

The Messenger
of Light

Lucifer

Lucifer[®]

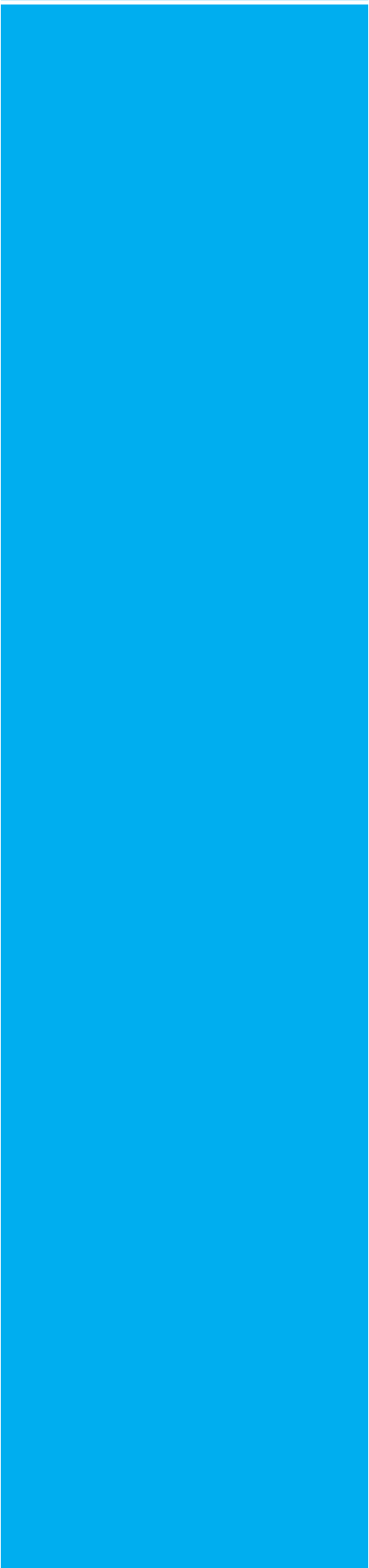
For seekers of Truth

Current topics viewed in the light of the Ancient Wisdom or Theo-sophia — the common source of all great world religions, philosophies and sciences

**I.S.I.S.
Symposium
2013**

**Practical
spirituality:
*beyond
matter,
in society***





Practical spirituality

beyond matter,

in society

I.S.I.S. Symposium, May 25-26, 2013, The Hague

Practical spirituality beyond matter, in society

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Introduction I.S.I.S. Symposium 2013

Practical spirituality beyond matter, in society

This third edition of *Lucifer – the Messenger of Light* is the printed version of the I.S.I.S Symposium that was organized on Saturday the 25th and Sunday the 26th of May 2013. Two interesting days full of lectures and workshops, in which participants actively shared ideas about what spirituality is, how they can recognize it and above all, *how to put it into practice*. In this *Lucifer* you will find the lectures and two commentaries on the workshops.

Spirituality is ‘hot’. There are many courses and books available. But how do you find your way through all of this information? Is this something you are able to do *yourself* or should you rely on others? More importantly there is the question *why* you should live spiritually. Is spirituality too ‘woolly’ and of no practical use or is living spiritually the answer to all of life’s problems?

What is spirituality?

There is more than just the spiritual and the material World. Spirit is sometimes depicted as the wind, invisible to our eyes. But not everything that we cannot see, hear or touch is spiritual. Where does the material end and where does the spiritual start? How do we make the distinction between unpractical woolliness and clear, practical spirituality? There is a clear stand-

ard that can be used to discriminate between true and false spirituality.

Spirituality means that you have to develop *another vision* on life. The phenomena don’t exist on their own, but they are reflections of consciousness that is not in the phenomena but yet is the source of them. A spiritual human sees the phenomena as illusions and at the same time he knows that behind these phenomena the spiritual, everlasting light shines.

Structure of the report

The contributions of this symposium follow a cycle that everybody who grows spiritually recognizes and experiences over and over again. Spiritual growth evolves according to the following cycle: wonderment – philosophy – discipline – mysteries. And that over and over again: wonderment ...

The readers are challenged to discover this cycle of spiritual growth within so that they themselves can find answers to all kinds of questions.

The goal of the Symposium

This edition of *Lucifer – the Messenger of Light* is meant for all of those who know – or at least suppose – that there is more than just the material World and who are willing to recognize and explore spirituality without dogmas or preconceived opinions. So for all who want to translate their dreams – their ideals – into daily practice.

Pass on your knowledge

When you discover spirituality in yourself, awaken and apply it, then you are an example and an inspiration to others. You follow in the footsteps of the Teachers and the Sages of the history of mankind.

The more you live in your spiritual core, the more you notice that the light that shines in each and every being is the same. Beings differ only in the extent that they let that light shine. The perception that every being is rooted in the same Life, strengthens one's relationship with all life. To be conscious of this, is the beginning of compassion.

So you master matter, but out of compassion you work in society. What could be more practical than that?

Reactions

We like to hear your reactions on the report of this I.S.I.S. Symposium. You can send them to: info@stichtingisis.org.

Wonderment ... there must be more behind this

It is the year 1884. A small boy, only 4 or 5 years old, is ill and lies in bed. His father gives him a compass and the boy soon forgets that he's sick.

The fact that the magnetic needle moves as through an invisible force field, instead of the more familiar mechanical method of movement or contact, creates a feeling of wonderment that he will always remember, and which will motivate him during his whole life. In later life he will often come back to this experience, which had set the direction for the rest of his life: there had to be something deeply hidden behind the external side of things.

He grows up, fascinated by the big scientists and philosophers of his time. He learns to play the violin and becomes a great admirer of Mozart, in whose music he recognizes something of the harmony of the universe. When he struggles with difficult problems, the answers often come to him in the kitchen, where he plays his violin for hours.

He starts to dislike the German schools where he is drilled to memorize facts in a very autocratic environment, but in the Swiss town of Aarau he enrolls in a training institute where students are stimulated to think for themselves and to draw their own conclusions. Independent observation, the use of intuition, conceptual thinking and the use of visual imagination are common steps in the training program. This is where he flourishes.

At the age of 16 he tries to imagine what it would

be like if you could run so fast that you could keep up with a light wave: 'the wavelength would then be totally independent of time ... but such a thing is of course impossible'.

Ten years later he shocks the scientific world with the publication of an article that not only, against all traditions, had no single reference to the established order, but also disrupted this order completely. The theory of relativity was born.

His name: Albert Einstein. His motto: 'Imagination is more important than knowledge'.

What is wonderment?

In more than one aspect he was a remarkable man, but most of all because of his attitude:

"There are only two ways to live your life: One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle. I prefer the latter."⁽¹⁾ In a letter that he would send to a friend in later life he wrote, "People like you and me never grow old. We never cease to stand like curious children before the great mystery into which we were born."⁽²⁾

That is what we call 'wonderment'. Something happens that we do not understand, but at the same time we feel there must be hidden truth behind this phenomenon. This condition of floating between knowing and not knowing opens the door to insight. If you open this door and enter, you will never be the same, because you open yourself for new insights, for growth.

Wonderment is not the same as surprise, because surprise only touches our head. Wonderment touches our heart, it appeals to our intuition: there must be more behind this.

What is it that has something behind it? There is something behind the world of shapes and phenomena, as Einstein found out at a very young age.

Are there forces working behind these appearances, which we know really exist? For sure, think of electricity, X-rays or radioactivity. Forces we can't directly experience with our senses, but of which we have provided sufficient proof for their existence.

What or who actually wonders?

Is it your body? So are you your body? Or do you have a body? And are you the consciousness behind this body, the driver so to speak?

If we believe that we are our body, we'll instantly get puzzled: because our senses have a limited perception, so where is this wonderment coming from?

Instead, if we believe that we are the force behind our body, it becomes much more plausible that we can have an intuition for a deeper truth behind that what we observe with our physical senses. So the wonderment comes from ourselves. As we can hear in the following lectures, it comes from the higher parts of our consciousness.

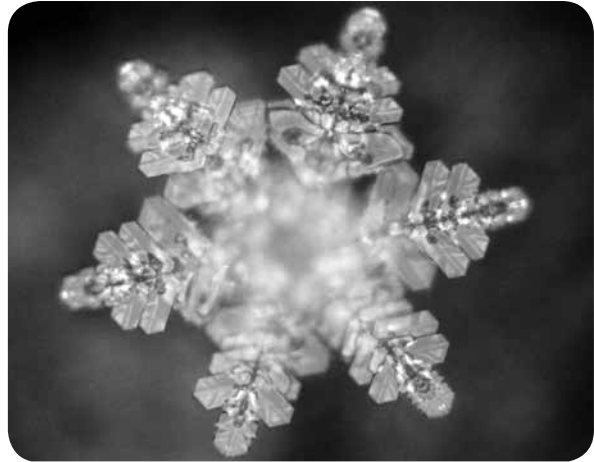
Many have wondered about the extraordinary pictures, published by Masaru Emoto, of water and ice crystals, of which the molecules showed very different patterns influenced by, for instance, certain thoughts or certain music.

A certain group of skeptic scientists stated that this phenomenon was complete nonsense, considering the fact that water has no senses ... If we however allow our wonderment and are willing to consider that there is a force working behind the manifestation, we can find an explanation for the behavior of the molecules.

Hypothesis: there is a force working behind appearances

During this symposium we therefore want to submit the following hypothesis to you:

There is a force working behind appearances. We call this force consciousness.



Everything that lives is consciousness, and has the possibility to manifest itself and acquire experiences by way of a vehicle, a body.

If you think about this, you could wonder where this force comes from. Could it be that this force is just a spark of a much larger fire? Can we think of anything that gives a limit, a boundary to the potential scope of that consciousness? Could it be that all life in its most pure essence is boundless? That there is something like boundless life, boundless space, and boundless time, without a beginning and without an end?

What happens if we use our imagination in order to build an image of this? Then we will start to realize that the possibilities of the vehicle, the body, are in fact limited, but that the possibilities for growth of what we are in our essence (the principle of consciousness) are boundless. We will start to understand that we can *always* keep wondering in principle. We'll therefore also start to realize that this boundlessness itself is the largest source of wonderment.

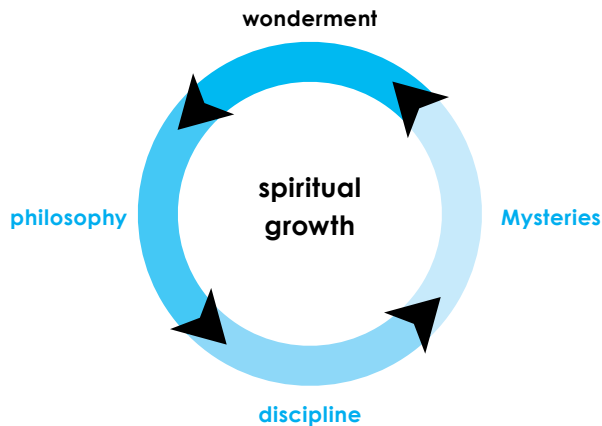
Tomorrow afternoon, after the last lecture, you can once more look at this hypothesis and decide for yourself whether you wish to explore this further.

This also means that we want to invite you to not accept or reject anything too quickly during the next two days, but to try as much as possible to allow wonderment in yourself, and explore for yourself what is true and what isn't, what is worth further exploring and what isn't.

This wonderment is in fact the foundation and starting point of spiritual growth. We will elaborate on it during this symposium.

Wonderment and imagination

If we do not *desire* wisdom, or in other words, if we're not in a state of wonderment we can never come to a philosophy. And we need this philosophic foundation to build discipline and, as the old axiom states, discipline precedes the mysteries. This cycle is the central theme for this symposium.



Today we will mainly focus on the wonderment and the philosophy; tomorrow we'll focus more on discipline and the mysteries, as you will most likely have noticed in the program.

Do you actually recognize this state of consciousness, which we call wonderment?

Kids wonder naturally. A child looks up at the starry sky and asks: "How can it be that the stars do not fall out of the sky?"

Only a few adults still wonder: "So many stars, is it not very unlikely that we are the only *life* in this universe?"

They catch a glimpse of boundlessness so to speak. The fact that we wonder about different things is, actually, not so strange if we assume that consciousness, which we are in essence, can be in different states of development; just like the body can be, for instance.

An absurd experiment

Sugata Mitra, a researcher in education, was driven by the ideal to offer qualitatively good schooling to every child. He executed a famous, and in his own words, absurd experiment. He placed a computer with software of university level biochemistry in a wall in the vicinity of a school in the countryside of Southern India. Subsequently he told a few curious kids in Tamil, the local language, that the computer

contained very interesting and important information, but the information was in English and he also didn't understand it.

But what did he find out when he returned a few months later? 12-year olds had not only taught themselves English but they had even grasped some understanding of the educational material, which was actually developed for young adolescents 10 years older than they were. They understood the concept of DNA and the fact that neurons communicate with each other.

We often find Einstein unique, not only because he kept wondering, but also because of his enormous ability to imagine. The experiments with which he built his theories all took place in his head. Apparently that is not unique to Einstein, for we all possess this enormous potential of imagination as children ...

What do children wonder about? What did you wonder about as a child? When was the last time you were wondering about something? What caused this wonderment?

The challenge

What happens to us when we wonder? For a short time we lose our grip. For a moment we become aware of something bigger than what we always thought we knew.

Our first reaction is usually one of confusion. We experience a sort of short circuit in our head. Our personality, in its need for stability, tries to recover its grip on the reality we thought we knew. The door to a larger truth was actually opened for a short while, but we usually close it quickly because our personality experiences this floating situation between knowing and not knowing as uncomfortable.

This way we'll know that, when we hear ourselves saying "yes, but ..." we're working on defending our familiar statements. At that moment we're not open for something else than the things we think we already know. The Dutch artist and innovator Daan Roosegaarde designed a chair for every environment in which it is important to be open for new ideas, seated in which, a person is given an electrical shock at the moment the person says 'yes, but'. To help you in your search for practical spirituality we have placed 300 of those chairs in this room ... ;-)

So our first challenge is to have the courage to start investigating, with the idea that we will learn something, but not knowing what that will be.

The next challenge arises when we *think* to have found the answer to our question. If it feels right or it seems to be right in 80 of the observations we quickly assume that it's right. The newly found truth crystallizes and takes the place of the old 'truth'.

Besides many great scientists who have provided us with new insights with their explorative approach there are unfortunately also scientists who are hiding in their ivory tower. A theory, which explains why swans are white, is great but when we find out that 1 in every 1000 swans is black and the theory cannot explain this, people are usually tempted to stubbornly keep the old theory instead of searching for a new, more comprehensive one.

We still know Louis Pasteur because he published about diseases being caused by external organisms which attacked us from outside our body and that we had to protect our body against them. His contemporary and counterpart Béchamp is much less known. Where Pasteur assumed separated entities, Béchamp intuitively assumed boundlessness. Where there are no boundaries, there logically have to be mutual connections. Béchamp's research showed that the external organisms, which Pasteur was talking about, were exactly the building blocks of life and that disease is more an internal disharmony rather than an external attack. According to rumor, Pasteur finally acknowledged this on his deathbed and agreed with Béchamp's theory. However, his theory was already so widespread that even today it still plays an important role in the way Western medical science looks at the concept of disease.

Open for new possibilities

How can we stimulate ourselves to get into this phase of wonderment as much as possible, through which we can become aware of a continuously growing truth, and as a result grow?

Let's try to illustrate that with an example: Ian Stevenson is a young doctor and he continually sees patients with apparent similar backgrounds developing different disease patterns. He comes to the conclusion that the two most prevailing attitudes (1) heredity

and (2) the Freudian idea that the development of the personality is being formed in the first years of the life, cannot fully explain why the persons whom he meets develop certain phobias and diseases. He therefore decides to investigate whether or not there is a third possibility. In the course of this research he starts to suspect that in some way there is a possible life-to-life transition of memory or personality. When he hears stories about very young children who say that they're able to remember their previous life, he does something remarkable. Instead of saying, "This is impossible according to what I know, and I have studied this, so it is nonsense.", he gets on a plane and decides to investigate this.

For the next 40 years he flies around the world and studies, in a scientific way, more than 3000 cases in which reincarnation is suggested. There are many cases, which he comes across, where there are multiple possible explanations for the stories and strange birthmarks, but he also discovers 'black swans'.

What is so special about Stevenson is not only the enormous effort, which he has put into doing such groundbreaking research, (which his colleagues, at best, only ignored) but also that he was always able to remain open for new possibilities. He therefore never assumed that he had found the definitive answer, but that reincarnation was just the best possible explanation up until that moment. He kept his conclusions 'fluid', so to speak.

A few years before he died (being already in his eighties), he was asked if his work was not one big failure because he hadn't been able to convince the world of reincarnation. He said that it was his hope that his research would bring established science to the point where they would, at some point in the future, study *the possibility of reincarnation*. His ideal and his imagination reached beyond the duration of his own life.

Pim van Lommel, the Dutch cardiologist followed his footsteps with his own study of the possibility of the existence of consciousness as a driving force behind the body as an explanation for situations which he wondered about. He published these in his book *Consciousness Beyond Life*. He also expressed his wish that his hypothesis would not be merely accepted but seriously studied.

So it is possible to stimulate this state of wonderment in order for it to occur frequently. It requires an attitude from us in which we let go of our prejudices and step into something from the starting point that we don't know anything. Zen Buddhism calls that strikingly 'beginner's mind'. "Sit down before a fact, as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abyss nature leads us, or you shall learn nothing."⁽³⁾

Are you also able to let go of your prejudices and adopt and keep an open mind?

Wonderment starting point for spiritual growth

If wonderment is the starting point from where we can come to a higher truth, it will also be a logical starting point for spiritual growth.

Prince Siddhartha grew up in a very protected environment. When he finally left the palace and was confronted with sickness and death for the first time, he wondered. He asked himself if the power of Brahmâ failed. Shortly after that he left the palace forever in order to find out if there was a way to stop suffering. Tomorrow afternoon at 17:00, this symposium will be over again. But never stop wondering, questioning and relying on your faculty of imagination. If we take boundlessness as a starting point, there is always a higher truth to reveal. So postpone 'knowing it all' towards infinity!

Gottfried de Purucker puts it in these words:

You need to realize always that what you think you understood is only the entrance to a room of knowledge, from where you can look outside through clean windows at even greater panoramas of wonder, and that that room of knowledge has doors, an entrance and an exit through which you can enter even more wonderful dwellings.⁽⁴⁾

References

1. R.E. Hinshaw, *Living with Nature's Extremes: The life of Gilbert Fowler White*. Johnson Books, Boulder 2006, page 62
 2. In a letter to Otto Juliusburger, September 29, 1942.
 3. Citation T.H. Huxley, in a letter to Charles Kingsley (September, 23 1860).
 4. G. de Purucker, *Esoterisch Onderricht in de Oosterse School*. Two Parts, ISIS-foundation, The Hague 1987, Part two, page 1222. This citation is translated (Dutch-English) by the editor.
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Man a spiritual explorer

Are you still in a state of wonderment? Or are you already looking for answers? Are you already philosophizing? Looking for answers to the questions of life – to the question of the why of things – belongs to the domain of philosophy. Because real wonderment always leads to philosophy.

Philosophy – the Greek *philo-sophia* – means the love for wisdom. For wonderment arouses an urge to learn to know truth, wisdom. The sages themselves do not philosophize. They are already wise. Neither do the ignorant philosophize. They ignore the state of wonderment by saying, “We will never know anyway.” Philosophers are those who, out of wonderment, feel an unstoppable urge to search for answers to the questions of life, who wish to unravel the mysteries of life. They are looking for the spiritual background of the phenomena.

But maybe you are neither in a state of wonderment, nor philosophizing. There are so many states of consciousness you could be in. Maybe you are sleeping? In that case this spiritual discovery journey will pass by you. However, if you are awake and if you retain that state of wonderment, then this voyage of discovery – the philosophizing – will never cease.

That’s why we cannot often enough bring to your attention the principle that Marijn (the first speaker),

by way of questioning, presented to you: Boundlessness. To the large, to the small, inside, outside: there is nothing but Boundlessness. Everything belongs to, yes, *is* that Boundlessness. Even a superficial reflection on this thought already brings you that state of wonderment.

Retain that state of wonderment, certainly also in regard to the different states of consciousness, in which we all can be, and which, assuming the Boundless, have to be nearly endless.

The composite constitution of our consciousness

That man can be in different states of consciousness you all will surely have experienced. An emotional mood is something quite different from an intellectual attitude when looking for a solution to a problem. Or, when you, full of idealism, do your best for a better world, you are in a different state of mind than when you are worried about your looks.

We often skim over matters that are so obvious, because we are not inclined to look into such matters with wonderment. The composite constitution of our consciousness is such a case.

Everyone knows that man has different powers, capabilities, capacities, but only few people give a moment’s thought to it and draw conclusions from it. Man is a composite being. He has – or maybe we can better say: he *is* – a number of aspects. There are

different “I’s” in us. Sometimes we are this “I”, and sometimes that.

Well, that state of wonderment is one of the possibilities in our consciousness. It’s a state of consciousness above or outside our daily consciousness so to say.

We are in our daily consciousness when we do the things from our personality. We place ourselves in the center. We think that we are Mister Johnson or Miss Brown; nothing more; living for our own personal interests.

But everyone who dares to observe him or herself a little bit closer, discovers that there is more than the person who we are in daily life.

There are ideals inside us, insight, understanding — something much grander and more lasting than what keeps us busy in the day-to-day fuss.

Even to children this duality in their nature is known. Already at a very early age a child knows that there is a ‘good’ Johnny and a ‘bad’ Johnny; a Johnny who claims all his toys for himself; and a Johnny who shares his toys with his friends.

So we can divide our consciousness into two aspects, which we may call the lower self and the Higher Self. The lower self is that consciousness that most of us manifest on a daily basis. It is limited, whereas the Higher Self is universal.

lower self	Higher Self
Limited	Universal
Separated	Aware of interconnectedness
Transient	More enduring
Illusory	More real
Personal	Supra-personal

By limited we mean that the lower self never sees beyond its nose. It feels separated from others. The lower self sees itself as apart from others. It speaks of my work, my car, my house, my country, my happiness, while the Higher Self – universal as it is – is aware of the interconnectedness with all other life. The Higher Self does not know separateness, but understands the fact that Life is in principle the same in everything. The wishes and desires of the lower self are also transitory. It is as though there is nothing lasting

about it. Everything goes by. On the other hand, the qualities of the Higher Self are more enduring. Take notice: these are not absolutely immutable. But if you have acquired insight into something, you will keep that insight. It may well grow, become more intense, profound. In the Boundlessness there is nothing finished. So the Higher Self is not the absolute destination as well.

The lower self is staying in a world of illusions. And by that we do not mean that that world does not exist, but that it exists as a consequence of something else, something that is behind it and is much more real.

That is in fact exactly the relation between the personal and the supra-personal. By this word ‘personality’ we mean therefore something different than what is meant by it in society. There, personality is something positive. We use the word in the original meaning of ‘mask’. The Latin word *personare* means ‘sounding through’. So there is something that uses that personality, something that sounds through it.

Therefore also mask. The actors of ancient times used a mask, so that the public was able to see which role they played.

It is the Higher Self that works behind the personality. Since the lower self is not separate from the Higher Self; neither is the one bad nor the other good. The lower self is like the vehicle, the instrument, that the real man uses; it is the mask that the Actor – or the Higher Self – puts on, in order to acquire experiences here.

Personality
personare = sounding through
persona = mask

Higher Self = Actor
personality = role

You see, when you connect yourself entirely with your lower self, you will only live for your own small world. A parent for example would then only love his own children, while children of others would leave him indifferent. We know that such matters really do happen. How many dictators, or large landowners,

exploited others in a terrible way, amongst whom were children? Yet they were also loving fathers. These are of course extreme cases, but we think that if you would look at yourself carefully, you would be able to recognize this universal aspect and that limited aspect in yourself.

Sometimes someone, living in that lower self, may suddenly enter in this state of wonderment. What happens then?

In fact, here you can speak of a first glimpse of the Higher Self that is captured by the personal man. It is the vision that suddenly is enlarged, you elevate yourself above what you normally see in consciousness, and you wonder.

Spirituality

It is this still diffuse panorama that we may call our first glance of spiritual consciousness. Spirituality is identifying yourself with the Higher Self, living in the Higher Self.

But do not see this as something absolute. You see, the Higher Self is that part of man that lives in the awareness of interconnectedness. But that is a relative notion. The larger your scope of consciousness, the more intense your notion of interconnectedness. But that does not mean that someone who has a somewhat lesser vision on life, is not able to realize this interconnectedness within his range of vision.

Imagine you only know of the living conditions within the Netherlands, and you feel yourself connected with the ups and downs of all Dutchmen, then you focus on the Higher Self and you are spiritual, although that spiritual development reaches less far than that of someone who has knowledge of the living conditions stretching out beyond the borders of the Netherlands, or beyond the borders of Europe, or even our planet Earth. Nowhere are there borders. Our notion of life – being Boundless in essence – is therefore always limited, because we are not able to imagine the Boundlessness as such.

However, that restriction does not at all need to inhibit us to be spiritual in life, as long as we live in the notion, as universal as possible, of the interconnectedness between all beings. In other words, spirituality is relative. No one can take another's measure. Everyone can live in the greatest possible conviction of unity and

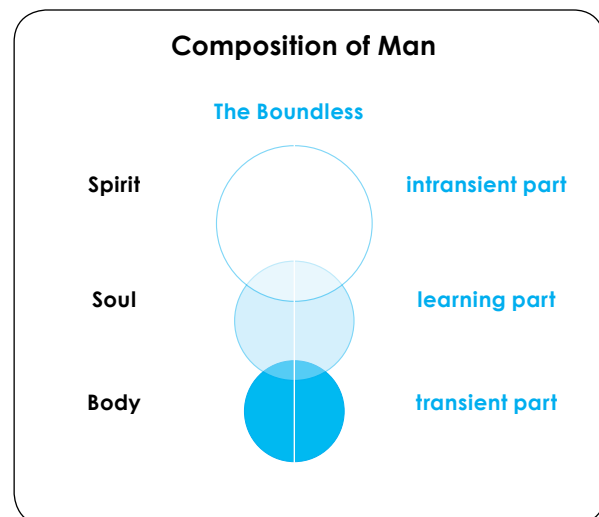
interconnectedness that he has reached in a certain moment in his life. That is spirituality.

Only, you always need to leave space for growth. That is, you realize that your vision can always be enlarged and made more profound.

Living in the best — that is, the most universal that you have developed so far, is therefore living spiritually.

Spirit, soul and body

Now, the division of consciousness in two parts is a rather coarse division. We can also divide consciousness into three, four or seven aspects. Today and tomorrow, we wish to use mainly the division in three aspects: man as spirit, soul and body. Then we are able to explain still better what spirituality is.



The spirit is the core of our being, a spark of eternity: all possibilities, capacities and qualities are inherent in the spirit.

The body is the carrier or the instrument of consciousness.

And between spirit and body is the soul. The middle nature. That part in us that learns and grows. It learns by focusing on the spirit and by shaping and expressing those spiritual characteristics in the vehicle, the body. So we are a soul. A soul that uses a body. Of course, we are also that spirit, but we are that latently, since we did not develop, not awaken, those spiritual capacities yet. Now, spirituality is the soul focusing on and identifying with that spirit more and more.

This has a large number of implications. The most important of which is this: a human soul that acts

accordingly, realizes that behind every appearance, behind the material world – so behind the world of the lower self – a Force is working. Behind this material world another world is hiding, and behind that yet another. The world of phenomena is like a shadow, a projection of something working behind it. This is what is called the spiritualistic principle — in contrast with the view that the material world exists by itself. We can describe this materialistic principle briefly as: what you do not see, does not exist.

Spirituality also means that you know (you have an intuitive notion) that behind the phenomena something is working. That ‘something’ we call consciousness, or life. And the spiritual consciousness must be of a beauty and loftiness, which we, living in this world of shadows, can only comprehend approximately.

And is wonderment not a glimpse that the soul captures of that world of the spirit, without understanding the full extent of the object of wonderment? But it stimulates one to seek and find answers.

Philosophy starts with wonderment, Plato said. There, the quest starts out toward the invisible, the intangible, the noble, of which you probably know little yet. But you do know that it exists.

Objective idealism

That realization is very important. Columbus was sure that he would discover new land and would not fall off the Earth. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have started his journey. When you want to discover something, you have to be sure that it is there. You have to acknowledge the existence of spirituality — know that it exists.

Something is real when we assign reality to it. This is an important principle. It is called objective idealism. It means that those things are true, those things exist, which you identify yourself with, which you assign reality to. For a child Santa Claus exists. I know of a case where a child saw that his father was dressing up as Santa Claus, but once he had his robe, mitre and beard on, he *was* Santa Claus — for that child anyway. You see, when a personality only assigns reality to the exterior of things – when the soul identifies itself entirely with the body – then that spirit does not exist at all. However, the soul is also able to focus on the spirit and assign reality to that. As you do this more often and more seriously – since this does not work at

once – the spirit and that spiritual world will become more and more real and concrete.

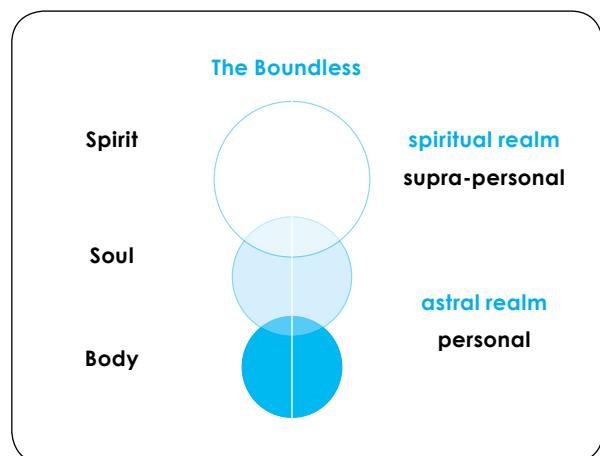
Now, this spiritual world is all too often covered with all kinds of personal ideas and prejudices. We have to get rid of those old thoughts, we have to empty ourselves of all those thoughts directed to material things. In fact, we bring ourselves consciously to a state of wonderment when we empty ourselves of all old thoughts, opinions and prejudices. Dare to see things with an open mind. Dare to acknowledge that you know nothing about it. Our next speaker Erwin Bomas will explain in his lecture on the Socratic method, how important this is.

If you acknowledge that the spiritual world forms the force that works behind the sensory perceptual world, then you will focus on it, and develop the characteristics of that world — the characteristics of the Higher Self. Then you will gradually enter the spiritual realms.

Invisible spheres

That spiritual world is, for the time being, invisible. In fact, all which stretches beyond the physical plane is invisible. But not all that is invisible is also spiritual. The Universe is much more than we usually think. The plane between soul and body is not perceivable to our physical senses. But that plane actually exists, at least for all people that focus on it. It is the plane of emotions, vitality, and desires. It is a plane where the personality gladly lingers. But it is certainly not a spiritual plane. In the Theosophia this plane is called the astral realm.

It is of a completely different characteristic than the



purely supra-personal plane of the spiritual. In this spiritual plane you will not encounter the 'I'. There the busy nervousness of the vitality does not dominate, and certainly not the selfish desire, which troubles the current personalities so often.

You can ask yourself why we do not perceive anything of these invisible spheres? Our answer is: we perceive a lot of it, however not with our senses. The lower self lives in that astral realm, feeds itself with the lower thoughts and desires of that sphere.

Now, it is not the case that the astral suddenly passes into the spiritual. That happens gradually. Gradually the astral becomes less coarse, less contaminated by all kinds of selfish feelings, desires and thoughts and becomes more pure, more noble and supra-personal. And why do we notice so little of the spiritual sphere? The objective idealism gives the answer. Because we are not focused on it, do not assign reality to those noble things, it seems as if it does not exist. However, if you never ponder on the problems of India or Tanzania, then those countries will not be alive for you. If you never pay attention to space travel, then a new theory on the origination of the cosmos will surely escape your attention.

Any unselfish, compassionate impulse, the whisperings of the conscience, seeing the connections between seemingly separated things, this all comes from the spiritual, from yourself, the Higher Self. However, when we do not pay any, or do not pay enough attention to it, and thus do not believe in it, we cannot expect that the spiritual influence will be large, let alone that we will get to know the spiritual better.

Spiritual voyage of discovery

Therefore: when we want to discover the spiritual realm, we have to start to imagine the spiritual capacities within ourselves — all those characteristics of the Higher Self. We have to develop a view of a spiritual world: a world in which people live as brothers with each other, in which the general interest is paramount, and in which we realize that this material world is nothing but a projection of something else, and therefore has no permanence in itself at all. Thinking that your happiness depends on this material world, is the same as believing that the holiday will never end.

The imagination is a tremendous means to discover the spiritual. When we give up all prejudices and personal views, it becomes easier to awaken those universal views in our consciousness. Because we have too little affinity with those spiritual realms yet, and have not developed the antennas in order to perceive something there consciously, we cannot self-consciously acquire experiences there yet. When we stay in that sphere, we fall asleep, exactly like a child falls asleep during college at the university.

The spiritual voyage of discovery starts with forming an image of the world of Spirit, and then weaving the supra-personal characteristic virtues of that world into our own character. Then we become familiar with the character of it, and we slowly get used to it, just like someone who has not seen the sunlight for years, gradually gets used to the sunlight again, to the glorious light of the spiritual world, of which we, in our higher parts, are already an inseparable part now. That is not a theoretical exercise. On the contrary. That vision is only really going to be a living force when you apply it in the practice of daily life. And that cannot be too difficult for anyone. Since what you can imagine, you can also accomplish. In the next lectures this will be elaborated further, to start with the lecture on how the Socratic method can help us with that.

Thinking like Socrates – recognizing spirituality

You may wonder, what does thinking like Socrates have to do with spirituality? However, if you just look at the cycle of spiritual growth, then following wonderment, philosophy is the second step.

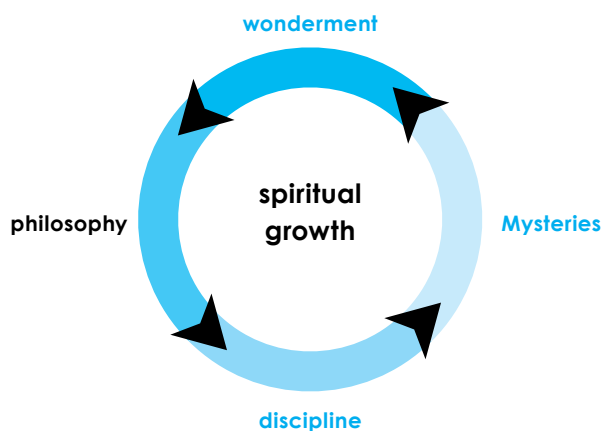
In philosophy, it's the independent thinking that Socrates practiced that is essential. Especially when it comes to recognizing spirituality. We are going to demonstrate this by means of a Socratic dialogue. Then we will explain what the Socratic method is and how you can use it. But before we do that we will briefly refresh your memory about Socrates himself, so that you do not think we talk about a Brazilian soccer player.

Who is Socrates?

Socrates was a Greek philosopher who lived from 469-399 BC in Athens. Although he has not written anything himself we know him through the writings of Greek contemporaries such as Xenophon and of course Plato.

In Plato's dialogues Socrates is invariably one of the main characters. Although the philosophy of Plato also emerges through the dialogues, it is clear from other writings that the method of Socratic conversation is also directly attributable to Socrates.

You might know the story that according to the Oracle of Delphi, no one was wiser than Socrates. When



Socrates heard this, he marveled greatly about this statement, because he did not think of himself as wise at all. So he went to investigate this statement by visiting the, in his eyes, wisest men. But guess what? Those who were most renowned for their wisdom, were found to be the least wise. This was true for politicians, writers and even craftsmen who, according to Socrates, knew more about certain things, but because of their expertise were convinced they were also wise in the really important things in life.

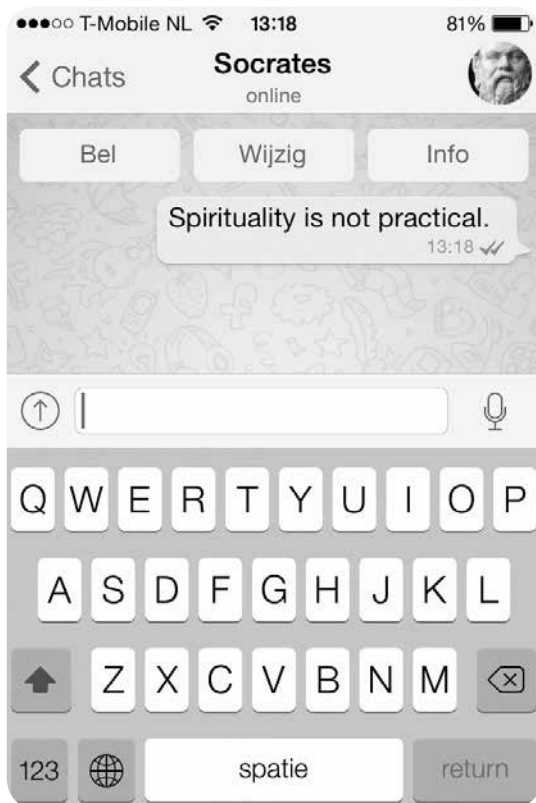
Thus Socrates distinguished himself from those who believed to be wise and were so in the eyes of many others, but, were not actually wise. Their wisdom was an illusion, something that Socrates often pointed out to them after a revealing interview, which did not make him very popular. So according to Socrates the oracle was right, although it also could have just said:

the wisest is the one who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom means nothing.⁽¹⁾

But which method did Socrates use to be able to distinguish between appearance and reality? we will demonstrate this with a contemporary Socratic dialogue.

Socratic dialogue

Such a dialogue always starts with a proposition. And now it just so happens that we were recently handed a very appropriate statement. Last March,



and online. We are going to WhatsApp, using our messaging app on our smartphone. And we will submit to him the following thesis:

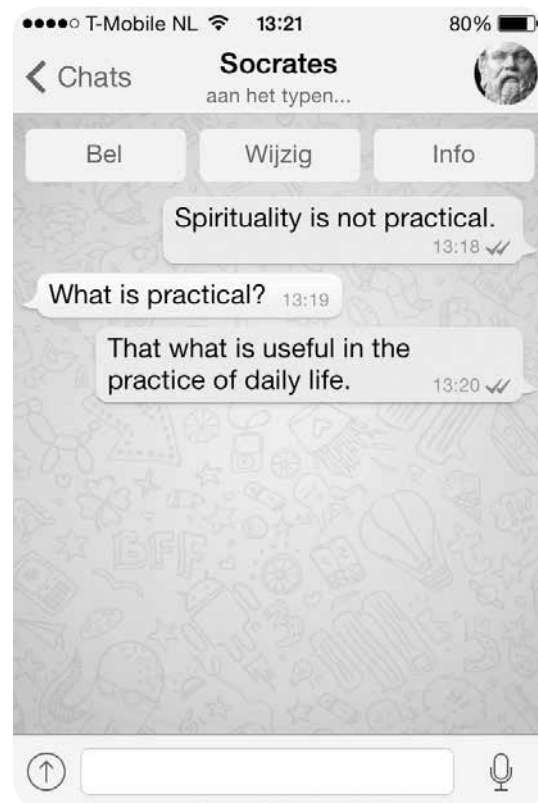
Spirituality is not practical

In his dialogues Socrates always looks firstly for the assumptions underlying a theorem.

The first question that Socrates could ask is: “What is practical?”

We as visitor (V) could react with the simple response: “That which is useful in the practice of daily life.”

Socrates (S) continues:



the city of The Hague once again organized the annual ‘World Tour in Your own City’ festival. Various philosophical organizations, including the Blavatskyhouse open their doors to interested visitors. One of the visitors asked me, when reading the theme of this symposium: “‘Practical spirituality’, is that not a contradiction? Spirituality is not very practical, is it?” Suppose that Socrates was alive today and would be presented with this premise. How would he react? We’re going to ask him, and we will find him just like in Athens at the marketplace, but contemporary

“Ok. Take eating food for instance. That is useful if you are hungry, right?”

V: “Yes”

S: “Is eating food practical if you are too heavy and want to lose weight?”

V: “No, but you will always need food.”

S: “Being occupied with food is practical if you are hungry, but is it also practical if you are still thinking about food even when you are no longer hungry and you have to work? For example if a surgeon has to operate, a teacher has to teach a class, a secretary has

to write a memo, etc.?”

V: “No, it is not so practical to be occupied with food then.”

S: “So food is practical for our physical part.”

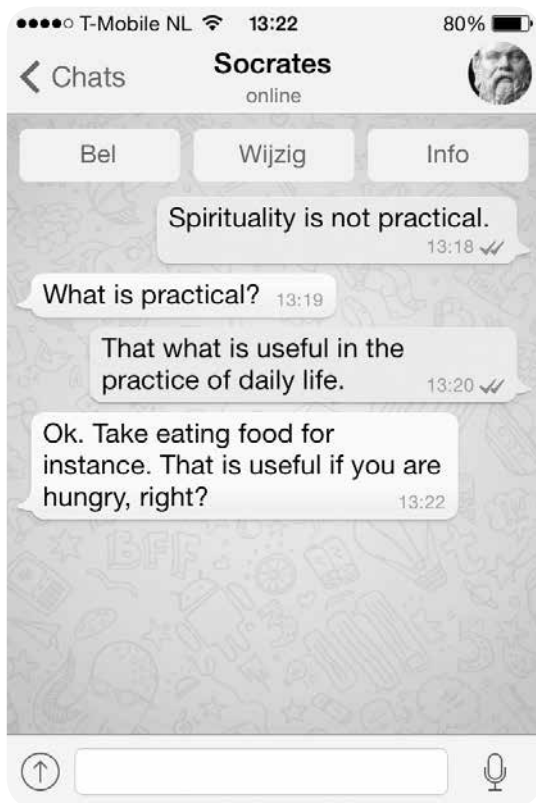
V: “Food can also just be enjoyed.”

S: “But only temporarily to make the body function, or do you enjoy eating after the stomach is already full?”

V: “No, then it is unpleasant.”

S: “And if you eat for enjoyment, do you not often eat just a little too much?”

V: “If the food is really good, yes, sometimes we do.”



to be done for colleagues for example, before you get totally absorbed in the pleasure of eating?”

V: “Yeah, that seems practical.”

S: “So if you do not act in your own interest, but from the notion of connectedness with others, wouldn’t you prevent yourself from ending up in such a situation?”

V: I think so.”

S: “If we return to what the philosopher Barend Voorham told us in the previous lecture about the composition of human consciousness, which part in you – personal or supra-personal – is in charge then?”



S: “And if you have to work afterwards, for example meet with colleagues, won’t it bother you then?”

V: “The infamous after lunch dip in energy.”

S: “Don’t you think your colleagues will be annoyed when you burp at the conference table and hardly manage to keep your wits?”

V: “Probably.”

S: “Then you are not of much practical use to them, are you?”

V: “No, I’m afraid not.”

S: “Isn’t it practical to think about what still needs

V: “I guess the supra-personal part. That part is conscious of the connectedness with others.”

S: “And aren’t we always connected to others?”

V: “In theory you could withdraw from society.”

S: “But it is impossible to live a completely separated life. To start with, somebody has to give birth to you, nourish you and even if you grow up as an orphan you need at least some other form of life to keep you alive, don’t you? So complete separateness is illusory, right?”

V: “Complete separateness from all and everything seems impossible, indeed.”

S: "Isn't it then practical to allow your supra-personal part to be in charge, which acts from connectedness in every situation? And not your personality that lives in the illusion of separateness?"

V: "All right, I can see that this is indeed the most practical. But when you act from the notion of connectedness with others with compassion as a motive, I still don't see why spirituality is practical?"

S: "Take a doctor, for instance. He wants what is best for his patient, doesn't he?"

V: "Sure, a good doctor does."

S: "If a patient visits the doctor suffering from pain and asks him for a painkiller, does he help the patient by sending him home with a painkiller?"

V: "No, a good doctor will examine the patient to find out what the cause is of the pain."

S: "Imagine the patient has always received painkillers before from another doctor and is convinced that this is what he needs to be relieved from pain, will the patient allow the doctor to examine him then?"

V: "Probably not, he just wants the painkillers."

S: "If it is his habit to take painkillers when in pain, how can the doctor change that? Only by changing his ideas, right?"

V: "Yes, he must first be convinced that painkillers will not help him in the long term."

S: "Only when he has changed his mind he will act differently and overcome his bad habits. And every act is preceded by a thought, isn't it?"

V: "I guess so."

S: "And thoughts emanate from man's thinking consciousness, don't they?"

V: "What do you mean by that?"

S: "Are you a body and do you possess consciousness, or do you possess a body and *are* you consciousness?"

V: "Um ... like Barend Voorham said, I do not think that what I cannot see means that it cannot exist. I assume I am not limited to that which I can perceive of with my senses, but that there is a force working behind it and yes, I think you might as well call that consciousness."

S: "And thoughts directed at the Higher Self, our spiritual core, they are directed to the long term, to what is universal and enduring, aren't they?"

V: "Why?"

S: "Because they are directed to the universal causal

force working behind our outer appearance. Such thoughts are not directed at the persona, the mask, that enters the stage only in this one life, but at the Higher Self, the actor that appears on stage life after life and is becoming more and more universal."

V: "That is quite something, what you are apping just now."

S: "For example, a stable society outlives a human life, doesn't it?"

V: "Yes."

S: "Do you help when you supply weapons to one party in a civil war?"

V: "You might help one party, but the other will get the worst of it."

S: "So will it lead to a stable society and sustainable peace or will the suppressed party remain in resistance?"

V: "As long as there is one suppressed party, there is a good chance that there will be resistance, I think that is just a matter of cause and effect."

S: "So, a civil war can only be ended in the long term when both parties become reconciled with each other?"

V: "Yes."

S: "And wouldn't it be best in the long term if they follow the most universal vision of a harmonious society and build it up together, even if it takes generations to do so?"

V: "That would be the ideal situation."

S: "So, having an underlying universal vision is the most sustainable. Another example. Does it make sense to separate two fighting young brothers without making sure they make peace? If you are out of sight they will continue to fight, won't they?"

V: "They will continue if they still can't stand each other."

S: "So they have to show their most noble-mindedness, forgive each other and understand that they have to behave toward each other as brothers."

V: "Right."

S: "And if they get the notion that it is good to imagine for themselves how brothers should behave towards each other, will they not in the end be more noble and brotherly towards each other?"

V: "Probably."

S: "And they will also behave brotherly towards others, who will react brotherly in return, won't they? What

goes around, comes around, right?”

V: “That seems likely too.”

S: “And if our Higher Self is enduring, as the Ancient Wisdom says, and ‘cause and effect’ is a universal law that transcends individual lives, then they will keep their brotherly character, wouldn’t they? And then they can consciously develop their character to become more and more brotherly?”

V: “That sounds logical, yes.”

S: “To be focused on the enduring and universal part of ourselves, means living from a spiritual vision, isn’t it?”

V: “Yes, you might call it that.”

S: “Then acting in accordance with a spiritual vision is in fact practical?”

V: “Yes, if you look at it this way, ‘practical spirituality’ seems even superfluous. If you aim for the causal, spiritual side of things it is always practical in the long run.”

S: “As long as you realize that spirituality is relative and that behind every reality that we discover an even more universal force is operating. As observing consciousness we can always develop more of our boundless ability to perceive and discover. So thinking we have a final answer is never practical.”

V: “Amen. ;-)”

Practical spirituality

And here we end our dialogue for now. Let us, before we look at the form of this dialogue, first look at the conclusion the visitor and Socrates drew, departing from the thesis that spirituality is not practical.

We have seen that ‘practical’ only becomes really practical when it is valid for the biggest totality and the longest term; when it is as universal and sustainable as possible. These are characteristics of the Higher Self, the supra-personal.

Spirituality is not focusing on the exterior appearances, on fighting symptoms, but aims at the universal force behind the appearances, just like an attitude or vision is the force behind behavior. It is thoughts that precede our actions.

Finally, we discussed that a universal vision is the most sustainable, so it is most practical to act according to the most universal within yourself.

Therefore it is *practical* to practice a vision as universal as possible, and it is *spiritual* to assume the most uni-

versal vision and to act accordingly. Thus, in truth, the practical is spiritual and the spiritual is practical. So practical spirituality is indeed a pleonasm, as was concluded by Socrates’ discussion partner.

How does the Socratic method work in practice?

Hopefully this attempt at a Socratic dialogue has clarified your understanding of practical spirituality. But the dialogue also had the goal to show you how the Socratic method works in practice.

When considering a thesis the assumptions that underlie the thesis get unveiled. What is the basis of the thesis?

In this case, the thesis consisted of an assumption as to what is practical. Or actually who, or rather, with what part of man this can be judged.

Socrates always starts with an open mind of ‘knowing nothing’, as mentioned before. But what in Socrates knows that he knows nothing? As a searching man he realizes that knowledge of exterior appearances is always limited and says nothing of the nature of things. Calling what is right or unjust without a clear vision of righteousness itself, is something for opinion makers and not for philosophers, says Socrates.⁽²⁾ So in the search for truth, you must be wondering, you have to prevent yourself from filling in the gaps from your personal knowledge or prejudice.

Subsequently, a thesis is tested with reason, independent thinking is activated. This is more than just an intellectual test. In a Socratic dialogue there is not only a search for logical consistency, but there is always a call upon the ethical side of man, upon wisdom, upon the inner knowledge of the supra-personal. Socrates will always ask: is it okay in principle, is it ethical? He appeals to the conscience of man. In addition he takes as a starting point the higher aspects of the human mind, the divine inspiration or spiritual intuition. But of course never without checking the answers by reasoning, to see if they are universal.

In the dialogues of Plato, Socrates always assumes that every human has an imperishable and universal part of wisdom within him. Learning is therefore remembering. Renewing what you already know inside. He says: “Not knowing means you can’t remember it, you have to try to find it and remember it.”⁽³⁾

So assume and trust that there is wisdom within yourself, and try to perceive this wisdom.⁽⁴⁾ This defines the true philosopher. In this we recognize the objective idealism: we can only recognize truth as far as we have developed our perceiving consciousness. Or, aimed at spirituality: we can only recognize spirituality as far as we have developed spirituality within ourselves. Therefore: you yourself are the touchstone.

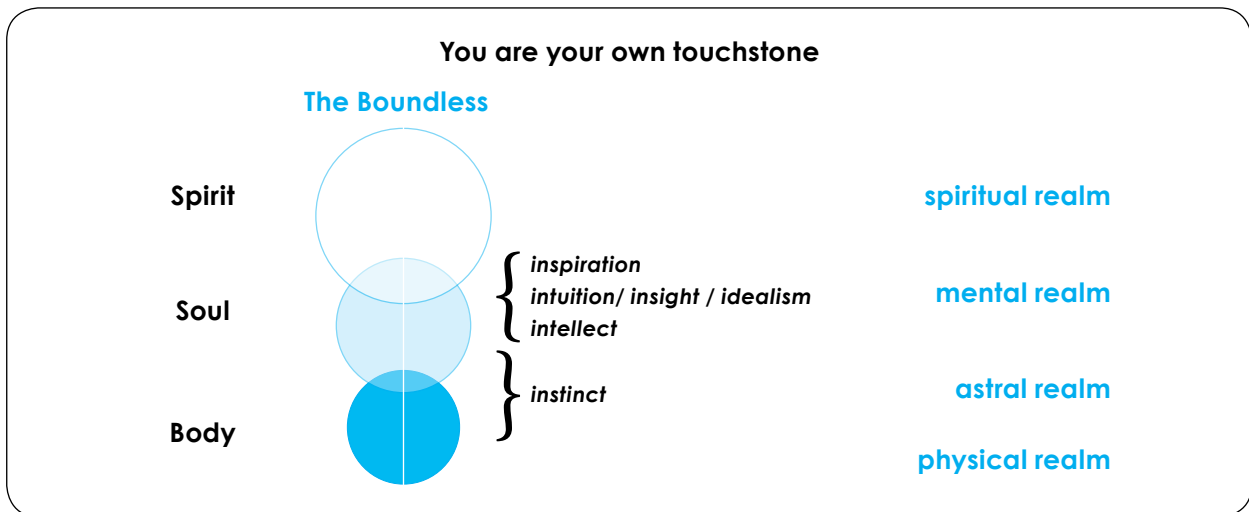
Recognize spirituality by using your thinking consciousness

But what should you develop in order to recognize spirituality? Barend Voorham has shown us that our consciousness is composite. The human consciousness, which is located in what we call the soul, the learning part, develops its thinking faculty. As humans we are thinkers, we perceive thoughts. Often this thinking is thought of as merely intellectual, but also our physical needs, our feelings, will, desire, ideals or inspiration, they are all thoughts in our consciousness. The capabilities of the thinking consciousness are much broader than just the intellect. By our thinking consciousness we can perceive areas that correspond with the realms of our composite constitution. With the sense organs of our body we can perceive the physical realm, the area that forms the exterior shell or crust of the astral realm. With our thinking consciousness we go into the mental realm that in its highest parts transcends into the spiritual realm. Animals, who do not have a thinking consciousness, are much more sensitive for the astral realm, to which

they react instinctively. Sometimes, they instinctively sense natural disasters before we can. We humans can acquire much more reliable ways of observation, if we want to. With your *intellect* you can determine under which circumstances natural phenomena occur. Through *insight* of causal factors you can begin to understand why natural phenomena occur and in *flashes of inspiration* you can, by obtaining a notion of the unity of everything, even begin to understand the meaning of it all.

You are your own touchstone

All these aspects of the thinking consciousness have their value. You are your own touchstone and are able, through the Socratic method, to determine what is real, in this case, what is really spiritual. And remember that this ‘real’ is also relative, which reminds us of the objective realism: we cannot perceive more than what our own developed thinking consciousness allows us to do. For example, most of us did not as yet develop the highest aspect of thinking, *inspiration*. If we had done that, we would have completely forgotten ourselves and we would have dissolved into the unity of life. *Insight*, the understanding of the connection of all things, which sometimes shows itself in a flash of intuition, is already more familiar to us. It is the intuition of Einstein that led to the relativity theory, as Marijn Gijbers has told us. Subsequently, Einstein needed many years to work out this intuition with his mathematic intellect. But also the idealism of fighters for equal rights, like Nelson Mandela or more recently,



the Pakistani girl Malala, are expressions of insight. The *intellect* is focused on logic and the orderly classification of information. It can be directed by the instinctive selfish human, for example when making calculations to gain maximum profit from something, without considering our fellow men. But it can also be directed by insight, for example when we devise a draft of the declaration of human rights, based on the universal equity of all men.

Finally, the *instinct*, also called 'a feeling.' Fortunately, most of the time we do not let our instincts control us, but this does not mean that well-controlled instincts have no function. We need our lower self as an instrument to work as spiritual beings in the external world. And instinctive perception may be a useful signal, as being thirsty is helpful to know that your body needs water. When your instincts arise, you know that your personality is at stake. This expresses itself often physically. Tension or excitement is often felt in the stomach area. We talk of 'cold sweat', of 'spitting bile' in anger or 'having something on your liver'.

When the supra-personal aspects, like intellect, insight or inspiration are leading, than our mood is calm, at least as long as our lower aspects are not exhausted. We speak of equanimity, which is recognizable in people who let the most noble aspects in themselves steer them. This is also part of the touchstone.

Spirituality is relative, but with the help of these four 'i's' (see the four italic terms in the figure on page 20) you can make a distinction between false and true spirituality. To recognize spirituality, you should not switch off your thinking consciousness, as we just defined it, but make it a servant of your higher aspects such as insight and inspiration or sense of unity. Of course our inner voice can only be heard when our personal thinking, our inner chatterbox, is silenced. If you are able to distinguish between false and true spirituality by using your supra-personal thinking as touchstone, you will not be tempted to think that all sorts of psychological phenomena in the astral realm are spiritual. The key questions are: is it logical, is it ethical, is it universal? In short, does it correspond with everything that you yourself have concluded to be true, and is it universally true?

There is a source of spiritual wisdom, which was tested

throughout the ages by independent thinkers and is still tested today. A wisdom which is not accepted on belief or authority, but which is tested by the facts in nature and the inner consciousness of the examiner. A wisdom you can detect in yourself, by longing for it, that is, by being a philosopher. And for the philosopher, the Socratic method will prove an essential piece of equipment.

References

1. *Apology of Socrates*, 23b, universal Plato-paging.
 2. *The Republic*, 475b-480a.
 3. *Meno*, 86b.
 4. *Phaedo*, 90d-91a.
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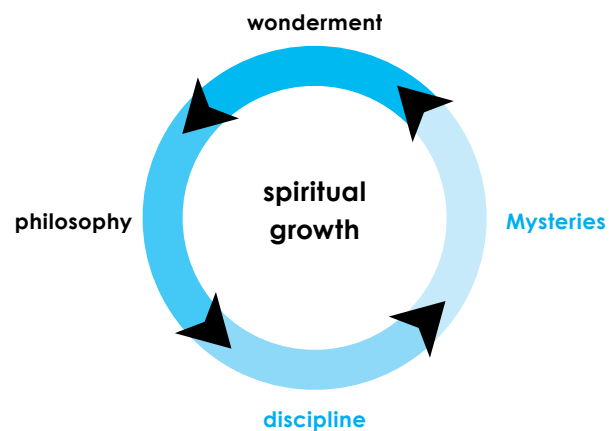
More light on spirituality

It is time to build up a kind of panoramic vision, to take a bird's eye view on the results of our activities and your activities on this symposium so far.

What are we going to do now? Reactions and questions have arisen from the workshops. Gathered by the workshop leaders. I requested them to sit here in the front. I will give my lecture and they will ask questions coming from their groups on the different subjects that I bring up. Then I will try to answer those questions. In that way, we will be able to build up a dynamic view of this afternoon together.

Core concepts for spiritual growth

The study group that prepared this symposium has developed an action plan for spiritual growth. On this first day of the symposium, we have discussed a few important elements in that plan with each other: wonderment, the philosophy – what is spirituality – and also the question: how do you philosophize? Wonderment is a very interesting phase — a phase you should not underestimate. Today, we used that wonderment to answer the question ‘What is spirituality?’ This afternoon, we talked in our workshop about the question what spirituality is and above all about the practical side of it. We focused our whole approach on this question and we made use of the



method Erwin Bomas presented in the third lecture, the Socratic or dialectical method. That method already exists for a few thousand years and is of great importance.

When you watch all tendencies in our society, like New Age, you will see that many people are involved in spirituality in all sorts of ways. However, if you ask what the practical use of it is, and its results, then people who have been occupied with spirituality for years already have no, or only a very vague answer. We are of the opinion that when you train and develop spirituality, you should see the results of it in one way or the other. And if not, you should go back to square one and ask yourself if you are dealing with it in the right way. From our organization, from the Theosophia, there is an enormous urge to learn to

understand that practical side of spirituality — and above all, to practice it.

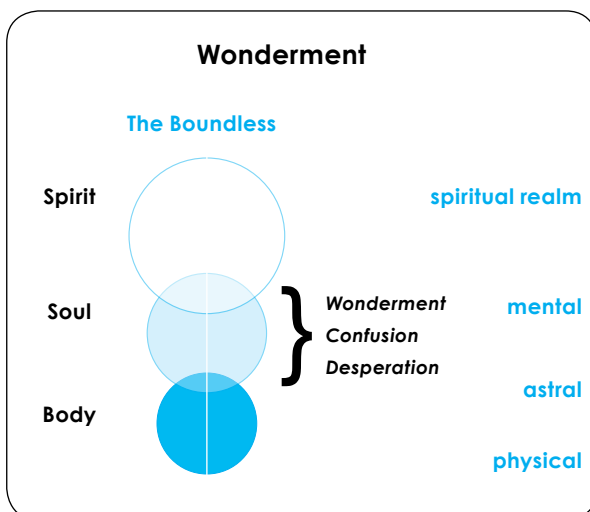
For almost all social, and even scientific or philosophical problems in our society there is a spiritual element necessary to reach a good answer. In questions like ‘Based on which view do I determine if I do or don’t take a medical treatment?’, ‘How do I gain insight in the causes of my depressions?’, ‘What kind of other vision should I develop?’ spirituality plays a role. You cannot come up with a problem without spirituality playing a role in it.

Wonderment – confusion – desperation

This morning, we started with the lecture ‘Wonderment — there must be more behind this.’ And from that point we talked about the spiritual explorer and the Socratic method.

Wonderment is the seed of knowing. If you look up the notion wonderment, then you will come across this thought in many, many places in literature and then you will find out that this state of consciousness is being appreciated a lot.

Wonderment is a door to growth which we open. A very nice statement with respect to wonderment is that you will never reach growth when you are not prepared to go from the known to the unknown. If you stay put with what you know, then that may give you personal comfort; however, it is of importance *not* to be afraid to go to that unknown. If we make use of the scheme with the principles of men, then wonderment is ranked at the top, confusion second and desperation at the bottom.



Why? Because in our opinion the state of wonderment lies closest to insight and evokes this state of insight best. When you watch all things and never ask questions, but immediately start to say ‘oh, this is this and that is that’, then this will be comfortable, but then you will never ask yourself the question: ‘Is what I think right?’ To give a very simple example. When you are on the beach this summer and you are watching the sun at sunset, and you say to the person next to you that the sun is going down, then everyone can be satisfied with this statement — however, it is not true. Because it is the earth that is turning away from the sun. This gives a completely different insight. When you are prepared to accept that insight and you have agreement on it with your friends and acquaintances, then it is no problem to keep using the statement ‘the sun is going down’, since you know that in fact it works differently. However, in fact it would be much better to say that it is getting dark.

The state of wonderment does not need to cause any disturbance, but that wonderment of course concerns things on which you have developed an assumed certainty for yourself over many years. And then someone passes by with another angle and you wonder if you in fact really know how it works, and then the process of wonderment starts. Then, you may get confused in a number of cases.

Confusion is an element that we have localized in that personality. In the second lecture today, Barend Voorham explained that you can speak of personal thinking and supra personal thinking. Or: thinking within limits, or from universality. And that confusion is an element that lies on the plane of limitations. Desperation calls for even more emotion; since then you do not only wonder how it works, but all things are beginning to be called into question and you ask yourself what to do with that. Some people can have this desperation so strongly, that they are no longer able to model their lives.

It is extremely interesting to make yourself familiar with that notion of wonderment. When you want to learn to understand things, it is an excellent starting point. Simply ask a question in all calmness.

Knowing versus information

What is of great importance, is the question on the

difference between knowing and information. And there the element of wonderment plays a role. Then you enter that state in which you start to think. And you reach a possible interpretation. And then you have to test this interpretation for yourself. And testing you can do by observing if what you have thought of is right in daily life. We always say to our students of 'Thinking Differently' that what we state in the lessons should be verifiable in daily life. If not, then something is not okay: either you do not understand it well, or we did not tell you well, or the text is not clear. However, you should be able to trace it back. Then, we talk about more than mere knowledge of facts. You can simply remember a multiplication: $7 \times 7 = 49$. However, you may wonder if this is knowing or information. If it is the last, then it is simply memory; we have developed knowledge of facts and it always turns out to be right. If it is knowing, then this means you see the process of 7×7 clearly before you. Or, to put it differently, you add seven rows of seven and you see: 'Hey, multiplying is in fact a simple method for repeated adding.' That is more knowing something. Information can of course be very clear as well, but it is acquired, accepted.

For fun you should wonder – and not in order to get in confusion or desperation – what did I experience as right for myself in daily life, and for which things did I *assume* them to be that way. When did you calculate the speed of light for the last time? Whom of you has ever checked gravity? There are so many things in our society that are presented as a kind of concrete facts, because others who studied into it and thought about it profoundly, told us that it works like that. When you watch the starry sky, you may wonder why those stars remain hanging. You can also ask yourself the question: 'Who pierced all those little holes in that black screen?' And then you must try to build up a view from your own experience. What can you experience as true as a result from your own research?

Of course these can be long lasting processes. I found a very interesting text in the preface of an English translation of the Tao Te Ching. The editor, Tolbert McCarroll, cites a Taoist called Chuang tsu.⁽¹⁾ And what does he talk about? About wonderment. He says wise men lead themselves with a torch of chaos and doubt. The editor continues: "This little book cannot

be understood any more than you can understand a river." What he means to say is that when you want to experience a river, you have to jump into it. Or, you have to *become* it, you have to identify yourself with it, as it were. And he says: "So it is with the *Tao Te Ching*" as well. A little explanation on the *Tao Te Ching*: it is a collection of 81 paradoxes and it is just the paradox that wants to bring you into that state of wonderment very consciously. A few of these paradoxes are: "As long as there will be good people there will be bad people."⁽²⁾ "As long as we have laws, there will be offenders."⁽³⁾ That is clear so far. So, put away all laws and you won't have offenders anymore. Such a paradox calls for all kinds of questions like 'Without laws, how do we interact with one another and on what basis?' Tolbert McCarroll continues: "Many things [...] will confuse you. The confusion is not to be conquered. It does not result from a lack of knowledge."⁽⁴⁾ It is a question of allowing yourself the luxury, as it were, to enter that phase of wonderment: "This confusion is a teacher that can teach you about yourself, your story, your people, your world, and the still point of the universe."⁽⁵⁾ That is the Tao of which is spoken in the *Tao Te Ching*.

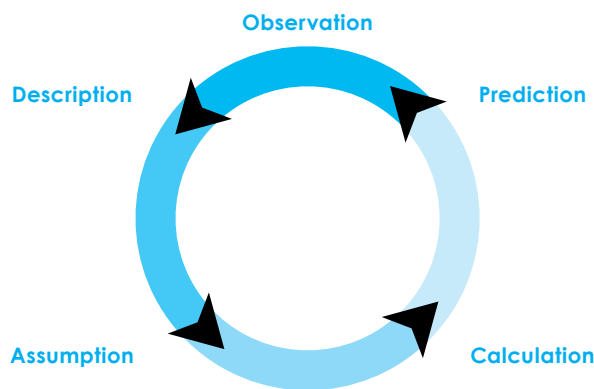
You may have had to write a text some time. Then, one thing is for sure: if you start to type right away and you think that you can build up a nice view while writing, then you will end up disappointed. Because, while you are typing but your view of your subject is not complete yet, you are limiting yourself. You have to go through that process of wonderment first. Ask yourself: what do I have to write about and which elements play a role therein, how does it work, what do I have to find out. You have to complete that view. And when you complete it, then you can – like we can say that in technical terms – record it in the manifestation, as it were, by typing it. After that, you can make some improvements on style and put the periods and commas right. And read it again and look whether it exactly covers what you want to say.

First, our study group developed a view on the theme of this symposium together and wrote the texts. At one of the last preparing meetings we still had to polish a text for the workshops. We all read that text separately, and were in the conviction that it was well put. Then, we put the text on a projection screen and

we discussed it with each other. Well, within half an hour we had made a much better text than each had written individually. What was the cause of that? We all developed a view, we all went through that process of wonderment, but we just went checking with each other if this was indeed the perfect view we could offer to our guests. That meeting was a very important lesson for us.

Action plan

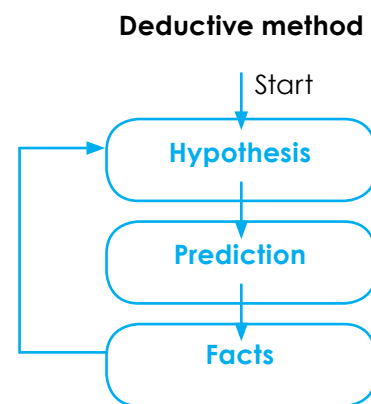
Christiaan Huygens, for us Dutch people a well-known and important scientist from the seventeenth century, had an action plan like that. He said, first, you have to observe. And you have to think thoroughly on what you observe. During your observation, you have to notice how something behaves. You have to look if you recognize patterns in it, and whether you are able to comprehend and understand it better. After that, you have to try for yourself to make a description, and an assumption. When you have done that, you have to make some calculations and make a prediction. And then you have to see if that prediction really proves to be true.



Huygens is the one who discovered that the planet Saturn did not have ears but rings. In his time astronomers thought that Saturn had protuberances on both sides which looked like ears, and it was not understood completely how that was possible, a planet with ears. Huygens conceptualized that those ears had to be rings which only could be seen from a certain position of the earth in relation to Saturn. He was able to predict when that would be. And he predicted that on a certain date no rings or ears would be visible at all. In order to verify that, he constructed a copy of Saturn — a

small globe with rings around it. He observed it with binoculars from a large distance, and yes indeed, his theory was right. And we may well say that up till now our knowledge in this field, enhanced with all kinds of observations by satellite, still turns out to be correct. This example shows that such a stepwise process of wonderment, asking yourself how it works, making conceptions of it and testing it in the practice of daily life, is a very essential matter.

That method is called the deductive method: you start with a hypothesis, you make predictions, you check the facts. Is it not correct? Then go back to square one.



Spirituality is relative

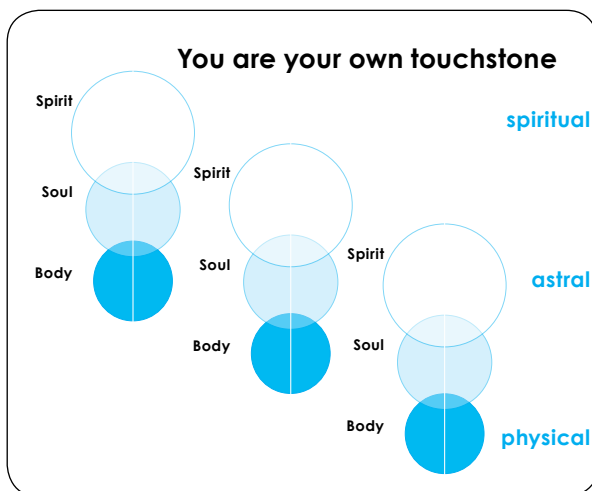
Another issue we thought was of great importance is the question: what is spirituality?

When you ask people this question, they often seem to think that everything you do not see is spiritual. That is something to give a moment's thought. Today, we defined spirituality very clearly as assuming a universal power behind matter, and acting accordingly. You cannot see that spiritual power. There are of course many things that we cannot see, which, however, do not belong to a universal power at all, in the sense that it is of *universal* influence on all more material things. When you look at yourself and you see yourself as a thinker, then you can realize that *you* are in fact a universal spiritual power for all those beings which cooperate on a lower level with you. All your cells, atoms and organs are really all consciousnesses that like to cooperate with you, since if this were not the fact, then they would leave. On those consciousnesses you exercise an influence. For those cells our way of thinking is very universal. Now, you may say for

yourself that your motives are not so universal, but for us there are even bigger influences which we experience as universal in the same way.

What we really should do, is to identify ourselves with that part in us which experiences that unity, that fullness, so that we are not in that element that experiences separateness. So, we should focus on our higher nature, which we call our Higher Self, and practice the most universal that we have developed. And that is different for everyone, since no two human beings are on exactly the same level of development. So, spirituality is a relative notion. For one person it can be very spiritual what he is doing, while for another person that is not spiritual because he has developed, tested and experienced as right, greater, more universal insights and ideas.

We tried to show this with the help of that diagram of spirit, soul and body.



There are two limitations to our perceptions: we do not see that which is above our level; and that which is below our level, we do not see either.⁽⁶⁾ We are the limitation ourselves, depending on our development. However, you can imagine that, when all which is above us is universal, there must be more sustainable behavior, more enduring patterns and greater natural laws there which we are subject to. Now, when you observe the composite constitution of three people in relation to each other in this diagram, then you will see that the norm of what is 'spiritual' is relative. From the workshop the remark came that each consciousness, each being, has a spiritual side. However,

you should realize that behind a material cell in my body a consciousness is active with a quality that belongs to that small cellular being. When I look at the behavior of that cell, then *my* consciousness side is clearly of a higher level than the consciousness side of that cell. The consciousness of that cell is more or less automatically active and I can influence it in a certain way. In a sense, I am the leading influence for that cell. In case it has no faith in that influence anymore, then that is the end of the road for it and it will go elsewhere. In case it likes that influence, then it will remain with me and will cooperate with me for a long time to go. So, despite our statement that every consciousness has a spiritual side, the notion spiritual is relative.

Spirituality is dynamic

Spirituality is also dynamic. By that I mean that during the day, the week, the months of the year, we are not always as focused spiritually. Not everyone among us is 24 hours a day active in focusing on that overall universal influence which we are subject to and which we should live in harmony with.

If you have a bad mood in the morning, or you have a headache and that is the end of the road for you that day, then you deviate clearly, and then you will have a day on which you are less spiritual than on another day when you are very seriously and well active with that. That dynamic behavior is always there.

In case you have a conflict with one of your fellow men, then you see that you step out of that universal aspect very quickly and move to that very personal aspect, and use all kinds of arguments, right or wrong, in order to enforce you are right in a certain degree. Then, when you take a deep breath and ask yourself: 'Is this a universal remark?', you may come to the conclusion that you should better not have made it. We are able to explain this a bit easier in our course 'Thinking Differently', since then we talk about the division of our thinking into seven layers. However, just keep it very simple at personal and supra personal thinking — then you already have a very nice test in itself. You can also wonder: 'Is my remark selfish or unselfish?' Depending on our state of mind, we value the things we are encountering and that determines how we deal with it. When we completely sink in our

own personal 'I', then we are in a state of separateness and we mainly see the illusory and not so much the reality. So, and we already said this, you are your own touchstone.

Spiritual growth

What does spiritual growth really mean? It means we make an effort to study and acquire the great laws and the universal aspects in our world or our universe.

A question from workshop leader Henk Bezemer: "In our workshop there was a very clear question. Someone envisioned that all beings try to grow and then wondered what it is, this power as a result of which all beings want to extend their consciousness."

Herman C. Vermeulen: in fact, that question is very easy to answer when you are prepared to accept the three hypotheses of Theosophia: Infinity – Cyclical movement – As above so below. In this case, Infinity is the most important one. There is Infinity and in that Infinity we all play a role. Stated differently, we all have a small part of that Infinity *in* us. Or, in principle we *are* Infinite. And that Infinity generates, as it were, an inner urge, an urge to express that as well. And that urge manifests itself by wanting to understand and to explore things and from that, growth happens. That exploring and wanting to understand is also not a continuous process, all kinds of cyclical movements play a role in it. When you are on holiday you may say 'these weeks we just don't need it', however, at other moments you are intensely active with it. Or, it is exactly the other way around, when you are on holiday you have time to think and during the rest of the year, when you have to work, it does not go that well.

However, the point is that this inner urge, which is in each and everyone of us, always needs to come out and from time to time it actually does. And in daily life we can experience this.

Everyone asks questions, everyone has moments of wonderment. But the question is if we then take the right steps. In case we take the right steps, we help to stimulate that inner development, that spiritual growth, and in case we do not take the right steps, we keep it at a distance a little, and we remain stuck in that limitation.

It is much more interesting not to see ourselves as a loose element of that Infinity, but to view the Infinity as something that consists of a number of dew drops which all have that urge of expression in them. Imagine that Infinity as a gigantic ocean full of little waves and whirlpools, and every little whirlpool or little wave is a consciousness, a being which is expressing itself. When you look at it that way, you assume a fullness of which all consciousnesses are a reflection in a certain way. And that immediately calls forth the idea of unity and the interconnectedness of all.

In material growth, the consciousness focuses much more on growth of the external side. That side is less universal and lower than the level on which humanity can think in this phase of development.

In one of the workshops it was mentioned that we do need that material aspect, and that is right of course. We need tools or vehicles in order to gain experiences, in order to reason and draw conclusions, in order to test our ideas. So, those vehicles help us with our development. However, that does not mean that those tools are our *goal*. They are the *means* in order to come to growth of the consciousness. In the Theosophia, you will never learn that you have to let go of the material aspect immediately because it would not be of interest at all. No, it has its place — as a tool. It helps us to explore the questions which arise out of wonderment and to stimulate our growth.

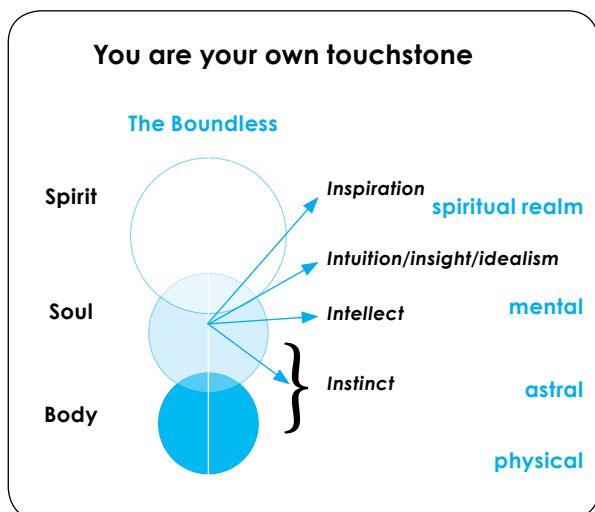
So, what is spirituality and what is living spiritually? Living spiritually is living in accordance with those directing, inspiring influences from those for us higher spheres of consciousness. So, that means that we, living here on this earth, are subject to a number of big universal influences — think of planet Earth itself for a moment, of the solar system, of the galaxy. Now, I mention the material side of it, but as a matter of fact you should focus on the power behind those external forms. There, you trace back to that universality, and then you arrive at the surprising conclusion that those universal influences are to be summarized in seven laws, like we do in our continuation-course 'Wisdom of Life'. You should realize, however, that those seven together generate an almost infinite variation of expressions.

Now, what are these universal powers? Very well-known are cyclical movement — for us human beings

that means reincarnation. And cause and effect. We call that karma. Not good karma or bad karma. No, nothing but cause and effect. In this way, you can identify seven of those universal influences which we also know as the Seven Jewels of Wisdom, fundamental thoughts which are very simple in themselves.

Love for wisdom and the Socratic method

Let's take a look at the second phase in the action plan, philosophy. The word originates – as you know – from the Greek and we translate it with: love for wisdom. However, you can wonder: what is wisdom? In Greek mythology wisdom is represented by the goddess Athena. She was created by Zeus and Metis and during that conception Zeus wondered if he did the right thing. This also happens in daily life, that you are doing something and then you wonder if it is wise. It seems that Zeus had that same experience when he was with Metis. Athena was born from the head of Zeus — so, wisdom was born from the highest element of Zeus. Which danger did he see? The danger is that wisdom can be used wrongly, can be misused, by a human being who is not developed as far yet. Then, shrewdness, cunning, come to the scene. We live in a society in which wisdom can be used openly, and that occurs when someone thinks it is applicable. In the scheme below you see that wisdom – that means vision, inspiration – belongs to the higher qualities of our human thinking. So, you will be able to understand the symbolism of the fact that Athena is born out of the head of Zeus — wisdom is placed there for a reason. The Socratic method is meant to develop wisdom.



You could see that as a step-by-step plan, and you could think that when you pass through the steps neatly, and answer the questions as well as possible, that you will know how something works. However, if you participated in the Socratic method exercise this morning, then you realize that that dialogue releases a process in our thinking also.

You always assumed that something is as it is, and now you are going to wonder: is it really the case? By consequently passing through that step-by-step plan you force yourself to wonder if you really know it, or if you just assumed it, that you have no first-hand experience with it. And you wonder what you should explore in order to really know something about this problem. Then, you need that element of wonderment. Because if you do not wonder, you assume preconceived ideas. Each repairman is able to recognize a number of malfunctions, but he will have to solve the difficult problems by emptying his thinking and just looking at what is happening.

And the Socratic method is a way to enter that condition. It is a kind of introspection, an emptying. And that is something different than becoming stupid. It is emptying yourself from your prejudice and simply, quietly, wonder: what do I know, what am I able to find about it, what does one party say, what does the other party say? In this way you will be able to build up a conclusion for yourself step by step.

Television broadcasted an interesting program years ago. It was called 'De achterkant van het gelijk' ('the other side of the picture') and they used the Socratic method in order to test all kinds of ethical and moral problems.

When you reflect on ethical and moral problems and you use this method, you will be able to verify what the background of a generally accepted ethical value is. Where does it come from? Is it really a tradition or is it only valid in our family or in our country? Or, when we are going to reflect on it, are we able to conclude, that it is based on a universal spiritual wisdom which is shaped in a practical way?

When you pass through the step-by-step plan in this way, you will stimulate growth in yourself. However, you should not have the illusion that you are already done when you found an answer by using that Socratic method of course. Because if you are a small part of

that Infinity, there is infinitely more to learn yet. So, spiritual growth is a continuing process of wonderment, philosophy, using logic, applying it, and training yourself in it as much as possible. In the workshops today, we showed you how it works and we tried to let you gain some practical experience with it.

Questions from the workshops

Do the workshop leaders have other questions from the participants?

Relative spirituality

Henk Bezemer: In the group many thoughts were given on the idea that somewhere there is a kind of source of all, and that was perceived as spiritual. Does this mean that everything that flows forth from it is spiritual as well?

Herman C. Vermeulen: When you adhere to our definition, you can say that not everything is spiritual in relation to us. When you say that everything which is more universal than we are is spiritual, then there are a whole lot of things which all arise from that infinite source, and they do have spiritual sides in their sphere, but they are not spiritual *in relation to us*. As an example I mentioned the cells of my body. They have a spiritual side in themselves, however, not for me, since I have a better understanding of the universal laws than those cells. So, from that infinite source manifestation arises, and that manifestation which is higher than we are, more universal than we are, is thus more spiritual than we are. And that expression, that manifestation, which is lower than we are, we perceive as matter.

However, we have to realize ourselves that matter exists which is so coarse that we cannot see it. For example, in the old literature aether is mentioned, which is some ten thousand times more dense than lead. And to us, lead is the most dense and heavy metal. And then there turns out to be matter, which is much denser and heavier, but we cannot see it. While we are under the contrary impression, the illusion that we should in fact be able to see it.

The same goes for light. We are able to see only a small piece of the spectrum. Light with a shorter wave length, the 'ultraviolet' light, and that with longer wave

lengths, of 'infrared', that light we do not see. We are only able to see that little strip in between.

Barend Voorham: In our workshop it was put forward that wherever you are, if you focus on the noble part in yourself, *then* you are spiritual.

Herman C. Vermeulen: Yes, then you focus on the universal, the higher. Then, you are directed to much greater views, concepts and natural laws. When you live spiritually and are practical, you have to express that vision consistently and not only when it is convenient to you.

There is always a power side, a spiritual side to something and there is always a substance side, or a material side to something. And from the point where we are, we call the one spiritual or universal and the other limited. However, both sides are consciousnesses, which express what is in that One Infinity, that One Universal Principle in their way. That idea, that spirituality is relative, has a broadening effect.

Socratic method

Joop Smits: In our workshop we discussed for a long time that in the Socratic method the phrasing of the thesis plays an important role. Furthermore, one of the conclusions was that it depends on your own state of development, 'objective idealism'. There is a continuous process of growth in which you constantly move your own frontiers in yourself. That plays a very important role. So, the result of your Socratic explorations is connected to your own inner development one on one.

Herman C. Vermeulen: Yes, each question you ask also arises from your qualities of consciousness. And that may imply that you have to go back because your question is wrong. In the technical profession I experienced a number of times that we discovered that our question was totally wrong, that we were simply looking for the wrong thing. For example, in physics there is much discussion on gravity at the moment. That is perceived as a power of its own, separate of the whole. That idea is not let go of easily. And there are only very few who postulate that gravity is the manifested effect of a more universal cause behind it. The Socratic method does not use an arbitrary

question, no, the question as such has to be correctly put: it has to be a kind of buddhic question, that means an insightful question. And then you have to see what information you are able to find which substantiates the statement and, on the other hand, which information contradicts it. And remember that you choose for the one or the other substantiation depending on your consciousness. The Socratic method always brings a deeper reflection, but whether it will always give you the ultimate answer? I think not, since in this process there is growth and development also.

Motive

Ruud Melieste: In our workshop the question ‘is what you do not see spiritual?’, was rejected as an irrelevant question, since it is not relevant if it is visible or invisible, however, it is mainly the intention behind it, which makes it spiritual or not. From that intention arises an action and by that action it becomes something practical.

Herman C. Vermeulen: It mainly concerns motive then. However, that does not say that much about the level you are on. Motive is about wondering: from what vision do I do it, or why do I do the things that I do. We try to answer that question in the lecture ‘On our way – is compassion a choice?’.

Theosophical-technically the question what is spiritual is relevant, certainly when you realize that spirituality is a relative notion. That you *yourself* draw that line, and that in the Infinity there is no such thing as two sides, a spiritual and a material, and that those two sides cooperate every once in a while. No, an important thought is that there is *always* consciousness and that it *always* cooperates. *Some* consciousnesses are material to us and *some* are spiritual to us.

Meditation

Erwin Bomas: In our group we wondered if meditation is spiritual, and that was in fact also the wrong question, since meditation also is a means to an end. Someone in the group said, that it is spiritual if it helps you to gain influences from your Higher Self again.

Herman C. Vermeulen: To us meditation is a technique. However, most important is: on what do you

meditate? If you meditate on what is a better type of bicycle, then that is of course very material, and if you meditate on how you can direct that process of wonderment, or how to get to an answer on a spiritual question, then meditation can be a tool in order to reach a certain insight.

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1. *The Tao: The Secret Way*. Edited by Tolbert McCarroll, blz. V. Preface: <http://docs6.chomikuj.pl/1309229492,PL,0,0,Tao-Te-Ching---Tolbert-McCarroll.pdf>
 2. Lao tsu, *Tao Te Ching*. Many editions, chapters 2, 27.
 3. See ref. 2, chapter 57.
 4. See ref. 1.
 5. See ref. 1.
 6. The 3rd fundamental principle of *The Secret Doctrine* can be described as ‘as above so below’, by which is meant that the natural laws of further developed beings are also valid for less developed ones. So, notions like karma and cyclicity are valid for, for example, humans and animals, but also for cosmic beings like suns and universes.
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Views on spirituality

This lecture is the first of a series of four, in which we examine *how spirituality and compassion affect our lives*. It is the result of the teamwork of our German group. In this first contribution we investigate how people think about spirituality.

It is not easy to define the word 'spirituality'. What definition would you give for it?

I began to do research within my family and friends on the one hand and I checked the internet, different encyclopedias and other literature on the other.

The results are astonishing.

First I asked my friends and my family. People of different ages, different religious beliefs, different educations and with drastic or less drastic experiences in their lives.

Personal views on spirituality

I asked a 50 years old graduate and he translated the word quite analytically and said spirituality means extrasensory or intellectual.

Also a 46 year-old women, a teacher, said that spirituality is something that deals with extrasensory things, i.e. everything that we cannot see or has not been proved academically. She thinks that there is something else between heaven and earth that we don't know.

A housewife of 49 years said that in her opinion spiritual people are mentally detached; she connects

the whole with horoscopes, dancing tables, ghosts, meditation, and so on. She cannot take these people completely seriously, for her they have lost themselves in something crazy.

A trainee of 18 years said quite spontaneously that spirituality reminds him of Buddha, the Dalai Lama, and for him this is a special way of thinking.

A high-school graduate 19 years old girl believes that spirituality is a special attitude towards life, which is a matter of survival for everybody and is hard to understand.

For a 19 years old student spirituality is something quite unconventional, socially regarded as weird, like the hippies. She said spiritual people belong to a fringe group searching for new ideals.

It was interesting that no one associates spirituality with the two most widespread classical religious beliefs of our western world, Catholicism and Protestantism. And it seems that everyone refers spirituality or a spiritual life to themselves, to their own lives, unconnected with others. So, according to different people, spirituality has many different meanings.

The Watkins Review: how many times somebody is googled

Further I researched the internet and found the Watkins' Review.

This Review is quarterly published by Watkins Books,

an esoteric bookshop in London, established over 100 years ago in England for spiritual subjects. The review consists of a list of the 'spiritually most influential' people in the world.

There are several factors that were taken into account when compiling the list. The main three are:

1. The person has to be alive.
2. The person has to have made a unique and spiritual contribution on a global scale.
3. The person is frequently googled, appears in Nielsen Data, and is highlighted in blogs throughout the 'blogosphere'.

In the text box on the right you see a small selection from the list.

Definitions of Wikipedia and different religions

In the German Wikipedia I found the following explanations of the term spirituality summarized in a few key sentences:

General definition: spirituality means a spiritual connection with the transcendent, the other side or infinity.

Christianity: spirituality means that the personal relation with Jesus Christ is the point of focus.

Buddhism: spirituality is the spiritual aim of enlightenment; this is reached amongst others by meditation.

Hinduism: spirituality means that Life and Death are in a constant circulation.

Islam: spirituality forms a bridge between the person, the world and God.

Then I visited the sites of the Vatican and the Catholic and Protestant Churches. Here is what I found:

Vatican: here I didn't find any definition, however, the word spirituality appears in connection with a lot of holy people.

The *Catholic church* says: spirituality is equivalent to the soul and refers to a personal relation with God.

The *Protestant church* says: spirituality is another word for devoutness and openness for religious topics.

Results

These are my results, certainly not statistical relevant, but, nevertheless, typical for our society where there

The Watkins Review: list of 'spiritual most influential' people in the world

Interesting statistics:

Male: 76, female: 24, average age: 67 years, the oldest: 104 years, the youngest: 30 years.

Here are some results from the annual report 2011:

01. Eckart Tolle – a bestselling author, e.g.,
Power of Now
02. Dalai Lama
03. Dr. Wayne Dwyer – psychotherapist and author
07. Paulo Coelho – a bestselling author, e.g.,
The Alchemist
08. Oprah Winfrey – talk show host
19. Nelson Mandela – the first black president of South Africa
34. Pope (Benedict XVI)

is no consistent view on spirituality. A large variety of phenomena is lumped together.

To comprehend the meaning of the term 'spirituality' we now hear about spirituality from the theosophical point of view by Ralph Kammer.

Where spirituality manifests itself in man

After having heard from Inge Knobloch on what kinds of ideas are circulating about spirituality in public, I would like to continue with what Theosophia has to say about this topic, remembering that spirituality in society and in every single human being is the central subject of our Movement. In order to form a clearer picture of spirituality, we must first discuss where spirituality is established in man and how it can be recognized. We will then explain how we can understand spirituality from a theosophical point of view.

Man, much more than a body

“Man does not consist only of flesh and blood,” is a saying that most have heard before. The Christian teaching is more precise and looks at man as a composite being made up of body, spirit and soul, which approximately corresponds with the theosophical view. The Theosophia is even clearer in its description and gives seven parts or principles of which man consists. These parts are:

1. *the physical body*, which probably seems the best known to us since it can be experienced with all our senses;
2. *the astral body*, the model after which the physical body is formed;
3. *the vitality* or *the principle of life*, which can be recognized for example in that impulse which steers our breathing;
4. *the animal principle* or *principle of desire*, the driving, electrical forces of man, which are the basis of his acts;
5. *the principle of mind*, that principle which gives man awareness of the self, because it gives him the possibility to reflect on the things around him;
6. *the spiritual soul of man*, that part of our constitution where intuition, boundless love and compassion reside;
7. and finally *the divine, universal principle* of man, which connects him with the SELF of the universe. It is the seat of pure consciousness, of original wisdom and inspiration.

We began with the lowest principle, but the divine principle is of course the highest one. It must be considered as a starting point for all other principles, which are developed one after the other out of the respective principle above them.

We carry all cosmic possibilities within us

The faculty of thinking is what distinguishes man from all lower beings. So if we want to know more about him, we must turn our attention towards that principle. And then we discover a little universe, a complete composite totality. Our mind is a microcosm, because

the seven universal principles which are reflected in each being, also reflect themselves in each separate principle. Thus we get a sevenfold partitioned mind. This means that we have seven different qualities or aspects of the mind, as reflections of the real principles. The listing of these various sub-principles or seven qualities of the mind will bring more clarity.

If we compare these aspects with our own thought habits, we will be able to form a clearer picture of where we tend to focus our thinking, and where we may find opportunities to focus on our undeveloped or only partially developed aspects. This all will help us to answer the question: *what does the Theosophia understand by spirituality and where can this be found in man?*

Thought aspects necessary in everyday life

If we take a look at the seven qualities or thought aspects, we first see the lowest or *physical aspect*. In relation to daily life, this means that with our consciousness we are in the *physical thought aspect* when we feel something such as a toothache, hunger or perhaps if somebody tickles us. We can then think of nothing else and are completely focused on this physical activity.

Next we have the *sensory thought aspect*, which corresponds to the astral level since this is where emotions reside. It is easy for us to recognize examples of this aspect. For instance, it is not so easy to remain calm and quiet if a neighbour or colleague spreads untruths about us. Such nastiness can give rise to negative emotions within us and bind our consciousness to this level. Equanimity is considered the means in all religions to master the consequences of the sensory thought aspect.

On the other hand, the *vitality aspect of thinking*, holds a completely different facet of daily life. If we want to get an idea of this kind of thought activity, the restlessness of the western civilisation can serve as a good example, because this restlessness has become one of her main characteristics by now. People who are part of the so-called workaholics, who permanently work, not able to sit quietly and get a bad feeling if they rest, are a good example of those fellow citizens located in the vitality aspect of thinking.

With the *fourth thought aspect*, we reach that kind

of thinking that contains *cravings* and *desires*. If one looks at it negatively, one could suspect the origin of all selfishness is found here. But *cravings* and *desires* must not be exclusively related to the ego. If we look at them neutrally, they are simply the driving forces of man. Only the motive of the single human being makes the desire an altruistic or egoistical motivated force.

A life without these different thought aspects is quite impossible, since each single one is an important tool used to master the daily routine. However, if one gives too much attention to one or another of these thought aspects, our perception becomes distorted. We then see and interpret life from only that one perspective. The above mentioned four qualities of thinking form the lower part of the general mind principle. It is the lower part because at this level our thinking is steered in a certain way by our instincts. So we think instinctively, rather than we think self-consciously.

What our intellect can and cannot do

The higher part of thinking begins with the *intellectual thought aspect*. This fifth sub-principle offers man the ability of self-reflection. It is thus possible for him to watch, to put in order and to assimilate his own thoughts. A well-known example of this is if one suddenly realizes while going about his daily routine that he has acted automatically and unconsciously and then tries to recapitulate the things that happened before. Since intellectuality is considered very valuable in our society, there are of course many more examples. The absolutely most important feature of the intellectual aspect of thinking is observing and mentally assimilating the *surface* of the things we discern, the things around us, which we discern with our senses.

We now enter that level where spirituality shows itself in the thinking of man. If we say that the four lower thought aspects are influenced or overshadowed by our instincts, than we must add that the two upper aspects are influenced from that area of the human microcosm which we call the spiritual soul.

Direct understanding of the heart of things

The sixth and therefore second highest aspect of thinking, *the intuitive thinking*, offers man a platform

or tool, to recognize the things around him as they really are. The thinker here dives into the nature of things and sees them, removed of all rational considerations, how they are. It is possible for him, because he sets all his prejudices and thought patterns aside. Another feature of the *intuitive aspect* is the fact that the thinker needs no explanations, unlike the intellectual aspect. There is no need for him to work out his impressions mentally to get an answer. If someone moves consciously to this area of the mind and recognizes things as they are, he will actually understand them. This understanding then enables him to recognize and to develop true compassion, sympathy and boundless love.

It is not easy to find a concrete example of this kind of thinking since one must have experienced such enlightening moments of awareness before. Why did people like Gandhi or Martin Luther King enter into the service of mankind and ethnic groups and work so hard, sometimes endangering their own lives, for the guarantee of their human rights or simply to save them from the definite death? Surely not because they had nothing better to do. They had insight and they derived their altruistic motives from this insight. Therefore they were standing on safe ground, no matter if their personal welfare was in danger.

Becoming aware of our universal essence

We will not find ourselves in danger if we approach the last and therefore highest thought aspect now. The consideration of the *inspirational thought principle* puts us at most in front of the problem, of not being able to comprehend it. By this mind principle, it is said, the thinker dives into Nature itself, and sees all the connections in it. Then he realizes that the impression of separateness from all the uncountable other beings is an illusion. The thinker and the world, yes, the thinker and the divine being, the great mystery, are here one, all barriers will have disappeared.

The group of people who can really enlighten us about this thought aspect is extremely exclusive. Great thinkers and philosophers may be included here, founders of religions and philosophical systems as well as some poets, painters and composers. The well-known mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi was such a poet, he belonged to the Sufism. The Sufi teaching,

for example, says that knowledge about God is like a pearl. This pearl symbolizes for them the stage of union of spirit and soul with God or even Divinity itself. They say, “that this unity is reality, or the state, truth and perception of things, where there is neither Lord nor servant. Both being united and one and the same, the adorer and the adored.”⁽¹⁾

To get to the point: if we are moving our consciousness forward to the sixth and seventh thought principles and remain there, we have made ourselves conscious channels of these forces which are streaming down to us from the very heart of the universe. We have then realized what we can call a real human being.

Reference

1. Quoted in: *The Theosophist*, August. 1882, p. 265-266.
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What is the next step?

We human beings are living links in a universal network of life. This contribution gives full attention to the inspiring doctrine of hierarchies. How do we recognize these hierarchies in us and around us, and which moral insights can we derive from them?

We have just heard that man is a sevenfold being. In his second highest thought-aspect – see the accompanying figure – we find the Spiritual Soul, which is only latent in human beings. But it radiates to the next principle: the thinking principle, which we need to develop.

Many people have not tuned their antennas to that Spiritual Soul and only think about themselves and their own advantages. Yet many people have the undefined feeling that there is more between heaven and earth. This ‘more’ we cannot perceive with our human senses.

This whiff of spirituality is causing our feelings of compassion for other beings and giving us the idea that everything is interconnected with everything. But what does this saying mean? How is everything interconnected?

Fundamental unity

Man is connected to the Highest Self through his highest principle — Âtman, the term ‘spirit’ we use a lot in this symposium. Everything and everyone

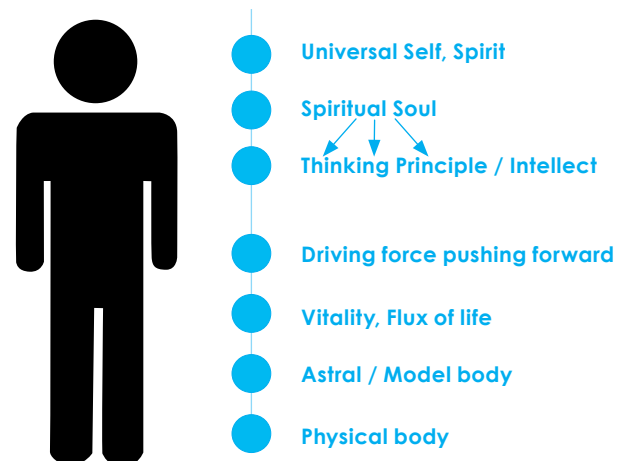
stems from this source. This Highest Self is within everything that exists.

We cannot imagine this Highest Self: our brain cannot grasp this. But this Highest Self within everything is the reason why we say: in each of us we find the Divine; man is a divine being.

Look for example to your own hand, with its five fingers. The fingers might feel separated from each other, but we say no, they belong to our hand and are connected. This exemplifies the idea that all persons in the society are connected, in fact, that everything is connected.

What is a hierarchy?

To explain how we are interconnected, we have to look at the topic Hierarchies. What is a hierarchy?



A hierarchy is said to be a system of elements which are superior or inferior to each other.⁽¹⁾ And interestingly enough, this word comes from the Greek language and we find the word 'holy' and 'leadership' or 'authority' in it.

Hierarchy means that some entity within a body holds the highest authority. This entity is called the Hierarch. The Hierarch conducts, guides and instructs the body. Considering the human body, we know there are atoms, and that certain amounts of atoms form the cells, certain amounts of cells form organs, and the cells and organs together form a sort of integrated circuits, for example the blood system or respiratory system. This is a hierarchy. And at the top we have a hierarch and this is obviously ourselves, our human consciousness working through the brain.

Our responsibility towards lower beings

To lead means to guide. But how can we do this in our own physical universe that is formed of our atoms, cells, organs and organ systems? Of course we can do this by proper nourishment, by exercising, and to take enough rest and sleep to recover again. Furthermore, also by careful hygiene, not only physically but also mentally, by thinking properly. And we need contact with other human beings, this is also very important. Do we want all the elements in our physical universe to fulfill their task properly? I think yes, because otherwise we will feel weak, we get ill or we die. Here we see again: all elements of our universe work together, all are interconnected within ourselves. And this is only a view of the human body, the material side of us.

Our society a living unity

Let's look at another hierarchy: the society, which is a main issue today. Just like the atoms build cells, and cells build organs, so single men build couples, some couples form families or other groups, and all these groups together form a society, while all societies together form mankind.

Who is the hierarch of that hierarchy, of a society? Of course political parties, if we adopt an outer view on our society. Other outer hierarchs are laws, governments, kings and some elites who influence the society as a role model.

Now we can also ask: do we want all elements of that

hierarchy to fulfill their tasks? What will happen if they don't? It is the same as for our body: the whole system will collapse perhaps — so also here we see that everything is interconnected.

Everything is ensouled

Talking about ourselves, we say that we are living entities with souls. We have consciousness and intelligence. We live. Isn't it consistent if we assign these attributes to all the elements of our universe? Atoms are ensouled beings, they have consciousness and intelligence, of course on a completely different level than we as human beings.

Perhaps this is a completely new thought for you. I have met a lot of people who refuse to accept this idea when they first hear about it. Perhaps it helps to take another look. Let us have a look at another hierarchy to get a better understanding: the hierarchy of beings we find in our Planet.

We assign a certain intelligence and consciousness to animals, do you agree? Furthermore, a lot of studies show that plants react to certain music or when you speak to them in a soft tone and with friendly thoughts. Then they grow better, and give more blossom. This is also very well-known. And if we take the next step down on the hierarchy, why should that be completely different? Does it make sense to think that consciousness and intelligence would stop here?

The psychical aspect of water

Some years ago I participated in a lecture where the speaker took two glasses of water. And he spoke to those two glasses in different ways: to the first one he spoke with friendly words, at the second one he shouted unfriendly words. Then he showed photographs of the structure of nicely and harshly addressed water. These were very different: one was symmetrical, like a snowflake. The other photo showed an opposite character.

Next, he asked the audience who wished to drink from the glass with the friendly addressed water, and some hands raised. But no one wished to drink from the other glass — and the big question is: why not? Science cannot explain that, but I think that their inner soul said: I know the truth, so don't drink that. So, everything that exists is living. A natural question

is: are there living beings higher than men? Is there a hierarch of our Planet? I will come back to this question later on.

Analogy of Planet and man

Perhaps another analogy will help to show the close similarity between all living beings. We compare a human being or microcosm with our Planet Earth, a macrocosm.

Our body has a constant temperature, which is about 37 degrees. It maintains an acid-base balance, and its salt-concentration has a certain level. Looking at the birth-rates of boys and girls, we note that usually they are balanced; only after the World Wars were there more boys born. That is interesting because there was a need for more boys, after the death of so many soldiers in the war. What or who is controlling that? Let us compare this to our Planet. The seas have a salt concentration of around 4 percent. This concentration has been stable for millions of years, which is astonishing, because the rivers are continuously washing salt from the mountains and bringing it to the oceans. Theoretically, the salt concentration of the oceans should be doubled each 12 million years — nevertheless, it remains constant.

Also the air has a consistent composition. The percentages of oxygen and nitrogen are stable all the time, even though there are now more people breathing and less trees producing oxygen. The temperature is not quite the same since we began measuring it. Here we see changes occurring.

Generally speaking, ‘something’ within our Planet is able to keep the balance.

Trees and lungs

Let us look to the function of one element of each hierarchy. Our lungs for example deliver oxygen to the body and take up carbon dioxide from the blood. Trees do the same on the scale of the Planet. In the figure you see the similarity between the structure of the lungs and trees, if we look to their branches and twigs, that perform the work.

Or take the example of the circuits. In our body we have several circuits, like the blood circuit. These circuits wonderfully perform a difficult task, without stopping a moment until our body is put aside. The

same is the case with the many circulations within our Planet, like the water circuit. These circuits keep running all the time.

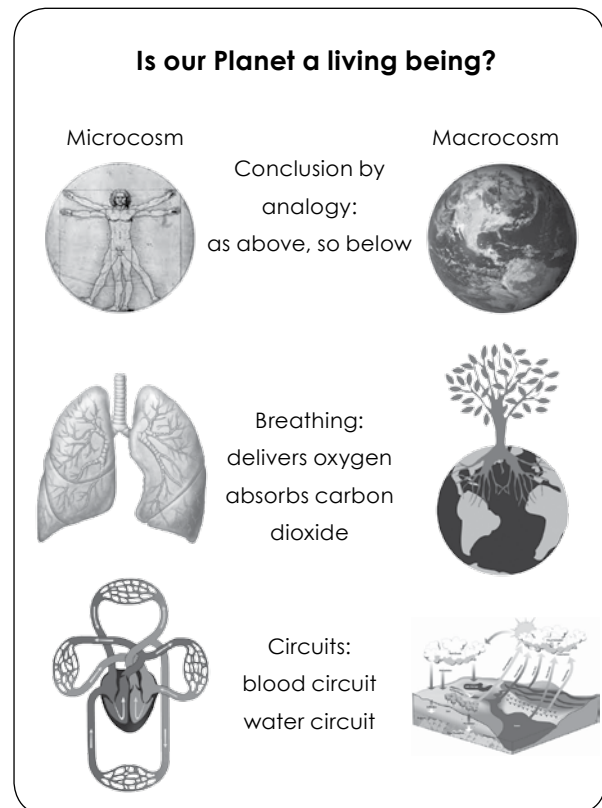
Think about these examples: is it so strange to say that the Planet is a living being?

Our spiritual hierarchs

Now we come back to the question: “Who or what is the hierarch of man in respect to spirituality?” That is the Higher Self, the common Root of all beings. But the Sun, our Planet and the Moon are also hierarchs: without them we cannot exist. The Moon for instance keeps our Planet on track with its gravity.

Spiritually seen, man is part of different superior hierarchies. The hierarchs of all these hierarchies guide us and stimulate all the elements within their hierarchies to fulfill their tasks.

Hierarchies extend *endlessly* in all directions: ‘living beings within living beings’. As man cannot grasp this ‘endlessly’ with his brain mind, he sometimes puts a ‘highest god’ or a ‘clutch of gods’ on top of it, and says: “Here it ends, this is the highest god.” But in fact, it is endless.



Nature composed of learning, imperfect beings

Hierarchies of living beings emanate, guide and lead Nature and form its 'natural laws'. Today the question arose, why there is so much war in the world. Why are people so often angry with one another?

One explanation is that Nature is not perfect. All beings are learning, and thus are imperfect. Do you care for your 'inner' universe in a perfect way, all the time? I think no one can say 'yes' to that question.

Therefore, we have to conclude that even gods are beings on their way to greater evolutionary development. They too strive to express themselves, they too are ignorant of things that are higher still than what they know now — which leads to suffering.

But we can all do our best within the hierarchies we are part of.

Our tasks as humans

Each element of a hierarchy has a task to fulfill or several tasks to fulfill. This includes us. First, we have to take care of our 'inner' hierarchy, for the beings that belong to our bodily nature. Second, we have to serve everything that is living and to accept that we have a responsibility.

To be able to help other beings, we have to learn and to develop spiritual thinking: the reason why we organize symposiums like these. And most importantly: we have to lend a helping hand to other beings on their long journey to spiritual development or evolution. These are our tasks as humans.

Universal wisdom

The doctrine of hierarchies is not an invention of The Theosophical Society. We can find this idea in all world religions and most of the ancient philosophers. In Christianity you read about angels and archangels, for example. In the Jewish belief we find the seraphim and cherubim, and also the old Greeks had a crowd or a bundle of gods and heroes. And so on. Each mythology teaches the existence of hierarchies, in which everyone has its role.

To sum it up: hierarchies stretch in all directions, endlessly: within man and above man. Each element of a hierarchy has to fulfill tasks. In the words of Gottfried de Purucker:

... that he [man] is, in essence, an incarnate god, an incarnate divinity in his essence, and that he has come down into these spheres of matter for purposes of universal work ...⁽²⁾

How we can do this in our daily life, we will hear about from the next speaker.

References

1. Wikipedia, term 'hierarchy'.
 2. G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of Esoteric Philosophy*. Point Loma Publications, San Diego 1990, chapter 43, page 472.
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Practical spirituality

How can we realize our spiritual ideal in practice? The Buddhist philosophy gives us a complete system of ideas and instructions in order to attain our ideal: firstly by explaining what reality is, and then by giving invaluable advice that leads us to unity with our Higher Self.

Every human being is searching for happiness – nobody would deny this – everybody wants to be happy. But if we look at human life, our own life, we then realize that many people are not happy at all.

What do we see, when we look around us? People striving for material wealth: everybody wants to be at a lovely beach with coconut palms, turquoise water,



leisure time and – of course – without mosquitos. Everybody wants a place in the sun without having to

work hard for one's living, without vexing problems, just enjoying life.

The Self always emanates its influence

But, as a friend once wrote in a little poem: “Only for some there is place in the sun.” And this seems to be true if we just focus on the visible world, on the outer shell, on physical life. The wonderful thing when we start to think of a possible unity with our Higher Self, which Ralph Kammer talked about, and see that we have a target to reach, as Claudia Bernard showed us, then everything changes. The inner sun – the Higher Self in its connection with the Universal Principle – is always shining, is always there. So finding it and uniting us with this inner light provides us with that “place in the sun” and could make us really happy as this sun is shining for everything and all. The point is, how can we reach this union?

Buddhist philosophy gives us a perfect system of thoughts and hints in order to reach this goal: starting from explaining reality e.g. with the Four Noble Truths and then giving hints or advice to follow step by step a path to perfection which at its end leads us to unity with our higher self.

The cause of suffering

Let us take a quick look at those Four Noble Truths, about which one can find a lot of information in many books and in the worldwide web.

The Four High or Noble Truths

1. The truth of suffering.
2. The truth of the origin of suffering.
3. The truth of the cessation of suffering and
4. The truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

We will all agree, that there is no life on this earth without suffering, without pain. Each phase of our life has its pains on various levels. We see sorrow and sometimes the pain of joy. And most of us can also agree: as soon as we understand the reason why we suffer – that is, we acknowledge and resolve ignorance on that level – suffering is lessened and pain disappears. So there is the key: ignorance must be overcome. Think of the pain when your first love left you, your beloved mother was ill, your grandmother died or other tragedies of life. Wasn't it horrible? Every one of us could give a long list of such sufferings from childhood to old age. And here – with those Noble Truths – comes an explanation and a way to overcome suffering.

The Four Noble Truths are a condensed philosophical, ethical and moral system, a view on the world – the inner and outer world – which points clearly to a special way of conduct leading to fulfillment, to perfection, to freedom from suffering. And of course at this point we have to ask ourselves — is freedom only for myself my ultimate goal? What about all the other human beings who are confronted with the same kind of suffering and sorrow — what about other living beings, animals, plants, etc?

The psychological wisdom of the Eightfold Path

The Lord Buddha gave us the example of his own life and he left his teachings, which the Theosophia perfectly explains — because they too are rooted in Theo-Sophia. You might say: well, I am far from being a Buddha, I am not even a Buddhist. But even a Buddha started on his way to perfection with the first step, and he left very practical hints with the Exalted Eightfold Path, which shows step by step how to climb the ladder to perfection. I will not give all the steps here — a large amount of information about it can be found everywhere. Let us just pick out some examples.

Christian religion gives us 'Don'ts'. Do not steal, do not this, do not that! Buddhism and Esoteric Philosophy give us 'Do's'. Take for example "Do not steal." In the eightfold path you find: "Earn your livelihood reasonably and respectably", which of course implies not stealing. Which rule do you think is easier to follow? Let us look at the problem with a little bit of psychology. Was it not always especially attractive when something was forbidden? Did you never want to look behind the door, which you should not open? I do not mean to say that you all like to steal because it is forbidden, but you see the structure behind it — because it is forbidden, it attracts special attention. This human weakness is known even from the times of the Bible: didn't Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit and were therefore thrown out of paradise? That eating this fruit has another meaning as well, is another story.

The four Noble Truths

Let us then return to a very short abstract of the Noble Truths and remember:

Life is suffering and pain: birth is painful, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, separation from the beloved is painful, hence any unsatisfied craving is painful.

There is an origin of suffering and pain which is: craving for renewed existence accompanied by sense-delight, seeking gratification. It is conditioned by ignorance and therefore ignorance is the cause of all suffering.

There is a way to cessation or extinction of suffering and pain: it is the extinction of the thirst or craving for renewed existence. Once having developed a genuine understanding of the causes of suffering, such as craving and ignorance, we can completely eradicate these causes and thus free us from suffering.

There is a path and if you follow it, it leads you to the extinction of suffering. And this path leads you to the Exalted Eightfold Path which is amplified and deepened in the long run by the Seven Virtues or Keys (which in reality are one with it, just mirroring the Eightfold Path on a higher level).

This path means to steadily lift our consciousness and change its conditions for the better. It means for instance to withdraw the focus of our consciousness

from the personal to the impersonal level, from the material subjects of our desires to the immaterial ones, thus uplifting it step by step to the spiritual spheres. A very simple example can help us understand the process: imagine a little child fell down and scratched his leg or arm. What did mother do? With a gentle blow on the wound or putting her hand over it, she quickly pointed to heaven and said — “Look over there, your pain flies.” And the child is distracted for a second, it might even forget its pain for a moment. We can use the same trick for ourselves, too!

The Virtues or Keys to a spiritual life

So here we are with our practical hints on how to attain enlightenment or perfection:

We want to *overcome ignorance* which means we *search for truth*. And how can we do that?

We can do it by climbing the steps of the Exalted Eightfold Path. Let us just keep in mind, that summarized, it gives the best guidance for a decent, disciplined, just and conscious life, centered on the inner development of man (through perfect speech, conduct, alertness of mind etc. etc.). And – as already mentioned – closely bound to the Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths are the Seven Qualities, Virtues or Keys for a spiritual life, which condition and characterize our steps:

1. *Charity, generosity, giving of oneself, which means in essence eternal love*. To practice it, you need to develop a fine sense of compassion, brotherly feelings and that divine love and compassion that inspired enlightened initiates like e.g. Lord Buddha to devote their lives to serve humanity.

We can find this compassion expressed on different levels in this world. And although this might sound a far-off target, we can start now in order to reach perfection: wherever a man forgets himself and works for others as e.g. working in a hospice to help people along with their last steps during this life, you find this virtue or this key.

All kinds of unselfish deeds in daily life as well as in difficult situations like wars or other catastrophes help to develop this virtue, and it must be developed until it reaches the highest heights of all embracing love, which in the end is unity with all life.

2. *Virtue, morality, discipline, proper conduct*, or in other words, the key which puts cause and effect into perfect harmony, so there is no space anymore for karmic action. To use it properly you need simplicity, friendliness, self-discipline, forgetfulness – that means a right or proper conduct – as expressed in the eightfold path, and a good sense of discrimination, a clear vision of reality. It needs discipline in thinking, feeling and acting, to be our own observer and guide, from the grossest layers of our consciousness to the finest scarcely noticeable ones. E.g. good acts without thinking of rewards are harmonious acts and help to free oneself from the bounds of cause and effect.

3. *Patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance* — that patience which nothing can disturb, nothing can topple. For this virtue we have to cultivate endurance, patience with outer circumstances and the temperament of other people, also patience with oneself – steadfastness towards our own self – which means to get up again after having fallen and to overcome fear and doubt: two enemies of patience. Again and again we try to live in accordance with our own highest principles. It means to stand, to endure and to affirm adversities of life — which leads us directly to

4. *Equanimity in joy and sorrow*. Equanimity in sorrow, ok, but in joy? Seems to be a bit more difficult. Does this mean not to enjoy the beauties of life? Should we no longer feel joy for others when they make a big step forward in their life? The key to understanding this well is – I think – if I make myself a slave of those emotions or if they just happen without being adhered to. This key needs sedateness and it leads to complete comprehension of truth. A fine example here is a lake. Only when its surface is still and not moved by winds can it reflect reality. This virtue starts to transform all passion and leads to truth alone. The door which this key opens is called ‘the gate of balance’, as it is a symbol for the final fight between the Higher and the Lower, between Real and Unreal. Even in this short description you can sense its depths: it means self-mastering in all its aspects; to be master of your heart and mind – your feelings and thoughts – to become one with reality. A prerequisite for this key is therefore Self-knowledge. It leads us to the realization



of Truth: you can indeed preserve equanimity in joy and sorrow when the illusionary character of the world is understood.

And of course obviously we will need:

5. *Energy, diligence, vigor or effort* for all the keys or virtues we discussed so far. And this energy is of special importance for those who have already decided to become a helper or servant of humanity because, as you will see, it needs more than just diligence and enthusiasm. Again steadfastness, courage, energy and enthusiasm is needed as well as self-mastering and endurance in keeping one's heart and mind pure and to bring truth to humanity.

This does not mean a missionary conduct, but holding the truth high whenever and wherever it is needed, and to act with right discrimination: to answer only when questioned and to always give the right measure of answers, so that they can be properly understood.

There are two or even five more keys, which follow as we dig deeper and deeper into our subject, but you already will have understood from the first five, that in their very essence they form a unity, intimately related to one another — none is obsolete. And they accompany us not only during one but during many incarnations – if not forever – because they will be refined and more refined while we grow.

So let me just very briefly mention: key number 6. *One-pointedness, concentration, contemplation*, which is needed to always be clear and with right discrimination. And of course key number 7. *Wisdom, insight*, which is at the same time a prerequisite and a result, because by practicing the aforementioned virtues you gain wisdom and insight — and, on the other hand, wisdom and insight is needed to have the right discrimination for your acts.

Taken altogether and practiced day after day, you will live a spiritual life and if you look closer at each single virtue, you find all the others included in it. Nevertheless these are building steps to the highest perception of truth and to wisdom — a wisdom embracing all and everything.

A large field of activity opens up before our eyes. It offers us the possibility to grow and makes us fit for far greater duties and responsibilities — to serve humanity and all living beings.

Reference

1. This contribution is mainly based on *The Voice of the Silence* of H.P. Blavatsky, and *The Esoteric Path: its Nature and its Tests* (volume I of the *Esoteric Teachings*) of G. de Purucker.
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Spiritual impulses before the foundation of The Theosophical Society in 1875

I was asked to talk a bit about spiritual impulses before the foundation of The Theosophical Society in 1875. And there we have the first problem: how far back should you go? Because there have been many spiritual impulses before 1875. I first thought to start 18 million years back when the Mânasaputra's incarnated into us or actually in our ancestors, but then I thought that 40 minutes would not be enough time to do that. So then I decided to start here; with this photo of the ruins in Athens of the last public Mystery school with such a building in the Western world. That is what is left of the Platonic Academy.



A major change within the esoteric movement in the West

So we go back about 1500 years to the 520s. Then there was a Roman emperor, named Justin. He was a very religious man, and deeply devoted to the Orthodox

Catholic Church, and he wanted to get rid of all the 'heathens' and all the 'pagans'. And along with them all the schools of philosophy, including what was then the remains of the last open Mystery school in the West. What happened then? Many are living with the idea – actually I would call it an illusion – that The Theosophical Society started with H.P. Blavatsky. When she received her orders from the Masters to form a new school to give out hitherto hidden teachings, to make old esoteric secrets exoteric, that is, public knowledge, among those worthy and ready to receive it. But it did not start then. Hence we need to go a little bit further back in history, back to the time of Atlantis. There was a time when there were no secret schools yet, no esotericism. Everything was public. But humans started to misuse the truth. They were misusing their knowledge. They were using it for their own benefit. So the leaders of those schools decided that they had to make the knowledge esoteric. They decided to close the schools for the public and make this knowledge available for only those who have come so far in their ethical development that they would be able to handle it. The Mystery schools were born. In the years after Justin started the persecutions, the last Hierophants, the leaders and teachers within the schools, who were still living in Europe, fled. First to Persia, and a couple of hundred years later when Islam arrived, they had to move to India. But their disciples were still in Europe. They hadn't left. They

were called mystics then. Some of them are known today as chela's and lay chela's. A few years after the persecution the Academy building itself was destroyed by the Roman army.

Those mystics, or disciples, assembled for a meeting in Rome. And there they formed a brotherhood, a secret society that was called *Magistri Comacini* and they selected a white apron as their symbol. We can say that at that meeting started what could be called the modern esoteric movement in the Western world. Many of the occult schools of the Western traditions, where the disciples were trained and where they were exercising the secret art of building of one's character, used a city as a symbol. A Heliopolis, a city of the Sun. It means that in your heart you are building a shining holy city. They were actually not building that city for themselves. They were building it for their inner God. For their Âtman. Here they could meet and receive education. You can never be accepted in a higher school of Occultism before your own higher self has accepted you. That's the first step. And the path towards that goal is to build an Inner City.

But in the early 7th century something changed. It was no longer a holy city they were building. They were going to build a temple. A temple in their hearts. We will come back to that a bit later. As you all know, the word 'Theosophy' has been used several times in our history. In *The Key to Theosophy* Madame Blavatsky talks about the Old Theosophical Movement and the New Theosophical Movement. We here today belong to the New Theosophical Movement. The Old Theosophical Movement was the neo-platonic school that was formed around the year 300 AD by Ammonius Saccas in Alexandria. So Platonism and Neo-Platonism are Theosophy. This is a key that we should use and keep in mind when we are looking at those various impulses on our way forward to 1875.

Spirituality in the Middle Ages

Many say that the Middle Ages was a dark age. That it was spiritually clouded. But is that the whole truth? Many mainstream historians say that the Middle Ages started when Rome was destroyed or when the Catholic Church arrived in a specific county. Or did this era really start when the old schools of antiquity, and the old Roman and Greek religions and temples were

destroyed? From an esoteric point of view I would say the latter. It is often said that the Middle Ages ended when the Renaissance started. This differs from country to country, but we can roughly say that the Renaissance started during the early 15th century. From an esoteric point of view we could agree on that. But we can't say that the Middle Ages actually were so dark and clouded, because that was an invention from the Renaissance. The word 'renaissance' means that the inner meaning of something is coming back, is returning. The Renaissance thinkers said that the Middle Ages started when antiquity ended. They considered the Middle Ages as a mere passage till the Renaissance, when the knowledge of the antique returned. For them the Middle Ages were of no interest at all. And we have actually been living with that idea for quite a long time. With the coming of the Renaissance, we have for example the neo-platonic Academy in Florence. You'll remember a name like Ficino, who was the leader of that school.

But in the Middle Ages there were many great thinkers also. Within the Catholic Church there were esotericists like cardinal Nicolás de Cusa and several others. Within the Theosophical Movement this fact is often overlooked, while Madame Blavatsky tried to open our eyes for this. So also within the Catholic Church there was a very deep spirituality. And this is actually what this painting is showing. That type of spirituality has its roots in the platonic and in the neo-platonic philosophy. This painting shows Saint Catherine of Ricci, a catholic saint of the Middle Ages. You see her in white. She is dressed like a combination of a nun and a bride.

This is a wedding. And whom is she marrying? She is



marrying Christ. Christ is putting the wedding ring on her finger. This is what is called a Mystical Marriage. And this is deeply symbolic. She is representing matter. Christ is representing spirit. It is a union between matter and spirit. The fully incarnated man. *Swabhâvat*. Remember there is a 't' at the end. The full union. And that's actually quite fascinating to see. She is meeting what Christ is symbolizing: the inner, spiritual and divine part of our self. And they join together. It is a kind of mystical transmutation. This kind of spirituality was quite common in the monasteries and among the monastics. Unfortunately it didn't spread much outside the monasteries and the priesthood. But there it was strong and it was important, and it was a living and deep spirituality.

The age of the Reformation

The Renaissance and the revival of the ancient philosophy spread to the church. Theologians and the priesthood started to reflect on these new ideas, and they started an internal opposition movement and we know that today as Protestantism and the Reformation.

But something else happened. The Protestant Church – and now I am going to say something quite mean – more or less cleansed the church of philosophy and mysticism. They created something 'empty'. The Protestants took something away from the people. They took away their feeling of, how should I call it, of spiritual security. The Catholic Church told the people: 'We are looking after you. There is no need for you to search outside the church because we have the truth. And even more, we have all the truth available for man. So you can rest in faith and trust.'

But the Protestants were saying at first that every single Christian can search the truth himself. Everyone is allowed to study the Bible. Everyone is allowed to study the theological scriptures. Everyone can search for himself. It changed later on, but that was what men like Calvin and Luther said in the beginning. But what was the result of that? People started to leave the church and unfortunately as a result many of the leaders of the Reformation like Jean Calvin became fundamentalists. People had to live a very hard life. Every single book, except those explicitly approved

by the leaders of the Reformation, were banned and burned. Even to love became a sin more or less.

Melanchthon

But one of the leaders of the Reformation was different. And that was Philipp Melanchthon. Do you know that name? Unfortunately he is almost forgotten today. Also in some of the theosophical literature the honor for his work has been given to Martin Luther. They were cooperating, but the work was done by Philipp Melanchthon. This German pastor noticed that the Reformation removed something from the church that the people needed, that the people wanted. That was spirituality. It was mysticism. It was the guidance in their search for the Divine. He saw what the protestant priesthood and theologians missed. They had lost the philosophy. So, he turned to Neo-Platonism. He turned to hermetic philosophy. He turned to alchemy. And he actually created a fascinating form of protestant Christianity. In Germany it was the main competitor of the Lutheran Church for about 200 years, called the Philippist Church.

Pietism

In Protestantism as we know it today, the Lutheran Church dominates. But what has become of the so-called Philippist Church? If they had been victorious, then there would be a mystical christian church in Germany today.

An internal movement started to grow and spread within the Protestant Church in Germany inspired by the Philippist Church, and that was the pietistic movement. Many today see Pietism as some kind of a fundamentalistic version of Protestantism. But that was not the case at the beginning. And I can also tell you that colonel Peter Alexeivich von Hahn, the father of H.P. Blavatsky, was a Pietist. Madame Blavatsky mentions her father's religion with deep respect several times. That was the old kind of Pietism. It started to develop a protestant form of mysticism and spirituality. And one of the results was of course Jacob Böhme whom I think you all are familiar with.

And there was the English 'Cloud movement', which is less known today. This started with a little book called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written by an English priest already during the late 14th century, drawing

its ideas from the christian neo-platonists, de Cusa and others, but got a revival among pietistic inspired groups in England after the Reformation. We don't know the name of the author. The book teaches that the only true way to 'know God' is to enter into a stage of a 'cloudy' mind, meaning to abandon all claimed 'knowledge', ideas and notions one may have of God and enter into the 'unknowingness', to surrender the ego, and by that get a glimpse of the divine. A beautiful little book I would say.

The Pietists, the word comes from Latin and means 'being pious' of course, started to search for the divine in a new way. They were striving for that little moment of 'unio mystica'. It is a very special experience, a 'unio mystica'. As you already hear in the term, it's a mystical union. It's when your mind just for a moment experiences unity, full unity with your spiritual and divine principles. We can all experience that. Just for a short while. And the Pietists were striving for that and for the connection with the heart and the divine. They also tried to build up alternative societies. And they tried to spread their ideas among other Christians. Many of them were quite tolerant regarding religion back then. Something that would change later. They also founded a fellowship with dissident catholic movements.

The Hussites

I would now like to say a few words on the Hussite movements from Bohemia. The founder, Johannes Hus, could be said to be the one who has started the whole Reformation. He was a catholic priest and a professor of theology at the Prague University, who was burned at the stake as a heretic.

The remains of that movement is the Herrnhutian movement. You have them here in the Netherlands as well I think. They are divided today into three branches. A lutheran, a calvinistic and a catholic branch, but they are all connected in one and the same brotherhood movement. They also have their roots in this spiritual impulse. But later they developed in a quite strange way. They became 'blood mystics'. And they had a favorite hymn where they sing:

I wish I were a worm crawling in the open womb of Christ, drinking his blood and eating his flesh.⁽¹⁾

But this actually is also deep symbolism. You may say it's weird but they are all symbols of course, symbols for deeper unity.

Rosicrucians

But history continued of course and a new order showed up just as a result of the Reformation. A secret society, known as the Rosicrucians. We don't really know when it actually started, who started it or where it was coming from. Early in the 17th century in protestant areas in Germany, books and manifestos started being published: *Atalanta fugiens*, *Fama Fraternitatis*, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*. Posters showed up in German cities, in Paris and even here in the Dutch area, saying things like: "We, the deputies of the Higher College of the Rose-Croix, do make our stay, visibly and invisibly, in this city (...)" and "The thoughts attached to the real desire of the seeker will lead us to him and him to us".⁽²⁾ I figure you all heard about it.

Where were they coming from? Who were they? It was a kind of christian mystical order, heavily influenced by Neo-Platonism, hermetic philosophy and alchemy. And here we see the temple of the Rosy Cross. You see



This illustration of 'the temple' shows many Rosicrucian symbols. The rose is seen at the left side of the portal, the cross at the right side.

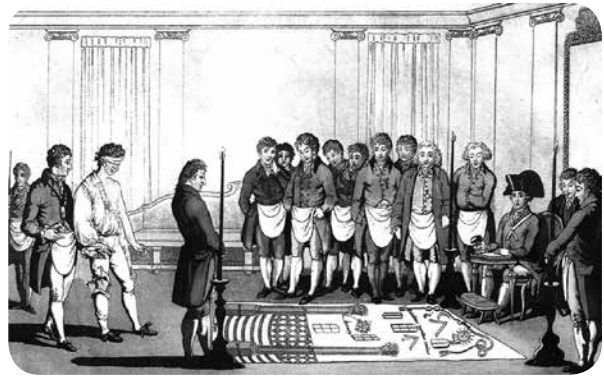
all the important Rosicrucian symbols; the gates, the cross and the rose, which are supposed to be united. That's the goal: the unity of the rose and the cross. The cross is matter, the incarnated man. After death we are 'hanging' in Devachan. After that we are letting go and fall down in matter. Here we are crucified. The rose stands for the higher mystical, spiritual aspect in man. It's actually worth meditating over this picture. It is a fascinating study to look deeper or closer into all the symbols we find here.

The Rosicrucian movement spread. It spread very fast. But unfortunately, I would say, the messengers that were behind it lost control of the movement. So, it was time for something new. As you know there are minor impulses and larger impulses from the Brothers of Wisdom and Compassion, that occur in cycles.

Freemasons

A Rosicrucian in England named Elias Ashmole, had a mission: to open the eyes of the Freemasons, to show them the philosophy, explain their symbols and tell them about their origin. Why were the Masons wearing white aprons? Not because they were masons building houses, walls and other things. They were the descendants of the *Magistri Comacini*, and the Freemasons take a similar pledge (in a higher degree) as the *Magistri Comacini*. The leaders of the Mystery schools had left Europe, as we talked about before. They were forced to leave Europe. But one day, when the conditions are different, they will return from the East to the West. And they will then re-open the Mystery schools again. The white aprons and the white gloves of the Freemasons are actually signs of sorrow that the old schools are closed and that the Hierophants who should teach us were forced to leave. The Freemasons are doing what they did in the old school: they are building. They are building a shining temple in the heart, a temple for our own inner God. Where we, every single one of us, could be accepted as a disciple of our own inner God.

What we see on this picture is the initiation in the first-degree, called 'Entered Apprentice'. The candidate is led in, wounded, blindfolded, in wonderment of what is going on now and what will happen. In the chair in the east of the temple we see the Worshipful Master of the Lodge. He is the symbolic representative



of the Hierophant during the rituals. A Worshipful Master of a Masonic lodge of the three first degrees, called the blue or symbolic degrees, is wearing the Masonic symbol of matter around his neck, a square, because he is in charge of the physical working, the lower working of the order, in other words the Lower Mysteries, the three first degrees of the Mystery school. A compass symbolizes the higher spiritual working within Masonry. The compass is the Masonic symbol of spirit.

So from the mid eighteenth century Masonry became what we can call the spine within the esoteric activities in the Western world, because you can't find a single esotericist that was not a Mason. If you look at the first half-century of the theosophical movement it's difficult to find an active working Theosophist that was not a Mason. Blavatsky was a Mason, Judge was a Mason, Franz Hartmann was a Mason, Hargrove was a mason. Gottfried the Purucker was a Mason, Olcott was a Mason and Mead was a Mason. I can't think of anyone who was not a Mason.

This is the main symbol of Freemasonry. And it is also showing this mystic union. And we all strive for this be permanent. This symbol is showing the constitution of man. With a triangle and the square.



The four points and the triangle refer to repeated incarnation. Now, in general we are only beginning to incarnate a few aspects of the *Manas* principle. But through evolutionary progress higher aspects of Manas are being incarnated. So you get the triangle within the square so to say. And this is showing exactly the same thing.

If you count, you can easily recognize the seven aspects there as well. This is man! The 'G' in the middle is representing the seventh principle, the divine principle. Square is matter, compass is spirit. They have to be joined together into a mystical union. We have to become a complete man. Matter and spirit have to unite.

Romanticism

Now we will move a little bit forward in time. The 18th century was the century of the Enlightenment. New knowledge in natural sciences was gained by man. But it was also the century where materialism was born. And in France a mechanistic view of the world was developed. We call them enemies to spirituality, to the theosophical movement and enemies of the spiritual impulses. By the end of the 18th century some thought that this materialism had moved Europe onto the wrong path. We had forgotten about our souls. So a new aesthetic movement and a new movement of thinking started to spread in Europe and that was Romanticism.

And this painting 'The wanderer above the sea of clouds' is a very typical romantic painting. The lonely man standing high up in the mountains, walking on the clouds, searching for the lost soul of the Europeans. This was a protest movement against the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment lost the soul, lost the spirituality. This new movement needed a philosophy. So where did they turn? To Plato. To Plotinus. To the Theosophists of the old. To the neoplatonic school of Hypatia and so on. It's all coming back. There are only minor differences in that school in comparison with what we are teaching and studying here today. The old teachings needed a return and they came there. And it became a very powerful movement, especially in Germany and France and in Britain. Many who studied the history of the esoteric tradition and the various works of the Masters of Compassion



and Wisdom, would say that there is missing one thing, because this was one of the most successful impulses in the Western world. It lasted for a hundred years but unfortunately today it's more or less only remembered as a movement of painters and some other artists. But it went much deeper. The Romanticists were looking for the spiritual side of nature and they were looking inside man, searching for the soul that was lost. I would say a beautiful way of thinking and a way to present spirituality that was very easy acceptable for men and women during the 19th century. It was a way to fuse philosophy, art, literature and spirituality into one.

Karl Gotthelf Von Hund

Now we are going back to the 18th century. I would now like to present a few, what we can call either



messengers of the Masters of Compassion like H.P. Blavatsky, or co-workers of the messengers.

This is Karl Gotthelf von Hund, a German baron, born in 1722. He was probably the most important Freemason and esotericist in Germany during the

18th century. In 1742, when he was 20 years old, he was in Paris, where something strange happened to him. He was raised to the degree of master mason in Freemasonry. But the question is: by whom? He also received a higher degree of Freemasonry and he was received as a Knight Templar. The minutes of the lodge were preserved, and Von Hund wrote down his memories of his initiation and these are available and can be read today.

The usual set of officers in the lodge was there of course. But from the letters that some of the attending members wrote later, and from the testimony of Von Hund himself about the ceremony, we learn that someone else was standing in the northeastern corner of the temple. There was standing a man in disguise. He wore a mask and was presented by the master of the lodge as the Knight of the Red Feather. That is all we know. Nobody there had any idea who this Knight of the Red Feather was. None of the brethren of the lodge that were present were informed either.

When Von Hund received his degrees, he was told that he had a mission. He should go back to Germany. He should start to work to form a new order of Freemasonry. He should re-establish the order of the Knight Templars. He should introduce Rosicrucian and alchemical degrees within Freemasonry. He should give the Freemasons philosophy and mysticism. He should give them new doctrines because he should prepare for someone that should come: the Messenger. So in 1751, he was more or less ready. He formed a new lodge named 'The Three Pillars' close to his hometown in Jena, in central Germany Thuringen. Only a few years later the new order of High Masonry was formed. And it was given the name *The High Order of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem*, in daily talk and today known as the *Strict Observance*. Remember building a temple in the heart. It became a strong order. Many lodges from other jurisdictions and Masonic systems decided to join Von Hund's new order because it had something that the others were missing: teachings. They had knowledge. They had wisdom. In many of the Masonic lodges then there were drinking parties. They were playing cards. They had left the track they were supposed to be following. In the lodges working under Von Hund, things were different. There they were studying. There were both male and female

lodges within his system. There were lectures, study groups, study material for everyone. Promotion from one degree to a higher followed only after written examination. Things started to happen here. All members were trained in alchemy and philosophy, and they started to do research. Just what we can find in the old aims of the Theosophical Movement; research of those hidden powers, the hidden aspects of man. And what we perhaps today would call parapsychology; telepathy and similar things. This was something totally new.

The movement became strong and powerful. But that was also their mistake.

There was strict discipline. And all the members had to take a pledge. As knights, they had to be ready to fulfill the secret goal of the order, while they were not even informed about what that goal was. They were told there was a secret superior, Von Hund's superior, who was going to arrive to give them their orders and they were obliged to fulfill them. But they didn't know who that hidden superior was. Not even Von Hund. He was called the Secret Master. Von Hund received letters, instructions, messages but he didn't know from whom. And everyone was pledged to follow the orders of this unknown Secret Master. Unfortunately they started to question this. And as a result the order fell apart. What remains today of Von Hund's Masonic system is called *The Rectified Scottish Rite*. They are working here in the Netherlands as well by the way. It is an esoteric mystic christian form of Masonry. The work of Von Hund was the preparation for the messenger of 1775. The messenger who came a century before H.P. Blavatsky.

Saint Germain and Mesmer

The chela who was organizing the Esoteric work in Europe during the 18th century was Saint Germain.



And that's what he is supposed to look like. The closest picture we have.

Unfortunately if you go on the internet now and write Saint Germain you will find some very strange colorful pictures. Usually with a blond beard and

some purple shiny thing around the back of his head. For sure, he never looked like that. Saint Germain was for sure the Knight of the Red Feather that initiated Von Hund in Paris, but he recruited another man as well. This man was the German Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer. He instructed him to organize the 1775 impulses. Saint Germain was the man behind the work. He was the channel between the messenger and



the Masters. And Mesmer was the messenger. So, what was he supposed to do in those years of materialistic philosophy? We know that in those years a political movement started to grow that finally would lead to the French Revolution. Where materialism, the mechanical view of the universe, seemingly started to dominate Europe, it was his mission to show that there was something else: *magnétisme animal*, the hidden powers within man. Vital forces in other words. And the result of his work we see still today: neurology, psychiatry, social psychology and unfortunately also hypnotism. The latter was the result of the misuse of his teaching. He never taught hypnotism. If you twist his teachings 180 degrees, you get hypnotism. But they got the idea from him.

Cagliostro

Mesmer could not work alone of course. Like all messengers he needed co-workers. Madame Blavatsky had co-workers as well. She had Judge, Mead, Hartmann, Damodar. And Mesmer needed his as well. The most important of them was Alessandro Cagliostro.

The poor man, many strange lies were spread about him. So, what was his duty? He had a mission as well, a mission to spread one single doctrine: the doctrine of reincarnation. He formed his own system of Freemasonry, called the *Egyptian Rite*, and he assumed the title of Grand



Copht for his new Masonic order. He travelled Europe as the Most Illustrious Grand Copht, visiting Masonic lodges and Rosicrucian chapters. Esoteric societies and groups all opened their doors for him to lecture on reincarnation.

He needed to form his own system of High Masonry. There was a need for higher esoteric degrees within Masonry in Europe after the closure of the *Strict Observance*. But there was also the need for the rank and the authority of a head of a higher degree order. So Cagliostro became most illustrious. He was a puissant brother, a powerful brother. And all over Europe hundreds and hundreds of lodges and chapters opened the doors for Cagliostro.⁽³⁾ And he taught them about reincarnation. One single doctrine. And he did it very well because the doctrine of reincarnation was incorporated into the methods of Masonry then. Unfortunately a hundred years later many Masons failed to recognize it within the rituals, but it was there and still is.

Chevalier Casanova and Saint Martin

There was another important co-worker for a while and that was chevalier Casanova. He was a close co-worker of Cagliostro and Mesmer. And then you can wonder what the duties and missions of Casanova were? Not to seduce women of course, because that's a myth. That is not true. He had several relations with women in his life, but not as many as people often believe. They have been counted and they were said to be eleven. Not the hundreds that they're trying to fool people with in films and in the books you can buy today, called "The Memoires of Casanova". These are mostly fiction. They're altered. The publisher included several love stories that never happened. Casanova never wrote these memoirs himself, for he was a very spiritual man, deeply religious. His whole life he fought with himself whether he should withdraw to the Swiss mountains to become a monk, so he could do what he loved most in life; to translate literature from the Antiques.⁽⁴⁾

He travelled a little too much, and he made a big mistake in France. He started to get involved in gambling and lottery. He was the secretary for French Royal Lotto. He is actually supposed to be the founder of Lotto.⁽⁵⁾ And gambling is not a good thing, even

less so when you make money out of it, like he did, so to say. So unfortunately he was not involved in this spiritual impulse in a way as was originally intended. Another one who was part of this impulse was Claude de Saint Martin. He formed the Society of Friends, a deeply mystical society in France whose members were seeking unity with the inner divinity of man. He had already worked with Martinez de Pasqually then, a magician who tried to spread the old Egyptian theurgical magic in Europe again. He noted that it was actually the wrong way, that this was not working the intended way. So he became a co-worker of Jean-Baptiste Willermoz in Lyon, who in his turn was then secretary to the grand master of what was left of the *Strict Observance* in Germany and the primary founder of the *Rectified Scottish Rite*. Saint Martin formed his own Society of Friends, and with that he laid the foundations of what is called the *Martinist Order* today. A mystical and esoteric christian order, still very much connected with the *Rectified Scottish Rite*. He wanted to warn the Christians for the mistake of dogmatism, and point out the inner and deeper spirituality of their own religion. In the beginning it went well, but as with all impulses, they don't last forever. The Martinist Order is active today, but few branches of it are faithful to the deeper ideas of its original founder.



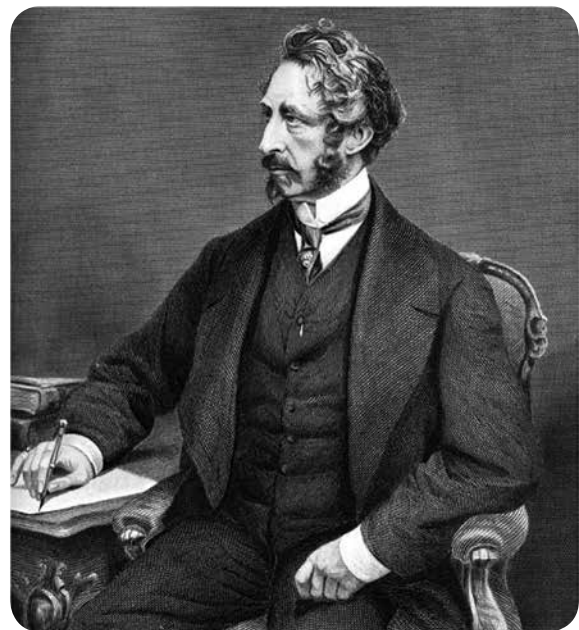
Bulwer-Lytton

And the final one I want to present was a very important man for The Theosophical Society. To read and study his novels should be mandatory for a Theosophist if you would ask me. They were recommended in the early days of the Society. Everybody read them and so did Blavatsky. He was Edward Bulwer-Lytton, born in 1803. The founder of The Theosophical Society, at least the first one with that name.⁽⁶⁾

We know him as the author of some very fascinating books. *Zanoni*, have you read that? It is about the disciple and his path. He was the author of *A Strange Story*; a novel from 1862, and of course *The Coming*

Race and several others.

When he was about 20 years old he started with his mission: to form The Theosophical Society in London and to build a new Mystery school. Of course those attempts had been made earlier like in Florence where young people and adults were taught. And there have been small attempts to form a school with a deeper spiritual and philosophical approach also, such as the one by Madame Guyon a century before him.⁽⁷⁾ But since the closure of the Platonic Academy 1300 years earlier no one had worked with a full scale open Mystery school, where children from the age of five were recruited to start working with them, giving them a mission, a purpose. Where they were given the doctrines, the teachings they needed when it was still possible to form them. That was his mission. We know from his own writings, from his diaries, from his letters that he was in direct personal contact with the Masters of Compassion.⁽⁸⁾ I would not say that he was an accepted chela but that's what I think when I read what he wrote or what others said about him. He had a grand mission but unfortunately he didn't succeed. Society was not yet mature enough for The Theosophical Society. The Masters were there, working with him. But they decided to stop the work and wait 50 years to form The Theosophical Society again. The Master that gave Lytton his orders was the same who later gave the assignment to H.P. Blavatsky to



form it. Can you imagine that? They were not trying to form a similar theosophical society with similar purposes, but exactly the same society. The same name, same organization, same constitution, same doctrines, everything was the same. Lytton was the first suggestion of the Masters to be the messenger. But the time was not right. Do you know what the Master said about Blavatsky? That she was actually not suitable for the work but she was the best they had at the moment.⁽⁹⁾ They didn't have anyone else because Lytton had died.

I wonder what would have happened if times had been different and he had managed to form the Society and the new modern Theosophical Movement as intended. Look closer at Bulwer-Lytton. At his life, his work, his writings and you see where Blavatsky got her inspiration. Read what she said about him and his work.⁽¹⁰⁾ She is one of those, who holds him in highest regard. A fascinating man indeed.

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Recommended further reading

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On our way – is compassion a choice?

Yesterday we looked thoroughly at the first two steps in the cycle of spiritual growth, namely wonderment and philosophy. Additionally, a method, with which you can be assured of an open-minded search for truth, has been discussed: the Socratic method. At the end of the day you have been given a ‘take-home question’, a question to give some more thought. The question was: *why* do you actually want to grow spiritually? And although we have kept this question until the middle of the symposium, we will show you in this lecture that it is in fact the most important question you can ask yourself. ‘*Why* do I want the things I want, *why* do I do the things I do?’

We are going to leave the cycle of spiritual growth for now and turn to the *motive* that underlies the choice to go through this cycle, to take that path. Before we can talk about this motive, we first have to continue building up the idea of what exactly the ‘I’ is that has the motive and takes the path. We do this by taking the fundamental proposition of the Theosophia as a starting point.

Boundlessness

Yesterday we have discussed that spirituality, among other things, means that you know, that you have an intuitive sense, that there is a force working behind the

phenomena. This force behind the phenomena we call consciousness, life. The Theosophia teaches us that consciousness is in essence boundless and that there is one absolute Reality, which precedes all manifested limited being.

We will now elaborate this a bit more. All manifested, limited existence comes from and is in essence this boundlessness. This is what we call a paradox, an apparent contradiction. How can something that is limited be boundless at the same time? Surprised? Maybe a nice one for a thorough Socratic investigation? Anyway, if we follow this hypothesis, then every being (an atom, a plant, an animal, a human, but also a planet or a star) emanates from the same Source and has the same boundless possibilities inside. After all, one is not more or less boundless than the other. Just the extent of the development of those possibilities in the manifestation varies. The fact that we can recognize different beings as such, already shows that one being has expressed a different ‘piece’ of his inner boundlessness than the other. And of course, you never express your inner essence alone. We are fully dependent on each other; separateness is therefore sometimes called ‘the great illusion’.

We could depict this One Life as a continuous appearance and disappearance of manifestations, hence of beings, in all shapes and sizes and at all different levels. A consequence of the idea of one boundless life therefore is that everything lives. Everything we can

perceive and what is beyond our ability to perceive (and try to imagine how much that has to be, based on boundlessness!) is therefore an expression of the One Life, is a being that, at that time, expresses somewhat of its boundless inner essence.

Then what we can perceive is that everything lives in everything, and I just mentioned it already, there is life within life, because of course you never live alone! How should a cell of your body be able to express itself if you were not trying to express your inner essence? How could beings in our solar system exist if the sun would not manifest itself? The Theosophia teaches that not one single being can be missed in this totality, since every being fulfills its own unique function and thus forms an essential building block in the overall structure. A famous quote from one of the leaders of the Theosophical Society states: "If only one atom would be destroyed, then the whole universe would collapse."⁽¹⁾ Every being is therefore responsible for its functioning in that totality, and at the same time, for the operation of that totality. Just by expressing *the best of what he has developed in himself*, up until that moment, as Barend Voorham explained in his lecture yesterday. Naturally a further developed being also carries more responsibility; we can simply expect more from a human being than from a sea cucumber. Although we will probably soon come to the conclusion that the sea cucumber cooperates more with nature than man does in its current state of development. Why would that be, do you think?

Yesterday we have talked about spiritual growth. We have just shown you that when we accept boundlessness as a hypothesis, everything is dependent on everything and *therefore a solitary growth cannot exist*. We grow in, of, for, by and with each other and this growth, as well, is boundless and eternal. Growth, moreover, is therefore development of that essentially boundless consciousness and this always happens towards the more spiritual, mental side.

From all that has been given before, it follows that brotherhood is a fact in nature. The different 'selves' are indeed just illusory, the One Life is the reality behind the many manifestations. 'We are all ONE' must then be understood in the most literal sense of the word. And in this One Life we need each other by definition. Brotherhood is therefore not a sentiment

or emotion, it is a logical consequence of the structure of life itself.

Compassion: applied sense of unity

Another logical consequence of the idea of unity is compassion. The Theosophia even states: "Compassion is not an attribute. It is the LAW of laws".⁽²⁾ Compassion is the foundation of everything; it is the binding force of everything that exists. That's quite a lot ...

But it is also a logical explanation, when we keep the principle of unity in mind. Because if there is only *one* Life, every being that fully realizes this, will then offer his assistance for that one Life, for that totality, won't it? Our heart is an obvious servant of our body, as a single musician is at the service of the entire orchestra. Compassion is thus living from the sense of unity. And when you live from that realization you automatically subserve the total and you will contribute your unique qualities and talents for the benefit of the whole. Compassion is therefore a way of life, which places the totality above the individual. From that understanding *my own* happiness is not the focal point anymore, but our common happiness is. Compassion is therefore the most natural force which can be found in manifestation.

There is a big difference between compassion and pity. Compassion means contributing to and serving everything that lives. From the sense of unity you will identify yourself with another person, so you will consider his problems like they are your own. Subsequently you will help that person with the wisdom you have developed in yourself. Pity refers more to instinctively feeling that another person is suffering and then start suffering with that person. Pity is more limited in its scope compared to compassion: you can indeed feel pity for your best friend, but perhaps it doesn't interest you one bit what happens to someone on the other side of the world. Compassion is therefore more universal, above personal in nature and you could therefore say that as a person grows spiritually, pity simultaneously 'grows with him' into compassion.

Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion

Some people have developed themselves further yet in wisdom than others. There is a group of people that exceeds the average person by far. This group has

studied the inner side of Life, the side of consciousness, and has applied and tested their insights in daily life. In this way they have discovered universal laws. Where the average person focuses perhaps occasionally on his Higher Self, they have permanently united themselves with their inner divine core. This way these very noble people form the spiritual top of the human family, and at the same time, because in boundlessness every top of course forms again the lowest level of an even higher hierarchy, they are being guided by a group, which is even further developed, namely divine beings. The Masters, as those far developed people are usually called, collaborate with the divine beings to help humans recognize and express their inner divine essence.

These Masters and their inspirers form what is called the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. Members of the Lodge have, a long time ago, made the choice of unconditional commitment to the totality. For some members of the Lodge this means in practice that they are committed to the spiritual development of mankind. The Lodge is always active and inspires everywhere where humans have created an opening for this purpose. Teachers are also being sent periodically from the Lodge to, over and over again, spread the Ancient Wisdom. Maybe in another form, appropriate for that time and place, but in essence, it is always the same Wisdom. Usually this happens in a time when humans become more and more focused on the material side of life, the perishable side rather than on the spiritual side, the imperishable side. A Teacher will then appear to show people the right direction again. Everyone knows the examples: Plato, Jesus or Gautama the Buddha. Fortunately, many more can be mentioned!

We too can cooperate with the Lodge, can even become a part of it. The only thing needed to achieve that, is that we identify ourselves with the most natural force in manifestation, the Law of laws, which is *compassion*. If we raise ourselves to what we are in the heart of our heart, we shall automatically cooperate in a natural way with the Masters.

Now, how do we recognize such a Master? We have stated already that a Master does not bring a new teaching, but that he will bring the same ideas to the attention of humanity — although perhaps clothed in

another form. As all his thoughts are centered around the fact of the unity of life, he will not discriminate between one or the other man, or one or the other group of men. For him, each being has the same value, since Life flows to the same extent through each entity. He will respect everyone's free will, and thus he will not pressure anyone. For real development comes from inside, and he would turn himself against the natural course of things if he would force a man to believe or do something. Everyone has his own responsibility for the development of his capabilities; we cannot do that for each other. So, he will therefore inspire and stimulate independent thinking. And, of course, he will be the living example of what he teaches. You will always recognize a tree by its fruits.

As already pointed out, we see in the manifestation that those beings that are more developed help the less developed ones in their progress. This fact is based on the structure of life itself. The Masters apply this fundamental law *self-consciously* by dedicating themselves to aiding all people that are much less developed than they are. They stay with humanity to spread the knowledge and insights that they have obtained, so that all people will be able to progressively develop themselves. Thus, these Teachers cooperate with Nature and as such are part of the hierarchical structure of compassion.

Free will: each human being chooses his own path

Now we come to the question: what choices do we have as human beings? To answer this question we must first pay some attention to the will. For it is clear that before we make a certain choice, we have 'willed' something. Now, do we human beings factually have free will?

Now, if we adopt as hypothesis the fundamental idea of boundlessness, we can even conclude that man does not have free will, but actually *is* free will, otherwise there would be a limitation of his potential capabilities *and these are boundless*. The will to manifest ourselves, and to act in that manifestation, flows from the deepest inner essence of our being. Yet, in the manifestation we are by definition limited, and thus our use of the free will is limited too. But our consciousness grows and *simultaneously our free will*. Compare for instance

a human being to an animal: obviously, the human being has more freedom of choice than the animal, which acts entirely instinctually. Again, an animal has more freedom of choice than a plant, etcetera. But we may follow this comparison also in the opposite direction! In the boundlessness, there are of course beings that are much further developed than we are, and therefore they have a much greater freedom of choice, have a much greater access to the free will. Take as an example the Masters, or, going even further than human beings, the divine beings!

Yesterday, Barend explained that a human being is a soul which is able to focus himself, by means of his thoughts, to the lower, more material side of Life or to the Higher, more spiritual side. By focusing his thoughts to this Higher Self, he will come to a growing understanding of the inner side of Life, of the laws of Nature. Consequently, he will experience a growing freedom, since he is not so much a slave of his instincts as before, he doesn't need to follow every impulse from his lower self anymore. In this respect he stands *above matter*, for he is able to make the wisest choice. Can you imagine that the more you understand how life works, the more choices there will be for you, and thus, the power to apply free will *grows*?

Indeed, every man chooses his own path. Free will is neutral: it is the direction of man's thoughts that colors the free will. And he may direct his thoughts to the lower self, giving his personality, his 'I', the central place in his life, and using his mind to get happiness for himself. Or he can direct his thoughts to his Higher Self, to universality, giving the totality the central place. And then you will literally think more about the well-being of *all* beings, and thus about influencing that well-being in the most positive way. Now, is compassion a choice? Compassion as the Law of laws is no choice, of course. This Law stands above each act of choosing. But compassion as the *motive* of a self-conscious being certainly is a choice. It is even the most important choice that you will make. Now it is highly important that you apply the consequences of this choice in practical life. As long as we wish to be compassionate, we are not yet compassionate, of course. From the moment that we have really made that choice and dedicate our whole life to the totality, then that compassion will color all our thoughts and

acts. In this sense it is a kind of universal spice, like salt in our food. The salt has been dissolved, yet you taste it in each bite.

When someone has chosen at a certain moment to dedicate himself to the universal interest, he will quickly come to the conclusion, if he did not so before, that compassion without wisdom is an insufficient basis for helping other people well. He must certainly develop more understanding of the characteristics of Nature, to be really able to help. For someone may have very positive intentions, and yet by his ignorance do the most disastrous things. Just like a parent that understands that he should give his child the chance to learn how to walk, and therefore should not continue carrying it around to prevent it falling. The parent understands the developmental process of his child and wishes to stimulate that development, so this means it will get a bruise every now and then. Compassion goes hand in hand with wisdom.

Following the Path of Compassion: practical spirituality

Now, when we return to practical spirituality, we can conclude that this is motivated by compassion. *In a man with a true searching mind, the desire for spiritual growth will gradually change into a desire to help.* In order to be able to help in this society, he will ask himself what 'helping' exactly means. The answer to this question will change as the helper grows in wisdom, but everyone can help other people according to his best insights *at that moment*. While trying this, he does not stand alone, because he can attune himself to the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. He can receive the inspiration that continually flows from this Lodge, just like a radio that receives a certain channel when it is attuned to it, or just like someone will feel the sunlight on his skin when he goes outside. The sun rays are always there, but we have to place ourselves under its rays. The inspiration is always there, but we should turn our mind to it in order to be able to receive it. In fact there is only one criterion here, and that is our *motive*. Only when our motive is the same as the members of the Lodge and thus has the same characteristics as the Lodge, yes, as Life itself, then this Lodge will immediately inspire. That motive is compassion of course; it will become a channel through

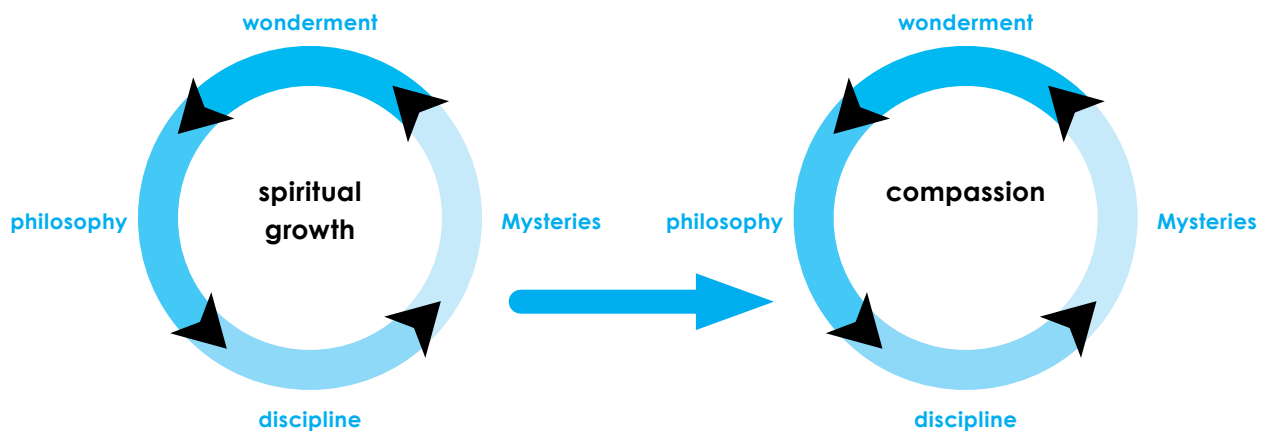
which the inspiration of the Lodge will flow through your heart into the world. If it is your deepest wish that all that lives will develop itself as well as possible, and that no one needs to fall behind, if it is your deepest wish that no being needs to suffer anymore, then the Lodge will help you to realize your wish. Because your wish is then identical to their wish.

And indeed, then you will grow. You will grow spiritually, your capacities will expand. But that is not an end in itself, it is only a result. It is also a safe way to grow, because the capacities do not grow before the motive has been ascertained and the wisdom has been

he choose for himself or for the totality?

Then that choice must be applied in practical life. What you think and do in your daily life determines the path that you follow.

Everyone will be able, on his own level, in his own life, in his own circumstances, to share his insights with other people. Everyone is able to help at every moment. When a man chooses for collective progress and thus makes himself subservient to the totality, he expresses the most natural force in manifestation, which is compassion, and factually becomes a coworker of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.



developed. You do not give fireworks to a child, do you? Is it not sensible to wait for the development of spiritual powers until we first develop the wisdom to apply them safely and for the benefit of all life? So there is no actual goal, apart from the relative perfection of each being within a hierarchy of Life. For, what other goal would there be in the boundlessness? Which finish should be reached? There is only life, boundless life. And as limited beings we are able to grow limitlessly, without an absolute final goal, without a finish: growing limitlessly together.

To conclude, we'll repeat the most important thoughts:

Compassion is the Law of laws and thus stands above each form of choice; but compassion as the motive of a manifested, self-conscious being certainly is a choice. At a certain moment during his development, each human being will be confronted with the choice: does

Perhaps, these thoughts may still seem somewhat abstract, but yet they can be transformed into a very practical ideal that will inspire all your thoughts and actions. How all this works, will be explained to you by Jos Peeters in the next lecture.

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Developing spirituality for a harmonious society

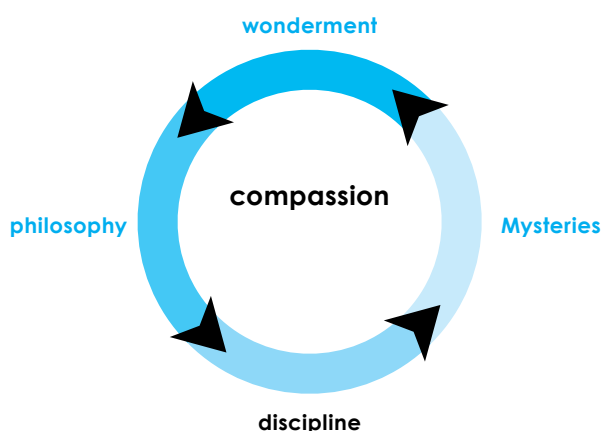
After the hopefully still present wonderment about the boundless possibilities you have during the development of your spirituality, and the knowledge that you were presented with by Linda van Noord and the speakers yesterday, the moment has come to train that knowledge and wisdom.

Discipline means training. It means consistent adherence in thought and action to the choice one has made. Through trial and error, it does not matter. As long as we keep getting up again and learn from our mistakes.

And this training we can put into practice of course, by building a harmonious society together. But before we get to work, we first want to build an image together of what a harmonious society looks like, what its main features are and how we can start working on it as of today. Otherwise it is obviously nothing more than a beautiful dream that we forget as soon as the alarm goes off tomorrow.

The Heart of the Universe is Harmony

Everyone has an idea of what can be understood by a harmonious society. Ask a child of primary school age and he will tell you that there should be peace and freedom, and that everyone is kind to each other. This ideal still remains as people become older, but is



unfortunately considered unreachable and is cast aside. This is particularly unfortunate, not only because these people thereby short-change themselves in this way, but also because it deprives the world of a lot of positive thinking power.

Everything would be so different if more people would realize that the entire surrounding and penetrating Nature is actually built on mutual relationships, influence and collaboration between all beings. A connection that can be explained by the Universal Source, the One Life where everything in the universe has its origin.

And this coherence and cooperation can be found everywhere. Take a look at our solar system and the planets. Or at the cells and atoms of your body. This cooperation is never perfect, because every being,

whether it's a sun, planet, body cell or atom is a learning being and has its own degree of free will. And this means the more developed the consciousness, the better the cooperation.

As you heard from Linda, with humans the free will of the personal self-centered man sometimes gets quite in the way. Then we make wrong choices from selfish motives and we create disharmony. And then the Natural Law of Cause and Effect, Karma or, as it is sometimes called, the Law of Restoring Harmony has to interfere to restore the Natural Order. Think of the bank manager who pays more attention to earning his own bonus than managing, as a good steward, the money which depositors have entrusted him with. The mentality within the company itself and the branch of industry changes, greed raising its head everywhere, even in the depositors who want to see higher interest. Until, of course, the bubble bursts. Hopefully, the lessons of recent years for the responsible people within the financial world will lead to the insight that the function of a savings bank is to keep people's money safe and not to use it for risky financial adventures. We are so connected with each other in the One Life, and the prevailing tone of Nature is cooperation and harmony. The fact that so much disorder and disharmony still exists in the world just means that it consists of imperfect, learning beings that are not yet aware of their inextricable connection with one another.

No humdrum

Does a harmonious society mean that everyone thinks the same, acts the same and maybe even dresses in the same way?

Maybe you remember the China from the time of Mao and his little red book. Every Chinese dressed in the same Mao suit and there were education camps for people with different ideas. Such attempts to impose like-mindedness has always, as taught by history, led to disappointments.

People like Mao Zedong forget that people simply differ from each other in their thoughts and actions. At their heart of hearts they are certainly identical. However, to the extent that they express the one divine consciousness that is in all of them, they do differ from one another. This can be explained by the fact that no

human being has followed the same path, made the same choices and gained the same experiences during the pilgrimage, which has lasted aeons. In fact, there are no two people completely identical.

A harmonious society is thus no uniformity where everyone whistles the same tune. On the contrary. You can compare a harmonious society with a good piece of music, in which opposing sounds are combined by the talent of the composer and the musicians, to form a harmony, a form of unity. The contradiction of high and low tones is required to achieve a unity: a symphony. An inspiring thought, don't you think?

Dynamic society

The Ancient Wisdom of Theosophia assumes a progressive evolution of growth. The basic idea is that man, in principle, is a divine being and on his aeons long pilgrimage has wrapped himself in several bodies and is now in the human stage.

We develop our consciousness together, time and time again. How could it be otherwise? In fact we cannot live without one another. We need this cooperation in order to grow and history has shown that the greater the differences in vision and ideals, the greater the chance of progress. Provided of course we respect one another and allow each other space.

Think of the Dutch Golden Age when philosophy, science and arts experienced a stormy development by influences from other countries, cultures and religions, based on the idea of freedom of conscience, in which the Netherlands was given its current form for the first time by William of Orange.

Within a harmonious society is therefore a high degree of dynamism. Based on the exchange of different views and ideas, we help each other to further develop our spiritual faculties, obviously in the interest of a common growth.

In a musical orchestra members encourage each other to get the best out of themselves and thus to achieve a greater consonance (= harmony). In addition, they subordinate themselves to the unity of the group to which they belong and they follow the structure of the music written by the composer. As soon as one of the members feels more important than the rest of the group it will not work. You all know examples of popular music groups who have perished in this way.

And this is not just true for the music world. Which misery was not created at the end of the last century in the Balkans, because some people have come to regard themselves as superior compared to other groups and wanted to have nothing to do with the others? These are distressing situations with terrible karmic consequences, while sooner or later the understanding will break through that we all need each other in order to reach a real development.

The right man / woman at the right place

Plato distinguishes in *The Republic*, one of his most famous dialogues, three types of people in society.

First, there are the governors of the state whose consciousness is characterized by wisdom. They have, because of the development of their spiritual abilities, acquired a deeper understanding of the spiritual background of Nature, through which they have learned to distinguish between cause and effect. They are the link with the hierarchies of the Gods. Plato talks about a philosopher-king who should be in charge of the state. The symbols in operation by the current kings and queens still refer to the idea of wisdom and a connection to realm of the gods. Think of the crown as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment. It was (and perhaps is still the case) also quite normal for kings to present themselves as the representative of God on earth without any restraint. As did the English Tudor King Henry VIII in the 16th century, known for his cruel and selfish rule and of course for his six wives, of which two ended up on the scaffold. We don't think this is a good example of divine wisdom. The idea of hereditary qualities of consciousness, on which our royal family also appeals, is a tragic mistake in our opinion. This also applies to the present caste system among Hindus in India where the same error occurred, from motives that we will not mention here.

Then there are the guards or protectors of the state. Their consciousness is characterized by courage and fortitude. They have, in fact, seen through the illusion of the perishable material existence and stand in the forefront of the ideals of the state.

A third class represents the great mass of citizens who have developed modesty as virtue. In fact, they are people who, by developing their higher consciousness, have learned to control their lower desires and

emotions.

There is also talk of slaves, which Plato refers to as those people who follow their lower desires and emotions almost instinctively. In India they are aptly called the once-born.

In a just and therefore harmonious state everyone does the task for which he is most suited. The wisest man is expected to take charge. Often some insistence from society is necessary. For example with Václav Havel, the well-known Czech dissident who nominated himself for the office of president after the Velvet Revolution in his country, but not without some pressure to do so. Everyone is necessary, no one is excluded, and everyone is co-responsible for the well-being of the whole state and is accountable for that. From the baker and the farmer up to the governors of the state. In such a way a spiritual hierarchical structure will develop, in which the inspiration can flow freely from top to bottom.

A harmonious society

Meanwhile, we have developed quite a view on what an ideal society should look like.

Such a society should be in accordance with the Heart of the Universe, the universal consciousness that flows through us and all other life, as much as possible. Because there, as we have established, we are looking at harmony, peace and love.

With our limited human consciousness we cannot say much more on the lofty state of the Universal Self. We have to manage with the reflections of it on our mental plane. Then, what do we see?

A society in which people share their grand ideas and visions on unity and cooperation with each other, each to his own best ability and in the interest of a joint spiritual growth, no one excluded. That is very different from fighting out conflicting opinions for one's own sake or in the interest of the group one represents.

A society in which everyone fulfills his own duty, which is in accordance with the quality of consciousness that he or she has developed up to this moment. A society in which the more developed men naturally pass on their knowledge, experience and wisdom to less developed men, and in which everyone counts and is valued for their contribution to the whole.

Undoubtedly, we missed a number of characteristics

that you think may be important. So you are welcome to complete your own vision of a harmonious society with these.

Let's start now

So ladies and gentlemen, let's get started. And let's choose the inward path, through your spiritual Self on your way to the Heart of the Universe. Since that is the only way in which we can free ourselves from the slavery of the single lifetime material world, train ourselves in modesty, control our lower desires and emotions, develop grand ideals with each other, and do our best in order to develop wisdom, acquire insight in the causal background of Life and begin to see the connections. With that we build a harmonious society in which spiritual well-being predominates.

That does not mean that we have to wait until we have developed this wisdom. When we have our goal clearly in sight, we can start to work immediately. And when we look around us in the world, we see there is an urgent need for it.

We live in a time in which a number of persistent misunderstandings are the order of the day. For one thing, this causes big problems, but at the same time, we think, this also offers opportunities for a substantial step towards a better world. Because don't we see an ever-growing number of people in the world who realize that you do not solve conflicts with violence, that happiness cannot be found in the material world, and that the mentality inside the world of banks and insurance companies does not really change with still more rules and inspection?

And these people are not just anyone. Think of people like Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter and Desmond Tutu who united under the name "The Elders" in a kind of World Council of Wise men. They use their influence in order to accomplish a positive change in the world, without discrimination. Visit their website www.theelders.org, if you did not do this before, and allow yourself to get inspired there. There you can also read what you can do to support their work. Just like us they tell you: begin with yourself, develop an ideal for society, do your best for it, to begin with in your own environment, family, job, neighborhood, and be an example for your fellowmen. For example, in The Hague since 1992 the Bureau

of Discrimination Affairs organizes the *World Trip through Our City* on a Sunday in March each year. Citizens of The Hague are given the opportunity to get to know other cultures and religions within their own city on that day. One can visit a Hindu temple, a Jewish synagogue, a Catholic monastery and a mosque amongst others, and one can get to know the Polish, Turkish and Chinese communities. On that day the Blavatsky-house also opens the doors for visitors who are interested in the solutions the Theosophia can offer for the problems in the world. We think that the *World Trip* is a magnificent initiative in order to come to a better understanding between people of different cultures and views of life, and to stimulate the exchange of visions and ideas. A spiritual project, fully worthy of your support.

However, we are convinced that you yourself are capable of discovering many more of these kinds of initiatives in your neighborhood, which you could join in order to make your contribution to a harmonious society. Maybe you work for a bank, and you will soon get the opportunity to join the works council. Then, what will you do?

What does The Theosophical Society have to offer you?

In our aeon-long pilgrimage of developing our in essence divine consciousness, we have arrived at the stage of mankind. Typical for this phase is the development of the thinking faculty, and when we observe the rather clumsy way in which mankind tries to form its ideals during this age, we can see we are just beginners. So men are thinkers. Developing spirituality means that we have to take on our thinking. Only by changing our thinking habits can we do something about the current mentality, which in general is still mainly focused on the exterior one-lifetime-only world.

For people who are prepared to investigate and reform their own thinking and who are in search of Truth, our non-profit foundation I.S.I.S., part of The Theosophical Society, has developed a very practical course under the name "Thinking differently" and in accordance with the Râja-Yoga method. Through independent research students discover the real background of life, and this enables them to take life in their own hands instead of undergoing it as a kind of

destiny or predestination.

For those who have attended the course “Thinking differently” there is the possibility to develop a new view of life based on the changed thinking habits, with the help of the follow-up course “Wisdom of Life”. That new philosophy is based on the Seven Jewels of Wisdom, which can be traced back in all great world religions and philosophical systems. A number of these Jewels you already heard during this symposium, such as re-embodiment or reincarnation, the law of recovery of harmony or Karma, progressive evolution and hierarchies. A right understanding and application of these Jewels gives you access to all knowledge available to you as a human in this age. Universal knowledge which you are supposed to pass on to other people, by the way.

“Discipline precedes the Mysteries”

The journey to discover Yourself, what you are in reality – a divine being – is an adventure, of which a magnificent picture is given in mythical tales like Homer’s *Odyssey*. Just like Odysseus experienced during his journey, you will have magnificent panoramas, experience special encounters, and learn much. There will also be trials however, in which your acquired knowledge and wisdom, your courage and perseverance will be tested. Our next speaker Bianca Peeters will tell you more about this in her lecture.

No initiation without trial

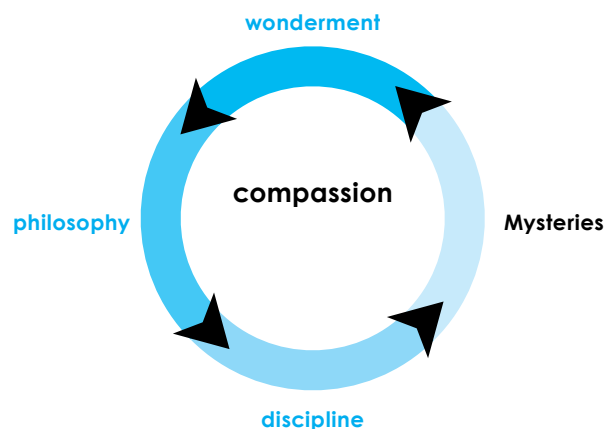
During this symposium we go through the phases of a cycle of spiritual growth, and if you do this for the purpose of the totality, it is also the cycle of developing compassion.

Yesterday we have looked at wonderment and philosophy. And by philosophizing we have searched together for answers to the question what spirituality is. An important conclusion was that spirituality is something practical, which has to do with taking action, with practicing. And to practice, to live according to your best insights, requires discipline. And so discipline precedes the Mysteries.

Discipline, not as we find it in the army, where the troops have to stand in the correct posture, and have to make their beds in exactly the same manner. No, here it involves the *inner discipline* because you have made the inner decision, by your free will, to work for compassion, to live from the idea of unity.

In fact that commitment entails that you give your Higher Self, the universal part in you, the lead, and that your lower self must serve this Higher Self. At least that is what you try to accomplish.

Thus, you must teach your personality to obey, and to act according to your highest insights. In practice this means that you no longer give in to the whims of your lower self, and that requires discipline that does not have to be imposed from the outside, indeed



cannot be imposed from the outside.

Inner discipline means that you think and act consistent with what you yourself think is right, and to which you make no concessions.

Initiation in the Mysteries

By this resolve to work for compassion you knock at the gate of the Mysteries.

How must we picture this?

Well, first of all, the word mystery very simply means 'secret'. You are standing at the portal to things that were formerly a secret for you. In this case to a deeper knowledge of the background of life, a deeper understanding of how everything interconnects.

With that you become an initiate. A student. Initiation

is derived from the Latin word 'initium', what means *beginning*. So you make a start.

So initiation into the Mysteries means that you focus your consciousness on the spiritual side and make a start to gain *self-conscious* experience of the spiritual planes.

No initiation without trial

This really means a lot — becoming a self-conscious part of the spiritual planes. Gaining insight on the way inner Nature works. Since, the more knowledge you have, the more influence you have, and that brings a certain responsibility of course.

Imagine the following situation: the board of a hospital appoints a child who likes to play doctor, as a cardiac surgeon ... Outrageous, is it not? Totally irresponsible. We are talking about life and death here! For such a responsible position one looks for someone who has the right education, someone with evident experience in the field and who is a master of his craft. Someone you can trust in this position.

Anyone who wants to be a cardiac surgeon has to study long and hard. He has to read books about the way the heart functions, about the different cardiovascular diseases and much more. Then he has to pass exams. In the operating room he first only watches how experienced surgeons operate. Only when he has prepared himself thoroughly, he finally has to handle the knife himself. Of course he gets the simple operations first, and only when he performs those well does he get the more difficult ones.

So he goes through a long course in which he makes himself capable, and with each step forward he is tested. Obviously, he has to show he is ready for the task.

Logically our inner path of spiritual growth is not without trials, too. Hence the title of this lecture: *No initiation without trial*.

You can imagine that with every step you take on the spiritual pathway, you have to show you are ready for it. Do you have the right mentality, the right insight, the right attitude and the right basis to be able to use your enlarged insight in a responsible and wise way? You will have to show that you can control your emotional nature, that you can master your personality. That is why we spend a whole lecture on this issue.

Not to frighten you, there is no reason for that. But to inform you, so you will not be surprised about the changes in your life when you decide to take the path of compassion.

Trial takes place in everyday life

You may wonder if there is something like an Academy of Compassion where you can study the Mysteries and get a degree in spirituality that will give you access to all the secrets of the spiritual planes.

If you mean by this that you can write a letter to a Master requesting to be his student, or if you mean there is an institute where you pay tuition fee, than the answer is no. But certainly there is a school where you can learn lessons and where you can take tests of competence. And, what makes it so interesting, we are all in this school, the same school! It is called the school of life. All small and big trials, all these 'admission exams' you will find every day, every minute, in what happens in and around you. In the subway, at work, in the supermarket and in your thoughts.

Spiritual adulthood is only achieved in daily reality. Why?

First of all because you do not exist separated from the rest, so you cannot develop your inner higher abilities apart from your surroundings. So, your spiritual development comes from within. You carry within yourself boundless abilities and you unwrap them, from the inside out. Your external circumstances, the people you meet, the things that happen to you are the *effect* of that inner development.

So, because you have made an inner decision – the promise to your higher Self to be compassionate – you will encounter in your daily life situations in which your discipline is put to the test. Situations in which you can show whether you really think and act according to your decision. For example, you have just decided that you will eat no more fish, and promptly you are invited to a dinner at the best fish restaurant in the city!

So there is no better trial for the inner man than everyday life.

You yourself determine your trials

When we talk about an average person, he expands the abilities of his Higher Self very gradually, and he

will need countless incarnations. Thus, you are taking small inner steps and you will invoke small trials. This development can be seen as a path that very quietly spirals round a mountain until it reaches the top.

But when you have self-consciously and out of compassion decided to serve humanity and all that lives, you will accelerate your inner growth. Then the path of evolution will be shorter — but also steeper, because you can't skip any step in your evolution.

So you decide yourself how many challenges you will face in practice, and how difficult they are. If you want to improve one mental habit, you will only be tested on that aspect. If you want to raise all your mental patterns, your whole character, to a higher level, than the trials will be proportionally more challenging.

There is a lot to tell about discipline and trials. And that is why we will take much time to talk about them in the afternoon workshops. Herman Vermeulen discusses this issue in the last lecture, page 62.

Which keys from the Theosophia can help you in the challenges on your inner path? We will mention three today.

Keys to discipline

- Self-knowledge
- Self-control
- Self-renunciation

Self-knowledge

If you want to grow spiritually faster than normal, than real *self-knowledge* becomes imperative.

Because on your pathway you will get a confusing experience: just after you decide, with full conviction, to live your life according to your noblest self, and to be always patient and friendly, then suddenly it seems that you only do the exact opposite! You constantly react in an irritated way to your partner, and you lose your patience while standing in line at the supermarket. But in fact these experiences show that your *insight* has grown. It only *looks* as if all goes 'worse'. For, what is here going on? Those lesser characteristics that are now so evident, are not new or have not become worse, but they formerly fitted so much in your personality that you never noticed them before. But *now* you do not

say 'I' to that personality with those selfish aspects. You're starting to say 'I' to your impersonal part. And that last part keenly recognizes these selfish aspects, *because* they don't fit anymore.

Your personality will keep harassing you for a certain period, for old habits die hard, old habits are not changed so easily. And in that fact lies the challenge, the trial: how do you act wisely now?

Our suggestion is: *observe* the situation, but *do not fight against* these characteristics. Fighting against them only makes them stronger. Instead, concentrate on the noble faculties that will manifest themselves too. Strengthen these noble traits. Thus, you raise your whole personality.

In short: your larger self-awareness, your clearer insight into what is impersonal and what is personal, is the key to overcome the confusion.

Now not only will you notice changes within yourself; your relation with your environment will not remain the same too. You will come into situations in which your power of self-control will be put to the test.

Self-control

Self-control is the second key.

If you want to go the Path of Compassion, then you should train to remain calm under all circumstances. Self-control is an impersonal faculty that you need in order to stand above the storms of emotion that bring the society so often out of balance.

A trial will come during a stressful situation. What one experiences as stressful, of course differs for everyone, but let us take this example: how does someone who has chosen for compassion, react on the loss of his job? Dismissal is ranked high on the list of stressful life events.

Will he yield to the feeling that he has become useless now, and does not count anymore? Very often that feeling plays a role. Or does he stay calm since he understands that unity and boundlessness are the foundation of existence, and that everyone is part of that unity? Then he will react in quite a different way, for he realizes that his situation is the result of old karma that can be worked out now. For him, this new situation will become a chance to discover what is the best place within the community to put himself into service: paid or unpaid.

You may also get opposition from your environment. Your friends and family see that you are changing, and not everyone will be charmed by this. Some people shall not be able nor willing to understand what makes you so enthusiastic. Other people will get the feeling that you pay less attention to them. Perhaps you will hear reproaches, perhaps friendships even come to an end.

How do you handle this? Does it bring you in doubt about your decision? Are you disappointed about the turn that your life has taken now? Or do you remain calm as you are able to understand these reactions from your environment? And: is your understanding *real*, or is that only your outer side, as you feel irritated inside? Are you able, in such a situation, to keep your focus on the Higher part in yourself while keeping control over the lower part?

We may mention countless examples of such moments of trial. Also when you are praised for your view of life, for you will meet that situation too. Who in you will rejoice then? The personality that is attached to words of praise? Or the higher Self, that sees that the hearts of his fellow men have opened somewhat?

The key of self-control will prevent you from being dragged along by your old habits, but will enable you to live in a gradually more balanced state of mind, according to your highest insights.

You can learn from each trial and identify yourself more with the universal essence in yourself. And each inner step forward will bring new challenges. By doing this, you will develop the capacity of self-renunciation.

Self-renunciation

How do you develop this ability of self-renunciation, of self-forgetfulness? As a mental exercise, we shall follow the path of a person who tries to overcome his addiction. An addiction is an all dominating attachment to something outside yourself. This may be liquor, gaming, money or power. There is no clear distinction between attachment and addiction. Isn't it so that we all have more or less strong attachments to outer things?

Addictions originate much more in our thoughts than in our body. For instance, someone who is addicted to heroin has the *idea* that he cannot live without his daily shot. So, he is entirely engaged in satisfying that need.

As a result he does not stand in but outside society. Until the insight dawns that he cannot continue this way. That insight comes from his inner being. Then he starts to realize that he himself is responsible for his condition, and thus is able to overcome it. Here starts self-knowledge. And if he can evoke his will power, then after a long process, usually by falling and picking himself up again, he will overcome his addiction. Now he starts to educate himself and finds a job and a house. This is self-control. He has grown above his addiction and he does not stand any longer outside but inside society. Now he knows that one can overcome an addiction and so he decides to use his experiences by helping other people to get rid of *their* addiction. This is self-renunciation.

After each trial that you pass, you will be better able to help other people. By progressively forgetting your self with a small s, you will become what you are: your Self with a capital S.

Your higher and more permanent faculties will get the lead more often, with increasing strength. Your own interest will merge into the general interest. In this way you enable yourself to cooperate with the Hierarchy of Compassion.

“But what happens if I fail?” you may ask ... The point is, whether you can truly fail when you tried to do well and instead have made a mistake. Have you failed then? No, you only fail if you give up, if you fall and refuse to pick yourself up. From mistakes we learn. New opportunities will always arise, if you hold on to your inner decision.

You are not alone in your efforts

But returning for a moment to the junkie we mentioned before. If he starts to kick the habit, for a while he will feel deserted by all and everyone. And if you decide to dedicate your life to compassion, you may also feel that you stand alone. But that is not the case. You have redirected your consciousness to the spiritual side, and by doing this you have opened in your mind a channel through which universal thoughts from higher planes will flow in. And these universal thoughts inspire and feed you.

And you will meet ‘helpers’ who will offer you keys to hidden knowledge. Maybe in the form of a book. Or you're sitting in the train and someone besides you

says something that makes you think.

But above all you have the power of your ideal. And if you cherish your ideal, it will surely bring you in contact with kindred thinkers. You will get the opportunity then, to practice your common ideal together.

Higher initiations

By the trials of daily life, an average man will grow into a noble man. And for a noble man who has the right mentality, initiations of a higher degree will follow. He has showed to the Lodge of Compassion that he is ready for an acceleration of his evolution.

Then, someone from the Lodge who had already successfully passed the initiations, will take up the task to train this person for this goal. And in this way this person will come into contact with his teacher, and becomes his *chela*, his pupil.

The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion selects her chelas very carefully. They must have a pure character in all respects, since they have to cope with great trials. For instance, they should be able to bring spiritual light to cosmic planes that are still heavily enshrouded by material veils. Then, not the smallest particle in their constitution may be attracted to this sphere any more. Which requirements should be met by candidates for these high initiations? We may find them in the Sermon on the Mount, in the *New Testament*, where Jesus teaches his chelas. They must be able to turn the other cheek, for instance.

And we find these requirements in the Buddhist rules of life called the Pâramitâs. This word means 'the perfections'. There we read for instance that the candidate should develop wisdom in combination with the power of discernment; and he should be indifferent to his own pain and pleasure.

The portal to the higher initiations is always open. The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion is always active. Wherever people are driven by compassion, training themselves to serve the totality permanently, there is an active center of the Lodge of Wisdom.

Be courageous, but not reckless

Spirituality is a relative thing, we said earlier in this symposium: it is the path of conscious spiritual growth. How quick and how steep that path is, everyone must

determine for himself. And this implies: the reach of your decision determines the reach of your trial. This is true for the student who wishes to become a surgeon, for the junkie who wants to be clean, for the bank employee who wants to earn his money in an honest manner, for the chela who finds his teacher, for Prince Siddhartha who longs to take away the cause of the suffering in the world, and finally becomes a Buddha. Remember that on the path of spiritual growth, a small step leads to a small trial and a large step to a large one. So, be courageous, but not reckless.

We all are parts of a boundless universe. There is a limitless number of initiations, since inner growth has no end in the boundlessness. It will always be possible to rise above yourself again, each and every time.

Obviously, long periods of training are necessary for initiations on the higher planes of consciousness. This is not accomplished in one life. Gautama the Buddha had lived many lives of unselfishness before he reached enlightenment.

Much is written in the theosophical literature about these higher initiations and trials. It is very inspiring to read about that. For we may learn a lot from it, if you realize that the Buddha was once a normal human being, and that he presently is a pupil of even more lofty beings than himself.

If you wish, you can do what they did and still are doing. If you are able continually to set aside the smaller truth to find a greater truth, then you expand your consciousness and you will grow from a personality focused on material things, inclined to selfishness and imagining himself to be separate from the rest – in fact a slave of desires, tendencies, attachments and emotions – into a person that is no longer attached to the material world, but yet by his unselfish compassion chooses to remain in the midst of the society.

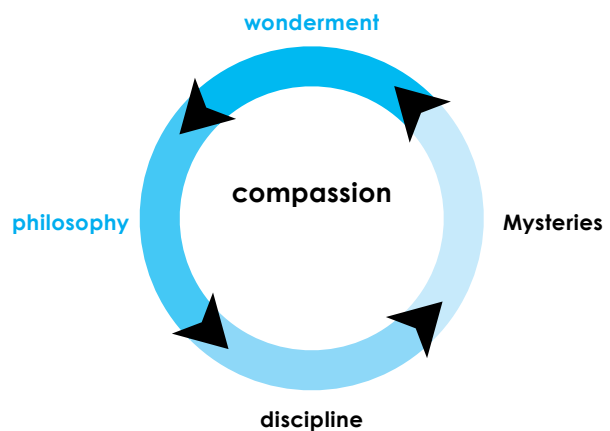
The spiritual society ... a matter of practice

For two days now, we have been talking about practical spirituality, above matter and in society. The circle has been completed: wonderment, philosophy, discipline, mysteries. We have touched on all of these subjects and you have had some practice in the workshops. Now, where do we go from here?

Discipline, compassion and initiation

First, let's once again give discipline a moment's thought. That could be an issue for some of us at times, because in general, we think of discipline in a negative sense — you must adhere to something. Rules are being imposed upon you by the society of which you are part. There are family rules and demands from your partner. Yet discipline is a very necessary part of life. Without discipline you would not be very successful in educating yourself. Your growth will not succeed without discipline.

Is compassion a choice? That depends a little. If you have followed Linda van Noord well – and in my opinion the logic in her speech was very clear – then it would be very easy to say: in fact, there is no choice. If you assume that everything is interconnected and that there can only be tranquility, harmony and peace, if in that fullness there are no suppressed people, groups or continents, then you can draw only one conclusion: we have to do everything in the light of that fullness.



You have to develop spirituality for a harmonious society, in the broadest sense. When you narrow your view, you already experience inequalities again. It's just like with the weather, as soon as there are high and low pressure areas, it starts to flow and circulate and all sorts of annoying and sometimes somewhat less annoying trials arise.

Compassion is the law of laws, that is very clear. But that does not mean that we are practicing it yet. There are many things that are logical, but we do not always act accordingly when we realize the consequences of our actions. If you have to make a choice about something that seems logical to you and you do not make that choice, then you should really conclude that your vision is not yet universal enough to realize that

in fact it is no choice, for deep inside you know what you should do. However, due to the narrowness of the personal atmosphere – thinking of your own benefits and so on – you choose for a limited vision again. We should go beyond that. Many theosophical writers wrote that ‘we should work on’ unity. However, there *is* unity. The challenge here is to express that unity. Today we talked about initiation on a, let us say, somewhat lower level, so that it is clear and within our reach. You can look at ‘initiation and test’ on world level, societal level, but on a cosmic level as well. This latter we did not touch upon at all today — and I’m not going to either. The only thing I want to say right now is that the notion ‘initiation and test’ is a continuous process, even on very high levels.

Can compassion be learned?

If you follow logic, then you already have an impersonal motive. However, you can also learn compassion. Then you have to learn to apply logic. For instance, a T-shirt of three euros can never be manufactured on the basis of a salary level as is customary in our western world. The challenge is: are you that consistent in following logic that you will pass up that cheap T-shirt and buy one that costs more but which means the people who made it are earning a better salary? Of course, you can say that if you do not buy the cheap T-shirt, the people who made it will have it even worse. That is true, but then we should make a deal with those people that we will pay *more* for it.

During the workshops there was also an interesting remark on degrees of compassion. Naturally there are degrees of compassion, since in addition to logic there is also insight. To what degree have we developed a vision, insight. Then you become aware of a compassionate influence in the solar system, in the galaxy, and you start to wonder how to develop this compassion. You can also limit compassion to your family. Family and universe — there is quite a distance in between. You have to develop a vision on that, and logic will help you.

Anyway, there are degrees of compassion. Therefore, it is possible that someone with the most compassionate motive will act in a certain way, of which someone else could say he could have done it better. However, the one that performed the action maybe achieved a top

score and did the most compassionate that could be done according to his capabilities and insights. And when you talk to him, you may be able to sharpen his vision, so that he will be able to improve his actions in the future, as long as his motive was compassionate, obviously.

It is quite another story if you do not work according to your best capacities and someone makes the remark that you could have done better. Then you have failed in the personal life.

Therefore, if we look to one another with compassion, then a very stimulating atmosphere arises and we can help one another enormously. Our symposium work group prepared this symposium on Saturday mornings over the last year on that basis. Those were very stimulating mornings, and when someone had other obligations and was not able to come, he was very unhappy about that, because what is better than exchanging ideas in the light of compassion and in that way also helping one another’s development?

Impersonal challenge

In regard to degrees of compassion I would like to add one more remark. Someone talked about personal compassion. However, in cases of compassion you should be prepared to move the personal aspect to the background and not to act from personal motives. Instead, you should think and act according to your best universal, impartial motives, as spiritual as possible, as practical as possible. Someone said: “Look, within my circle of friends it is easy to be compassionate, however, with the neighbors, with whom I have friction for years now, it gets very tiresome to be compassionate.” There you typically find the impersonal challenge. If you assume that everything is interconnected, then you also have to deal with those neighbors with whom you have friction, in such a way that you work from compassion. Moreover, you really have to take one thing into account: being compassionate does not mean to say that you should always be friendly and that you always, by definition, have to concede. Being compassionate implies that you presume the totality. You presume the general interest; actions and situations have to be tested from that perspective. Then it may be the case that you need to have a serious conversation with your neighbors. You

do not need to bend to their wishes, but you do have to invest in the vision of those neighbors in order to reach a more universal insight.

Freely chosen commitments

If you take all these elements together, then we arrive at the executive side and that has, as was remarked as well, everything to do with willpower. That is usually understood as a synonym for self-control.

Let's take a look at that maintenance of willpower. We have a will. This morning we already talked about the degree in which it is free. I hope you have been able to grasp that it is in principle free, but that you restrain it yourself with all your appointments and commitments. So, when you have a certain desire, then in general you will have to work to maintain that desire. For example, if you say that you are going to do a study and this study takes four years, then you know in advance that you will be busy for four years, and that you will have to invest a lot of your time in it in those four years, if you want to reach a good result. That is discipline. Discipline in the sense we like to use it; not discipline in the military sense. You can also talk about perseverance, and include free will and karma. You have to really realize that the will is principally free. Your own choices and actions – with which you can be very happy as such – limit you and lead to karmic consequences.

Say you go to the bank and close on a mortgage, and you have to – let's be modest – pay 500 euros per month for that, then you simply know that you will have to do your best to earn that 500 euros somewhere during the rest of the month. Then you may say: but this limits me enormously in my free time and in my choices. That is true; it is, however, something that you have taken upon yourself. That is, your will is free; you limit it yourself. However, those self-chosen restrictions can also contribute to harmony and to happiness for the general interest, when you presume compassion. And fortunately there are people who actually do so.

The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion continuously attempts to spread this knowledge and this Lodge always has been aided by people for whom it is self-evident to put themselves into service for that fullness. Many people think that is a sacrifice, but I can assure

you that it is not. If I would never have put myself in service of compassion, I would never have been able to develop many facets of myself, and then I would never have grasped many things the way I understand them now. So, to do your best for compassion is a very interesting path of growth and of understanding as well. It is not limiting and burdensome, but it is an enormous stimulus.

Laws

Another question from the workshops: do we need laws? I would say: no, laws with a lowercase letter 'l' we don't need. But Laws with a capital 'L' we do. In one of the paradoxes of the *Tao Te Ching* it is mentioned that it is wise to do away with laws.⁽¹⁾ What does Lao tsu mean by that? Does he mean that the Tao should not be served anymore? A well-known Dutch Sinologist, Henri Borel, has written a booklet titled *Wu-wei*, which means Acting by *not* acting. Acting with a capital letter and acting with a lowercase letter. Acting in the personal interest: no. Acting in accordance with harmony from compassion: yes. Then, what happens? Then you get harmony and you don't cause all kinds of small whirlpools and whirlwinds from which problems could arise.

At the moment, our country has the choice to change laws which I would clearly put under 'the lowercase letter l'. We are talking about immigration laws. We think it is self-evident – when you think humane and are compassionate – that you welcome refugees and that you try to give those people a place in your society: that you feed them, train them, teach them the language, help them with housing — and many people want to do that very much indeed. However, if you make a law that penalizes that, then you will have an ethical conflict if you one day find yourself in such a situation, and would also like to be accommodated and helped. This is typically an example of the fact that ethics are of a universal value. If you develop morality and ethics from compassion, then you have to deal with notions like the Universal Rights of Man much more, although in their current form they are slightly 'tuned' to be able to get them approved — so you may have a few comments on that. However, it is a step in the right direction.

Yes, we need universal laws with an L, since those are

in fact the patterns of conduct which you can trace back to the universe. You may call the fact that the earth circles around the sun such a natural law. The fact that the earth respects that distance is also connected to a natural law. It is pleasant that it is maintained — that is in fact the behavior of consciousnesses together. However, if you are going to generate laws that run counter to the general universal laws, then you may run into an issue.

Mysteries and test

Why is discipline necessary for the Mysteries?

That could be the subject of a symposium. Now, the motive — and I think we made that clear already at another moment — will determine the result to a considerable extent. Now, why is it that motive is so highly valued in the Mysteries?

In *The Mahatma Letters* it is very clearly mentioned that only those chelas are being helped in their development, and initiated, and acquire knowledge of the Mysteries, whose motive is compassion. The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion accepts no one, and helps no one, who does not have a compassionate motive. Isn't that discrimination? No, since if you do your best for the general interest, then the Masters will train and help you. You accelerate your development. Only therein will the Masters put their energy, and they will take the karmic consequences for that. They would never do that for someone who subsequently says: "Nice, thank you, I grasped it, I am going into Nirvana now, and I will see when I leave it again." That's not the way it works. It is from compassion for compassion.

Why is discipline so important in that respect? Let's compare that with learning how to swim. When you have learned the swimming movements and you are thrown into the water, and you did not have the discipline to practice those movements, then it will not work out well and you will drown. You should be consequential in practicing what you have learned. There is yet another facet to it, something we also see with our students. When they do not understand the course 'Thinking Differently' or 'Wisdom of Life' correctly, this is not much of a problem in general. However, students who do, have to maintain discipline. They have to understand well from which motive they

are engaged in the course, before they will build up a number of karmic consequences of which they cannot foresee the effects.

From this point of view, that Teacher has a big karmic responsibility. And that student has to practice discipline until he understands well what he is doing, in order to prevent the building up of a lot of problems and negative consequences. Therefore, newly acquired knowledge can be very dangerous. That knowledge is more dangerous than many a weapon, since if you act from that incorrectly grasped knowledge, then it is possible that you will have to carry the negative karmic consequences of it for one or more lifetimes. The conception of Athena by Zeus (with Metis), and the doubt he experienced afterwards, was exactly in this field. What will Athena do with that wisdom she acquires? After all, she is born out of the head of Zeus. Initiation is that process of acceleration. And in order to acquire that knowledge, discipline is necessary. Then you will be able to acquire that knowledge step by step and under full control. Dr. De Purucker makes an interesting remark.⁽²⁾ When you study something and the moment comes that you are grasping it — that aha-moment — then it can be that you are captivated by it, that you are in fact blinded by it for the next couple of days. Not literally, but mentally, because you are taken by it. You suddenly realize how something works and the possibilities that arise. But in fact, you should beware and you should develop discipline in order to control those new possibilities.

You can also say that initiation in the Mysteries is a consciously evoked wonderment. You are trained, you are exposed to situations in which you are completely unfamiliar. This is especially the case with chelas, the somewhat more developed fellow men. In those situations of wonderment they have to apply discipline in order not to end up in confusion or despair. They have to keep acting consequently in order to acquire experience in that field. So, test is the concluding element. This process is also described in *The Mahatma Letters*.

Many occidentals will think: now, what is this? I study, I grasp it — and why a test? Surely, I can see for myself what I will do with it and how I'm going to apply it? Surely, that is not something for those Masters to judge? However, your applying has consequences for

the Masters too, since they have the responsibility because they made the tenet public. So, testing is necessary. Actually, that is the same as with that cheap T-shirt that you will or will not choose to buy. Then you also have the choice before you to do or not to do it.

So, study is very interesting, however, the practice or test is very essential.

Examples of practical spirituality

We received a whole series of examples from the workshops. I will present the various examples, so that you will be able to realize that we are talking about something which is not abstract, but occurs in daily life.

One thing to begin with: you have to realize that, being an outsider, it is not possible to judge what the motive of another is. It can be that the motive is different than it appears and what you expect. Therefore, testing is so important.

Undoubtedly, you know the example of the Pakistan girl Malala. What would you do if you were sitting in a bus in Pakistan, and that bus is stopped and the Taliban enters with weapons and asks: "Who is Malala?" Do you remain seated or do you stand up? You know that if you remain seated, then everyone in the bus will probably be killed. However, you also know that if you stand up, there is a big chance that *you* will be killed. You should try to imagine that as an exercise: how would I react?

Then, we have some 'easier' examples. 'Resto VanHarte', an eating-place for local residents, that works with volunteers and students. It gives long-term unemployed people and resettling discharged prisoners the opportunity to get to work. That restaurant is quite successful.

Then, you have activities like 'the good neighbor', in which you can help people who need it for two hours in the week for example. Foundation 'Gered Gereedschap' ('saved tools') is another good example. There are also those ethical dilemmas. Try to reflect on those as well. To rescue another and to drown yourself? Is that practical? There is an example of someone who rescued two boys but drowned in the process. Is that practical spirituality? Do I do my best for the greater whole in that way? If you know that you cannot swim,

then you can imagine that if you jump into the water too, there will be not one but two problems. However, if you are a good swimmer and you have confidence that this can come to a good end, then you should be expected to do your best. Naturally, all kinds of karmic consequences are connected to it.

You have to realize that we live in a country where a serious proposal has been made to penalize not-rescuing someone. So, if you watch someone falling through ice or drowning and you do not make attempts to rescue him, then you have committed a crime. That bill really means that we are very deeply involved in the personality and are not prepared to do our best for others, since you never know what trouble you may bring upon yourself. For saving a man in a canal will give you a wet suit or wet papers.

What do you achieve by punishing?

Another good example of compassion is the Truth Commission in South-Africa. When Apartheid was abolished, everyone was afraid for a day of settlement to come, that the most terrible things would happen there. However, thanks to the Truth Commission, the issue was closed and one and all have started again. That is a theosophically justifiable working method. When we assume cause and effect and reincarnation, then we don't need to punish our fellow men for the crimes they committed, since nature already laid out their punishment. On the other hand, we should help these people of weak properties understand that they should not cultivate those properties, but let go of them by developing other, more noble properties. You have to teach them that you have to presume the fullness and must never live at the expense of others. Then, when you look at our own country, you see that many people think that you cannot punish heavily enough. That tendency appears more and more. However, dozens of reports have already shown that it does not help. The only thing that helps is re-education. There is reincarnation and karma. We don't need to punish, but we do have to help.

Another example: the Marshall plan. Countries struck by the Second World War, like the Netherlands, Germany, France and Belgium, were helped to re-develop the country. One of the reasons why the Second World War broke out, is that this was not

done after the First World War. If you get stuck in your personality or in nationalism, you will naturally think helping your conquered enemy is incomprehensible. However, you have to realize that if you make someone so poor that he actually has no choice, and then someone promises cars, highways and that everyone will have a living again, then for a lot of people it is an easy choice.

Meditation and fair income

Then, something about mediation. In the light of compassion it is of course to be welcomed. However, if you do it because you will have less legal costs and because the lawsuits take so long, then the motive is not compassionate of course. Then it is not about solving the conflict, but you want to get rid of the problem as soon as possible. In the light of compassion it makes sense to deliberate, of course. However, mediation does not always have to involve a lawyer if you have a conflict. Suppose you are in a bus and two lads start to fight, then what will you do? Just watch? Or will you try to prevent it from escalating together with some fellow passengers? Will you try to start a conversation with both parties and show them that fighting doesn't offer a solution?

Another example: fair trade. If you want to buy products, because you think that the people who worked for it deserve a fair income and that those products are not tainted with blood, then that is also an interesting example of compassion.

Yet another example: high officers surrender salary. If you are not a high officer, you will agree of course, but if you are one, then you can only do this by realizing that your input in society – thinking from compassion – is self-evident. When you assume unity, then you will know that anyone who doesn't do his best for the fullness within all his capacities is not compassionate. So, when you do not contribute your capacities, which are necessary in society, then you fail society. When, because of societal ideas grown crooked, a salary is connected to a job that is much higher than that of others, then it is obvious that you take off the part you need for a reasonable living and refund the rest into the funds of society. There have been political parties that demanded this from their representatives. And there have been people who

canceled their membership of that party, because they wanted much but not exactly *that*. There are countries in which a high officer gets a higher fine for a violation than someone with a lower wage. Why? He has a higher responsibility, he has to be a living example. He has a better insight in the consequences of his actions, so he must be punished heavier when he breaks the law. Countries like Finland and Switzerland have this.

All men are fellow pilgrims

This is also a nice one: second chance. Someone in your surrounding fails. It bothers you a lot. At a certain moment this person says: "I'm sorry, I made a mistake. I should not have done it, but I would like to continue working with you." Then, can we cooperate with someone like that without connecting the coloring of that failing to it, without involving those negative actions again and again? That is the reason why we think that you should not judge the person but the action. If you would be able to look backwards at your previous incarnations, then you would probably encounter a few things about which you would rather not talk anymore. Maybe this does not apply to everyone, but I dare to say for myself that this surely applies to me.

Another one: respect for everyone. Do you think the garbage collector is as important as the mayor? When you have to talk to the mayor, are you more nervous than when you talk to the garbage collector? Or do you see the mayor as someone who does his job just like others? Or don't you want to talk to the garbage collector at all? Honestly, I have much more problems if the garbage collector would strike for a week, then if the mayor would — because I will not notice that so much. However, if the garbage collector is on strike, I will notice it, and I will be glad when he comes past again. Then, I will be quite prepared to have a chat and if he would ask if he may use the bathroom, I would of course say yes.

This is a nice one: the king of Denmark wore a star during the Second World War. What is this about, you may wonder. Well, during the German occupation of Denmark all Jews were obliged to wear a star on their coat. And who was the first one to wear the star? The king. What was the effect? All civil servants started doing it — and in the end almost everyone in

Denmark wore a star. That is, it was still not possible to distinguish people.

This is also a very nice one: train poachers to be foresters. These are of course people who are familiar with the land and the wildlife there. You can let them go their own way, but you can also try to take care that they are going to work as protectors of nature. In Africa, there are examples where this principle is applied. This requires a change of mentality for the poacher. You have to guide this process and take away the need for poaching. When someone poaches because he doesn't have a job, yet has hungry children, then you have to make sure that he earns a salary as well. Based on all these examples you see that spirituality is very practical. As Erwin Bomas showed yesterday, spirituality has to be practical, otherwise it is not spirituality.

Reference

1. Lao tsu, *Tao Te Ching*. Many editions, chapter 57.
 2. G. de Purucker, *Man in Evolution*. Chapter 1: The Approach to Truth, p. 6-11. For authorized text in original form: www.blavatskyhouse.org/onlineliterature.
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Announcement:

How our consciousness changes our brain

Symposium I.S.I.S. Foundation on 17 / 18 May 2014

*Do we have a brain?
Or are we our brain?*

Many neuroscientists act as if it is proven that we are our brain. But the latest developments in neurology show that from birth up until death the brain continues to change. And it is possible to direct these changes. Our thinking can change the brain.

These recent scientific discoveries support the theosophical teaching that consciousness is the leading factor: the brain is the steed, the consciousness the rider.

From brainmind to insight

This symposium will focus on how the consciousness changes the brain. Related subjects to be included are free will, our (collective) memory, intuition and reincarnation.

Our consciousness has a lot of potential, which is not or is rarely used now. If we activate these possibilities within ourselves, then it has influence on our vehicle: our body including our brain. During the symposium practical directions will be provided as to how to activate these abilities and how to exchange the brainmind-thinking for thinking differently.

On both days there are workshops in which all participants can test these insights by their own experiences, giving ample opportunity to exchange ideas. The working languages are both English and Dutch; the lectures will be translated simultaneously.

Save the date: Saturday May 17th and Sunday May 18th in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Current information about the symposium: <http://www.isis-foundation.org/symposium/>

Lucifer®

Colophon

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I.S.I.S. Foundation

The name of the Foundation [Stichting] is 'Stichting International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth'. Its registered office is in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The object of the Foundation is to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood by disseminating knowledge about the spiritual structure of human beings and the cosmos, free from dogma.

The Foundation endeavors to accomplish this object by giving courses, organizing public and other speeches and lectures, issuing books, brochures and other publications, and by drawing on all other resources available to it.

I.S.I.S. Foundation is a non-profit organization, which is recognized as such by the tax authorities in The Netherlands. For the purposes of the tax authorities, I.S.I.S. Foundation has what is called ANBI status.

ANBI stands for General Benefit Organisation (Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling). The most important requisites in obtaining this ANBI status are:

- It is a non-profit organization, so it has no earnings. Any profit earned from for example book sales, must be fully used for general beneficial activities. For I.S.I.S. Foundation, this is spreading the Theosophia. (We refer to the statutes, aims and principles for further information.)
- Board members must meet integrity requirements.
- The ANBI must have a separate property, whereby a director or policymaker cannot dictate over this property as though it were his own.
- The remuneration of board members may only consist of a reimbursement for expenses and attendance.

I.S.I.S. Foundation ANBI number is 50872.



International
Study-centre for
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Search for truth
Foundation

I.S.I.S. Foundation

The activities of the I.S.I.S. Foundation are based on:

1. The essential unity of all that exists.
2. By reason of this unity: brotherhood as a fact in nature.
3. Respect for everyone's free will (when applied from this idea of universal brotherhood).
4. Respect for everyone's freedom to build up their own view of life.
5. To support the developing of everyone's own view of life and its application in daily practice.



Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

Each culture in the East and West has his bringers of light: inspiring individuals who give the initial impulse to spiritual growth and social reform. They stimulate independent thinking and living with a profound awareness of brotherhood.

These bringers of light have always been opposed and slandered by the establishment. But there are always those who refuse to be put off by these slanderers, and start examining the wisdom of the bringers of light in an open-minded and unprejudiced way.

For these people this journal is written.

“... the title chosen for our magazine is as much associated with divine ideas as with the supposed rebellion of the hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost* ...

We work for true Religion and Science, in the interest of fact as against fiction and prejudice. It is our duty – as it is that of physical Science – to throw light on facts in Nature hitherto surrounded by the darkness of ignorance ... But natural Sciences are only one aspect of SCIENCE and TRUTH. Psychological and moral Sciences, or theosophy, the knowledge of divine truth, are still more important ...”

(Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in the first issue of *Lucifer*, September 1887)