

the *Light-bringer*

# Lucifer<sup>®</sup>

*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*

**Easter: the  
Initiation of the  
Great Temptation**

**Theosophy: the  
Way towards  
Universal  
Consciousness**

**Symposium Life  
Wisdom:**

- Working on Life Wisdom
- The Foundation of Life Wisdom
- How to become life-wise?



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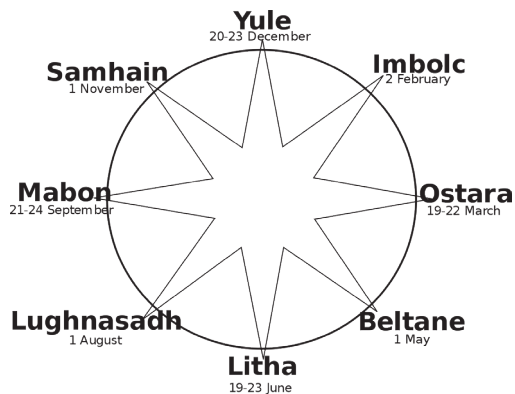
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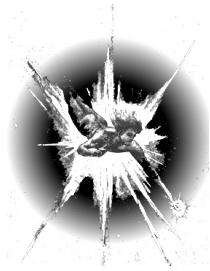
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# Editorial

Spring is the time in the northern hemisphere where we you can see life is returning to the earth. The bare trees get leaves. The birds come back from their winter home. People long for the warm summer, for vacation, for adventure.

Yet it would be good if we do not forget the winter solstice of last December. Christmas is the time of the year in which we make intentions or decisions to improve and uplift our life. We wrote about the winter-solstice in our last issue of *Lucifer*. Now it is time we have to ask ourselves whether we are still on the same track. Do we keep our intentions and decisions?

In an article about Easter – the second holy season of the year – we go into this inspiring topic and try to show the real story behind Easter.

Can we really reach a greater consciousness, yes, can we come to a Universal Consciousness? Theosophy answers this question with a loud and clear “yes” and teaches us how to do it. Theosophy is *the* Way towards Universal Consciousness. That may be a bold statement, but we hope to make it clear in an inspiring article.

Expressing Universal Consciousness means that we become wise; also wise in the practical issues of life. However, what is the basis of life wisdom and how do we obtain it? The Theosophical Society Point Loma devoted last year a symposium to this issue. We publish the two core talks of this Symposium. Together they give practical answers to these questions.

Further you will find in this *Lucifer* our response to a rather remarkable vision that was expressed during a scientific symposium in India. Did people of earlier civilizations really have some kind of flying machines?

Finally, in *Questions & Answers*, we discuss the power of desire, the nature of our Self and progressive evolution.

We thank our readers for the comments we received and we continue to appreciate it when you email us your questions, comments and suggestions.

**The editors**



# Easter: the Initiation of the Great Temptation

**Do religious festivals have any significance in our secular world? For most of us Easter is nothing more than a free long weekend. This article shows the original meaning of Easter and how we can celebrate this festival meaningfully again.**

## Key thoughts

- » Easter or spring festival was celebrated by many others besides the Jews and Christians.
- » The Easter story is representation of Initiations of the Great Temptation, at the time of the spring equinox (March 21).
- » The initiate descends into the “underworld”, gives an impulse of light, without being contaminated by that sphere.
- » The Chrēstos (disciple), after passing the tests in the “underworld”, becomes a Christos, a Master.

In our materialistic world there are not many people who know the real meaning of Christmas. We have tried to make that clear in a previous article.<sup>(1)</sup> This winter festival is generally associated with “birth”. But the background of Easter is unknown to many people. Because of the progressive secularization, the commemoration of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as it is confessed by the Churches, is an event experienced by an ever-decreasing number of people. Nowadays, Easter is a feast of chocolate eggs and moreover a nice long weekend.

However, for many centuries, Easter was the most important celebration in the Christian world. After all, the central dogma of the Christian Churches, through which they hoped to distinguish themselves from others, was faith in the resurrection of Jesus. And that is celebrated during Easter. It is for this reason that Churches have appropriated the Jewish Passover. For although this universal spring festival undeniably

goes back in time much further, there are still Churches who believe that it is their patented property that no one else can claim.

## The Jewish Passover, Pesach

That claim, however, lacks any evidence. Easter was celebrated by the Jews many centuries before the alleged birth of Jesus.

Now, of course, the Christian faith is a continuation of the old Jewish religion. The holy book of the Christians, the Bible, therefore consists for the largest part of Hebrew books. One of those books, Exodus,<sup>(2)</sup> describes how the Israelites instituted their paschal feast, or Passover. They were in captivity in Egypt and their God, the Lord, had already sent nine plagues over this land to deliver His chosen people. It was not enough. A tenth plague would follow. All the Egyptian firstborns, from the son of the Pharaoh to that of the prisoner in the dungeon,<sup>(3)</sup> died, yes, even the firstborns of the animals died. But the Israelites, by the command of

Moses and Aaron, had smeared the blood of a sacrificial goat or sheep on both doorposts, so that the Lord might pass their doors and they would be spared. The animal sacrifice was like a *Pascha* – a Passover – to the Lord.

That word *Pascha* is an Aramaic word – the Hebrew equivalent is *Pesach* – which is related to the verb *pasach*, which means “to skip”. God had skipped the houses of the Israelites.

If you take this story literally – which both the Christian and Jewish authorities do – it is a gruesome, barbaric act. You let a whole nation cruelly pay for something only a few were to blame for. The majority was as innocent as the sacrificed sheep.

But there is sufficient evidence in the story to conclude it means something else. The nature of the sacrifice and the moment at which the animal has to be sacrificed, give us a clear hint for this. In Exodus it is explicitly stated that the sacrifice must be a sheep or goat. Does the Lord only love that type of flesh? Of course not! This should not be taken literally. The “Lord” God symbolizes *Deus Sol*, the divine Sun. That Sun was born on the 21st of December, at the time of the winter solstice and that Sun grows and grows until it comes under the sign of Aries (a ram) at the spring equinox. The sacrifice must be given on this day. The Jewish tradition is fully in line with this, because the Jewish Easter falls on or after the 14th of the first month of the Jewish calendar. In the Bible this month is called Abib,<sup>(4)</sup> now it is called Nisan. The Jewish Easter feast still falls in the spring month Nisan (March-April); to be precisely: on the fourteenth day or the full moon night of the 14th on the 15th of Nisan. Fourteen days before, it was, of course, new moon. This may seem like a logical and therefore pointless remark, but later on it will become clear that we did not make this comment without a purpose.

## Pagan Easter

Besides by the Jews and Christians, Easter or the spring festival was celebrated by many other peoples. The name “Easter” indicates that this feast should have been known to other peoples who spoke languages other than Hebrew. Scholars do not know with certainty where the word Easter comes from, but a certain St. Bede, an English scholar from the 8th century, suggested that the word came from the Anglo-Saxon *Eastre*. *Eastre* was the goddess of spring. The spring month, which corresponds to our April, was named after her. In honor of her, celebrations were held on the day of the spring equinox — the 21st of March. At

that time, the Easter bunny was already associated with this party and colored eggs were given to each other. The hare symbolized fertility, while the eggs represented the sunlight, returning at this time of the year.

The egg has been the symbol of life, fertility and rebirth from the earliest times. The Hinduistic Egg of Brahmā, the World Egg of the Egyptians, yes, in many places the egg was seen as a symbol of the creation of a world and the return of life. The entire Easter party is a reflection of that fact. Maybe that is why Christians suggest that the Easter egg also symbolizes the empty tomb, from which Jesus resurrected.

Also Ostara, the Scandinavian goddess, where, according to others, the name Easter is derived from or is at least cognate with,<sup>(5)</sup> was a symbol of the resurrection that takes place in nature during the spring. She was therefore worshiped by the northern peoples in this period. During this festival people gave each other eggs — the so-called Ostara eggs.

The return of life also inspired the ancient Greeks to hold festivities in spring. Known is the legend of Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture and donor of growth and fertility. Persephone was eloped by Hades and had to stay in the Underworld for a third part of the year. Her return to Earth symbolizes the resurrection of death from that Underworld. Not without reason both Persephone and Demeter were especially worshiped in the Eleusinian Mysteries, where, as is known, initiations took place in the spring.<sup>(6)</sup>

Candidates for these initiations in these so-called Lesser Mysteries were told the myth of Persephone. These neophytes, too, would be resurrected from the dead. Furthermore, a variant of the legend tells that Demeter, saddened by the loss of her daughter, descended into the Underworld to find and liberate her daughter. Immediately we also think of the well-known hero Orpheus who moved into the Underworld to get his beloved Eurydice out of that sad, dark world. But also the handsome young man Adonis had to enter the Underworld. He was both loved by Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility (or life) and by Persephone, the goddess who stayed in the underworld and thus represented death. Zeus judged that he had to spend part of the year with both of them.

Not only the Greeks knew this story of resurrection from the dead. The Phrygians, for example, who lived in Asia Minor in the first millennium B.C., believed that their deity slept during the winter season. At the time of the spring equinox they made music and danced to awaken



him. Also the loved one of their female deity Cybele died from his wounds, inflicted upon him by this goddess, but arose from the dead.

Finally, the myth of the Egyptian Osiris cannot be missed here. This deity, who, like all the other gods, symbolizes the sun, drowned in the Nile by the hands of his jealous brother Seth, but was revived by his sister and wife Isis and by Nephthys, the wife of Seth. In a certain version of this myth, Isis received her son Horus from the dead Osiris. We could give many more examples of other sun gods who are put to death and rise again in spring time. But anyone who has an eye for it can easily find those stories himself. There are enough myths of gods or heroes who rise from the dead, and whose resurrection is celebrated during spring.

### The initiation of the 21st of March

These myths from all corners of the world make the theosophical doctrine saying that initiations take place at the four major turning points of the year - during the two equinoxes and the two solstices - at least plausible and worth studying.

In our previous article we wrote about the initiation of the mystic birth.<sup>(7)</sup> A candidate has successfully touched his own inner source, his divinity, his Christos principle. The “child” in him has been awakened. He has united himself with his inner god.

But the union with that inner divinity has just begun. You can always unite more intense, merge even further. There are therefore degrees of initiation. Initiation means starting and greater, deeper initiations can take place.

Therefore, after the Initiation of the Mystic Birth, that of the Great Temptation, takes place, beginning on March the 21st. It is not necessarily so, that the candidate who has passed the Initiation of the Mystic Birth will take part in the spring initiation that same year. This probably does not happen. Maybe he will only be so advanced in a next life. But anyways, the winter initiation is followed by the Initiation of the Great Temptation.

As mentioned before, it starts on the 21st of March, preferably with a new or waxing moon. The greatest initiations take place when new moon falls on the day of the spring equinox.

With a new moon, the attraction of the sun is the strongest and the spirit-soul of the initiate then most easily leaves the sphere of the Earth to find, through the inner ways of the solar system, its way to the atmosphere of Venus, Mercury and then enters the spiritual spheres of Father



This famous relief was offered by a rich initiate in the Eleusinian Mysteries. It depicts Demeter, giving ears of wheat to the young Triptolemos, the founder of the Eleusinian Mysteries. These ears of wheat represent wisdom. Behind him stands the daughter of Demeter, Persephone (or Kore), crowning Triptolemos. This crowning happens to each neophyte.

Sun. Those inner ways are called the *correspondences of the cosmos*. They are comparable to the venous system or nervous system in the human body.

All beings travel from planet to planet and to the sun over these pathways, just like blood circulating from organ to organ through our veins. We, human beings of planet Earth, travel over these correspondences during our sleep and death as well. But this we do unconsciously, because we have not yet learned to perceive the other, more ethereal worlds, of our solar system. The pathways lead us to the pumping heart of the sun and from there they lead again to the different organs – the planets – of the solar system. These great initiations last for fourteen days. Two weeks after the start, therefore, when the moon is full, and the attraction of the earth is the strongest, the spirit-soul of the initiate descends again into the body that was in trance and guarded by the Teachers of the initiate.

The Jewish Passover is, as mentioned above, celebrated on the first full moon of the month Nisan. In other words, Passover begins on the day when the moon is full of the month of which the 14th day falls on or after the 21st March, the spring equinox. This is a clear reference to the spring initiation, where the neophyte returns from the “dead” at full moon after fourteen days.

Even Christian Easter, whose final date was set after much bickering and squabbling at the Nicene Council in 325, reminds us of this fact. The first Christians, however, wanted to stand out from the Jews and therefore decided to celebrate their Easter on the first Sunday after full moon and after the spring equinox. They chose for a Sunday, because the spring festival is characterized by the return of the sun. But while doing so they detracted from the two-week period after the spring equinox. Yet they introduced a tradition that, at least, still contains something of this fourteen-day cycle. That is the phenomenon of Passion Sunday: the second Sunday before Easter, and the fifth Sunday of the Lent. Passion Sunday is still celebrated in many countries. It is remembered that on this day the alleged suffering of Christ began.

## **The Initiation of the Great Temptation**

The Easter initiation is known in Theosophy as the Initiation of the Great Temptation. Even more than at the Initiation of the Great Birth in December, it is all about trial and victory ... or failure!

There are however major misunderstandings about these trials. We should therefore make it clear that you are only tested by yourself. There are no teachers who present difficult tests or give dangerous assignments. They do not lay traps, nor do they dig holes. You only meet yourself. What is being tested? That part of the composite consciousness that has solemnly pledged to live according to the most ethical rules of conduct that exist, is tested. It is the personal man who pledges this to his Higher Self. The personal man addresses his Father in Heaven and says, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”<sup>(8)</sup>

That means that the personal human accepts the ethics of the Higher Self, even if he has to drink the cup to the last drop. He will live for the sake of others, whatever it may cost him. He no longer wants anything for himself. He will calmly and in a controlled matter develop all his inherent abilities and use them compassionately and unselfishly for the benefit of the totality.

For this he will be tested. That trial certainly does not

start at the sacred moment of the Initiation of the Great Temptation. Never can anyone participate in such an initiation, if he has not already shown in the practice of daily life, that he has embedded these ethical principles into his character

The trial can never reach beyond the consciousness where the light has been shed upon. If a thief decides to stop stealing, he will be tested in this kind of honesty. He may then come into a situation where a wallet is left unattended. There is no chance that he will be caught. Will he continue to respect someone else’s property? If so, he succeeds in that trial and is in fact initiated at his level. The inner light illuminates this part of his consciousness. But if telling the truth, no matter where no matter when, is not included in his decision, then he will not be tested for this determination.

The neophyte who is initiated during the spring equinox comes in an undeniably more exalted but nevertheless comparable situation as the thief who stops stealing. The Easter initiation is that of adolescence. After all, the Pupil on the Path has already successfully witnessed the Initiation of the Great Birth. And the light that he has ignited in himself during that initiation must enlighten him in all his deeds and thoughts.

In other words, he has to prove that he has really become the unselfish power that he has pledged himself to be. He stood face to face to his inner God. He may have been that God for a brief moment. Now he cannot go back. He has seen the light and can no longer pretend he has never seen it. That is why he has to deal with everything from his past that has not yet climbed up to this spiritual, yes, divine level. He may no longer feel any attachment to what he has left behind. With every initiation, the curtain will close behind him forever.

Everybody can recognize this principle. When you at some point in your life discover that a certain act is wrong, then you can never pretend you did not know it. Imagine, you buy a beautiful carpet for an affordable price. You do not know how it was made. If you later hear that it was knotted by children working in miserable conditions, you can never ignore this knowledge when purchasing a second carpet. If you really are concerned about the lives of others, you must use this knowledge in your own life. During the many lives we live, we think almost innumerable thoughts. And all those thoughts are living beings, provided with life energy by us. If they are below the fictional dividing line of unselfishness, then they should in no way have an attraction on someone who must be so



purified, if he wants to enter the portals of the spiritual sun successfully. And please note: attraction does not only mean that something is pleasant to you, but it also arises when something instills your aversion or fear.

## The underworld

Before the student becomes a Master, he must be tested in harsh conditions. This is alluded to in many of the stories of all Reformers of the world. Before Siddhārtha became Gautama Buddha, Māra, the evil one, visited him, while Siddhārtha was meditating under the Bodhi tree. It is also said of Jesus that he spent forty days in the desert and was visited there by the devil.<sup>(9)</sup>

In ancient mythical narratives of initiation, the neophyte must descend into the Underworld. Take for example the so-called Egyptian book of the dead — which is in fact a representation of initiation and of which the real Egyptian title is *Reu nu pert em hru*, which means: “Book of Emerging Forth into the Light”. In this book the neophyte moves through *Amenti*, the Underworld, before he arrives in front of the throne of Osiris. The original Egyptian book of Job, which was strangely enough included in the Bible, provides a flowery description of the suffering that the neophyte can experience in that lower sphere.

There are various descriptions of this “descent into hell”. We already noticed that Demeter, in search of her daughter

Persephone, moves into the Hades, as the Greeks called this low atmosphere. But best known is probably Orpheus who is allowed to pick up his deceased beloved Eurydice through a favor of the gods from the Underworld.

That Underworld is not just a fantasy world. According to Theosophy, it really exists. Our entire solar system is completely filled with all kinds of interpenetrating spheres or worlds. Radio waves, having a different condition, a different vibration compared to physical matter, can penetrate solids. In the same way there exist more and less spiritual worlds than ours, consisting of substance that is of a different nature: coarser or more ethereal. That is why these worlds are invisible to us, earthly people, who have to deal with the senses of our world.

The Underworld is a sphere that is less developed than the earth world. That is why it is an *Underworld* for us. Just as for the gods this earthly atmosphere is an Underworld for them.

The neophyte must bring light and life in that dark sphere. His presence is needed badly, especially at the time of the Easter season. Through spiritual magnetic attraction, his perceptive consciousness dwells in this gloomy area, where he must give wisdom, hope and inspiration. But he may not in any way be attracted to this rough world.

It may sound crazy, but we are also being visited by more developed beings. The Sanskrit word “*Avatāra*” alludes

to this. A very lofty being — a “god” — has its influence here on earth for some time. For that god, our habitat is an Underworld.

In the same way the initiate in the Hades gives an impulse of light, without being contaminated by that sphere himself. And that is only possible if there is nothing in him that is attracted to it. No fiber of his consciousness, no fleeting thought, no secretly cherished wish — nothing but nothing should vibrate with the rough structure of the Underworld. You can compare it with a former drug addict who has overcome his addiction for quite some time. In daily life he does not feel any attraction to drugs. His experience has grown, he elevates himself. Maybe it has been years and years since he last felt the weakness of addiction. Then he re-enters the sphere of drug addiction, but this time to help there.



Siddhārta, sitting under the Bodhi Tree, is tempted by Māra to give up the quest to enlightenment.



Is he still experiencing an attraction to that atmosphere? Does he feel disgust? Is there a small thought in him that wants to join with his old friends? Does he have feelings of being homesick, of desire, nostalgia? Do the old thoughts, the ones he used to think during his addiction, pop up again? If so, he is lost. Then he fails. But if he stands above all thoughts that belong to this sphere, if he is permeated with the idea of providing aid and light and inspiration to his brothers who are chained to drugs, chained to their lower impulses, then he passes the test. And beware, he is full of compassion with these poor wretches, although he has no sympathy for their way of life. But he sees the Man behind the addicted personality. And the life of that personality does not exert any attraction on him in any way, neither positive nor negative. He is completely neutral about this, while at the same time he is full of sympathy for the real Man who is hardly able to express himself through that distorted personality. He has really overcome this pitiable condition and is therefore no longer attached to it in any way.

So do not look back. Attach to nothing. Have no fear. Do not long for anything. Be indifferent to joy and sorrow. Be part of the totality. Then you go through the largest trial. But if you, just like Orpheus, who wanted to rescue his Eurydice from the Underworld, still feel some attachment and look back, then you are lost, and you lose your Treasure, your Beloved, your Eurydice. The story of Orpheus in the Underworld is the story of a failed initiation.

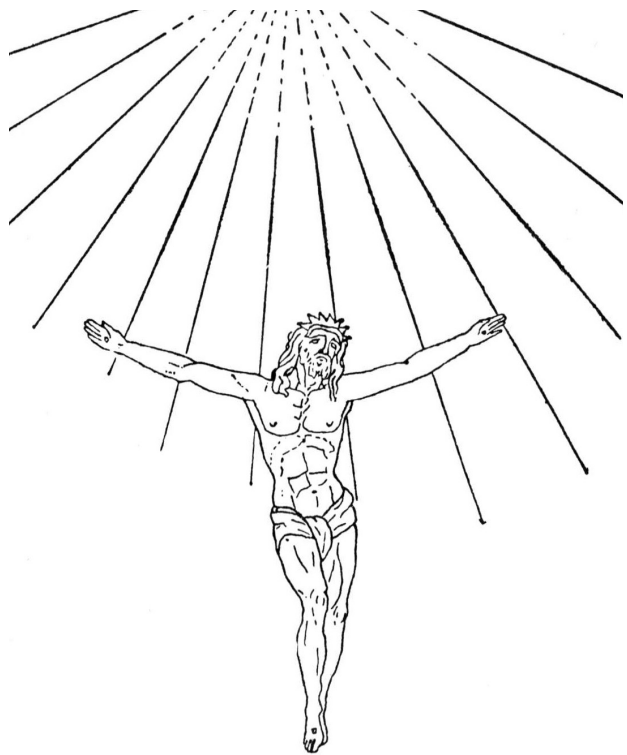
## The cross

When Moses commanded his people to slaughter a sheep and to smear its blood on the doorpost, this had to take place in the form of a cross, the tau, the cross that has the form of a T. Listen to what he says:

And ye shall take a bunch of hyssops and dip it in the blood that is in the bason and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.<sup>(10)</sup>

Thanks to this blood in the form of a cross the vengeance of the Lord will not reach the house; it will “skip” the house.

Let us not profane this statement by taking it literally. It is pure symbolism. The Israelite – and that is he who tries to awaken the divine within himself, a “warrior” for the divine – will not be killed during the initiation of March the 21st, nor will be killed what he produces: his



Krishna crucified in space. H.P. Blavatsky notes that this figure does not actually represent Krishna, but another form of Vishnu, Vithobā. Source: H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 14, pp. 286-297.

first son. This suffering passes him, when he brings the sacrifice of the cross.

That cross is a universal symbol, contrary to what some Christians want us to believe. When the Christian Churches adopted Easter and claimed it as unique to their faith, they commemorated at this festival what they considered the most important of their doctrine: the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus. Whether they had any knowledge of the true background of their religion, we cannot judge. But that the suffering of a great man, his death and resurrection at the time of the spring equinox is commemorated, is in itself absolutely correct. The crucifixion is however certainly not an exceptional Christian phenomenon.

First of all, we find the cross as a symbol with the Hindus, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the native Americans, the Greeks, the Romans and many others. The cross is a universal symbol. It has many meanings. It stands amongst other things for eternal life and a twofold generating power. The philosophical background of it is that the universe arises when spirit and matter unite. If a living being is born somewhere – and it does not matter whether this is a solar system or a human being – there is a duality: spirit and matter. The spirit is then, as it were, crucified

in the fabric.

In every man the spirit is crucified in the matter of the body. The divine-spiritual power connects with the material. The spirit-man – or the Christos – is “nailed”, glued in the material.

There is a woodcut in a book from the 19th century, *The Hindoo Pantheon*, entitled “Krishna crucified in space” (see image on the left).<sup>(11)</sup> At a glance the European or American reader, educated in the Christian tradition, may think: “That is a strange picture of Jesus. The cross is missing”. For the likeness with the suffering Christ is remarkable; even the holes in the hands are shown.

It is said about Krishna that he died because he was nailed to a tree by an arrow of a hunter. When the hunter asks the dying person for forgiveness, Krishna answers: “Go, hunter, through my favor, to Heaven, the abode of the gods.”<sup>(12)</sup> Does this not resemble Christ, who, hanging on the cross, forgives the thief who is hanging next to him. We find the same picture in other places as well. On Egyptian reliefs in the temple of Kom Ombo we see two hierophants on either side of the body of a newly initiated candidate. They are pouring a double stream of water over him; these streams are intertwined and form a cross.<sup>(13)</sup>

In the Scandinavian *Edda*, it is told that Odin is crucified on a tree. He then says:

I know that I hung on a wind-rocked tree, nine whole nights.  
With a spear wounded and to Odin offered — me to myself.  
On that tree of which no one knows from what root it  
springs.<sup>(14)</sup>

Finally, we want to conclude these incomplete summations by pointing out that during the initiations in the Greek Mysteries, the candidate was placed on a cruciform bank, died and then resurrected as someone who was born twice. The symbolism of all this is clear. The spiritual aspect of man is crucified in the matter of existence. We are crucifying the Christos within us by surrendering ourselves to or identifying ourselves with that part in us that is focused on that matter, from which it has been raised. It is the personality within us that crucifies the Christos. However, if man focuses on his inner deity, then he is illuminated by the rays of Osiris, the rising sun. Then he is like the hunter, who has indeed killed Krishna, but in his intercession, he can still go to heaven. Then he is like the thief who is crucified next to Christ, but who focuses on his inner Christos, his own higher nature.



Relief in the temple of Kom Ombo. Two gods-hierophants pour the water of life in cross form over the body of the initiate when he awakes, when he stands up after his successful initiation.

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,” he says. And Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”<sup>(15)</sup>  
It is through the Self that the self is redeemed.

## The Eucharist and the crucifixion

The entire crucifixion story is a symbolic representation of initiation. The entry into Jerusalem, the last supper, the betrayal of Judas, the crucifixion and the resurrection come straight from the Greek Mysteries.

Narrations say that Jesus came to Jerusalem on an ass and the foal of an ass. Literally taken, such a detail obviously means nothing. But the planet Saturn was referred to in the mystical language of the Hither East as an ass. Saturn now has a very close relationship to the Earth. It is one of the seven sacred planets known to the ancients and it fulfills a formative function in relation to the Earth. Saturn is like her mother. That is why the foal of the ass is the Earth. As is known in Jewish symbolism, Jerusalem stands for the Earth, while heavenly Jerusalem represents the spiritual world.

If you apply these thoughts to the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem, then it is clear that what is described here is how the spiritual man – the Christos – descends into matter in which he is eventually crucified.<sup>(16)</sup>

When Jesus is in Jerusalem, wine and bread are consumed during the last supper. That is, of course, also not without significance. This practice existed for many centuries before Christianity. In the Greek Mysteries bread

stood for Demeter or the spiritual mind, and wine for Dionysus. Demeter was the symbol of revival of life from the seed, just as bread derives from the wheat seed. Wine is a well-known symbol that stands for wisdom. It is through fermentation of the grape that wine is obtained. Eating bread and drinking wine is a symbolic expression of the awakening of spiritual life and the fermentation of esoteric wisdom in yourself.

Wine and bread also stood for the blood and the flesh of Christ. There is far more meaning behind this than what is generally assumed. In the blood is life, is the old mosaic statement. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of blood during the last supper, he means the cosmic life, the cosmic vitality. In Sanskrit this is referred to as *Jīva*, the divine life, divine vitality. Drinking this blood is becoming one with the Universal Life.

Bread symbolizes the intellect in the mystical language of the Mystery Schools. It was told that bread, or the raw material of bread, grain, originally came from the planet Venus. That planet is associated with the mind, but the mind enlightened by spirit: the Higher Manas. While the wine, which represents the blood – life – was supposed to have a relationship with Jupiter, the planet that controls vitality.

Drinking the mystical wine and eating the mystical bread – eating the cosmic Christos – is thus becoming spiritually and intellectually aware of the unity of life.<sup>(17)</sup>

Another significant fact is that the Christ is crucified on Mount Calvary, which means Place of [the] Skull. And next to him, two criminals are crucified. One is the symbolic representation of the brain-intellect and emotional thinking aspect in our consciousness. This brain-mind gives great value to sensory perception. This criminal therefore asks for a sign that Jesus is really the son of God. The other criminal, as we have just seen, focuses on the inner Christos. This is the mind that in Theosophy is called Higher Manas: thinking beyond the persona, and in which intellect, but especially comprehension is dominant. This aspect of the human thinking capacity survives death and is brought to the spiritual areas.

### **Does Christos or Chrēstos suffer?**

It goes without saying that we could say much more about the countless symbols, all coming from the initiation ceremonies of the ancients, but it would be too much for a short article like this. We would like to highlight one more aspect, however.

It is never the Teacher who suffers. It is never the inner god

that is being tested. How can a mighty god be crucified in the literal sense of the word! The idea of a crucified god is an absurdity that no missionary has ever been able to explain to a pagan.

As we mentioned in our previous article, it is the disciple or the Chrēstos who is being tested.<sup>(18)</sup> It is the personal aspect in the human consciousness that has raised itself to a lofty level, in such a way that it is able to endure the fire test, in order to determine whether it is actually transformed from iron to spiritual gold in an occult alchemy. If we pledge ourselves to live in the higher, noble aspects of our consciousness, those higher aspects are not tested. Our Higher Self is already compassionate and does not need to take any test to prove it. It is this idea that is expressed in the sublime but also veiled manner in the so-called cry on the cross.

In the Gospels it says that Jesus exclaims at the peak of suffering: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Now something strange is occurring in this passage. The New Testament of the Bible is written in Greek. But this passage is first given in Hebrew: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”<sup>(19)</sup>

This fact should make us wonder. In the Gospels Jesus frequently appears speaking, but his words are not displayed in Hebrew or Aramaic, the language he must have spoken. That makes sense. If you write a book in English about a Frenchman, you will display his sayings in English. Then why presented the writers of the Gospels this text in Hebrew?

The answer is because they wanted to say something that not everyone was allowed to know. As Gottfried de Purucker shows,<sup>(20)</sup> “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” is something different than what the Greek text deliberately misinterprets. It says, “My God! My God! How thou hast glorified me!”<sup>(21)</sup>

Those who understand this paradox also understand the essence of the holy Initiation of the Great Temptation.

It is the personal man who is at the peak moment abandoned by his inner god. He *must* be abandoned. He has to do it alone. He must prove his independence. Did he not pray, in accordance with the Lord’s Prayer, “Lead us not into temptation”?<sup>(22)</sup>

That does not mean that God should lead him into a situation where he is tempted – it will be a very cruel god who does such a thing with his “children” – but it means that during the trial he wants to be left alone, so that he may overcome. Actually, the English translation of this fragment of the Lord’s Prayer should read: Do not lead



us, in periods of temptation. Do not lead me out of this labyrinth of manifested life, but let me do it on my own, so that I may become strong. The young student still expects help from his teacher. The teacher will assist and advise him. But when he becomes stronger, he will have to do it alone. Then the teacher takes a step back. And when the student wants to become as wise and strong as the teacher, he will request to be left alone.

The weak man, living in the personality, constantly asks for help. He seeks the cause of his grief, of his setbacks, outside himself. He does not yet recognize that he himself is the cause of everything that happens in his life. But while growing, he is going to lead life. Then he becomes Chrēstos, student on the Path. He grows, expands his consciousness. Until the moment has come, when he has to prove himself. He descends into the Underworld, brings light there, gives as much inspiration as he is able to, so that those chained souls there at least can free themselves a little. He becomes aware of his own past. He sees the mistakes, the tendencies of the past. It is the temptation. He is confronted with the weaknesses of his past that have become living entities. He has to face them. He must show that he has overcome them. And he has to do it alone. Is he as strong as his teacher? Does he cherish his ideals intensely enough in these difficult circumstances? Oh, it is so easy to confess a sublime ideal with the mouth. In normal circumstances, in times of prosperity and peace, it may not be too difficult to love your neighbors. But what to do when oppression prevails? Or war? When you may have to pay for your selflessness with death or torture?

Initiation is such an exceptional situation. You may call it a stress situation. There is spiritual, intellectual, psychic and astral suffering. But, paradoxically, the neophyte may not experience that suffering, may not be touched by it. If the neophyte confesses to the stress, he is lost. He must remain as calm as in a normal situation with no help. No one to provide support or advice or inspiration. But exactly because of this – because his inner God has withdrawn himself – the neophyte will be glorified. The neophyte himself becomes the deity. He raises himself to the divine area and the previously latent divinity has now become active.

This divinity is called by the neophyte in the Greek text: “Ho theos mou”, the God of mine. It is your God. You are that God. You prove that you can do it. You prove yourself. You have become the Self. Because the inner God left you to Yourself, you have become like that inner God. You are no longer a student anymore, you are a Master. You have

gloriously passed the Initiation of the Great Temptation. It is Easter. Life returns to the earth. From the unfathomable depth of the divine sun the Christos who died as Chrēstos, rises. He was left alone by his inner God, so that he was able to unite permanently with Him. The neophyte comes back from the other shore, as the Buddhists say, but now as an initiate, a Master.

This is the real meaning of Easter. And everyone can experience something of it.

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# Theosophy: the Way towards Universal Consciousness

What is consciousness? What is Universal Consciousness? Should we speak about *a* path or *the* path to Universal Consciousness? These essential questions were discussed by Herman C. Vermeulen in his contribution to the congress of the European Federation of the Theosophical Society Adyar (EFTS), which took place from August 21st till 26th 2017 in Barcelona, Spain.

## Key thoughts

- » There is *one* Universal Truth. All humans possess a part of it.
- » We will continually approach the One Truth and never stop doing that.
- » Consciousness is limited, but all its limitations can be broadened and extended.
- » We are the Boundless All. The point is to realise that and live accordingly. Theosophy offers us inspiring guidelines to do that.
- » If we wish to enlarge our theosophical influence in the world, we must train ourselves to cooperate selflessly.

I was very inspired by the invitation for this Conference and its title: *Theosophy: a Way towards Universal Consciousness*. Because immediately it gave me a lot of thoughts and questions. And it forced me to think about a lot of things as well. So many thanks to the president of the European Federation for the invitation. The questions that came up with me while thinking about this title, I will try to answer one by one in my lecture. And I will also explain why I came to certain conclusions. So, let us have a look at them.

## ***Theosophia: a Way towards Universal Consciousness***

First I like to talk about the word *Theosophia* and where it comes from. We learned that its origin lies in two Greek words. “Theos” means “God” or “Gods” and “Sophia” means “Wisdom”. And if we combine these words it says “Theosophia is the Wisdom of the Gods”. So you and I are students

of the Wisdom of the Gods.

In our tradition, we often call the Theosophia the mathematics of religion, philosophy and science, because we are convinced that the Theosophia is the fundamental basis of *all* religions, philosophy and science. Some people say this is a very bold statement, but up until now we have always been able to prove that.

The spreading of the Theosophia started 18 million years ago and you all have read in *The Secret Doctrine* the famous stories about the Mānasaputras. They tried to spread the knowledge among the human beings. That was not always successful. To protect this universal knowledge they started to establish schools, which we call mystery schools. In Europe and the Middle East you will find a lot of remains of them: in Greece, Egypt, Lebanon. They also sent messengers, who, by the way, seldom openly announced that they were messengers. But we do know their names, like

Plato, Mohammed, Jesus, Buddha, Lao-tse. They all spread the same truth, the same fundamental truth, dressed in the language of that particular place and culture. And of course, what they brought was a limited expression of the Theosophia. An example that I always like to mention is the *Tao Teh King* of Lao-tzu. There are some 156 English translations and not one of them is perfect. You always need the Theosophia to understand the deeper meaning. The best thing to do is to start from the Chinese characters and study the original text yourself — but it might take you a year or so to translate one paradox.

## The impulse of 1875

So, what happened after the mystery schools closed? In 1875 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky started her attempt to bring Theosophia back into the western world. She spread that part of Theosophia in our civilizations that fitted best in our way of thinking and in our state of development. And let us keep in mind that what she brought was a limited presentation of Theosophia, yet it was not her own view on it. She intended to write a *Secret Doctrine* of four volumes. She published only two, because her Teachers came to the conclusion that time was needed to understand and study the first two volumes, before we could start with the other two.

In these two volumes we find the heart of the Theosophia, that we all know as the three fundamental propositions. You can find them in volume 1 of *The Secret Doctrine*, in the Proem. This Proem was added after the other parts of *The Secret Doctrine* were written. The people helping H.P.B. in editing and proof reading *The Secret Doctrine* said: “Can you write a type of introduction, because what you present to us is so new in our way of thinking?”

To me, these propositions are one of the most important parts of *The Secret Doctrine*. Why? Because, if you understand those three propositions, you can use them always as the touchstone to check whether your theosophical conclusions are right or wrong.

That was the start of getting Theosophia back into the western world.

If you look to the many incarnations of the Theosophia which happened during the past 18 million years, you

will see that they are nowadays only partly available, and only in a degenerated form. That’s why it always takes an additional effort to discover their basic ideas that are the same in all. For example, we have many translations of Plato’s dialogues in the Dutch language, and there is not one that chooses the right translation of the word “Nous”.

## Theosophia: a Way towards Universal Consciousness

Let us look at the title of the congress again: “Theosophy: a Way to Universal Consciousness.” A way or *the* way, is the big question. Is there more than one way? Or do we all have one and the same way, only differently implemented in different traditions?

We say: there is *One Universal Truth*. And we all have a part of it. To say it with the words of Plato: we build our

own theosophical cave. That is not a problem, as long as we realize that we have created this cave ourselves. What I wish to say is that, if we are able to keep the message of H.P.B. — the Theosophia of 1875 — pure, and present it in the way she had in mind, we can speak about *the Way*. In that case it is *the Way* for our civilization. My conclusion is that I like to read the title as “Theosophia: *the Way* towards Universal Consciousness.” This is also the consequence of the first proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. An important thing to recognize here is that *the Way* does not talk about an end goal. In fact, our evolution, the process of developing our consciousness, is in principle infinite. That

means that we are always, in infinite time, approaching the goal but never come at an end-result. But do not worry: we make progress. We are coming closer and closer to the One Universal Truth. And we will never stop doing that.



## Theosophia: the Way towards Universal Consciousness

Next, let us see, what is *consciousness*? If you think about it, consciousness is acting and reacting upon all the things that we see, perceive and transmit, et cetera.

The process of consciousness leads us immediately to a very important conclusion: consciousness or self-consciousness is always limited. This is not only true for human



beings: there is a limitation for every conscious being. So, if we speak about a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, Gods or Dhyān-Chohans, whatever type of consciousness you may think of, there is always a principal limitation. And what I like to say is that it is a *dynamic* limitation. It is not fixed: all the borders can be moved and enlarged.

### **Theosophia: the Way towards *Universal Consciousness***

Now, let us see *how we can expand our consciousness*. We must realize that in principle we are the Boundless. So, the Way, the principal road we have to go, is *in* our self. In that process we develop ourselves from *un*-consciousness to *self*-consciousness in the direction of *Universal* consciousness.

Self-consciousness means partly reflected consciousness, thinking. We know that we exist by all the things we perceive and to which we react. So what we should realize is: *what we think is what we are*. That is what we identify ourselves with. And of course, that is not only the case with the nice things in life, but also if we become angry, these emotions are also a part of you.

So, how can we expand our consciousness? That is by liberating ourselves from those narrow views. We are living now in a time where a lot of problems run across the world. We cannot solve them by fighting them, we have to really solve them. This is our task: realizing step by step that we are not our personality. That is just an instrument. But to enlarge our mindset takes a certain amount of courage. It always means that we have to enter the unknown.

A good illustration for me is the ocean and its waves. One wave says to the other: “We differ in our identities, we are different waves separated from each other” — without realizing that waves only exist as an *event* in the ocean. What I try to say is that we *are* the ocean and it is our personalities, the waves, that feel the separation.

So it is not the point how to become what we presently are not, and what we have to do to attain it, no, we already *are* the ocean. It is not a matter of training. The process is a step by step identification with the totality, with the Universe, to start realizing that we are the totality.

### **Theosophical guidelines for expanding our consciousness**

How can Theosophy help us? The three propositions are an excellent exercise for this, especially the first one. Besides that, the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* gives

us a lot of information on what Universal Consciousness is and all the steps towards it. The second volume gives us a lot of information about how our human evolution proceeds. In short, this whole process of transformation is first and foremost a process of realization.

The second step is to have the courage to take the consequences. By reaching out, helping others, we express compassion in the right way. Thus we widen our circle. To help us expressing compassion we have of course *The Voice of the Silence* and the seven Pāramitās to guide us in our development. Especially the Pāramitās are a help for the awakening of the character. So, it is not a matter of growing in form or power, but of growing in CHARACTER with capital letters.

And we have a lot of other theosophical material that can help us. In our tradition the seven Jewels of Wisdom are very popular stepping stones: (1) Reincarnation, (2) Karma, (3) the Hierarchical structure of the Universe, (4) Swabhāva, (5) Self-directed evolution, (6) the two Paths and (7) Ātma-Vidyā, Knowledge of the Self. Reincarnation and karma are probably the most well-known and popular topics of the seven. What I like to point out here is that if you want to understand one Jewel, for instance reincarnation or karma, you need to understand the other six as well. If you try to explain to someone that reincarnation exists without taking karma into account, you give that person a very incomplete story. But you cannot leave out Jewel number 6 as well, about the motivation why you do something: in that Jewel lies the explanation why you end up in a specific situation.

What can we do with these theosophical insights? By studying the three fundamental propositions and all seven steps or Jewels, you will continually get a better understanding of your position in the totality and the next step you have to take. The point is to develop an ideal for yourself, a mental picture of what you want to be and where you have to go to. It is very important to *be* the Pāramitās and express them in daily life.

So, if you look at other material from H.P.B. that can help us, we find in volume 12 of the *Collected Writings* her *Esoteric Instructions*. And volume 14 is also important. In that volume she speaks about the mystery of the Buddha. Furthermore we have volume 10, “The Hierarchy of Compassion”, of G. de Purucker’s *Esoteric Teachings* — they are all very inspiring. And another very important one is, as we know, the Bodhisattva vow, working for the enlightenment of all other living beings. And that vow is not limited to one incarnation but will go on forever.

## How can we theosophists help each other?

Now that we are talking about developing the right ideals and motivation, for me the question arises: *how can theosophists help each other?*

Besides being the leader of the Theosophical Society Point Loma, I am one of the vice-presidents of the *International Theosophical Conferences* (ITC). What is the motivation of the ITC? That is to help each other and work together. So, we work out of compassion and we work for compassion. And what makes more sense than seeing different theosophical streams demonstrating as the first ones what compassion means. For, now more than ever there is a need for theosophical knowledge and a theosophical force in the world.

We can make a long list of current problems, such as misunderstanding of religion and philosophies, science, and so on. We now have the key for solving these problems. But first we have to train ourselves to translate the solution into daily, understandable words. From this point of view we come to the conclusion that the situation in the world is not “five to twelve”, but “five past twelve”. To say it a bit more harshly, we are already too late. Just observe what is now going on by wrongly directed idealism: why weren’t we able to inspire young people into a different direction?

If we wish to enlarge our theosophical influence, we have to implement a number of steps in the way we interact and collaborate with each other:

1. *Respect and trust.* Remember that people and organizations are not a “goal” but are a “means”. And we should look over the fences, to learn from each other.

2. *Establish “cross pollination”.* An important goal of ITC is what we call “cross pollination”, sharing each other’s insights. That word was implemented by Betty Bland during the Naarden Conference in 2014, in the Netherlands. And since then it has regularly been a point of discussion: what is the real meaning of “cross pollination”? We do not mean any blind intermixing of ideas and methods, but an exchange and sharing of *the best parts* that we theosophically can offer to each other.

3. *Being impersonal.* Being impersonal is of course our goal, not only during all our contacts, when we meet to exchange thoughts, but also when we reach results. For instance, we may share the articles and other texts that we publish.

4. *Training ourselves in applying Theosophy.* The ITC organizes yearly conferences where the different theosophical traditions – as well as those people calling themselves “independent” – work collaboratively towards specific goals. We have already done this for a couple of years now.

In this connection it is very appropriate to tell you something about the ITC-meeting in Philadelphia in 2017. In 2014, during our meeting in Naarden, we formulated a “Naarden declaration”. In Philadelphia this declaration was made more concrete. Both declarations can be found on the ITC website.

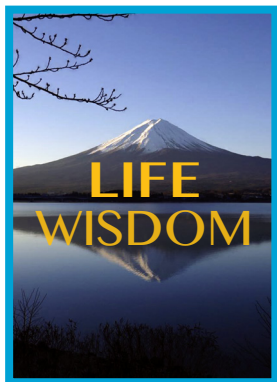
One of the important outcomes of this Philadelphia declaration is that we try to harness the uniqueness of the different traditions. And we try to realize this [and this has already been practiced during the ITC meeting in Berlin, in 2018; eds.] by:

1. Let us identify a number of big problems in this world.
2. See what we can do from the theosophical point of view, by trying to understand the causes and reasons which started this problem, and what will be the solution for it. We study together, each and everyone with his own background, so that we build up a very wide view on the problem and hopefully an answer.
3. Then we translate the answer to our modern language.
4. Next, we make pure, intelligible products which each theosophical organization or stream may use.
5. And we stimulate each other to enter the “arena” of the society with these products, to offer these solutions to our fellow humans. It is very valuable to exchange our experiences in this “arena”, since all our work in the world is one entire whole.

One of the last things I would like to say are some words by Thomas Paine. Philadelphia is the birthplace of a lot of essential things in the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, et cetera. Thomas Paine was a very important figure then, when these ideals were formed. He said: “*We have it in our power to begin the world over again*”. And I like to add this: *in the light of Compassion, spiritual development is a side effect and not a goal.*

Thank you very much.

# Working on Life Wisdom



**The season of 2018-2019 started on the 8th of September with the symposium entitled “Life Wisdom”. There were many visitors at the venue location: New Babylon in The Hague. And thanks to the many opportunities to *interact*, everyone was able to digest a good amount of spiritual**

**energy.**

**Herman C. Vermeulen opened the symposium with a reflection on knowledge and long-term wisdom: *thinking beyond the issues of the day*.**

**Subsequently, two short and clear lectures were given in which the theosophical principles for developing Life Wisdom were presented. After that participants in the workshops discussed the practical application of these principles taking into account pressing and current topics such as education, refugees and loneliness.**

This symposium is, in line with the tradition of The Theosophical Society Point Loma, a “work meeting”. We see it as a great challenge to show the practicality of the theosophical teachings. We do not only wish to spread knowledge about the laws in the Universe, but we also want to show what this knowledge can mean for us. Our current society faces many ethical, moral and technical challenges, that force each person to make important choices. The question is, of course, on which basis these choices are made. We would like to help you to get a clear picture of this. This does not mean that we offer turnkey solutions; it means that we want to provide insight into the nature of what is going on. This makes the possibilities and consequences resulting from our choices much clearer. And that gives us the opportunity to make better choices, especially in the long run.

Knowledge and information has never been distributed

and stored so intensively as well as extensively as today. This also comes with disadvantages. When we are active on the internet, information about our online behavior is stored in databases and someone can benefit from this by selling that information. But knowledge is not only gathering a lot of information but it also requires finding connections and relations between these pieces of information.

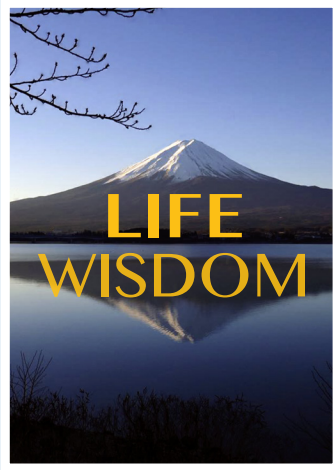
Knowledge may consist of small facts, but it may also consist of fundamental information that transcends our daily delusions. It often takes a lot of effort to develop that kind of knowledge; to separate the “noise” of the temporary and shallow facts and see the broad lines, laws and patterns.

In short, how do we get from mere factual knowledge to Knowledge with a capital, to Wisdom?

Now the knowledge that we present at this symposium goes, as poetically described, back to the depths of time. In all ancient philosophies and religions we will find that same knowledge. So, thinking about this, developing insights, experiencing and applying them, is something for the long term, because the Theosophia, as you know, is based on reincarnation and karma.

With wisdom – the ability to gain insight into fundamental processes by “long-term thinking” – we can determine our paths and choices better. That does, however, require more from us. Firstly, we should be open to wisdom. Secondly, we may recognize consequences that we actually do *not* want to see or experience. Therefore, we should learn to see these consequences in light of the long term. The Theosophia – the wisdom of the gods – always brings us to long-term solutions, longer periods, longer life cycles to work things out. In today’s symposium, we will touch the tip of the iceberg. In the two following lectures we will first present the basic ideas on how to start working with Life Wisdom. No recipes, but “tools” to get started. And in the workshops after that we will see how we can use these tools in practice.





# The Foundation of Life Wisdom

## Habits

Before we will discuss the foundation of Life Wisdom, I want to present some ideas about thoughts and habits. What you see in this picture is the foundation of a wind mill. Just like a foundation keeps something standing, our thoughts are the foundation of our functioning in the world. This wind mill foundation is not visible for people who pass by. Just like our thoughts are invisible for others, and often enough for ourselves as well, because we are not always completely

aware of all our thoughts. We could see the wind mill built on this foundation as a construction of habits. As human beings we all have our habits. They serve us well to get through a working week efficiently: getting up, having breakfast, going to work, getting home, and so on. But they are also necessary to use our energy effectively. Not only do we have habits on a practical level, we are also habitual in the way we interact with one another or in certain situations. Habits can be quite convenient, but



they can also get in our way. When we navigate through our day on auto-pilot, we are not open to new insights and thoughts.

Before something became a habit, it was an action, and prior to that action we had a thought. This makes the sequence: *thought – action – habit – character*. An example of this is making contact with someone. When you see this person, you have a first impression: looks cleanly cut, has a friendly appearance, and so on. With these thoughts in mind you get in contact. The longer you know each other, habits are created within the relationship and over time the relationship with this person will have a certain character. In other situations you also thought first and then acted, and as a result, for example, you end up at the place where you now work or live.

Therefore, you can say that our acts and habits stem from our thoughts. Do we want to change our habits? Then the key to change them lies in our thoughts. Tracking down which thoughts are the foundation of your habits requires a certain degree of self-consciousness and objectivity. Do we want to gain more Life Wisdom? Then we should try to look at our thoughts from a wider perspective. The first fundamental step is the ability to zoom out, in order to create room to view our thoughts from a distance and by which you can obtain other, greater thoughts about your habits or life circumstances.

In a moment I would like to show you a clip about some people who encountered this unexpectedly.

## The overview effect

This clip is about the launch of the Apollo 8. 50 years ago, in 1968, the Apollo 8 went to the moon. This was going to be the first time that a manned spacecraft would leave the Earth's orbit and circle around the moon.

During this journey the astronauts obtained a different view of the world. They were completely astonished. They perceived life on earth and earth itself from a different perspective; as an eco-system of which everything and everyone is a part. They gained a strong sense of cohesion and unity. Let's take a look.

*At this moment in the lecture the video was played. The video can be found via YouTube, search for: "The Overview Effect", or use the link: <https://youtu.be/CHMIfOerio>. The video lasts 20 minutes. During the lecture the fragments 0:00-2:05 and 10:47-12:37 were used.*

## So, what happened in the video clip?

For these men there was no longer a distinction between

themselves and the world. The individual consciousness was expanded and stretched. Both their own problems and the problems on earth disappeared. From their perspective, looking down at the earth, they realized, for example, how useless it is to fight one another, and why we have to end the pollution of the earth. Instead, the astronauts felt a strong need to take care of each other and the earth.

The result of this greater perspective was that the astronauts gained more insight into the cohesion and interconnectedness of life. When your insight into something deepens, it immediately affects the thoughts you have about it. The thoughts of the astronauts were expanded and they shaped their actions accordingly.

This was also the case for Edgar Mitchell, astronaut of the Apollo 14. After his experiences in space he founded the *Institute of Noetic Sciences* (IONS) to share his deepened insight into life with others. The institute aims to expand human consciousness through scientific research that supports inner knowledge. This kind of research fills people with wonder, and shows them that all life is interconnected. In this way they try to inspire people and make them go into action to support mankind and the planet alike.

We are not yet able to jump into a space shuttle today and zoom out to look at the earth but we can *imagine* ourselves doing such a thing, which can be tremendously helpful to us in life.

## Three hypotheses

Zooming out can be done with the help of three hypotheses, which I shall explain shortly. These are universal hypotheses that you can recognize in nature and that are the root of religion, philosophy and science.

When I first heard of them, I kept them in the back of my mind and I started looking at the world through these glasses. Can I explain more of this world using these hypotheses? Evoking these thoughts in different situations helped to expand my scope. Apparently so much so that I am standing here to share my experiences with you :).

## Boundlessness

The first hypothesis is boundlessness. To be found in several philosophies and religions, like the "Tao" of Lao-tzu, or "Allah" in Islam and "Śūnyāta" in Buddhism. We can see boundlessness all around us. Are you zooming out in space? Then we will see that the universe is boundless. Are you zooming in on a human being? Then

you will see that his body is composed of tiny building blocks, and we keep on discovering even smaller particles. Science still hasn't hit a wall anywhere. That is why some scientists are searching for the unification theory, the theory that connects all phenomena and all matter in the universe.

Let's return to the hypothesis of boundlessness. And think of boundlessness in its broadest sense. Boundlessness means:

- Everything already is, therefore in principle nothing can be created or destroyed; we have always been and we will always be.
- There is no absolute beginning, nor ending; and this also applies to forms of life.
- Endless duration.
- Endless potency, fundamental unity.

Please realize that it is a *hypothesis* and you will have to do your own research. This is important! Ask yourself questions like: If there were boundaries, then space and time must have started off at some point, but then what came before? Do I think an absolute starting point makes sense?

Boundlessness indicates the unity of life. If anything would be outside of it anywhere then by definition it would *not* be boundless. This means that all beings belong to the same boundlessness and that all life is very intimately connected. We can speak of a universal brotherhood, in which all life cooperates and is interdependent.

When we consider boundlessness, we can also think about our boundless capacity to learn, there is no end to it! We could learn new things every day. The only reason we do not always manage to do so is that we are not always consciously open to it. A while ago I was confronted with the fact how unaware we can be of our world of habits.

## Conscious and Unconscious

The moment I realized this was when I was riding a bike with my niece and I was teaching her to read traffic signs. We arrived at a sign with arrows for the directions left, right and straight on. We had to go straight ahead. I asked her which way we should go and ... my niece was pointing *up*.

I was so used to seeing the arrow in the context of the direction I am coming from, that I didn't even realize anymore that the arrow was actually pointing upwards. My niece made me aware of this thought.

This experience made me aware of three things:

1. There is always potential of greater understanding.
2. Thoughts can be unconsciously restricting a greater understanding.
3. It is possible to transcend habitual thinking!

My thought about the arrow was very limited. My niece gave me a broader understanding of that arrow. You can imagine there are so many more ideas of which we are not yet aware of, but we could be!

If you are aware of a concept such as boundlessness, it becomes easier to zoom out and to learn, because you realize the fact that there is always more than what you perceive at this moment. *This realization is one of the most important steps to take.* Because it ensures that whatever you see or how you see it, should never be interpreted as *absolute* but always as *relative*. There is always more to know, there is always a deeper and greater truth behind it. It opens the door to other perspectives and with that to more life wisdom.

## Everything is already there

When there are boundless possibilities, this implies that everything is already there potentially.

This means, for example, that "inventors" are actually not so much inventing something new, but they are discovering something. Because the possibility was already there in the light of boundlessness. Just like the rabbit being pulled from the top hat is not created out of nothing; it already existed before it came out of the hat.

I think this is a really hopeful thought. Because it means that there are always ways, we only have to find or discover the right way. If and how fast we'll find this way depends on how familiar we are with nature.

Based on boundlessness, based on unity, everyone is included, also across borders we should be there for one another and support one another. We should care for the earth and devote ourselves to changing the current situation regarding pollution and climate change.

Since boundlessness is the basis of nature, one can say that if you start from the principle of unity, you will find the right way of whatever. These hypotheses can therefore also be seen as signposts on the path, which help you to check your thoughts.

The first time I heard about boundlessness it sounded logical to me, but even so one question remained. Okay, boundlessness, everything is there, but then how can it be possible that life and life forms seem to disappear over time?



## Cyclicity

This question brings us to the second hypothesis, cyclicity. This idea is about the coming and going of life. In the world we can recognize this in phenomena like sleeping and waking, the coming and going of the seasons, dying and being born again.

What is it that disappears, or rather *disintegrates*? Only the outer shape. Consciousness, the soul, the force, the developing being, or however you want to call it, stays intact and it cyclically clothes itself in an outer shape or form to pick up where it left off. This consciousness is the part that learns and has periods of activity and rest, of waking and sleeping. Periods of activity, in which we learn lessons, and periods of rest, the time to process our lessons.

The perspective of cyclicity leads to two important insights:

1. It is important to focus on what is permanent, because outer shapes are temporary and will disappear.
2. As long as we do not overcome our challenges in life, they will return to us.

## Cause and effect

Cyclicity can also be recognized in the realm of thoughts, think about the thoughts that regularly pass by. For example, the daily thought to brush our teeth, but also the annual thoughts about people's birthdays.

The idea of recurring thoughts is very fundamental when we think of Life Wisdom. Indeed, when we repeatedly think certain thoughts, these thoughts will shape us, through the sequence thought-action-habit-character that we mentioned earlier.

Subsequently, our character has an effect on the world around us. In this outer world we move and act and the outer world reacts to this. According to the hypothesis of boundlessness, life is one after all; we are all connected to one another. If we cause an imbalance somewhere, we will reap its effects. The outside world reacts to us, just like how water reacts to an object falling into it. When an object falls into water, a ripple is set in motion in the water. Any other objects that may be in the water reflect this ripple. The force of the impact determines how strongly the water will react to the object. You can imagine that when you slide something into the water gently, it will cause less reaction than when someone splashes something into the water.

Think, for example, of our interaction with others. If someone behaves like a follower, then someone else can

be more inclined to show opposite behavior and take a leading role. You can see this cause-and-effect principle everywhere; in interaction with others, situations we end up in, and so on.

The outside world reflects who we are, as it were. If we look at ourselves honestly and objectively, we can often trace back a number of cause-and-effect relations. This can sometimes be annoyingly confrontational, but on the bright side; we can *learn* a lot from it! It can lead to plenty of self-insight and therefore wisdom, provided we are open to receive this feedback. With each piece of insight we gain, we gain a growing opportunity to rise above ourselves and to improve and strengthen our foundation, our thoughts.

## Growth and fundamental equality

When we gain insights, our consciousness expands. This is how we grow. The third hypothesis explains that we are expressing more and more of our boundless potential. We are the boundless. All life grows and brings out more and more of its boundless potential. This means that all living beings are equal in potency. That we all follow the same pathway of learning and that only *relative* differences exist, related to how far something or someone has grown. If, according to the principle of boundlessness, everything is one, and we are ever expanding our consciousness when we grow, then we will equally see more and more of the unity of life. Like the astronauts in the clip, we become aware of the fact that we are a part of a greater totality, like the earth. But also of the fact that the earth, in its turn, is a part of an even greater totality. And then it is not surprising to figure out that besides this zooming out, you can also zoom in. That we are not only part of increasingly greater totalities, but that something can be part of us as well. Our visible body and our invisible thoughts are all a part of us.

This leads to an important question. If we are so intensely connected, if we are one with all this life around us, are we not also responsible for this? To live in harmony with that unity? With our fellow human beings, the earth, but also with everything we are composed of? This perspective affects our sense of responsibility and our respect for life around us. It brings about a mental attitude that takes into account the effects of our actions on other life. For people, for example, this means being there for one another when necessary, being each other's safety net. Giving one another space and freedom, so that we can express and develop ourselves. Not to diminish

one another, but indeed to stimulate one another in our growth.

## Summing up

Looking back we have discussed the following:

### Thought – action – habit – character

- Thoughts are the foundation of our habits and our character

An important lesson we can learn from this in respect to Life Wisdom is that everything starts with our thinking. That if we want to improve the circumstances in the world, including ourselves, we have to expand or improve our thoughts.

## Hypotheses

### Boundlessness

- No beginning and no end; nothing can be added or be lost
- The fundamental unity of all life

What we can learn from this in respect to Life Wisdom is that we are always capable of expanding our outlook. By zooming out and considering our thoughts from this broader perspective, we can gain a growing opportunity to expand or improve our thoughts.

### Cyclicity

- The coming and going of life; periods of activity and of rest.
- Cause and effect.

For Life Wisdom this means that it is important to focus on the things in life that are permanent. Besides that the hypothesis also shows that it is not wise to run from the challenges that life brings, but that it is wise *to overcome the challenges in life*.

### Fundamental equality and growth

- We are expressing more and more of our boundless potential.
- There is cooperation with beings that are both further developed and less developed.

Regarding Life Wisdom, this hypothesis shows that it is important to realize that we have the *responsibility* to select our thoughts in such a way, that we stimulate and

support our fellow-beings in their development.

## Signposts

Together, these insights form the basis of life and growth and therefore they form the basis of Life Wisdom. The hypotheses can be viewed as signposts along the road. We can always find the right way if we start from the idea of unity. These insights enable us to build Life Wisdom and choose more consciously the direction of our life's journey. Through the sequence "thought – action – habit – character" *we* decide our current as well as our future path.

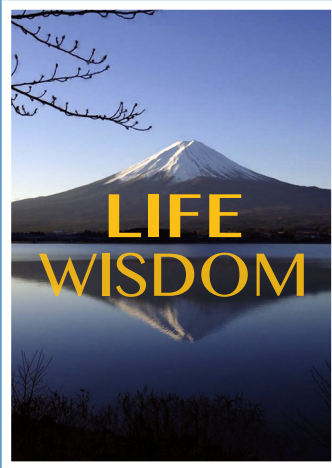
## Definitions

On the basis of this presentation we can describe Wisdom and Life Wisdom as:

*Wisdom* is the ability to see and experience the true coherence and causality of all things.

*Life Wisdom* is the dynamic process in which we learn how to apply Wisdom consistently in all circumstances of life.

I won't go into further details on these definitions, because Mariska Zwinkels will be doing so in her presentation "How to become life-wise?"



# How to become life-wise?

## The basis

The principal assumptions of wisdom have just been stated as: “boundlessness”, “cyclicality” as well as “growth and fundamental equality”. That is therefore the foundation to elaborate on if you want to become life-wise. It implies that all life is essentially boundless, that it manifests itself through cyclic movement over and over again, expressing more and more of the boundlessness.

In this second lecture, I will discuss what the process of becoming life-wise looks like, where this wisdom can be found and what the consequences are of becoming wiser.

Prior to this it is probably useful to repeat the definitions of Wisdom and Life Wisdom, which Lalibel has just given.

## Definition of wisdom

*Wisdom* is the ability to see and experience the true coherence and causality of all things.

*Life Wisdom* is the dynamic process in which we learn to consistently apply Wisdom during all phases and conditions of life

With such a short definition, we can still have different ideas about wisdom, so let's elaborate. Wisdom

is more than just knowledge or having insight. It is not about learning thousands of details and examples of wisdom, it is building a universal picture of Life. It is the assumption of laws that apply in all circumstances, of being able to interpret the basic assumptions we mentioned earlier, “boundlessness”, “cyclicality” and “growth and fundamental equality” and applying them to all questions in life.

The word “apply” in the definition of Life Wisdom indicates that it is also practical and moral. So you can only be wise in life if you actually do something with that wisdom, if you live according to it every day.

So, knowing that it is wiser not to argue about a proper definition of a concept, such as “the definition of wisdom”, is insufficient. You have to avoid taking a dogmatic point of view towards a definition you find accurate. You will have to listen to each other patiently in order to understand more and more elements of the concept. This allows you to develop an increasingly broader view as well as an increasing insight into what can be meant by the concept. Wisdom is seeing the bigger picture, gaining insight in life and the coher-



ence of things. It is knowing that you are a learning being and keeping in mind that you are able to learn more and more, infinitely more. Wisdom is knowing that there is more knowledge. You can, for instance, know that the sun comes up every day, but if you don't know that the earth is a sphere in space that revolves around its axis, you have no insight into what causes day and night.

Wisdom is not being overwhelmed by what is happening around you, not to be overwhelmed by emotions, but to control your emotions, to lead your own life and to direct your thoughts and actions based on the vision that you have on life. Wisdom means taking your own responsibility in helping to improve the world, wherever you can, to the best of your abilities.

With acquired insight and wisdom you can then search together for a sustainable solution for life questions much more effectively.

## Insight and acting

From the aforementioned it appears that Wisdom is thus both about acquired insight and about acting according to it. It is good to add that you do not need a scientific education to be wise.

I will now go into the question of how you can become wiser.

## How can you become wiser?

To start with the short answer: you can become wiser by gaining insight and continuously developing a broader vision of Life. By getting to know the key patterns of life and learning how to apply them in practice. And this is only possible if you are open to it, if you can keep an attitude of wondering and want to keep learning.

This learning process consists of a number of distinct phases:

1. wondering,
2. investigating,
3. consistent application in all life conditions and
4. the gaining of increased insight, thus becoming wiser.

## Wondering

The first distinct phase is “wondering”. In this phase, the focus is on questions that arise about something you perceive or think about but you do not understand yet. In Theosophy we do not mean just any question, such as “how is the peanut butter I put on my bread today made?” or “how does my salary actually get into my account?” No, it concerns questions that challenge you to understand

more of life, such as “how is it possible that people hurt each other?”, “how is it possible that I can have such a great experience that everything and everyone is okay, when I ride my bike to work and see the sun rise and hear the birds chirping?”

So it is about questions that make you consciously realise that everything is not so common at all, but that it is special and grand, much larger than you are: questions that rise above your personal life. These kinds of questions can come up at any time. During a walk along the beach or in a forest, in a good conversation with friends or fellow students. And you can imagine many more moments yourself. Because if you did not ask these kinds of questions yourself, you would not be here today.

Such a moment of wonder can come unexpectedly. The astronauts' view on earth in the video was not planned, they were on their way to the moon, their focus lay there. But during their journey they looked backwards and unexpectedly were so overwhelmed by the image of the earth that they directed the camera in the other direction to share this image with others. You can also deliberately search for these kinds of moments and questions, for example by organizing a study group and exchanging questions that you have, or by going to a symposium on Life Wisdom.

By asking yourself questions, the next phase automatically comes into sight, the phase of investigation, allowing you to find possible answers to your questions.

## Investigating

In the investigation phase you will critically think about potential answers, you will philosophize about them. You can do this in a structured way by formulating a possible answer to your question, making an assumption, and subsequently check whether that answer is correct. In science this is called “defining and testing a hypothesis”. You can formulate hypotheses yourself, but you can also use what has already been defined by others. Theosophy, for example, provides three hypotheses that can be investigated by everyone. These are the three key principles for wisdom that have been mentioned a few times already: there is “boundlessness”, “cyclicity” and “growth and fundamental equality”.

We state today that with these principles you can actually answer all life questions. We will actually do this investigation together today, first in a plenary exercise before lunch and in smaller groups during the workshops this afternoon.

## Consistent application

Once you have provided an answer to your life questions, the best answer you have been able to find at this moment, then it is key to consistently live according to that answer. If you were to wait until having acquired insight in everything, you would never act accordingly, because you can grow continually.

If the found answer to my question “why do people hurt each other?” is “because they lack understanding and do not know how to live together in harmony and love”, then for me the consistent application of that answer is spreading knowledge on how you can do that. Hence the decision to cooperate in the organization of this symposium.

This phase emerges clearly in the formulated definition of Life Wisdom “the dynamic process in which we learn to consistently apply Wisdom in all life conditions”.

## Gaining insight, becoming wiser

Through wondering, investigating and consistently applying what we have learned in all conditions of life, we develop the ability to see and experience the true coherence and causality of all things, and we are increasingly becoming wiser. And as indicated earlier, becoming wiser is an infinite process, so you can keep wondering forever, and continue to nurture the wisdom acquired in this life from an inexhaustible source. I will come back to this when talking about where wisdom can be found.

## Continuous cyclic learning process

Becoming wiser is therefore a *process*, a continuous, infinite cyclic learning process. A process that always begins with *wonderment*, causing you to ask questions about Life and search for answers, through which you gain insights into the coherence of Life and also start living according to those acquired insights. Enabling you to grow with these new experiences and insights.

This process, this learning, means that you move from what you know, the known, to the unknown, that you are open to new, different thoughts. In which you not only learn to think differently but you gradually also learn to think more independently. You learn to give answers to life questions more independently and live according to them. I think that it has become clear by now that wisdom is always relative if you assume that it is boundless. And also that the aforementioned phases do not always consistently follow each other, but can be shuffled around for all kinds of questions.

Now that we have talked about how you can become

wiser, we will continue with the part where wisdom can be found.

## Where can more wisdom be found?

Again we start with the short answer: Wisdom can be found within us and our search for it leads to the infinite source of Universal Wisdom.

We can develop and grow because we, as humans, are composite beings, and all the wisdom that we can develop is potentially already present within us. As we further our development, we can acquire more and more wisdom, which can be compared to successive classes at school. There is also a hierarchy of wisdom, shaped by wiser and less wise forms of thinking as well as wiser and less wise beings.

The key concepts in this answer are “Universal Wisdom”, the “composite constitution of man” and “hierarchy of wisdom”. More about that now.

## Universal Wisdom

The Universal Wisdom that we need to solve problems in life can be found within us. And assuming boundlessness, we even have a boundless potential for wisdom within us, so that we can continue to learn infinitely. We are that *boundlessness* and the wisdom is free and accessible to everyone.

The Universal Wisdom is also the source of all wisdom traditions. For all wisdom traditions originate from a messenger who has found, developed and spread more of this inner wisdom. The same core of this wisdom can still be found in all traditions.

It is important to be able to distinguish Universal Wisdom from the level of wisdom of the human being who applies it, and how much that person understands. There is no Universal Wisdom then, just personal wisdom. This distinction is discussed in more detail in the second key concept of the answer to the question “where can more wisdom be found?”, and this concerns the composite constitution of man.

## The composite constitution of Man

A human being is not only what we can perceive of him with our eyes. There is a force working behind the outer human being. As human beings we are composed of a temporary part, the body, the part which our eyes can perceive, a learning part, the soul, and an eternal part, the Spirit, the force behind M/man. The learning part connects the eternal part, where all knowledge can be found,

with the temporary part. In the course of its incarnations, the learning part is able to express a growing portion of the Spirit's inner wisdom in the physical, temporary part. This learning part, this soul, can focus its mind upwards or downwards. If the soul aims its mind upwards towards the eternal part, it becomes impersonal. When doing so, you live in the notion of interconnectedness and unity. If the learning part aims its mind downwards, or identifies with the impermanent, temporary part, then we speak of personal consciousness. You are then living more from the assumption of being disconnected from other people, from the assumption of separateness.

As human beings we see and explain [the world] differently, because each one of us is in another phase of development. One Human Soul has already learned more than another one and can express more of the inner wisdom.

Furthermore, every human being can identify himself at any given moment with another part in this composite constitution. This is related to what we mentioned earlier about the soul aiming upwards or downwards. So, one moment a person may be fully focused on the personal, temporary part, only assigning value to that part. Then this person will tend to see his own, personal thoughts as the only right ones. He could even become emotional when someone else refuses to accept "his truth": could even start to feel worried about that other person, wondering whether that other person is on the right path.

Whenever someone turns his mind more towards the impersonal, to the higher, wiser and eternal part and identifies himself with it, he will try to listen to what someone else thinks, asking questions until he understands the other person's views. Such a person would try hard to jointly develop a clear view that is shared by more people. He also realizes that in the future these views will be adjusted if necessary, when more insight is obtained.

It is precisely our identification with the personal or impersonal part in us, that will color all our thoughts. It colors the interpretation of our perceptions, the interpretation of our experiences as well as our knowledge and the insights we gained. This identification, by the way, may fluctuate in one and the same person during the day, depending on his moods.

So, the answer to the question "where can we find wisdom?" is: in that part of us that identifies itself with the large totality of which we are a part.

By focusing on the higher qualities in ourselves, we can reach our own inner wisdom. So we can become wiser by directing our focus on our eternal part. This act of focusing

the mind you can only do yourself: another person cannot do it for you. And you can only do it during your life in a temporary body. Thereafter, in the period between two lives, you will digest all the higher insights you gained during that life — similar to your experiences of the day, which you digest during your sleep.

Just as you eat and drink each day to feed your physical body, you will have to take in spiritual food to grow in insight and wisdom.

We all know how to prepare a meal for the physical body, but how do you prepare food from the eternal source in such a way, that it becomes "digestible" for the learning soul? How do you gather ingredients that you cannot see, hear, taste, smell or feel? And according to which recipe do you combine them into a healthy meal for the learning soul?

As the senses are suited for a physical meal, there are other abilities for that spiritual food. As a matter of fact, we utilize them by learning to recognize the higher aspects in ourselves, which we can focus on to let wisdom awaken. We utilize them by structuring our thinking and building up a vision. We utilize them by continually thinking in line with the unity of life, the equality of all people, the fact that each living being is an expression of the one living principle. By realizing that there is still so much left to learn. By realizing that we are *all* learning entities, able to assist each other during that learning process, starting with the simple recognition that we are learning and not yet "perfect".

And we utilize them above all by developing an ever clearer view – and testing this view as well – on how that one life manifests itself in *all* living beings.

The clearer our own view is, the better we can put that view on life into words and the better we can convey that view to other people.

## People differ in insight

So, people differ in insight. These differences express themselves for instance in the questions we ask and the explanations we find for the phenomena that we perceive. Here is an example. Nowadays, everybody can see pictures of space in documentaries and on the internet. We see how awesome it is to observe the sun not surrounded by a blue sky, but by a black sky because the picture is taken outside the earth's atmosphere. Then we see the sun just as we, looking from the earth, see other stars at night. So, the sun is "just" a part of the rest of the universe. Something we already knew intellectually of course, because we learned



it at school. There are many documentaries that show us such astonishing pictures. So, nowadays we are all able to see that the planet earth “floats” in space.

We can also observe for ourselves how thin the atmosphere in fact is. This atmosphere makes all life on our planet possible, a kind of “skin” of the living entity Earth. Seeing this thin layer has already made many people realize how vulnerable our earth actually is, and how large our responsibility is to treat our earth, which makes all manifested life on it possible, with care.

These same observations described above give rise to various questions and explanations. So, one person may look for the explanation in the intellectual field, in natural science, by asking himself “how do the things I see function?” Another person would be inclined to ask philosophical questions like “why does it work that way?” And other people again will raise the question “what is the final purpose of this?”, which will lead to more spiritual insights. These various questions and explanations lead to different views and corresponding acts and activities when we apply them in practice. Human beings differ in insight and in what they express through the learning soul in our visible physical world.

## Connecting with the hierarchy of wiser beings

As said earlier, all wisdom is available in the Spirit of man, all insights are already present. These insights in yourself need only to be awakened and clearly passed on to the learning soul. In this respect you may speak of a hierarchy of understanding and applying insight and wisdom. This hierarchy is built up as follows:

- from intellectual analysis – as for instance  $1+1=2$  thinking – and mathematical formulas: knowledge on *how* something functions,
- to comprehension *why* something is what it is: the more philosophical insights,
- to the notion of the *purpose* of things, the spiritual insights.

Life Wisdom consists of a synthesis of these three approaches. By turning your mind to that higher wisdom in yourself, your inner spirit, the top in the hierarchy, you will resonate with the universal laws, and you will learn ever more quickly.

By maintaining an open attitude of wonderment, enabling you to investigate the questions of life without any prejudice and to live in line with the answers you have found,

you will continually become (relatively) wiser. As a logical consequence, you will become ever more connected to the hierarchy of beings who are much further in their development.

This Universal Wisdom has been expressed already many times in human words. The Buddha for instance gave us ideas that already for thousands of years have helped us to become wiser. And H.P. Blavatsky has formed The Theosophical Society and provided it with many ideas, which are now studied worldwide for already more than 140 years.

## What are the consequences?

### *Do you realize your responsibility in the light of unity?*

Be aware that all information that we give to you today, brings along certain consequences. Knowing that there is a process to become wiser, will logically lead you to set your steps upon that path, to follow the process that leads to wisdom. Staying passive or waiting keeps the present world as it is, so, an active attitude is indispensable. Also your personality may protest now and then by feelings of uncertainty or fear or sticking to old patterns of thought — something that may likely happen. Actually, growing wiser also means letting go of everything you formerly held on to in your thoughts. It is learning to think from another perspective, from the impersonal perspective, that is founded on “boundlessness”, “cyclicality” and “growth and fundamental equality”. And that is different from what most of us have gotten used to in our daily lives. You now know that you can contribute to the realisation of your ideal world by study and investigation, and by learning to live your view, to live your thoughts: by learning to transform them into acts.

## What do you do with your wisdom?

### *Are you a stimulus, a source of inspiration for your surroundings?*

What you do with the insights you have gained is important. The point is: you can try to get wisdom only for the spiritual growth of yourself or for the spiritual well-being of everyone. This choice concerns not only your acts but also your thoughts.

The way you think determines the way you stand in life. Thinking from the personality colors your life entirely different compared to thinking from the impersonality. For instance: in a few minutes from now you will gather with others in a workshop, and you can choose to focus

your attention primarily on appearance: “How could that person choose such clothes, those colors don’t match at all, while those of that other person combine very nicely.” But if you pay attention to more inner aspects, you may notice how well everyone works together, or that some people did not yet understand each other, so that some extra informative questions are needed.

All your thoughts add to the mental sphere that we are creating together. With our thoughts we sow seeds in other people, and that comes with responsibility. So, thoughts are not toll-free. Everyone around us may pick up our thoughts and get affected by them. You can feed a mental sphere by what you think and by the ideas you advertise. Strong thinkers may exert a really great influence in this way.

We influence flows of thought day after day. Today, during this symposium, we make an effort to share and clarify thoughts that can help us all to become what we essentially are.

But influencing flows of thought we also do at our jobs and at home. We do it by giving a positive thought to the colleague who “for the hundredth time” starts to “grumble” about the train delays, which may change the whole sphere of his day. Perhaps also by pouring a cup of coffee for him, which may give him a moment of wonderment that gives him more room in his thinking for new thoughts and insights.

So it is important to try very consciously to change your thinking, focusing on the higher qualities in yourself, directing your attention to the inner wisdom that can be found in yourself. And then making it your guiding principle, it is all about character improvement. Look at reality from that freshly gained wisdom and let go of your old images. Make that impersonal view the basis of your daily life. By doing this, you can awaken your inner wisdom from the Spirit in your learning soul, and can learn to express this wisdom in practice, manifesting it in the physical world in which we live.

You then increasingly express that boundless potential within you!

## Resuming

To summarize the whole story.

The main question in this lecture was: “How do you become a wise living being?”

The summarized answer to this is:

- by actively drawing upon the source of boundless knowledge,
- by learning during the active phase of the life cycle,

and act more and more accordingly

- and while doing so realizing growth and fundamental equality (by manifesting it yourself) for all that lives.

And about the learning process in the active phase we indicated that it consists of:

1. wondering,
2. investigating,
3. consistent application in all life conditions, and
4. the gaining of increased insight, which means: becoming wiser.

# Observations

## How to deal with unorthodox visions?

A prestigious scientific conference was held recently in India. Many researchers were part of it, among which some Nobel Prize winners. During the conference, commotion arose about the unorthodox remarks of some speakers. We quote an article from *The Guardian*:

The organizers of a major Indian science conference distanced themselves on Sunday from speakers who used the prestigious event to dismiss Einstein's discoveries and claim ancient Hindus invented stem cell research.

The Indian Scientific Congress Association expressed "serious concern" as the unorthodox remarks aired by prominent academics at its annual conference attracted condemnation and ridicule.

(...)

"We had 100 Kauravas from one mother because of stem cell and test tube technology," said G. Nageshwar Rao, vice chancellor at Andhra University, referring to a story from the Hindu epic Mahabharata.

Rao, who was addressing school children and scientists at the event, also said a demon king from another centuries-old Hindu epic had two dozen aircraft and a network of landing strips in modern-day Sri Lanka.

(...)

The Breakthrough Science Society, an Indian-based educational charity, said it was "astounded and even horrified" at the remarks made at an academic summit. "Puranic verses and epics are poetic, enjoyable, contain moral elements and [are] rich in imagination but [are] not scientifically constructed or validated theories," the group said in a statement Sunday.<sup>(1)</sup>

Rao and some of the other speakers emphasized the high level of science in the ancient Indian civilization. Their comments contained a strong nationalistic undertone, for instance: "look how high-tech our culture was". This led to the reactions quoted above.

What we see here is a collision of two dogmatic views. Both the protagonists of "official" science as well as the Indian nationalist scientists felt that scientific theories should

fit into their views. This makes it difficult to initiate an impartial discussion about the value of the unorthodox remarks.

### How to beget 100 children?

In her book *The Secret Doctrine* H.P. Blavatsky showed through many examples that ancient myths and epics often contain much truth. However you must learn to read them. The hidden knowledge in these stories is veiled in figurative language. Spiritual Teachers in the past translated a part of their knowledge into symbolic stories, which for many centuries triggered the intuition of their fellow human beings, without a risk that the knowledge was misunderstood.

The great Indian epic the *Mahābhārata* for example, is not a historical account but describes the evolution of mankind in the form of a story. This does not mean that it contains no historical facts at all. The allegorical stories may refer to a real event. To mention one example, the battle that is mentioned in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which is a part of the *Mahābhārata*, is an historical fact. This battle between two large armies on *Kurukshetra*, took place on a plane bordered by the Ganges and present day Delhi. This however does not diminish the symbolic nature of the story.

According to the *Mahābhārata*, King Dhritarāshtra and his wife had 100 children, called the Kaurava's. The round number "100" is one of the universal symbolical numbers. Begetting 100 children is obviously an allegory. All myths are full of such "impossible" events. The 100 children were not produced by "stem cell research and test tube technology", as Rao suggested at the scientific conference. So, they were not "clones" of their parents. These "impossible" stories are meant to arouse our intuition, to make us wondering and start searching for their real meaning. In mythology, each symbol can be applied at many levels: the level of a single individual, of the human evolution in general, of the whole cosmic evolution, and so on. If we look at it from the perspective of our *individual* evolution, the 100 Kauravas represent our desires for a materialistic



life, for the continuation of our physical existence.<sup>(2)</sup> Indeed, these desires can take on almost countless different shapes, “100 shapes”. And as a matter of fact they are the children of one source: the physical, material pole of our being, personified by king Dhritarāshtra. Our physical body is in a sense blind: it is only the vehicle of the inner man and it is powerless without the inner man, without the consciousness that uses this vehicle during one incarnation. Therefore, king Dhritarāshtra is blind.

If we do not control these lower tendencies with our spiritual, unselfish pole, they will control us. Then we become their slaves instead of masters. The *Mahābhārata* describes this inner struggle. In the end the Real Man, our immortal Self, is the winner: in the long run, we will conquer all our illusions by our growing wisdom.

### Flying machines

As far as the reference to “flying machines” is concerned, these are described in the much beloved epic the *Rāmāyana* as well as in countless other old Indian myths and traditions. In Sanskrit texts these machines were called *vimānas*.<sup>(3)</sup> Could these stories be ancient remembrances of a fact? Did nations exist who possessed flying machines, incalculably long ago? Why not? Around the world, we find many indications of the former existence of civilizations with an astounding technical expertise. To mention two of them: the great pyramid of Giza and the megalithic walls in Peru. If people from these civilizations could move and position stones of that size, why should they not be able to transport a few persons through the air? The existence of ancient civilizations with a profound knowledge of natural laws, is a logical corollary of the process of reincarnation and inner growth. Our Western technology is a result of the knowledge and skills that we as reincarnating egos have developed in previous civilizations. Our consciousness, our knowledge and skills, are gradually growing, never in jumps. The present technological boom worldwide proves that we did comparable things in past incarnations, perhaps even in the ancient past — of course utilizing the knowledge, materials and methods of *those* times.

What still hampers many scientists to investigate these views, is the dogma that *all* human civilization started only 6,000 years ago. This dogma is based on the arrogant idea that our civilization must be much further developed than all civilizations before us. Each time remnants of very old civilizations are found, researchers try to fit its application in present theories, even when they have to

make assumptions that are very unlikely, for instance, assuming that a population of farmers was able to build Stonehenge.

### Exceeding prejudices

Science and religion are universal and should therefore not be used for nationalistic or chauvinistic purposes. Both the insights of the writers of the Vedas and the insights of scientists such as Newton and Einstein belong to us all. They show us something of the truth and truth stands above cultures, countries and individuals. Gravity and relativity were already facts before Newton and Einstein lived, and were understood by investigating human minds in all great cultures of the world.

In addition, humanity has always had spiritual Teachers. Modern science owes its fundamental concepts and methods to Greek thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates and others. And they got their insights again from ancient Egypt and India. Every religion is based on the insights of spiritual Teachers, such as Krishna and Gautama the Buddha. H.P. Blavatsky was such a spiritual Teacher, such a messenger of truth. We stand therefore “on the shoulders of giants”: universal thinkers for whom it was indifferent from what country or culture they came from. There is nothing more fulfilling than an undogmatic exchange of ideas between disciplines, between thinkers, without claiming your own right or being afraid that you do not longer fit into the present religious or scientific straitjackets. Why is there no room for such completely open attempts in a scientific top conference in order to reach the best answer on questions such as: what is the origin of the religions, of the sciences? Were there, just like now, simultaneously high and low-developed civilizations in the past? What knowledge was the basis of the hyper-precise technique which was necessary to build the great pyramid of Giza and the megalithic walls in Peru? And so forth ... If the mental atmosphere is suffused by each and everyone’s dedication to truth, a great number of important steps could be taken together.

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# Questions & Answers

## Desire force

What is the difference between desire and the desire force?

### Answer

There is no difference. However, we prefer the term “desire force” because it emphasizes the strictly neutral character of desire. The word “desire” has a rather negative connotation for many people. This is a wrong assumption, because desire can be used for both “good” and “bad” things.

### Question

So you can also have “good” desires?

### Answer

Certainly. Philosophy and the *desire* for wisdom, for example. Or the desire to serve your fellow man.

The tone of desire depends on its purpose and on the motive with which it is used. Just as electricity can be used for good and bad things, desire can be used for selfless and selfish things.

### Question

I don't understand that if you give in to desire, it will become stronger. How is that possible? If you are thirsty and you drink, you do not get thirstier.

### Answer

But that will happen if you drink sea water! Its salt makes you even more thirsty.

Giving in to desire means that you direct your consciousness to, or focus it on the desire force. Every thought you focus on becomes bigger, stronger, more

powerful. So suppose I want a car. I direct all my consciousness towards some beautiful car. I think about it, I dream of it. I forget my duties, because I am constantly visiting that car with my desire thoughts. Do you think that when I finally have that car, my desires will be extinguished? At most for a while. The desire I have nourished in myself will almost automatically find a new object: a larger or more beautiful car. And the whole process continues with increased power.

It's like the story of the dwarf Piggelmee and the magic fish. Piggelmee got the chance to make a wish, which the magic fish fulfilled. But when he came home and told the story to his wife, she was not happy at all. She sent Piggelmee back to the sea and he had to ask the fish something else. And this was repeated many times. Instead of wanting, the desire only increased. Until the fish got tired of it and everything went back to the old situation. And, strangely enough, Piggelmee and his dwarf wife were happy.

Therefore, do not give in to desire and do not think it will disappear if you do that, because that is an illusion.

## The nature of our SELF: *Ātman*

Is the Self of the *Know Thyself* engraved in the portal to the temple of Apollo in Delphi, the same as *Ātman*?

### Answer

Yes, that's right! The Self is the divine power within us. It exists on its own

divine level. It is the relative top of the human hierarchy. Human consciousness is a hierarchy with different layers. Its top is the Self, *Ātman*, from which the other principles, the other living forces in man, flow.

It is very difficult for us to understand anything about *Ātman*. It is pure consciousness. It has a range as large as the galaxy. It is certainly not the ego. The ego can be described as I-am-I. *Ātman* is the I-am.

In incarnated people the lower aspects of *Ātman* have assumed properties and qualities, creating a link with *Buddhi*, and from *Buddhi* again with *Manas* (thinking). The entire human hierarchy is built up in this way.

So it is important to know that we are, at the core of our being, *Ātman*, an inner god, with a range of consciousness that encompasses the entire galaxy, both its inner and outer spheres. We humans are truly noble beings!

### Question

Is there anything beyond *Ātman*?

### Answer

Paramātmān. That means “the Supreme Self”. So even beyond, even greater, even nobler than *Ātman*. For us these are theoretical differences, because we can hardly experience *Ātmic* consciousness, let alone what is beyond it — or rather, what is more within/inwards. Nevertheless it is good to reflect on this, because otherwise the idea might arise that there is a boundary somewhere. And there are no boundaries. Beyond or within Paramātmān there is something even more lofty, and so on.

## Question

Would it not be better if we would read on the portal at Delphi “Be Yourself” instead of *Know Yourself*?

## Answer

That would indeed have been possible, but then we would have skipped a step, a degree of initiation. First we must form an idea of who we really are. That is why it is so good to use our imagination and form an image of a noble, unselfish and compassionate consciousness. Then we will start to catch more and more glimpses of our Self, and will experience a gradually closer connection with our fellow human beings and all that lives. Then, at some point – in an already high degree of initiation – we will stand, as is so beautifully put, “face to face” with our own inner god. In a next, higher degree we will become completely one with our Self. Then we will know we are ONE with the whole Cosmos.

## Question

Is Ātman in Buddhism different than in Theosophy? Because if I’m right, Buddhism does not know any self.

## Answer

It seems that way. But this confusion is due to the extremely subtle nature of Ātman, which is difficult to understand. Sometimes the mistake is made – which is understandable in view of the nature of these very spiritual matters – to present Ātman as an eternal principle, something that always remains unchanged. But that is not the case. For however high and spiritual and divine Ātman is for us, it is not the end point, it is not an absolutely perfect thing. In other words: at its cosmic, ātmic level, the SELF is also subject to change. Ātman grows, evolves, becomes even greater. We have

just spoken about Paramātman. Every Ātman will become a Paramātman over time. Will it stop there? No, the development continues without end. Well, in the Ānanda-sutra the uninitiated monk Vacchagotta asked the Buddha the question whether there is a self in man, to which the Buddha kept silent. Then he asked if there is no self in man. The Buddha remained silent. Later he told his devoted disciple Ānanda that any answer would have led to confusion. If he had confirmed that there was a self, he would have fed the wrong idea that there was an immutable thing in man. He would have spoken an untruth. On the other hand, if he had said that there was no self in man, he would have supported the atheistic idea that after life nothing of man would remain, which is just as much beside the truth.<sup>(1)</sup>

On the contrary, there is *relative immortality*. And that means, that there is always *something* – call it the divine spark, the monad or the monadic essence – that constantly goes from one phase to the other. It dies constantly, but is simultaneously reborn. It dies in an old phase. The form has become too small and just like a snake it sheds its skin: consciousness dies in that old form and is born in a newer, greater, grander form. The child must die if the adult is to be born. That *something* is always there, has always been and will always be, but it continuously changes. Such metaphysical ideas are not easy to fathom. You have to ponder on that for a long time.

## Reference

1. [www.purifymind.com/AnandaSutra.htm](http://www.purifymind.com/AnandaSutra.htm); see also: H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, several editions, chapter 5, last footnote.

# Progressive evolution

If our consciousness is constantly changing and passing through one phase to another, is there continuous growth?

## Answer

Indeed.

## Question

Isn’t that very tiring?

## Answer

It depends on how you look at it. If you find it tedious to discover new things, to meet new people, to gain new great experiences, to gain greater awareness of the connectedness of all things and beings, then this inner growth can sometimes seem very tiring. Such a mentality is not really an impulse for growth. Yet, inner growth seems to me to be a blissful thing.

The opposite would be, in my eyes, a desolate situation. Imagine that there would be no growth at all. Then everything would always remain the same. We would never have a new idea or experience. We would be unable to grow in knowledge and wisdom. It would be hell!

## Question

Is this growth the same as what is called “the obligatory pilgrimage”?

## Answer

Undoubtedly. And that word “obligatory” does not mean that there is anyone other than ourselves – no god or devil or anyone else – who forces us to go on a pilgrimage. This obligation comes from within us. It is the karmic seeds from the past that are emerging and that force us to develop ourselves further. We ourselves want this! Nobody forces



us to get up every morning and to live on, learn and grow. But sometimes we are slow learners. Then it takes a little longer before we understand something. Learning and growing in consciousness is something very natural. I don't know a child who doesn't want to discover, learn, and gain new experiences. That urge for development, that desire to go on a pilgrimage, is a characteristic of our consciousness. Every human being knows deep in his heart that there is more than we have been able to obtain so far. We know that there are greater

## Question

Is our pilgrimage easier than before?

## Answer

What is easy and what is difficult? These are relative concepts.

Is learning to read more difficult for a four-year-old child than Pythagoras' theorem for a 13-year-old child? The word "difficult" always has the additional meaning of something heavy, exhausting. If, on the other hand, you find joy in discovering greater truths, then the pilgrimage is neither difficult

journey. We are on the "return journey"; back to the spirit from which we came. However, we return enriched with all the experiences we have gained in the worlds of matter.

Our awareness of that return should make us light-footed. We then rise above concepts such as difficult and easy. We do what comes our way and what our duty dictates. That is actually the secret of human happiness.



possibilities in our consciousness. To attempt to develop these is a logical consequence of the nature of our consciousness, yes, of the consciousness of every living being. If this urge to grow no longer exists, then we fall asleep. Then we die.

However, this urge will never be absent in the absolute sense, because it is an integral part of the relatively immortal being itself. Therefore, progressive evolution is one of the seven laws of nature.

nor exhausting. The personality in us sighs and complains sometimes, but the impersonal mind is always cheerful. If you live in the lower self, there are struggles, troubles and trials. Live in your super-personal aspects and there will never be something that resembles a struggle.

Well, mankind has taken the turning point on its great cyclical pilgrimage. As humanity, we are beyond the half-way midpoint of our great evolutionary

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Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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