on the personal level, the reaction presented as an antithesis, or as an exaggeration, of core elements of origin, with retention of familiar aspects of the precipitating events, behaviour or beliefs. The nineteenth century exploration of religious alternatives, thus assumes, in its quest, a search for the familiar.

Said's notion of Orientalism suggests a similar pattern of encounter. The shape of Western identity was formed, not just in contradistinction to the oriental Other, but also by way of similarity. Those from the West who first travelled to the orient "searched for the similar"\(^1\) as much as they did for contrasts. They saw in the cities, artefacts and customs they encountered, things that were 'like' or the 'same as' things they knew back home, and used this comparison to make intelligible what they found. This pattern remained whether the encounter was with artefacts or ideas like Buddhism; it begins with similarity, or rather, familiarity.

Historical Links.
Thomas Rhys Davids observed, "the sayings attributed to [Buddha] are strangely like those found in the New Testament"\(^2\) and Paul Carus provided, also in the early period of Buddhist scholarship, a detailed list

\(^1\)Pearson, MN. "'Objects Ridiculous and August': Early Modern Perceptions of Asia" *Journal of Modern History* 68 (June 1996) p392.
of parallels\(^3\) showing that the "resemblances between Christ and Buddha are exceedingly great".\(^4\) Finding such familiarity in things foreign induces a literalist inclination to speculate on historical connection or influence. At first, in *Orientalist* inflation, it was assumed Christianity influenced Buddhism through some Nestorian conduit. Later the suggestion was advanced, in the 1880s by Arthur Lillie and Ernest de Bunsen,\(^5\) that the influence may have been the other way around.\(^6\) Then again, as the orientalist Max Müller suggested, possibly the similarities derived from a common foundation "which underlies all religions".\(^7\)

Though there was little historical European acknowledgment of Buddhism in the common era,\(^8\) there were nonetheless vague versions that entered the European narrative. Woodward, for example, translated from Thomas

\(^2\)Rhys Davids "What has Buddhism derived from Christianity" *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1923 pp43-4. It is interesting that this article originally written in 1877 assumes that if there was an influence, Buddhism must have borrowed from Christianity not the other way around.

\(^3\)The parallels are many - here are some: both are royal lineage; both have auspicious births; both are proclaimed at birth as saviours by angels and sages; both excelled their teachers; both undergo temptation alone; both lead a life of poverty & wander homeless; both walk on water; St Peter by faith also walks on water as does a disciple of the Buddha; both feed a multitude with a small supply of food with an abundance remaining; both send out their disciples to spread the word; both forbid signs and miracles; both stand against the established religion; both use parables like the prodigal son, the widows mite, the fool who stores up worldly goods; both demand the love of one's enemies; both show compassion towards a woman sinner.


\(^5\)Lillie, A. *Buddha and Early Buddhism* (London: Truber & Co., 1883)

\(^6\)de Bunsen, E. *The Angel-Messiah of Buddhists, Essenes, and Christians* (London: Longmans, 1880) see also Almond pp126-128.

\(^7\)See Radhakrishnan *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967- first published 1939) p 158ff. The parallels have given rise to works of dubious scholastic merit such as Gruber, E & Kersten, H. *The Original Jesus- The Buddhist Sources of Christianity* (Shaftsbury, Dorset: Element, 1995).

\(^8\)Muller, M. "Christianity and Buddhism" *The New Review* (1891), p67-74. Cited in Almond p126. This assumption of ultimate underlying unity accorded with the many nineteenth century attempts to 'show' universal links in ideas, races, religions, even plants. Linneaus was a seminal example of this European obsession with classifying all things in a universal and comprehensive way. See Pratt, ML. *Imperial Eyes- Travel writing and transculturation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992).

\(^8\) The existence of Buddhism was recorded about 200CE by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, iii. 7), then largely disappeared from mention for about thirteen hundred years.
Vaughan, who lived at the time of the English Civil War, an essay on *Life and Death* that contained *The Story of the Son of Abner*, an obvious rendering of the Buddha’s early life. Similarly, in the eighth century, St John of Damascus circulated among Christians a version of the life of the Buddha as the story of Balaam and Josaphat, a story so popular in medieval Europe that in the fourteenth century Josaphat (a corruption of ‘bodhisat’) was canonised by the Catholic Church.

The historical connections of Europe and the East followed the usual invasion and trading routes, along which ideas move like any other commodity. Alexander the Great invaded India in the fourth century BCE, some two hundred years after the Buddha lived; as a pupil of Aristotle, he appreciated matters philosophical and brought with him a “train of savants”, scholars and artists. While it would seem almost inevitable that Hindu and Buddhist ideas would have been considered within the Greek philosophic tradition, whether one accepts a direct link or not, “a student of Orphic and Pythagorean thought cannot fail to see ... the similarities between it and Indian religion.”

Greek contact with Indian culture persisted and is evident in a number of areas. Aesop’s fables owe much to the influence of Buddhist *Jataka* stories, and in the Pali texts, Milinda in *Milinda-panha* is identical to the Greek Menander, the name of a Bactrian Indo-Greek king (c.140–110

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Woodward, FL “The Story of the Son of Abner” *Mahinda College Magazine* Vol. III No. 6 January 1919. Woodward’s interest in Vaughan was not without context; in the Theosophical pantheon, Vaughan was regarded as an important mystical antecedent of the Theosophical Society.

10 Skilton, A. *A Concise History of Buddhism* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 1994) p199. This is based on an earlier assertion by Thomas Rhys Davids.


12 Radharkrishnan, S. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* p143.
BCE) who converted to Buddhism. Classic Greek culture is evident also in the Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhara (northern Pakistan and Afghanistan) which has continued to shape Buddhist art to this day. The Greek hair knot, for instance, passed into Indian art as a stylistic accretion, later interpreted by native iconographers as a protuberance of the skull, the *usnīsa*.14

Buddhist penetration of the West occurred most strongly during the third century BCE when the Buddhist Emperor of India, Asoka, issued edicts carved in stone establishing missions to take the *Dharma* to Greek territories in Syria and Egypt, about which Woodward wrote an monograph in 1952.17 The entry of Buddhist monastic practice and Buddhist philosophic ideas to the West, is evidenced in the *Mahavamsa* (the Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka) which records, in the first century CE, a delegation of Buddhist monks from the Greek city of Alexandria, attending the inauguration ceremony of the Ruvanvali-saya (Great Stupa) at the now ruined Anuradhapura in Ceylon.

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13 Rahula, W. *Zen and the Taming of the Bull: towards a definition of Buddhist Thought* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1978.) p.25. The *Milinda-panha* (Questions of Milinda) is one of the important non canonical Pali commentaries on the *Tipitaka* and is a comprehensive exposition of Buddhist metaphysics, ethics and psychology based on a purported dialogue between a sceptical Milinda and the Buddhist elder, Nagasena, that has the feel of being founded on actual encounter. The *Milinda-panha* also mentions Alexandria as a place which Indians frequently visited.


15 Rock Edicts II, V & XIII, which are still extant.

16 Nock, AD. *Conversion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) p45-47. Territories held by Antiochus I (or II?) of Syria (285-247 BCE), Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia (276-246 BCE), Magas of Cyrene (300-258 BCE), Alexander of Epiris (272-258 BCE) and Ptolemy II of Egypt (285-257 BCE). Similar stone edicts of Asoka have been discovered in Afghanistan in both Greek and Aramaic.

17 The work was published by the Adyar Library but not no copy is presently extant. [Letter November 1998, Theosophical Society Archivist, Adyar, Helen Jamieson.]

18 "*Yona-nagara-Alasanda*. *Yona* a transcribing of 'Iona' is the Pali for 'Greek' but whether this was the city known today as Alexandria is debatable but not unlikely. The *Mahavamsa*, while an extraordinary chronicle, contains as much mythology as 'history'. 
The Chronicle attests to a relatively common-place traffic between the Middle East and south Asia, and the links were historically persistent. Leonard Woolf,\(^\text{19}\) one time Ceylon Government Agent, described graphically the annual pearl fishing season at Marichchukaddi, eighty miles from Jaffna, where some four thousand divers would gather from all over the Persian Gulf in their dhows for the pearl fishing, as they had for centuries. Ceylon was the ancient region of Ophir and Tarshish to the Hebrews from where Solomon imported peacocks (**tuki** in Hebrew, **tokei** in Tamil) and apes, (**kapi** in both Hebrew and Tamil).

To the ancient Greeks and Romans, Ceylon was known as **Taprobane** (**Tambapanni** in the **Mahavamsa**) and was referred to as such by, Siculus, Ovid, Strabo, Pliny, and Ptolemy.\(^\text{20}\) The Greeks too, knew about Indian asceticism, in fact it was “a literary commonplace”.\(^\text{21}\) Strabo mentions an Indian embassy in Athens in 20 BCE and the self immolation of one of their aesthetes, quite a sensation,\(^\text{22}\) so Buddhism was undoubtedly recognised though it may have been confused with Brahmanic practice.\(^\text{23}\)

The historical links of East and West lean towards an inevitable exchange of influences that would naturally give rise to a sense of familiarity in the first imperial encounters with Buddhism. The Islamic ascendancy that had severed Europe from the East, meant the period quaintly described as


\(^{20}\) Arunachalam, P. "Sketches of Ceylon History" *Ceylon National Review* #1 January 1906. p41.

\(^{21}\) Nock p47.

\(^{22}\) Radhakrishnan p157. Plutarch refers to the incident (**Vit.Alex. 69**) and suggests the ‘Tomb of the Indian’ was somewhat of a tourist attraction. St. Paul’s reference (1 Corinthians xiii. 3) “If I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.” may well be an allusion to this well known incident.

\(^{23}\) Almond, P *The British Discovery of Buddhism* p15. Because early European encounters with Buddhism were via Hindu pundits who viewed Buddha as an avatar or incarnation of Vishnu, confusion was bound to occur and may have characterised much earlier understanding.
that of European "discovery", was in reality one of "re-discovery", contributing to a shocked familiarity with things purportedly 'new'. However, the 'fact' of such earlier encounters is not as significant as the Orientalist impulse to impose and appropriate from the Other, such that its perception of familiarity tends to confirm 'facts', rather than be derived from them.

**The Philosophic Contribution to Familiarity.**

If Buddhism had any influence on Western thought, it would be most detectable in Greek philosophy, and there are superficial similarities between Buddhism and the philosophy of the Neoplatonists like Plotinus (205-270 CE), indicating a possible legacy of earlier Greek contact. Plotinus acknowledges no direct eastern influence, though "he wished to investigate the thought of the east - a perpetual longing of the Greeks". Like Buddhism, Neoplatonism did not necessarily seek to displace other religious practices: it emphasised conduct and asceticism rather than worship, personal pursuit of salvation rather than reliance on a redeemer, and espoused views on metempsychosis such as those proposed by earlier Greek Philosophers like Plato and Pythagoras (who was reputed to have visited India).

It would probably be precious to suggest no oriental influences penetrated early Greek philosophy, and not to expect any legacy to flow through to its Neoplatonic elaboration and influence on later Christian theology, but

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24Plotinus *The Enneads* (London: Penguin, 1991) p. lxxxvi. Plotinus had, according to Porphyry, joined the Emperor Gordian's expedition against the Persians, principally to visit the Magi and the Brahmans, though he hastily departed in the wake of events surrounding the assassination of Gordian in 244. Plotinus proposed a view of 'soul', however which is decidedly un-Buddhist.

25Rist p5.

26The early Church wrestled with ideas like pre-existence, which were not condemned and suppressed until the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553CE.
whether Buddhist echoes in Christian and early Greek philosophy were of historical origin or simply the narcissistic reflection of a European voice - or both - is not as significant as the perception of similarity. This apparent similarity is important because it was through Greek philosophy that many English scholars came to an interest in eastern religion in the nineteenth century. It emerged from a fortuitous conjunction; an education system steeped in the study of Greek and Latin texts meeting an emerging knowledge of eastern theology (also via texts), in a milieu of profound secularisation and alienation from a traditional Christianity which had itself been substantially shaped by Greek philosophy.

The classic Greek and Latin education of the 19th century induced (for those that survived the experience) a fascination both with philosophy and philology, a taste for ideas other than the strictly Christian and a penchant for dissecting texts, a habit drilled in since childhood. The ideas unearthed from the mystery of oriental texts had a strange familiarity; eastern ideas of karma, rebirth and moral asceticism echoed Platonic metempsychosis and Stoic asceticism. But it was not only ideas of Greek origin that induced an odd familiarity; more contiguous motifs within Christianity contributed as well.

**A Religion Made to Victorian Order.**
In its Theravadin form, Buddhism had an austerity not unlike Protestantism without the inconvenience of a deity - Anglicanism without God - and this appeal aligned with secularising intellectual trends of the nineteenth century which nonetheless “retained the ethical fervour of the

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27Public familiarity with Buddhism remained largely Theravadin in origin until publication of DT Suzuki’s first exposition of Zen Buddhism in 1927, *Essays in Zen Buddhism.*
childhood belief [that had been] discarded". Theravadin Buddhism fitted the preoccupations of the times. The Christian missionaries had characterised Christianity as theistic, Buddhism as atheistic; Christianity rested on faith, Buddhism on reason and enlightened ethics. Far from dissuading interest, these elements were Buddhism's appeal, and though not entirely correct, this was how Europeans tended to interpret Theravada.

Woodward fits with the factors of nineteenth interest in Buddhism - like many of his contemporaries, he came to Buddhism via Platonic ideas, particularly those concerning metempsychosis, and the Stoic philosophy and austere morality of Marcus Aurelius. What was encountered also in Buddhism was the millenarian anticipation of a Metteyya Buddha, the Buddha-to-come, a familiar parallel to the evangelical anticipation of a Second Coming, which was exceedingly resonant.

While early Greek philosophy may have provided ideas that made Buddhism appear 'familiar', it also, consequently, established expectations of emphasis and meaning that imposed a eurocentric interpretation. It was certainly not a neutral encounter; familiarity and similarity were the foundations of a distortion which altered the narrative emphasis of Buddhism. In a world defined by European intent, elevation into existence relied on European recognition, which is essentially interpretative, shaping the object perceived, satisfying the resonances

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within the perceiving authority. This is what Said identifies as the ‘violence’ of *Orientalism*.

...that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, ‘there’ in discourse about it.30

Recognition of Buddhism as a ‘serious’ object for consideration required the *creation* of Buddhism31, as Almond emphasises, and this went through a number of phases in the nineteenth century. Initially it was an object ‘out there’, unfamiliar but in the *present*. Later it became a textual object preserved in European oriental libraries and lodged in the *past*, and this European possession of text engendered a view that they “alone knew what Buddhism was, is, and ought to be.”32 It was an intellectual hubris that certainly did not escape even ‘sympathetic’ patrons like the Theosophical Society, and adherents like Olcott, Besant and Woodward.

From the imperialist point of view, the societies they absorbed were either ‘primitive’, or, if owning some pretensions of a cultural past, in ‘decline’. After all, why else would they have ‘allowed’ themselves to be so easily dispossessed? This arrogance can be easily dismissed today but it was not without foundation - no ‘myth’ is moulded in a vacuum. After all, the subjugation of teeming millions by a small number of maritime marauders from an obscure island off the European coast, is an extraordinary act of self confidence and arrogance. While a deliberate exaggeration, this characterisation highlights the enormity of imperialism and the ease with which it extended a view of personal and cultural superiority.

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So, if one begins with the premise that subject peoples are in 'decline' and further observes the obvious disparity between text and practice, then it is easy to arrive at a view that Buddhism has degenerated, though, of course, it could just as easily indicate healthy cultural adaptation. Similarly, the accretions that adhered to Buddhist practice in the countries of adoption, such as Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist coexistence in Chinese temples, seemed to the early missionaries a certain sign of degeneracy and decline, since such syncretism was, officially, alien to Christianity. The perceptual premise of decline in subject cultures as well as possession of Buddhism as a textual object, allowed the West by the mid nineteenth century, to assume the Buddhism of their investigations was something of 'purity', as distinct from native practice. Though organisations like the Theosophical Society rendered significant service in re-interpreting and returning religious icons, they did so on the assumption that some original 'purity' of faith was being 'restored'.

This same textuality of Buddhism in the West made it ripe for interest with the general public of the West. The middle and 'respectable' artisan classes, which were growing in number, as well as economic and social power, "had a voracious appetite for literature of all kinds." This meant Buddhism became one more item on the menu of learning and 'self-improvement'.

The emerging middle classes had few of the structural traditions and connections necessary to provide a framework for defining appropriate

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31 Almond p 12
32 Almond p 13.
33 Almond p25.
moral and social values, behaviour and beliefs. The need was met by the presses that cranked out a blistering array of religious literature, political commentaries, fiction, criticism and a proliferation of periodicals to satisfy the insatiable demand for potted learning and to be 'properly' informed about what one 'ought' to know. This desire was born of a doubt and uncertainty, an anxiety that matched the uncertain status of the new class, and yet the field of exploration was broad and pluralistic - frequently without adequate discrimination - to match the boundless enthusiasm of their uncertain vision.

To strike a chord with such a public, the interpretation of Buddhism needed to reflect “an image not only of the Orient, but of the Victorian world also”.35 Victorian enthusiasm for something as apparently alien as Buddhism is difficult to comprehend unless measured against its accord with Victorian values, ideals and intellectual trends. A contemporary account highlights the elements of that appeal.

A few years ago magazines were full of [Buddhism]; and every young lady, who made any pretensions to be of the higher culture, was prepared to admire ‘such a beautiful religion and so like Christianity’...the daring reformer, who stood up alone against a dominant caste...; the isolated thinker, who struck out a whole system of philosophy and morals......; his heroic career of self-sacrifice and life laid down for friends. 36

The encounter is again with motifs of similarity and familiarity, though the weight of interpretation is clearly Victorian. Even the sexist negation is typically Victorian; dismissing Buddhism as an enthusiasm of ‘young

35Almond p 6.
ladies’ reveals the misogynist and patronising prejudices of the time. Woodward found it hard to avoid such bias too, and enjoyed a typical *Punch* cartoon of the era where a young women says to her friend, “You *must* come next week to Professor X’s lecture on Bud-ism”, to which the friend replies, “Oh! My dear. You know how I just love anything to do with flowers!”

Buddhism’s social appeal was among those striving towards a ‘higher culture’, the purportedly intellectual, ‘progressive’ middle class, but the values they sought were distinctively Victorian. One particular Victorian absorption was discovering the ‘man’ behind the myth, a pursuit influenced by J Ernest Renan’s *Vie de Jesus* and David Friedrich Strauss’ *Leben Jesu*. These attempts to reduce Christian mythology to a ‘real’ Jesus produced, not surprisingly, a particularly Victorian Jesus of Stoic nobility and compassion. Such reconstruction also influenced the interpretation of Buddhism. Here was an heroic man of duty, decency and morality, standing against the forces of convention, an ‘historic’ figure featuring all the ‘manly’, ethical virtues of a Victorian gentleman.

In the area of religious exploration, Buddhism, “a religion so different from Christianity and yet in some ways decidedly similar,” served as a refuge for those increasingly dissatisfied with the shape and oppression of Christian religiosity. It offered flexibility, a breadth of tolerance and the opportunity for neoteric experience - as well as the added assurance of thoroughly antagonising the religious establishment. To a person like

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36 *The Quarterly Review* 1890 p318 Cited in Almond p3. The author was Bishop Copleston, one time Bishop of Colombo.
37 Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner (FOSL.). Also Woodward, FL “English As She is Spoke and Wrote” *New Lanka* Vol.1 No.4, July 1950.
38 Almond p35
Woodward born into the family of an Anglican clergyman, Buddhism was a distinct statement of severance from stifling origin. In terms of the psychological elements of ‘reaction formation’, it presented an opportunity to separate from the oppression of past; to a search for a new perspective without relinquishing the old; to seek new connections without severing those that reside at the core of memory.

The recurring elements of the ‘familiar’ in the European interface with Buddhism may have some basis in historical exchange but if one accepts that the resonances that induced attraction in the nineteenth century were derived from the area of cultural and religious formation, from within the transitional arena, then one would expect to encounter contrasts of alien and familiar. As with transitional objects that carry qualities both of ‘otherness’ and ‘of-one’s-selfness’, such that they are able to sustain being alternately both objects of particular adoration and of rejection (even hatred), then resonant ideals and beliefs found and formed in the transitional arena will carry similar qualities. It is the sense of meaning and connection arising within transitional space that is the ‘goal’ of the encounter, thus any intellectual exploration will constantly seek, find or encounter elements that reinforce a sense of connection, which will inevitably assume the shape of the familiar.

**The Masters’ Voice - Theosophy and Buddhism.**
The height of popular nineteenth century British interest in Buddhism can be dated to the publication in 1879 of Edwin Arnold’s *Light of Asia*, a life of the Buddha rendered in eight books of poetic blank verse. It is difficult from the late twentieth century to appreciate the appeal of the florid style of Victorian verse with its long narrative intention and grandiose language. Nevertheless it was a period that esteemed poetry and poetic
endeavour as a suitably manful enterprise and Arnold’s book went through at least a hundred editions in England and America, attesting its enormous public appeal. While Arnold had an obvious and genuine fascination with Buddhism, his interest was mediated by the ubiquitous presence of the Theosophical Society, a presence that recurs frequently in the unfolding of Buddhist appeal in the West at that time.

The appearance of *Light of Asia* represented a culmination of about twenty years of growing public interest in Buddhism that began with publications such as those by Spence Hardy and Victor Fausboll.\(^39\) Publication of *Light of Asia*, along with a number of other commentaries, spurred a heightened interest in Buddhism that persisted for a further twenty\(^40\) years, though it was *Light of Asia* that did more to popularise notions about Buddhism and engender public fascination with religious exotica\(^41\) than any other work. Arnold’s poetic propagation of Buddhism was complimented by the more serious, scholarly works, such as those by Thomas Rhys Davids, secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society and founder

\(^39\)Hardy, Spence R., *Eastern Monarchism* (London, 1850); *A Manual of Buddhism* (London, 1853). Hardy, General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission in South Ceylon, borrowed considerably from Rev. JD Gogerly, who wrote in the 1830’s and unlike Hardy was a Pali scholar. Most of these earlier efforts were attempts to come to grips with a religious adversary than to necessarily appreciate with dispassion. See also Bishop, A.S, (ed). *Ceylon Buddhism: being the collected writings of Daniel John Gogerly* (Colombo, 1908).

\(^40\)Almond *The British Discovery of Buddhism* p3.

\(^41\)This is not to minimise the efforts of scholars like Max Muller whose popularisation of Indian (Hindu) theology complimented the efforts of Arnold, Rhys Davids etc and prepared the ground for acceptance of Buddhism in Britain.
of the Pali Text Society in 1881, who published, as he described it, a “little manual”\textsuperscript{42} on Buddhism,\textsuperscript{43} in 1877.

British interest in Buddhism spread with remarkable speed. In 1888 William Dawson (1857-1928) in Hobart, Tasmania, produced a volume published at his own expense on the subject of Buddhism, though it repeats many of the misconceptions of the time and shows the undoubted doctrinal influence of the Theosophical Society. He claims Buddhism as a system of monotheism which demonstrates not only gross misunderstanding but also the frequency with which commentators of the time earnestly sought parallels with Christian theology or Neoplatonism.

It does not teach that there is \textit{a} God but simply that nothing is but God; that God is all, and all is God. To it, matter is not one substance and spirit another; matter is but the shadow of spirit, spirit manifested.\textsuperscript{44}

This less than profound analysis and pantheistic confusion was not uncommon at that time, though it indicates the degree to which persons on the periphery assiduously followed the current intellectual preoccupations of the centre, often with an enthusiasm exceeding the jaded tastes of metropolitan sophistication. Communication and transport routes, the “information highways” of the time, appear slow and narrowly defined from the modern perspective, but they were laden with information in books and in the minds of people. As one receded from the established routes, though, there was a rapid shading away of news and information,


\textsuperscript{43}Rhys Davids, TW., \textit{Buddhism: Being a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama the Buddha} (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1877). This popular work was reprinted in 1882, 1887, 1894, 1899 & 1903.
in contrast to the few umbral information areas in the present global village. Tasmania, in the path of the Roaring Forties, sat squarely on the sailing trade route that linked England, South Africa, Ceylon, India and eastern Australia. It was a link that significantly influenced Tasmanian migration and demographic patterns as well as the flow and pattern of news and ideas.

For Henry Dawson remaining informed in the antipodes was not difficult, though in a sense he was a symptom of the process, an information vector. Born in Stockport near Manchester and educated in the middle class milieu of Manchester Grammar he emigrated to Tasmania with his brother George in 1884, only four years before the publication of his pamphlet. It is highly likely he brought his influences with him including his sympathy for Theosophy, though he was far from alone. Along with John Beattie, an established colonial photographer, Henry Gill, parliamentarian and newspaper proprietor and Edward Ivey, well known political reformer, Dawson became a founding member in 1889 of the Theosophical Society in Hobart. Considering the Theosophical Society was only formed in New York in 1875 and Madame Blavatsky's influential tomes, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* were only

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44 Dawson, WH *Buddha and Buddhism* (Hobart: Mercury Printers, 1888) [Tasmaniana Collection-Allport Museum, State Library, Hobart] p18
46 Beattie was invited in 1906 by another Tasmanian, the Rev John Goldie, a pioneering Wesleyan missionary on Rubiana & Munda in the Solomon Islands (where he is still revered today), to conduct a photographic mission. Tasmania was not just on the receiving end of the colonial experience but made its own contribution as well. See (on Goldie) Thomas, N. *Colonialism's Culture- Anthropology Travel and Government* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994) pp 112-113 & 127-132 and Beattie's diary held by Royal Society Archives University of Tasmania. Also Tassell, M. & Wood, D. *Tasmanian Photographer* (Melbourne, 1981).
47 State Archives Non State Record Group NS 859/1 of Tasmania and Roe, J *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1986) p16
published in 1877 and 1888 respectively, the appearance of a Theosophical Society branch in Hobart in 1889 was remarkably responsive.

The ubiquitous association of the Theosophical Society with interest in Buddhism in the late nineteenth century, is inescapable, though the Society holds an ambivalent position in the minds of serious researchers. It has been dismissed as peculiar, eccentric and even fraudulent because of its occasional cult aspects, however, it was influential in excess of its numerical strength in many fields. It managed to encompass people like the artists Kandinsky, Klee, and Mondrian; writers like HG Wells, Conan Doyle, WB Yeats, and George Russell; architects like Walter Burley Griffin; scientists like Stromberg and Sir William Crookes; military historian, CEW Bean and Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin48 among many others.

Theosophy placed itself at the radical forefront of ‘modern’ thought and ideas and became synonymous with ‘progressive’ values. In the area of late nineteenth and early twentieth century biography, Theosophy frequently rates a footnote in the lives of many who saw themselves at the vanguard of radical thought. The frequency of that recurrent influence indicates that it merits elevation from the footnotes to deserved examination. For all its peculiarity and occasional madness, Theosophy needs to be rescued from what Edward Thompson called “the enormous condescension of posterity.”49

48 Gabay, A., The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press 1992) p24. Deakin was only a formal member one year but he was strongly influenced by its doctrines and was in correspondence with Col. Olcott.
Theosophy arose concurrently with a number of other 'progressive' organisations and views in the 1880s, part of Chadwick's "movements of mind" that passed over Europe at that time. There were Theosophists, Anti-Vivisectionists, Psychical Researchers, Spiritualists, Free Thinkers, Anarchists, Socialists and Suffragette Feminists. More an odd menage than melange of intellectual interests, the paths of many players within these currents cross and re-cross throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian period.

Edward Carpenter, an important figure in the Theosophical Society and a social commentator of the period who experienced many of these varied roles, expresses the pulse of the period succinctly.

The years from 1881 onward were certainly a new era.....the oncoming of a great new tide of human life over the Western World.....It was a fascinating and enthusiastic period.....The Socialist and Anarchist propaganda, the Feminist and Suffragist upheaval, the huge trade Union growth, the Theosophic movement, the new currents in the Theatrical, Musical and artistic world, the torrent even of change in the Religious world - all constituted so many streams and headwaters converging, as it were, to a great river.\(^{51}\)

The Theosophical Society entered into many streams of thought and social activism and drew many people from these areas to an interest in Buddhism. Woodward was particularly dismissive of this gaggle that gathered around Buddhism in England, and not without justification: "They seem in England ...to have a whole coterie of ultra fanatics, ex-theosophists who cling to Blavatsky, and Ceylon Bhikkhus [monks]."\(^{52}\)

\(^{50}\)Chadwick p239.


\(^{52}\)Letter FL Woodward to CA Rhys Davids, 12 December 1934 (FOSL).
Nevertheless, the Theosophical Society provided an organisational and intellectual structure for Buddhism in England, without which, it would have remained only an idea.

Theosophy claimed to be an eclectic spiritual movement emanating from a Neoplatonic tradition dating back to Ammonius Saccas, the teacher of Plotinus. FL Woodward's extensive Greek and Latin library contained many rare and valuable folios including, as one would expect, volumes of the work of Plotinus as well as Marcus Aurelius, Pythagoras and Plato. The European interest in Buddhism at the end of the nineteenth century was, in the hands of the Theosophical Society, often enmeshed with Greek mysticism, European esotericism, occult and spiritualism, gathered into a clutch of ideas that would have been unrecognisable to Buddhists anywhere else. Thus the 'esoteric' Buddhism that emerged from the Theosophical Society, particularly as defined by Sinnett, was quite unique - "Esoteric, it may have been. Buddhism, it certainly was not..."

Almond is justifiably dismissive of TS interpretations of Buddhism but one cannot ignore the significant influence of the Society on the study of Buddhism in Britain, Australia and elsewhere. Christmas Humphreys, one of the most influential Buddhist writers in English, was able in 1968 at the end of his long life to say,

53Blavatsky, HB. "What are the Theosophists?" The Theosophist (Bombay, India) October, 1879.
54Woodward left over 350 volumes to the University of Tasmania, many dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. He was a collector who regularly subscribed to antiquarian shops in London. (Information from list compiled by Nigel Heyward and held by solicitors, Shield Heritage, Launceston- used with permission.)
55Sinnett, AP. Esoteric Buddhism (Houghton Mifflin, 1884)
56Almond The British Discovery of Buddhism [notes] p147
57The Theosophical Society has always been fond of abbreviations and generally describes itself as the "TS", a practice I will adopt in this work as well.
I am still unshaken in my view that the Theosophy of H.P. Blavatsky is an exposition of an Ancient Wisdom-Religion which antedates all known religions and that Buddhism is the noblest and least-defiled of the many branches of the undying parent tree.58

Thus while Humphreys was fervently committed to Buddhism, he remained a Blavatsky Theosophist. This seeming contradiction is observable in both Blavatsky and Olcott who, when visiting Ceylon in the 1880s, took *pañśīl* and assumed a commitment to Buddhism that they saw in no way contradicted their Theosophical adherence. The same is true of FL Woodward who moved to that side of the TS particularly attracted to Buddhism and, like Humphreys, who was to write an introduction to Woodward’s *Some Sayings of the Buddha*,59 he never shed his TS roots even when the Society itself had moved on. This dual, even multiple, adherence was characteristic of the interest in Eastern religion. It was an ability to hold disparate positions simultaneously, without relinquishing an original view point, and, more importantly, without abandoning a fundamental adherence to eurocentric Victorian views and values.

This Victorian eurocentrism was carried too, by the Theosophical Society, into its seminal contribution to the revival of Buddhism and Hinduism in Ceylon and India. The onslaught of western culture and missionary zeal had deeply eroded indigenous culture by the latter half of the nineteenth century but as the Buddhist scholar, Edward Conze noted, “the tide turned rather suddenly and unexpectedly” as Theosophists appeared

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58Humphries, C. *Sixty Years of Buddhism* (London: The Buddhist Society, 1968) p18
among Hindus and Ceylonese to “proclaim their admiration for the ancient wisdom of the east”.

Colonel Olcott in particular expended extraordinary missionary energy in reviving Buddhist culture in Ceylon, emulating Christian missionaries by establishing schools to foster western learning in a sympathetic Buddhist environment. In 1880 when he first visited Ceylon there were only a few Buddhist schools but by 1900 there were two hundred, one of which was Mahinda College, Galle, where FL Woodward would take up the position of Principal in 1903.

In India, Gandhi acknowledged that it was Theosophists who introduced him to the Bhagavad-Gita and assisted him in disabusing the “notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition”. The impetus for Indian nationalism owes much to the Theosophists, to AO Hume, who founded the Indian National Congress in 1885, and to

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61 Murphet, H. Yankee Beacon of Buddhist Light: life of Col Henry S. Olcott (Wheaton III: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, 1972) This biography of Olcott reads as hagiography, though he was undoubtedly an unusual man. His own version of these pioneering years is recounted in Olcott, HS. Old Diary Leaves (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972) 6 volumes
65 cf also, Murphet p140. Murphet states there were only two though on what he bases this estimate is unclear. Malalgoda, a more reliable researcher, says there were a number, including four specifically registered as Buddhist schools and in receipt of government grants-in-aid which indicates satisfactory inculcation of recognised secular subjects. Also the low number of Buddhist schools does not take into account the large number of pansala schools (about 1,769 c.1885) and the more advanced pirivenas (monastic colleges) attached to monasteries that offered education to local communities. After 1880 a belated attempt was made to assist these to conform to the requirements of government-grants-in-aid with mixed results.
66 Gandhi, M. Gandhi’s Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948) p91. also
Annie Besant who was a fervent supporter of Indian religion and nationalism. These views and activities bordered on the seditious and led to the internment of Besant during the Great War, but it shows, too, the courage, determination, and contribution of the Theosophists.

In 1903, when Woodward offered his services to Olcott and received the offer to take up the reins of Mahinda College, he was taking up membership of one of the most significance Western contributions to the revival and valorisation of indigenous culture and belief, in opposition to imperial intent. These are accepted and commonplace values today, but they owe their origins to the tireless efforts of the Theosophical Society and its many acolytes like Woodward. Woodward’s contribution in Ceylon, however, went beyond the role of simple headmaster; he was to have an impact on religious and nationalist ideology, more significance than has hitherto been acknowledged in Ceylon or the West.

CEYLON.

'Not so much the Promised Land as the Land of Promises' FL Woodward


Galle is a deep water, sheltered port in the south of Sri Lanka that has always had historical significance. The ancient town had been an important and extensive trading centre for centuries and may well be the town of Tarshish mentioned in the Christian Bible. And despite some treacherous hidden rocks in the harbour it remained the main port of Ceylon until the construction of a harbour and breakwater in Colombo in 1882. The hills about the port draw on the legend of Rama-Ravana for explanation; of how when Lakshaman lay wounded from a poisoned arrow fired from Ravana's bow, Rama sent Hanuman, the monkey general, to the Himalayas, to fetch a special plant as an antidote. In his haste he could not remember which plant, and so grabbed a slab of mountain which somewhere contained the plant and returned dropping it where it lies today, about the port of Galle. And on the hills today there are still medicinal herbs, including the rejuvenating kalu-nika.²

The Portuguese arrived in Galle in 1505, blown off course from the Maldives, and began a period of uninterrupted European colonisation of Ceylon. The Dutch eventually displaced the Portuguese and, in 1663, built a solid fort at Galle of over 36 ha., with substantial walls and fortifications on the site of the smaller Portuguese fort. With Dutch efficiency, they even designed a system of sewerage disposal where the mains were flushed each day by the tide. Further efficiencies included the

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¹ Letter FL Woodward to IB Horner 30 April 1949 (FOSL) Also 26 May 1948, 12 December 1934 to CA Rhys Davids, and many others.
breeding of musk rats in the sewers and the commercial harvesting of their valuable gland.

On the afternoon of 23 February 1796, Galle was ceded by the Dutch to the British in a solemn ceremony where the keys to the different gates of the Fort were handed on a silver tray to a relatively unknown officer of H.M Regiment of Foot, Lachlan Macquarie, later Governor of New South Wales and Tasmania, a man who took his instructions from the Governor of Madras, Lord Hobart whose name graces the capital of Tasmania. These colonial echoes, far from being particular, recur continually in imperial discourse. Trade routes and patronage closely linked the remarkably small cast of European colonial characters and intimately connect the early history of Tasmania, India and Ceylon up to the twentieth century; Woodward is simply one further example of the continual interconnection.

With the shift of central port facilities to Colombo, Galle slipped into relative unimportance, an unsanitary and somewhat lawless backwater remote from power until connected by rail, which was completed to Galle, in 1894. This was the town at which Frank Lee Woodward arrived, in 1903, to take up the position of Principal of Mahinda College. It was the main Buddhist educational institution in the southern maritime Low Country, the heartland of the nationalist and Buddhist Revival, and

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3 Roberts, N. *Galle as Quiet as Asleep* p 100.
5 Diaries of the GA-SP(Government Agent-Southern Province) (SLNA). Both the Diaries and the Ceylon Administrative Reports note the higher rates of crime in the Southern Province which, however, began to recede from about 1904 onwards. Nonetheless, the Diaries tell a conspicuous tale of frequent execution (hanging) which the GA had to witness and supervise, a task universally loathed by all incumbents.
Woodward was to remain there until 1919. Far from being a simple schoolmaster, he became a significant part of the educational focus of the Buddhist Revival, and Mahinda College became an elite, English-medium school that promoted the laicised Buddhism with a strong nationalist inflection, that Woodward fervently embraced. The six to seven thousand students that were to pass through his hands over the period, contributed disproportionately to leadership in Ceylon, and to the Buddhist and nationalist agenda.

Mahinda College was run by the Buddhist Theosophical Society$^6$ (BTS) in close cooperation with local interests, particularly Thomas Amarasuriya, a successful local Karava$^7$ businessman who provided the backbone of both managerial and financial support. Woodward was fired with an unusual intention: to build a premier institution, founded on Buddhist values and beliefs, that fulfilled Ceylonese national objectives, but at the time of his arrival, the school was struggling to survive. Woodward may have imagined he was entering a challenge that could be shaped without reference to prevailing cultural constraints but, far from an unformed province of endeavour, it was one defined by a very particular context.

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6Olcott originally formed two types of society - Buddhist Theosophical Societies, with an obvious Buddhist orientation, and traditional Theosophical Societies, "Lanka Theosophical Society" with a syncretic religious approach for "freethinkers and amateurs in Occult research" [Old Diary Leaves II p169]. The latter quickly withered while the former thrived, being quickly taken up by orthodox Buddhist adherents eager to appropriate whatever benefit might be gained by association with the European Theosophical Society. This is not to suggest calculated duplicity by local Buddhists, rather to underscore the confused message of the TS itself that gave the impression of orthodox adherence while otherwise espousing a more universalist creed.

7 Caste of Fishermen.
Nineteenth century Sinhala society and religion was caste\textsuperscript{8} bound, hierarchical, and dominated by the traditional aristocratic Goyigama, who were numerically the largest caste, "an inversion of the pyramidal structure"\textsuperscript{9} of caste in India. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, there had been a gradual redefinition of social and economic stratification arising from the phenomenal economic gains of the non-Goyigama castes, particularly the Karava, who came to predominate in the southern maritime province\textsuperscript{10} and were influential in the formative years of Mahinda College, recognising in its progress, the potential to advance communal interests.

The upward mobility of the non-Goyigama, which challenged traditional Sinhala\textsuperscript{11} cultural status and values, was remarkably akin to the nineteenth century upward social mobility of the British middle class. It displayed similar attributes that would have appeared familiar to Woodward: reformist and 'progressive', challenging established religious and secular authority and perceiving education as a means of social progress (which to many, implied advancing caste and communal interests).

The relationship Woodward formed with the community he came to serve was an intriguing interface of values and intention regarding religion,

\textsuperscript{8}While there is some debate about the role of caste in Sri Lanka, generally caste boundaries are not as rigid as those in India and are based on relationships of productivity. In Sri Lanka the high caste Goyigama, the Farmer or Cultivator caste, make up 60% of the populace with the balance of lesser status. See, Gilbert, W "The Sinhalese Caste-System of Central and Southern Ceylon" The Ceylon Historical Journal Vol. II Nos. 3&4, pp295ff. A reprint of the Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences Vol. 35 Nos. 3&4 (March & April 1945.)


\textsuperscript{11}This work concentrates on Sinhala Buddhist culture, largely ignoring the significant Moor, Burgher, and Tamil cultures that coexist (often in tension) within Sri Lankan society.
education, social outcome and national direction. It was a narrative of contrasting harmonies and dissonance, where interests sometimes aligned, though not always with the same intention, and sometimes diverged. Whatever his intentions, Woodward brought with him many inescapable Victorian and imperial values. The interaction of intention, the deep structure of personal origin, and the profound faith that inspired Woodward’s ‘mission’, shaped a fascinating discourse that had lasting effects on Sri Lankan education, culture and religion, though it was the slow dawning of insurmountable difference, along with his increasing interest in the solitary task of translation, that ultimately prompted Woodward to leave Ceylon in 1919.

**Imperial Values and Colonial Response.**

When FL Woodward joined the Theosophical Society and wrote to Col. Steel Olcott, in Adyar, Madras, expressing a fervent desire to give “personal help in [Olcott’s] great work”, it was an offer of sacrifice and service, an archetypal nineteenth century gesture, which to a contemporary generation, appears inflated and grandiose. Yet, within the imperial context of the time, such hyperbole frequently animated construction of life and events. Stories abound of men (and it was generally men) inspired by faith or adventure who threw up their future to pursue some idealistic aim or ‘mission’ abroad, in an heroic step into the unknown.

Like pages taken from a ‘Boy’s Own’ adventure, young men of the nineteenth century were encouraged to seek expression in lives of renunciation and duty, of sacrifice to ideals higher than self. This was a world of imperial possibility, boundless potential and exotic opportunity

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and Woodward’s efforts to build Mahinda College into an institution of excellence takes on the appearance of something almost ‘heroic’, in the sense beloved of the nineteenth century. His efforts saved Mahinda College from probable slow dissolution and demise, and his remarkable exertions and imagination decisively advanced the school as one of Sri Lanka’s more prestigious public schools. In this sense it may well represent a typical imperial tale, even more so because Woodward was undoubtedly ‘odd’ and may never have achieved the same advancement, or experienced the same creative opportunities, in the conformity of an established England. As with many young men of ambition, colonial experience offered opportunities and responsibilities either far in advance of their years or unlikely in their home environment. The results were often of remarkable success and, equally, of remarkable and sometimes spectacular failure. Woodward’s efforts fall firmly among the former.

The world Woodward entered was one of missionary zeal - in both the generic and specific sense - a world of people fired by the perceived opportunities to mould and create, where human life was frequently seen as a blank slate waiting to be inscribed with civilisation. It is difficult today to appreciate the optimistic embrace of change and ‘progress’ that went with these attitudes, and difficult to excuse the cultural insensitivity and inherent harm that often lay behind such hope, but it would be wrong, in reaction, to fall into an obverse or compensatory manifestation of imperial intent and to characterise colonial peoples as simple victim, an occasional, if unintended, aspect of Said’s *Orientalist* critique.

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13Dr Vitharana, [an ex-student and ex-teacher of Mahinda College, later professor of Sinhala in a number of Sri Lankan universities, and now, in retirement, Visiting Professor at Sri Jayewardenepura in Sinhala & Cultural Anthropology] is probably the most knowledgeable regarding Woodward in Sri Lanka. He is quick to acknowledge and recognise Woodward’s oddity:
Far from a 'blank slate', many cultures in colonial subjugation were neither in naïve states of natural stasis nor in disintegration. On the contrary, many revealed dynamic and opportunistic aspects that were alert to the possibilities of colonial intrusion. This was particularly true of Ceylon with its long experience of cultural absorption and colonial administration. This is not to deny the Orientalist critique and minimise the awesome impact of imperialism on the Other, rather to indicate there was appreciable cultural flexibility and capacity to alter external influences to serve communal interests in preference to, or even concurrently with, imperial objectives. There was, among the emerging new economic castes that formed the basis of Ceylonese social activism in the nineteenth century, a resolute capacity to respond “originally and creatively”14 to external western influences and, as Hobsbawm suggests, to read into the ideas, ideologies and programs they absorbed “not so much the ostensible text as their own subtext”.15

The Rise of the Non-Goyigama: Commerce and Tradition. The procession of European cultures, Portuguese, Dutch and British, that had impacted on Ceylon for centuries, had left traditional Sinhala culture battered, often uncertain of its own value, but nevertheless resilient and alert to the opportunities of colonialism. The British colonial presence, in particular, provided economic possibilities through arrack16 monopolies,

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14 Ames, M. “Westernization or Modernization: the Case of the Sinhalese Buddhism” Social Compass XX 1973/2 p140.
16 Arrack is fermented nectar collected from the flowers of coconut palms and is of extreme potency. Colonial governments granted licences or ‘rents’ for the sale of arrack, a lucrative revenue earner for governments and renters alike.
bridge tolls, plumbago (graphite) mining and plantation agriculture as well as in import/export trade.

Success in such enterprises, in turn, provided an urge to access power, influence and the necessary trappings of status. The emerging economic power of non-Goyigama castes such as the Salagama, Durava and Karava was cemented by philanthropy and the acquisition of 'native' and other colonial titles, though this was not simply vainglorious. The relationship was reciprocal; status obligates the individual to give, in the highly valued sense of Buddhist dana,\textsuperscript{17} to 'share merit', and to receive, in return, community esteem. But this reciprocal obligation was also a means of advancing the interests of the caste group as a whole by powerful and mutually reinforcing networking.

The significance of non-Goyigama, particularly Karava, adoption of commerce along the western maritime provinces in the nineteenth century lies in the fact that such an economic emphasis contrasted markedly with traditional cultural valuation. The Kandyan culture, based on hierarchical caste, did not place a particular value on wealth. As Robert Knox in his seventeenth century classic study of Ceylon observed, "Riches are not here valued nor make any the more Honourable........it is Birth and Parentage that inobleth."\textsuperscript{18}

The conversion to commerce by the maritime-based, non-Goyigama, castes, and the subsequent elevated valuation of such endeavour, created a cultural contrast which remains evident today, where one is still "struck

\textsuperscript{17}"dana" or almsgiving, occupies a highly significant place in Buddhist culture with its emphasis on 'karma' and 'rebirth', in which actions performed in this life are causally related to one's future lives and well-being. In Christianity, where the emphasis is on salvation, actions are a manifestation of one's state of 'grace', not the principal architect of one's salvation.
by the ambivalence towards money-making”\textsuperscript{19} in Sri Lanka. The aversion to commerce is firmly rooted in Buddhist values which sees the ‘householder’ pursuit of economic livelihood as necessary mainly for survival but not an end with any value beyond that. It is a pursuit firmly within the realm of \textit{samsara}, the circle of birth, suffering and death, release from which the doctrine of the Buddha seeks to address.\textsuperscript{20} One of the compensatory manifestations among the wealthy to assuage the guilt of such prosperity and its doctrinal disjunction was, and still is, to “try to validate their worldly success by elaborate merit-making rituals and religious philanthropy”.\textsuperscript{21}

Here the Buddhist concept of \textit{dana} presents a traditional compensatory mechanism for a westernised dilemma, for, in essence, the movement of the non-\textit{Goyigama} castes into commerce at the beginning of the nineteenth century meant a substitution of western economic attainment for traditional values. It defines, in a significant manner, the commencement of cultural westernisation in Ceylon. It was a change made possible by the imposition and opportunities of colonial presence, and one that altered the rigid traditional definitions of status and power,

\textsuperscript{18}Knox, R. \textit{An Historical Relation of Ceylon} (1681) reprinted in the \textit{Ceylon Historical Journal} Vol 6, 1956-57, p 106.
\textsuperscript{20} The foundation of Buddhism rests on the \textbf{Four Noble Truths}; the fundamental reality of Suffering [\textit{dukkha}], its Cause or Arising [grasping and desire, including material acquisitiveness], its Ceasing [eschewing desire], and the Way that leads to its ceasing [the \textbf{Eightfold Noble Path}] The Eightfold Noble Path consists of 1. Right View 2. Right Renunciation 3. Right Speech, 4. Right Action 5. Right Livelihood, 6. Right Effort 7. Right Mindfulness and, 8. Right Concentration. These are divided into 3 \textit{khandhas} or ‘groups’: \textit{siла} (morality), numbers 3, 4, & 5; \textit{samadhi} (mental training leading to an equanimous mind), 6, 7 & 8 and \textit{pañña} (wisdom), 1 & 2.
\textsuperscript{21} Fernando, T. “The Western-Educated Elite.” p29. It also lends some explanation for the traditional attraction of Sri Lankans to medicine and law, which allow for prestige without the necessity of overt engagement in commerce.
offering the non-Goyigama castes the possibility of upward mobility and a new form of social status - with the usual costs of such change.

The rise of the non-Goyigama somewhat alters the usual cliches of imperial social mayhem, for it is often easier to identify the erosion and destruction of traditional culture by the colonial presence than to identify opportunistic behaviour of particular groups that advance their own interests in the disruption of traditional social stratification generated by colonial intrusion. It is even more difficult when such opportunistic groups later become vociferous advocates of, obviously altered, 'traditional' values and standards, in much the same way as the upwardly mobile middle classes in the West often became guardians of conservative 'traditional' social values.

There is an understandable tendency for the beneficiaries of social change and transitional disruption to seek security in an imagined past of stability and certainty, to engage in what Hobsbawm and others have described as the "invention of tradition". But there is also an obvious irony in the narrative of an underclass that has finally found social inclusion, adopting an exaggerated adherence to traditions and values that once saw their exclusion, though, the discourse is usually edited subtly to reflect both the needs and new status of adherents.

It is thus not surprising that the non-Goyigama castes that availed themselves of the economic opportunities that arose under colonialism, provided important nationalist figures and became staunch advocates of the Buddhist Revival, which, while it may present as radical, harbours an inherent conservatism. This Janus-faced radical/conservative paradox
inhabits most radical movements and was often evident in the nationalist and Buddhist Revival movements of twentieth century Ceylon which sought a redefinition of identity, of Self and Other.

The Rise of the Non-Goyigama: the Case of Amarasuriya.
The economic advancement of the non-Goyigama castes, and particularly the Karava, saw ready acceptance of Western style living, making the Sinhala upper middle class more westernised “than any other Asian group outside the Philippines.” The adoption of Western habits both consolidated and erased aspects of caste; Western clothes masked the outwards signs of caste inferiority expressed in rigid customs of caste identifying clothing, and English-medium instruction and education propelled caste members into prestigious occupations and positions of influence and authority.

The alteration in the fortunes of the Karava caste in the southern province, for instance, had been substantial, with the “status and power of the Karava elite at the end of the nineteenth century... [standing in distinct]... contrast to their situation in the late Dutch and early British period”. They became a significant social and political force in the coastal Low Country and were influential beyond areas of their residential concentration.

One of the significant identities among the upwardly mobile Karava had been Muhandiram Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya (1847-1907) from Galle, who had made his fortune from shipping, as an arrack renter and from

23 Roberts, M Caste Conflict and Elite Formation..... p10.
24 Roberts, M. Caste Conflict and Elite Formation. p102.
plumbago (graphite) mining, as well as from plantations. For Amarasuriya, the arrival of Olcott and the Theosophical Society was a fortuitous occurrence that meshed with rising personal and community ambitions. In particular, the proposed introduction of English-medium education accorded with the desire to advance Karava community interests, part of the "prodigious efforts to bring ... caste ranking, social status and political influence into line with their economic weight".

Thomas Amarasuriya became the mainstay, financial and managerial, of Mahinda College, Galle, and he established with Woodward a relationship of great affection and regard as he had with Olcott who referred to him with affection, though somewhat patronisingly, as "Old Tom". Thomas Amarasuriya, however, was not simply a benign figure of philanthropy but a person of considerable business and political acumen, and certainly not beyond some scheming.

It was rare for matters other than strictly governmental to be mentioned in the Government Agent’s Diary, unless of substantial community controversy, but Amarasuriya claims several mentions. Once (25 May 1905) he is mentioned for failing to honour a cheque after an auction of ‘waste’ land (uncultivated jungle). Amarasuriya claimed he had “made a mistake” in the purchase and attempted to renege. It seems, when bidding, he had raised the stake significantly and the other bidder, clearly bluffed, then left the room. He signed the papers but stopped the cheque because he “had only meant to raise the bid by 5 rupees”. It seems his

25 Confirmation of Amarasuriya’s Karava background comes from Roberts, M. Caste Conflict and Elite Formation. p.109 & p.220. The ‘suriya’ suffix (meaning ‘Sun’) is often indicative of Karava caste.
26 Roberts, M. Caste Conflict and Elite Formation. p133.
enthusiasm to outbid his opponent had exceeded the value of the land and he attempted to withdraw.\textsuperscript{28} He was no innocent, however, but an experienced purchaser of land, whose estates extended to several thousand acres by this time.

Amarasuriya also expanded his interests into politics and contested the number 4 ward of the Galle Municipal Council in 1905\textsuperscript{29} but again came to the notice of the Government Agent after vigorous objections and controversy regarding his election. With shrewd opportunism, it seems, he acquired proxies from over half the listed voters, and the other candidates mysteriously withdrew.\textsuperscript{30} He was a man capable of some colourful and astute ‘wheeling and dealing’, which did not always endear him, nevertheless he acquired considerable esteem and some obvious affection. In 1906 he was appointed to the Native Rank of Muhandiram (on the recommendation of the Government Agent, Mr Hellings) though the Hellings noted that Amarasuriya’s relations were vocally disappointed he had not been granted the higher title of Mudaliyar,\textsuperscript{31} an indication of just how significant these honorary titles were to individuals and to the advancement of community interests.

Thomas Amarasuriya vigorously pursued both his commercial and philanthropic interests and his particular interest in the English-medium education provided by Mahinda College was as much about its promotion of Buddhism as it was about the social and economic benefits to be

\textsuperscript{28} Diaries of the Galle Kachcheri (Government Agent-Southern Province) 25 May 1905 RG 43/13, (SLNA).
\textsuperscript{29} Roberts, M. Caste Conflict and Elite Formation. p220.
\textsuperscript{30} Diaries of the Galle Kachcheri 15 November 1905 RG 43/13, (SLNA). The franchise, which was limited to landed and educated, made such manipulation possible.
derived from such an education. The BTS agenda offered an opportunity for all these elements to be advanced in concert. While the degree of rigidity within the succession of colonial authorities regarding religion varied, in general, conversion and adherence to Christian faith assisted entry into social standing; by 1880 it was "almost essential for those who wished to join the ruling elite".32

There was thus no small measure of defiance in the determination of Amarasuriya and others to nominate a specifically Buddhist context for the westernised education they sought to harness to the advancement of their communal interests. The resurgence of Buddhist adherence took some courage as it did not necessarily align with the demands of pure self-interest. The temptation would have been to succumb to the centrifugal forces of social fissure and adopt, as many earlier had, a separate religious identity in Christian conversion, a move that would have severed them from the rigidity of traditional Sinhala social stratification. This had taken place earlier with the Karava and other non-Goyigama becoming significant targets of Portuguese Catholic conversion, so Buddhist adherence was both a statement of communal or caste position, and alignment within the Sinhala community as a whole.

Some elite non-Goyigama families did, in fact, manage an odd balance of outward Christian adherence and retained traditional practice33 but the

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31 Diaries of the Galle Kachcheri 9 November 1906 RG 43/14, (SLNA). Mudaliyar was originally a chief headman but by the mid-nineteenth century was only an honorary title. Muhandiram was an assistant to a Mudaliyar, though again, had, by the mid-nineteenth century, become an honorary title.

32 Gombrich & Obeyesekere Buddhism Transformed p 202. The holding of public office under the Dutch had required Christian adherence and while this requirement was not removed by the British until 1858, it remained a de facto qualification. See, Bayly, CA. Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830 (London: Longman 1989) p212. Ames "The Impact of Western Education..." p31.

33 See Pieris, P.E Notes on Some Sinhalese Families, Part IV: Ilangakon. (Colombo: Times of Ceylon Company, ND.) This dual adherence is particularly odd to Christians whose faith officially
fact that many chose to remain within the centripetal forces of social cohesion and Buddhist origin says much for their tenacity and accounts for their attraction to the efforts of the Theosophical Society. A Buddhist religious revival was well in train by the late nineteenth century, but there seems little doubt that the presence of the Theosophical Society and the hundreds of Buddhist Theosophical Society schools they formed over the years, became significant vehicles for the advancement of Buddhism and had a profound impact on the standing of Buddhist faith among the Sinhala people.

**Economics and Religion in Tandem.**

There is a tendency in the West to view Buddhism in Ceylon as a static entity, a view reinforced by the insistence by many Sinhala that Theravada is an uncontaminated and original Buddhism. In fact, Buddhism in Ceylon has historically encountered periods of decline and renewal, including a period of Mahayana influence, all of which have altered the shape and emphasis of Sinhala Buddhism. Such decline was sufficiently significant to require the renewal of the higher ordination, *upasampada*, and the lineage[34] within the *sangha* (monastic order) from outside Ceylon on a number of historical occasions.[35] While the Buddhist renewal of the nineteenth century, to which the Theosophical Society

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[34] Lineage- the concept of unbroken connection through many teachers and higher ordained monks, back to the Buddha, is an extremely important concept within Indian and Sri Lankan culture. It ensures an authenticity and authority of doctrine, handed down in 'unaltered' form through countless generations. This derives from the nature of oral culture that preserves through strict memorisation and repetition. The endless recurrence of initial stock phrases and numerical recurrence in Buddhist scriptures, attests to its oral origin. The continued reverence accorded Woodward today in Sri Lanka is similarly an aspect of this respect for lineage.


contributed, was built on changes occurring in the economic and social fabric, they were part of a continuum of historical renovation and renewal of Buddhism in Ceylon.

What was significant about the many new monastic fraternities or nikaya, that proliferated from about 1802 onwards, was that caste rather than doctrine characterised their establishment. The central Siyam (Siam) Nikaya, aligned with the Kandyan kings, was a Goyigama preserve, monopolising religious power by largely restricting recruitment to the Goyigama. The attempt by the Goyigama establishment in Kandy to deny higher ordination in 1765 to non-Goyigama in the Low Country led to considerable resistance and eventually to higher ordination being taken directly in Burma or Siam which required the economic resources of entrepreneurial caste members with their rising economic status.

The Buddhist Revival was, to some extent, “the religious expression of the improved economic and social status” of the non-Goyigama castes; temporal change sought reflection in the religious institutions, indeed, “the alliance between trade and religion was strong”, a relationship not unknown in Christian Europe. This struggle by the non-Goyigama stamped a reformist tendency on their activities, and with it an emphasis

Higher ordination was renewed from outside Ceylon, four times from Burma in the eleventh, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; once from India in the thirteenth century; and from Siam in 1753.

36Ames “Westernization or Modernization” p159.
37The first group, a Salagama group from Welitara, went to Burma in 1799-1803. A Salagama group from Dadalla near Galle went 1807-09; a Karava group 1807-10; a Durava group 1807-13; a Salagama group 1811. Source: Roberts p136. This movement led to the formation of a new Buddhist fraternity known now as the Amarapura Nikaya which is a loose federation of caste based groups. A further split occurred in 1862 when the priest Ambagahawatte broke away from the Amarapura to form the third significant group, the Ramanya Nikaya, originally based at Dodanduwa near Galle, and particularly dominated by the Karava.
on a lay involvement with historical antecedent. The expropriation of monastic lands by the Portuguese, necessitated that Low Country monks establish close connections with the laity quite different from the isolated Kandyan Kingdom with its undiminished monastic wealth. This difference in the evolution of monastic tradition formed a foundation for the close connection, in the nineteenth century, between the new fraternities of the Maritime Low Country provinces and their lay economic sponsors.

It is not surprising that the reformist zeal that saw the reconstruction of Buddhist institutions in the Maritime provinces to rival Kandyan hegemony sought further expression in nationalist political rivalry with colonial authority. It was the logical corollary of a reformist impulse and it is not surprising that the new Nikaya, or monastic fraternities, (and their lay supporters) "were among the vanguard regiments of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism ranged in opposition to the British government and Christian missions." However, as Wickremeratne points out, the nationalist manifestations of the Buddhist Revival were "frankly more sectarian than national", focused more on caste stratification and antagonism to missionary activity than nationalist objectives.

The issues alluded to were not simply 'historical' and remote. Woodward was to write to the then President of the Pali Text Society, Caroline Rhys Davids in 1935 enclosing comments written to him by an obviously non-Goyigama ex-pupil about the Siam Sect bhikkhus, who only recruited from the Goyigama. He told Woodward the bhikkhus,

40 Roberts, M. Caste Conflict and Elite Formation. p138.
have deteriorated to an alarming extent. They now drive about in bullock-drawn carriages, deal in money, and even handle coins, from which, if I am right, they are prohibited. Why do they encourage caste distinctions in extending upasampada [higher ordination] only to those born in the Goigama [sic] community? Do the rest not fear samsara? Was not Upali, a barber?42

The principal intention of the nineteenth century Buddhist Revival was to ‘restore’ Buddhism to some imagined pre-existing pristine ‘purity’, as Ames43 describes it aptly, a “back to the Buddha movement”, with all the fundamentalist nuances such suggests. As with all efforts at re-inventing tradition, however, there is absolutely no suggestion of innovation though the ‘restoration’ is inevitably novel with “something old, something borrowed and something new.”44 From seventeenth century European sects through to the present, such movements tend to stress laicisation, a ‘back to basics’ faith, and an individual scriptural interpretation that sometimes borders on spiritual hubris.

As Hobsbawm points out, recruitment is from those at the social margins and critical borderlands, those who stand “between the rich and powerful on one side [and] the masses of the traditional society on the other: i.e. among those...about to rise into the middle class.”45 As has been described earlier, the attraction is not principally among the ignorant and unlearned, but among the educated and newly upwardly mobile, who seek psychological certainty in a life narrative otherwise fraught with change.

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42 Letter FL Woodward to CA Rhys Davids 16 January 1935 (FOSL). The alarm would be even greater today. Some complain about the Mahathera of the Siam Sect being given a Mercedes by the government! The issues remain. Upali was a principal disciple of the Buddha, from the lowly barber cast.

43 Ames Westernization or Modernization p161.

44 Ames Westernization or Modernization p162.

45 Hobsbawm, E. The Age of Revolution, Europe 1789-1848 (London: Cardinal, 1962.) p270. Hobsbawm is describing 17th century European sects, but application to the Buddhist Revival is apt.
and alteration. Adherents of the Theosophical Society, like Woodward, tended to exhibit such characteristics, and in their interface with the Buddhist Revival, found the familiar, something not entirely Other but of the Self as well. In a sense they were more than qualified to articulate the well-springs of that Revival, which occasionally found expression in their acolytes, like Anagarika Dharmapala.

**Myth & Self: the Case of Anagarika Dharmapala.**
A central consequence of colonial intrusion, with its imposition of inferiority on subject cultures, is the dislocation of traditional Self valuation and identity. Prior to European occupation Sinhala ethnicity and Buddhism were synonymous identifiers, without distinguishing terms like ‘Buddhist’ to define an adherence separate from ethnicity. With the advent of Christian conversion the terms drifted and a Self-conscious necessity arose to define Self and ethno-cultural identity. Myth, as Obeyesekere emphasises, has always been a powerful determiner of Sinhala identity and the attempts to define or redefine identity in the aftermath of European colonisation became sourced within the pivotal mix of myth and history of the *Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa* and *Culavamsa*,46 the Chronicles of Sri Lanka produced by monks (the educated elite of the time). Significantly they are written in Pali, which is a scriptural, not a living language, thus lending the Chronicles a timeless air of authority.

The significance of the Chronicles is that they constantly equate the destiny of the *Sasana* (the Buddhist dispensation) with that of the Sinhala

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46 The *Dipavamsa* was probably written in the 4th century and the *Mahavamsa* in the 5th century. The *Culavamsa* was probably composed in the 13th century with subsequent additions in the 14th and 18th centuries.
people, emphasising Lanka as the refuge of Buddhism in its purist form. The purpose of ‘history’ within the Chronicles is to link ‘events’ to a narrative occupied with the advancement and preservation of the Dharma, much as British history of the nineteenth century is a narrative unfolding of the ‘destiny’ of the British people - the historiography is really not so dissimilar. Obeyesekere describes the Chronicles as ‘historical myth’, to emphasise the melding of purpose, but whereas, for example, the Arthurian myth has ceased to define English identity, the myths of the Chronicles “remain part of the current beliefs of the Sinhalese people”.

This is important in placing Woodward in a specifically Sri Lankan, rather than Western, historical context, for part of the persistent reverence accorded Woodward to this day in Sri Lanka, lies not his person, but in his role. It is his contribution as a Buddhist educator, advancing the dharma, that establishes his significance, not the fact that he was a fine educator, or unusual person with any other message. In this sense the text is all; the sub-text is without interest. History is handmaiden to the destiny of the Sasana. And the legend surrounding Woodward’s exertions- the ‘stories’- is what matters, not the ‘facts’.

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48 Roberts, Raheem & Colin-Thome The People Inbetween: The Burghers and the Middle Class in the Transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790’s-1960’s (Colombo: Saravodaya Book Publishing Services, 1989) p32. The Mahavamsa tells that on the Buddha’s death (Parinibbana) he summoned Sakka, king of the gods and told him that Vijaya will come to Lanka and “In Lanka, Lord of Gods, will my religion be established, therefore carefully protect him with his followers and Lanka.” (Mahavamsa Geiger trans. 1950. p55) This is the concept of Dhammadipa (lit. ‘dharma island’ or ‘dharma light’- ‘dipa’ is ambiguous in this compound), the special destiny of Lanka that permeates the Chronicles.
49 Obeyesekere “The Vicissitudes of Sinhala-Buddhist Identity ...” p280.
50 I am again indebted to Dr Vitharana for making this clear.
The same applies to the figure of Anagarika Dharmapala, the important nationalist and Buddhist revivalist figure of the early twentieth century, who more than any other resorted to the Chronicles for source and definition of cultural identity. While he originated from Matara in the southern province, Dharmapala was raised by his Goyigama parents in Colombo where the elite was principally Protestant. Though he was from a traditional elite caste, he was nevertheless displaced by geographic translocation, a displacement exacerbated by the contrast of a mixed Catholic and Protestant education set against a traditional Buddhist religious home life dominated by an adoring Buddhist mother. The conflict and dislocation was resolved through the adoption of a particularly puritanical ‘Protestant’ Buddhism, powerfully influenced by Olcott, Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, which nurtured his religious education and career until the inevitable break with his sponsors.

Dharmapala’s Buddhism relied on elements of reaction formation within his own early intolerant Christian education and drew heavily on Olcott’s elevation of lay involvement, which both emulated Protestant inclinations and indigenous historical antecedent. The laicism Olcott emphasised, while it echoed Low Country monastic evolution, was nevertheless innovative, and Dharmapala’s forceful lay advocacy advanced this emphasis within Sinhala Buddhism. He himself did not become a monk until late in life and he remained first and foremost the model of an activist layman, an intermediate personage between traditional householder and monk roles. His fervent renunciation was not often imitated but he was nevertheless the significant model of many lay advocates.
The Buddhism Dharmapala advocated was akin to the 'creole' Buddhism Prothero ascribes to Olcott, and which, given Olcott's influence, is not surprising. The 'creolisation' analogy doesn't quite fit Dharmapala since the 'deep structure', the 'grammar' of his life narrative was obviously Buddhist not Protestant. It was, though, the 'reaction formation' to his childhood influence of a Protestant and Catholic education profoundly antagonistic to his Buddhist origin, that made Olcott's 'creole' Buddhism extremely resonant.

Where Prothero's analogy gains application, however, is in the inherited nineteenth century European chauvinism, racism and puritanical Victorian morality, that dominated the early life narrative of Dharmapala and his contemporaries. Extending Prothero's analogy, Dharmapala borrowed the 'grammar' of nineteenth century European imperial intolerance and racial superiority while retaining a Buddhist, nationalist and anti-imperial 'vocabulary'. In Dharmapala a nineteenth century imperial bigotry was cryogenically preserved into the late twentieth century by its permeation of Sinhala ideology.

Dharmapala attempted to recreate a national identity based on the fusion of Sinhala/Buddhist identities, drawing on the authority of the Chronicles, and the link between the destiny of the Sasana and the Sinhala people. But he also extended this 'authority' to countenance racial intolerance. He spoke disparagingly of other ethnicities, describing Tamils as hädi

51 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*

52 Traditional Sinhala marriage did not necessarily compel monogamy, as far as it is known, and was more relaxed about 'divorce' and remarriage but by the late nineteenth century the Victorian moral code stamped most colonial societies and strict monogamy was the norm, an aspect firmly imprinted on the Buddhist Revival. The attraction to Temperance as a cause also indicated the legacy of Victorian morality, again picked up from, reversed, and turned on Christian intrusion, another example of 'reaction formation'. Victorian morality's permeation of colonial culture is described elegantly in:-
demalu (filthy Tamils) and counselling against ‘mixing’ (caste, colour or ethnicity). Even the term “Aryan”,53 which had shed its racial connotations in general parlance and had assumed a generic meaning of “noble” or exalted, he occasionally restored to its racial meaning.54

The responsibility for the formation and spread of ‘Protestant’ Buddhism in the nineteenth century is disputed by commentators. The prominence given to Olcott and the Theosophists by writers like Conze and Prothero is understandably disputed by Sinhala commentators like Malalgoda,55 who, correctly, points to a revival well under way before Olcott, spearheaded by proselytisers like Mohottivatte Gunananda at, and even before, the Panadure Debates.56

Buddhists were by no means dormant before the arrival of the Theosophists; in fact the Theosophists were enthusiastically welcomed and absorbed into the Buddhist movement precisely because the Buddhists were already active at the time of arrival.57

Obeyesekere58 sees Dharmapala as the person who successfully took Olcott’s conception of Buddhism and formed it firmly into the definitive Buddhist narrative of the twentieth century, though his elaboration revealed “a dark underside of Buddhism without the mitigating humanism

Hyam, Ronald. Empire and Sexuality
53 “Aryan” is used extensively in Buddhist scripture eg ‘Aryan Eightfold Path’, where “Aryan” is generally rendered as ‘Noble’. Masefield, in Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), argues the original use of “Aryan” entailed a racial connotation that was lost in the geographical spread of Buddhism.
55 Malalgoda Buddhism in Sinhalese Society p256ff.
56 A series of debates between Christians and Buddhists had taken place in the 1860s, spearheaded by personalities like Mohottivatte, and culminating in the 1873 debate where over 10,000 attended. This last was significant in that it was perceived as a Buddhist ‘win’. Mohottivatte was an unusual monk in that he eschewed the usual monkish persona of calm introversion and became an articulate and forceful advocate - again much in emulation of the Christian missionary style.
57 Malalgoda p256.
58 Obeyesekere “The Vicissitudes of Sinhala”
of the Buddhist conscience".\(^{59}\) In Obeyesekere’s view “Olcott .... might not have had as powerful an effect on Sinhala-Buddhist thought but for the fact that he had a Sinhala disciple [Dharmapala] to continue his work and popularize it.”\(^{60}\)

The truth probably lies in a combination of factors. Dharmapala’s vociferousness certainly made him ‘heard’ but also made him an ideal figure for post-colonial elevation and manufacture into nationalist hero beyond his actual importance. After all, he spent most of the time, after 1915, away from Ceylon. For the same nationalist reasons, Olcott probably has attracted some levelling. The reality was that an indigenous revival in reaction to, and emulating Christian doctrine and methodology was certainly well under way before Olcott. It was Olcott who added ‘spin’ with his journalistic and organisational skills, as well as the novelty of his own white European adherence to Buddhism. It was Olcott who shaped and focused the Buddhist Revival, with such instruments as his Buddhist Catechism,\(^{61}\) that essentialised Buddhist doctrine for easy transmission, and the multi-coloured Buddhist flag that added symbolic focus.

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\(^{59}\) Obeyesekere “Buddhism and Consciousness” p 238. Obeyesekere goes on the suggest that “Without that conscience and humanism, Buddhism must become a religion that has betrayed the heritage of its founder.”- which is a dark assessment indeed of the legacy of Dharmapala who is seen as a national hero.

\(^{60}\) Obeyesekere “Buddhism and Consciousness” p 226.

\(^{61}\) Olcott’s Catechism, painstakingly assembled to satisfy all Buddhist sectarian opinion, was translated into 22 languages and went into over 40 editions. It was used extensively in schools and was extremely innovative for Buddhism, but nevertheless a ‘straight steal’ from Christian practice with an extremely laicised slant. In it he describes Buddhism as a faith “without rites, prayers, penances, priest or intercessory saints.”- a very Protestant vision. [Olcott, H.S. The Buddhist Catechism (Colombo: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, n.d) p4.] The Buddhist flag, made up of Nila (blue), Pita (yellow) Lohita (red) Odata (white) Manjesta (orange) and Prabhasvara (a mix of the other five colours) remains a ubiquitous presence in temples and towns in Sri Lanka to this day. There is some dispute over Olcott’s ‘authorship’, though the idea and size and shape of final version seems to have been his. The designer seems to have been Carolis Gunerwardena (b 1854), a member of the BTS who was from Matara, in the south and a relation of Dharmapala.
Olcott’s efforts, like Woodward’s, would have been of absolutely no consequence without a fundamental indigenous receptivity, a fortuitous combination of time and place. It was Dharmapala who added the language of extremism Olcott or Woodward could never muster, the “violent anti-Christian, anti-missionary, anti-colonial polemic”, the ideology necessary to torch the psychologically resonant “dark underside” that spoke the needs of people in transition, the village intelligentsia:

schoolteachers, monks, ayurvedic [traditional] physicians, various types of government officials, representatives of local bodies (‘village committees’). They lived in the village but did not belong to the peasant class. They were educated in Sinhala schools, had high aspirations for themselves and their children, but were cut off from the sources of political and economic power.

These were not only the people who in 1956 spearheaded the chauvinist shift in Sri Lankan politics with the election of the Bandaranaike government, they were also the people attracted to the elite schools taught by people like Woodward, and while Obeyesekere emphasises the proselytising worth of Anagarika Dharmapala, it was:

primarily through the ..[BTS]. school that modern Buddhism (that is, the Western conception of Buddhism) diffused into the society and became the basic religious ideology of the educated Buddhist bourgeoisie.

Olcott and Dharmapala undoubtedly shaped and furthered an existing Buddhist Revival, promoting a westernised ‘Protestant’ Buddhism but, "Institutionally, this transfer was effected through the Buddhist schools." Without this additional and critically pervasive layer of

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62 Obeyesekere “Buddhism and Consciousness” p 238.
63 Obeyesekere “The Vicissitudes of Sinhala-Buddhist Identity..” p303.
64 Obeyesekere “The Vicissitudes of Sinhala-Buddhist Identity ” p308.
65 Obeyesekere “Buddhism and Consciousness” p 233.
66 Obeyesekere “Buddhism and Consciousness” p 239. My emphasis.
formation and transfer, this laicised, ‘Protestant’ Buddhism may not have so effectively pervaded the educated elite and penetrated society and Sinhala culture to the extent it did. Additionally, when one talks of ‘Buddhist schools’ at this time, one is really talking about the Buddhist Theosophical Society schools like Mahinda College and people like FL Woodward.

Dharmapala clearly recognised the schools as primary nodes of influence and visited many, including Mahinda College, as he did, in October 1906, when he came to speak to students at Woodward’s invitation. Dharmapala became the radical face of the Buddhist Revival, a role enhanced after 1915 when he was effectively exiled from Ceylon and became more potent as a martyred exile than local agitator. But however strident Dharmapala became, the Buddhism Revival was considerably more complex than the articulation of one man’s views and the symbol of his defiance. Dissemination of the values of the Revival, as Obeyesekere suggests, relied critically on the BTS Buddhist schools.

Woodward, Education and the BTS Influence.
On the surface at least, Woodward’s motivation contrasted dramatically with the usual imperial intent. Far from attempting to convert the ‘natives’, Woodward’s purpose seemed directed at reinforcing indigenous religious values and valorising the Buddhist faith to give it strength to withstand the onslaught of Christian proselytising. While there were many traditional pansala (temple) schools, several important pirivenas (monastic ‘colleges’) and, at the turn of the century, even a number of western style schools managed by wealthy lay Buddhists, the fact

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68 Ames, “The Impact of Western Education……” p31. By 1896 some 27 schools were sponsored by philanthropic lay Buddhists while the BTS had 63 registered under its name.
nevertheless remains that the Buddhist Theosophical Society (BTS) was the sole ‘Buddhist’ organisation attempting to compete with the missionaries in the specific provision of elite, Westernised, English-medium schools. Herein lies the significance of the BTS schools like Mahinda College and of Woodward in particular, for the influence of such schools and their headmasters was often disproportionate to their apparent reach and size.

The significance of the BTS contribution, and that of people like Woodward, extended well beyond the realm of the school yard, because, as Hobsbawm points out, the history of Third World transformation in the twentieth century “is the history of elite minorities, and sometimes relatively minute ones”69 with disproportionate influence on the shape of national agendas. The BTS, in their schools, shaped that rising elite with a unique blend of western values, English language and a reconstructed laicised Buddhism, which in turn made the influence of the schools on national and social transformation considerably greater than the apparent magnitude of their efforts.

While its purpose was ostensibly to stem the tide of missionary zeal, the Theosophical Society was clearly in the business of social construction, building a ‘Buddhist’ and civic agenda that both opposed and emulated the Christian ‘civilising’ mission. While ‘radical’ for the time, the TS agenda harboured inevitable cultural assumptions. People like Woodward were unavoidably English and Victorian, motivated by values and beliefs emanating from the same context of imperialism and Victorian morality as animated their missionary counterparts, values that included an

69 Hobsbawm Age of Extremes p202.
acceptance of 'progress' and an assumption that European, and more particularly, English culture stood at the summit of 'civilisation'.

They were almost inescapable values, so 'self evident', in fact, they were accepted too, "as a simple matter of fact" even by most early Sinhala writers. What is remarkable about Woodward, Olcott, and other TS acolytes, was the degree that they diverged from the hegemony of imperial opinion to assert the validity of indigenous culture and belief, a position of assumed orthodoxy today, but one requiring some imagination and courage at what was then the height of imperial influence.

Other cultural encumbrances carried by Woodward, (and, Prothero suggests, by Olcott), were values derived from evangelical and Protestant origins, values that laid emphasis on the individual experience of faith and scripture, and the ascendancy of the laity in the propagation of religion. These aspects slipped between the interstices to indelibly define their Buddhism, appropriately described by Obeyesekere as 'Protestant Buddhism'. These facets were reflected in Woodward's approach, in his affirmation of a laicised 'Protestant Buddhism' and his commitment to education as a vehicle of social and national elevation.

It is significant that education was the principal instrument of the BTS in Ceylon and a logical one given their reformist inclinations. Their first educational venture saw the opening of nine Buddhist Sunday schools in Colombo in 1880, an effort emulating the public education movement in Britain which lead to the Education Act and compulsory elementary education. The emergence of mass education in the late nineteenth

71 Ames "Westernization or Modernization" p159.
century was not seen simply as a benign good within accepted social policy but as a vehicle of social transformation focused on the establishment of national coherence, consciousness and advancement, another element in defining the then evolving nation state.

The belief in education’s potential for social engineering was appropriated by both radical and conservative forces. In continental Europe expanding secular education was often linked with socialist and anti-clerical ideology and was regarded with justifiable suspicion by conservative clericalists. Missionaries and colonial administrators, on the other hand, saw education as a potentially conforming instrument they hoped to harness for their own ends, to subdue and Christianise the populace.

The Theosophical Society assumed a ‘progressive’ position that acknowledged the transformational potential of education. Paradoxically, given the impact by BTS schools on elite formation, the ideology of their efforts was generally couched in democratic terminology. ‘Progress’ was not to be confined to the few, but a careful reading of the subtext reveals middle class aspiration does not necessarily include the seething masses. Woodward, who remained an unrepentant elitist,\(^\text{72}\) encapsulates this paradox in an article written in the *Journal of the Ceylon University Association*, the official publication of an organisation whose membership included many early Ceylonese\(^\text{73}\) nationalist leaders like Woodward’s friend, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam,\(^\text{74}\) and which was instituted to agitate for the establishment of a local university.


\(^\text{73}\)Ceylonese is used here to include all ethnicities, not just Sinhala.

\(^\text{74}\)Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam was an important nationalist and Tamil leader and co-founder with another of Woodward’s friends, Sir James Peiris, of the Ceylon National Congress in 1919. Like many of the early moderate nationalists, he was committed to democratic ideals and inter-communal
Woodward saw higher education as an “activity that must prevail among
the majority of the population” and not be “confined merely to the upper
classes”. Along with this apparent democratic intent, education “must be
connected with and derive its vigour from the people of the country” and
in this manner fulfil nationalist objectives. Woodward’s intention was
plain, “My object is to train patriots for Ceylon”. It was an intention
with social and political overtones, a transformational intention which
exceeded the role of simple educator, an aspect that marked much
Theosophical Society effort, and the BTS schools in particular.

The transformational potential of the BTS schools established by Olcott
will always remain conjectural, though, if the Jesuit boast that given the
boy at seven they can show you the man, has any validity, then the
potency of such schools cannot be underestimated. Prothero,
understandably, sees Olcott’s educational efforts in Ceylon as
“remarkably successful.” Others, like Wickremeratne, are sceptical, and
see the regard granted to Olcott and the Theosophical Society as an
“exaggerated reaction” simply indicating the “ascendancy which Olcott
had established over the minds of ...Buddhist leaders”. Whatever the
case, BTS schools became a principal means of disseminating a valorised
Buddhist message throughout society by way of an inculcated, influential

tolerance and harmony. They were close friends and Woodward would often stay at “Waga”, Sir
Ponnambalam Arunachalam’s country home. He wrote a foreword to Woodward’s translation of the
Dhammapada and was sometimes invited to address the students of Mahinda College. While he was
sympathetic to Theosophy, like many at that time, he was never formally associated with the TS.

1909.

Roberts, N. Galle. As Quiet as Asleep p153.


Wickremeratne, L.A. Religion, Nationalism, and Social Change in Ceylon p6. This seems a odd
piece of obverse imperial thinking, assuming, in effect, that Buddhist leaders were insufficiently
astute not to be overawed by the Olcott charisma, which sells them short indeed.
elite, and their efforts cannot be underestimated in an imperial system antagonistic to race and indigenous religion.

By 1905, the Buddhist Theosophical Society had 14 government funded 'grant-in-aid' English-medium schools and 141 'grant-in-aid' vernacular schools, compared with a total of 127 Christian denomination English-medium schools and 666 Christian vernacular schools. The BTS effort appears modest in comparison with the Christian juggernaut but there is some discrepancy among authors as to just how significant the BTS commitment was, though it is generally agreed about 7% to 8% of government registered and aided schools around 1900 were Buddhist, depending on which figures are used. Confining the assessment, however, to government 'grant-in-aid' schools, which had to attain certain standards to achieve funding and were as a result fairly stable, the BTS accounts for about 11% of English-medium schools and over 21% of vernacular schools by 1905. This was very nearly the entire non-Christian educational effort attracting government funding, with the exception of a small number of Hindu and Moor schools, and makes the BTS effort more significant than it first appears.

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79 Ceylon Administrative Reports 1905 Vol.II, Pt.iv, pA42.

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80 See Jayaweera “Religious Organisations and the State in Ceylonese education” Comparative Education Review, 12 (June, 1968) Table 1, p.163 and Table 2 p.168.


Ames, M. “Westernization or Modernization Table 2 p.167. [Ames’ estimates are based on the above two authors]
A somewhat different picture emerges when taking into account all 'registered' schools. By 1908, according to figures in the Report of the General Manager of Buddhist Schools, the BTS with 183 schools accounted for 11% of registered schools and 14% of all pupils, though if account is taken of registered 'private' schools - some 206 - which were primarily in fact, Buddhist, then the percentage of generically Buddhist schools would be considerably elevated.\(^8\)

However one weighs the statistics, the area of 'grant-in-aid' is the most significant because standards, stability and finance were more assured. In the area of vernacular 'grant-in-aid' education, the BTS penetration was significant, and even in the area of English-medium education its contribution was impressive, particularly as these were the core institutions of elite formation, which is what really matters in respect of authority, influence and affect. The importance of English-medium schools such as Mahinda College can be judged by the fact that until well after Independence, "education at an English-medium school was the sole point of entry to the ruling elite."\(^8^2\)

The small band of Europeans like Olcott and Woodward who were prepared to publicly promote Buddhism and to build educational institutions to further its dissemination, contributed immeasurably to the resurgence and shape of Buddhism in Ceylon. The particular 'Protestant',\(^8^3\) proselytising, puritanical edge of the late nineteenth century

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\(^8^1\)"Buddhist Schools in Ceylon: Report of the General Manager of Buddhist Schools for the Year 1908, Colombo Buddhist Theosophical Society", *Journal of the Ceylon University Association* February 1909, p131-133. Total Registered Schools: 1680 (No. of pupils 171235). Total BTS schools: 183 (No. of pupils 23975). Of these only 18 BTS schools were English-Medium schools.

\(^8^2\) Gombrich & Obeyesekere *Buddhism Transformed* p208.

\(^8^3\) Malalgoda *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society* p191ff. The influence of Protestant missionary activity on the response and shape of Buddhism is discussed at length, though the term "Protestant Buddhism" was coined by Obeyesekere.
Buddhist Revival, which made it look remarkably like Victorian high morality, was formed partly in reaction to, and partly in emulation of, Christian forms and methods. Certainly Olcott had no hesitation in consciously employing the tactics of the Christians - schools and the printing press - against them, and the kind of Buddhism that evolved and was promoted in BTS schools like Mahinda College, was not strictly an orthodox or "traditional Buddhism but the spirit of a new rational and reformed Buddhism" which spread through society to become, as Obeyesekere emphasises, "the basic religious ideology of the educated Buddhist bourgeoisie".

Laicisation and Scriptural Access.
FL Woodward, in particular, through his involvement in the translation of Pali scriptures, made an especially important contribution to the reconstruction and spread of the Buddhist Revival. While there is a significant presence of Pali words in Sinhala, the languages are remote, and for the laity (and even many monks) Pali was largely unintelligible. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century very few Pali texts, printed in Pali or translated into Sinhala, were publicly available. Even when Sinhala translations of Pali texts began to appear, they tended to be written, not the demotic Sinhala of the ordinary person, but in classical high Sinhala, which, as Woodward suggested, was "almost equivalent to the average Englishman’s reading Chaucer with ease."

84 The first to employ the press, the Lankopakara Press of Galle in 1862, was the leading anti-Christian polemicist of the 1860's and 1870's, Mohottivatte Gunananda, who with delicious irony, bought an old Wesleyan Mission press to print anti-Christian tracts. See Malalgoda Buddhism in Sinhalese Society p188 and 191ff and Ames, M. "Westernization or Modernization.
86 Obeyesekere, G. "Buddhism and Consciousness" p292.
87 FL Woodward to IB Horner 30 January 1950. (FOSL)
Texts were preserved, as they are to this day, in monasteries, hand inscribed on ola (palm) leaf manuscripts, in appearance much like compressed venetian blinds. General public access was principally possible only through the editions and translations of the Pali Text Society, to which Woodward significantly contributed, and these became, for the educated Sinhala laity, “the main path of access to the Canon”.

Woodward provided English translations for his pupils, particularly of the Dhammapada, a collection of Buddhist aphorisms (not dissimilar to those expressed by Woodward’s favoured hero, Marcus Aurelius), and also facilitated access to scriptures by formally introducing Pali into the curriculum. On Woodward’s insistence, Pali was eventually included, by the Dept. of Public Instruction, on the Cambridge Entrance Exams, which had a ‘subversive’ significance Woodward obviously perceived, as he wrote to CA Rhys Davids,

I am glad that Ceylon Pali Candidates for exams are learning our up-to-date ‘Buddhism’ - The bhikkhus will be frantic!

Similarly, Mrs Musaeus Higgins of Musaeus College, Colombo, another BTS school, this time for girls, also produced an English translation of the popular Jataka, for which Woodward wrote a generous foreword, and she created plays and stories based on historic and religious themes that were performed in BTS schools.

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88 Gombrich, R & Obeyesekere, G Buddhism Transformed p 210. Gombrich’s opinion is probably not entirely unbiased - at the time of writing (1997) he was President of the Pali Text Society.
89 Letter FL Woodward to CA Rhys Davids, 23 October 1933. (FOSL)
90 Higgins, M.M, Jatakamala (Colombo: Lake House Bookshop, ND but originally about 1914) The Jataka is a series of stories purportedly about the Buddha’s previous births.
91 Musaeus-Higgins, M. Stories from the History of Ceylon (Parts I & II) (Colombo: Lake House, 1999) It is noteworthy that these works remain in demand and in print.
Woodward promoted a laicised Buddhism in his school, not only through the example of his own abstemious behaviour, but also through the teaching of Buddhism and Pali, and the provision of English translations of Pali texts to his students and to the public (through English journals and papers). It is a particularly odd aspect of nineteenth and early twentieth century Ceylonese history, that lay access to Christian scripture was through tracts in Sinhala, while lay access to Buddhist scriptures was principally through English translations, which adds considerable significance to the promotion of Buddhism through the English-medium BTS schools.

Laicisation of Buddhism in the nineteenth century, arising both from historical aspects of Low Country Buddhism and the emulation of Protestantism, was a key shift in Buddhism from a virtuoso to mass religion. This new attitude, and access by the laity to the scriptures, diminished reliance on local monks and their interpretation of scripture, furthering lay command of their own faith. The quality of learning among bhikkhus varied significantly, from the impressive to the abysmal, and the renewal of Buddhism among the laity in turn affected a re-examination of doctrine within the sangha.

Woodward always maintained good relations with the local bhikkhus and the monasteries, and valued Buddhist scholars like the Venerable Buddhaddatta but, privately, he believed that bhikkhus, “except for one or two, are useless duds”92 and looked forward, in his particular vision of Buddhism, to their demise.

....monks nowadays are ‘crustaceous’ and when the Bodhisattva appears (as is hoped in not so many years from what I hear)-

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92 Woodward to IB Horner 3 May 1951, IB Horner Collection- box 14.(FOSL) Woodward's emphasis.
monks will vanish. Already you see X’ian parsons wearing the last remnant of sanctity (dog-collar) which is curiously paralleled in Anagata-Vamsa- which says in times to come monks will wear just a little scrap of yellow cloth, not the robes.93

This attitude exhibits a religious view in considerable contrast to the emphases of traditional Theravadin Buddhism and echoes Olcott’s view that indigenous Buddhism was often ‘debased’,94 and Besant’s view that Ceylonese Buddhists had sometimes ‘perverted’95 the true teachings of the Buddha. Despite its support of Buddhism, the Theosophical Society harboured an imperial arrogance that it knew best what Buddhism ‘really’ was. So like others in the Theosophical Society, Woodward was not a simply an advocate of religious revival but a patron of a quite different approach, one emphasising, for the laity, an individual path in contrast to the prevailing orthodox reliance on the guidance of the sangha.

While to the average Christian this view seems unremarkable, Woodward’s view contrasted significantly with the prevailing Buddhism based as a monastic priority.96 Generally, it was held, ‘householders’, or the laity generally, could not hope to become an arahant, an ‘enlightened saint’, but must wait for the opportunity of another life-time to devote themselves to the cultivation of Path, almost certainly within the community of monks (which then and now presents an ambivalent attitude towards women). The sangha was seen as the principal vehicle and

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93 Woodward to IB Horner 20 January 1950. IB Horner Collection- box 14 (FOSL). Woodward’s emphasis. This antagonism towards monks was, I found, noticeable among activist Buddhist laity even today, though expressed sotto voce. The reference here to the Bodhisatva is to the belief in a future Metteyya Buddha. Woodward’s expectation of these events- “from what I hear”- has a millenarian feel and indicates a firmly held view within his circle. The Anagata-Vamsa is a text that talks of the future of Buddhism and foreshadows a decline and degeneration in the priesthood.


means of seeking Nibbana, a corner stone of Theravadin Buddhism as expressed in the triratna (the Triple Gem) wherein the adherent commits to taking 'refuge' in the Buddha, Dharma (doctrine), and Sangha (community of believers but more specifically, the monastic orders).

An emphasis on the laity thus represented a quite significant inflection on the prevailing form of Buddhism. It was reinforced by the extensive educational endeavours of BTS, the provision, by Woodward, of scriptural translations for students in BTS schools, and the inculcation, generally, by lay instruction.

**Mahinda College- Acceptance of Western Educational Ideology.**
The BTS schools, with their proselytising Buddhist intent, were originally formed in hope and enthusiasm but with little prospect of success. The Galle Theosophical Buddhist School was founded on 15 September 1880 in the wake of the first visit to Ceylon of Col. Olcott and Madam Blavatsky, a visit of great local curiosity and historical interest. After all, a pair of Europeans not only expressing support of Buddhism but prepared to take pansil (the 5 main precepts of Buddhism), was a statement not only of support but adherence, a gesture not lost on local people. The school, formed as a result of the enthusiasm whipped up by Olcott, opened with five hundred pupils but closed before the year was out, the enthusiasm dissipated and the much promised funds failing to materialise. This was the pattern of much of the early efforts that

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96 There is nothing preventing a householder becoming an arahant, but according to the Canon they must become a monk immediately. This does not prevent a householder achieving any of the earlier stages of enlightenment: 1. Stream Winner, 2. Once Returner, 3. Non-returner, 4. Arahant.

97This marked the particularly Buddhist phase of the Theosophical Society, which remained until Olcott's death in 1907. Thereafter under Besant, the Society took a more Hindu tack with digressions into a World Messiah movement and Liberal Catholicism (a kind of occult Christianity) under Leadbeater (though the only thing 'catholic' about the TS was its universal appropriation of religious ideas).

98See Wickremeratne, L.A. *Religion, Nationalism and Social Change in Ceylon, 1865-1885*
surrounded Olcott’s frequent forays into Ceylon - much promise but little fulfilment.

The school was opened again some ten years later in the early 1890s, but again it struggled to survive in an atmosphere of community indifference to the perceived value of an ‘English’ education. Unlike the radical ethos of social transformation associated with education in the west at the time, in Ceylon, education was generally seen as an extension of religious instruction and the preserve of the monasteries whose numerous associated pansala and pirivena ‘schools’99 had been the backbone of local instruction.

Sinhala education was intended to develop Buddhist moral and spiritual abilities; ‘knowledge’ was valued but ‘wisdom’ (pañña) based on intuition rather than reason, was the true goal of learning. Education was thus valued more for its Buddhist spiritual content and less for its practical utility: “crafts and trades were consequently less valued and frequently not taught within a strictly Buddhist monastic context.”100 This is not to suggest Buddhist education was inferior, in fact the literacy rate of Ceylon at the time the British first invaded in the eighteenth century was higher than in Britain itself.101 Apart from a successful mass education, Ceylon had also achieved real eminence as a centre for higher Buddhist learning, though it was elitist and primarily reserved for those with monastic

99Monastic schools were numerous though the quality in western terms (ie their ability to impart basic numeracy and literacy) was, with some exceptions, questionable.
100Ames, M. “The Impact of Western Education on Religion and Society in Ceylon” p 25.
intentions. It was based on the traditional authoritarian model, where a master apprenticed a select number of pupils.102

Embracing ‘English’ education entailed embracing a different definition of ‘education’ with a different methodology and ideological intention. Dr Bowles Daly, the founding Principal of Mahinda College, illustrates this contrast in his comments on pansala schools, which he described, with imperial arrogance, as unsatisfactory and wanting in every way, in organisation, materials, finances, discipline and “slovenly methods of teaching”.103 Any advance in social penetration and acceptance of ‘English’ education, thus required adoption of potent Western values and the ideology of Western education.

Two preconditions were essential for the success of an English-medium school; a receptive community, and personalities prepared to foster such an experiment. The rising economic success of the non-Goyigama in the nineteenth century, which entailed adoption of western capitalist motives, provided the first precondition. Personalities like Thomas Amarasuriya, a close friend of Olcott,104 who recognised the benefits to communal advancement of a Buddhist English-medium education, and were prepared to back it with management and money, provided the second.

Despite the story of Woodward’s invitation to take up the reins of Mahinda College having the heady feel of a colonial adventure, it was in fact an invitation couched in desperation. The College, which was re-

102 See, Mookerji, J.K. Ancient Indian Education (Brahmanical and Buddhist) (London: Macmillan, 1951.)
103 Daly, J Bowles. The Buddhist 3 (28) July 1891. p220. [The Buddhist was a Theosophical journal in Ceylon which Woodward edited from 1908-1912]
established in 1891 under the stewardship of Dr Bowles Daly LLD, continued to stumble. Bowles Daly remained only briefly as did a succession of mainly ‘native’ principals, and the school continued with declining enrolments and disquiet among supporters, until the arrival of Woodward. Given the background of flagging support and imminent collapse, the success of Woodward over his sixteen years as Principal can only be seen as an extraordinary tribute to his energies and ability. More than that, it was a tribute to his ability to convey successfully to the local community the advantages of a western style English-medium education, revealing it in terms pertinent to Buddhist and Sinhala national interests. Nevertheless, while Woodward’s efforts to build and sustain Mahinda College were remarkable, without an alignment with indigenous self-interest, he would never have succeeded.

104 On Olcott’s death his ashes were interred in a memorial set in a grove of king coconut palms planted by Muhandiram Thomas Amarasuriya at the TS headquarters in Madras where they evidently still remain today.