

The Light-bringer

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

Special issue:

**The Hierarchy of
Compassion –
worldwide,
of all times**

**The Hierarchy of
Compassion – world-
wide, of all times**

**The awakening of
humanity**

Mystery Schools

**Spiritual impulses
before H.P. Blavatsky
(1875)**



The three fundamental propositions of Theosophy

As far-reaching as the Theosophical teachings are, they are based on three fundamental propositions. For a proper understanding of Theosophy, it is necessary to consider them carefully.

The first fundamental proposition: Boundlessness

*An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. (...) One absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being.**

And although unknowable, this absolute reality is the foundation for all life.

The second fundamental proposition: Cyclicity

*The Eternity of the Universe in toto as a boundless plane; periodically 'the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing', called 'the manifesting stars', and the 'sparks of Eternity'.**

All beings are imperishable 'sparks of Eternity', passing alternately through phases of active life and inner rest (sleep or death), in a ceaseless cyclic process.

The third fundamental proposition: The essential equivalence of all life

*The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul – a spark of the former – through the Cycle of Incarnation (or "Necessity") in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term.**

The same One Life flows through the hearts of all that exists. Everything is alive. There is no dead matter. Therefore, everything is essentially equal. Everything latently possesses the same faculties as the greater whole of which it is a part (Over-Soul) and gradually unfolds these inherent faculties, re embodying itself continually (second proposition). This growth of consciousness always takes place in interaction and is boundless (first proposition).

* Source: H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*. Volume I, p. 43-47 (pagination original edition).

For more explanation, see our website:

blavatskyhouse.org/about-us/what-is-theosophy/

Interested in our lectures?

Watch them on our YouTube channel:

[youtube.com/
@theosophicalsociety-tspl](https://youtube.com/@theosophicalsociety-tspl)

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In 2025, the Theosophical Society Point Loma held a series of lectures on the inspiring impulse that H.P. Blavatsky and her co-workers have provided to human thought since 1875. These lectures will be published in a number of special issues. This issue is the first in this series and lays the foundation for all subsequent issues. The main theme of this issue is: 'The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, of all times'.

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The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, of all times

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Throughout the world and across all ages, there has been a collaborative effort dedicated to the moral and ethical development of humanity as a whole. It is part of the Hierarchy of Compassion. Who or what is this Hierarchy? What is its purpose, and how does it function? And what does it mean for us today?

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18 million years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy

The source, impact and future of the spiritual impulse of 1875

In 2025, it was 150 years since Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, together with a few associates, founded the Theosophical Society and started spreading Theosophy. She did this on the instructions of and in cooperation with her Teachers, Masters of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, because humanity's mental and spiritual condition was very critical. People who were searching for understanding, wisdom, and a path to a better world, remained empty-handed because dogmatic clerical belief and equally dogmatic, materialistic science dominated general thought.

The universal teachings that the Masters of Wisdom revealed through their disciple H.P. Blavatsky under the name 'Theosophy', are part of *Theosophia* or *Universal Wisdom*, by which we mean the 'wisdom of the Gods', 'Divine Wisdom'. The Theosophia offers us insight into the essential unity of all life, as well as the structure and functioning of the Kosmos. She offers us a logical, universally applicable, and thoroughly ethical holistic view of Man and Kosmos. She teaches us humans our fundamental unity and interconnect-

edness with all living things, and thus the logic of universal brotherhood.

The *Theosophia* is timeless. Appropriate parts of it have been periodically disseminated by the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion for 18 million years, ever since our minds awakened. This Lodge has sent, and keeps on sending, messengers – great spiritual Teachers – whenever humanity needs a new impulse, in order to keep the fire of *love of truth* and *compassion for other beings* burning in people's hearts. With the impulse of 1875, much more of Theosophia was made public than had been done for a long time before, in order to break through the rigid, dogmatic mental molds of that era.

In 2025, 150 years had passed since H.P. Blavatsky started her work. It is very much worth taking a look back and investigate the impact of those universal ideas on the general way of thinking, on developments in religion, philosophy, and science, and on the rapid changes in society. For this reason, the Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL) has dedicated all of its lectures from January through May 2025 to the theme '18 million

years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy', with the aim of publishing them at a later date.

We are now doing this in a series of special issues of our magazine *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, of which the current issue is the first.*

This special issue provides insight into the origins of Theosophy and the impulses of the wisdom-messengers in the past.

The following issues in this series will discuss:

- the mysteries surrounding the appearance of H.P. Blavatsky: her tasks and how she carried them out, amidst severe opposition;
- the impact of the fundamental ideas of Theosophy on the thinking climate and society since H.P. Blavatsky's time;
- what is needed – and this is our shared task – to keep this source of universal wisdom alive for the next 2,000 years, so that it may inspire future generations and show them the way?

This issue is the first in the series. It explores 'The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, at all times' and consists of four articles written by Erwin Bomas and Herman C. Vermeulen. The four articles are based on the four lectures given in January 2025.

Does the content of this issue raise any questions? We invite you to submit them, as this gives us the opportunity to provide further clarification. If we publish a question and answer in *Lucifer*, it will always be anonymous and with the submitter's consent.

The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, of all times

18 million years of Theosophia
150 years of Theosophy

Online lectures via YouTube
The last 30 minutes of each lecture: study via chat
Sundays 19:30 CET

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H.P. Blavatsky's mission in the Hierarchy of Compassion

18 million years of Theosophia
150 years of Theosophy

Online lectures via YouTube
The last 30 minutes of each lecture: study via chat
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23 Mar Unveiling the invisible worlds
30 Mar Unlocking the Eastern Wisdom

H.P. Blavatsky's role in transforming the world-mentality

18 million years of Theosophia
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13 Apr The spiritual heart of every being
20 Apr From: the infinity of Life
To: vegetarianism, cre
abolition of capita
27 Apr Universal Brotherhood
04 May From: humanity, a unity
To: Peace Conferences
decolonization

H.P. Blavatsky's role in transforming the world-mentality

18 million years of Theosophia
150 years of Theosophy

Online lectures via YouTube
The last 30 minutes of each lecture: study via chat
Sundays 19:30 CEST

11 May Freedom of thought and conscience
18 May From: the equality and unique function of all beings
To: animal protection and abolition of slavery, racism, caste system, child labor
25 May From: consciousness as the cause of the phenomenal world
new foundation for science
vision as a universal way of living

Contributing to 2000 years future of Theosophy

18 million years of Theosophia
150 years of Theosophy

Online lectures via YouTube
The last 30 minutes of each lecture: study via chat
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08 Jun Keeping the IDEALS OF HUMANITY ensouled
15 Jun Keeping the FUTURE OF HUMANITY protected
22 Jun The mission of H.P. Blavatsky
And how do WE continue her work?
29 Jun Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL)
The magical power of working in a group

* One lecture from this series has already been adapted into an article and published in *Lucifer*: Bouke van den Noort, 'Compassion as a universal way of living'. Article in: *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, no. 3, September 2025, p. 81-90.



The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, of all times

Key thoughts

» A hierarchy is led by a hierarch – the leader, the starting point – who inspires the entire hierarchy with a holy sphere of influence.

» A Silent Watcher is a being who delays his own evolution in order to help the less advanced beings who follow behind him.

» Compassion can be described as thinking and acting from a sense of oneness, universal love, wisdom, and knowledge.

» Through the power of thought, humans can consciously guide their actions and thus cooperate with Nature.

» People still often lack compassion because we are limited thinkers and act out of ignorance.

» The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion will never impose anything; it will only inspire.

» We are already capable of forming a link in the great work of the Hierarchy of Compassion.

Throughout history and across the globe, there has been an active collaboration dedicated to the moral and ethical development of humanity as a whole. This collaboration is known as the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. This Lodge is part of the Hierarchy of Compassion. Who or what is this Hierarchy? What is its purpose, and how does it function? How do we recognize it, and what does it mean for us today?

The year 2025 marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society. This marked the beginning of a tremendous impulse of spiritual wisdom from the Hierarchy of Compassion. Although the name of Madame H.P. Blavatsky is most closely associated with the Theosophical Society, it was in fact the Hierarchy of Compassion that inspired her to found the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. Thus arose the modern Theosophical Movement, which continues to expand through the work of Theosophists around the world. This impulse did not arise out of nowhere, but fits into a pattern of cyclical spiritual impulses, as we will describe in this special issue.

The significance of this impulse is still greatly underestimated. Wisdom has been revealed that had remained hidden for thousands of years. Wisdom that offers solutions to all the problems in our lives and in this world. Wisdom with which everyone can

accelerate their own evolution and that of their fellow human beings. And so, with this newly acquired knowledge and these new possibilities, one can protect both oneself and others from many pitfalls and thus spare them from suffering. This wisdom deserves far more attention in today's world!

We begin at the source: the Hierarchy of Compassion. A collaboration that is active worldwide – in fact, even beyond the world – and throughout all ages. In the articles in this special issue, we describe the work of this Hierarchy of Compassion up to the impulse of 1875 with the arrival of H.P. Blavatsky.

Hierarchy in our daily lives

In a world like today's, many people ask: Where is the leadership? Where is the wisdom? Where is the compassion? Where are the people who will stand up and inspire us with their example of how to live, who will inspire us with selfless love, vision, insight,

and knowledge? Who can give us the hope and courage to build a free, peaceful, and joyful society? Where are the sages? If they exist, why do they not show themselves? Yet every person has a certain sense that there must be more wisdom and that a more peaceful and compassionate world is possible. People often go looking for knowledge or guidance elsewhere, outside themselves. Ancient wisdom, however, always points inward: to the wisdom that is present within ourselves.

We share these visions of a better life because we all carry them within us. We know things can be better! We feel that, despite all the struggles and suffering, there is unity and connectedness. We all possess the power of imagination with which we can create ideals of a fraternal society. These ideals are not new, either. Throughout history and across the globe, there have been world teachers. They brought the same message of compassion, wisdom, and peace. Think of Krishna, Gautama the Buddha, Pythagoras, Zarathustra, Lao-tzu, Plato, Confucius, and Jesus of Nazareth. We still recognize the ethical value of these teachings today. Their shared and hopeful message is consistently that we ourselves can determine our own destiny. But it is also that we ourselves are the cause of the suffering we see. They point to our own responsibility.

Therein lies the difficulty: we actually know better, but we are not acting on that knowledge yet. And let us be honest with ourselves: to what extent do we often look for a quick fix? Something or someone to solve it for us? We then look for solutions outside ourselves. Many people still think this works. They choose what they see as strong leaders who promise to solve all problems in the blink of an eye. Often, these so-called strong leaders point to an external cause for all the misery — an enemy, a neighboring country, another ethnic group, or migrants — in order to wage war against it. The appeal of these limited ways of thinking stems from a worldview based on fear and selfishness. It stems from the illusion that we are alone in our lives, that we are in conflict with others in order to survive.

The result is that we grant power to someone who will make decisions for us. We help put an autocrat in power who restricts free thought and, in doing so, restricts our free will. Is this, then, the path to growth? No, because in doing so, we fail to tap into our own inner wisdom.

Yet this is often the path we choose, and it is the one that has given the word ‘hierarchy’ a negative connotation. When most people hear ‘hierarchy,’ they think of power. Of bosses. Of people who tell you what to do and more or less impose their will on you. Unfortunately, there are

plenty of examples of this kind of bosses. But we get exactly the leaders or bosses we deserve. Often, we have chosen them ourselves. And for many people, it goes without saying that whoever is at the top decides what happens. Freedom is limited to what this boss allows. Abuse of power is therefore always a risk. Who has not seen bad examples of this? It is a hierarchy based on power and coercion. It is the kind of hierarchy that many people rightly dislike.

On the other hand, we see a natural hierarchy based on competence. Steering a ship, cooking in a restaurant, or constructing a building usually works best when one person is in charge — someone with expertise and experience, who understands what is going on and what is needed at all levels, and who knows how to bring together the various perspectives and interests. When it comes to social problems or challenges, we therefore prefer to listen to someone with a vision — someone who can inspire us to work together to find a solution.

So there are conflicting images and interpretations of the concept of hierarchy, and that is mainly because we often still have conflicting perspectives within ourselves, even unconsciously. We may see ourselves as isolated individuals, with a single life, born by chance at a specific time and place under specific circumstances, who must struggle to survive in competition with others — or, to put it more positively, who must make the best of the short time we have been granted. This view limits us to our outer personality in the here and now. If you look at the external world today, it seems as though many people approach life in this way. But this view is, at best, only half true. It is not false, but it is limited.

Because in practice, we depend on others. Everyone also knows that our actions influence others, and we all consider it just when right actions are rewarded and the opposite is punished. And if, as mentioned earlier, we look deeper within ourselves, we realize that we all have a sense of justice, a sense of connectedness, and a conscience. At some point, you may realize that there is more to life — much more. That broader perspectives exist, far broader than what we can perceive in the material realm. Theosophy offers such a broader worldview, through which we can view the concepts of compassion and hierarchy in a different light.

Theosophical principles

Theosophy offers a worldview that is completely different from the conventional one. It does not assume a reality

limited to what we can perceive with our senses, nor does it assume a once-only life, followed by either nothing at all or a static, eternal life in a heaven or a hell.

Theosophy begins with the most expansive premise of all: the principle of boundlessness. We can recognize this boundless principle as a simple fact. For example, reality has no end. With everything we have been able to measure and know to date, our horizons are constantly expanding. New perspectives are constantly emerging. Every person has their own perspective, and hopefully we have all experienced that we can broaden our perspective.

Moreover, taking infinity or boundlessness as a starting point leads to the conclusion that an inseparable connection exists. Everything is rooted in the same boundless principle; otherwise, it would not be boundless. Everything, so to speak, has the same parent. Universal brotherhood is therefore a fact, not merely a beautiful ideal to strive for. We are, in essence, one and will always remain so. Separateness is an illusion. Just as finitude is an illusion. But how does that work, then? Is a human life not finite? Is everything not temporary, fleeting, and transient? After all, you can never step into the same river twice, can you?

Yes, that is true if you look at the external, outwardly perceptible world. But boundlessness means precisely that everything we see – all manifestations – are like shadows, waves, temporary phenomena, just as memories are: fleeting. They arise from an underlying force. And that underlying force is a ray of the boundless. We also call this the monad. Every being is, in essence, a monad: a ‘spark of eternity’ or ray of consciousness emanating from the boundless. And very importantly: that ray or spark manifests itself cyclically. And that outer form is the only thing we perceive. We mistake the waves of the boundless ocean for separate individuals that seem to appear and disappear.

There are constantly alternating periods of activity and rest for every consciousness, every monad that manifests itself. A human life, therefore, is nothing more than such a cyclical phenomenon. What we call death is nothing more than a period of rest during which the ray of the monad temporarily withdraws, only to re-embodiment itself after this period of rest and continue its evolution or development.

Finally, a fundamental theosophical principle is that every being evolves or grows, guided by its own inner nature,

yet always in karmic connection with other beings. No being, no cycle, exists in isolation. Just as every wave is composed of countless droplets, so too is every incarnation a collaboration with countless living building blocks, or ‘child monads,’ within a hierarchical structure. Every vehicle or body, in turn, consists of living beings undergoing their evolution within it, whether that be a star, a planet, a human body, a cell, or an atom. As above, so below.

So, there is always life within life. Hierarchy and hierarchical structure are therefore a reality in nature. Let us use these principles as a starting point to explore the meaning of hierarchy.

Hierarchy: life within life

Theosophy outlines a worldview based on unity, personal responsibility, and infinite cyclical growth. What does hierarchy mean from these principles? To begin with: the word ‘hierarchy’ comes from the Classical Greek *hieros*, meaning ‘holy’, ‘sacred’ or ‘filled with the divine,’ and *arkhè*, meaning ‘starting point’ and also ‘leadership,’ a derivation of *arkhein*, ‘to lead’ or ‘to be the first.’ A hierarchy is therefore something led by a hierarch – the first, the leader, the starting point – who is sacred, imbued with the divine, and who thereby inspires the entire hierarchy.

According to Theosophy, every life – every microcosm or macrocosm – has a hierarch. It has a relative starting point that is both a crown and a seed: a guiding consciousness with a specific sphere of influence. Every form of life is hierarchically structured around such a hierarch. Each form of life itself consists of countless gradations of life, which form layers or spheres of consciousness that interpenetrate one another.

There is life within life, there are hierarchies within hierarchies, and there are cycles within cycles. Just as we live our

Hierarchy: life within life

Formed from classical Greek *hierós* ‘holy,’ and *arkhè* ‘starting point; leadership’

Every life has a hierarch with a particular field of influence

Every life is hierarchical

There is life within life, cycles within cycles

Man ‘a microcosm within the macrocosm’



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lives on this living planet, which is part of the living Solar System that is in turn part of a living galaxy, and so on, so too do we, as human individuals, provide a field of influence within which countless ‘child monads’ incarnate and go through their many cycles. We as human beings are, for instance, the hierarch of the beings that make up our bodies: our cells, molecules, and atoms, behind which consciousness also operates and which we refer to as ‘life atoms.’ These beings undergo their growth within our sphere of influence. Hence the saying: the human being is ‘a microcosm within the macrocosm.’

Pythagoras illustrated this explanation of hierarchy with a symbol, an image: the Tetraktys.

It consists of ten dots arranged in an equilateral triangle. You can clearly see the hierarch, the apex, which forms the sphere of influence for each of the dots, each of which in turn represents beings – ‘child monads’ – that are themselves undergoing their evolution within that sphere of influence. But each of those child monads is itself also a parent monad for the beings within *its* sphere of influence. Like every cosmology, the Tetraktys also begins with a One or the One, which itself has its origin in the boundless or the mystical ZERO. As the great Chinese sage Lao Tzu says: from the Tao comes the One, from the One comes the Two, from the Two comes the Three, and from the Three come the ten thousand things.⁽¹⁾

This actually applies ad infinitum. Because you can extend this Tetraktys by assigning two dots below each of the dots at the bottom, and then two dots below those, and so on. And you can also imagine that the top itself is actually the bottom dot of a hierarchy above it. It is a very powerful symbol that you could spend a lifetime studying and meditating on.

Hierarchy of Compassion

Let us return briefly to that sphere of influence. Among the *governing* hierarchies in Nature, the sphere of influence is compassion. The head of that hierarchy is a being who, out of compassion, halts his own progress in order to inspire all who come after him within that hierarchy — a hierarchy in which he himself has already learned everything there is to learn. We also refer to such a leader as the ‘Silent Watcher.’ A Silent Watcher is a being who, after having become practically omniscient through evolution within a particular hierarchy, nevertheless does not continue his evolution, which would lead him to even higher realms. Instead, he remains to help the countless less-advanced beings who follow in his footsteps. He stays to carry out the

task he has taken upon himself: waiting, watching, helping, and inspiring — and he does this, from our human perspective, in the deepest silence of spiritual compassion. Hence the term ‘Silent Watcher.’ Compassion, then, is that guiding field of influence. How can we define this compassion? I will let two important messengers from that Hierarchy of Compassion speak for themselves:

What is compassion?

In her mystical book *The Voice of the Silence*, Madame Blavatsky writes the following:

Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS – eternal Harmony (...); a shoreless universal essence, (...) the law of love eternal.⁽²⁾

It is worth analyzing this statement carefully. First of all: it is ‘no attribute.’ That means it is not something you either have or do not have. In other words, it is something universal — something that is not reserved for just a few people, but rather a state of consciousness that everyone can find within themselves. Although to varying degrees — but we will come back to that later.

It is ‘the LAW of LAWS’: as such, it is actually the most natural thing there is. It is the underlying pattern of behavior of all of Nature, because the laws of nature are patterns of behavior of the beings that collectively make up Nature, from the most highly developed to the least developed. And as we have described, every hierarchy has a Silent Watcher who leads from compassion. The fact that we must explicitly name and distinguish compassion as a law actually says more about our current state or mindset, which is often so far removed from it. People who are truly compassionate will therefore not expect any special recognition for this, because they act in accordance with Nature. What others might see as a sacrifice is only natural to those persons.

‘Eternal harmony’ makes sense if you start from the premise of unity. Because then every action has an effect on the whole, no matter how slight, and sooner or later that whole will respond to that impulse. If you throw a stone into a pond, you will see ripples form, which recede along the shore and return to the spot where the stone hit the water. Acting in accordance with this law of karma – or the law of restoring harmony – therefore essentially means acting in such a way that no restoration of harmony is necessary. It means working in harmony with Nature.

‘Universal essence’: In essence, we are always connected to

the whole. Our deepest universal essence is that whole, just as every spark contains the essence of fire, every drop contains the essence of the ocean, or every ray contains the essence of the sun. The more we connect with that essence, the more we ourselves will become a source of 'love eternal' or compassion. But this is a different kind of love than what we usually mean by the term, such as the love depicted in your average Christmas movie. This is also the subject of the following quote from the fourth Leader of the Theosophical Society: Gottfried de Purucker.

Compassion is Nature's own heart, for compassion is a form of love, and love is harmony and harmony is law, and law is the heart of the Universe.⁽³⁾

It is cosmic love, which the same author also refers to as 'the cement of the Universe.'

And as he also says elsewhere:

Impersonal love is self-forgetfulness and personal love is self-worship.⁽⁴⁾

Something to think about. Which, by the way, does not necessarily imply that personal love is completely wrong. But it is limited. And that love can expand into a more impersonal form of love, as you also see happen in a good relationship, or in a parent-child relationship. A good parent does not just think and act in the best interest of their own child, but also in the general interest to give the child its rightful place within that context. Such a parent therefore places less emphasis on the child's individual achievements and instead looks at how the child behaves within the bigger picture. For example, what responsibilities does the child take on in the classroom? Just as a good teacher divides their attention among all students.

Compassion can also be described as follows: thinking and acting from a *sense of oneness*, from universal, impersonal love, wisdom, and knowledge of the Laws of Nature.

The fact that this involves thinking and acting means that, from our perspective as human beings, it comes down to a conscious choice. A choice based on a particular motive: are you doing something for yourself, or are you doing something for the greater good, without thinking of yourself? It is a motive that depends on the extent to which we identify with the greater whole — the unity to which we are, in fact, inextricably connected.

And that degree of identification — that ability to base our thoughts and actions on a greater unity — can grow out of

an understanding of that unity. For example, we see that some people act based on the interests of their own country, while others act more in the interests of the world as a whole. Consider, for instance, the discussions about our climate. But there are also people who reason not only from the perspective of the interest of humanity, but from that of all living beings. Furthermore, one can take as a starting point not only an external, visible Nature, but also the spiritual life that lies behind this visible reality and assume an even greater unity.

Why do we not always recognize compassion?

But if compassion is the Law of Laws, why do we not always recognize compassion? Because when we look around us in today's world, we unfortunately still see a great deal of discontent, discord, injustice, hatred, and violence. Is harmony truly the heart of the universe, and love the cement of the cosmos? Is this just wishful thinking? Or is there much more to it than that?

To understand the answer going forward, it is necessary to look not so much with the outer eye as with the inner eye. To start from the spiritual background of all life, from the realization that you are one with all that lives. And then you have already grasped part of the answer.

Theosophy speaks of an infinite number of other realms of consciousness, of the fact that everything is alive, of Budhas, Silent Watchers, and the Hierarchy of Compassion. When people hear this for the first time, they are quick to ask: Can you prove it? Can you show it to me?

However, this is a bit too simplistic, because as everyone knows, it does not happen overnight that you start looking at life in a completely different way. It happens gradually. And why? Because we actually only see what has already developed within us, what lives within us, and what we are receptive to.

Just walk into any random lecture hall at the university where a professor is speaking. You will only pick up on the things you are familiar with. In fact, there are probably a lot of words being used that you do not even know the meaning of — and so you cannot form a mental image of them either. We perceive what already fits into our mental picture — what we have already developed. Just think of a pregnant woman who suddenly sees strollers everywhere. Or when you are driving a new car, you suddenly start seeing that same model everywhere on the road.

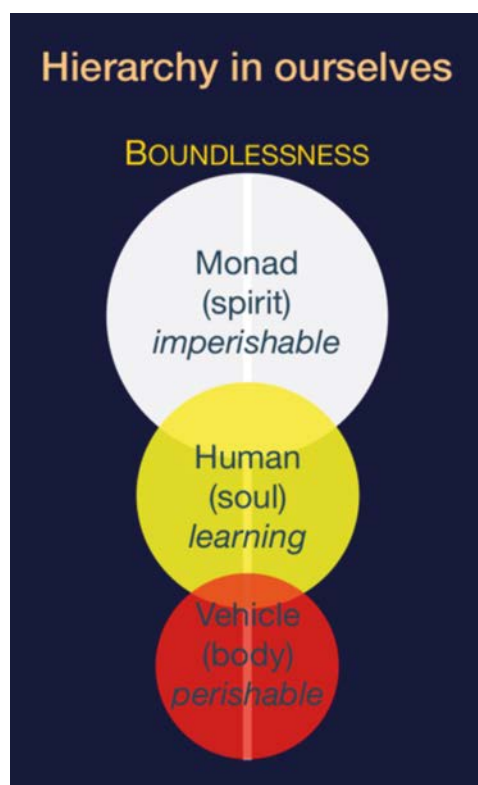
The same applies to our own lives. If you look only at what your external senses perceive — only at this life and the role

you play in it – then you are actually living from the perspective of a single page in what is, in essence, an infinitely long book. At our core, each of us has always been here, will always be here, and every life is just one cycle among countless cycles.

If we base our understanding on just one life, it is as if we are living solely within the reality of a single day. As if everything in that day were new to us, rather than the continuation of all the days that came before – from our birth until now – with all the knowledge and experience we have gained along the way. However, if you do not want to live from day to day, and if you are willing to base your life on the imperishable part within yourself, then you can also begin to recognize yourself in your own grand evolutionary history spanning all those lives! How can we recognize and develop that part within ourselves? To do so, we will reflect on what a human being essentially is, according to Theosophy.

Hierarchy within ourselves

We then look at it from the highest part of our composite nature, as shown in the diagram below.



We have already explained that human beings – indeed, all life – are, in essence, one with the boundless. We are a spark or ray of it. We previously referred to this as the monad, the imperishable part within us.

But as we manifest ourselves now – as the human beings we are – we are actually the continuously learning, evolving being that is learning to express more and more of that boundless monad. That central part expresses our unique *character*, the individual part.

And of course, we need a vehicle in which to move, to learn our lessons in this outer world. That is our perishable part, which we cyclically rebuild life after life using all the living building blocks with which we have worked together before.

So, in fact, people are also a hierarchy, although we are generally not aware of it. Our composition can be subdivided into even more realms of consciousness than this rough three-part division.

In Theosophy we also distinguish a sevenfold division (see illustration on page 86). These are seven principles that can be recognized in every human being – and, in fact, in every form of life (as above, so below) – whether it be a human, a plant, an animal, an atom, or a star.

Every being expresses these principles to a greater or lesser extent, in its own way and within its own realm. The highest of these, *Ātman*, is the most universal or divine. The *Sūkṣma Sarīra* is the physical and most impermanent. But each of these principles is indispensable. As human beings, we are now developing or learning to express the fifth principle from the bottom: the *Manas*, or faculty of thought (the word 'Man' also derives from *Manas*). We humans are thinking, conscious beings. Our learning aspect expresses itself through thinking, through thoughts. And in doing so, we interpret thinking much more broadly than is customary. For that faculty of thought itself can be further divided into seven parts. Seven aspects of thought, which we as humans can also readily recognize.

These seven aspects of thinking are also important because they help us understand the principle of hierarchy: not so much as a system of power, of bosses and superiors, but as different levels of consciousness, ranging from limited to very expansive.

For example, we are familiar with the moments when we identify with our bodies: when we are hungry, cold, or in pain. At the same time, everyone would admit that life would be very limited if we were guided solely by the ups and downs of our bodies. Living merely to survive, to eat — we would call that animalistic rather than human.

Nor do we consider someone who identifies solely with their emotions to be a healthy person. It makes a person unstable. Emotions have their place and purpose, but they should not be the driving force. The same applies to vital-

Hierarchy in ourselves

- Recognizing the hierarchy in ourselves in our thinking (manas)

7 Principles

Âtman
Buddhi
Manas
Kâma
Prâna
Linga Sarîra
Sthûla Sarîra

7 Aspects of thinking

Sense of oneness, inspiration
Insight, ideals, intuition
Intellect
Desire
Vitality
Feeling, emotion
Physical

Widening
Limiting

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ity: the drive to act. If you let yourself be completely controlled by it – if you can never sit still and run around all the time – then we also view this as a disorder. And the same applies to desire. Someone who is controlled by one or more desires, we call an addict. But a dominance of the intellect is not very harmonious either — just think of the cold-hearted scientist who will do anything for his experiments, even if it causes suffering to laboratory animals, for example. This, too, requires understanding or insight nourished by a sense of oneness.

In short, you can already see that in a normal person, all aspects must have their place. This becomes immediately clear when applying the higher aspects. For true insight into the interconnectedness of things is not possible without also taking the other aspects into account. If you want to understand how something works, you also look at its physical side, you empathize through your feelings, you try things out and act on them, you strive for something (namely, understanding), and you use your intellect to reason whether something is logical or correct.

The higher the aspects you want to activate, the more you must master the aspects below them. So you cannot truly achieve a lasting sense of unity or inspiration without that mastery of the other aspects. And at this point in our evolution, the experience of unity is therefore very rare.

One way to describe compassion is eternal harmony. Harmony can also be described as the unification of the high and the low, which also requires self-control. All aspects have their place, but what is the guiding principle in your thinking? Is it the most expansive, or rather something that is limited?

Here, too, it is about what you identify with, where you

aspects of thought can also be recognized in people we regard as role models — people who, on average, are more advanced. Think of the World Teachers: Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tzu, and Plato. If you evaluate their ideas against the framework of the seven aspects of thinking, you will see that the higher aspects are much more clearly present than in the average person: they emphasize the unity of all life and speak of unity with the universal or divine within themselves. They demonstrate understanding and insight into the workings of Nature, present us with ideals, and share wisdom that remains relevant to this day.

If you want to understand Theosophy, it requires us to look more with our inner eye, from the expansive part of our thinking. So not so much to look at this outer world, but to start from the spiritual background of all life, from the awareness that we are one with all that lives. It means not just looking at what you can perceive with your senses in the here and now, but seeing – contemplating – from that part of yourself that has always been and always will be. For example, when we look at life on Earth from the perspective of the development of consciousness and make distinctions between the various kingdoms of nature.

The kingdoms of nature on Earth

What are these kingdoms of nature? Like any realm, planet Earth also forms a hierarchy. It has a summit, a Silent Watcher. That Silent Watcher identifies completely with the entire hierarchy — in this case, with all beings belonging to the living planet Earth.

And now we can also explain why we call that being ‘silent,’ or why that being is silent and invisible from the

can view the sense of oneness as the broadest and most expansive, and the physical aspect as the most limited and limiting. And so, based on this list, you can already see what kind of levels may exist in the development of consciousness.

This is, of course, subject to change and growth and varies from person to person. But discerning between these aspects gives us direction. The higher

perspective of our current limited powers of perception. For we can only form a mental image of it once we have awakened something of it within ourselves. By way of comparison: if a child sees his grandfather reading a book, or sees him lost in thought, he would say that Grandpa is quiet, doing nothing, because he is motionless. Yet at that very moment, Grandpa's mind is bursting with activity.

Thus, the Silent Watcher – the top of the Hierarchy – appears to nearly all beings who are less developed than he as silent, motionless, and seemingly engaged in nothing. Below the Silent Watcher are three distinct realms inhabited by beings also known as 'gods,' 'Dhyāni-Chohans,' or 'Buddhas': different names for realms whose scope of consciousness transcends the human. In fact, 'Dhyāni-Chohan' means 'Lord of Contemplation,' which, just like the name 'Silent Watcher,' is also telling of how we perceive these beings. To us, they appear to be immersed in a state of continuous contemplation.

Then there is the human kingdom. And below that, the beast kingdom, the plant kingdom, the mineral kingdom, and also three elemental kingdoms. For not only above but also below our level of consciousness, there are countless forms of consciousness that manifest in classes invisible to us. We can recognize the workings of the elemental beings – with only a limited elemental consciousness – in natural phenomena such as light, electricity, or weather phenomena that react directly to the influences of beings from the higher kingdoms of nature. This gives rise to the image of an entire Ladder of Life, on which every monad can ascend to the level of the Silent Watcher!

We, as human beings, are now at an interesting turning point, even when viewed from the perspective of compas-

sion — the Law of Laws. The realms of consciousness that, hierarchically speaking, stand above us are self-aware, living expressions of compassion. We humans, through our thinking, have the ability to consciously guide our actions, and we can learn to cooperate consciously with Nature. However, because we do not yet sufficiently recognize these Laws of Nature – and do not sufficiently identify with them – we sometimes consciously or unconsciously act against them. As a result, we also bring a great deal of karmic disharmony upon ourselves, which we will then have to restore, either now or in future cycles. But the meaning of life is to learn to work consciously in harmony with Nature, by translating inspiration from higher realms into the mental realm.

The beings of the natural realm are still in the process of attaining self-consciousness. They are not yet ready to develop the capacity to think; they are without self-awareness and unconsciously follow the patterns of the higher realms, including our own. This immediately shows what a responsibility we, as human beings, have not to hinder but to promote the evolution of those less advanced forms of life.

Our phase in the cycle of human evolution

As human beings – in comparison to the other kingdoms of nature – we are thus at a unique stage in the development of our thinking abilities and the attainment of conscious awareness. This also holds true when we consider the current phase of our human evolution. If you look again at those seven aspects of thinking, they also correspond to phases in our evolution. Remember that every being, including us humans, is essentially a monad – a divine spark – that is boundless and immortal and passes through

countless cycles throughout the Cosmos. As the core of consciousness, that monad learns to function at every level of consciousness through incarnation in the various kingdoms of Nature of a particular hierarchy, such as a living planet.

As monads, we generally pass through one such kingdom of nature during a single embodiment of a planet or planetary life cycle. And just one embodi-

The Kingdoms of Nature on Earth

(Relative) Top of Hierarchy - Silent Watcher

(To us) self-conscious, living expressions of compassion

3 Kingdoms of 'gods' / 'Dhyāni-Chohans' / 'buddhas'

Human Kingdom

*'The one free agent'
Learning to self-consciously cooperate with Nature - transforming inspiration on a mental level*

Beast Kingdom

Vegetable Kingdom

Mineral Kingdom

3 Elemental Kingdoms

Unselfconscious, unconsciously following the patterns of the higher Kingdoms

ment of our planet Earth spans a period of 4 billion 320 million years. During this time, we pass through the human kingdom in various phases or cycles.

Within this framework, there are seven major evolutionary phases called 'Rounds.' Each of these evolutionary phases corresponds to one of the seven aspects. But each of these seven Rounds can also be subdivided into seven phases that we can call the various 'classes.' This gives us a total of forty-nine of these classes. Each of these classes still lasts millions of years, and during that time we go through thousands of cycles of incarnations.

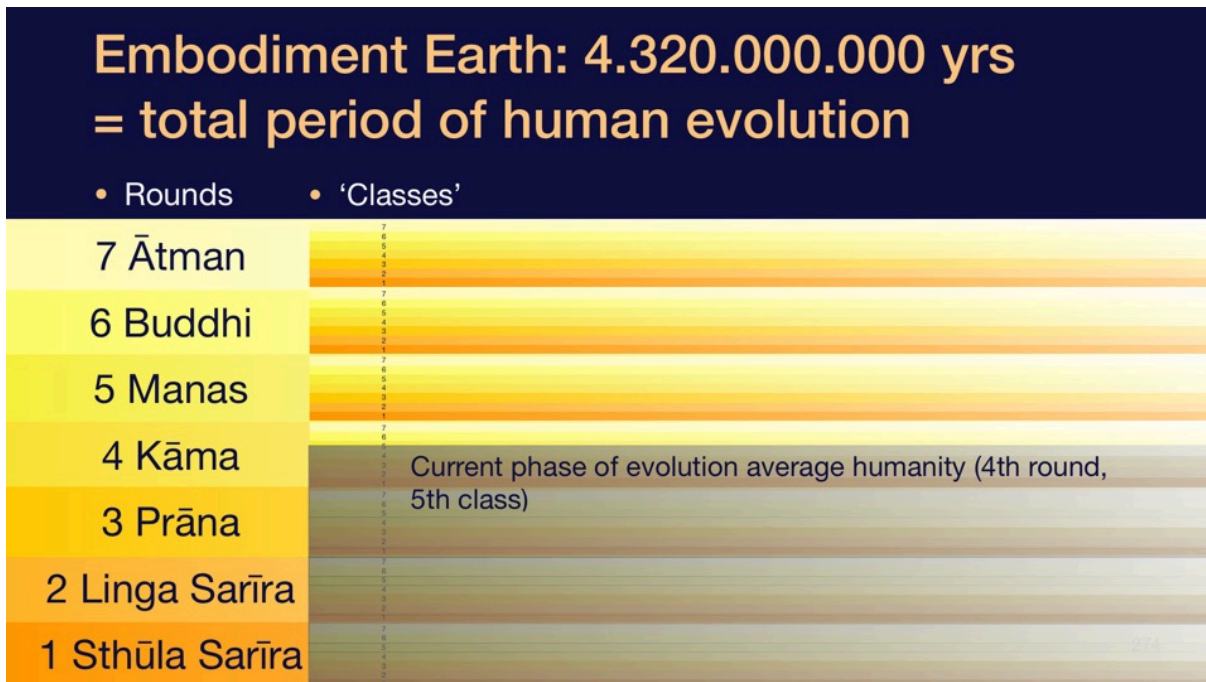
The average human being is currently in the fourth Round and in the fifth class of that Round (see the diagram below). In other words, we are in an intellectual phase of desire-based thinking, or *Kāma-Manas*. As average human beings, we are currently still working to bring desire-based thinking under control. You can see, then, that desire often takes the lead, and the intellect is used to serve that purpose. Just look at how many intelligent people allow themselves to be lured into making money at large corporations without making a substantial contribution to society as a whole. You can see that, as far as our current development is concerned, there is still a long way to go in terms of our sense of oneness.

Karmically, we still have a great deal to process and learn. We must make amends for everything that stems from personal, limited, and selfish actions — in light of the harmony of the whole, in light of the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, or the restoration of harmony.

That law describes how the nature of a consequence is equal to the nature of the action that causes it, and thus the consequence is, in a sense, already inherent in the action. If our motive is not pure or selfless, we will have to restore it in the light of unity, in this life or the next. When you consider how much action is still motivated by self-interest, it stands to reason that we still have quite a few more incarnations ahead of us. With this brief explanation of our stage of evolution as learning human beings, we are now better equipped to answer the question of why we do not always see compassion.

We are making ourselves blind to compassion

Because, returning to the question: why do we see so little compassion when it is the core of the Universe, the Law of Laws? We repeat: first, because we see only what we have developed within ourselves. And second, we can now add that we humans are still limited thinkers. We do not yet



In the human kingdom, the monad develops the faculty of thought, or *Manas*, from within itself. The diagram above shows the seven major phases of human evolution from bottom to top (the 'Rounds'), each of which is subdivided into seven sub-phases ('classes'). The seven phases correspond to the seven principles of our faculty of thinking, which are listed on the left in their Sanskrit names. The section marked in gray indicates the current stage of evolution at which the average human being now stands. Most people are currently in the fourth Round, in which *Kāma* — or the desire-principle of our thinking, or *Manas* — is being developed. Furthermore, we are in the fifth class of the fourth Round. And within this class, the intellectual — or the *Manas* aspect — of *Kāma* is specifically developed or brought under control.

think with such conscious awareness or such breadth. The average person is quite ignorant about the Laws of Nature and therefore often acts out of ignorance.

We mainly see things with our physical eyes and from a short-term perspective — from the vantage point of a single lifetime here on Earth. We still need to learn to see with a more inner vision — from the perspective of eternity, cyclicality, and karma. If you do not base your understanding on this law, you may react emotionally to many things that seem to happen by chance, or you may simply accept them passively without giving them further thought. You might then be less inclined to look within yourself when someone reacts to you in a certain way.

If you do take this law as your starting point, you can begin to look for patterns. You will then assume that there is a connection to be found in everything you experience, knowing that nothing happens to you that you have not yourself caused at some point. That circumstances and others' reactions are, in one way or another, part of you — that you have attracted them yourself. You will then be more inclined to explore which characteristics underlie certain events and also which characteristics drive how you react or would like to react. If you proceed from the unity of life, you will find that you approach your fellow human beings differently. If you are actively reflecting on certain ideals, such as brotherhood, you will also be more likely to see opportunities to bring them to life. You will see what you have developed within yourself and what you can still develop. These universal ideas are slowly but surely coming to life within you, and you will increasingly bring them to fruition.

Secondly, we have explained that, as human beings with relatively free thought, we are also able to act relatively freely — including against Nature — out of ignorance of the Laws of Nature. This naturally leads to disharmony, as we are currently experiencing, for example, through the climate disasters we have brought upon ourselves. The cause of this disharmony, therefore, lies in our own actions, based on free will and our own thinking. This is because we are so focused on our desires, and often on selfish, lower desires: becoming rich, living in luxury, self-interest, and so on. This is what blinds us to compassion. But we could already have moved beyond this stage. For despite our limited focus in the evolution of thought, there is the continuous inspiration from the Hierarchy of Compassion that we can draw upon. And we see, just as with any group, that some do make use of it and have become forerunners ahead of the average crowd.

Forerunners

For example, there are people who are already a whole cycle — or millions of years — ahead of us in evolution. They have developed and mastered virtually all sub-aspects of thinking. They live consistently within the insightful, or *buddhic-manasic*, part of their thinking. As a result, they are also far more capable than the average person of directing their consciousness toward more inner realms to gain knowledge and experience there. These include the realms we pass through during the cycle of life and death, where the average person remains completely unconscious (more on this in the article about Mystery Schools in this issue). Within the various ranks of these human forerunners, there is also a human Buddha active: a person who has permanently developed, at least in part, the *Buddhi* aspect of thinking. He is a so-called Sixth Rounder, and it is actually a mystery how such a being could already exist in this fourth Round. At present, he is also the one who leads the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.

The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion

This Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion is the human 'branch' of the Hierarchy of Compassion on Earth. It consists of those pioneering individuals who consciously choose to work for compassion out of compassion. It is these forerunners who have united in a collaborative effort. These individuals, who attune their thinking to the unity of life and fully master the limited aspect of themselves, are known, among other things, as 'Teachers,' 'Masters,' or 'Mahātmas.'

According to Gottfried de Purucker, "(...) the Great Brotherhood of the Masters or Mahātmans is not an arbitrary institution, i.e., not an artificial arrangement, which the Masters themselves have in different ages brought about in the world," and "(...) we know but little of the immense love, the divine impulses of compassion, which sway the Souls of those who form this Hierarchy of Light. They have made the Great Renunciation"⁽⁵⁾

In short, no one has an arbitrary place there, as a link in the chain of wisdom:

1. The Silent Watcher of the Earth / the Mahā-Chohan
2. Teachers / Masters / Mahātmas
3. Disciples / Chelas
4. Probationary Disciples / Lay Chelas
5. Good, unselfish people

We will explain this list from the bottom up.

Fortunately, we see countless examples in this world of good, unselfish people who are working to make the world

a better place. They work toward an ideal; they protect, help, or educate others, and they do not let anything, or anyone stop them. No matter how much the world resists them, they always find the strength to carry on and never give up. These people can be found everywhere, and they are an inspiration to those around them. Any person who acts with compassion, out of a selfless motive, can – whether consciously or unconsciously – be a link in the work of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. If they do this over a longer period of time or more frequently, and if they voluntarily commit themselves to the ideal of universal brotherhood, we also refer to them as probationary students or lay *chelas*.

But a person is only truly an accepted disciple, or *chela*, once he takes a vow to dedicate his life to the service of humanity. He is someone who has repeatedly proven his ability to serve consistently. At some point, he will also meet his Master. And his Master can train him to endure certain trials. Trials designed to help the *chela* overcome the lower aspects within himself and become, more and more, a living expression of compassion.

The Teachers, Masters, or Mahātmās have already undergone these trials. They are at home in the inner realms and are therefore also the initiators and revelators who can initiate the *chelas* (see also the article on Mystery Schools). In a sense, they guide their students through an accelerated process of evolution so that they, too, may become Masters, enabling them in turn to fulfill a role in the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion to protect, heal, and inspire humanity.

At the head of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion stands the Silent Watcher of humanity, who is also the Silent Watcher of planet Earth.⁽⁶⁾ He is known as the *Mahā-Chohan*, the head of the Masters, the initiator of the Masters: a being who, for us, is the embodiment of pure compassion. He is the wisest person on Earth. Just as these human examples clearly identify with something far vaster than themselves – with humanity or the world as a whole – you can imagine that there are even vaster realms of consciousness, that there are beings who have thus already evolved beyond human consciousness and who identify with life that extends into the Cosmic.

The Hierarchy of Compassion

For example, there is a Silent Watcher for every hierarchy or cycle. There is a Cosmic Silent Watcher for our Solar System. There is a Silent Watcher for every planet. There is a Silent Watcher for every Kingdom of Nature on that

planet. And there is a Silent Watcher for every evolutionary phase of every Kingdom of Nature.

Consider, too, the seven major evolutionary phases spanning hundreds of millions of years, each of which consists of seven sub-phases lasting tens of millions of years. Each of these phases is guided – both initiated and brought to a close – by a Silent Watcher.

Inspiration from the Hierarchy of Compassion is always there, and the wisdom also lies, in potential, within each of us. But we must bring it to life within ourselves, both individually and collectively. And that is a matter of development, of learning.

All Silent Watchers work together within the Hierarchy of Compassion. They can be seen as transformers of Cosmic compassion, which flows through each link in the chain and thus inspires every area of life throughout every life cycle.

As Gottfried de Purucker says: “Life is a school and men are the pupils in that school, and in that school there are teachers.” And he adds: “In these few words you have the key to the whole situation and to the policy of the Great Lodge.”⁽⁷⁾

Life is a school of consciousness that extends into infinity! Just as naturally as we raise our own children, and just as naturally as we feel the responsibility to educate children so they can stand on their own in society, so naturally do beings from broader realms of consciousness make their wisdom and compassion available. Life is a school, and for every stage, for every class, there is a teacher who instructs the students.

And so, under the guidance of the Silent Watcher of the Earth and humanity, impulses of wisdom have been bestowed for millions of years, ushering in cycles of varying lengths. This occurs at the beginning of the great eras, or *Yugas*, which range from 432,000 years (for the *Kali Yuga* in which we now live) to well over four million years; at the start of the precession cycle of about 26,000 years, during which the Earth’s axis completes its circuit through the zodiac; and also at the start of a messianic cycle — one-twelfth of that cycle, lasting 2,160 years; and there is also an impulse every last quarter of a century.

The Hierarchy of Compassion operates worldwide and at all times. Thus, every people, every country, has its own branch and its own Master. This is not to say exactly according to the national borders as we know them today. What matters is this: there is leadership worldwide and at all times. Not based on power, but on compassion. Not based on coercion, but on inspiration. Life is a school;

people are pupils in that school, and in that school there are teachers. This is the policy.

In fact, inspiration is always there, and a helping hand is extended to us, but we must reach out and take it. And that is primarily a matter of mindset. Are we willing to live according to the guidance that the representatives of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion have given us time and again?

The rules are simple, and we all know them. Love. Forgive. Be honest. Be fair. Speak the truth. Forget yourself. Be wise. Be compassionate. If we are able to follow these rules, we ourselves can be a link in the Hierarchy of Compassion.

How does the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion work?

The members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion recognize Universal Brotherhood as a fact and live by it. Out of compassion, they have chosen to dedicate their lives to all living beings. In doing so, they give up their own evolution. Paradoxically, however, their own evolution is first accelerated as a result. For, through the Hierarchy of Compassion, the members help one another develop the wisdom they need to fulfill their mission.

This means they always work together. For example, it is said of the *chelas* – the disciples of a Master of Wisdom and Compassion – that they must first ‘learn to work together like the fingers of one hand.’ They must learn to function as a close-knit team, as a single unit.

And this applies just as much to the Masters themselves. The founding of the Theosophical Society originated initially with two Masters who proposed their disciples, H.P. Blavatsky and H.S. Olcott, as potential founders of the Theosophical Society and sought permission for this from their superior, the Mahā-Chohan. He agreed to the experiment with some caution, wondering whether the world was truly ready for it.⁽⁸⁾

Several Masters were involved from the very beginning. Many *chelas* of the same Master were also instructed to support Blavatsky. Much was left to the *chelas*’ own judgment. This is entirely consistent with the Lodge’s approach to esoteric education, which teaches students to stand on their own feet as quickly as possible. As one Master writes: “Brave soldiers need neither orders nor constant encouragement.”⁽⁹⁾

That is because the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion always operates in accordance with the Laws of Nature. Its members act in harmony with cyclical patterns and karma and are known as ‘Servants of the Law.’ This means they

will never interfere with the karma of others. In fact, doing so would only lead to more complicated karma and would delay the restoration of harmony. Think of it like two people who are arguing. You cannot resolve it for them unless they take the initiative themselves. At most, you can mediate, but at some point, they will have to sincerely shake hands again.

That is why the members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion do not coerce others. They do not impose anything, but rather inspire. They do not force others by using abilities that those people do not yet possess. They use their abilities only to protect people from external forces that we humans are not yet aware of. And they try to heal by providing guidance at the right moments, enabling people to find their way back on the right path.

They also protect by passing on certain knowledge and abilities only to those who are ready for them. Because knowledge is power. And this requires discipline. After all, could the average person bring themselves to always act selflessly? Even someone above average would struggle with that. Only when people have proven they possess the right mindset – and have been tested in this regard – can they handle more knowledge. And the members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion have already given us more than enough knowledge to work on developing this mindset. As average people, that will keep us going for lifetimes to come. This allows us to add another answer to the question of why we may not always see or recognize compassion: because the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion will always respect our free will, will never impose anything, but will only inspire. The more we align our will with the spiritual will of these beings, muster the discipline to control the selfishness within ourselves and replace it with a mindset of selflessness and compassion to serve our fellow human beings, the more we will recognize the work of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, and it will become a living reality for us.

With all the wisdom they have been given, the members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion also renounce their own progress. For with everything they offer us, they become co-responsible, which means they commit themselves to matters they have long since overcome. This, of course, also gives us – as recipients – the responsibility not to use what we receive for our own gain, but to pass it on as well and thus use it for the common good.

The members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion work by unveiling, revealing, and initiating. Through their spiritual development, they are able to enter the more

inner realms. These are realms of which we, as ordinary people, remain unaware — such as during sleep or death. The Masters are able to remain conscious during these processes and thus gain firsthand knowledge and experience. With this, they can also help others take their first steps into these realms on their own. That is what takes place during initiations.

Finally, the members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion serve as links to the kosmic Hierarchy of Compassion. For even the Chief, the Leader, the Hierarch of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion — the *Mahā-Chohan* — is still a human being, although, from our perspective, a kind of god-man, a *mānushya-buddha*, the most universal human being we can imagine.⁽¹⁰⁾

Is this not an incredibly hopeful teaching? So we are never alone. The outstretched hand is always there. But we do have to reach out and take it ourselves! The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion does not operate on the basis of favors; it does not respond to bribery or to occasional selfish prayers.

A link in the Hierarchy of Compassion

Since the dawn of humanity — for millions of years — the Hierarchy of Compassion has been the source of unceasing inspiration, wisdom, and compassion. They continuously pass on *Theosophia*, the divine wisdom. Over the past 150 years, Theosophy has been the embodiment of this inspiration of wisdom and compassion.

Compassion is boundless; it is something that can continue to grow and that we can also cultivate. It arises when we set ourselves aside and place ourselves at the service of humanity. You will then suddenly discover that you possess unexpected strengths — that you are capable of more than you ever imagined. You will feel as though you are an instrument for something greater. A link in the great work of the Hierarchy of Compassion. We can practice compassion on every level. By focusing on the greatest whole we can imagine — the broadest unity with which we can identify — and working toward it, and in that Work forgetting ourselves.

And if we are able to do that — even if, at first, it is only in fleeting moments — then we are part of the Hierarchy of Compassion. It sometimes sounds like a sacrifice when you talk about giving everything for the life around you. But what could be more meaningful than that? What could be more fulfilling than that? And the more we do this, the more it becomes a habit, a part of our character, the more we will also experience the power of the Hierarchy of

Compassion within ourselves, so that we may ultimately take our place within it as a connecting link.

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The awakening of humanity

Key thoughts

» The monad, the core of every being, works in collaboration with less advanced monads, which form the vehicle through which the monad can express itself.

» The monad passes through all stages of the development of consciousness, from the most elementary to the most divine.

» All beings always evolve in interconnectedness. Inspiration flows from more advanced beings to less advanced ones, so that they can pursue their evolution independently.

» Our ability to develop an ever broader, wiser, and more compassionate sense of responsibility is what makes us human.

» The Mānasaputras – higher-developed spiritual beings – have awakened our thinking and, with it, our self-awareness.

» As the Mānasaputras did, so too is the thinking of children awakened by their parents and teachers.

There are many myths and stories about the awakening of humanity: Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and thereby ignited humanity's thinking; Adam and Eve, who ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and thereby became conscious of themselves. What is the meaning of these stories? Was there a single specific moment of humanity's awakening? What exactly happened, and how can we still recognize it today?

In this second article of this special issue on the Hierarchy of Compassion, we focus on the awakening of humanity. The importance of this topic cannot be overstated. It concerns the history of each of us, what makes us human, but also how we came into being. And let us say right from the start: according to Theosophy, this was not merely a creation by a god existing outside of ourselves, beginning with a single human being. Nor did we, as human beings, come into being because human consciousness happened to emerge from the evolution of the ape.

In addition to these two rather dominant – but highly incomplete – theories, there is a need for greater understanding of theosophical teachings, which, moreover, encompass, integrate, and provide depth to both the symbolism underlying one theory and the scientific facts serving as the basis for the other. And which, we believe, offer much greater meaning.

Theosophical teachings not only offer us greater insight into our origins and where we stand today, but also provide clear guidance on how we can continue our evolution.

Similar myths from around the world with the same symbolism

In many religions and traditions, we find explanations for the origin of humankind. These are often myths — stories full of symbolism. Usually, there is already a human-like figure, sometimes made of clay or dust, but still mindless, without reason, and without self-awareness. Life must still be breathed into him; he must be awakened.

Sometimes the gods do not seem to be entirely satisfied. Zeus wanted to destroy early humankind, but Prometheus, the Titan – a kind of demigodlike giant from Greek mythology – prevented this. In the end, Zeus still sent a flood upon the

world.^(1,2) Prometheus foresaw this and advised his son Deucalion to build a ship. This allowed him to survive the flood. The ship came to rest on Mount Parnassus.

Does this sound familiar? There are countless such flood stories around the world. The best known to most of us here in the West is, of course, the one from Genesis. The Judeo-Christian god Jehovah also wanted to get rid of the first humans, the descendants of Adam. Only after a flood did he allow one of them – Noah, whom he deemed fit – to repopulate the Earth. He, too, came to rest with his ark on a mountain, Mount Ararat. These are symbolic stories with multiple meanings. The same applies to the myth in which Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give it to humankind, which we will discuss in greater detail later. Just like the story of the Flood, there is not just one version of this, for there are a striking number of stories worldwide featuring the symbolism of a god, hero, or other being who steals fire: from Asia to North and South America, from Africa to Oceania, and within Europe, stories in Germanic folklore and from the Georgian Caucasus.⁽³⁾

One Wisdom underlying all expressions

Why the same symbolism over and over again? Surely it is not really about fire stolen from the gods, is it? Just look around you and see how often forest fires occur — unfortunately. And how often lightning strikes. And there has been volcanic activity for as long as the Earth has existed. So early humans must have already known about fire. So what could the real meaning of this myth be?

The same applies, for example, to the parable of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, prompted to do so by a serpent. Dogmatic adherents of the Christian religion have very often tried to present their version of the story as the only true one. They began to take these stories very literally and came to believe in that interpretation. Independent thinkers turned away from these dogmas and, through science among other means, brought to light facts that were incompatible with the literal interpretation of the religious account. At some point, however, this led to a dogmatic belief: that a materialistic, scientific explanation is the only valid perspective, thereby dismissing global, universal symbolism as mere fiction. Meanwhile, the true scientist recognizes that we know very little for certain and that, at the very least, multiple theories or interpretations are possible based on the same facts.

There is only one Reality, so there can only be one Truth. Therefore, either one of the symbolic stories is correct and

the rest are not, as the devout followers of every religion claim. Or they are all false — they are all fabrications — as the adherents of scientific materialism claim. Or, and this is the most reasonable view in our opinion: the various myths all convey a fragment of one and the same reality, but sometimes using the same symbolism and sometimes slightly different symbolism. Consider the Eastern parable of the blind monks and the elephant. Each of the blind monks is holding a different part of the elephant: one holds its tail and claims it is a rope, another holds a leg and says it is a tree trunk, and a third holds its trunk, mistaking it for a snake — they all have a piece of reality. So why not investigate what lies behind those observations? And that is precisely what Theosophy teaches: that behind all those myths and stories lies a single wisdom, a single source of knowledge, which you might also call Theosophia — the wisdom of the gods or divine wisdom.



And that wisdom offers a very logical explanation: namely, that each of these myths has something to tell us, but should not be taken literally. They describe a certain reality using figurative imagery. If you understand the symbolism they contain, and what it represents, and then compare the stories — which often use the same symbols — they all confirm one another and point to one and the same underlying wisdom and truth. Moreover, this explanation turns out not to contradict scientific facts! This article is not intended to provide a comprehensive summary of how H.P. Blavatsky elaborates on this in *The Secret Doctrine*, with all its symbolism and connections to science, nor of how later Theosophical teachers such as Gottfried de Purucker developed these ideas. Instead, we outline the process, offer some pointers, and hope that this provides new perspectives and inspires you to continue exploring the subject on your own.⁽⁴⁾

In this article, we will first consider the question: What

makes us human? After all, ‘awakening’ implies bringing something to life that already exists. What, then, is it that awakens within us and makes us truly human? However, to understand the myths surrounding the awakening of humanity and to answer the question of what makes us human, it is necessary to have a general understanding of the process of human evolution as described in Theosophy.

The evolution of consciousness

The major distinction between the doctrine of creation, on the one hand, and the theory of evolution, on the other, is that Theosophy teaches the evolution of essentially boundless consciousness, which seeks to express itself more and more fully.⁽⁵⁾ ‘Boundless’ means that consciousness has always existed and always will. It is therefore not created, nor is consciousness, in its essence, limited to embodiment in any particular vehicle. However, consciousness cannot exist without a vehicle and will always be subject to limitations in its manifestation, just as a driver is dependent on the quality of a car. The perspective of consciousness implies that it is not the physical forms that evolve. It is consciousness that unfolds or ‘unwinds’ from within – the literal meaning of ‘evolution’ – with the vehicle, the physical, following the development of consciousness. The monad – our core of consciousness, the spark of eternity or divine spark – works in collaboration with other monads that are at a less advanced stage of expression; these monads form the vehicle through which the monad can express itself (see also the insert on the Monad).

The monad springs forth from the boundless and, through this collaboration, unfolds its latent capacities, passing through all stages of the development of consciousness in the various realms of nature, from the most elementary to the most divine. That is why the Kabbalists say that “the stone becomes a plant, an animal, a human being, a spirit, and the spirit becomes a god.” This is a concept we also find in Sufism, the esoteric tradition of Islam. And in fact, we must view this independently of forms, for it is essentially the monad – the spark – that expresses itself more and more fully by passing through the forms of the natural kingdoms: the mineral stage, the plant stage, the animal stage, the human stage, the spiritual stage, and the divine stage.

But because everything proceeds in cycles, each stage of evolution involves a so-called ‘descending arc’ of material orientation for the sake of the evolution of matter from spirit, after which a so-called ‘ascending arc’ of spiritual orientation begins again, moving back upward for the sake

of the evolution of spirit from matter.

This is how the evolution of the monad works. Its ray manifests itself in realms that are hierarchically related to one another. Through all these hierarchies of consciousness, it gains experience and thus becomes a Self-conscious divine being. This is the universal picture of the evolution of consciousness.

The Monad

Monads are described as ‘sparks of Eternity.’⁽⁶⁾ They work together with other monads, whereby the monads that are more advanced in expressing their infinite powers enter into a collaboration through emanation (attraction and activation) with monads that are less advanced. The latter form the building blocks for the higher monads and represent the lower (material) aspect of those higher monads. This creates a collaboration between the two. What we call spirit and matter thus essentially consists of monads with the same core powers; the spiritual aspect consists of monads that express more powers than those of the material aspect. According to Theosophy, spirit and matter are essentially the same. They are monads that differ only in their degree of expression.

The evolution of human consciousness

The evolution of human consciousness proceeds, as above, so below, in the same way, but on a smaller scale in the human realm. Although ‘small’ is relative, because this entire process takes a considerable amount of time. In principle, it can be completed within one embodiment of the Earth, which, according to Theosophy, takes 4 billion 320 million years.

Although the monad is essentially boundless, as it gains experience in the Human Kingdom, it is referred to as the ‘human’ monad. And it is at this stage that self-consciousness is developed. This occurs around the lowest point of the descending arc, because by then – under the guidance of the monad – the physical vehicle has been built up to the point where it is ready to express the spiritual. And it is precisely at this point that the human can awaken.

Is this purely an individual matter? No, we always evolve and grow in connection with others. And moreover, there is always help! From the Hierarchy of Compassion, which is always present to inspire, as can also be read in the first article of this issue. There is always inspiration from beings who work on the Side of Light. They pause their own

evolution to inspire others to develop. Just as educators, parents and teachers in a sense temporarily pause their own evolution to assist their children in their evolution, so that once they reach adulthood they can move upward independently. The Hierarchy of Light or Compassion does the same within the great cycles of life. The various kingdoms of nature also play a role in this process.

In every life cycle of this planet, every embodiment of this Earth, we have the opportunity to perfect evolution within a kingdom of nature and thus enter the next kingdom of nature. We repeat: “The stone becomes a plant, a plant becomes an animal, an animal becomes a human, a human becomes a spirit, and the spirit becomes a god.” Although every being activates its own abilities from within and thus evolves independently, our evolution in the light of unity is also a matter of cooperation. Beings in more advanced kingdoms of nature inspire those in less advanced kingdoms to develop their latent abilities.

For example, the Secret Doctrine speaks of a time when the gods walked the earth and mingled freely with mortals, just as the Old Testament says of Enoch.⁽⁷⁾ A time before the divine beings became invisible to us in the outer realm. It was these Dhyāni-Chohans – who themselves had been human beings in Earth’s previous embodiment – that inspired us and awakened the human within us. We will return to this in greater detail later; for now, let’s focus on the big picture: how cooperation exists between more advanced consciousnesses and beings who are less advanced. As briefly put by Gottfried de Purucker, the fourth Leader of the Theosophical Society: “Life is a school and men are the pupils in that school, and in that school there are teachers. In these few words you have the key to the whole situation and to the policy of the Great Lodge.”⁽⁸⁾

And by ‘the Great Lodge,’ De Purucker refers to the Lodge

of Wisdom and Compassion, the branch of the Hierarchy of Compassion among humanity here on Earth.

Let us now return briefly to the question: what makes human beings human?

Human beings are thinkers

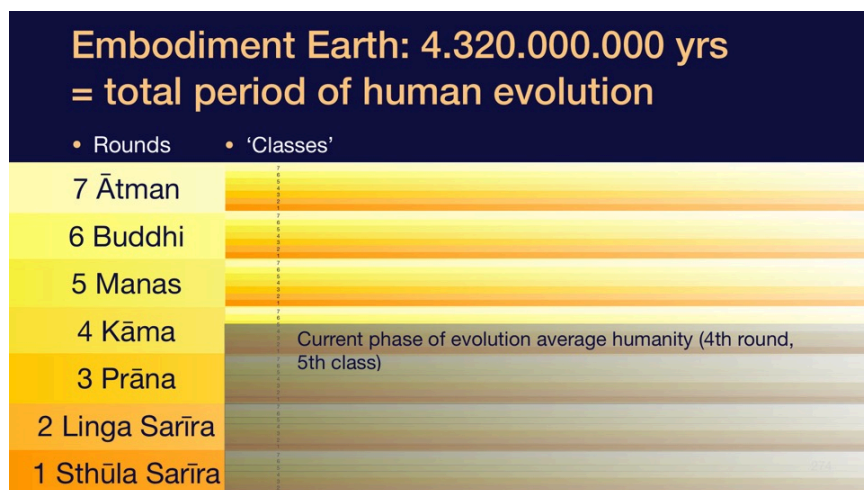
As explained in the previous article, every being – including human beings – is composite. We are learning to express something of the boundless potential of the monad. And we have explained that, at this moment, we do this primarily through the fifth principle from the bottom of the seven principles: the *Manas* principle, or the power of thinking. That power of thinking enables us to perceive thoughts. We think; we form mental images. We can reflect on them. And we can direct our thinking.

For that *Manas* principle – that faculty of thought – is itself sevenfold, and within it we can distinguish seven aspects of thinking; ranging from the most limited to the broadest we can imagine. And if we learn to distinguish these aspects of thinking clearly, then we can also learn to direct our thinking. For the more we direct our thinking toward the higher, more expansive aspects, the more the other aspects beneath them will also find their proper place.

In other words: the most harmonious thinker makes use of all aspects, but is guided by the highest one, which in fact encompasses all the others as well. But as we concluded in the previous article, it is not surprising that when we look around us, we do not always see examples of broad or expansive thinking: many people do not think consciously, but rather out of habit, and are still not very familiar with their higher nature.

This has to do with our own stage in evolution. We have explained that in principle such a monad can undergo the development of consciousness, characteristic of a kingdom

of nature, over the course of one embodiment of the planet, a period lasting 4 billion 320 million years. In other words, we humans can evolve into universal human beings during that time. This process unfolds in seven major phases, analogous to the seven principles. In Theosophy, we refer to these phases – each lasting hundreds of millions of years – as the Rounds. And each Round, in turn, consists of seven subphases of tens of millions of years of evolution that we can call ‘classes,’ which also correspond



to the seven principles, but as subdivisions.

And as you can see in the image on page 96, we are actually only just past the halfway point in our evolution. Average human thinking, therefore, has not progressed much beyond its Kāma subaspect — that is, desire-based thinking. So, in reality, we are still only half-human. We still have a lot to learn. But we can be optimistic, because the glass is just a little more than half full — at least for the average person, setting aside any laggards and forerunners. And thanks to Theosophy, which the Hierarchy of Compassion continually makes available to us, we can also learn to discern within ourselves how to direct our own evolution.

How human are we?

In the diagram ‘Hierarchy within ourselves’ on page 82 of the previous article, we see the human being depicted with his spiritual, mental, and vehicle parts. As human beings — as a learning middle part situated between the imperishable and the perishable parts — we have the choice to identify with either of the other two parts. This is, in fact, the self-consciousness that has awakened with the development of our thinking: the potential to identify with either this or that aspect. To form a mental image of yourself — of how you want to be, how you want to act, and for what purpose — and thereby ultimately become that person.

Is that image of yourself based primarily on your outward appearance? On how you are perceived by others? On the role you play in this life — wanting a certain house, a certain partner, a certain appearance, a certain salary? This is, in fact, a limited and limiting image. Because it is merely identifying with the ‘I am I’ — the personality in this outward life — which imagines itself to be separate from others. In fact, you end up fixating solely on what you see — which may seem real on the surface, but is actually the most illusory thing of all, because it is transitory. For everything material we possess — including our bodies and our personalities — is transitory. And that is especially true of status, fame, or the pleasure we derive from them.

You can also identify with the individual behind the personality or persona. ‘Persona’ literally means ‘mask.’ Behind the mask is the actor, who takes on a new role in every life. This is the true human being. This human individual cherishes universal, compassionate thoughts and ideals and cultivates wisdom, truth, and compassion in light of the unity of life. It is our reincarnating self. In those moments when you forget yourself and act selflessly, you identify with it and feel increasingly at one with everything else.

What makes a human being human?

So now we are a little past the halfway point of our evolution. And this is also reflected in the duality of the average human being’s thinking. We recognize both perspectives within ourselves, but we still oscillate between limited personal thinking and truly human, compassionate thinking. Yet with this development of our self-consciousness, we have grasped the most essential characteristic of what makes us human, in the words of De Purucker: “The steadily growing sense of moral and intellectual responsibility.”⁽⁹⁾

This is what truly makes us human: our ability to learn, grow, and develop an ever-broader, wiser, and more compassionate sense of responsibility. And with that, we can also take responsibility for our own growth and evolution. We can direct our thinking and identify with an ever-broader part of the One Life. And the more we recognize and nurture this human aspect within ourselves, the faster we grow and become more human and more compassionate toward others.

With this, we have clarified what makes us human. We can now turn to how the awakening of humanity — the awakening of this growing sense of moral and intellectual responsibility — took place. And why it happened eighteen million years ago.

The awakening of humanity

How did humanity’s awakening take place eighteen million years ago? We have previously described how the monad gains experience in the various kingdoms of nature and thus evolves. We have also explained that the beings in each kingdom of nature have the role of helping their fellow beings in the kingdoms below them to undergo their evolution.

Semi-divine beings from the realm of the Dhyāni-Chohans have helped humanity awaken. If you are hearing this for the first time, it may sound a bit like a fairy tale. But before you judge, try first to recognize the logic, the universality, and also the ethical value of this concept, based on the principles of boundlessness, cyclicity, and self-directed growth within a hierarchical cooperative framework.

In the previous article, we considered the concept of hierarchy as a layering of levels of consciousness or spheres of life guided by a Hierarchy — the First, the Leader, the starting point — who inspires the entire hierarchy through a specific sphere of influence. Now there is an important concept we would like to add to this, regarding the origin of such a

hierarchy: namely, the process of emanation, which literally means ‘flowing out’ or outpouring. This means that the sphere of influence emanating from the Hierarchy exerts a certain magnetic attraction on less advanced beings sharing the same characteristics. These beings then enter into collaboration within that hierarchy, within that sphere of influence, and in turn, with their own spheres of influence, attract beings below them, and so on.

Such was also the impulse of the so-called ‘Mānasaputras,’ literally the ‘Sons of the Mind.’ It was the ‘descent’ of these semi-divine beings that awakened humanity eighteen million years ago. We will explain this further below, but to begin with, let’s look at how this story was told in well-known myths, along with some insights to help us better understand their symbolism.

The awakening of humanity in mythology

Let us start with the best-known story here in the West, from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. It tells how Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, tempted to do so by a serpent. Now, the tree is an age-old symbol of Sacred or Hidden Knowledge or Wisdom, often guarded by serpents or dragons. Just as in Greek mythology, a dragon guards the tree bearing the golden apples of the Hesperides. And the ‘lush trees’ and vegetation of Mount Meru in Eastern traditions are, in turn, guarded by a serpent.

Here, the serpents or dragons represent the Sages or Teachers who both protect and spread Wisdom. Could the serpent in the story of Adam and Eve really have had evil intentions? The golden apples from the Tree of the Hesperides were a wedding gift from Gaia to Zeus and Hera, and granted immortality to whoever ate them. And eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil does indeed mean gaining insight into both good and evil, but it also signifies the end of ignorance. Not necessarily a negative thing.

Of course, it also refers to what we mentioned earlier as what makes a human being human: the development of thinking, which implies moral responsibility; the recognition of good and evil within oneself — that is, the limited part of us that is primarily self-centered and seeks to pursue its own interests, as opposed to the reincarnating part of us, which is conscientious, intuitive, wise, compassionate, and selfless. Awakening is the moment we become self-conscious, which is also depicted in the story when Adam and Eve suddenly see themselves as naked and begin to feel ashamed in front of one another. Through the Wisdom of

the Serpent, Adam and Eve suddenly become aware of themselves and thus awaken from their paradisiacal, child-like state. And the serpent is punished for this.

Prometheus

The same happened to Prometheus.



Above, you can see Prometheus stealing fire from the gods to give it to humanity, depicted in this fascinating ceiling painting from the Louvre. Below, in the center, you can see a human receiving the torch. Above him on the left is Prometheus, and above Prometheus on the right is the goddess Athena, the goddess of wisdom and peace who also represents higher thought, born from the head of Zeus. On the left are the Fates, the spinners of destiny who together represent Karma. And at the bottom right is Cronus, holding a sickle. He represents time. Cronus is also snatching a golden ring from the man, perhaps a symbol of the Golden Age, the golden cycle of Satya-Yuga, or the paradisiacal state. There are a striking number of parallels between the ancient Greek story of Prometheus, the Judeo-Christian story of Paradise, and stories from other traditions, such as the Norse, Mesopotamian, and Eastern traditions. For example, there are parallels in how the story unfolds with the Deluge, as we mentioned earlier.

‘Prometheus’ literally means ‘he who knows in advance, foresees, or sees into the future,’ from the Greek *pro metis*, meaning ‘fore-knowledge’ or ‘fore-thought.’⁽¹⁰⁾

Of course, we should not take the fire he stole and gave to humanity literally, as we already mentioned at the beginning of this article. Prometheus is the bringer of intellectual and spiritual fire to humankind. He represents the collective of semi-divine beings who kindled the power of thinking and the divine flame of self-awareness within humanity. They gave us light, reason, and understanding, and opened our eyes. We became self-aware, and just as when we ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, responsibility became our lot.

The beings represented by Prometheus and the serpent from the story of Paradise are also referred to in Theosophy by the term 'Mānasaputras.'

Mānasaputra's

'Mānasaputras,' as mentioned earlier, literally means 'Sons (-putras) of Mind (Manasa-)' — highly evolved spiritual beings. They were human beings in our planet's previous life cycle. They have developed the faculty of thinking to relative perfection and are now active in the inner realms as semi-divine beings. They awakened the Manas of Manas — the human within the human, the thinking within the thinker — and thereby self-consciousness. Now these Mānasaputras are also called our 'higher selves' who incarnated within us. Not our highest self, nor exactly us, for they are independent beings, and we were actually those still half-asleep human beings in whom independent thinking had yet to awaken.

But as we have already explained, the principles of Theosophy teach us that every being is connected — indeed, is essentially one — with all other beings. That connection is sometimes so close that one can speak of a single ray with different focal points or transformers. Thus, the Mānasaputras can be viewed as higher focal points within the same ray, the same stream of consciousness of which we are a focal point. They are part of our constitution.

How did this awakening through the Mānasaputras work? They did so by awakening something of their own characteristic of consciousness within us, just as one uses the flame of one candle to light another. In fact, the Mānasaputras radiate their own thoughts in such a way that we can receive them at our level. It works according to the principle of resonance: when you emit a certain vibration, objects with similar characteristics begin to vibrate in unison, just as striking an F note on a piano causes the other F strings in the other octaves to vibrate as well. Objects that share the same vibrational quality — a similar characteristic — will also begin to vibrate in unison.

Let us return briefly to the story of Prometheus. The fact that the Mānasaputras helped awaken our thinking also made them karmically co-responsible for what we were going to do with that thinking, as we will explain further on. Zeus punishes Prometheus for giving fire to humanity, just as the serpent was punished by Jehovah for tempting Eve to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The serpent is forced to crawl across the earth, and Zeus punishes Prometheus by chaining him to the Caucasus Mountains. Every day, a vulture comes to peck out his

liver. That liver regrows at night, so that the torment begins all over again the next day.

Why this punishment, when these beings helped us out of compassion? This is karmic; everything proceeds according to the law of karma. Knowledge brings responsibility. Without this knowledge, we humans could never have misused it. The Mānasa-putras share karmic responsibility because they provided us with knowledge. But it is karma that the Mānasaputras consciously chose, for it also has to do with the time when they first appeared.

The evolution of consciousness

As explained, the general evolutionary cycle of the monad proceeds in two phases that flow into one another: a descending arc of material orientation, followed by an ascending arc of spiritual orientation. Starting at the human stage, self-consciousness develops with the awakening of the faculty of thought. With this, we developed the ability to independently direct our evolution toward the conscious expression of our inner divine potentials.

If we then zoom in on human evolution, this process is, broadly speaking, exactly the same. The entire evolutionary cycle of the monad in the human kingdom spans 4 billion 320 million years — a period of embodiment of this planet. But that enormous span of time can be divided into phases. We have previously presented these as stacked layers, but they are, of course, cycles.

There are, for example, these seven major phases, which we call 'Rounds'. You could call them seven major schools of consciousness. These phases correspond to the seven characteristics of consciousness that we mentioned earlier — ranging from the very limited, the physical realm, to the most expansive, the full realization of oneness with the All within our human realm of thought.

Now, the term 'evolution' literally means 'unfolding' what is already present within. According to Theosophy, this is only one side of the coin. Before something can be unfolded — can 'evolve' — something must first have been folded in, something must have 'involved' itself. If you reason from the perspective of consciousness, then the inner always precedes the outer. No house can be built without an architect. Perhaps you build it yourself and don't even use a blueprint, yet you will always have an idea before you lay the first brick. The same applies to the evolution of the cosmos and all living beings that comprise it.

These processes of involution and evolution occur simultaneously, but if you look only at the exterior — because you cannot perceive the inner processes — you create a one-

sided picture. For example, some biologists focus solely on the bodies that are changing, yet it remains a mystery how nature sometimes conjures up, in a very short time, the external characteristics necessary for survival. Fortunately, there are also an increasing number of biologists who realize that this is not a matter of chance, but that an inner force is at work behind the scenes, guiding these processes. And some of them are already coming very close to Theosophy by positing a consciousness that operates through or behind every cell.

If you consider the seven principles of consciousness, you can distinguish the following seven phases with regard to involution and evolution (see diagram below).

The Ātman, or the principle of unity – the most divine or universal – involves, while the Sthūla Sarīra, or the physical principle, evolves.

The Buddhi, or the principle of enlightenment, involves, while the Linga Sarīra, or the astral principle, evolves.

The Manas, or faculty of thought, involves, while the Prāna, or principle of vitality or life currents, evolves.

The higher Kāma involves, while the lower Kāma evolves, followed by the turning point after which the higher Kāma evolves and the lower Kāma involves or withdraws.

Prāna involves, while Manas evolves.

The Linga Sarīra involves, while Buddhi evolves.

Finally, the Sthūla Sarīra, or physical principle, involves, and the most universal, divine, or unity principle – Ātman – evolves.

‘Involving,’ however, does not mean that these principles disappear, but rather that they are governed by the spiritual aspects — Manas, Buddhi, and Ātman.

Of course, this may seem a bit complex when you first read it. On the other hand, Theosophia is universal wisdom.

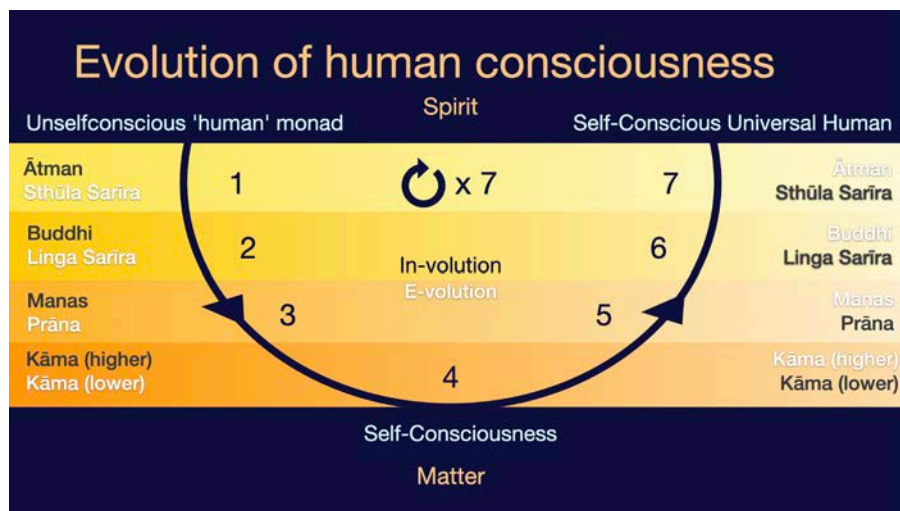
This implies that this process – ‘as above, so below’ – can be recognized in every cycle of evolution. At the end of the article, we will provide an example from a human life. It is a very interesting exercise for you to see if you can recognize this process of evolution and involution according to the seven aspects on a broader scale — think of the development of an organization, a project, or perhaps the life cycle of a civilization as a whole. Why are we sharing this? To take another look at the characteristics of us as human beings at the moment our awakening took place by the Mānasaputras, or Sons of the Mind, and what karmic consequences this had for them – which in the myths is also referred to as punishment.

When did our thinking awaken?

As mentioned, we are only just past the halfway point in our current phase of evolution. We have thus just passed the turning point beyond which the higher Kāma evolves and the lower Kāma involves, and we become masters over it. Also keep in mind that each Round represents hundreds of millions of years of monadic evolution, and that the Rounds themselves can be divided into seven classes, each spanning tens of millions of years. If we consider eighteen million years out of our entire evolutionary cycle of over four billion years, this was actually relatively recent! The awakening took place in the fourth Round, the Round in which we still find ourselves today. Theosophy further explains that this important turning point in our development began roughly halfway through the third class of that fourth Round. Let’s now take a moment to examine which principles play a role in this.

Humanity on the verge of awakening

What were we like as human beings in that third class of the fourth Round, before we actually became truly human? And we speak of ‘we’ because, based on the concept of cyclicity or reincarnation, one can argue that those were our previous incarnations as a growing or developing human consciousness. Now, it’s not as if we were completely devoid of the ability to think or were totally unconscious back then. We were comparable to a child who does not yet think independently, somewhere between the ages of five and



seven.⁽¹¹⁾ There were already early signs of thought, but in reality it was mainly instinctive. We humans of that time had flashes of intuition; we had feelings and the vague awareness of children, but we did not yet possess true reason, understanding, or intellect. So there was still no question of thinking or self-consciousness, and that would actually remain the case for hundreds of millions of years if it weren't for the descent of the Mānasa-putras.⁽¹²⁾ You could compare that to a child who grows up in isolation without parents, like feral children, for example. As a result, they fall so far behind that they can never catch up for the rest of their lives.

Why did the Mānasaputras come then? Because humanity, in the third class of the fourth Round, was open to receiving a certain kind of inspiration. First, the fourth principle had to be sufficiently developed to serve as a vehicle for the fifth.⁽¹³⁾ But if you look closely at the process – as above, so below – you can also draw an analogy between the cycle of a class and the cycle of a Round, as depicted in the diagram of evolution and involution. And then you see that in the third phase, as the Prāna evolves, the Manas involves. So there is already something of the Manas taking root in the consciousness during that third class or subphase of evolution. And that is precisely why the Mānasaputras were able to do their work at that time. And of course, that was not just a single moment. Not everyone simultaneously reached the phase when their thinking faculty could be activated. This was a process that took several hundred thousand years!⁽¹⁴⁾

Why the Mānasaputras were punished

Now we can explain why the myth of Prometheus and the story of Paradise speak of a punishment. For we see that thinking and self-consciousness were activated within us by the Mānasaputras before we, as human monads, had reached the lowest point of material evolution. We were still in a subphase of the development of Prāna – a rather childlike phase – in a sort of paradisiacal state.

Just as children are still full of devotion and trust toward their parents, so too did we, as newly emerging thinkers, still place our complete trust in the beings who were ahead of us in evolution. But just as childhood gives way to adolescence, when desire begins to play a greater role, so too was it for humanity as it entered the fourth class after the third. The fourth class of the fourth Round, thus characterized by a dual nature of desire. Now, desire is a neutral principle, but it began with a period in which, at first, lower-oriented desire came to the fore — that is, the desire

for the physical, for matter and its control, and for outward appearances. And because our power of thought had already awakened, the intellect could be employed to pursue those external, illusory, and often selfish desires. For some, cunning and cleverness thus became more important than wisdom. We entered the Atlantean era, in which selfish desire prevailed. The wisdom of the Mānasaputras had to be protected from abuse for personal gain. We will discuss this further in the next article when we talk about the Mystery Schools that were established for that purpose.

At this point, the vast majority of humanity has now passed that low point. On average, we are already halfway through the fourth subphase of the fifth class of the fourth Round (4-5-4). The characteristic of desire, or Kāma, is once again dominant. And the Atlantean karma still weighs heavily upon us, as we can still experience around us every day.

The punishment of the Mānasaputras is that they brought our thinking to life prematurely, sooner than necessary, even before we had passed through the lowest point of desire. For this has made them partly responsible for our selfish use of thought to satisfy personal desires. They bear karmic responsibility for this. They disrupted the natural course of development and were 'punished' for their compassionate act of hastening our awakening as human beings. Moreover, they had to descend into a world that is, for them, an underworld: they themselves had already gone through human development. They were chained to this material realm. Like the serpent, they are doomed to crawl in the world of external desire.

However, the delay in their own evolution is karmic: the causes for this lie in previous Manvantaras (embodiments of the planet). If you now consider how we, as humans, treat the beings in the animal kingdom – and thereby interfere with and slow down their natural evolution – this gives an idea of what needs to be restored. The monads that now make up humanity, which were still part of the animal kingdom in the previous Manvantara, were slowed down in their development. Our capacity for thinking should already have been active in this Manvantara. Had we not been aided by the Mānasaputras, we would have fallen even further behind.

Yet the Mānasaputras, foresighted as they were – and as the name Prometheus suggests – knew exactly what they were signing up for at that time. They knew it was necessary to help humanity by making up for their delay. The development of self-consciousness offered humans more opportunities to begin the 'school of humanity,' because it elevated

humans above mere animal instincts. It gave them the freedom of thinking, making them, so to speak, the only free – but also stubborn – actors in nature. With that still immature thinking, humanity could also make very poor decisions, pursuing its selfish desires, leading to all kinds of disharmony, discontent, injustice, violence, pain, and so on. The consequences of this are still evident today. It is these lower desires and tendencies of humanity that figuratively chained Prometheus to the rock. The vulture symbolizes ‘the ever-unsatisfied desire’ that still gnaws daily at the liver of the Mānasaputras.⁽¹⁵⁾ These are the personal and animalistic desires and inclinations that can never be permanently satisfied, because they are directed toward the transitory aspects of external life: material wealth, status, personal glory, animalistic pleasure, luxury, and comfort. Nevertheless, the Mānasaputras chose this fate out of compassion for humanity, which otherwise would have remained in a childlike state for aeons — instinctive, dream-like, without self-consciousness, without real progress, and without learning all the ethical lessons, including those from the mistakes we might make. And in part, this was a karmic obligation, as compensation for a previous delay in evolution that they had caused in a previous cycle — a period in which we were still in the animal kingdom and they were in the human kingdom.

If, armed with this knowledge, we look again at the choices we make every day and the motives behind our actions, we will hopefully understand that we also have a responsibility toward the Mānasaputras to let go of the personal, the limited, and the limiting, and to be truly human – selfless and compassionate – just as they have inspired us and continue to inspire us.

An example of awakening thinking: a human life

The theosophical concept of the involution and evolution of consciousness – the process of emanation and the continuous awakening of essentially boundless consciousness – provides us with a clear picture of the meaning of life. It shows that, through our own development, we can cultivate an ever-broader sense of universal brotherhood, of the spiritual unity of life, and of our moral responsibility. This is a development that never ceases but reaches ever higher, ever farther, leading ever more toward unity and harmony. This growth occurs solely on the basis of free will, through the self-expression of the latent capacities within us.

This evolutionary process – as above, so below – can be recognized in every cycle, including that of a human life,

and can therefore be applied in practical ways.

According to Theosophy, in every incarnation, every life cycle, we reenact on a small scale what has happened throughout our entire history as humanity on Earth. We call this ‘recapitulation.’ It is a term derived from embryology. In the embryonic stage, we can see how each embryo goes through the forms of earlier evolutionary phases once again. But this is only the outer aspect, because this process is also taking place inwardly, as seen from the perspective of consciousness. Just as we rapidly retrace the Rounds we previously experienced on the outer level while in the womb, so too, after birth, do we retrace the development – or in- and evolution – of consciousness from the previous five classes of this fourth Round, until, sometime in our twenties, we reach adulthood again and continue our learning. It is the entire process of in- and evolution of humanity but accelerated into a single lifetime. All those aspects of consciousness are revisited in succession throughout this process.

During the infant stage, we rebuild the body while the sense of unity involves. Feelings then emerge during the toddler stage, while the first early insights and the power of discernment also begin to develop. Then we learn to express our vitality and, slowly but surely – somewhere between the ages of five and seven – to control it as the intellect begins to function. And during puberty, you see idealism at work, and the adolescent wants to use their desire to create a better world, though this often happens somewhat uncoordinated. Desire is then increasingly brought under control by the intellect, reason, the conscience built up in previous incarnations, certain insights, and moral responsibility. And then, at a certain point, we find ourselves once again at the stage our evolution has reached so far, and as adults, we pick up where we left off. We see that in the third phase – roughly from the third to the seventh year – independent thinking and self-consciousness begin to develop slowly but surely. In the story of the Garden of Eden, we discussed the moment when we became self-conscious, when Adam and Eve suddenly realized they were naked and began to feel ashamed in front of each other.

Shame – which includes the realization that you make a certain impression on other people – is also an early sign that children are developing self-awareness. Educators (parents, teachers, grandparents, etc.) actually function as the Mānasaputras. Through their many conversations with the child, by reading stories, by answering the many questions children ask at that age, they are the ones who

enlighten the child's nascent thinking. And they also serve as temporary 'higher selves' who draw children's attention to their growing moral responsibility.

Parents and educators have the opportunity to bring the child's thinking to the surface in a harmonious way — by awakening the higher aspects simultaneously with the development of the lower ones, so that the child learns to know and control itself. Just as the Mānasaputras awakened our thinking by surrounding us with their atmosphere, so too is the child's thinking awakened by the atmosphere of the family or the classroom in which they grow up or are taught. And this is not so much something you do as an educator; it is about who you truly are. It is what you radiate day in and day out. Think of a harmonious family in which the development of inner wisdom is stimulated in all sorts of ways and the members selflessly devote themselves to one another and to others.

If we now connect this once again to the broad concept of humanity that Theosophy presents to us — that which makes us human, that steadily growing sense of moral and intellectual responsibility — then hopefully it will become clearer what we must do when we have a role to play in raising or educating children, or even in learning from one another. For with this knowledge, each of us is able to make a contribution — to help one another become more fully human.

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Mystery Schools

Key thoughts

» Mystery Schools are centers of compassion centered around spiritual Teachers. The founders of the Mystery Schools were envoys of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.

» The purpose of the Mystery Schools is to awaken the inner abilities within human beings, so that they may apply their self-acquired wisdom for the benefit of all living beings.

» Initiation is accelerated evolution for the sake of compassion.

» The 'Lesser Mysteries' depicted, what took place in the 'Greater Mysteries.'

» Inner decline led to the closure of the Mystery Schools.

» The inner force behind the Mystery Schools – the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion – will always be present.

» Through the modern Theosophical Movement, more Mystery teachings have become public.

The streams of inspiration flowing from the Mystery Schools are sometimes visible, but they usually go unnoticed by people who are focused on their daily worries and the turmoil in the world. What are the Mystery Schools? Why do they operate in secret?

From the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875, H.P. Blavatsky, her Teachers, and later her successors gradually revealed how streams of inspiration from the spiritual realm flow into the world. This began with the awakening of humanity by the Mānasaputras, the Sons of Mind, who awakened our thinking eighteen million years ago, as we explained in the previous article. Even after the awakening of the faculty of thought, the inspiration continued, just as there is, in fact, a continuous flow of inspiration from the Hierarchy of Compassion. The next milestone in our evolution was the establishment of the Mystery Schools, some four to five million years ago.

The need for secrecy

The Mānasaputras have accelerated our evolution by many eons. Otherwise, we would have developed much slower. That acceleration did come at a price, however. The moment when they were able to awaken our thinking occurred before we had reached the lowest point of our material de-

velopment, a point at which the desire for the external life is strongest, and thus the illusion that we are separate from spiritual unity is also at its peak. Our independent thinking, which normally would not have begun to function until after that lowest point, could now be directed toward pursuing external desires: for possessions, for status, for power. This is something we can still observe today. For as human beings – as a learning 'middle part' between the imperishable and perishable parts of our composite nature (see the diagram of our composite nature in the first article) – we have, with the awakening of our self-consciousness, gained the ability to identify with either of these two extremes within ourselves. On the one hand, the higher human, reincarnating part, which self-consciously cherishes selfless, universal, compassionate thoughts and ideals. Or, on the other hand, with the lower human, personal part within ourselves, which imagines itself separate from the whole, with self-centered, limited, and limiting thoughts,

causing us to be guided more unconsciously by lower desires and inclinations. And at the lowest point of our evolution, the attraction to this lower part was greatest. And this brings us directly to the reason for the establishment of the Mystery Schools.

Let us take a brief look at the early evolution of independent human thought. It began some eighteen million years ago with the awakening of thought by the Mānasaputras, as we explained in the previous article. Humans were ‘god-like,’ albeit unconsciously. There was still no evil, no selfishness, because humans almost instinctively followed the wise guidance of more advanced beings.

Subsequently, in connection with humanity’s deeper descent into matter, divine dynasties were established: a succession of divinely enlightened rulers, priest-kings, and initiates who, drawing on the wisdom and compassion they had developed within themselves, guided the civilizations of that time, just as they had done in the earlier stages of the human school of evolution.⁽¹⁾ But when desire began to dominate human thought more and more, and selfishness increased as a result, the Mystery Schools were founded some four to five million years ago. This is also referred to in the story of Enoch, with the statement that God took him away.⁽²⁾ This means that the Enochs or Enoichions, the Seers, with their knowledge and wisdom, stepped out of the public eye and withdrew into seclusion. The wisdom of the gods, or Theosophia, had to be protected from selfish abuse through seclusion and secrecy. From that time onward, wisdom was taught directly only to those deemed suitable for it. They took a vow not to disseminate this wisdom further. They promised to use this wisdom solely for selfless purposes. And as they demonstrated through their discipline that they could apply this wisdom in their lives, they were able to receive more wisdom. This is how different levels of training came into being.

That secrecy was intended to prevent the misuse of knowledge, but also to prevent the wisdom from degenerating. When people acquire knowledge but are not yet capable of understanding it, they may pass on information that was never actually said or intended that way, which always has major karmic and moral consequences. Furthermore, this knowledge was not without danger. The deeper teachings deal, among other things, with life and death, as well as with the possibility of preserving consciousness during these cyclical processes. Without proper guidance and sufficient moral preparation, it is extremely risky to make contact with the invisible realms and the beings that dwell there.

Finally, the spiritual Teachers themselves had to be protected either from a kind of blind worship – from which no one would truly benefit – or from persecution, because their knowledge prevented others from continuing to abuse their power over the uninformed people. For this reason, they could no longer act publicly in that capacity, as had been the case during the divine dynasties.

Because of this secrecy, very little was known among the general public about the content of the mysteries; only the existence of the schools was widely known, through the so-called ‘Lesser Mysteries,’ as we will explain below. From 1875 onward, more information about this was made public through theosophical literature.

What are Mystery Schools?

The word ‘mystery’ comes from the Greek *muo*, meaning ‘to keep one’s lips sealed,’ and *mustēs*, meaning ‘initiate,’ referring to the first degree of initiation, at which point the student was bound to secrecy. Mystery Schools are centers around spiritual Teachers, centered on a focal point of compassion. The founders of the Mystery Schools were envoys of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. Because of the secretive nature of the Mystery Schools, the members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion were able to continue to spread their wisdom, rooted in compassion, among their select group of students and thus to indirectly exert a harmonious influence on the world. This is where people could be trained and supported in their spiritual development, after which they were given the choice to become an active member of that Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. A Mystery School can be viewed as a university for the human soul. The students primarily study the mysteries of human inner nature and, by extension, the structure of the cosmos. Within the Mystery Schools, students strive, through self-discipline and devotion, to become one with their inner god for the sake of compassion. The schools operate out of compassion and for the sake of compassion.

Many Mystery Schools operated around major temples or sacred monuments. To Westerners, the Mystery Schools of ancient Greece are best known, such as those at Eleusis, Samothrace, and Delphi. Furthermore, Pythagoras, Plato, and Asclepius each had their own Mystery School. The Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt was also an initiation monument associated with a Mystery School. Originally, therefore, the pyramids were not the tombs of pharaohs. They only became so after civilization had fallen into decline and wisdom had been lost. The construction of the

pyramids points to a wealth of esoteric knowledge and abilities on the part of both the architects and the builders. In Mexico and Peru, there are also pyramid-like monuments associated with Mystery Schools, such as those at Teotihuacan.

Stonehenge in England, Newgrange in Ireland, and Carnac in France are other well-known remnants of monuments associated with Mystery Schools, whose structures alone are enigmatic. Each was built to align with a specific position of the sun. Certain cosmic conditions are favorable for initiation, such as the seasonal transitions. In addition to specific times, certain places on Earth may be favorable, but the initiations do not depend directly on these. Due to the inner and sacred nature of the initiations, the mysteries often took place in secret, for example in underground chambers, sometimes far from civilization. In the Druidic tradition, however, you will find no buildings, as they often held their gatherings in caves and forests. In India, you will find partially hidden cave temples surrounding a Mystery School, such as those at Karli or Elephanta.

What was being taught?

What was taught in the Mystery Schools? In short: the synthesis of Religion, Philosophy, and Science. In the Mystery Schools, these three were not separated from one another. They are completely *one*, because truth and wisdom are *one*, and that one wisdom was taught in all its facets.

Religion examines the ‘what’ or purpose of things in their essence: what is life in essence, who are we as human beings in essence, and what is the purpose of our lives? Philosophy deals with the ‘why’ of everything, the interconnectedness of all things. Why do we see what we see? Why are the Laws of Nature interconnected? Why is something right or just? Science investigates more the ‘how’ of things. How are things put together? How does something work? Why is it that one effect always follows a certain cause? Religion, Philosophy, and Science are inseparable. All three spring from our human consciousness and, together, form our ability to investigate the truth, explain it, and become one with it. For the true seeker of truth, these three aspects are always interconnected.

The various scientific disciplines we know today thus also have their origins in the Mystery Schools. In this context, attention was not only paid to outward phenomena, but also, and above all, to the life behind those phenomena. Astrology and astronomy, for example, were taught as a single subject. It was not merely a matter of being able to



Samothrace, Newgrange and Karli.

measure and calculate the movements of the heavenly bodies, but also of understanding the characteristics of the cosmic consciousnesses at work through them. The same applies, for example, to mathematics and the theory of harmony. It was not just about calculations, but also about the proper proportions of things — the harmony of the whole of beings in the cosmos. Every science we know today — chemistry, meteorology, geology, zoology, botany — was already studied in the Mystery Schools. This also applies to Philosophy and Religion: the mysteries of the Cosmos, the divine origin of humankind, as well as legislation and the

organization of the state were all part of the teachings — but again, as reflections of the universal laws and the hierarchy within living nature.

Furthermore, language, the arts, and crafts — from architecture to agriculture — have their origins in the Mystery Schools. And in earlier times, when the body was still regarded as something sacred — as a temple for the soul — the hidden workings of the human body were also taught, along with how to properly maintain and utilize it, or to heal it if necessary. Thus, among other things, medicine, hygiene, and even singing and dancing were part of the teachings. In short: it was an education in Theosophia in all its aspects. The goal was to become that wisdom. And those who, out of compassion, wished to become co-workers of the Mystery School were enabled to learn the truth about all things and ultimately to experience it for themselves.⁽³⁾ For after the stages in which knowledge was taught, this transitioned into the process of initiation or independent experience: the Greater Mysteries.

The Greater and Lesser Mysteries

Even though historically we know very little about the Mysteries because their exact teachings and rituals were kept strictly secret, these centers have been known worldwide and throughout the ages for a very long time. This is mainly due to the so-called ‘Lesser Mysteries.’ For in these, what took place in the Greater Mysteries was recounted in the form of drama, a kind of theatrical performance rich in symbolism and grounded in moral principles. The teachings about life were presented in veiled form within the Lesser Mysteries. This also applied to the experiences that the initiate had to undergo in order to independently test the truth of the teachings. Furthermore, the Mystery teachings were presented in veiled form through symbols — for example, in the form of fairy tales or myths — to stimulate people’s intuition that there is more, that explanations exist for the origin of humanity and the cosmos, for the laws of nature, and for ethics and morality. Consider, for instance, the myth of Prometheus or the story of Genesis (see the previous article). Through these ‘Lesser Mysteries’ and the similar symbolism found in many myths and fairy tales worldwide, we can thus glean some insight into what took place in the great Mystery Schools.

Esoteric and exoteric

The difference between the Lesser and Greater Mysteries points to the distinction between what we call ‘esoteric’ and ‘exoteric.’ The word ‘esoteric’ comes from the Greek

‘*esoterikos*,’ meaning ‘belonging to the inner circle,’ derived from ‘*esotero*,’ meaning ‘more inward,’ and is also sometimes translated as ‘hidden’ or ‘secret.’ ‘Exoteric’ is the opposite of that and means ‘open’ or ‘outward.’

Now, in every world religion and major philosophy in the world, you can find traces of this inner or secret teaching, which later shifted, to a greater or lesser extent, from the esoteric to the exoteric. Thus, every original world religion or major philosophy has had its esoteric currents, which later became somewhat more well-known and therefore exoteric. Consider the *Upanishads* as part of the esoteric branch of Hinduism, the *Kabbalah* in Judaism, Gnosticism in Christianity, Mahāyāna in Buddhism, and Sufism in Islam. Through esoteric teachings, one could discover the deeper, inner meaning of religious texts. These keys were passed down in secret from teacher to student after the time of the original founders.

The Greater Mysteries: initiation

The purpose of the Mystery Schools was to awaken the inner faculties within the human being, enabling him to independently gain knowledge about the Self and the Universe, so that he could then apply that self-acquired wisdom for the benefit of all living beings. The Greater Mysteries represent the initiation processes through which the student independently gains experience in the inner realms of consciousness.

Initiation is accelerated evolution for the sake of compassion. Initiation processes are not intended to serve the individual student, but rather to help, out of compassion, those students who wish to work for compassion — those who wish to become co-workers of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. Just as the Mānasaputras awakened our thinking and thereby accelerated our evolution by many millions of years, so too do students undergo more or less the same process through initiation. They train to rapidly develop something within themselves, to awaken something within themselves, and to bring it to life. This involves activating the higher aspects of the thinking consciousness and, in parallel, bringing the lower aspects under control. In this way, the disciple becomes fully master of himself in all circumstances. In the higher degrees of initiation, the focus is on proving certain teachings based on one’s own experience.

The student is prepared to enter inner realms on his own. Inner realms that we all pass through during sleep and death. Currently, we do so unconsciously, because we are not yet familiar with them. And so we gain little insight

from them. In the Mysteries, we are taught how to maintain our consciousness during these processes. In the end, the student – if deemed suitable and sufficiently prepared by his teacher – is tested on this. It is, in fact, the experience of the cycle of life and death, but consciously. This allows us to independently experience and actually verify the Laws of Nature, such as cyclicity or re embodiment, karma, and the hierarchies of consciousness.

In addition to this self-conscious experience of the truth of the Mystery Teachings, encounters with one's own inner divine nature also take place at various levels during the different stages of initiation. In higher initiations, there is even, to a greater or lesser extent, an identification with that inner divine nature. In a sense, one becomes, in part, a vehicle for one's own inner divinity, something that is also depicted in various myths and stories across many religions. An example of this is the halo, the divine ring of light, or the crown of light that hovers above the head, which can be seen in depictions of Buddha statues as well as in images of Roman emperors and Christian saints (not necessarily implying that all the shown figures were in fact initiates into these higher realms, the meaning of the symbol might have been lost in later times).⁽⁴⁾

Furthermore, trials are part of the initiations: the student also passes through realms that, in terms of consciousness, are sometimes lower or coarser than this earthly one, and must thereby prove that he can remain connected to his 'Higher Self' under those circumstances.

The purpose of all this is for the student to attain a certain level of mastery, enabling him to help humanity through the experiences and insights he has gained during the initiation. He can then act as a teacher himself and inspire and help others with this knowledge to restore harmony. In doing so, he also becomes a protector and guardian of this teaching and will pass it on in its pure form — but only to those who are suitable for it.

Why were the Schools closed?

At present, all of the aforementioned Mystery Schools are no longer active, at least not outwardly. The Lesser Mysteries are no longer practiced, and the schools have closed. The last known Mystery School in the West, the Platonic Academy in Athens, was closed in 529 by Emperor Justinian, most likely at the request of the Teachers themselves.

For, slowly but surely, decline had set in. The secrecy had been breached, and the inner life behind the Mystery School was fading away. This gradual process had actually

been underway since the emergence of the early Mystery Schools. As Blavatsky writes: "With the masses they [i.e. the Mysteries - E.B.] degenerated into Sorcery, taking later on the shape of exoteric religions, of idolatry full of superstitions, and man-, or hero-worship."⁽⁵⁾ Whereas 'faith' is precisely something that does not appear in theosophical dictionaries, as she later writes.⁽⁶⁾ And we also see throughout history how much suffering has resulted from the conflict between religions and religious people who rigidly clung to their own beliefs.

But the fact that the Mystery Schools are no longer active in the public eye says nothing about what still takes place in secret. The inner force behind the Mystery Schools, the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, remains ever-present and will always be present. It merely withdraws from the public eye during what Plato called the 'barren times.' In our time, on the one hand, the Mysteries have shifted more into the background and into the hidden realm, but on the other hand, there has also been a tremendous impetus toward making the esoteric teachings more widely known since 1875.

Mystery Schools today?

Gottfried de Purucker, the fourth Leader of the Theosophical Society, writes that the exoteric form of the Mystery Schools has largely been replaced "by the different activities of the Theosophical Movement which is itself exoteric as a Movement."⁽⁷⁾ For through the work of H.P. Blavatsky, her collaborators, and her immediate successors, much more of what until then had been esoteric (part of the Mystery teachings) was brought to light and became exoteric than what had happened in thousands of years. With the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*, among other works, all of its content ceased to be secret in one stroke. At least, it was no longer secret to those who make an effort to understand this book. For many others, who do not make such an effort, the 'teaching' remains a secret to this day.

And this coming into the open, of course, was a conscious act, guided by those Teachers or Masters who also work through the Mystery Schools. Some of the discipline required for admission to a Mystery School can be inferred from the Pledge for admission to the Esoteric Section or Eastern School founded by H.P. Blavatsky in 1888.

It would be going too far to discuss this in detail here, but to illustrate our point, we are sharing three articles from this Pledge:

"1. I pledge myself to endeavour to make Theosophy a living factor in my life.

“4. I pledge myself to maintain a constant struggle against my lower nature, and to be charitable to the weaknesses of others.

“5. I pledge myself to do all in my power, by study or otherwise, to fit myself to help and teach others.”⁽⁸⁾

These rules (or articles) make it clear that the Mysteries begin within ourselves. First and foremost, they require of us a pure motive and the discipline to bring what we learn to life. There is no better way to summarize this than with these words from one of the Masters: “Live the life, and ye shall know the Doctrine, because knowledge will come to you naturally.”⁽⁹⁾

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Spiritual impulses before H.P. Blavatsky (1875)

Key thoughts

- » Spiritual impulses trace their source to Theosophia (as indicated by the three fundamental principles). They are primarily guided by compassion.
- » Spiritual impulses generally manifest in alignment with the cycles of nature. Epochs or cycles are life periods of consciousnesses with which we collaborate.
- » Spiritual impulses share a single source: the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. They build upon one another and never contradict each other.
- » Spiritual impulses appeal to the inner divinity of human beings — their own free will.
- » An unbroken line of inspiration can be traced worldwide and from century to century.

Throughout history and across the globe, there have been impulses of wisdom, compassion, and peace. In our collective memory, we often – and mistakenly – link these spiritual impulses to a single person who seemed to appear as suddenly as he disappeared: Krishna, Buddha, Pythagoras, Lao Tzu, Jesus, Plato, Muhammad, and so on. Spiritual impulses, however, do not stand alone. Anyone who investigates it will discover that, from East to West, lines can be drawn between these spiritual impulses, their backgrounds, and their continuation from the distant past all the way to recent history. With the arrival of H.P. Blavatsky in 1875, these lines converge and resurface.

In this final article, we would like to begin by showing how one can recognize that the Theosophia has been revealed worldwide and throughout the ages. We will do this by examining a series of spiritual impulses spanning the last three thousand years. This is a period for which we have some historical records. On the timescale of human evolution, as we have explained in previous articles, these three thousand years are comparable to just under half an hour in the course of a human lifetime.

We will once again reflect on that timescale of human evolution on this planet and highlight a number of important cycles that play a role in it. This allows us to show that these impulses continue unceasingly. They are the pulses of the spiritual heart-beat that continuously provide humanity with inspiration, wisdom,

and compassion, worldwide and in all times.

We will reflect on spiritual impulses in the East and the West. This article will mention many names and concepts from traditions around the world. We use the names of the Teachers and the teachings from these traditions to illustrate that they share the same Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion as their source and disseminate the same universal wisdom, or Theosophia. Of course, we will point out those universal principles, and if you keep them in mind, you will continue to see the forest for the trees!

How do you recognize universal wisdom, or Theosophia, in spiritual impulses?

Theosophia stands for divine wisdom

or the wisdom of the gods. This refers to wisdom that originates in realms of consciousness that transcend the human, which is also referred to as divine. But that wisdom derives its authority not only from its source, but above all because it is universal. And if it is universal, then it can also be found within ourselves. It is wisdom that has always existed, will always exist, and can be found throughout the world and in all times. It is therefore not merely a philosophical school of thought or a religion, such as Buddhism, Platonism, or Christianity as we know them today. These schools of thought are, at their core, nothing more than a reflection of Theosophia, but presented and articulated by a Gautama the Buddha, a Plato, or a Jesus the Nazarene in accordance with the culture and language of their time. Of course, Buddha did not announce that he was going to bring Buddhism, but rather shared the wisdom he had accumulated in order to serve humanity out of compassion. This universal wisdom, or Theosophia, can be recognized by its three fundamental principles, found in Madame Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* — the three fundamental propositions that you can read on the cover of this magazine. In short, they can be summarized as follows:

1. a boundless principle;
2. cyclicity;
3. fundamental equality or 'as above, so below.'

To begin with, we will provide a number of examples of how you can recognize these three principles in the major religious and philosophical traditions around the world when they have their origins in Theosophia.

Boundlessness in traditions worldwide⁽¹⁾

Because boundlessness cannot be expressed in human terms, in Hinduism they use only the word 'It' or 'That', the translation of *Tat*, to refer to the boundless principle from which everything arises.

In Buddhism, they speak of *Sūnyatā*, or 'Emptiness.' It cannot be described in terms of any attributes. It transcends our world of phenomena.

You can also find this concept of 'Emptiness' or 'Depth' in the Norse *Edda*: there, it is called *Ginnungagap*.

In the Guatemalan *Popul Vuh*, it is called 'the Great Sea of Space.' Space is a metaphor that is often used to describe the boundless principle. It has no attributes, cannot be grasped or perceived in and of itself, yet at the same time, it is impossible to imagine the world without it.

In Babylon, there was a similar concept called Mammu Tiamatu: 'great sea' or 'deep.'

In China, people spoke of *Tsi-tsai*, the Self-Existent or the

Unknown Darkness, the root of *Wuling-sheu* (Boundless Age).

Lao Tzu spoke of "the *Tao* that cannot be named," which is the only true *Tao*.

In the Hebrew *Bible*, it is called the Deep.

In esoteric *Kabbalah*, there is the concept of *Ain Soph*, which means without bounds.

The ancient Greeks had the concept of *Chaos*, which originally also meant 'Void', but later came to refer to 'Matter unformed and void'. The 'unformed matter' is a fullness. This is an interesting paradox that also reflects the Buddhist idea that the fullness of the world of phenomena is inherently empty.

The school of Democritus and Epicurus spoke of the 'Void'. Other Greek philosophers, such as Anaximenes and Anaximander, and later Plato and the Neoplatonists, spoke of *Apeiron*, or boundlessness.

The Druids in Western Europe spoke of the Black Virgin, from whom all things originated. This corresponds to the Chinese concept of something that is Self-Existent and dark.

The gnostic Christians also spoke of the 'Deep', and in Islam, *Allah* is ultimately described as 'the All,' which must not be depicted, because no likeness of Him is possible.

These are all similar concepts that denote an aspect of the principle of boundlessness, infinite space, or eternal duration: something that cannot be named or comprehended, but that is also impossible to imagine life without.

Cyclicity in traditions worldwide

The principle of cyclicity can also be found in the major religious traditions around the world. In Hinduism, for example, it is said: "The Universe lives in, arises from, and will return to Brahma."⁽²⁾

In Buddhism, there is a saying about the dewdrop that slips into the shining sea.⁽³⁾

In Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh King*, we find: "The movement of the *Tao* is return" (to itself).⁽⁴⁾

The apostle Paul says in the *Bible* of Christianity: "For in It we live and move and have our being."⁽⁵⁾ In the Islamic *Quran*, we find the phrase: "We belong to *Allah*, and to Him we shall return."⁽⁶⁾ All these thoughts illustrate the principle of cyclicity. And this applies not only to emerging from and returning to the source, but also to the constant process of emerging and returning, which — depending on one's spiritual growth — proceeds in a more or less spiral-like manner.

This is evident in the doctrine of reincarnation, which is

common in the East and was also common in the West in ancient Egypt and ancient Greece. It was also an accepted doctrine in early Christianity.⁽⁷⁾ It would be going too far to go into this here, but there is plenty of evidence to support it.

‘As above, so below’ in traditions worldwide

Finally, the third proposition, which describes the fundamental identity of all life, can be summarized in the hermetic axiom ‘as above, so below.’ “The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, which is itself an aspect of the Unknown Root,” implies that every being possesses, in essence, boundless potentials.

You can recognize this in the *Chāndogya Upanishad*, an esoteric Hindu text, in the statement: *Tat tvam asi* (“You are It”). Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gītā: Ahem Ātman*, “I am Ātman”; my abode is in the heart of every being.⁽⁸⁾ In Buddhism, there is the idea that every being is essentially Buddha-nature⁽⁹⁾ and will eventually become a Buddha.⁽¹⁰⁾

In his dialogue *Timaeus*, Plato writes: “Souls share the same principles and structure as the World Soul.”⁽¹¹⁾ And the Stoics speak of the intermingling of everything with everything else.⁽¹²⁾

Zarathustra, from the Persian tradition, teaches: “For whoever knows himself, knows the All within himself.”⁽¹³⁾

The famous motto that hung above the Greek Oracle of Delphi also points to this: “Man, Know Thyself.”

Lao Tzu of China puts it this way: “Those who know others are wise. Those who know themselves are enlightened.”⁽¹⁴⁾

And in the *New Testament*, we find Jesus’ statement: “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.”⁽¹⁵⁾

We hope these examples have demonstrated that the three fundamental propositions of Universal Wisdom, or Theosophia, can be found worldwide. Why this has been the case at all times will be further explained below.

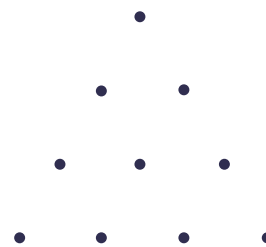
The kosmos as one living whole

The three fundamental propositions of the Theosophia lead to what you might call the spiritualistic standpoint. That is to say, there is an underlying force at work behind all external phenomena. Behind everything we perceive in the material realm, consciousness is at work. And that consciousness is, in essence, boundless. If you reason consistently from this premise, you build a picture of the kosmos as one living whole. If we limit our view to our own planet – a living being within the living Solar System – then, as described in the first article, we are dealing with different

kingdoms of nature, different classes of consciousness. Every being passes through each of these classes in order to further express its inner latent potentials. In this way, consciousness evolves from mineral to plant to animal to human to a superhuman, or divine, being. And within each kingdom of nature, too, different phases of evolution can be distinguished, which follow one another cyclically.

This cyclical evolution is linked to the idea of what might be called ‘life within life.’ Like us humans, who undergo our own evolution within the life cycle of this planet Earth. In other words, the Earth is a hierarchy of life, a collaboration of consciousnesses, guided by a hierarchy. The head of this hierarchy is called the ‘Silent Watcher.’ He guides the hierarchy through his sphere of influence.

Every life is part of a hierarchy and is also a hierarchy in itself, just as our body consists of countless living cells. The Tetraktys, which we know through Pythagoras – a name we will encounter again later – illustrates this beautifully.



Each point is a monad, a center of life, that interacts with other monads (see also the box on ‘The Monads’ in the second article of this issue). The idea of life within life, cycles within cycles, therefore offers an interesting perspective when we seek to understand what eras or time periods actually are.

Life within LIFE, cycles within CYCLES

Epochs or cycles are life periods of consciousnesses, within which and with which we cooperate. The Eastern concepts of *kalpa* and *manvantara* are examples of this. A *kalpa* or a *mahā-manvantara* is the period spanning the entire lifespan of a planet during its seven evolutionary phases. This is also called a ‘day of *Brahmā*,’ lasting 4,320,000,000 years. The ‘day of *Brahmā*’ refers to a being whose level of consciousness so far surpasses our own, that the entire evolution we as humanity are undergoing on this planet, spanning over four billion years, is like a single day to that being. *Manvantara* is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘between two *Manus*.’ *Manu* refers to a total group of beings or entities. Here, too, the term pertains to the lifespans of *beings*. *Mahā* means ‘great.’

In the first article, we discussed the Silent Watchers. These are beings who have already mastered everything within a particular hierarchy but who consciously ‘wait’ – out of compassion – to help all beings in that hierarchy with their evolution. There is a Silent Watcher for every hierarchy or cycle. A Cosmic Silent Watcher for our Solar System, one for each planet in our Solar System, and a Silent Watcher for each kingdom of nature on that planet, such as the human, animal, or plant kingdoms.

All Silent Watchers work together and form the Hierarchy of Compassion. They are the transformers of Kosmic compassion, passing on inspiration from the highest to the lowest levels. That inspiration flows from the most advanced consciousness, through various intermediate stages, down to the most elementary level for that particular cycle.

Cyclical impulses of Compassion

In the first article, we explained that the Hierarchy of Compassion always operates in accordance with the laws of nature. This also means in harmony with the various cycles. Silent Watchers can be identified for each of the seven major periods of human evolution: the ‘rounds,’ each lasting 616,896,000 years⁽¹⁶⁾, and the seven ‘classes’ within each round, which span from one to several tens of millions of years (the exact durations of these are not specified in theosophical literature). Then, within each class, there are also the so-called Mahā-Yugas. These are periods of

4,320,000 years, composed of four consecutive ‘Yugas’ whose durations are in the ratio of 4:3:2:1. The Kali-Yuga, at 432,000 years, is the shortest of the four Yugas. We are currently in a Kali-Yuga. Then there is the Precession Cycle of 25,920 years, of which there are many within a single Kali-Yuga. This is also the period during which the Earth’s axis, as it wobbles, completes a full rotation. One-twelfth of the Precession Cycle is the so-called Messianic Cycle of 2,160 years. Every 2,160 years, a messenger appears who once again brings forth aspects of Universal Wisdom: this is the cycle in which H.P. Blavatsky also appeared, following Jesus the Nazarene.

Then there is the hundred-year cycle. According to Theosophy, a Teacher or messenger appears in the last quarter of every century. And, of course, these cycles overlap with larger cycles, as was the case with the arrival of H.P. Blavatsky in 1875, when a hundred-year cycle, a Messianic cycle, and a larger period of time overlapped.

As above, so below: there is a continuous flow of inspiration, both inner and outer, even though we do not always recognize these impulses. It is also very difficult to recognize the exact beginning or end of spiritual impulses. Sometimes the Teachers or messengers appear without revealing their identities. And if some messenger is known, we often focus on the external manifestations of their appearance. We do not know what activity took place in the inner realms in preparation for or in conclusion to

Cycles within cycles

The numbers below are approximate: these are processes and cycles of living beings with free will, which leads to adjustments, just as we can speed up or slow down our heartbeat.

1 *Kalpa* or *Manvantara* or *Day of Brahmā*: 4,320,000,000 years (equal to 1 life cycle of our planet Earth)

Consists of 7 *rounds* of 616,896,000 years⁽¹⁷⁾

Each round consists of 7 evolutionary *classes* spanning tens of millions of years

Each evolutionary class consists of many *Mahā-Yugas* of 4,320,000 years, consisting of 4 successive sub-phases:

- 1) *Satya-Yuga*: 1,728,000 years
- 2) *Tretā-Yuga*: 1,296,000 years
- 3) *Dwāpara-Yuga*: 864,000 years
- 4) *Kali-Yuga*: 432,000 years

Each Yuga consists of *precession cycles* of 25,920 years

Each precession cycle consists of 12 *Messianic cycles* of 2,160 years

These are composed of *centuries*, and each century consists of *years*, which in turn include the annual *solstices* and *equinoxes*.

these events. And we have little insight into which spiritual group of people these are intended for. Furthermore, there is also a continuous flow of inspiration from people who are doing important work in the world, without them themselves realizing that they are inspired.

When a messenger appears, and what kind of messenger it is, also depends on the circumstances. For although the Hierarchy of Compassion always works in alignment with cosmic cycles, you should not regard this as some kind of automatic clock! The impulses are always guided primarily by compassion. Compassion is the determining factor, not whether it runs according to the rhythm down to the second! As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

“I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness.”⁽¹⁸⁾

This shows that compassion is the defining characteristic of the lives of the Teachers and messengers from the Hierarchy of Compassion. Whenever there is a need, they offer help. How do these spiritual impulses spread?

How spiritual impulses spread

Gottfried de Purucker describes how inspiration flows continuously from the ‘Mystic East’.⁽¹⁹⁾ And by that, he does not mean a specific location. It is a synonym for the spiritual Heart of the Universe, the Heart of the Kosmic Hierarchy of which we are a part. That flow is transformed through our own spiritual Sun. We are referring here to the Mystical Sun and not merely to its outer body, which we perceive on a daily basis. That current enters our Earth at the Mystical North Pole. Here, too, it is not the outer North Pole, but a spiritual realm of consciousness invisible to us, which in Eastern traditions is also referred to as Mount Meru. Through the North Pole, this flows to the navel of the Earth, the location of the Great or Central Lodge — Śambhala. This is the site of the headquarters of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion on Earth, invisible to the average person. This is our spiritual home, where the Silent Watcher of humanity resides, the Mahā-Chohan. All Mystery Schools, National Lodges, or Esoteric Societies still active worldwide that protect or disseminate Theosophy are branches of that Central Lodge and are therefore very closely connected to it.

It is from that Lodge that the messengers appear among

humanity. And at present, exoteric or public Theosophy is disseminated through the Theosophical Movement, which was initiated by HPB. This does not preclude the possibility that other exoteric organizations – such as certain philosophical or religious movements – may, consciously or perhaps unconsciously, still disseminate parts of this wisdom and, if possible, be employed for this purpose by the Masters, provided that compassion is their motive.⁽²⁰⁾ But in many of these cases, the spiritual fire has become weakened or veiled by selfishness, power, superstition, and so on. Furthermore, as mentioned, individual selfless people can also serve as more or less conscious instruments for transmitting impulses of wisdom or compassion.

From East to West

Spiritual impulses spread everywhere and at all times. But in general, you can observe a movement from East to West. This has to do with currents across the Earth that run from the northeast to the southwest and with the location of the Great Lodge somewhere on the Tibetan plateau, surrounded by a chain of the majestic Himalayan mountains. There, many messengers are trained and prepared for their work. This is a realm that is inaccessible – and even invisible – to us ‘ordinary people.’ Therefore, you should not confuse the headquarters of the Lodge of Compassion with specific, well-known countries or people in that region. The spiritual impulses that are given in Western countries thus have Eastern origins: a fact that is virtually unknown in the West.

When it comes to passing on spiritual impulses, an important concept is the *guruparamparā*.

Guruparamparā – passing on spiritual impulses

Guruparamparā is a word that means ‘Teacher after Teacher’. This term comes from *Guru* (which means ‘Teacher’) and *-paramparā*, a compound that means ‘a row or uninterrupted series or succession.’ It refers to the unbroken chain or succession of Teachers in a particular wisdom tradition. In the West, this concept is also known as the ‘Chain of Hermes.’

It points to two things: first, the succession or sequence of Teachers that ascends or descends, depending on which perspective you take in terms of the scope of consciousness. As we have already indicated, there are Silent Watchers in every realm – from the most Kosmic down to within the individual – who work together across inner and outer realms. Just as there is a Silent Watcher for humanity,

there is one for each round and one for each class within it. The *Mahā-Chohan* or Master-Teacher guides the Masters, and they in turn guide their disciples or chelas. These chelas are primarily the messengers who, every century, disseminate aspects of Theosophia among humanity or otherwise work behind the scenes for the welfare of humanity. Below, we will provide some examples of this.

Second, the concept of *guruparamparā* refers to a succession over time. This implies that each Teacher is succeeded by another who is deemed suitable and trained for the role, to ensure that the impulse can continue uninterrupted. The true Mystery Schools, esoteric societies, and, where possible, their exoteric organizations, strive as much as possible to model themselves after this natural hierarchy or *guruparamparā*.

Before we delve further into the various spiritual impulses, however, it is also worth considering the question: how do you recognize a Teacher within such a *guruparamparā*? How do you know if they are a representative of the Hierarchy of Compassion?

How do you recognize a Teacher?

You can recognize a Teacher first and foremost by the fact that he works out of compassion for the sake of compassion. He (and by ‘he’ we equally mean ‘she’) will therefore always work ‘for free’ and never ask for money. He works based on the idea of unity and brotherhood. He always appeals to the inner divinity of human beings and to their free will, and will therefore never make others dependent or exert power over them. He also works exclusively with volunteers — people who, out of compassion and of their own free will, offer to become his collaborators and to benefit from his wisdom. No one will be forced or paid by him to do so.

He will never present himself as the source or originator of the wisdom he imparts, but will always refer to Theosophia as the source (under various names) — which he, in turn, received from beings who are even more advanced than he is. In fact, he often revives the wisdom from a previous cycle or prior spiritual impulse. Just as Gautama the Buddha, for example, restored the Hindu teachings that had fallen into decline from a previous cycle, and just as the teachings of Jesus the Nazarene — which you can read in the *New Testament* — refresh and refine the teachings of the *Old Testament*.

And finally, in the teachings of a Teacher from the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, you can always recognize the three fundamental propositions: the principle of bound-

lessness or infinity, the law of cyclicity, and the inner, infinite potentials within human beings themselves. He might convey the more profound teachings through parables or metaphors, because his vow of secrecy forbids him from expressing those teachings in plain language (see also the previous article).

Each of the Teachers conveyed their message within the cultural context of a particular era. They used imagery and analogies that their intended audience could more easily understand.

Spiritual insights suited to the culture and the times

As explained above, the original source of spiritual impulses that meet the above criteria is always the same. However, the form in which they are presented differs — or differs in part — in every culture and era. Eastern literature, for example, includes Buddhism with its thousands of *sutras*. But there is also the *Tao Teh King*, a book containing only 81 paradoxes and 5,000 Chinese characters. Yet one can recognize the same theosophical ideas in both traditions.

Another example: buddhist terms such as *Nirvāna* and *Sūnyatā*. There was a great deal of misunderstanding about these concepts when they were introduced to the West. *Nirvāna* literally means ‘blowing out’. In the West, we took that translation literally for a very long time, as if a being were in fact dissolving into nothingness by being ‘blown out.’ But entering Nirvāna is not a literal blowing out; it is merging with the supreme, the opposite of blowing out. Only the lower, material part of a being is ‘blown out.’

And *Sūnyatā*, ‘Emptiness’, does not mean that Buddhists strive for emptiness. As if they were some kind of nihilists who deny that anything truly exists. No, they strive for a lofty spiritual state, which appears empty to our level of consciousness because we simply cannot perceive it yet. In other words, if we want to imagine the highest possible state — as high as we can — we cannot give it a form, because if we give it a form, we are limiting it. Just as Islamic tradition dictates that one must not depict Allah, so too can the Buddhist concept of *Sūnyatā* be understood in the same way.

Lao Tzu sums this up very well in the first paradox of his *Tao Teh King* by saying, “The more you desire it, the less you see it.” For the more you approach something out of desire, the more you become obsessed with it, and the more limited your vision becomes.

Adumbration

The challenge faced by every Teacher or messenger is to convey the wisdom they have gained from a certain level of consciousness to people who do not yet possess the same qualities of consciousness (even though they do carry that potential within them). Just as every teacher faces the challenge, when teaching math, of having to start with addition and subtraction, using simple examples that the children can understand. That process is exactly the same when it comes to spreading Theosophia.

At the same time, Teachers must preserve the purity of their message. A half-truth or a truth that is only partially understood can sometimes do more harm than good. They are aware of their responsibility not to impart knowledge to their fellow human beings that they might, due to a lack of understanding, misuse for their own purposes. The latter is a major potential danger, because knowledge gives power. You wouldn't let children play with fire, either.

This highly esoteric and profound knowledge can be very difficult to understand for people hearing about it for the first time. The Masters therefore present the teachings in 'adumbration.' This literally means 'foreshadowing.' It refers to a rough, vague outline of something, one that is, however, fundamentally accurate. At the beginning, the Teachers deliberately present their knowledge in a sketchy manner, encouraging the student to reflect and build understanding step by step.

And that requires students to awaken their consciousness, their thinking, and their spiritual qualities — to expand them, as it were. They must train themselves to understand and internalize the conceptual outlines. Then, slowly but surely, the teachings will become increasingly complete. This leads to greater knowledge, more profound teachings, and deeper spiritual wisdom.

This also means that the knowledge that has been made available, the various publications, do not contain the final word. The profound, esoteric wisdom actually requires a much better, higher, and far more spiritual expression, but such an expression is not yet something we humans can understand or grasp.

Translation and decline

In the early days of Blavatsky's work, an immense amount of effort was put into accurately translating ideas and concepts from Eastern traditions into Western terms, usually in English. In many cases, the decision was also made to leave the original Sanskrit intact and then explain the concept derived from it. The enormous advantage of this, if

you study that Sanskrit term and come to understand it better, is that the term itself can remain the same, but the understanding you have of it can continue to grow. An example is the Sanskrit word *Dharma*, which can be translated quite simply as 'law.' But a law, according to the theosophical meaning, is much more than a law established by humans. A law is a pattern of behavior of more advanced beings, which is followed by all beings within their sphere of influence — for example, beings who develop according to the same step-by-step plan. It is therefore essential to translate concepts accurately to prevent teachings from degenerating.

Now, many Teachers — such as Gautama the Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, and Ammonius Saccas — never wrote anything down themselves. That was done later by their disciples. Lao Tzu and Plato are exceptions to this rule. *The New Testament*, for example, did not appear in its earliest published forms until some three hundred years after the passing of Jesus the Nazarene. That is why, for instance, it is also called the Gospel *according to Matthew*.

As Buddhism spread from India to northern countries such as Tibet, China, and Japan, many sūtras were translated into Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, and so on. Over the course of a thousand years, certain original Sanskrit texts were lost. Some sūtras were subsequently retranslated into Sanskrit by the Chinese. You can imagine what that does to keeping the fundamental teachings pure and alive.

Concepts from one language and tradition cannot be transferred directly to another. A translator can never avoid making a certain interpretation. Take, for example, Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh King* from the 6th or 5th century B.C. There are about 150 different English translations of it. So how do you determine which one is the right one?

Setting aside the issue of translations, a particular message of wisdom becomes vastly diluted over the course of a thousand years. The same concepts may have taken on different meanings over time. Often, the literature is still sound, but people interpret it in a completely different way. Even in theosophical literature — despite the fact that it has only been published for 150 years — reprints are already appearing with 'corrections' based on personal interpretations. Making changes to original editions without the author's supervision is a slippery slope toward the decline of teachings.

'Thus have I heard'

In addition to personal interpretation, another reason for decline is that people tend to take the aforementioned ad-

umbration – the sketchy nature of the work – too literally.

Take Buddhism, for example. At its core, it is a philosophy of life: not a religion that involves a specific form of worship. Yet today, in some countries, it is the state religion. How is that possible when there are sūtras in which the Buddha himself says, “You must not worship me. You must not venerate me. You must study what I teach.” His message is to shape your own life based on the

teachings rather than praying to higher beings, such as gods, Buddhas, or *bodhisattvas*. According to the Buddha’s teachings, that is pointless anyway, because these higher beings act in harmony with the laws of nature and not according to personal favors. You will never receive such favors.

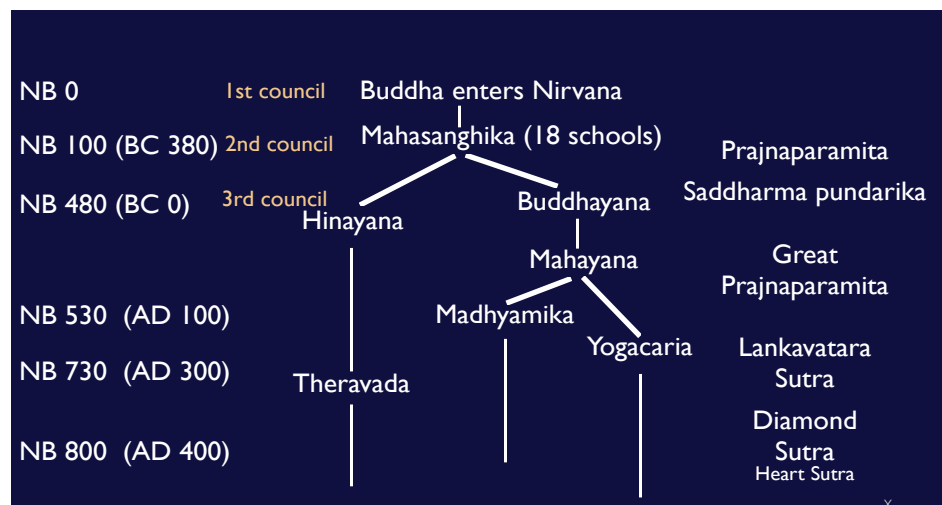
This can be avoided by adopting the attitude expressed in the saying: ‘Thus have I heard.’ In other words: I have studied this; this is how I received it, and this is how I pass it on. I let the sages speak; I cite the sources.

If one practices the discipline of applying this consistently, it prevents decline and the need to restore the teachings over time.

We will now give two examples of the spread of spiritual impulses in the East over the past three thousand years: the teachings of Gautama the Buddha and those of Lao Tzu.

The spread of Buddhism

One of the reasons for the appearance of Gautama the Buddha was to reverse the degeneration and decline in Hinduism. He passed on to the common people the esoteric teachings that the Brahmins had kept to themselves and from which they derived their power. This makes Buddhism a kind of renewal, but at the same time, it is a very comprehensive philosophy. The tree diagram above illustrates the spread of Buddhism in the first centuries following the passing of Gautama the Buddha. When the Buddha passed away and entered Nirvana, his disciples – his *arhats* or *chelas* – began to write down and publish his teachings. The first council was also held to discuss these texts. A hundred years later, the so-called *Mahāsāṃghika* tradition had already split into eighteen schools or movements, each propagating different interpretations of Buddhism. A schism then occurred between the *Hīnayāna* and



the *Buddhāyāna*. *Hīnayāna* means ‘the small vehicle,’ while *Buddhāyāna* means ‘the vehicle or path of the Buddha.’ From the latter emerged the *Mahāyāna*, which means ‘the great vehicle.’ All sorts of other schools arose from this, such as the *Yogācāra* and the *Madhyamika* school. Each of these schools has its own writings, each with its own ‘flavor.’ By studying both traditions, you gain a better understanding of the original source.

This shows how quickly such a message spreads throughout countless texts: the *Prājñāpāramitās*, the *Saddharma Pūṇḍarīkā* or *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, the *Diamond Sūtra*, and so on. It is a challenge to identify the core idea behind the impulse of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion in all these different forms of presentation. As described, the three fundamental propositions are an essential touchstone for this. You can also recognize, in various buddhist traditions, a succession of Teachers who continually bring forth the same Theosophia, but each time in a refreshed form.

Lao Tzu and the *Tao Teh Ching*

Another example of the spread of a spiritual impulse from the East is the *Tao Teh Ching*. This work was written by Lao Tzu himself toward the end of his life, around the 6th



or 5th century BCE. He was not very popular in China at the time. So he decided to go ‘back home,’ which for him meant heading West, to (the aforementioned Shambhala in) Tibet. When he reached the border, he was recognized by the border guard. And the guard said, “Master, you can’t just go away without leaving something behind!”

“All right,” says Lao Tzu, “Just give me a brush and some

bamboo.” He then writes the *Tao Teh Ching* in just five thousand Chinese characters. And he leaves.

The original *Tao Teh Ching* thus consisted of small bamboo slats tied together with string. Over the years, the string wore out, some bamboo slats were lost, and the original order was lost.

In the first half of the 3rd century AD, lived Wang Pi, a very wise young man who had been studying Chinese philosophy and literature from an early age. He restored the *Tao Teh Ching* to its original order – an order consistent with the ideas we know from *The Secret Doctrine* – and corrected a number of points.

Not long after that, he died at the age of only twenty-seven. Shortly prior to that, already knowing that he was about to die, Wang Pi himself stated that he had come to fulfill this task – to restore the *Tao Teh Ching* – and that his work was now complete. This is a good example of how the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion periodically sends its messengers to ensure that the truth continues to exist in the world.

Spiritual impulses in the West

We will now identify a few spiritual impulses in the West from the past three thousand years, to illustrate that the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion has been active throughout all ages and traditions. We will highlight a number of characteristic teachings from the wisdom tradition, which may or may not have been transmitted through a direct lineage. We begin with Pythagoras, thereby connecting with the East and also incorporating a little bit of Egyptian wisdom.

Pythagoras (ca. 570-495 BC)

Pythagoras came from Asia Minor, present-day Turkey. He is known, among other things, for the statement: “Everything is vibration,” in line with the assertion in *The Secret Doctrine* that motion is the only reality. The concept



of the ‘monad’ – the essentially boundless, imperishable core of every living being – is discussed in Pythagoras’s teachings. He is also known for the symbol of the Tetraktys, although, according to Blavatsky, he was not its creator, as it has Eastern origins.⁽²¹⁾ The Pythagoreans further taught

metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, an aspect of the doctrine of reincarnation.

He was the first to use the Greek word ‘philosopher’ — someone who possessed wisdom about the underlying forces that hold the universe together. He himself was too modest to call himself that. The Pythagorean *Golden Verses* contain ten virtues, analogous to the ten Pāramitās of Buddhism. Most people are, of course, also familiar with the Pythagorean theorem. It shows that science, philosophy, and religion were viewed as one in his time — as three perspectives of eternal wisdom.

Pythagoras built upon the ancient wisdom of various traditions. He was initiated into the Mysteries of Orpheus, which, as Blavatsky points out, originated in India.⁽²²⁾ Furthermore, Pythagoras studied in Egypt for twenty-two years and was eventually initiated into the Mysteries of the Temple of Thebes. In doing so, the Eastern sages were compelled to share their knowledge with him.

Pythagoras influenced many ancient Greek and, subsequently, Western philosophers who came after him, such as Plato, the Neoplatonists, Hermeticists like Paracelsus, and scientists such as Galileo. Pythagoras, for example, already taught the heliocentric system.

Plato (ca. 427-347 BC)

A second key figure in the Western tradition is Plato. Here we will mention a number of ideas that are central to Plato’s philosophy. First, the unification with the divine.⁽²³⁾



It was Socrates’ invocation. Its essence is this: “O Father Zeus, lead me so to live that the outer man on earth and the inner man may be at one!”⁽²⁴⁾

Plato is best known for his Doctrine of Ideas. In short, he argues that an inner world of imperishable, universal Ideas precedes the

outer world of phenomena. The Idea of the Good transcends all other ideas; it stands even above ideas such as Truth and Beauty. The Good is the Idea from which these ideas derive their truth and beauty. Virtues such as justice, wisdom, courage, and self-control also stem from it. According to Plato, the Idea of the Good cannot be confined by any definition or description, which is entirely in line with the first fundamental proposition of Theosophy.

The second fundamental proposition is also found everywhere. Plato, for example, refers to the doctrine of reincarnation in various places, such as in the dialogue *Phaedo* or the final chapter of *The Republic*. And the third fundamental proposition is also very clearly evident in Plato’s work.

Here are a few examples from his dialogues:

- ‘Life is self-motion’ (the ability to act and react).⁽²⁵⁾
- ‘All souls are immortal and eternal.’⁽²⁶⁾
- ‘Everything that exists arises from the One and the Many, and contains within itself the finite and the infinite.’⁽²⁷⁾
- ‘Souls share the same principles and structure as the World-Soul.’⁽²⁸⁾

According to one of our Theosophical teachers, Plato was indeed a Theosophist.⁽²⁹⁾

Another idea that emerges in Plato’s work is that of the philosopher-king. He describes the ideal of a natural leader among people, who must be compelled to assume his position because he will insist that there must always be someone more suitable than himself. This leader is the embodiment of natural justice, which precedes and transcends limited human laws. Compassion is also evident here, just as it is in his famous Allegory of the Cave. In that allegory, the person who has been freed from the chains of the cave (the external world) and who has discovered the (inner) light outside feels a desire to show his fellow inhabitants the way to the light. To do so, he wishes to return to the cave.

Plato used many similes and metaphors, such as the Allegory of the Cave, because, as an initiate into the Mysteries, he was not allowed to directly reveal certain ideas to the outside world. He himself says the following about this:

“According to his report, you say that the nature of ‘the first’ [the Idea of the Good or The One – E.B.] has not been sufficiently explained. I must speak of this matter to you in enigmas, in order that if anything should happen to these tablets ‘in the recesses of the sea or land,’ whoever reads them may not understand our meaning.”⁽³⁰⁾ Here again we see the responsibility of the messenger to convey information accurately.

Plato founded his Academy in Athens, and upon his death, leadership was passed on to his nephew Speusippus, who thereby continued the Chain of Hermes, or succession of Teachers.

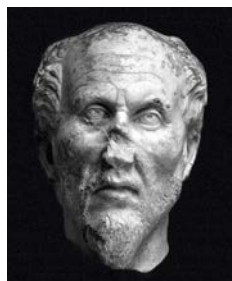
Plotinus (ca. 205-270) and Alexandria

In the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, a new school was founded in Alexandria by Ammonius Saccas. Alexandria was a well-known metropolis at that time, where many different philosophies and religious traditions from East to West converged: Buddhism, Platonism, Egyptian wisdom, Persian wisdom, Jewish sects, and early Christians, to name a few. Ammonius’s goal was to unite all these reli-

gions under the One universal wisdom that was the source of them all. The word ‘Theosophia’ also dates back to that period. However, Saccas left no written works, and everything we know about him and his teachings comes primarily from his student Plotinus and Plotinus’s student Porphyry. Because they drew heavily on Plato, the school later became known as the Neoplatonic school.

Plotinus is known, among other things, for his doctrine of the One. It is equivalent to Plato’s concept of the One or the Idea of the Good. Plotinus was able to express this idea more explicitly than Plato was in his time. Plotinus also taught the process of emanation: the idea that everything flows from the One and also flows back to the One in a cyclical manner. He taught a doctrine identical to that of the Vedānta, namely that the spiritual soul, which emanates from the One Divine principle, is reunited with Him after its pilgrimage.

The following quote from Plotinus illustrates the Theosophy of that time:



‘Our thinking cannot grasp the One, as long as any other image remains active in the soul. Therefore, you must free your soul from all external matters and turn completely inward, with no inclination towards what lies outside, and rid your thinking of ideal forms, as you

did before of sensory objects, and even forget yourself, and thus come into the sight of the One.’⁽³¹⁾ This aligns very well with what Lao Tzu writes about the inability to perceive the Tao as long as one still has desires.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P. Blavatsky refers to the Neoplatonic School as the precursor to the Theosophical Society. They were also known as the Philaethes, or lovers of truth.⁽³²⁾

There was clear evidence of a Guruparamparā (the succession of teachers). The Alexandrian School was a sort of replica of Plato’s Academy. And after the School of Alexandria, the Neoplatonists also rebuilt Plato’s Academy in Athens, which had been destroyed in the first century BCE. Some of the teachers and their students who succeeded one another in one of these schools were: Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Hypatia, Proclus, and Damascius. The latter was one of the last seven philosophers of Plato’s Academy in Athens before it was closed by Emperor Justinian in 529 AD. These last seven philosophers found refuge with the Persian Emperor Khosru. This is an important fact, as we shall see later.

With the Neoplatonists, we are already looking at the first centuries of our era. Of course, we cannot overlook another major influence when discussing the Messianic Cycle:

Jesus the Nazarene (1st century BC)

The messenger Jesus the Nazarene actually deserves a whole series of articles. Jesus was what Theosophy calls an Avatāric phenomenon: a temporary collaboration between a divine entity, an intermediate entity provided by a Buddha, and a human vehicle. A mystery.⁽³³⁾ One of his central teachings



was: “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,”⁽³⁴⁾ “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” And likewise: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”⁽³⁵⁾

In doing so, he replaced the Mosaic doctrine of vengeance and ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’ – which can still be found in the *Old*

Testament – with a doctrine of forgiveness, as found in the *New Testament*. Less well known is that Jesus was called ‘the Nazarene,’ not so much because he came from Nazareth – as the Orthodox Church would have us believe – but because he belonged to the Nazarenes, a Jewish-Buddhist group in Syria that was part of the larger Essene movement. We also recognize the strong influence of Buddhism in the *Sermon on the Mount*. Compare it to the Buddhist *Pratimoksha Sūtra*, and you will see the similarities.⁽³⁶⁾

Jesus’ influence continues to this day, even though the teachings degenerated very quickly after his death in the many sects and churches due to the influx of superstition. Nevertheless, Christian doctrine contains universal wisdom at its core, such as the teachings on love for one’s neighbor and forgiveness from the aforementioned *Sermon on the Mount*.

All exoteric religions originated as expressions of Theosophia, in which Religion, Philosophy, and Science went hand in hand. This also applies to Islam, particularly during its Golden Age between the 8th and 13th centuries.

Islamic philosophy (7th-13th centuries)

Islam began with the prophet Muhammad (570-632). He appeared at a time when the Arabs were a rough, undisciplined people with little sense of ethics.⁽³⁷⁾ Arab tribes were constantly at war with one another, and there was a great deal of violence.

Muhammad is known for the statement “*La ilaha illa’ llah*”:

“There is no god but God.” Literally translated, however, it reads: “There is no god; there is one God.” A great paradox, then, and food for deep reflection. When the 112th Sura of the Quran states that *Allah* was not begotten and has not begotten, it gives rise to the idea of a boundless and divine life force that knows neither beginning nor end, that is everywhere and permeates everything. Doesn’t that bear a striking resemblance, for example, to Plotinus’s ‘the One’ or perhaps to the boundless Principle of *The Secret Doctrine*?

The fact that Islam also recognizes earlier prophets such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus indicates that the concept of God is universal and, furthermore, that spiritual guidance is continually being given to humanity. During the so-called ‘Golden Age of Islam,’ between the 8th and 13th centuries, religion, philosophy, and science were not separated. Many philosophers engaged with the combination of both religion and science: mathematics, astronomy, or medicine. Baghdad was the center of civilization during that period. The intellectual climate was very free, open, and tolerant. Philosophy sometimes contradicted the prevailing interpretation of the *Quran*. Unfortunately, as with the Christian church, a certain dogmatism later emerged, and those who thought differently were persecuted — even though the *Quran* clearly states: “There is no compulsion in religion.”⁽³⁸⁾

We have already mentioned that after the Academy in Athens closed, the seven remaining philosophers, including Damascius, found refuge at the court of the Persian emperor Khosru. This was an important fact, because it marked the entry of the teachings of Plato and the Neoplatonists into the Persian and, later, the Islamic world! And this, in turn, ultimately had a major impact on awakening Europe from the Dark Ages, with the ...

Renaissance, Rosicrucians, and the Reformation (13th-17th centuries)

... Renaissance! Initially, three people are central to this movement: the Byzantine scholar Gemistos Plethon (ca. 1355-1454), Cosimo de’ Medici (1389-1464), and Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).

Gemistos was a great admirer of Plato and therefore called himself Plethon. At the age of 83, he was permitted to accompany the Byzantine emperor on a visit to Florence. While there, he gave lectures on Platonism and Zoroastrianism, which were attended by many young Florentines. One of his occasional students was Cosimo de’ Medici, the son of a banker from the wealthy and influential De’ Medici family. He was so impressed by Plethon’s enthusi-



Gemistos Plethon, Cosimo de' Medici and Marsilio Ficino.

asm that he came up with the idea of founding a Platonic Academy in Florence. In 1462, Cosimo de' Medici founded the Platonic Academy in Florence and appointed Marsilio Ficino to lead it.

Ficino was the De' Medici family's physician and an expert in ancient Greek. Cosimo acquired all the original Greek works by Plato and the Neoplatonists, which had remained well-preserved and accessible largely thanks to the Islamic world! Ficino then translated all these works by Plato and the Neoplatonists into Latin. There is also a fourth founding father of the Renaissance to mention in this list, Pico della Mirandola, to whom we will return shortly.

Furthermore, during this period of the Late Middle Ages and the Reformation, we see the emergence of Rosicrucians, alchemists, and Kabbalists. In the 13th century, the German Christian Rosencranz had a vision of Christ. He had been practicing black magic. In his vision, he received a warning about this. He then took a vow and subsequently disappeared. The Rosicrucians sought to bring together the most diverse branches of the occult, and they quickly became famous for the extreme purity of their lives and their extraordinary powers, as well as for their profound knowledge. Paracelsus (1493-1541), Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) – also referred to as a 'theosoph' – and Thomas Vaughan (1621-1666) are some of the key figures who played a role in spreading the ancient wisdom, or Theosophia, through the societies of Rosicrucians, alchemists, and Kabbalists.

All of these influences fostered greater freedom of thought and fueled the struggle for religious freedom, freedom of conscience, and universal rights, which culminated in the Reformation. We will highlight one person to illustrate the momentum of the Renaissance: Pico della Mirandola.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494)

Pico studied philosophy from a young age, but also delved into Islam and Jewish teachings. In 1484, he met Marsilio Ficino in Florence, who became his teacher. He was only 24 years old when he sought to publish his nine hundred

theses in Rome. Among other things, he sought to reconcile Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Aristotelianism, and Platonism. To that end, he had invited scholars from all over Europe to discuss these theses.

His main goal was to reconcile the contradictions between the various traditions and to bring a universal truth to light. The Church was not very pleased with his publication, and despite his defense, his theses were condemned and banned. Pico was forced to flee and died at the age of 31 under suspicious circumstances, likely from poisoning. As an introduction to his nine hundred theses, he wrote the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, which is regarded as a kind of Renaissance manifesto. Here are a few excerpts from it:

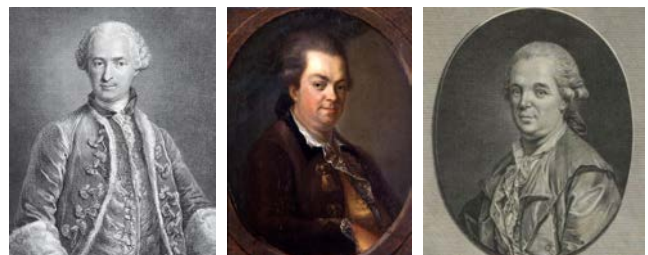


(...) you, O Adam [i.e. the archetypal man - E.B.], (...) may, by your own free will, (...), trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature (...) You may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being [referring to Plotinus], fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.⁽³⁹⁾

Anyone familiar with theosophical literature will recognize pure Theosophy in this. With the Renaissance and, later, the Reformation, a new wind clearly began to blow in Western Europe. That wind was further fanned in the following century.

Revolutions and Freemasons (18th century)

In the 18th century, the spirit of freedom of thought and conscience spread throughout Europe, further fueled by three individuals associated with the Theosophical Movement at that time, who also foresaw the upheavals it would bring about: the Count of Saint-Germain (ca. 1691-1784), Cagliostro (1743-1795), and Mesmer (1734-1815); shown in the images from left to right.



Much about these three is shrouded in mystery, and many wild stories circulate about them. It is clear from the numerous accounts that each possessed extraordinary gifts. The Count of Saint-Germain, for example, is said to have spoken countless languages fluently – French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, and English – and to have been familiar with Chinese, Latin, Arabic, Ancient Greek, and Sanskrit. He was highly musical, intelligent, and socially adept, and moved in the courts of the time, from Paris to London and The Hague. Not for his own amusement, but to carry out diplomatic work. He knew that the impending revolutions in thought would also cause upheavals in society, as in France, and wanted these to unfold as peacefully as possible. Blavatsky calls him "certainly the greatest Oriental Adept Europe has seen during the last centuries. But Europe knew him not."⁽⁴⁰⁾

St. Germain led the impulse from the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion in the 18th century, which was mainly transmitted through the German physician and scientist Anton Mesmer.

Cagliostro, too, supported this movement. Mesmer healed through magnetism, among other methods; he provided a powerful impetus to scientifically investigate these invisible phenomena and thereby elevated thought to a more ethereal realm. These three gentlemen were associated with the rise of Freemasonry in the 17th century. The Freemason movement was one of the embodiments of Theosophia in the long Chain of Hermes, more or less following the impulse of the Rosicrucians, of whom Cagliostro was still a member.⁽⁴¹⁾

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, another movement was gaining momentum in the areas of freedom of thought and the separation from ecclesiastical power: the American Revolution. The Founding Fathers and courageous Freemasons – George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, among others – were inspired by the work and ideas of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). Paine's statement, "My own mind is my own church," is very telling. Thanks in part to his ideas, the American Declaration of Independence was drafted without any reference to the Christian faith or the Christian God — the dogmatic faith that for centuries had hindered the progress of human development, justice, and freedom. Instead, it refers to the natural rights of every human being: such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Finally, we will now discuss the prelude to Blavatsky's impulse in 1875: the impulses from around the first half of the 19th century.

The prelude to 1875

At the end of the 18th century, the world looked completely different. In addition to the French Revolution and American independence, German unification took place under Bismarck. France, Germany, and England all subsequently played a role in the dissemination of Eastern wisdom that was introduced to the West: in France through an interest in the esoteric Hindu Upanishads, in Germany through the study of Sanskrit by Professor Max Müller and others, and in England through the colonization of India.



Thomas Taylor, Alexander Wilder and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In the United States, the influence of Platonism grew, partly thanks to the influence of several Englishmen who had revived Plato's ideas, such as Henry More (1614-1687) and, in particular, Thomas Taylor (1758-1835). Thomas Taylor translated the entire works of Plato and several Neoplatonists into English. This work was gratefully utilized by, among others, the American Platonist Alexander Wilder (1823-1908), who later assisted H.P. Blavatsky in writing her first book, *Isis Unveiled*. And by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1883), the Transcendentalist philosopher who studied these translations in his hometown of Concord alongside, among others, the writer Henry Thoreau. Emerson is also known for his essay *The Over-Soul*, a term that H.P. Blavatsky used in *The Secret Doctrine* to describe the third principle. A characteristic sentence from that essay, which reflects theosophical thought:

Within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE.

An uninterrupted stream of inspiration

We have now discussed spiritual influences in the East and West from about three thousand years ago up to 1875. We hope to have demonstrated that there is an unbroken line of inspiration passed down from century to century, from teacher to teacher. And there is much more that we have not mentioned, since we have covered only a period of

three thousand years, focusing on a small part of the world. For example, we could also explore the wisdom of Ancient Egypt, that of North and South America, of Africa, Scandinavia, the Celts, the Germanic peoples, the Stoics, the Kabbalah, or countless other myths, fairy tales, or artistic expressions.

What conclusions can we draw from this?

- Spiritual impulses share a single source: the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.
- Spiritual impulses exist worldwide, throughout all ages and traditions.
- Spiritual impulses build upon one another and are never in conflict with one another.
- Spiritual impulses operate out of compassion for the sake of compassion (and always ‘free of charge,’ just as St. Germain, for example, offered his advice and diplomatic services to the courts at no cost).
- They appeal to the inner divinity of human beings, their own free will.
- They refer to Theosophia as their source (recognizable by the three fundamental propositions).

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Questions & Answers

The questions below were asked during the four lectures on the Hierarchy of Compassion given by Erwin Bomas in January 2025. The answers to these questions therefore provide additional insights on various aspects of this topic.

Will more theosophical wisdom be given to humanity in the future, when humanity is ready for it?

Yes, that is correct, but for the time being, the esoteric knowledge given to us since 1875 is more than enough. That knowledge is more than sufficient for the next 2,000 years, and we should count ourselves lucky if we manage to assimilate that knowledge reasonably well.

There will be very few people who can process more than what has been given to us so far. The nature of every spiritual impulse is always precisely attuned to what humanity can process. This can be illustrated with a simple example. You would not try to explain Einstein's theory of relativity to a young child. You wait until the child is ready for it.

The greater spiritual impulses, such as those of H.P. Blavatsky, occur periodically at the beginning or end of a cycle. During such transitions from one cycle to another, receptivity is relatively high or the need is relatively great. The Masters of Wisdom and Compassion are wiser than we are and able to hear this spiritual-ethical 'knock on the door'.

What applies on a grand scale also applies to individuals. Every person can give the right 'knock on the door'. It does not matter where in the world they live. How? By attuning their thinking to the same compassionate and understanding keynote as the Masters of Wisdom continually do. Then there is resonance. The Masters respond by strengthening, by 'fanning' as it were, the small flame of insight and self-forgetfulness. Such a person

may receive an intuition that opens up a new world of understanding for him. Then, as long as that lasts, he becomes a transmitter for a ray of universal wisdom to his fellow human beings.

Are Mānasaputras highly evolved human beings?

No, Mānasaputras are beings who are one or more steps beyond the 'school of humanity'. They therefore belong to the kingdoms of nature that follow the human kingdom.

On the kosmic path of inner growth, we humans are engaged in developing and mastering the thinking faculty, the fifth principle of consciousness (manas in Sanskrit). The Mānasaputras have already done this. They were, in fact, human beings in earlier great cycles (Manvantaras) and have already learned the lessons we are now learning. The Mānasaputras have thus already fully developed their thinking faculty and are therefore able to 'awaken' the – previously dormant – thinking faculty in nascent humanity by 'surrounding' and stimulating these human beings by their *manasic* sphere of influence. By their stimulus, the power of thought became active, began to resonate, in the consciousnesses that were ready for it.

You can view the Mānasaputras as semi-divine beings, starting Dhyān-Chohans: the term for all beings who have evolved beyond humanity. The relationship between Mānasaputras and humans can be compared – in its principles – to the relationship between humans and animals.

Is there mutual cooperation among the various Mystery Schools on Earth?

Yes indeed; in fact, they form one unitary whole. All Mystery Schools are integral parts of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, the Mother Lodge. They all work for humanity, based on their realization of universal brotherhood as a fact of Nature. Their motivation and purpose are the same. It is therefore logical that they work as 'the fingers of one hand', under the guidance of the central Lodge.

Each great culture or country has its own branch of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. As a rule, these branches operate in secret, completely unknown to the public. They carry out their noble work behind the scenes. They never interfere with politics, power policies or any group interests, but inspire the community with lofty visions and ideals wherever they can. It is well known that H.P. Blavatsky, during her years of training (from 1851 to 1875), traveled around the world several times, visiting a number of centers to learn from them.

Were/are women also admitted to the Mystery Schools?

Certainly. H.P. Blavatsky underwent certain initiations. Theosophical literature also mentions the existence of various other female initiates.⁽¹⁾ When determining whether someone is suitable to join a Mystery School as a disciple, no consideration is given whatsoever to physical gender. The focus

is exclusively on the candidate's inner qualities: that a person has demonstrated over a long period of time, in all aspects of life, to put selflessness and wisdom in command. In other words, people with an incorruptable ethical way of life.

The gender of our body is merely an outer aspect of ourselves: it belongs to the vehicle that the true, reincarnating human being uses in this incarnation. The reincarnating human being itself is genderless.

The current division into genders within humanity is a passing phase. It is a temporary stage in our evolution. There will therefore come a time when we will leave this – semi-animal –state behind and begin to procreate in a more spiritual manner.

Even now, there are people who have identified so strongly with their immortal part, that they have attained complete mastery over the mortal parts of their constitution. They are able to consciously choose, during each rebirth, whether to incarnate in a male or female body. We are told that such advanced individuals more often choose a male body than a female one, because such a body has certain advantages, including greater hormonal stability. Yet there are sometimes reasons to choose a female body instead.

In summary: from the perspective of the true Human Being, outward gender is of no importance.

Reference

1. G. de Purucker, *Questions We All Ask. Volume I*. Point Loma, California, Theosophical University Press, 1929, p. 354. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/gottfried-de-purucker/questions-we-all-ask-series-1-2/>).

In what ways does the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion provide spiritual impulses: solely through the dissemination of teachings, or also through other methods?

These spiritual impulses consist of more than the outward action of disseminating teachings, because the latter offers no guarantee at all that those teachings will be understood and put into practice wisely. That is why inspiring, wise leadership is needed. A fundamental part of such an impulse is the activity of one or more spiritual Teachers. Their example, their way of life, inspires many to follow in their footsteps — not only during their lifetime but also in the many generations that follow.

In addition, the Masters – the members of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion – always work through multiple channels when imparting a new impulse of Universal Wisdom. It is always a matter of *group work*. For example, several Masters were involved in the impulse of 1875, and in addition to the direct representative, H.P. Blavatsky, there were several other chelas and collaborators. If you read *the Mahātma Letters*, you will notice that quite a few people were involved in that impulse, who, under the inspiration of the Masters, made a start to change the general pattern of thinking.

Sometimes people are unaware that they are playing a role in this grand process. This refers to individuals who selflessly strive to create a different mental climate and thereby reform society. We are all familiar with examples of such people. Because of their compassionate nature, they can become a channel for the Masters during a certain period. For example, they might receive a bright intuition that becomes the guiding principle for the rest of their lives. Where

does such an intuition come from? It may come from the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.

We must realize that every spiritual impulse is aimed at ennobling humanity's thinking and thus operates primarily on the *spiritual-mental* level. This means that if, for example, we read a book by H.P. Blavatsky, this outer act of reading does not necessarily lead to a broader understanding. The challenge is to be willing to leave the grooves of our own fixed opinions and to look beyond the words for the deeper meaning, the deeper connections, and to draw practical conclusions from them. Only with such an attitude do you open your mind to the universal thoughts that constantly radiate from the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. *Then* a theosophical text can lead to inner enlightenment of one's thoughts and deeds.

The point, then, is to give our thinking such a characteristic that our consciousness resonates with the universal wisdom of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.

Everything is in a state of development. Could you say that Theosophia is in a state of development?

No, that is not the case. Theosophia – which is another word for boundless truth – is not something that can evolve. After all, only things that are limited can evolve. And that applies to all beings, no matter their stage of development. All beings essentially possess boundless potentials, but they have developed them only to a limited extent. This also applies to the highest god we possibly can imagine. Theosophia, however, is not a being. It is the divine formulation of the laws of the Kosmos. It is 'eternal, boundless knowledge'. But the extent to

which a being understands it can, of course, for that being continually grow: can expand life after life ever further. What is also constantly changing is the way in which Theosophia is presented. The Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion periodically 'enwraps' Theosophia in such a way that we can understand it.

The Lodge does this when humanity needs a new spiritual impulse. Then the message of universal wisdom is shaped in such a way that it can resonate with the mindset of that culture. It is presented in such a way that as many people as possible recognize its value in solving their problems. And because humanity

will gradually grow in insight and compassion over the millennia, these 'packagings' will evolve along with it: they will contain ever more knowledge. But the fundamental principles of Theosophia never change.

Agenda

English lectures on Sunday evening

Starting October 18, our weekly lectures on Sunday evening commence again, from 19:30 hrs. p.m. to approximately 21:00 p.m. CE(S)T. Each meeting starts with a lecture which can be followed via our website on YouTube (website: [blavatskyhouse.nl](https://www.blavatskyhouse.nl)) or via Zoom. Lectures are followed by a 30-minute interactive study which can only be followed via Zoom. We advise you to sign up for the Zoom-session in time via **our website**. We can then send you the link beforehand.

Preview of all 2026-2027 series

The 2026-2027 program has a clear structure. The lectures in October provide an overview (a 'bird's-eye view') of the principles of Theosophy.

In the months November through February, our lectures are inspired by the four 'links of the golden chain' that H.P. Blavatsky mentioned in her book *The Key to Theosophy*. These are four theosophical principles which, when applied, unite humanity into one family, one universal Brotherhood. They are:

- (a) universal unity and causality;
- (b) human solidarity;
- (c) the law of karma;
- (d) reincarnation.

The lecture series from March through June explores our origin and place the Cosmos, and the profound connec-

tion between our destiny and that of the Cosmos, bringing us a deep understanding of the meaning and potencies of life.

Series 1 - October

Universal Wisdom for daily life - introduction to the course Universal Wisdom

Series 2 - November

Karma: the universal law of equilibrium

Series 3 - December

Reincarnation: the lost key in Western thought

Series 4 - January

No faith, yet Religion

Series 5 - February

No inner peace, no outer peace

Series 6 - March

Esoteric Wisdom in Blavatsky's books

Series 7 - April

Spiritual Science

Series 8 - May

History and future of humanity

Series 9 - June

Living in the spirit of Brotherhood

Weekly lectures in October, November, December

Series 1 - October

Universal Wisdom for daily life - introduction to the course Universal Wisdom

18-10 The Unity of Life

25-10 The Mystery of Man

Series 2 - November

Karma: the universal law of equilibrium

- 01-11 Is Karma just?
- 08-11 Karma and Astrology
- 15-11 How to deal with suffering?
- 22-11 The end never justifies the means!

Series 3 - December

Reincarnation: the lost key in Western thought

- 29-11 The process of dying
- 06-12 What happens after death?
- 13-12 Will I become myself again?
- 20-12 Reincarnation and karma: keys to a just society

National symposium of the Theosophical Society Point Loma

The annual English symposium takes place **on Sunday evening, October 4th 2026.**

Time: from 6:00 p.m. to approximately 10:30 p.m. CE(S)T. It will be held online via Zoom. Participation is free.



In her final book, *The Key to Theosophy*, Helena P. Blavatsky writes that there are four fundamental ideas capable of binding all of humanity together as one family: Universal Unity and Causation, Human Solidarity, Karma, and Reincarnation. If we were to live by these ideas, the world would change.

Chaos, war and poverty would cease to exist. There would be harmony and justice.

At this symposium, we will explore together what is meant by Universal Unity and Solidarity, as well as the deeper meaning behind Karma and Reincarnation. Most of us have heard these terms before, but do we really know what they mean and what their implications are?

If people put these four fundamental ideas into practice in their lives, would this really change the very foundations of

civilisation? Every day, the media confront us with an overwhelming stream of suffering in all its forms. Could that ever come to an end?

Through three lectures and two workshops, we will explore these questions. Are these ideas truly so far-reaching that they can bring about change not only in individuals, but also – and perhaps even more importantly – in our society?

You are warmly invited to join us at the symposium!

Program

- 18:00 Welcome/ introduction
- 18:10 Lecture: Four ideas to understand the world
- 18:30 Lecture: Four ideas to understand ourselves
- Break (5 minutes) -
- 19:00 Workshop
- Break (1 hour) -
- 21:00 Lecture: Four ideas to change the world for the better
- Break (5 minutes) -
- 21:25 Workshop
- 22:30 Closure

For more information about the symposium, visit our Website www.blavatskyhouse.org.

Symposium in Lisbon, Portugal

Four Ideas to Improve the World

October 11th, 2026

Turim Hotel, Avenida 5 de Outubro 160, 1050-062

Admission is free

This is the second time the Point Loma Theosophical Society organizes a symposium in Lisbon. The response to the first symposium was very positive, and many people asked us to organize another one this year. We are delighted to fulfill that request. Therefore, we invite everyone to the symposium 'Four Ideas to Improve the World.'

During the workshops, there will be ample opportunity for everyone to exchange ideas.

At our book table, you will find several theosophical books in Portuguese, as well as several copies of the Portuguese edition of our magazine *Lucifer – the Light-Bringer*. You can also get all information about our course 'Universal Wisdom', which will begin in the fall.



If you would like to secure a seat, please register by emailing info@blavatskyhouse.org

You can also contact us at this email address if you have any questions or if you would like some more information.

Program

- 10:00 Four ideas to understand the world
- 10:45 Break -
- 11:00 Four ideas to understand ourselves
- 11:45 Workshop
- 12:45 Lunch break -
- 13:45 Four ideas to change the world for the better
- 14:30 Break -
- 14:45 Workshop
- 16.00 Informal chat

Course Universal Wisdom

Starting again in October

This course is based on the core of wisdom that underlies all great religions and philosophies. This wisdom is known by several names, such as Esoteric Philosophy, Theosophia. The core of universal wisdom teaches us that unity and compassion are the foundations of Life. If anything is clear, it is that these are the missing links that the world today so desperately needs. By applying the wisdom in this course, you will help fill this gap.

The lessons

1. Unity
2. Reality and illusion
3. Seven thought aspects
4. 'Man, know thyself'

5. Interim research
 6. Thoughts and ennobling your character
 7. Cyclicality and karma
 8. Hierarchies of consciousness and the process of emanation
 9. Self-realization and progressive evolution
 10. Building an image of an ideal
 11. Two paths, a principled choice
 12. Knowing the SELF
 13. Unveiled thinking
 14. Theosophical Society – Point Loma
- The course is held online via Zoom, weekly on Sundays at 16:00-18:00 CE(S)T from October to May. The contribution for the course is € 60,-

Info and registration:

<https://blavatskyhouse.org/courses/> 31/07/2026 16:22



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
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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 Theo-
sophia. (We refer to the statutes, aims and
principles for further information.)
- Board members must meet integrity
requirements.
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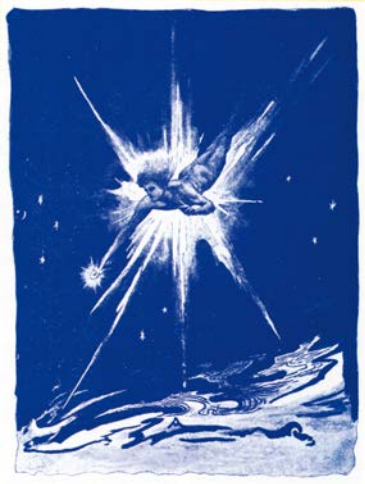
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I.S.I.S. Foundation

The activities of the I.S.I.S. Foundation (International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth) 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)