

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*

**A notable call for  
Friendship and  
Peace**

**How our vision of  
truth determines  
reality**

**Evidence for the  
effectiveness of  
homeopathy?**

**Compassion and  
Wisdom — keys to  
a harmonious and  
healthy world**



Cover photo:

*Wood engraving by an unknown artist, published in Camille Flammarion's 1888 book: L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire ("The Atmosphere: Popular Meteorology"). The caption reads: "A missionary of the Middle Ages tells that he had found the point where the sky and the Earth touch..."*

# Contents Lucifer — the Lightbringer

No. 1 | March 2018

## Editorial

*p. 2*

### A notable call for Friendship and Peace

*p. 3*

In all world religions, the key thoughts are the same in their core. For achieving peace mutual respect for each other's way of living without constraint, obstruction or force is needed.

Herman C. Vermeulen

### How our vision of truth determines reality

*p. 6*

By developing our inherent capabilities, we will be able to get closer to the truth.

Erwin Bomas

### Is there evidence for the effectiveness of homeopathy?

*p. 13*

Can prevailing scientific evidence ever be applied to homeopathy?

Barend Voorham

### Many opinions ... but what is true?

*p. 18*

How has the world been brought about? And how can we change it?

Ella van Zaanen

### We are more than our vision

*p. 22*

What instruments do we have at our disposal to broaden our thinking?

Mariska Zwinkels



### From truth to wisdom: wisdom can be developed

*p. 26*

How can we move from personal truths towards universal truths?

Jenny van der Tak

## Questions & Answers

31

» Karma, relations and society



# Editorial

We live in a world of fake news. People spread consciously – and sometimes unconsciously – untruths or even pure lies. There is confusion. One country sometimes proclaims a truth that is diametrically opposed to the truth of another country. One politician claims that something is a fact, and the other claims that it is not a fact at all. How can the well-meaning citizen find his way in this maze of opinions, truths and supposed truths?

In this issue of *Lucifer, the Light-bringer* we will try to give you some support. We are convinced that we can get to know truth, but we must adopt an active attitude for it. If we really want to get out of our bubble and reach a greater truth, we should try to build an all-encompassing image in which everything has its place.

The article *A notable call for Friendship and Peace* gives a practical example of when you rise above your own familiar opinion. It reports a call for world peace from the leaders of the world's religions.

It is our own vision that determines whether something is true or not. This is apparent from the article *How our vision of truth determines reality*. So we make our own truth. But we can make our truth, or our alleged truth, ever more universal. We have the capabilities of doing this.

It is that own personal vision that also determines the reality of homeopathic medicines. There are scientists who believe that these medicines cannot work. In the light of their materialistic vision they make their own truth. Reasoning from the spiritualistic viewpoint, there is no reason to assume why those medicines do not work, as stated in the article *Is there evidence for the effectiveness of homeopathy?*

Next three articles were lectures presented at the I.S.I.S. Symposium “Compassion and Wisdom. Keys to a harmonious and healthy world” held on the 20th of May 2017 in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The first article *Many opinions ... but what is true?* discusses the multitude of opinions, which overwhelm us, but we can find out what is true and what is not.

We have the ability to perceive that truth exists immediately within ourselves, for we are more than our temporary vision. We must awaken those abilities within us, which you can read about in the second article *We are more than our vision*.

Ultimately, we can rise above all those opinions, above half and alleged truths and become wise. Then we see the Oneness of all and lift ourselves above the illusions. This is explained in simple words in the third article *From truth to wisdom: wisdom can be developed*.

Finally, some questions about karma are answered in our *questions section*.

We have again tried to put together a varied number in the hope of contributing to the practicality of Theosophy, and thereby spreading it. Questions and comments are always welcome.

**The editors**



# A notable call for Friendship and Peace

## Key thoughts

- » In all world religions, the key thoughts are the same in their core.
- » Religious leaders can promote mutual friendship, direct personal contact and the exchanging of ideas.
- » For achieving peace, mutual respect for each other's way of living without constraint, obstruction or force is needed.

In June 2017 we were alerted to a remarkable news report. It was about a positive initiative, a call from prominent religious leaders for friendship between religions.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is remarkable for two reasons: firstly, usually not much attention is given to positive news in the press and readers usually don't have much interest in positive news. Secondly, this is a call that relates to the source of many conflicts in our society: mutual religious tensions and conflicts. One of the leading figures of the project is Dutch marketer Mark Woerde. He says, he has been working on this project for years. It wasn't an easy project. Interviewing fourteen religious world leaders for one and the same project is challenging. Fortunately, he was supported in this project by the Elijah Interfaith Institute, an institute that promotes inter religious contact and friendship which is further explained on their website.<sup>(2)</sup> It took two and a half years to complete the video that was recently presented at a conference in London.<sup>(3)</sup>

It is understandable that in a world where mutual tensions are high, and there is great lack of friendship and

trust, there is also an institute that promotes mutual trust and friendship. The urgency of this initiative is more apparent in regions where the lack of friendship and trust are most prominent. That friendship influences our view of all we experience: after all, our neighbour with whom we have a personal contact does not belong to the group we are afraid of.

## The influence of the top-level leaders on local religious leaders

A thought I couldn't suppress when looking at the names of the leaders is that each of them is connected to one or more conflicts in the world. What is wrong with the communication from top-level to the underlying levels? Are there only clashes and conflicts in the low-level areas? If so, then what are the top-level leaders not doing right?

A curious phenomenon is that the lower organisational parts have a more conservative attitude than the top has. The top is more liberal but this attitude is not effectively conveyed to the lower parts, or the lower parts do not pick it up adequately. That making space for mutual friend-

ship and exchanging ideas broadens the mind, became clear in a quote of Pope Francis who remarked that his religious life was enriched by these mutual contacts. Mark Woerde hopes that this initiative will trickle down to the lower levels and that local religious leaders will pick up the task to bring people together.

### The source of understanding and mutual respect

It is notable how easily religious leaders can promote mutual friendship, direct personal contact and the exchanging of ideas. They support all kinds of attempts to gain a better understanding of each other's traditions in order to take away, or prevent, underlying tensions. In one of the previous issues of *Lucifer* we published the article: "The mathematics of Religion".<sup>(4)</sup> This article explains what the key thought in all world religions is and when these key thoughts are undone from their cultural and historical colourings, then they are all the same. In studying this core idea, the mutual understanding for each other's religious views will grow. It will reduce and eliminate the distance and tension between several religious traditions. We hope this idea will spread because then more and more people will experience it. We often see that personal hardening occurs over small differences: the greatest tension exists

where the fundamental differences between the religions are the smallest, for example between Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

What this activity teaches us is that an approach on a personal level helps to come to a peaceful society. There are not many conditions needed to achieve peace in the world: mutual respect for each other's way of living without constraint, obstruction or force. The liberty of one cannot be restricted at the expense of the other. These conditions seem to be very simple but are difficult because we always feel the need to make people see it our way.

On page 5 are the calls to friendship between religions from prominent religious leaders. When reading those calls one wonders: why isn't there peace already?

### References

1. NOS, Dutch news site: <http://nos.nl/artikel/2178265-religieuze-leiders-maak-vrienden-met-mensen-van-ander-geloof.htm>.
2. Elijah Interfaith Institute: <http://elijah-interfaith.org/hope-center>.
3. Website Make Friends. The video (with Dutch subtitles) can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLx1WMaSCY>.
4. Barend Voorham, "The mathematics of Religion". Article in: *Lucifer, the Light-bringer*, no. 3, August 2017, pp 3-10.



*Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*

We are called to look into one another's eyes in order to see more deeply and in order to recognise the beauty of God in every living human being.

*Ayatollah SayyidFadhel Al-Milani*

Our advice is to make friends to followers of all religions.

*Pope Francis on his conversations with Rabbi Abraham Skorka*

It is very important because my religious life has become richer by his explanation, so much richer. And I think the same counts for him.

*Rabbi Abraham Skorka on his conversations with Pope Francis*

We have found each other in life due to our religious calling.

*Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh*

No matter from which side of the mountain you are climbing we should be helping each other. So that we all can get to the same place. So, there's a need for people to make friends.

*Grand Mufti ShawkiAllam*

Do not only seek the differences between religious groups.

*H.H. The Dalai Lama*

Personal contact, personal friendship, then we can exchange deeper level of experience.

*Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*

Honour other religions like you do your own.

*Ayatollah Sayyid Hassan Al-Qazwini*

We need to get together and know one another just to discover and explore those commonalities.

*Archbishop Antje Jackelén*

That starts a process where prejudices go away, when new insights are born and where basically hope is born.

*Archbishop Justin Welby*

It is not complicated. I would say to everyone start with sharing what we all share which is the pleasure of conversation.

*Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks*

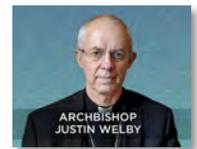
One of the wonderful things about spending time with people completely unlike you is you discover how much you have in common. The same fears, the same hopes, the same concerns.

*Ven. Khandro Rinpoche*

I think I'll keep it very simple. It's probably time to talk less and listen more.

*Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma)*

May universal friendship become reality.





# How our vision of truth determines reality

## Key thoughts

- » The underlying causes of life can be known and our understanding of them is of priceless value; yet fragments of this knowledge are often being colored and mutilated to serve a personal, egoistic goal.
- » Our vision of truth determines our life: he who bases everything on just the outer world, will think he is nothing more than a body with its physical needs.
- » Truth is boundless; that rules out any form of dogmatism.
- » By developing our inherent boundless capabilities, we will be able to get closer and closer to truth. This is only possible through independent search and investigation. Each human being can further develop this, experience the unity of life and act accordingly.

**We live in a special time. Thanks to modern media, we are aware at any time of what is happening in the world every day. At the same time, however, it has not become much easier to discover the true turn of events. There is no lack of opinions, everyone can have their say via the internet and social media, but usually this does not bring forth actual truth. And what is actually our vision of the truth? Do we realize that this vision determines our reality? And is there not a huge need to have a better understanding of truth?**

An American senator once said: “In times of war, truth is the first victim”. The present times show this on a daily basis. Take a conflict situation: an airplane is taken down, a border is crossed or there is a quarrel between politicians in a party. Although all those involved are part of the same event, the personal views of the event are often totally different. Quite possibly, just to make one’s point as opposed to the ‘opposing party’. For reporters it is very difficult to get quick access to the right sources and the areas where the news is happening. In addition, journalists are pressured to respond in a short period of time. The news supply must compete with others. So, there is a hurry to come up with a scoop, because this will provide more readers. And a newspaper headline cannot contain too much nuance, because otherwise

many people will not even read the article. The many opinions are based on this limited information. And despite this lack of reliable information these opinions are more often than not heavily expressed, from street level to the political arena. The goal it seems is usually not to really reflect on events, but rather to ride one’s own hobbyhorses or to find confirmation in the group.

## **Truth as a product: as long as it satisfies the needs**

That’s why Rob Wijnberg, philosopher and editor-in-chief of the Dutch online newspaper *The Correspondent*, writes that we live in ‘the era of truth as a product’<sup>(1)</sup>: (...) *truth as a product is essentially a form of satisfaction of needs and of self-confirmation*. The process of retrieving the truth is no longer an end in itself, the ‘truth’

has become a means of selling one's own message or the product in which the truth is packed, like the news article. *Making news is not 'putting certain events and developments on the agenda on the basis of an underlying idea of social relevance', but 'following and reflecting on what people are talking about' in order to connect with the interests and needs of 'the target group'.*

Truth is no longer a higher ideal that is sought after, it has become an economic product that is being sold. And the truth suffers in this commercial competition just as it does in times of war. Wijnberg describes how this economization of our world view radically changes our vision on society:<sup>(1)</sup>

Citizens become clients, patients become care consumers, students become customers of education, immigrants cheap labour forces, elderly people increasing debit items, artists creative entrepreneurs and GDP [Gross Domestic Product; EB] the yardstick for our collective well-being.

We quote the recognizable observations of Wijnberg:

Politics, for example, is not 'convincing as many citizens as possible of certain ideals at the service of a general interest', but rather: to probe, express and implement what a certain segment of the electorate ('target group') thinks and wants. Or, as sociologist Willem Schinkel put it beautifully once: the aim is to 'let voters consume their own opinions'. (...) For the same reasons, education is less about passing on knowledge with inherent value, but about tailoring knowledge to the needs of the student and those of the labour market for which he is being trained; science is increasingly less driven by research for the sake of fundamental insights and more and more driven by research for the sake of economic efficiency; and art has, to a decreasing extent, the aim of undermining or renewing existing ideas and increasingly has as a goal to fit in with existing interests of the intended public. (...) It explains why solidarity is crumbling and short-term profit motives prevail. And, it explains why 80% of the (western) citizens are so satisfied with their own lives and at the same time an equal percentage is very concerned about society as a whole: our needs are more than satisfied, but we hardly have an idea of why and for what purpose.

How did all this happen? Wijnberg gives a short history in which the perspective of truth in the western world has changed (see box on page 8). He begins with the era in

which we saw truth *as faith*. Next, we considered truth as knowledge. Then the idea of truth *as a construction* came into being. And in his opinion, arriving at the present time, it seems as if we only see the truth *as a product*.

However, in our opinion, the degeneration of the concept of truth according to the epochs that Wijnberg mentions begins already with the concept of truth *as faith*. For there is a concept of truth that precedes this first era described by Wijnberg.

## Truth as a boundless principle

Rob Wijnberg's presentation of truth perceived from the different eras is very recognizable and makes the current world view and the accompanying opinions explainable. However, as *International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth*, we find that an essential and original concept of truth is lacking. This is a concept that constantly degenerates, causing a lot of struggle and that is therefore reintroduced in every era. To understand this vision of truth, one must go back to the most original message of world teachers such as Buddha, Plato, Jesus the Nazarene and Mohammed.

If you look at the teachings of the founders of the great religions and philosophies of life, they are all talking about one TRUTH with capital letters. Plato describes this as (the Idea of) the Good, *that only becomes visible in the end and with great difficulty. But once you have seen the good, you have to establish that this is apparently always behind everything that is good and beautiful.*<sup>(2)</sup>

This idea of reality can also be found in the original concept of 'God' in Christianity:

He is the invisible Spirit of whom it is not right to think of as a god or something like that. For he is more than a god, because there is nothing above him. ... He is unlimited, for there is nothing to limit him.<sup>(3)</sup>

This also reflects the Jewish concept of *Ain-Soph*, which literally means 'without borders' and which indicates what precedes the manifestation. But also in the great Eastern religions and philosophies we find only other words for the same idea: *Tat*, *Tao*, *Sûnyatâ*, they all refer to an unmentionable, all-encompassing, boundless reality. In *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky shows that there is one wisdom on which all the world's teachers rely. One universal doctrine also known as *Theo-Sophia*: Divine Wisdom or Wisdom of the Gods. This is a synthesis of

science, philosophy and religion. The three facets of truth, which together answer the *how, why* and *(for) what (purpose)* of life, respectively.

The Theosophia is based on three basic principles. These are not dogmas, but axioms or hypotheses of which you can test their accuracy and value. The first of the three fundamental propositions describes the boundless reality as follows:

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

To stay in terms of Wijnberg, we could refer to this as

*Truth as a boundless principle*. Central to this fundamental proposition is the concept of boundlessness or infinity. According to this premise, there is only one Truth. This is also in line with the intuitive awareness that we are part of one and the same reality. However, this fundamental proposition also says that because of its limitlessness, the Truth can never be known in its entirety by any manifested consciousness, no matter how exalted, in the sense that there is nothing further to know. This would be the opposite of the concept of boundlessness. Starting from *Reality as a boundless principle*, our view on this, our own truth with a small character, is always limited. This starting point immediately closes the door for all dogma. For if Truth is boundless, then no human being, no manifested being, however developed, can know everything. Limitlessness implies infinite growth, that a greater, broader understanding of the boundless reality is always possible.

## The three eras of truth according to Rob Wijnberg leading to truth as a product:<sup>(1)</sup>

### **Truth as faith**

According to Wijnberg, the foundation for the first era was laid by Plato. Wijnberg writes:

Truth, according to the essence of the platonic model, is something 'extraterrestrial' and 'extra-humane' in the sense of metaphysical or transcendent: it is not within the reach of man\*. ... Christianity and Islam in particular are nothing more than a mythical variant to platonism in this respect, based on the idea that Truth lies outside mankind and beyond his reach.

Truth, according to this vision, is not something that can be found independently, but something that is given from a higher power *outside* of us. To reach Truth a leap of faith was needed, the only hope was salvation by *faith*.

(\* Plato however *does* imply that human beings can reach Truth. We disagree with Wijnberg on this issue, see further on in this article.

### **Truth as knowledge**

During the enlightenment, at the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, influential thinkers such as Descartes laid the foundation for the idea that truth can indeed be known. Understanding reality was not a matter of faith, but became possible by applying reason. During this period, hope for salvation

through faith was exchanged for hope for progress through science. The idea of the social engineering of the world came up; society was no longer determined by an imposed power from above, but by ideologies of thinkers from society itself.

### **Truth as construction: everyone has his own truth**

Wijnberg mentions a whole series of influential postmodern philosophers from the beginning of the twentieth century (such as Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida and Foucault) with many different views, but with a clear similarity: truth is not given, nor is truth found, truth is *made*. Wijnberg summarizes the thinking that this period heralds with a formulation by philosopher Richard Rorty: *You cannot rise above interpretations and get to facts*. In short: the truth is nothing more than your own personal interpretations, something you make yourself. Truth is a *construction*. During this period, the belief in individual feasibility increased enormously. If truth was a construction, you as a human being could, after all, shape your own truth and thus also your own life as you wished, regardless of others. Truth became individual and even the existence of an overarching truth, a reality of which everyone is part, was questioned by some post-modernists. This 'constructivism' offered the roots for truth as a product, the fourth era that Wijnberg mentions. If everyone makes their own truth, then truth can also be 'sold' according to the principle of the free market.

Is it then pointless to look for this? No, and here we again find a great deal of similarity in the origins of the message of the founders of the various world religions and philosophies.

### **Truth as a boundless principle: approachable not through faith but through knowledge and insight**

To begin with Plato, who, so we believe, is wrongly portrayed by Wijnberg as someone who has laid the foundation for a 'faith'. Plato describes how people can come to a broader consciousness through independent thinking in many of his dialogues.

For example in the *Apologia* where Plato makes Socrates say that the unexamined life is not worth living.<sup>(4)</sup> Man does not gain knowledge by passive faith, but by gathering knowledge independently, by gaining insight, through own effort. In *Politeia* Plato describes in different ways how the mind can come to true knowledge and distinguishes between different kinds of knowledge. From superficial opinions based on purely sensory perception to the higher thinking that through hypotheses can come to a principle, a basic idea (the Idea of Good). A basic Idea that, just as the sun casts its light on the world and thus makes everything visible to the eye, casts the light of truth on the world and makes everything knowable for the cognitive faculty.<sup>(5)</sup> Plato argues that every human soul contains the ability and instrument *to bear the sight of the existing, of the most radiant part of it, what we call the good.*<sup>(6)</sup> That everyone has this inherent ability is also evident from Plato's statement that learning is nothing more than remembering.<sup>(7)</sup>

That is why Socrates as a teacher also compares himself with a midwife, who only helps souls to give birth to the good that they have found within themselves.<sup>(8)</sup>

The same thought is reflected in the words of Jesus the Nazarene, for example in *The Kingdom of God is within you.*<sup>(9)</sup> And here too it is not meant as passive believing, but an active striving: *Take the Kingdom of Heaven by force.*<sup>(10)</sup> In Islam, this thought can be well recognized in the saying *Knowledge is light* of Mohammed.<sup>(11)</sup> or in the following words of Sufi al-Ghazali:

[Do ye not know that the door to knowledge of God will only be opened for a man if he knows his own soul and understands the truth about his own spirit, as is revealed: 'he who knows himself, knows his Lord also.'](#)<sup>(12)</sup>

A resonance of the 'Man, Know Yourself' written above the

entrance to the oracle of Delphi. And this essential thought is also clearly reflected when we look to the East.<sup>(13)</sup>

So is there a paradox in all these religions and philosophies? That Truth *as a boundless principle* is beyond our thinking, unlimited, but still knowable?

### **Objective idealism: Reality dependent on acting consciousness**

With the premise of Truth *as a boundless principle*, Theosophia philosophically ties in with the *objective idealism*. According to idealism, everything can be traced back to a spiritual principle and the outer world of phenomena, as we perceive them, is an illusion. *Absolute* idealism even says that the outer world does not exist and that all phenomena are just a product of the mind.

According to *objective* idealism, however, this illusion does not mean that the outer world does not exist, but that the spiritual core, the essence of it, is something that eludes us. We attribute reality to the object, the external form in which something appears before us, while it is only a limited reflection of what something really is. The acting consciousness mistakes this illusory mirroring, that shadow, for reality, as long as it does not know the underlying cause that produces the mirroring.

This is reflected in the well-known comparison from Buddhism in which various blind monks describe an elephant. One has a leg and describes it as a pillar, the other has a trunk and describes a snake, the third holds the tail and describes a piece of rope. In other words: every observer builds up a truth for as far as his acting consciousness reaches.

In order to arrive at a greater truth, you need to expand the perceiving ability itself. For example, by making different observations and combining them. This is basically the scientific method. And of course, a person who can see, can build a broader picture of the elephant than the blind person. In other words, broadening your ability to perceive, outwardly and inwardly, makes you understand more.

With the premise of Truth *as a boundless principle* or boundlessness, observer and observed cannot be separated from one another. The observer can only see that which he has developed as a perceiving consciousness. Anyone who looks at a painting with little understanding of art can only see a collection of colored brushstrokes. This is where the thought comes from that everyone has their own view of the truth. But the objective idealism distinguishes itself from the postmodern idea (see box on page 8 at 'Truth *as construction*') that everyone has his own truth only and

therefore you cannot come to an agreement about truth or that truth does not even exist altogether. There is indeed one Truth, and we can approach it ever closer, because we ourselves are that Truth.

### **The truth in every being**

A consequence of boundlessness is that nothing can exist outside it. This means that everything essentially forms a unity and that every part of it, every manifested being, every human being, is part of the boundless unity. In other words, the truth does not exist outside of us, moreover: in essence, every being *is* the boundless.

This is not what manifests itself on the surface. Each being is composed, roughly divided into body, soul and spirit. From each being we only perceive the material shell, the body. However, the force that works behind it is the essential boundless consciousness, also referred to as the monad, the life core or spirit. And the soul is that part of the boundless consciousness that a being expresses.

Because every being cannot be separated from the boundless, it contains everything that is present in the boundless, whether or not this is already expressed. Each being has latent limitless abilities in it. By developing these abilities, it can approach the boundless reality ever closer. Until it reaches a relative summit of development of consciousness. Then one speaks of salvation, *Moksha* (liberation) or the attainment of *Nirvāna*.

This liberation is possible by ennobling the soul and developing the spiritual. By identifying more and more with the imperishable in oneself, until one has become it. However, in the boundless there are only relative endpoints, there is always a higher, a broader, a more eminent level. Growth always remains possible. This knowledge prevents all dogmatism. Unfortunately, it is undeniable that this thought is hardly recognizable anymore in contemporary religions.

### **The degeneration of Truth**

We have tried to show that in the origin of the world religions you find that Truth is neither limited nor outside of man, and that it can be known. Now we can show that the muddling of the idea of Truth *as a boundless principle* to Truth *as faith* is the beginning of the degeneration of the concept of truth. The similarities in the doctrines of the messengers from the various religions are not coincidental. These messengers all drew from the same source of Universal Wisdom. They could spread parts of this wisdom because they had independently tasted of the Universal Wisdom, whether or not through the process

of initiation, and tested it in the practice of life.

But every messenger in his own time had difficulties to pass on his message unadulterated. As Plato describes in the 'allegory of the cave', the liberated prisoner is unable to convince his chained companions on his return that the shadows on the wall are not real, but merely depictions of the objects in the light of the fire behind them. Let alone that he manages to convince them of a world outside the cave, bathed in sunlight. In Plato's allegory, the returned prisoner even has to fear for his life if he perseveres in his attempts to show others the light. Scientists such as Galileo and Bruno have experienced this first hand. But also in our present time scientists are practically silenced if their message does not fit in with the prevailing paradigms, such as Rupert Sheldrake.<sup>(14)</sup>

In addition, because of the danger of abuse of their teachings, many messengers could only teach their doctrine to a limited group of pupils who had shown that they were well suited. Public messages were cast in similarities and metaphors, appropriate for the spirit of the times. As Jesus the Nazarene says: *You [the disciples, the approved pupils, E.B.] is given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, everything comes in parable (Marcus 4:11)*. Despite these measures, after the passing of these messengers, their teachings soon deteriorated. Some of those who belonged to the select group or claimed that they belonged to the select group, without maintaining the appurtenant selflessness and discipline, started to take advantage of the ignorance of others and thus to exercise power over them. A priestly class arose. These people did not obtain their positions because of their proven moral and mental fitness. On the contrary, they gained these positions by exercising power and often their relatives retained these positions through inheritance. The truth was placed outside man. Instead of something that you could and should develop on your own merits, it became something that could only be found and obtained by those who had granted themselves a certain position.

Despite the fact that the truth in the various religious movements is formulated as something unmentionable, unknowable, inexpressible and with which every comparison is by definition wrong, the truth was contained in dogmas established by the priest class. Dogmas that in the long run were seen as the last word about the truth, rounded, limited and something out of reach for the average human being.

Followers of the same doctrine united themselves and anyone who did not explicitly believe in their dogmatic

doctrine was seen as hostile. There was separation in sects and churches, and there was a fall from religion (literally: unification by effort) to worship of god(s). The quest for truth by developing the divine *in* oneself was replaced by blind faith in a higher power (or higher powers) *outside* of oneself. The truth *as faith* was born.

### **How a limited vision of truth can deprive us of our view of reality**

History has proven how dangerous dogmatic belief in an absolute truth can be. It is therefore not surprising that an aversion to any form of ideology has arisen. Thanks to the work of science, many people have let go of the doctrines of religions that were literally taken. But in the present day it seems as if we have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

Scientists like Newton, Kepler and Einstein all assumed a spiritual world. But here too, it were the followers who made their teachings dogmatic and this time separated science from religion. Hence science became a breeding ground for pure materialism, based on the idea that what you do not see, does not exist. A vision that still has a great deal of influence in the present time.

If you only take the physical appearance of the world for reality, a result of the era of truth *as knowledge* as Rob Wijnberg describes, this leads logically to the postmodern idea of truth *as construction*. Because if you think that what you do not see, does not exist, so if you only depend on sensory perception, then, because of the unreliability of the latter and its limited nature, this view *is* completely different for everyone. Just think of the big differences you get when you ask witnesses of an event what happened. It is then a logical conclusion that there is *nothing but interpretation* (see also the box on page 8).

Then, according to the metaphor of Plato's cave, the level of the shadows on the wall that you perceive as real is the only level of reality for you. You start from the limitation, only that which is perceptible. This leads to skepticism, which is different from a healthy critical attitude. For what is something like honesty in this light, for example? Does this only apply if you are in sight? And is this really interpreted by each individual in a totally different way? It is good that every opinion counts, but that does not make those opinions equally true. It seems that one can hardly distinguish anymore between a superficial opinion on the one hand and true knowledge on the other hand, as Plato described; leading to the scenes that Wijnberg describes, those we started with in this article. The world's

situation is to a large extent determined by what man sees as reality. By assuming that only what we perceive is real, man himself is also limited to what we can perceive of him: the body. The identification of the self with the outer body causes the excessive attention for personal satisfaction of needs. External comfort becomes a life purpose: satisfying as many personal needs as possible. Leading to the truth *as a product* that Wijnberg describes. This also denies that man has the ability to realize truth, other than what he obtains through sensory perception and then processes through the brain. Man is not seen as a composite consciousness with a boundless core, inextricably linked to the whole. Universal brotherhood is not seen as a fact, but as a mere sentiment, if one acknowledges it at all. One is limited to the personal level only, in which the 'I-am-I' is central who fancies himself to be separate from others. Universal ethics, self-control, noble virtues and moral discipline have lost their values, the higher part in man is no longer recognized. Some even question the existence of truth at all, as if it would be possible to have two conflicting realities existing side by side.

One no longer recognizes oneself as one with the boundless reality, in which each being is connected. One thinks one is detached from the whole, leading to selfishness. Life thus quickly falls due to a struggle for existence, in which the law of the strongest prevails.

Does a person not seriously fail himself and the world by this way of thinking?

Although unfortunately recognizable, this view of our time is of course not sufficiently nuanced. First of all, it is clearly a Western image. In other parts of the world, people are busier to survive or fight for peace, justice and equality. If the West realized that the current Western mentality is also the cause of inequality and bad conditions elsewhere, then we would know better than to look upon self-centered satisfaction of our needs as the highest good. Because the West unfortunately has a huge influence through commerce and media, and the idealized Western standard of living is increasingly sought after worldwide. Secondly does this view lack nuance, because fortunately more and more people in the West are realizing the emptiness of the materialistic vision of life. Many people are struggling with the questions: why do we live or what is the meaning of this life? Stripped from dogmatism the old religious and philosophical scriptures provide answers to these questions. How can we recognize that truth?

## How to master Truth?

Actually, the first step is an open and inquisitive mind, an active wonderment, wondering about things with the willingness to receive a greater truth (without speaking of an absolute truth). It is the confidence that more knowledge exists and can be found. As long as you are afraid to let go of your familiar ideas when necessary, you will not learn. This does not mean that you have to accept something blindly. Just as H.P. Blavatsky emphatically presented the three fundamental principles of the Theosophia as axioms or hypotheses: starting points that should be tested in the practice of one's own life with independent thinking. And which are also tested independently by all pupils in Theosophia over and over again.<sup>(15)</sup>

The messengers mentioned above never taught the truth as something they possessed themselves and that simply was handed out by them. They always acted as a guide, pointing the way to the truth that their students had to discover for themselves. They constantly stimulated the independent thinking of their students. This means that they stimulated those aspects of thinking that are available to man in order to arrive at truth. Without going into the complete composition of human thinking, this refers to those aspects of our thinking that are focused on the spiritual part in ourselves. The thinking aspects that focus on cohesion, on the whole, on unity: the intellect, the understanding or insight, and the inspiration or sense of unity that correspond to science, philosophy and religion, respectively. Using these you transcend the personal self. And it is precisely in the combination of the scientific, the philosophical and the religious that truth can be found. Of course, it is not enough to come to a realization of the truth, but it must also be applied in the practice of life and thus passed on to others. "To be true, religion and philosophy must offer the solution of every problem.", according to the head of Mrs. Blavatsky's teachers.<sup>(16)</sup> When it comes to religious and philosophical matters, it means that they will remain meaningless if they are not applied. To actually know the essence of something, you have to identify with it, you have to live it, and so awaken something in yourself that corresponds to it. Take, for instance, a virtue such as justice: you do not really get to know this without being consistently just towards others. This is also the only way the real teachers of humanity used to spread the truth. By being a living example of their own message and thus making recognizable what truth means in practice. To show that it holds true for everyone at all times and in all situations, that it is universal.

And if it is universal, every human being – from the smallest child – can understand something of that truth. Every human being can experience the unity of life – the starting point of Truth as a boundless principle – and develop this vision of life and put it into practice.

Hence the motto of the Theosophical Society: "There is no Religion higher than Truth". And as a Theosophist from the early days said: Its (Theosophia) creed is: Loyalty to Truth, and its ritual is "To honour every truth by use".<sup>(17)</sup> A task that many Theosophists are still trying to realize in their daily lives.

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# Is there evidence for the effectiveness of homeopathy?

The Scientific Council of the European Union, EASAC, advised the European Commission that homeopathic medicines are no longer allowed to be classified as medical products. They should also no longer be reimbursed by health insurance companies because apparently there is no evidence that they really work.<sup>(1)</sup>

The question however is, what is evidence? And, can prevailing scientific evidence ever be applied to homeopathy?

It is not the first time, that homeopathy is being attacked by established medical science. Already since the appearance of Hahnemann, the founder of modern homeopathy in the 18th century, this way of healing is attacked by physicians. Nonetheless, over the course of centuries thousands of patients have benefitted from homeopathy.

At the same time, it has almost become normal that the traditional medical world attributes these healings to a placebo effect. EASAC has to acknowledge as well that in individual cases homeopathy managed to heal people, however, this European Scientific Council also attributes this to the placebo effect.

So, this Council too believes that healing patients is no evidence for the effectiveness of homeopathic medicine but that evidence should be found in the medicine itself. And

that is the difficulty of the issue, since in that extensively diluted homeopathic medicine there is no trace of the original substance to be found.

## What is evidence?

Evidence is a concept often used to indicate that something is absolutely true; as if there is an absolute certainty for the explanation of an observation. When it is mentioned in a publication that it is *scientifically proven* that homeopathy does not work, this seems to be an absolute certainty. The words 'scientifically proven' seem to ban all doubt. However, such an absolute certainty does not exist in scientific evidence.

In science, hypotheses are formulated that must confirm observations and make predictions regarding appearances. When those explanations are logically underpinned and the predictions turn out to be true, then this is

## Key thoughts

- » Evidence is relative; it is conviction of the consciousness.
- » Physical matter is the 'sediment' of astral matter.
- » Although physical parts of the curing substance are sometimes absent in homeopathic medicines, they contain the characteristic of its consciousness.

considered 'evidence'.

However, whilst often enough these hypotheses are able to explain and predict a large part of the observations, there are exceptions as well. Even though those are not explained by the hypothesis, this does usually not result in dismissing the hypothesis for being inadequate.

Basically you can only speak of real scientific evidence, when it meets the requirements the German philosopher Karl Popper made for evidence, namely, that it also explains the exceptions.

As a matter of fact, you will have to question if you observed *all* appearances during your research, and whether you observed them *correctly*. Since it is impossible to determine if this is indeed the case, you can never speak of an absolute proof. Even in the most logical branch of science, mathematics, you cannot speak of absolute proof because it is based on a number of axioms. These axioms are hypotheses that are not proven, but have shown their validity in practical applications. They serve as a basis for logical reasoning and effects.

So, there is no absolute truth and there is no 'evidence' that confirms or disproves such an absolute truth.

In fact, evidence is related to the individual person.

Therefore, Gottfried de Purucker, the fourth Leader of the Theosophical Society (T.S.), describes evidence as the conviction for the mind.<sup>(2)</sup> What has been proven for one person, may be a question for another. One person is convinced by an explanation, another doubts, and a third person thinks the explanation is unsound. Therefore, evidence is relative. When scientists would realize this, they would undoubtedly be more careful in drawing their conclusions: an attitude that has always characterized the big scientists. When evidence is relative, and depending on the individual person, then no one can prove something for another. It can only be obtained by self-examination. Scientists should take this into account when considering homeopathic medicines.

### **Immaterial level**

The core of criticism on homeopathy lies in the fact that medicines are extensively diluted, as a result of which sometimes not a single molecule of the active substance can be found back in the medicine. According to the materialistic vision on matter, there can therefore never be any effect from the medicine.

However, in the article 'The scientific approach to classical homeopathy'<sup>(3)</sup>, it is shown that these medicines do work, although not so much on the physical cells and molecules

of the body, but on the *power* behind them.

The starting point of homeopathy is that the physical body is controlled by a non-material power, called *dynamis*. The cause of an illness does not lie in the body, but in this dynamis. The real healing process takes place at this immaterial level — or we should rather say: less material level. The self-healing capacity, situated in the more inner part of man, is activated. So, homeopathic medicines work on the level of the dynamis, or life force. When that power is denied by materialistic scientists, because it cannot be physically observed, it is obvious they will never understand anything of the effect of homeopathy. Something immaterial cannot indeed be directly measured with something material: you can only measure possible effects from it in the material world. When you imagine the immaterial as composed of matter as we know it, you are just like the American doctor MacDougall, who in the beginning of the 20th century tried to find out how much the soul weighs by weighing dying people just before and after their death. However, when the soul is something immaterial, then it is obvious that a worldly scale cannot register its weight.

The idea that *something immaterial* exists and impacts matter may have been difficult to imagine for MacDougall, but in the 21st century, in which we turn our television on and off with a remote control and drones are navigated by people at a distance of thousands of miles, this thought should be rather easy to comprehend. Also by members of EASAC.

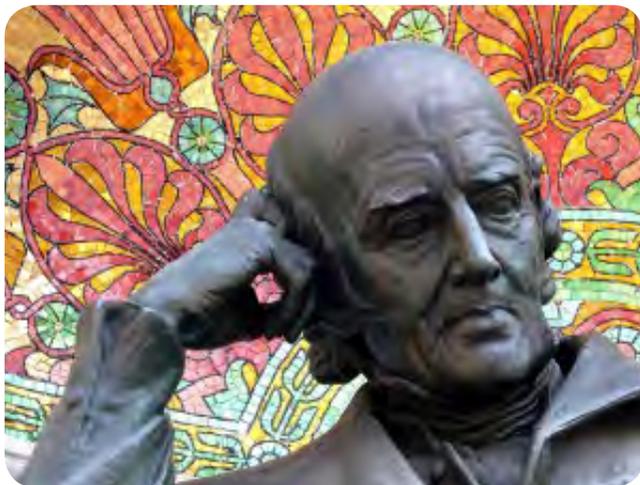
### **Plausibility**

When there is no evidence, should we then simply believe that homeopathy works? No, that is absolutely not necessary. First of all, thanks to homeopathy patients are cured, an argument in favour of the effect of this way of healing. To dismiss the cure of these patients as a result of a placebo effect is rather short-sighted and would apply to basically all patients who are cured, be it by homeopathy or allopathy, since those medicines, especially when they are prescribed by a well-known doctor, are also based on a placebo effect.<sup>(4)</sup> Moreover, countless cases of children, as well as animals who have been cured thanks to homeopathy, have been documented. And children and animals surely cannot have been influenced by placebos. Double-blind research on preventing diarrhoea with piglets has shown that homeopathy definitely works.

Furthermore, by *logical reasoning and by comparison* we are able to draw the conclusion for ourselves that homeopathy

could work anyway. We have to investigate the principles on which it is based, observe the appearances with an *open mind* and ask ourselves questions.

The first question we must then try to answer is if something immaterial is able to influence matter as we know it, for instance the body. The answer to that question is not difficult to find, as countless practical examples show. Also in regular science the so called psychosomatic diseases are a well-known phenomenon. Apparently, there is an influence of the psyche – something immaterial – on the body. Furthermore, I think everyone has witnessed sometimes that consciousness can affect the body. When you are sitting nervously in the waiting room of the doctor or dentist, it is not uncommon that this has an influence on your digestive system and you get a stomach ache. When you watch a violent movie, this can also have its physical effects.



Statue of Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) in Washington, VS.

Hahnemann himself gives the following example: when we watch a picture of something disgusting, we have to gag or even throw up as a result.

When you carry out physical examination after these experiences, no physical changes would be observed. Yet, they are there. What is more, they can occur again when you only think of that movie or dentist. Apparently, there are immaterial powers that can definitely have an influence on matter, also on the matter of our body, even when those changes cannot be measured.

### **What is matter?**

Subsequently, we must ask ourselves the question, what matter actually is. Without getting in all kinds of details, we can say that physical matter consists of atoms, that

rotate around one another with incredible speed and that are themselves made up of subatomic particles, of which we continuously gain more knowledge, but yet do not know much. According to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, you can equate mass and energy, since mass (matter) can be converted into energy and energy into mass.

It seems, that as we dive deeper into matter, we run into ever more 'immaterial matter'. Physically perceivable matter gradually transforms in something we call energy, which is also matter in its own sphere, be it ethereal matter, unmeasurable for our material instruments.

According to Theosophia, sensory perceptible matter is the crust or the 'sediment' of astral matter. In other words: astral matter is matter that is just a bit more ethereal than matter we know. Astral matter is the basis or foundation of visible matter. There is a continuous exchange between the powers of the astral and the physical world.

In fact, the physical world is nothing more than just one cross-section of the universe. Beyond, behind or in (in fact, each preposition is incorrect) the physical world other worlds are situated, the astral world being one of them. That astral world itself is again subdivided in many grades, from the physical world known to us till the much more ethereal and spiritual worlds.

When the physical world is the dregs of the more astral worlds, would it then not also be obvious that the physical man is no different than the corollary or 'sediment' of an astral or invisible man.

Apparently, homeopathic medicines interact with these astral layers in the human constitution.

### **High potentials**

When materialistic researchers determine that no particle of the active substance can be traced back in the water or alcohol, and therefore, there cannot be a healing effect, they make a logical error. We shall try to explain this.

In principle, each substance can be used as homeopathic medicine, provided that the substance triggers the same symptoms as those of the patient, since – according to the homeopathic principle of similarity – it activates the dynamis of the patient, so that he is able to get rid of the illness. However, in order to have impact on the level of the dynamis, the substance needs to be diluted and potentiated. This means, that the substance is diluted in water or alcohol step by step, and after each step the liquid is shaken. The stronger the medicine is diluted – and so the more shaken it is as well – the higher the potential. So there will be less and less molecules of the substance

in the liquid. It is even said that in the higher potentials no single particle can be found anymore, but this can of course never be proven since that would mean that individual atoms could be observed and counted. Interestingly enough, exactly those higher potentials are psychologically the most powerful, and work most deeply within the dynamism of man. The high potentials are therefore used for fundamental symptoms. After all, the medicine must always work on a corresponding sphere.

The fact that no or hardly any particle of the medicinal substance can be traced back in the liquid, means in no way that the character of it is no longer present. According to common chemistry atoms of two substances that are brought together, can establish a connection, but will not change themselves. The atoms and molecules of a substance that is diluted in water will react on the water molecules, but since there are far more water molecules than diluted substance these water molecules will not change.

However, according to a vision in homeopathy, the water molecules organize themselves in a certain pattern due to the added substance, which becomes stronger and stronger as the potential becomes higher. The dilution is after all established stepwise, and shaken at each new phase, which has to result in the characteristic of the substance 'expressing' itself to all water molecules. All these molecules are the bodies of molecular beings: beings that interact with and affect one another continuously.

Compare it with a crowd of people in which a lion suddenly appears. Although the lion does not physically change the people, nonetheless, a wave of fear will arise. When that lion walks through this crowd continuously – you can compare it with the shaking of the liquid – more and more people will become scared.

In this way, the 'neutral' water or alcohol becomes the carrier of the characteristic of a substance. That substance is being undressed, so to speak. All the 'unnecessary' is cleansed, so that only the essence of it remains.

Perhaps an example can clarify this. Sulphur is a substance that is used in homeopathy. When you take it in, you will get symptoms such as a rash, comparable to eczema. When you dilute and potentiate sulphur in steps, this substance will transfer its characteristic to the water molecules. Despite – or maybe even thanks to – the fact that no tangible part of sulphur can be traced back in the water, you have gone to the essence of sulphur. You are on the border of physical and astral matter, since those two are, as has been mentioned before, continuously interconnected.

So, in this way, you make a medicine that strongly possesses the sulphur characteristic. When you give this medicine to a patient who has the symptoms of this substance, such as eczema, it can activate the self-healing power. The fact that no particle of sulphur can be found in the medicine, an 'evidence' for materialistic researchers that the medicine has no active ingredients, certainly does not mean the medicine does not work.

One of the conditions homeopathic medicines do not meet according to the EASAC, is the fact that the ingredients and their volumes in the medicine have to be clearly described. Obviously, that is impossible for homeopathy.

### Individual cases

Another objection which is often mentioned, is that a medicine should have the same effect on a large group of people, which is not the case in homeopathy. This is obvious, since each patient has his own completely individual symptoms and, especially, causes for the disease, and therefore needs his own medicine. After all, no two people are identical. As clearly explained in "The scientific approach to classical homeopathy", diseases do not exist, only sick people. This means, that two persons with a headache may need completely different medicines.

For scientists who are used to think in categories, this is of course difficult, since a medicine always needs to have the same effect. Medical research therefore often takes place according to a method called *randomized controlled trial* (RCT). People with the same symptoms are divided into two groups: an intervention group and a control group. The intervention group gets the medicine, and the control group a placebo. Of course, one does not know to which group one belongs. In this way, scientists hope to determine if a medicine works.

This method can however never be applied to homeopathic medicines, since these are always tailor-made for each individual. After all, one person reacts completely different to the medicine than another.

This phenomenon is in fact also known in allopathic medicine. To mention one example: an antidepressant can have the desired effect for one person, while another person notices hardly anything. And for yet another person it may even work counterproductive: he becomes even more depressed and becomes suicidal. Researchers reason from a certain model and test medicines according to that, yet models are not reality. The individual patient is reality! In short, to criticize homeopathy because it assumes sick people instead of diseases, is rather unscientific.

It is the same as when you apply English grammar to the Dutch language and then draw the conclusion that Dutch speaking people do not comply with the rules of grammar.

### **There is more than the physical**

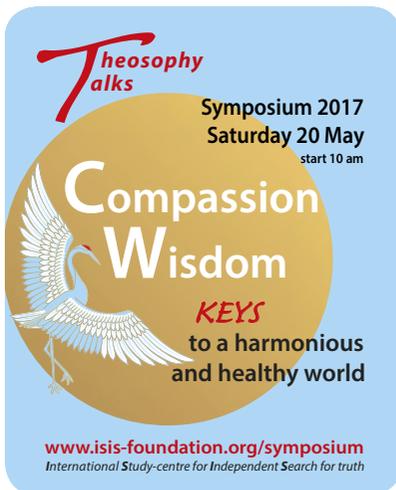
When you judge a soccer player on his qualities as a chess player, you deprive him as soccer player. When you judge homeopathy according to allopathic medicine, you deprive homeopathy.

When current medical science would take into account the hypothesis that there are more worlds than the physical, and that man is therefore more than just his physical body, it would make a big step forwards. By considering this hypothesis medical science will not only develop itself further, it will definitely also have a positive impact on the whole society.

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# Many opinions ... but what is true?

## What's going on with our world, and with us?

Because there are many depressive countries, the United Nations want to make governments see the importance of the feeling of happiness of their population.

Worldwide millions of people are involved. Depression will be the endemic disease number one in our society of 2020, according to the World Health Organization. This is one of the examples that illustrate that something is wrong. In the first workshop we will get back to this.

How is it that so many people seem to have no joy for life? And how can we best help each other?

People's well-being doesn't seem to increase, if we look at the world with its problems. For instance, how does the daily news influence the general well-being? Reading our newspapers and watching the news on television, radio or social media, we are immediately overrun with all sorts of bad news. We are continually confronted with negative facts. What are we supposed to do with all this? We often do not know.

Old, established certainties no longer hold and seem to disappear. To some people this means a certain emptiness, a lack of a common vision on

life. This may result in a depression, or one may flee in the virtual world of the World Wide Web or – even worse – one may seek escape in some addiction.

Furthermore, it can be noted truth is easily fiddled nowadays. Emotions and personal convictions often prevail. This was clearly observable in the preparatory phase to the Brexit, and also during the American presidential election campaign. Fake news and misleading information are part of this and that makes it even more difficult to establish the truth.

We are part of a turbulent world, we are right in the middle of it all, our involvement in the world's affairs expands all the time, and along with that our mutual responsibility expands. People are not separate from each other. We become more and more aware of this. When something happens on the other side of the world, we know it within minutes. Retreating or ignoring this are no longer options.

Of course, there are also positive developments: world-wide poverty has diminished. Our health has improved. On average we all live longer. There is growing attention for green sustainability; there is more effort to sustain the environment and many

## Key thoughts

- » Objective idealism: something is true as long as you attribute truth or reality to it.
- » There is a greater reality behind every phenomenon.
- » However grand your truth may be, there is always an even greater truth.

people still engage in voluntary service. So, a lot of good is being done as well. Nevertheless, there is cause for concern. We certainly cannot speak of a harmonious and healthy world. To achieve that, a change of mentality is necessary. The idea must be ensured that man has the abilities for a much better quality of life than he imagines and shows now. In our thinking faculty we possess all the possibilities to make our world a dynamic harmonious one. However, let's start with the situation of today's world.

### **What exactly are opinions?**

How has the world, as it is today, been brought about? Perhaps one may be astonished to learn that it is all our conflicting opinions that have enabled this. Let us examine the word "opinion".

An opinion is a subjective point of view or attitude towards situations, events or persons. A typical characteristic of an opinion is its volatility. Opinions change in time. We all interpret circumstances, facts, truths, each in our own way.

Generally speaking, we are used to thinking from our own point of view, based on our education and experiences, on what we have heard or read from others, on what other people do, in short, from the frame of reference we ourselves have built up. At the same time, we assume that what we can perceive with our senses is really true. So, an opinion is a personal, mostly transitory, interpretation of perceptions.

Of course opinions can be substantiated with arguments or knowledge, but next to well-founded opinions there exist less-informed opinions, though the latter may be shared by a lot of people.

Because people rather differ it is not surprising that many opinions exist concerning all sorts of things. Disagreements are a daily reality and there need not be any objection to this if we listen to each other respectfully. And that is the crux of the matter, because this is often not the case. Opinions are randomly being used and misused, even in unpleasant ways, which can offend people.

Because opinions are sometimes diametrically opposed they collide and generate misunderstandings which may result in real conflicts. We will address this in the second workshop. In short, Cicero, the Roman scholar, put it this way: "As many men, so many opinions".

### **Do we live in our own bubble or don't we?**

One would think, that these days of supersonic communication would give us many more means to find out the

truth. Just giving a search-prompt in any browser on any subject delivers a wealth of information. At the same time, however, this can be a pitfall. Exactly this tremendous amount of information about any subject may differ to such an extent that it results in utter confusion. Then what do we do? We choose what confirms our own ideas and we ignore opposite points of view.

Platforms like Google, Twitter and Facebook contribute to that. They filter information, using formerly used keywords from your search-history, ensuring the information links with your preferences. This includes fake-news. In this way your own limited vision, your own filter-bubble, as it is popularly called, is constantly confirmed.

This largely increases the risk that you will get less and less critical about your own ideas and you will get accustomed to the habit not to investigate other opinions.

Of course this cannot lead to finding any truth. On the contrary!

But what happens if one bursts his bubble? Then you will notice there is much more to experience than you had ever imagined. On the one hand this is a very attractive thing to do, but on the other hand this needs careful consideration on matters we have made ourselves believe in and on issues we were not involved in before.

We often don't do our best to put ourselves in other mental worlds; we simply don't want to understand the other, we get stuck in our own opinions, ideas and personal interests. We call that: living in your bubble, described as a state of consciousness in which you only pick up information that fits in with your personal view. You feel comfortable with your own opinion. Other opinions are not interesting or are considered nonsense. And we gladly welcome that information that pleases us, that fits our interests, for the very reason we all have our own thinking patterns. Before we know it we find ourselves living in our own self-confirming bubble. We selectively only pick up that kind of information that suits us.

A striking example of all those bubbles we could observe recently, when we had elections in Holland and could choose from 28 political parties; groups of people all living in their own particular bubble, granting reality to it. And each one of those political parties has their supporters, some more, some less, but even so.

Now, which of the political parties tells us the truth?

A truth is something you have investigated yourself and that you have experienced as being right. But your own truth is always a limited and relative one. It is only just a piece of a greater truth.

## How to rise from opinion to truth?

How can you distill what is true from that multitude of opinions? We will need a method for this, a fundamental touchstone.

Well, so-called objective idealism is one such fundamental touchstone. It involves that something is true as long as a perceiving consciousness – this includes human beings of course – attributes truth or reality to it. That may sound complicated, but it is quite simple really. Let me illustrate this with a few examples. If supporters of rival football clubs watch the same match between those clubs, and you ask them what they have seen, you may well expect that each has seen a *different* game. For they interpreted the game with a personally directed consciousness, that means from their respective opinions, sympathies, preferences, et cetera.

We also know the story of a toddler who witnessed her nanny changing into a clown's outfit and, for the girl, she became that clown. When the nanny appeared later on in her normal clothes again, the girl told her: "Miss, there was a clown here". You can see that she gave the human being who was dressed as a clown, the reality of a clown. She perceived the phenomenon 'nanny' as a clown. Actually, as adult human beings we do exactly the same as that little toddler did. We create our own perspective on reality. We color the world with our opinions.

The way we are is how we perceive the world. When we are in a happy mood, we experience the weather entirely different compared to when we are feeling unhappy.

Objective idealism explains why someone feels happy, while another, in the same circumstances, is unhappy.

It is not the external circumstances that determine happiness or grief, it is the consciousness that interprets the circumstances. And because we have no universal standards, it is easy to imagine that the person who is happy now, will be unhappy, or even depressed in the near future, (or the other way around of course), while circumstances have hardly changed.

We can only perceive what we have already developed in our own consciousness. If something is not a living reality to us, we will not perceive it. So we all mirror reality in our own way. This in itself does not mean that we must find ourselves an impenetrable bubble, provided that we are aware of this fact. Because then we keep in mind the possibility that we do not interpret our perceptions correctly and that our truth can be expanded, that there is always a deeper or greater truth. We should be willing to invest in it, to consider other insights and investigate

further to gain a more and broad experience. Those experiences can be compared to other experiences, and in this way our truth can be expanded and we can ask ourselves what we can share with each other within the possibilities of the world.

## Boundless Truth and limited truths

So if you search for truth, you will find many truths. In other words, all found truths are relative ones, not false *per se*, but limited. They spring forth from limited human consciousness. And because every human – however educated they may be – is limited, their reality or truth is limited as well.

Must we conclude then that there can be no greater Truth or Reality? No, that's not the case. But a comprehensive vision of this grander TRUTH lies beyond human cognitive ability. We, limited humans, simply cannot grasp the concept of the Boundless.

And still – and this is the great paradox – we are all part of this boundless Reality. It means that there is a greater reality behind everything, every phenomenon. This is a force we call consciousness.

If boundlessness exists, then there is one grand, comprehensive Truth, which for us is inconceivable. Every mental image of it that we have, is a limited one. In this way we have our own personal truths, consisting of what we have experienced to be true, what we ourselves call true.

An understanding to some extent of these two ideas is all you need to prevent you from ever finding yourself in a bubble again, because you realize that your personal truth is always a partial truth. In other words, however vast and grand your truth may be, there is always more, there is always an even greater truth.

## Consciousness and thought

So we can say that something that you *yourself* experience to be true, because you tested it within your ability and with the knowledge you already gained, is your truth. You experienced it as such. Not the perceived circumstances, but your interpretation of them is crucial. If you think this through, it means that although you perceive with your senses, you interpret this perception with your thinking. In fact we perceive with our mind.

That is to say, with our thinking faculty we form a mental image of everything we perceive in whatever way. We can focus our mind entirely on the external world. Most people do. Everything we see, hear, smell and touch we then believe to be true. And we consider our opinions

that we change so often, to be true.

But we also know that this sensory world is never what our senses want us to believe. Our senses deceive us. They make us live in an illusory world. We could give many examples of this.

For one, if we would not know that the moon reflects the light of the sun, our senses would have us believe that the moon is a source of light itself, and that it continuously changes shape throughout 28 days. We would think that matter is solid, instead of knowing that it consists of atoms that are continuously moving at an enormous speed. And we would think that humans are just their bodies. That would be our truth. But our mind can also give another explanation to the same perception. And then we see the body, not as being the human itself, but as a vehicle the human uses.

The point is that we should learn to interpret what we perceive in another way. In that way we would create other truths for ourselves. We would draw entirely different conclusions. Humans, animals, plants, stars, yes everything would be considered above all as a conscious, living force. Usually we call this consciousness. And this consciousness is nothing but: being conscious.

So, everything is consciousness. But all consciousnesses are not identical. People differ from animals and from plants. And obviously humans differ from each other as well. All humans possess self-consciousness — they are able to focus on themselves, view inside themselves. That is because humans have developed thinking consciousness. It is this ability to think that we use to interpret the world, and so it is with our ability to think that we create our own truth. However, this thinking activity is not something homogeneous. You probably experience this yourselves. There are many kinds of thoughts and ways of thinking. The more universal our thoughts are, the more universal our truth is. And the more personal our thoughts, and the more reality we attribute to the external world, the more restricted our world is. We then hold illusions to be reality. In the next presentation Mariska will elaborate on those different ways of thinking, those different aspects of thinking as we call them.

## **Finding Truth**

We live in a world of phenomena, of outer appearances. That means that behind this world consciousness is active. This consciousness can be traced back to the boundless Truth in the end, because everything is part of the boundless. That is why we are able to find truth, although we

live in this phenomenal world. But we can only do so if we leave our bubble, if we realize that our truth is only a very limited reflection of universal truth. We can never approach that universal truth if we lean on so-called truths of strong personalities. We must explore independently, have an open mind towards a greater vision. We must ask ourselves questions. And we must love truth. Everyone can obtain greater truths, each with his or her own level of thought.

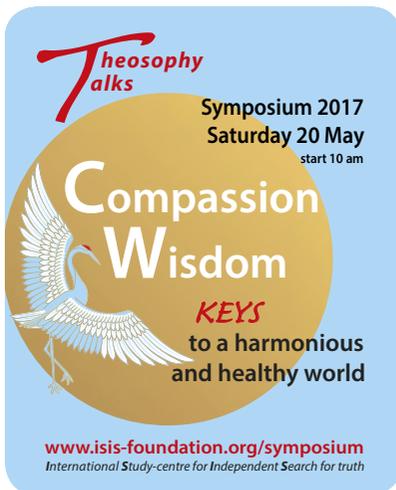
## **Calmness in turbulent times**

To search for truth independently doesn't mean that we must do it alone. We can learn from others. By exchanging ideas we can learn to see more truth. We show respect to someone only if we take their ideas seriously. Which doesn't mean that we have to take those ideas for granted, no, we should give them some fair thought. Doing so we should be understanding, empathetic, and trustfull instead of suspicious towards each other.

The fact that we are living in turbulent times doesn't force us to quit our search for truth. On the contrary. Of course there is tension and pressure in almost everyone's life. But it is turmoil like this that offers people the chance to reflect more profoundly on experiences that are sometimes unpleasant. Much can be learned from that, mentally as well as spiritually. If we succeed in remaining calm despite the turmoil, we can make more progress now than in any other time. In this process it is important to focus less on outer appearances but rather to consult our inner consciousness. It is actually a joyous activity. The quest for truth is not something that has to be done with a grumpy face. Just wondering about the many, many aspects of life will already provide you with a different view.

It is a challenge to set an ideal for yourself of how things can be better and to try to live according to your highest ethical standards.

In the next article it will be explained that in our mind, our ability to think, we have the potential to eventually reach towards Compassion and Wisdom.



# We are more than our vision

In the previous lecture from Ella van Zaanen you heard that we live in a time with many opinions. “There are as many opinions as there are people”, my mother used to say. Opinions are personal interpretations of what one sees, and they tend to change. People therefore often disagree, which should not have to be a problem as long as people listen to one another respectfully.

A truth is something you have examined yourself and experienced as correct. But even your own truth is always limited and relative. It is always only a part of a bigger truth. We also mentioned that, in order to go from a personal opinion to a truth, you firstly must be aware that it is always *you* who attributes reality to something. You always give your own interpretation to anything you observe, which is also known as objective idealism. Objective idealism therefore means that there are individual, relative, truths.

It has been said that a bigger Truth or Reality can exist, but that a complete picture of this grand TRUTH lies beyond human cognitive ability. Because we, as limited people, simply cannot grasp the concept of

Boundlessness.

An essential question that has been asked is: “How do we get from these individual truths to an expansion of this limited truth? The answer is: by extending your limited reality, by broadening your thinking”. To be able to do that you must be willing to think about other opinions, and to be open to the idea that those (could) contain truth. And you will have to explore and examine the things you find.

Ella van Zaanen ended her lecture with an encouraging observation: *that in our mind, we have the potential to eventually reach towards Compassion and Wisdom*. In this lecture we expand on that observation with the question: “what instruments do we have at our disposal to (learn how to) broaden our thinking?” Firstly, I will tell something about the materialistic and spiritual image of man, after that we will focus on the thinking faculty of man. These elements will be combined to show that you can learn to rise above your individual truth.

## Force behind phenomena

Many people today have adopted a materialistic image of man: “I am a

## Key thoughts

- » Consciousness is the driving force behind manifestation.
- » There are seven levels of thinking.
- » Your character is built up through thinking patterns, you have formed in your thinking.
- » At the core of unbiased thinking lies wonderment.

body, therefore I exist and am able to think". This image assumes that first there is a material body that develops a mind, through which consciousness arises. This image also assumes that existence is temporary. Theosophy, however, is based on a spiritual image of man, where consciousness is the working force behind all manifestation.

So whereas people who think materialistically, reason from the physical, externally visible body of man, Theosophy looks at man from his imperishable inner side, his spiritual side. This spirit is the same for every man, and works through the human soul. The soul is that part of the spirit we have developed already, the learning part. It forms the connection between the underlying consciousness and the physical body. The inner man, his thoughts, inspiration and abilities pour forth from the spirit, through the soul, into the physical body and express themselves in how one thinks and acts as a human. Man is therefore a composite being, with different parts.

I just said that Theosophy is based on a spiritual image of man, with consciousness as the driving force behind manifestation. In Theosophy, this holds true not only for mankind, but for everything. Everything is consciousness. It is a matter of "being that is conscious" and of "something it is conscious of". So, there has to be something that is active, that manifests itself, that mirrors itself onto something else, for example its surroundings. Essentially it is the ability to observe, but this ability goes beyond our "normal" daily sensory perceptions.

Plato defines life, or consciousness, as the ability to act, to take action, and to react on the activities of other beings. This power is not only linked to a physical body, as in the materialistic opinion, but to everything that manifests itself, in every possible way. So, you don't have consciousness, you are consciousness.

In Theosophy the real Human being (the one with the capital H) is an invisible being. What we see with our senses is only the manifestation of this inner man, because in principle man is a spiritual force. Although this human being is invisible to our senses, it does need a physical body. A body in which he can live, which he can operate and use to interact with others on this physical level. The level that we are able to perceive with our senses.

The spirit of man works through the human soul. A soul is not the spirit itself; it is the vehicle of the spirit. This human soul in its turn works through the physical body. The higher does not become the lower, but works through the lower, it manifests itself, it expresses itself in the lower part. It is essential to state that the perceived reality is only

a reflection, a projection or an effect of something that exists outside of our physical perception.

To what extent a human being (like you or I) has developed this underlying, invisible force during this life can be realized, also by us. It becomes apparent by your true love for your fellow man, by your highest aspirations and by your vision of life. But it can only be realized if you have developed this (partly) in yourself. You can actually recognize it. Nelson Mandela, for example, is someone who later in life, more than the average person, shaped his higher aspirations to form a society where all men are equal. Many other leaders, such as Donald Trump for example, seem to take their personal emotions and ambitions as a starting point for their thoughts and actions.

### **Human thinking faculty**

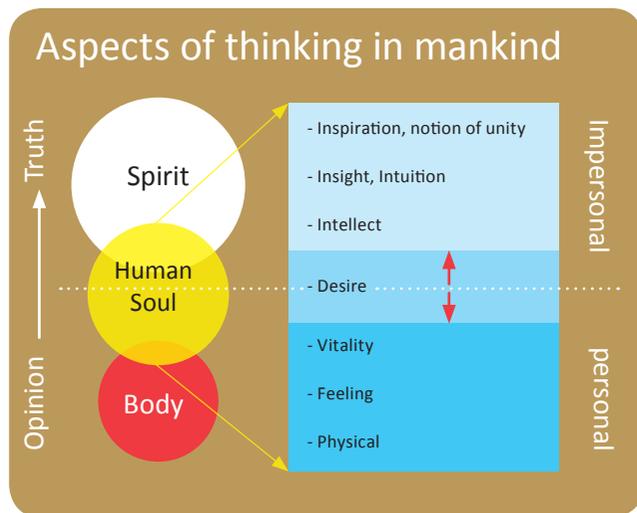
The specific form of consciousness for us as humans is the human thinking faculty. There are different levels of thinking, for example the daily thoughts like "I am hungry" or "it is time to make dinner" or "I have to rush if I want to catch my train", or "what shall I do today: have a lie in or be on time for my appointment?" But a judge who has to rule in court will think of all the laws, which are applicable to a specific situation that is presented to him. And a scientific researcher will think of all kinds of mathematic and physical formulas in his work, when he starts a big experiment. And a philanthropist will think of all the good charities he can spend his time and money on. These levels of thinking are of a different quality, and they derive from different parts of man. The thought "I am hungry" is important to maintain the physical body, we therefore call this the physical aspect of thinking. These thoughts help us to drink and eat on time, but the thoughts disappear when hunger or thirst are lessened. This thinking is normally short lived, disappearing when the goal is reached.

Likewise, thoughts of disgust or sympathy coming from the emotional aspect, for example "I am angry", or "I am in love" are normally short-term thoughts. For example, when you are angry with a colleague because he, at the end of the day, is not ready with his part of the assignment, this anger can disappear in an instant when he, after an all-nighter, delivers his share in the morning.

A third aspect of thinking is related to the desire to accomplish things; this is the vitality aspect of thinking. This aspect expresses itself by a willingness to act, to do things, to solve situations with decisiveness.

We can actually distinguish seven aspects of thinking in

man and the fourth aspect is, in the current phase of the development of man, by far the most dominant aspect. This is the desire-aspect, also known as desire force. Desire in itself is a neutral power, which draws its character from the motive behind it and the goal for which it is used. Because of this motive, this aspect has an arrow upwards and an arrow downwards in the diagram.



You see, this aspect can be targeted “downwards” to the physical, temporary part of man. But it can also be targeted towards the “higher”, the spiritual part. I will return to this subject in a minute, but first I will name all the seven aspects of thinking.

We have now arrived at the higher thinking aspects. The fifth is the intellectual thinking aspect, which for example expresses itself in the shape of a mathematical formula. This aspect of thinking endures much longer than thinking of the physical or emotional aspects. It can also be used by different persons in different applications. A mathematical thought, or *thesis* does not depend on a personal opinion or state of mind. Whether you are angry, tired or in love, two times two always equals four. And a hypothesis in mathematics is valid until another scientist proves that there are situations where the formula is not valid, or until a new formula with a broader scope takes its place. This can sometimes take centuries. In our age, with much attention for scientific research and higher education more and more people are trained in this way of thinking.

Now we arrive at the higher thinking aspects that are not developed on a large scale in current mankind. The sixth aspect is namely about insight, the real understanding of a situation, and therefore the comprehension. This thinking lies at the basis of selflessness and righteousness. It leads

to gentleness and it enables people to forgive. Finally there is an aspect of the thinking faculty that lies outside the intellectual ‘knowing power’ of man. This is inspiration and the notion of unity. This aspect causes the experiences of a mystic and the inspiration of an artist.

In the diagram a line is drawn through the aspect of desire, this is the aspect that I said I would get back to. As I just made clear, the thinking aspects above the line are more generally applicable, to multiple men in multiple situations. These aspects are more related to insight. People who are thinking this way are looking for the coherence of things, the interdependences and the unity of the whole, the more universal. We call this therefore *impersonal* thinking. The thinking underneath the line has a much smaller scope, this way of thinking is much more self-centred and based on personal needs, feelings and experiences. We therefore call this *personal* thinking. Thinking below the line leads swiftly to an opinion, thinking above the line is more abstract and helps us to come to a shared idea with many more people, and can subsequently lead us to truth. The human mind can only function at its best when all aspects are completely active and are used to the fullest by the human being. As we concluded in our first lecture, we do have something to learn and develop with each other in our society.

### Developing vision – rise above illusion

The aspects of thinking a person uses form his own demarcated, comfortable bubble. Generally, you see what you already know and are acquainted with, because you recognize it. The current internet amplifies this by giving only information that you already have looked for before. Theosophy, by the way, claims that this ‘recognizing’ is not based on experiences in one lifetime, but on experiences gathered in multiple lifetimes. In your own bubble you shape your own opinions, your own restricted vision on life, your image of man and the meaning of life; you give reality to the world that surrounds you.

Now, the essential question is: how can you expand that bubble? How can you rise above this restricted image and come to a bigger truth? What possibilities are at your disposal?

To cut straight to the chase: your *character* forms the limitation of the range of your thinking. Your character, your range of consciousness, defines your thoughts and the images you pick up. This character is built through *thinking patterns* that we ourselves have formed in our

thinking. Thinking patterns we share with others like family, friends or colleagues. Therefore we are all limited because of our character and patterns in our thinking. This is a normal part of our human development.

Luckily, we can do something about this restriction, which we all have. We can grow. Everything is already there within us, in the underlying spirit that through our soul has formed the physical body that expresses our character. This growth does not come spontaneously; it takes effort. Anyone who has tried to change a habit knows what I am talking about.

The expansion of your range of consciousness, of your character, starts by *thinking* differently. Changing your thoughts leads to different actions, which leads to different *habits*, which in the end leads to a change of character.

We can practise Thinking differently through unbiased observation: this means trying to see other things than we already see based on recognition. Other people can help you with this by sharing their thoughts, for which you can be open to. You can ponder over these thoughts, again and again and try not to draw conclusions too soon. Then, when you think you understand, you talk to that person again, tell them how you understood their thoughts, and ask them if that is indeed what they meant to say.

You can also practise not following the thinking patterns of your family, colleagues or friends, but to think independently as much as possible. You share thinking patterns with the people you grew up with. For example, many Dutch people think of The Netherlands as a country with a Christian tradition. When you ask these people what they mean by this tradition, few of them can really describe it, and even if they can, for example by naming the Christian holy days, then they do not celebrate them or they celebrate them without knowing the background of these days. This is a contradictory fact, the personality 'below the line' draws a conclusion: "we share a Christian cultural background", but in the meantime 'above the line' you think: "do we actually? What is the value of this statement?"

## Wonderment

At the core of unbiased thinking lies wonderment. True wonderment opens itself to the unknown, is neutral, dares to listen without prejudice and is able to look at other thoughts with an open mind. Wonderment as we use it here, therefore arises from the impersonal thinking aspects. In our daily language, this term is also used for surprise, amazement or even curiosity. These terms are better words

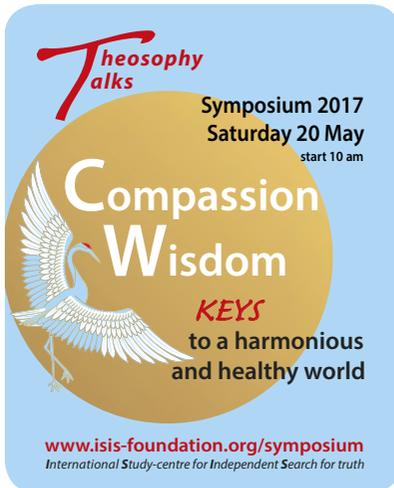
for the lower thinking aspects such as the emotional thinking aspect or the personal desire aspect, because these terms are much more related to thoughts such as 'what a nice surprise, this present is not what I expected', or 'wow, I really would like to know what is going on between these two', or 'seriously, was he involved in that?'"

No, wonderment as meant here concerns desire for truth, actually wanting to grasp the truth, whatever the truth is. It is related to your inner silence, is unbiased, contemplative and helps you to open up to other thoughts than you were used to thinking. It helps you to change your character, step by step.

To actually rise above illusion and evolve from a mere opinion to a more universal truth, a connection must be made with the inner wisdom. That is the wisdom that acknowledges the coherence of things and a connection to the whole, and that experiences the connection with all other beings. Herein still lie many latent powers in each and every one of us, that are yet to be developed.

## Where do you stand?

In this lecture I focussed on the question: "which instruments do we have at our disposal to (learn to) broaden our thinking?" I started by telling you about the materialistic and spiritualistic image of man, and the composite constitution of man. In addition to that I told you about the different aspects of thinking. These elements were combined to show you how you are able to rise above your individual truth and how you can broaden your mind from personal thinking to impersonal thinking. I also stated the importance of wonderment in this process. If you would act upon this, what you would actually be doing is, step by step, starting to think differently. By thinking differently, you are able to change your actions, habits and finally your character. You change your way of thinking as a person, coloured by personal emotions and experiences, to a way of thinking that leads to a broader, more impersonal truth. Key is an ever higher quality of thinking that rises above your personal opinion and experiences.



# From truth to wisdom: wisdom can be developed

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

This morning we investigated “truth” during the lectures and in the workshop. We saw that truths do not stand on their own, but differ from person to person. Now we will examine how we can move from these personal truths towards universal truths that are valid for everyone.

Before we enter the path from truth to wisdom, we will repeat some of the core ideas from the lectures and workshop from this morning.

## Core ideas

### *Truth*

We described the concept of truth to be that what we have found to be true, correct, valid. Something is true for us when it is concurrent with our own experiences and the knowledge we have gained. We have researched and investigated the matter and concluded that it is really true.

We also saw that our truths form a filter through which we look at the world around us. With this filter we interpret reality.

We ourselves determine the extent to which we are open to matters that lie outside our truths. It goes without saying that if you really want to get

to a greater truth, you try to build an all encompassing image in which everything has its place.

### *Wonderment*

We also paid attention to the importance of wonderment. The state of wonderment is an excellent attitude to have in order to make your truths grow. This way a personal truth can eventually develop into a universal truth.

### *Universal Truth*

A universal truth is characterized by the fact that it is in accordance with the truth found by others who also did impersonal research in this area. So, a universal truth is no longer limited and individually determined, but is universally valid and timeless. It really offers insight into something. You can come to universal truths on your own. But it is much easier when you cooperate with others and discuss everyone’s best ideas in an impersonal way. It is quite a challenge to develop smaller truths into universal truths, but it is absolutely possible!

By applying your found truths in every day practice and by refining them, you see the range and validity of the found truths grow. If they are

## Key thoughts

» Build up a universal vision by making use of universal principles, such as: “as above, so below”, “cause and effect” and “cyclicality”.

» Wisdom is to live, think and act in line with the universal vision you built up.

» Compassion: a condition of consciousness in which you realize that you are ONE with totality.

universally applicable and valid, then they are Universal truths. Universal truths are fundamental and *unequivocal*.

## Universal principles

### *As above-so below*

When we apply universal truths in the practice of everyday life, and when we are truly knowledgeable in a certain area and have really penetrated to the core of that matter, we start to recognize the same universal patterns in other aspects of life. We see that an atom is a solar system in miniature and that the process of development of the four seasons can be applied to a human life, for example. In Theosophy we call this universal principle: “as above-so below.”

We want to present to you two more universal principles that are always valid, and we think these are very helpful when you are researching truth. They are very simple and you already know them, but the challenge with principles is that you apply them consistently to everything. When doing so you can check for yourself if for you these principles are true and universally applicable.

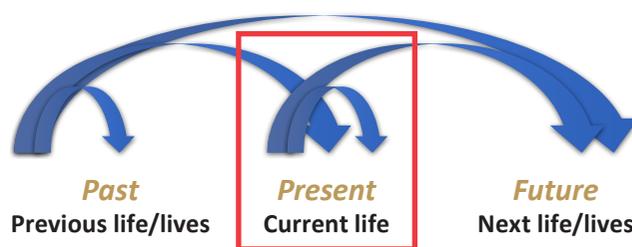
Theosophy knows seven universal principles, but for this symposium it is sufficient to cover three of them. If you want to learn about all seven and investigate them, then you can sign up for our course Life Wisdom, in which you examine each principle, together with your fellow students.

### *Cause and Effect*

The second universal principle we want to present to you is the principle “Cause and Effect”. We all recognize this principle in our daily life: we experience daily the effects of our previous actions and we know that what we do now, will have its effect in the future. Your visit to this symposium today is not without effect! The thoughts you ponder on today will have an effect on your future thoughts and actions.

At world level, it is also easy to recognize the universal principle of Cause and Effect. It is easy to understand that we seriously disrupt the balance of the earth and life on it if we use its rivers and oceans as a waste belt; and that the world would change in a positive way if worldwide power supplies would be sustainable and carbon neutral; or that a war will develop if we keep delivering more weapons to parties that are in conflict with each other. The chain of cause and effect is eternal and concerns everything. We build, so to speak, our lives and our future based on this principle. Insight in this principle of cause and effect or karma makes life predictable, even though the web of

varying causes and effects that are simultaneously active is at times complex. We may not always see the relations, nor do we always understand why something should be happening to us or someone else. The reason is that causes that were sown in this life, don't always lead to effects in this life. This has to do with the next universal principle that we want to discuss. But because many people want to know how karma works and why karma is the answer to many unexplainable circumstances, we want to explain in short the working of cause and effect, with the help of this overview.



In short we can say that causes sown in the past, can have their effect in the past, the present or the future. Causes sown in the present life can have their effect in this life or in a future life. We can only oversee the part that is working out in this life because we usually do not remember our former lives.

So, how we think and act now, determines the effects that we will encounter in the future. This applies to individuals, groups and the population of the world at large. We can all recognize this principle of cause and effect as a universal principle that is always operative.

### *Cyclicality*

The third universal principle is “cyclicality”. Everything in nature unfolds cyclically. Not only the principle of cause and effect unfolds cyclically, but also the weeks, the lecture season, the challenges at work and the thoughts you think come back to us cyclically. Also life comes back to us cyclically through birth and death. This universal principle that is active everywhere, is a process in nature that is always valid and, together with the principle of ‘cause and effect’, makes life predictable.

Have you noticed that situations in life from which we have to learn something, keep returning to us, so that every time we can become a little wiser in the way we behave in that situation? These circumstances do not occur to ‘bully’ us, but to help us to restore the harmony and gain insight in life. Actually we should be happy when these situations take place!

## **Dynamic harmony – an interaction of universal principles**

We have now discussed three important principles with each other: as above — so below; cause and effect and cyclicity. It is our experience that these universal principles, that can hardly be separated from each other, are present in, and even more, they form the fundament of every universal truth or vision.

If you have investigated these principles and you have concluded that they are true, and if you have investigated with the three higher thinking aspects that Mariska Zwinkels discussed, then you can very well use the principles as a touchstone to keep your thinking both sharp and flexible when checking truths for universality and when building a universal vision.

## **Thought-action-habit-character-destiny**

With the knowledge of the three principles we can finish the sequence that Mariska Zwinkels showed us this morning: thought – action – habit – character – DESTINY. We have seen that we all determine our own future, our future life circumstances. And in connection to that also the life circumstances of the future planet earth because man clearly has a very big impact on the wellbeing of the earth. If we live according to our highest aspects and our most universal vision, then we will have a positive, harmonizing influence on the whole. Our entire surroundings are benefited if we develop ourselves further and upwards, just like children that can optimally develop their inner qualities in an inspirational, harmonious and healthy educational climate.

It is usually easier to build an image of something from a universal vision, as we tried to do during this lecture, than from the level of the details of our personal truths. From a universal vision you can oversee the whole picture and from there you can zoom in on the details (just like overseeing the valley, standing on the top of a hill with your binoculars). But starting from the smallest details it is sometimes much harder to discover the whole picture. Of course, in the end you should come to the same universal vision from both sides.

## **A harmonious and healthy world**

When we develop a universal vision of a harmonious and healthy world, we realize that this can only be the case when all the people living in this world are harmonious and healthy. This can best be achieved, when all humans build up a common, universal vision, and live accordingly.

Nowadays, as all parts of the world are so intensively connected to each other, and we are informed about all things happening worldwide, and what kind of ideas prevail, and as our appliances and food come to us from all over the world, it is simply not realistic anymore to build up a universal vision without involving all living beings of the planet. If we were to exclude something, we can be sure that we are living in a bubble.

The thoughts and acts of humans have an impact on all other humans as well as all other beings of this world. The mental atmosphere of the earth, the sphere for which we as mankind are responsible, is the sum total of all the truths that people have and which they follow in their lives and actions. This mental sphere continuously influences us. It determines how healthy and harmonious the world is. So, by acting from a universal vision on a harmonious and healthy world, you contribute to a harmonizing influence on the whole.

Of course we realize that worldwide problems are often complex. They were not created in one day and cannot be solved in one day. But each attempt is a step towards the desired result. What is important, is that we ourselves live according to our most universal vision, and do not yield to the lower influences that we observe around us. All the rest we can leave to the sequence thought – act – habit – character – destiny.

We want to give you an important thought, that may prevent you from becoming discouraged when you see the disharmony in the world: a universal vision on this issue means, that all people everywhere in the world who understand the importance of this issue, and have studied it, in a group or as an individual, will certainly find the same universal truths as you will. And they too will try to adapt their lives to these truths.

Even if you do not know anyone around you who is striving in the same way as you, yet you know that elsewhere in the world there are people like you. There is no need to know them, and yet you actually work together in building up a positive mental image of a harmonious and healthy world. Thus you bring this ideal nearer to its future realization.

## **Wisdom**

The important question that remains, now that we have gathered so much knowledge and insight together, is: How do we deal with the present disharmony in the world? What is wisdom? The answer speaks for itself: Wisdom is to live, think and act in line with the universal vision

you built up. You live in harmony with life itself, and you do not cause any disharmony. And where you encounter disharmony in your life, you immediately restore it, and thus prevent it from coming back again.

Everyone can act wisely, according to his vision on the totality and his desire to live from this standpoint. Thereby we notice that it is almost impossible NOT to act according to the vision you built up yourself. And just as truths, as we said earlier, are *filters* through which we see the world around us, just the same can be said about our universal vision. *We become* our vision of life, and we continue to make it more and more perfect.

So, the development of wisdom is a key to reach a harmonious and healthy world. Wisdom gives us insight in the solutions for the disharmony that we now produce together, or which we now face as a result of the disharmonious actions of former generations. Wisdom is related to insight, discernment, so to the sixth aspect of thinking which Mariska described. Because he sees the interconnections, a wise human lives his life in harmony with his environment.

## Compassion

The second key to creating a healthy and harmonious world, mentioned in the title of this symposium, is compassion. Compassion goes a step further than wisdom, and has an even greater positive impact on the world. It is a condition of consciousness in which you realize that you are ONE with the totality. It means that you attune your thoughts and actions in such a way that these are aimed at the development of the whole, and not on that of your own personality. It arises out of the seventh aspect of thinking: sense of unity. Someone who possesses wisdom will take care that he will not create any disharmony in his own life. But someone who lives from Compassion, only works for the greater whole. His motive is always to be of service to other beings.

By practicing this, you steadily grow in knowledge and wisdom and your universal vision will continuously expand, but your only goal is to share it with other people, to help them in their development. In this way you can show them that unity, cooperation and compassion are the foundation of all life, and how valuable it is to apply these thoughts in daily practice, as (only) this contributes to a harmonious and healthy world. This mental attitude of compassion is the natural consequence of the universal vision that we have developed. It is the greatest, all encompassing universal truth. In the Theosophia, compassion is

called the Law of Laws, and the cement of the Universe. Let us not be scared off by the greatness of this idea, and let's not distance ourselves from it, but let yourself be inspired by the magnificence of these thoughts, and keep the principle "as above so below" in mind. The point is that we, by our ideal, choose the direction in which we want to develop ourselves, and become aware of our motive. Over time, our knowledge and insights about how we can contribute to a healthy and harmonious world with wisdom and compassion will continue to grow.

## Workers for humanity – helpers in our search for truth

You do not stand alone in your attempts to contribute to a healthy and harmonious world. Many people work for it. Some people work for a fair distribution of food and water, others for establishing good education for everyone, or the sharing of knowledge. As students of Theosophy we are active on the plane of the three highest aspects of thinking, to stimulate people to think self-consciously and build up an ideal image that is as comprehensive as possible, and to live according to this ideal. In I.S.I.S. Foundation – our work company – the four letters I.S.I.S. meaning "International Study center for Independent Search for truth" – we continuously search for truth, and we cordially invite all people to participate in this endeavor during our lectures and courses, because together we grow much quicker in wisdom than alone!

To help us in our search, we also study the wisdom which, through the ages, is given to humanity by many Wise people, for instance Jesus, Lau-tzu, Buddha and Plato. Their ideas are all based on the same universal principles that we have discussed with each other today. If you investigate this, you will see that all religions and all cultures in all ages have taught the same universal vision and ethics. You can get more information about this at our literature stands: there you can look into several books full of universal wisdom.

Another help during our quest for wisdom and compassion, is the help of people who are further advanced on the Path of Compassion than we. Often, we are not aware of the existence of this group of humans, but their existence is a logical fact. These human beings have allied themselves to a tradition which already exists for many centuries. Through the centuries, they pass their knowledge and wisdom on to all those who, like themselves, have chosen to live for the harmonious development of all beings.

So, these human beings are men who are more evolved than we presently are. They have built up a very clear insight, a universal vision and a vast wisdom about the development of all life, in all its aspects. They help people from all over the whole world, to discover increasingly greater truths and natural laws, and inspire them to live in their higher aspects and to use this knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of their fellow men. By acting in such a way, they actively cooperate with the laws of nature. The historically known great thinkers, wise men and spiritual teachers were all inspired and helped by these Masters of Wisdom and Compassion. Thus, extended over the whole planet, there is a network of people who have chosen for compassion and actively work for the benefit of a harmonious development of all beings. When you yourself have this same ideal and live according to it, then, at that instance, you too belong to that network: a network that is aimed at contributing to a healthy and harmonious world by practicing Wisdom and Compassion.

### **You can learn to live wisely!**

Today we showed you the way towards a wise way of living. We can imagine that during this journey from personal truths to wisdom and compassion, you may have lost the big picture. That's why we will finish by giving you a short description of the path we talked about:  
Because you can learn to live wisely!

Let us assume you are confronted with a problem.

- In that case, firstly adopt an attitude of wonderment, and keep that attitude during your whole investigation. This means having an open mind, searching for greater truths.
- Then find out which truths are related to the problem.
- Test whether these truths are universal or not, and expand them to universal truths. You may accomplish this by looking at the question with your 3 higher aspects of thinking: your intellect, your insight and your sense of unity. Build up a universal vision by making use of the universal principles we discussed and that are all involved in the problem: the principles 'as above so below', 'cause and effect' and cyclicity.
- Now create a universal vision directly relating to the problem. The ideas and keys of great Wise men from past and present can be helpful to create a clear vision.
- Next, on the basis of this grand vision, you find out how you can *wisely* deal with the problem.
- Then think, act and live in accordance to your uni-

versal vision. You will experience that your universal vision will expand continuously.

- And inspire other people to walk the path of 'wise living', by being an example yourself of compassionate and wise living!

Thank you for your attention.

# Questions & Answers

## Karma, relations and society

In this life you have a relationship with your family and friends. Do you have this relationship also in your next life?

### Answer

Everything in one's life takes place on the basis of free will. You enter into a relationship with someone because you *want* it. And do not get me wrong: entering into a relationship does not always happen because you like someone. You also have a relationship with someone you do not like. That is why we say that love and hate are binding factors in Nature.

So, if you have in this life a good or bad relationship with your family, then it is obvious that you will meet them again in a next life. If you alienate yourself from your family, then the relationship will also become less close or perhaps cease to exist. That happens regularly. A son or daughter may have no contact with his or her parents for years. Yet, the parents do not suffer from it. Maybe they have other children with whom they have close ties. And the forgotten child has built up a different life, dwells in a different atmosphere, a different climate of thinking. And his parents are in peace with it. In that case it is likely that in a next life there is no relationship between them or they only know each other superficially.

Of course, with your friends you always have a good relationship, because otherwise they were not your friends. So, you will certainly meet them again

in a next life. And with your enemies you have also a relationship, albeit it a bad one, because you dislike them. Therefore you meet them too in your next life.

In short, in this life we choose our future family, future friends, and, unfortunately, also our future enemies.

### Question

So, you will meet that bastard again?

### Answer

Certainly. If you speak about someone in terms of 'bastard', it means that you still have a negative relationship with him. In this case, you have chosen your own enemy.

Conclusion: never think negatively about people. Do not call someone a bastard. Do not hate!

### Question

Could it be that you hate someone, and you do not even know that you hate him? You unknowingly hate someone.

### Answer

Oh yes, I think that this occurs regularly. I will give you an example. I once gave a lecture on karma. So, I told about love and hatred as binding forces. Afterwards a lady approached me. She told me she liked the lecture very much. She said she was rather spiritual. But her ex-husband was a materialistic type. She was glad she was separated from him. And she told me about all the bad qualities of the husband she was recently divorced from. I interrupted her and asked her if she had understood the lecture. "Oh,

yes," she said, "because I am focused on these spiritual things. But my husband ...". And again, she started to tell ugly things about her ex-husband. Then I asked whether she had understood that love and hatred are binding forces. She understood that very well, she said, but started again slandering her ex-husband.

Do you understand what I want to say. It was clear that she still had a close relationship with her ex and that this relationship was not based on love. But I wonder if she realized it.

### Question

I have two daughters and I feel that one of them was my mother. Can you tell us something about that?

### Answer

It could be done, of course, but I must tell you frankly that I cannot make any concrete statements about it. I cannot look into your previous life.

I think that you can approach this case from different angles. We have lived many thousands of lives and have lived together with a lot of people in different relationships. Therefore, it is by no means excluded that in a distant or near past your child has been your mother. Some people are very curious about their previous lives, but they forget that everything in this life is a kind of reminder of the former because everything that happens in this life is a result of previously created causes.

But you know, it does not make much sense to speculate about it. You will not be wiser for it. You won't get a better understanding of how to live your life

or how to improve your relationship with your daughter. Always remember that the *personal* man or woman is just the mask behind which the real human being hides. Much better than making contact with the mask – the personality – is to make contact with the real human. And then it does not matter so much what kind of personal relationship you have with each other or what kind of *personal* relationship you had in a previous life.

### Question

Why are you born into a family with a certain faith?

### Answer

As said, all relationships are ultimately determined by free will. This applies to family relationships, to friends, colleagues, neighbors, but it also applies to your relationship with larger communities such as a neighborhood, a city, a country. Or, to answer your question, it applies to a certain religion as well. You are not born by chance in a Catholic, Buddhist or atheistic family. You have a relationship with that community. Perhaps you have once strongly opposed this religion. Perhaps in your previous life you were a staunch opponent of a faith and therefore you are now born into a dogmatic religious family. You are the notorious black sheep in that family, because you know: antipathy is also a binding force. It is sometimes said that the fanatic Christian and the fanatic atheist both think of the same thing: God. The Christian always wants to prove that God exists and the atheist always wants to prove that He does not exist. And that's how they create a bond with each other.

The opposite, of course, is also possible. In a previous life you have built up a strong affinity with certain rituals, with a certain degree of devotion,

and therefore you are born into a religious family.

There are numerous attractive and repulsive powers in a human being. You are never born anywhere on the basis of just one factor. Sometimes an attractive force can be so strong that these other forces are, as it were, overruled. But one thing is clear: you always become yourself and are always born in an environment where you can become yourself.

Can you imagine that someone in a previous life has been very concerned with Theosophia. (Probably it was not called Theosophia in that previous life, but that is, of course, not important.) He studied Theosophy his whole life, tried to apply and spread it. The theosophical characteristics in him are so strong that in a subsequent life he is born in a place, where he can continue his theosophical work. Maybe he is born in bad circumstances. Perhaps he is born in a poor family or has a defective body. But that is a side issue for him, because he can pick up his theosophical thread again and continue to spread Theosophy and help his fellow human beings.

### Question

But that means that because of Theosophy he will have an unhappy life.

### Answer

Why do you think that? Do you think that your happiness is determined by the circumstances in which you live? Well, we do not think so. Your happiness is not determined by the circumstances but by your *vision on* those circumstances. And if you assume that the circumstances arise from your own thinking and acting – after all, this is what the law of Karma teaches – then it depends only on your own response to your own creation whether you are

happy or not. In other words, happiness or grief is in your own hands. That is why people who live in what we call unhappy circumstances may nevertheless be happy and live harmoniously, while people in a rich, prosperous environment are unhappy.

So, take that hypothetical case of someone who worked for Theosophy in a previous life and is born in a poor situation, but close to his theosophical friends with whom he continues to work together — such a man will be very happy. His dream came true. His heart's desire, working for Theosophy, is fulfilled.

Do not forget either that the only lasting happiness arises when you help and inspire your fellow human beings.

## Colophon

Editors: Barend Voorham,  
Henk Bezemer, Rob Goor, Bianca  
Peeters, Erwin Bomas, Bouke van den  
Noort.

Chief editor: Herman C. Vermeulen

Editorial office:  
De Ruijterstraat 72-74,  
2518 AV Den Haag,  
tel. +31 (0) 70 346 15 45  
e-mail: luciferred@isis-foundation.org

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The object of the Foundation is to form  
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structure of human beings and the cosmos,  
free from dogma.

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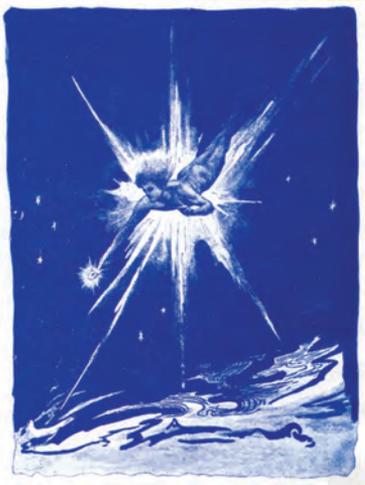
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## I.S.I.S. Foundation

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

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



## Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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

For these people this journal is written.

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

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

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