

the *Light-bringer*

Lucifer[®]

For seekers of Truth

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

**21 June: Initiation
of the Great
Renunciation**

**Expressing Truth
and Beauty through
Compassion**

**Gandhi and
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The Theosophical Society Point Loma was invited for the third time by its sister organization the Theosophical Society Adyar to contribute to their International Convention in Adyar, Chennai, India. This year the theme was “Truth and Beauty, a field beyond.” Erwin Bomas gave the lecture “Expressing Truth and Beauty through Compassion.”

Erwin Bomas

Gandhi on Theosophy and the global civilization of tomorrow, part 1

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During the 138th Convention of the Theosophical Society Adyar, James Tepfer, Associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists, gave an inspiring lecture on Gandhi. We are pleased to be able to publish this – slightly extended – talk in *Lucifer*. In this first part of the lecture, James Tepfer shows how Gandhi was inspired by Theosophy already early in his life.

James Tepfer



Prajnāpāramitā, “Perfection of Wisdom”, depicted as a female Bodhisattva. East Java, 13th century.

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What type of intelligence is “artificial intelligence”? Can computers become more intelligent than humans? Will they, perhaps in the distant future, ever be able to think for themselves?

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Editorial

Our thoughts and actions determine the future. Selfless thoughts and actions create a noble future: a society where cooperation, a dynamic harmony and peace reign. All the articles in *Lucifer, the Light-bringer*, attempt to contribute to that future.

The more that theosophists can cooperate in this noble work, the greater their influence will be. We are therefore very happy that through an ever closer collaboration between the various theosophical organizations, we are able to increase our 'magnetic' attraction, to which idealists and truth searching minds will surely respond.

In this issue of *Lucifer* you will find a beautiful example of the cooperation between three different theosophical organizations. At the annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, two lectures were given by speakers from different organizations. We are happy to publish these two, slightly edited lectures, that were given by a member of the Theosophical Society Point Loma and by an associate of the United Lodge.

At first glance it appears that both articles have a totally different subject. One article is about beauty and art, about expressing Truth and Beauty through Compassion. The other article is about the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi and how Gandhi was inspired by Theosophy already early on in his life. In the next *Lucifer* we will publish part 2: Gandhi's influence on the global civilization of tomorrow.

Yet both articles have much in common: they call on us to arouse compassion in ourselves and thereby create a nobler society in the future.

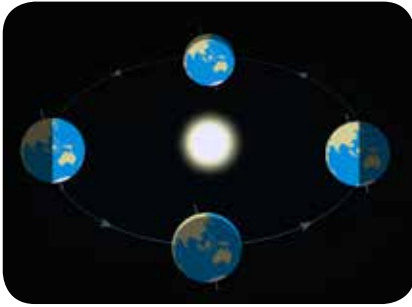
In that nobler future, the celebration of the summer solstice will be an important event, just like it was in the distant past. On June 21st, the sun is at its highest point in the countries of the northern hemisphere. This is the period when all vegetation is in full bloom, so the period of maturity. A lesser known event that also takes place this time of year is the Initiation of the Great Renunciation. This article is the third in a series about the four holy seasons. Articles about Christmas and Easter were published in previous issues of *Lucifer*.

Will we use types of artificial intelligence in the future? There are enough people who believe that computers and robots will play a major, yes, perhaps even an all-dominating role. Can those machines be more intelligent than humans? Or will computers and robots, being an expression of human intellect, always remain subordinate to humans? This article gives a clear answer.

Finally, in our Questions section we take a look at fairy tales. Those age-old stories can be very inspiring, not only for our children but also for us adults.

As always, we tried to shed the theosophical light on various subjects. Your questions and comments help us to continue our work.

The editors



The sun stands still for a moment

21 June: Initiation of the Great Renunciation

The holiday that is celebrated at midsummer has an esoteric background. Ever since time immemorial, initiations have taken place at the time of the summer solstice. The initiation of the Great Renunciation is the third initiation in the esoteric year after Christmas and Easter.

21st of June. The shortest night. The longest day. In some countries, this astronomical phenomenon hardly gives rise to commemoration or celebration. The winter festival, Christmas, and the spring festival, which is called Easter, we celebrate, although the true meaning of it has been lost to many. But we hardly remember the celebration of the summer solstice. For other people, however, such as those in Scandinavia, this time is very important. Midsummer is celebrated as exuberantly as Christmas. An important event takes also place in other Christian countries around this time. The birthday of John the Baptist is commemorated, which includes large fires and in a country like Brazil the release of self-made large balloons. Theosophy agrees that the 21st of June is extremely important, but you can understand this only when you study this in relation to the winter solstice of 21 December, and the spring equinox of 21 March. In previous articles we have considered what happens at these two

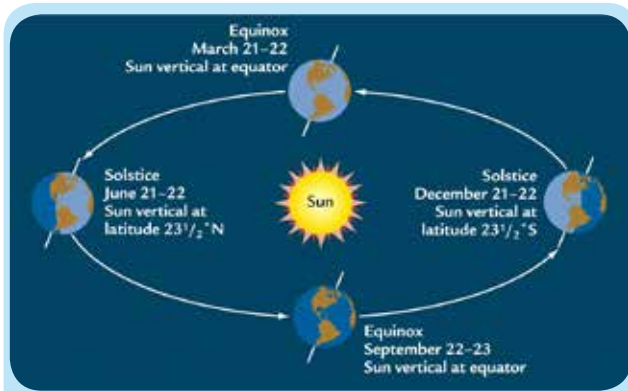
reverent moments.⁽¹⁾ Then advanced students on the path of spiritual development are initiated into the Mysteries. During the winter solstice, such a well prepared human being makes contact with his inner divinity, comes face to face with it, and returns to Earth as a 'twice-born'. This initiation is therefore known under the name 'the initiation of the Great Birth'. Christmas is nothing but a Christianized representation of this ancient tradition. Something similar happens during the spring initiation. The neophyte, however, before he temporarily unites with his inner divinity, goes to the Underworld, where he has to bring light and hope for the beings who reside there. Nothing in him should be attracted to the dark atmosphere there. Otherwise, the neophyte fails. The crucifixion stories in almost all cultures, in which a deity is crucified, which later rises from the dead, are a symbolic representation of this initiation. Because of the immense trial that accompanies this initiation, it

Key thoughts

- » At some point, every man is faced with this choice: "Do I harvest the fruits of my past labor? Do I choose for myself, for my own development, my own growth, my own achievements? Or do I renounce the harvest that comes forth from my own sowing?"
- » The essence of the summer initiation is not to reach a wider range of consciousness. The initiate does something much more substantial. He will settle permanently on the light side of nature.

is named the “Initiation of the Great Temptation.” The summer initiation ties in seamlessly with these initiations, as we will demonstrate in this article.

Finally, around the 21st of September there is an initiation known by the name ‘the Great Passing’. In a subsequent article, we will dwell on that initiation, which is the most difficult for us to grasp.



The word “solstice” is derived from the Latin term “solstitium” and literally means “solar standstill”. This phenomenon has to do with the orbit of the earth around the sun. In just over 365 days, the earth moves in an elliptical orbit around the sun.

The earth’s axis – this is the imaginary axis that runs from the north to the south pole – is skewed in relation to the orbit around the sun. It deviates 23.5 degrees from a right angle. This means that different parts of the earth are more or less turned towards the sun at certain times. This is the cause of the seasons. In the Northern Hemisphere, on the 21st of December the North Pole is the least focused on the sun. Around March 21, the spring equinox, the day and night are equally long. On June 21, the northern hemisphere is most focused on the sun. Finally, around 21 September, day and night will be equally long again.

So during the solstices, the sun is the most “removed” from the equator. It seems as if he is standing still for a while during his annual journey, because he almost rises and sets in the same place for a few days.

The midsummer night celebration

Every year, people all over the world will look forward to the day of the summer solstice. We already mentioned Scandinavia, where this festival may be even more important than Christmas.

Long before Christianity made its appearance, the festival of the solstice was celebrated everywhere in Europe. It must have played such an important role in the lives of the

European peoples, that the emerging Christian Church incorporated it within its own tradition, as was done with the midwinter and spring festival, on which the alleged birth and the death of Jesus is commemorated.

The midsummer celebration also underwent this fate. John the Baptist, who is mentioned in the Christian gospel⁽²⁾ and who Jesus would have baptized in the river Jordan, was claimed to have been born on this day.

“Saint John’s night” was once a big celebration everywhere in Europe.

With that incorporation something strange happened. First of all, the Catholic Church commemorates the birthday of Saint John and not his dying day, which is the case with all other Catholic saints. That his festival is situated on 24 instead of 21 June, has to do with the inaccuracy of the early Christian calendars. Others also believe that the ecclesiastical authorities wanted to have its memorial day run parallel with the alleged birth of Jesus on the night of 24 to 25 December.

Anyway, the midsummer celebration is still characterized by pagan customs. In Sweden and Wales for example, a midsummer tree is decorated, which people dance around. In villages, they still light large fires, which they then jump over. There was also a custom that on the longest day of the year girls and women took a bath in a river. The summer solstice is often associated with marriage and fertility. June still seems to be the most popular month to marry worldwide. The first (or only) full moon of this month is therefore called *honeymoon*, a word meaning a journey that a just married couple makes. Incidentally, the name honeymoon arose because of the popular belief that the best honey is harvested during this moon.

How strong the closeness of marriage to midsummer is, is evident from the famous play by Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In addition to marriage, all kinds of magical practices that were common during the summer solstice are also included in this comedy.

This time of the year is strongly associated with light and fire. But it is not only the fires of Saint John that take place. In Australia and in some parts of Brazil, countries thousands of miles apart, boats with candles are sent into the water of the sea or a lake. In some parts of England – Yorkshire for example – one rolls burning wheels from a hill. Furthermore, this time of the year is all about picking herbs. This, of course, applies to St. John’s Wort, which has to hang from the ceiling, so that evil spirits disappear. The divining rod could also be cut best in the Saint John’s night. And if you put cloths outside to collect St. John’s

dew, you would have an excellent cure for eye infections. These kinds of traditions were spread all over Europe, as indeed the popular belief that at the time of Saint John all fairies, elves and other invisible beings became visible. There are dozens of stories in almost all European countries, in which people come into contact with these fairy-tale characters on midsummer night.

By the way, it is not only Europe that celebrates the summer solstice. In ancient Egypt this day was related to the flooding of the Nile and heralded the new year. The celebration was dedicated to Isis.

It is also known that people from China experienced this day as a celebration. Dragons played an important role in the festivities.

It is remarkable that dragons are also associated with the summer solstice in Wales and England. This seems to be a Celtic tradition. In Norwich, England, the Tuesday before the summer solstice is called “Snap Dragon Day”. “Snapdragon” refers to that beautiful flower that blooms during this period of the year. But it also refers to dragons, because during the parade a huge dragon can be seen on that day.

The original inhabitants of America, such as the Natchez and Hopi, also celebrated the time of the summer solstice. In Swaziland, bordering on present-day South Africa, the 21st of June was also considered a holy day.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the essential meaning of all these customs. Nevertheless, we claim that there is indeed an esoteric meaning behind it, however bawdy these events may now be celebrated. In Sweden, for example, the 21st of June means nothing more to people than to indulge in alcohol and reckless behavior. Anyone who has driven a car in that country during the midsummer night will agree.

If we want to understand some of the backgrounds of the summer solstice nowadays, we must appeal to the previous initiatory festivities.

The esoteric year

All growth takes place in cycles. The growth process of consciousness can therefore be compared with the annual cycle.

Since untraceable times, there are people who are trying to accelerate the growth of their consciousness. They have been given the name of *chela* in the East, which means pupil. These chelas – disciples of the Masters of the Order of Wisdom and Compassion – make themselves ready for initiations into the Mysteries. They do so in the practice of

daily life. They apply the doctrine they have theoretically studied in lower degrees of initiation. They practice what they have been taught. It is like a student who learns a craft. After theoretical and some practical study, he completes his master’s thesis. Then he is independent in life. Initiation means making a start. The initiator makes a start with a new life: a life in the spirit of unselfishness and compassion.

The first phase of the initiation cycle is the intention. You commit yourself, as H.P. Blavatsky calls it, “To live to benefit mankind.”⁽³⁾

You have to prove that in the first major initiation: the initiation of the Great Birth, which takes place during the winter solstice. You are born as a new human being. Of course you are not yet at the peak of your abilities. You grow further in wisdom and insight. You penetrate even deeper into the secrets that lie behind the visible world. You mentally become an adolescent.

Then follows the initiation of the Great Temptation, which takes place at the time of the spring equinox. That does not necessarily have to be the 21st March, which immediately follows the winter solstice in which the neophyte went through the initiation of the Great Birth. This probably does not happen until many years later. It can also happen in one of the following lives.

In this initiation the neophyte descends into the dark regions of the Underworld, where he must bring light and inspiration, and, if he has no attraction to that gloomy world, he rises to the heights of the spiritual sun.

Even now the disciple has not developed everything that can be developed. He continues to grow to spiritual maturity. If he has grown so far – whenever that may be – then the summer initiation follows, that of the Great Renunciation.

Ingenious devices

The all-celebrated folk festivals on June 21st must have a common background. How else can it be explained that in such diverse places on earth this festival was or is being celebrated?

One is inclined to suppose that the midsummer celebration originates from the experiential world of a primitive man, a farmer, who for his survival was still closely tied to what the earth yielded. He therefore followed the different seasons, which were important for his harvest. But such an explanation cannot be maintained if one knows which ingenious devices people have invented to determine exactly when the sun was above the equator

or one of the tropics.

Many ancient peoples knew ingenious ways to determine the solstices and equinoxes and even solar and lunar eclipses. An effective method was to engrave or paint symbols on the wall of a cave. The sunlight then threw a bundle of light exactly at that spot during the solstices or equinoxes. Newgrange in Ireland is an example of this.

Another way was to look at the shadow of a pillar. In the northern hemisphere the shadow is the shortest at the time of the summer and the longest during the winter solstice. The Babylonians, Greeks and Chinese used this method. For the Incas, who live south of the equator, the method of measurement was exactly the other way round: the longest shadow means that the sun was above the Tropic of Cancer; if the shadow is the shortest, the sun stands above the Tropic of Capricorn.

A third technique was mainly used by the native population of Central America. Only on the longest day of the year the sun shines directly through a hole in a ceiling or

on a special spot on the ground.

You can also determine from a fixed position where the sun sets on the horizon during the changing seasons. We find this technique everywhere in Europe, Asia and America. Stonehenge in England is perhaps the most brilliant example of this.

The determination of the exact time of the changing of the seasons must therefore have been of far-reaching importance. We know that this was also the case in ancient China. This is evidenced by the instructions that the Perfect Emperor Yao from China gave to his astronomers to determine the solstices and equinoxes. This emperor, who was the fourth of the five so-called Perfect Emperors, is claimed to have lived from 2356 to 2255 before our era. These numbers, however, must be taken with a grain of salt, because these five Perfect Emperors must have lived when the young humanity was directly instructed by divine beings. And that is much longer ago. There are even indications that these Emperors themselves are symbols



Initiation chamber near Newgrange, Ireland.



Stonehenge, near Salisbury, England.

for those early miraculous periods of humanity.⁽⁴⁾ Why did these “primitive” peoples want to know these precise times of year? What did they need these cosmic clocks for? Why did all this have to be done? It cannot have anything to do with agriculture, for a farmer does not need a watch nor a calendar to know when to sow or harvest.

Some sort of answer to these questions is read in a stone calendar of the Aztecs, which is dated in the year 1502. It is known that the priests could use this calendar to determine, among other things, the equinoxes and solstices, which was necessary for their religious festivities.

The conclusion is therefore justified that the weight given to the determination of the solstices and equinoxes had to do with religion. All this must have served a religious or mystical purpose that modern man no longer knows. That goal, we say, is initiation.

The summer initiation

The folk festivals around the 21st of June have everything to do with those initiations. The changes of the seasons were not only an ideal time for well-trained chelas to go through an initiation, but it was also an excellent opportunity to inform the population about such initiations by means of suggestion or imagery. Of course everything could never be said, but enough was communicated to at

least keep the intuition of the population awake.

In Greece, in the so-called Lesser Mysteries, the people were shown in a kind of dramatic play what the initiator would later undergo in reality.

The festivities that are still celebrated today are degenerated customs that have their origin in those religious festivals that took place at these sacred initiations. And although it is not easy to find something of those Mysteries remaining in the existing traditions, it is not impossible.

First of all, we see that St. John’s Night is all about fire. That is probably an element that all commemorations of the summer solstice have in common. Fire is preeminently predominantly the symbol of the sun. It is not for nothing that the medieval Hermeticians and Alchemists were given the name of ‘firewalkers’. The ‘solar fire’ was the deity from which everything had originated

In ancient India, Agni was the God of fire. The Vedas mention that already. Agni is said to be the threefold aspect of fire: the Sun in heaven; the lightning in the air; the ordinary fire on Earth. The earthly fire is, in other words, nothing but a shadow of the divine fire of the Sun. The fires that are still raging on Saint John’s night have to do with the divine Sun, from which we have all come forth. The seldom practiced tradition of bathing on the longest day of the year must also have a deeper background. Water was always associated with the giving of life. Baptism was

the symbolic representation of it. Water always symbolized the matter or the outer realms. It also symbolized the purifying and enriching workings of our experiences gained in the outer world. In the physical life we can gain wisdom. The baptism by water therefore always precedes baptism by fire, or baptism by esoteric knowledge.

You get that esoteric knowledge in higher initiations. This is the background of John the Baptist's performance in the Gospel. John the Baptist also baptized. He did that before there were Christians. He baptized with water, while Christos – and that refers to the inner Christos, which is awakened during initiations – does it with fire. In other words, through inner purifications in daily life, one prepares for real firsthand experiences in the inner worlds. Baptism was practiced in all religions. Perhaps the Christian Church wanted to legitimize this pagan use with the introduction of St. John's Night on the 21st of June. In ancient India, baptism already existed. The Chaldeans practiced it. In the Eleusinian mysteries one dipped in the sacred ponds of the temples. According to H.P. Blavatsky, this ritual was also used in the Great Pyramid of Egypt, "where we can still see the baptismal font in the form of a sarcophagus".⁽⁵⁾

The midsummer tree, which, for instance, now plays an important role in Sweden and Wales, has a strong symbolic value as well. Trees play an important role in many religious stories, such as in Genesis and the Edda. They may represent different things. The most important thing for June 21 is perhaps their representation of the Cosmos. The roots are lost in the invisible areas of it, and the branches, twigs and leaves represent the different hierarchies of beings, all originating from the source of the tree. So everything is connected. During initiations, the neophyte travels to the "roots of the tree", the heart of the Universe, which is the source from which he comes and in which he is actually rooted. That means: to the heart of the solar system that includes our planet, and therefore all human beings.

The fact that people dance around the tree is not without significance. Dancing was important in all civilizations of antiquity, and still is with what we call "primitive" peoples, not just a pastime. It was a form of worshipping the gods. Dancing around the midsummer tree is a tribute to the Universe, of which we are a part.

In China, dragons play a role in the feast of summer. The esoteric background of this is that dragons are symbols of divine wisdom, or for people who have acquired that divine wisdom. Often they act as a kind of messenger between the

gods and the people. With the Hopi the summer solstice was dominated by spiritual beings as well. Those divine beings left the people on the 21st June to continue their work in the invisible worlds.

These magical dragons are in line with the widespread belief in Europe that you have to pick certain herbs on the shortest night of the year. They would then have a magical power. You can see fairies, elves and other "heavenly" beings dancing at the time of the summer solstice. This also indicates that a contact between the human and the invisible world is possible during midsummer.

All these folk customs have to do with the atmosphere of holiness that adheres to this day. It really is a holy day. As a result of the initiation of the Great Renunciation, there are indeed beings to see, solar beings, provided that one has the unspeakable happiness of coming into contact with someone returning from this ethically highest initiation. Also the association of this day with marriage is not without significance. This does not mean that two human beings enter into a relationship with each other on this date. Marriage is in the entire mystical literature a symbolic representation of the merging of the lower man – the personality – with the higher consciousness – the inner god. The classical Sufis have fully developed this symbolism, giving the inner god the name of the Beloved. The Old Testament Song of Songs is a symbolic representation of the ascension of the personal man into the inner divinity. This amalgamation takes place in initiations.

Summer: harvest time

Although the celebration of the summer solstice is widespread, its meaning is more difficult to trace than, for example, Christmas, the feast of birth. The light – the sun – is born at that time. And the spiritual light – the inner Sun – can be born into man. But what is the esoteric background of the summer solstice?

We can hardly derive anything from the folk stories themselves. In general, it is assumed that these traditions are related to the harvest, which is inaugurated when the sun is at the peak of its annual journey. The earth is showered with sunlight. The flowers are blooming. It is a time of abundance. Nevertheless, this time also denotes the decrease of the sunlight. The days will be shorter.

Perhaps a tradition of the Hopi from Arizona teaches us something about the background of the summer initiation. In the religion of these people, the *Kachinas* have an important role. They are spiritual beings who guide and inspire us since the birth of humanity. In earlier times of



Ceramic image of a kachina spirit.

existence the *Kachinas* were visible, but nowadays they are imperceptible to the human senses. The tradition now is that these *Kachinas* descend from the tops of mountains on December 21st. They stay with the people for six months. From the 21st of June they leave the villages of the Hopi and stay again for six months in the mountains, where they visit and assist the dead in the underworld.

It is clear that this has to do with the sun, which is in its declining cycle from June to December. Obviously, the Hopi believe that in this period the divine influence also diminishes, which they suggest by the myth that the *Kachinas* are living elsewhere at this time. At Midsummer, masked and feathered men represent these *Kachinas*.

Throughout mystical literature, divine beings are associated with the sun. These *Kachinas*, whose appearance and the disappearance exactly coincide with the rising and falling sun, are solar beings. The solar cycle is therefore very important during the initiations.

The aforementioned tradition of burning wheels rolling from a hill could also indicate this natural fact. The burning wheels represent the sun, and their downward movement has to do with the declining power of the sun

starting on June 21. But this symbolic action could also mean something much deeper, namely the passing on of light to lower areas. If we apply that to ourselves, it means that the solar impulse can continue for several cycles (rotating wheel), provided we are willing and able to conduct this impulse. Does that not coincide beautifully with the workings of nature? Because after the 21st of June, in the time when the power of the sun is decreasing, the harvest will be brought in. The fruits of the trees, the wheat that is sown, all the yields of the land, must be harvested. This also occurs in a metaphorical sense. We can now reap the fruits of the resolutions and decisions we made during the sowing season of the winter solstice, which we have carried out despite the trials of spring. Also in this spiritual sense it is time to harvest.

All of this must have something to do with the summer initiation. The solar power is decreasing, but the initiator rises to higher powers. It is as if he is going to take the place of the departing sun. As if he is sacrificing himself to stay behind, where the solar forces will leave the earth.

The initiation of the Great Renunciation

Summer is the time of maturity. Maturity is the harvest of youth. Nevertheless, we regularly see that middle-aged people regard youth ideals as a kind of juvenile sin. They only have an eye for their own interests and often that is not in line with the impersonal ideals of when they were young.

But there are also humans who retain their idealism as they grow older. In fact, their ideals are constantly increasing in generosity and intensity. With these men and women you actually see two lines of growth. First of all, you see that, like everyone else, they can improve a number of things with the climbing of the years. They grow in insights and skills. On the other hand, they retain that idealism. And that means that they do not keep those insights and abilities for themselves, but they donate them, so to speak, to their ideal, or, to a greater whole.

When, in other words, an older man realizes that the

spiritual ideal that was born in his youth and that was tested as he grew older is the guideline for the rest of his life, he also knows that he must renounce every personal benefit that his abilities can provide. If he did not renounce that personal harvest, it was no longer an ideal that guided him. After all, there is no room for self-interest in any super-personal ideal. If there was self-interest involved, the ideal would not be completely super-personal. Every kind of selfishness, therefore, detracts from real spiritual idealism. That is why the adult must forsake the harvest of his life if he wants to be faithful to his youthful idealism. It is the choice between the community and the “me”.

Every man comes to such a choice in his life. “Do I harvest the fruits of my past labor? Do I choose for myself, my own development, my own growth, my own achievements? Or do I renounce the harvest that comes from my own sowing?”

Then it is possible to join the chela who has successfully passed through the initiations of the Great Birth and the Great Temptation. He now faces an even greater challenge. We must realize the following. Initiations take place in an organized manner. Although you must independently go through your initiation – and thus in a certain sense you are your own initiator – a chela can only be initiated thanks to the help of his Master.

That Master himself is also initiated with the help of his Master. He also works with others. It is thanks to a grand organization that initiations can take place.

That organization is called the Order of Wisdom and Compassion in the theosophical language of today. It is an organization that was actually instituted by divine beings with the aim of serving and guiding humanity in its entirety on its evolutionary journey. In this Order it is therefore never about individual success, but always about the elevation of humanity as a whole.

Initiation is accelerated evolution. You develop mental aspects in a short span of time, which others may only develop during many lifetimes. But within the Order of Wisdom and Compassion these initiations can only take place when the candidates offer the fruits of it on the altar of all mankind. The first and final step is to always live to be a blessing to mankind. The initiation of the Great Renunciation is therefore a logical continuation of the previous major initiations.

As with the previous great initiations, during the summer initiation the spirit-soul of the neophyte, like during the process of dying, will leave his body and travel through the cosmic circulations, along the moon and the planets

to the heart of Father Sun. A journey that is easier to do with the changing of the seasons. Even now the neophyte will come face to face with his inner god and even become one with it for some time, so that he is omniscient for our Solar System.

At this initiation, however, he must resist the greatest temptation. He has to say goodbye to any prospect of growth, to progress. He cannot even devote any thought to this. He may not cherish any secretly covert, individual, utterly minute wish hidden in the depths of his consciousness. He undergoes the initiation for the whole ... or he fails. If he does not fail, he descends into the body as one who made the ultimate choice. He is irradiated with a cosmic light. He descended to earth as a sun-god. He is a savior of mankind.

The essence of his initiation was not to reach a wider range of consciousness. In fact, the initiate has done something much more substantial, much more principal. He has settled for good on the light side of nature. That means that he has fully understood the nature and structure of life and is fully aware that there is One Life that flows through everything and everyone. That is why he can no longer choose for himself. He has already chosen. He has taken his place. He is a living building block of what in mystical language is called the Protection Wall, which protects mankind, who, by the way, has no knowledge of it. Great is the compassion and the purely impersonal love for humanity as a whole of the initiate who survives the Great Renunciation. He may have sacrificed himself for eons in service for his weaker brothers who have not yet developed as far as he has.

Incidentally, this does not mean that he cannot grow in insight and wisdom. He will undergo deeper initiations. But the nature of those initiations will never differ from that of the Great Renunciation. He forever gives up the fruit of his actions for the sake of all that lives.

The Bodhisattva Initiation

Those who carefully read the ancient religious and mystical literature, will occasionally find an allusion to the initiation of the Great Renunciation. Every time someone sacrifices his own bliss and acquired rights on behalf of the whole, the characteristic of the Great Renunciation is there.

We find this, for example, in the great epic of the Mahābhārata from India. Yudhishtira climbs Mount Meru at the end of a life full of suffering, trials and tribulations. This mountain symbolizes the cosmos. Climbing this mountain thus indicates initiation: the expansion of

consciousness. Yudhishtira is accompanied by his faithful dog. Suddenly he hears a divine voice, telling him that he can pass through the heavenly gates, but his faithful four-legged friend does not get permission. Yudhishtira refuses. He renounces heavenly happiness for the sake of a being much less developed than himself.⁽⁶⁾

Also in Islam we find a story of this all-embracing sacrifice. Salman the Persian suffers the most terrible trials. But he refuses acquired divinity. This makes him so transparent for the divinity that he transforms the divine influence to those less developed.⁽⁷⁾

The clearest reference to the initiation of the Great Renunciation is found in Mahāyāna Buddhism, namely in the doctrine of Bodhisattvas. The literal translation of

this word is “he whose being has become wisdom”. In Tibetan Buddhism it is assumed that a Bodhisattva is one step away from becoming a Buddha. Yet, in general, Tibetans worship a Bodhisattva more than a Buddha. The intuitive spirit of Tibetans has sensed this very well. For although a Bodhisattva is less developed than a Buddha, he is higher in ethical terms. This paradox is explained by the initiation of the Great Renunciation.

Becoming a Buddha means entering Nirvāna. However spiritual and wise you may be, if you consciously seek Nirvāna, you ultimately choose your own salvation.

However, there are beings who, through the practice of compassion, have become so spiritual that they have to enter Nirvāna. Even if you work super-personally for

others, at some point the attraction of the spiritual world can be so great that you cannot resist it. Just as a child cannot prevent growing physically, these initiates are drawn to higher spheres. But these great ones have taken steps so that after their departure to Nirvāna, the compassionate labor for less advanced beings will continue. Reaching Nirvāna was never the goal of their endeavor, it was more of an incident, derived from their compassion. They differ essentially from those who strive for spiritual rest for themselves. To these people the words of H.P. Blavatsky apply:

Self-gratulation, O Disciple, is like unto a lofty tower, up which a haughty fool has climbed. Thereon he sits in prideful solitude and unperceived by any but himself.⁽⁸⁾

The human who really realizes the unity of life no longer knows any difference between “me” and “them” In between, he never has to choose again, because he has already chosen definitively. He has joined in the forces of light. He sacrifices all personal and individual progress. He constantly inspires his fellow pilgrims on the Path. He works constantly for them. He has become the vehicle of compassion.



Yudhishtira climbs Mount Meru, accompanied by his dog.

Of course he slows down his upward pace. But it does not matter. For “many first will be last, and many last are the first.”⁽⁹⁾ Doesn’t this famous saying from the Christian Gospel reflect the renunciation of what is spiritually acquired? Those “last ones” are the first, the greatest in wisdom and compassion, because they realize that everything that exists is kneaded with the same life-giving juice. There is a unity. That is why those “last ones” wait until the least advanced have reached their towering spiritual level. They answered the following questions from *The Voice of the Silence* for themselves with all their heart and soul.

Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?”⁽¹⁰⁾

Solar eclipse

Every year around the 21st of June, initiations take place. Not every year, however, offers the same possibilities. Because not only the fact that the sun occupies the highest position in the northern hemisphere is important, other cosmic conditions also play a role.

The neophyte travels from the Earth on the circulations of the Cosmos, and via the Moon, Venus and Mercury, to the Sun. Now when the celestial bodies are in more or less a straight line, the attraction force of the Sun is greatest on June 21st.

When a solar eclipse coincides with the summer solstice, the cosmic situation is ideal. A moon eclipse often occurs two weeks before or after a solar eclipse. That will happen two weeks after June 21, so on July 5, when the moon is full again. Solar eclipses have everything to do with the circulations of the Cosmos. In a solar eclipse, Earth, Moon and Sun are in syzygy, or in a straight line. If the planets Venus and Mercury are also in a straight line with the Sun, the Moon and the Earth, then the Cosmic condition is particularly favorable. Then the most great initiations take place. As a result, the spirit-soul of the neophyte can be attracted more easily by the Sun. And if the initiation is of a very high character, after fourteen days, when the moon is full, the neophyte will return to Earth along the same circulations of the cosmos.

There are many mysteries about initiations, which are so deeply profound, and whose knowledge is so easily misused, that in public a Master cannot do more than giving certain ideas, clues, suggestions, which must awaken our intuition. Therefore, not much can be said.

It is in any case inspiring if we keep in mind that the greatest of mankind are going through the holiest of the

initiations around the 21st of June. Strange paradox! The neophyte does not necessarily make a step forward in his evolution, and yet this initiation is most sacred because the neophyte refrains from own progress. And there is nothing more sacred than the sacrifice of one’s own bliss in favor of all that lives.

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Expressing Truth and Beauty through Compassion

The Theosophical Society Point Loma was invited for the third time by its sister organization The Theosophical Society Adyar to contribute to their International Convention in Adyar, Chennai, India. This year the theme was “Truth and Beauty, a field beyond.” Our members Jenny van der Tak, Bouke van den Noort en Erwin Bomas made the journey. Erwin gave the lecture “Expressing Truth and Beauty through Compassion.”

Key thoughts

- » BEAUTY and TRUTH are universal, imperishable and eternal.
- » Beauty and Truth with ONE capital letter are the highest expression of the universal BEAUTY and TRUTH.
- » Compassion is the expression of the BEAUTY and TRUTH of Unity.
- » Truth and Beauty are at other times expressions of compassion.
- » If we resonate with the highest level of our consciousness, the notion of unity, then we are a channel of inspiration, of compassion and of Truth and Beauty.

In the *Tao Teh King*, Lao-tse (verse 81) said:

Truthful words are not beautiful.
Beautiful words are not truthful.

This gives us a little excuse to start a bit ugly.

If you look at the world right now, at the disharmony, inequality, the inhumanity or in short the *Avidyā* or ignorance that is behind it. And if you think at the same time of the Truth and Beauty of the Theosophia, the Divine Wisdom that is our inheritance, that holds all the answers to solve the world’s problems. If you have these two perspectives in mind, and if you are honest with yourself, you must admit that we have to do a better job. And by “we” I mean the Theosophical Movement as a whole. And I say this without disregard or disrespect of the sincere work that is being done of which we witnessed some great examples of during the

course of the week here at the International Convention in Adyar.

We really have to do a better job. But how? We would like to share some ideas about that with you.

Let me first start by thanking the organizers of this wonderful convention for putting all this together and also for inviting us.

And I say ‘us’ because we cooperated on this presentation with a small team, including my friends Jenny and Bouke who are also present here.

Why Compassion underlies true Beauty and Truth

When we heard about the main theme of this convention: Truth and Beauty – a field beyond, we first thought: how can we recognize this “field beyond”?

And our first point that we would like to address is that compassion is the expression of Truth and Beauty. The question that soon follows is: how do we express Truth and Beauty

through compassion? What does that mean? That is what we would like to share.

But to start, let us share a definition of Beauty and Truth. And I think it beautifully aligns with what has been previously shared. What is Beauty? What is beauty? We can be very much inspired by beauty. For example, by the beauty of Nature.

What is Beauty?

When we experience a sunrise over the mountains. The myriad of stars of our Milky Way visible on a clear night's sky. A lotus flower in full bloom. But also great works of human culture in art, music or architecture like the famous Lotus Temple of the Bahá'í here in New Delhi. Our home country the Netherlands has a rich culture of art with masterpieces that are widely known and appreciated.



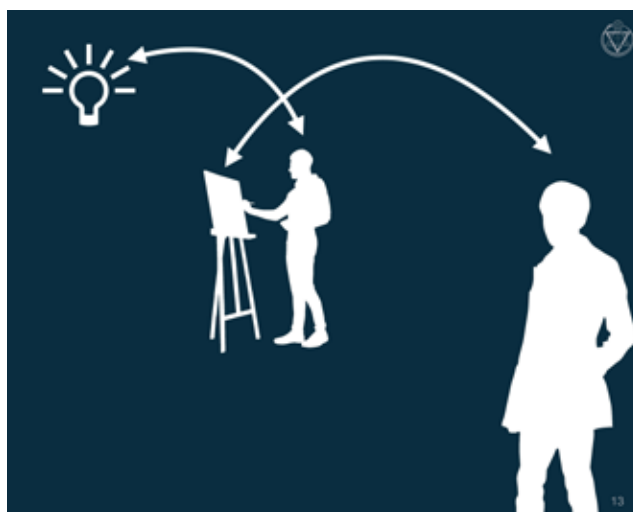
Sometimes they depict universal meaning or symbolism. Such as this painting from the famous 17th-century painter Rembrandt called “the Philosopher in meditation”. Do you recognize the yin-yang? And the point in the circle?



Another example is this painting from painter Johannes Vermeer, also from the 17th century: the “Girl with a pearl earring”, also referred to as the “Mona Lisa of the North”. Vermeer’s paintings are full of “Sacred Geometry”, golden ratios et cetera.

A more modern Dutch artist was Piet Mondriaan from the last century, who was also a Theosophist. With his art he tried to inspire the viewer with the universal teachings he learned from studying the *Secret Doctrine*. It is very abstract: with just vertical lines (standing for the spiritual) and horizontal lines (symbolizing the material).

And of course there are endless examples of the inspiring beauty of a musical harmony or the beauty in literature. But although my perspective is that these are examples of beauty, there are always little differences in who likes what. “There is no accounting for taste” as we say. Why is that?



If we take the beauty of art as an example, there are three steps. First, the artist has an idea of beauty, he receives some form of inspiration. Secondly, he tries to express the inspiration in a material form, let's say by creating a painting, but it can also be a sculpture, a musical

symphony or the design of a product. Thirdly, an observer perceives the work and experiences something. To find the origin of beauty you can ask yourself: where does the idea of inspiration originate?

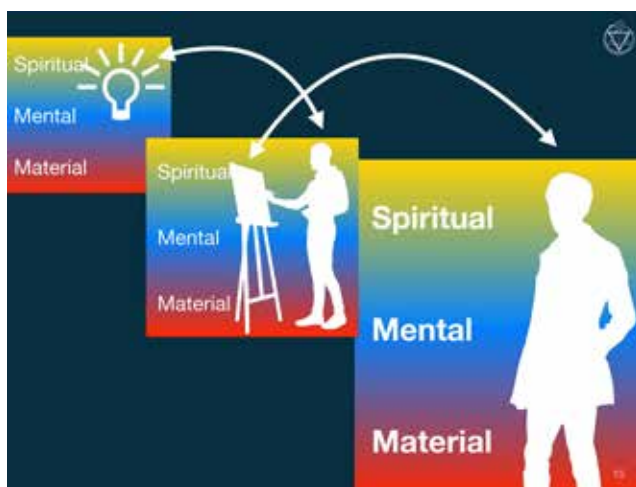


Hierarchical levels

According to the Theosophia you can look at different hierarchical levels, those visible and invisible. If we make a threefold distinction: there is the spiritual world, the mental world and the material world. The spiritual world is the cosmic picture gallery containing the symbolic ideals or original archetypes on a very abstract level.

These spiritual and symbolic ideas are transformed in their passage amongst others through the mental plane and the astral light.

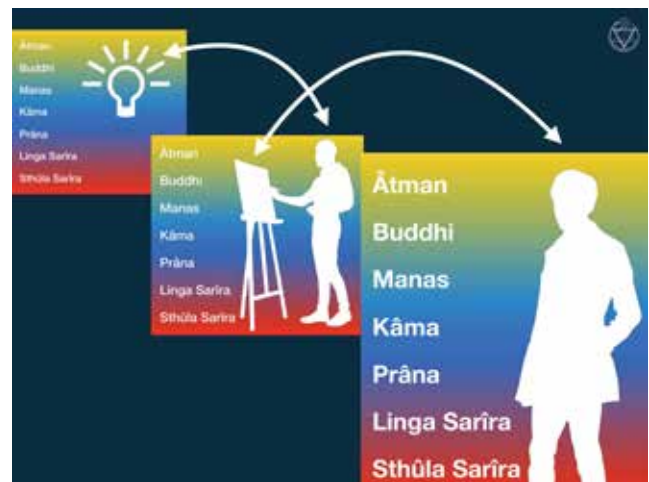
We receive thoughts and feelings from the mental respectively astral planes that also leave an impression on our human brains on the material level. And these impressions are further communicated by us in the material world.



Now if we combine the first scheme of the idea, the artist and the viewer with these three levels, we can distinguish

these levels of seeing and understanding for each of these. The idea has a certain quality. It can be of a purely material beauty like a scene of nature or it can be an elegant formula, a beautiful ideal or even a mystic experience of oneness. Of whatever level the original idea might be, the artist's interpretation of the idea is of the level he the artist is at. Then the artist translates his interpretation into a piece of art. And finally the observer viewing the piece of art experiences something depending on the level he himself is on.

Now we Theosophists know that instead of three levels you can also use seven levels of seeing and understanding for each of these three steps.



You can see that there are quite a few filters that determine how we experience the beauty of a piece of art. This is why discussing beauty is sometimes difficult. The technician's perspective will probably differ quite a bit from that of the historian. While someone else will have a completely different experience depending on his thoughts, the time of the day or the size of the crowd in the museum.

But, if the artist is able to translate his inspiration in a pure form and the observer is on a similar level, the observer might even resonate with the original idea.

So there are some characteristics of beauty that inspire almost universally. What are they?

- Beautiful nature, art or music show a certain harmony. There is a harmonious interrelation between the parts and the whole. Think of the arrangement of flower petals, the use of complementary colors in painting or the Indian rāga music that is tuned to the season, time and atmosphere.
- Beauty in nature and art also expresses the imperishable, like the golden ratio, universal symbols or eternal motives such as the inner struggle that is used in

literature, for instance in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, but also in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or in Harry Potter.

- Finally, beauty in nature and art makes us identify with something bigger, it expands our consciousness, it inspires us, uplifts us and opens us to the universal in ourselves.

BEAUTY is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable

However, in the end, all outwardly manifested beauty is transitory, and will perish — sooner or later. That is why we state that true BEAUTY with all capitals is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable.

Outer beauty is only a reflection, a manifestation of this BEAUTY and therefore the expression will never reach the ideal.

For example, the golden ratio that we can find in our present manifestation, in relation to our phalanges, of our hand to our arms, the ratios in our body and in our face; it is always an approximation. It is never exact.

It is like the perfect circle or square. They only exist in the ideal, the spiritual world.



So you could say there are three levels of Beauty.

1. BEAUTY *per se*, in all capitals. Universal, eternal and infinite.
2. Beauty with a capital B. It is the highest expression of the universal BEAUTY.
3. And finally, outer beauty. Very transitory and part of the pairs of opposites. If our skin is white, we like to have a tan. If we are darker skinned, we like to have a fair skin, et cetera.

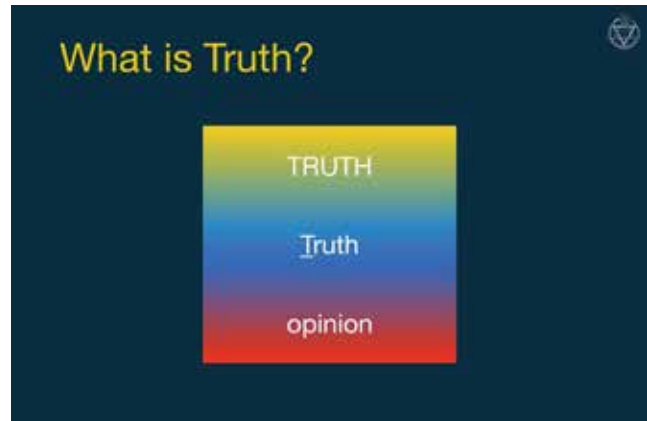
Let us go on to the next subject: Truth.

What is Truth?

Does the same hold true for Truth? We think so.

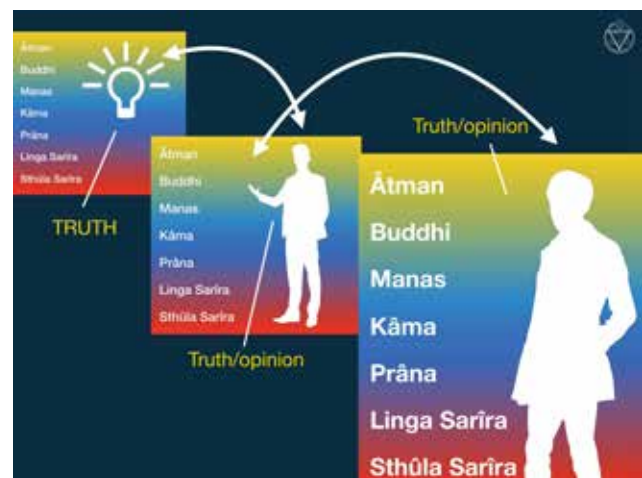
Absolute Truth is omnipresent, eternal, boundless, and

immutable as well. It is the “One absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being” as is so beautifully put in the Prologue of *The Secret Doctrine*. It could only be dwarfed by any human expression. The real Tao cannot be named, Allah cannot be depicted.



We can distinguish the same three levels with truth.. First, there is universal TRUTH or Absolute TRUTH.

Secondly, the highest expression of TRUTH is Truth with a capital T and thirdly, our personal truths. And those can be named for what they actually are: opinions.



We see the same applies for the perception of Truth as for Beauty. We can tune in to the world of ideas. Depending on our focus and orientation on one of the seven aspects or a mix of these, we resonate with these ideas and form our relative perspective of truth.

But we are always a receiver and sender at the same time. We communicate our ideas even if we do not express them in words. Those ideas are received by others depending on their focus and orientation, be it emotional or intellectual or idealistic. Our ideas may resonate with others or not at all.

So, in the same way that we value beauty, according to

our level of perceiving, we value truth according to our level of understanding. So we could say: as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so truth is in the mind of the thinker. Now because of this fact that we each have our own perspective on truth, some claim that therefore The TRUTH or Absolute Truth does not exist. This postmodern idea is actually a misunderstanding of TRUTH with all capitals. This general lack of vision on the universality of Truth leads to a lot of chaos and conflict, such as fake news. However, understanding that TRUTH is boundless, eternal and immutable implies a few very important things:

The TRUTH

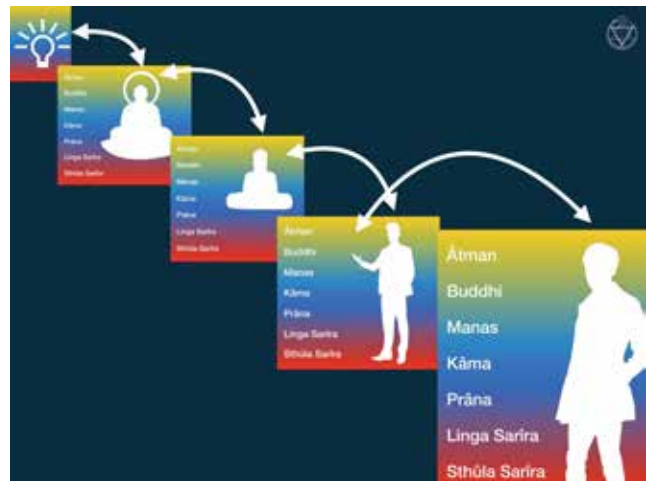
1. As *The* TRUTH is boundless, there can only be ONE because there are no two boundless principles possible. Although some try very hard to convince others of their version of the truth and try to force their opinions on others through modern media, the one TRUTH will ultimately triumph.
2. As The TRUTH is boundless, our understanding of it can and will always continue to develop. We should never mistake our truth for The TRUTH. If we would recognize that all we know is a limited understanding of The TRUTH in all capitals then we would be much more modest about our opinions. The knowledge that we can never understand the entire boundless TRUTH in its fullness prevents us from dogmatism, crystallization and fanaticism. But at the same time ...
3. As part of the Boundless, we *are* in essence the Boundless, so we have all the potential to progress in our understanding of the TRUTH. We will get closer and closer to IT when we progress to unfold our inner being.

So for the sake of clarification:

We used three levels before, but as we define The TRUTH as boundless we know that it is a simplification. There is of course an endless number of levels.

You might say all inspiration comes from our inner Teacher, the inner bodhisattva. If we are able to identify with this inner Teacher, that is our highest Truth with a capital T. But that inspiration comes from the inner Buddha. And we can further develop to reach the stage of identification with our inner Buddha. Then we have reached a higher Truth with a capital T. But beyond that, there is the level of what you might call our inner divinity or god.

Following this line of the Hierarchy of Compassion, the link never ends and goes on to the Heart of the Heart of the Universe.



So if we really understand the essence of TRUTH, the essence of BEAUTY, we see ONENESS.

We will never reach the Absolute TRUTH as it is boundless and we can always climb higher. But, if we resonate with the highest, the Buddhic-Ātmic level, on whatever step of evolution we are, we are a link in this golden chain of Hermes and become a channel of inspiration ourselves, messengers of Truth with a capital T.

We can now conclude that

- true BEAUTY is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable;
- that the TRUTH is omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable;
- and that TRUTH and BEAUTY *per se* imply oneness.

In other words, if we see TRUTH and BEAUTY *per se*, we see Oneness, or rather we identify with the One, with the whole. And if we identify with the whole, our thoughts and acts will always be in line with the whole. That is why we state that:

Compassion is the expression of TRUTH and BEAUTY

Compassion is the expression of TRUTH and BEAUTY, because if you see TRUTH and BEAUTY *per se*, you see the Oneness of all life, you understand that everything is ONE. And if you identify with all, then Compassion is the sole motivation for anything in life. Compassion then becomes the highest law of conduct. Like Blavatsky expresses in her *Voice of the Silence*: it is the Law of Laws. By expressing TRUTH and BEAUTY we are the instrument of this Law of Laws. We help Nature and work on with her instead of against her.

It is exactly how the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion

works. Identifying with Oneness, the one TRUTH, BEAUTY or Theosophia, our Teachers choose to share their wisdom with all living beings. Compassion is their one motive, their rule of conduct, their law to spread their wisdom. And in order to share their wisdom in its purest form they identify with us, to bring us the essence of what we need to help ourselves.

Before and in the time of the Mystery Schools they taught us the sciences, philosophies and forms of art as part of the Wisdom-Religion or Theosophia. In modern times they are sending us messengers such as H.P. Blavatsky to spread TRUTH and BEAUTY through compassion. All with the goal to uplift us to their level and beyond.

So now that we have discussed what TRUTH and BEAUTY are and why compassion is the expression of TRUTH and BEAUTY, we can ask ourselves:

How to express Truth and Beauty through compassion

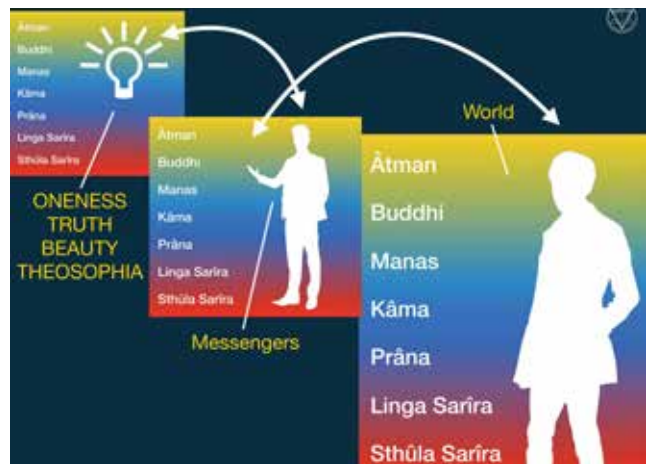
How do we ourselves express TRUTH and BEAUTY through compassion? What does that mean? It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the great teachers of mankind, the messengers of TRUTH and BEAUTY like Buddha, Lao-tse or Plato, and to see how they worked.

Lessons from the messengers of TRUTH and BEAUTY were spread in the most durable and compassionate form. Namely by showing us how to find Truth and Beauty within ourselves. It is the most durable and compassionate way. Because once we are awakened to the inner wisdom that is found in our heart, we are able to find all the solutions to life's riddles ourselves.

Secondly, they brought wisdom in its purest form. They went back to the core principles of the teachings, building upon and relating to traditional teachings to show the universality of what they brought. That is what the Buddha did with the Hindu tradition, Jesus with the Jewish tradition, Plato with Pythagorean teachings *et cetera*. And they adapted their presentation to the time and culture in which they lived. They used the language, examples and metaphors to get their message across, but without sacrificing the original meaning and intent.

By the awakening of their inner faculties, their buddhi-manas, the messengers created a direct link with the Hierarchy of Compassion. They have given up their own progress, in order to help us in our evolution whenever we are ready to receive their inspiration.

When we really resonate with their compassion and wisdom or Theosophia, they will enable us to tap directly



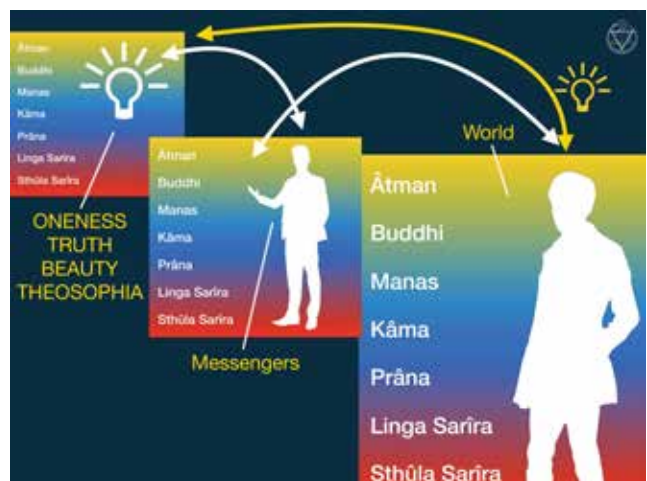
into the same source.

They help us with accelerating our self-directed evolution or, in other words, by initiation.

It is like electricity, and I know that it is still a thing that



is being worked on in this country today. Instead of just connecting to a point that is near, we have to offer a good grid to connect people directly to the energy source, the power plants, so they will have a continuous source of



pure power for themselves, that they can really rely on. This is exactly what our job is as Theosophists! As we are inspired by the TRUTH and BEAUTY of the Theosophia, the Divine Wisdom, the highest knowledge of our hierarchy, and understanding of Oneness, we have to uplift the whole. We cannot keep it to ourselves. We have to work towards uplifting the whole. And understanding the position of our brothers who still suffer, because they fail to see TRUTH and BEAUTY, we will only want to work harder. How can we do this?

Our duty as Theosophists

How to express Truth and Beauty through compassion and fulfill our duty as Theosophists?

Of course we can follow the example of our teachers exactly. We develop a clear vision on how to solve the problems of today and share our knowledge. Not out of feeling sorry for others, but by resonating with their highest aspects. Because when they connect with their inner wisdom, they know what is right.

If we do our job well, we awaken the buddhi-manas in others and by doing so they can become a channel of inspiration themselves.

A perfect touchstone that we can provide and that anyone can understand and use is the idea of identifying with Oneness. In our everyday life, are our thoughts and acts in line with the whole, or are they out of self-interest? And we can learn to identify with a larger and larger whole. Maybe for someone oneness means identification just with his own family, for another it implies identification with his city or country and someone else is even able to see and act from the idea of the oneness of humanity. On whatever level someone is at, this is the never-failing touchstone to find the answer to what is right.

And if we think and act compassionately, we spread wisdom in its purest form. First by example, and if necessary with words. And at the core of the Theosophia, which means at the core of all great religions and philosophies, are basic axioms, the three fundamental propositions. Or their elaborated form of the seven Jewels of Wisdom, such as the teachings of reincarnation and karma. These are the principles that suffice to find solutions to all problems in life independently.

Our job is to translate these simple and beautiful ideas into modern language that fits our time and culture, in order to awaken others to the Truth and Beauty that is there. And we really need each other to do this job to give Theosophy its place in the minds and hearts of men.

If Theosophists join forces and cooperate we can do an even better job.

One example of global theosophical cooperation is ITC. ITC, standing for International Theosophy Conferences, is a platform where Theosophists from all theosophical organizations meet. It is not another theosophical organization, but a platform where we support each other as Theosophists in doing our work.

Each year a conference is organized and this year it will be at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS) of America, the Olcott center in Wheaton. It is planned just after the Summer National Convention of the TS of America, so it makes a nice combination.



Why this example?

ITC is a working conference in which theosophical study is done in order to find answers to today's problems. A hot topic is selected, like the subject of depression, and we study to select the relevant theosophical principles that can help to uncover the underlying causes and to formulate sustainable solution perspectives.

We then translate these into modern language, so all Theosophists can use these to inspire others in their public meetings, lectures and writings.

This time of year (December-January) is the best for new year's resolutions. The wisdom that Theosophy offers is more than enough to solve all of the world's problems. We have all the knowledge that we need right here, right now. So let us work together to spread the Truth and Beauty of Theosophy in today's world!



Gandhi on Theosophy and the global civilization of tomorrow, part 1

During the 138th Convention of the Theosophical Society Adyar, James Tepfer, associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists, gave an inspiring lecture on Gandhi. We are pleased to be able to publish this – slightly extended – talk in *Lucifer*.

In this first part of the lecture, James Tepfer shows how Gandhi was inspired by Theosophy already early in his life.

Key thoughts

- » Gandhi's principles of social reform are: truth, non-violence and creative suffering.
- » Since 1889, Gandhi drew much inspiration from the books of H.P. Blavatsky. This encouraged him to start a life-long study of the Indian wisdom literature and in fact of the basic thoughts of all religions.
- » Gandhi embraced factually the first two objects of the Theosophical Society. With respect to the third object he had great reservations, if it was interpreted in such a way that we should concentrate on psychic powers.
- » Gandhi had an "inner voice", sometimes telling him what to do.

Invocation

Common be your prayer;
Common be your goal;
Common be your purpose;
Common be your deliberation.

Common be your wishes,
Your hearts in concord,
Your intentions in concord,
Perfect be the union amongst you.
Rig Veda⁽¹⁾

Dedication

Let me begin this evening by honoring the ancient and noble practice of saluting those who have made this talk possible. I have drawn inspiration for Gandhi's connection with Theosophy principally from Gandhi's own writings and from Louis Fischer's sparkling and insightful biography, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. I have also immensely benefitted from the brilliant and profound elucidation of Gandhian thought by Raghavan Iyer in his book *The Moral and Political*

Thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Lastly, I have drawn from a variety of contemporary sources for meaningful pointers toward the emerging global civilization of the future. However, the richer, wider prospects and possibilities of the dawning Aquarian Age have been nurtured by many seminal articles penned by H.P. Blavatsky as well as by that most insightful of all books on the prospects of a "universal civilization", *Parapolitics: Toward the City of Man*, also by Raghavan Iyer. Before turning to the substance of my talk, I would like to add that it is especially a privilege to present this talk on the sacred soil of *Aryavarta*, [ancient name for India, Eds.] on the very site which was consecrated by the dynamic presence of that great and compassionate initiate, H.P. Blavatsky. It was H.P. Blavatsky, as we know, who made Adyar holy as she dedicated it to the global Work of the spiritually wise and magnanimous Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas. And, to its immense credit, the Theosoph-

ical Society Adyar has nobly weathered all the trials and tribulations of its past and might yet fulfill the prophetic declaration from *The Great Master's Letter*⁽²⁾ that the Theosophical Society is to be the cornerstone of the religions of the future. Considering these profound facts, what more auspicious place to discuss Gandhi, Theosophy and global civilization than here in Adyar, at this gathering of students of *Theosophia* from across the globe?

About Gandhi

M.K. Gandhi was the most eminent social revolutionary of the twentieth century and perhaps one of the many paradigms of the Aquarian man or woman of the coming centuries. No doubt, Albert Einstein spoke for peoples across the globe when he said:

Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this, ever, in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth.⁽³⁾

Gandhi's benign influence has been global, spanning geography and generations alike. He was the forerunner and inspiration to a Nelson Mandela in South Africa, a Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King in America, a Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia and, of course, the intrepid Malala of Pakistan. Each of these exemplary individuals has, in turn, become an inspirational prototype in our own time and will undoubtedly continue to affect generations to come. As a thinker and a committed social reformer, Gandhi held that truth, non-violence and creative suffering are equally vital to universal human uplift. *Truth*, to Gandhi, is at the core of our being and of all existence. Truth involves the whole person and encompasses thought, word and deed. Truth, to be truth, is also relevant to every sphere of human life — public as well as private. Finally, and most significantly for man, Truth is embodied in the world as the Law of Interdependence. This is the scientific basis of morality — sacred and secular.

Non-violence is action free of the urge or impulse to do harm, to act out of malice. It is rooted in the mind and heart of the actor. It is the deliberate negation of self-assertion, of pushiness, of arrogance and of the desire to exploit others. Non-violence ultimately releases some degree of unconditional love towards one's friends and one's enemies alike. It involves the conscious ability to reduce one's ego to a zero. It is, as one contemporary thinker put it, the science of 'un-selfing the mind'. From a theosophical perspective, we might say that non-violence is the conscious negation of the asuric will, of atavistic

Atlantean pride and of the willful misuse of higher creative powers. If this is so, then non-violent, egoless action is that moral conduct that honors perceived truths by negating the personalizing will and releasing the latent, Gangetic waters of pure love.

Intrinsic to Gandhi's theory and practice of non-violence is that of *creative suffering*. Voluntary suffering is a necessary ingredient of all non-violent truth-acts and especially so when it comes to dealing with seemingly intractable social and institutional injustices. Self-suffering is really the alchemical hyphen that connects truth and non-violence. Suffering ignites the moral chemistry that releases the light within truth and the energy within unconditional love. This is intrinsic to the life of the undaunted and benevolent social reformer.

Gandhi, as we know, was an unusual individual with many admirable qualities. As an earnest thinker, he was principled, lucid and insightful. As a *karma yogin*, his actions were purposeful and discriminating. As a *bhakti yogin*, he was a lover of God and man and, most especially, a lover of God-in-man. He was also honest to a fault, full of love for friends and strangers alike and was blessed with abundant good humor. With respect to the latter quality, Gandhi was once asked by a British journalist if he had not felt scantily dressed when meeting King George at Buckingham Palace. After all, persisted the journalist, Gandhi had only worn a *dhoti* and a shawl to the occasion. Gandhi smiled and retorted that he did not feel awkward at all since his majesty had on enough clothes for both of them. Gandhi could also take a joke



Gandhi together with Lord and Lady Mountbatten in 1947.



Mahatma Gandhi is greeted by a crowd of female textile workers during a visit to Darwen, Lancashire, UK in 1931.

at his own expense. Louis Fischer, his best biographer, visited Gandhi in 1942 and again in 1946. On his second visit, Gandhi humorously remarked that Fischer must find him as unhandsome now as he had four years ago. Fischer, with a twinkle in his eye, immediately said that he would never dare to disagree with a great man. Gandhi laughed loudly and walked arm and arm with Fischer to his simple dwelling in the ashram.

Beyond all his admirable traits there was a deeper more profound quality in Gandhi that is often over-looked — his desire to heal. Gandhi's fervent wish as a young man was not to be a lawyer or a social reformer or a national leader. His heart's wish was to be a doctor — a healer. However, he wasn't allowed to study medicine because of the practice of vivisection. Nonetheless, his compassionate, healing impulse still found moments of spontaneous expression throughout his life. It motivated him to enter into forbidden areas of plague on at least two occasions in order to tend to the desperate and the dying. He also voluntarily took into his home lepers and people with various maladies. He formed an ambulance corps during two wars in South Africa and together with his ambulance crew risked his life to relieve the miseries of wounded soldiers on both sides of the battle. All in all, Gandhi's supple mind was obedient to his compassionate, oceanic heart. The latter was, in fact, the source of his moral genius.

Gandhi and Theosophy

There was a golden current of Theosophical influence that continually sustained the spiritual arc of Gandhi's life. That fertile current entered his life in November of 1889 at the age of twenty in London and continued as a vibrant, tempering influence until the very day of his

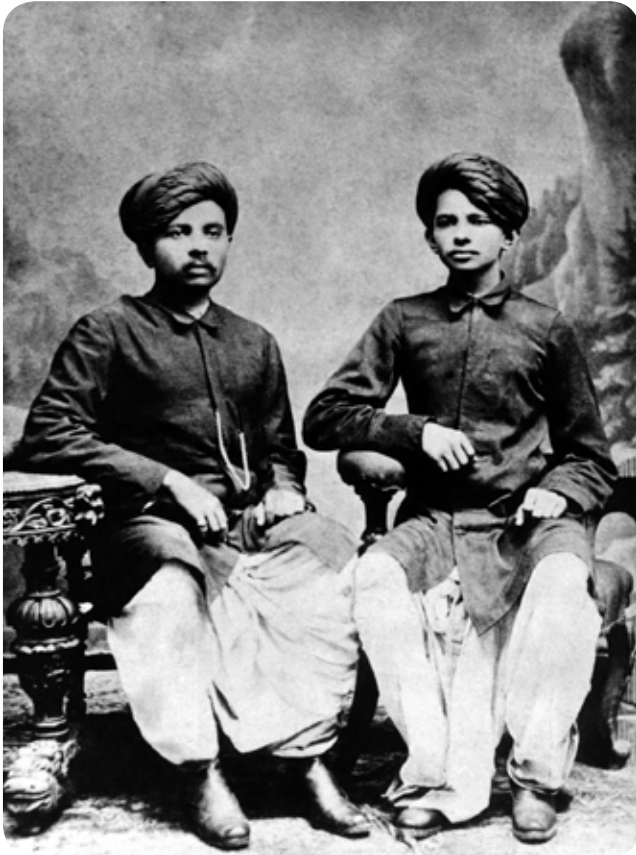
assassination in 1948. The seminal "Theosophical moment" that occurred in London was when Gandhi met two Theosophists who introduced him to the *Bhagavad Gītā* and, most significantly, took him to a meeting of the Blavatsky Lodge. There he met H.P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant. (He had, by the way, read Annie Besant's book on why she became a Theosophist and he was very impressed by the reasons she gave for her conversion.) As a result of Gandhi's personal encounter with H.P.B. as well as the encouragement of Theosophical friends, Gandhi studied *The Key to Theosophy*. Among other things, his study of the *Key* made him keenly aware of the philosophical richness and spiritual potency of Hinduism. It helped him to see through the many criticisms of Christian missionaries and eventually led him to declare that philosophical Hinduism was the religion that spoke to him the most deeply. We are told more about young Gandhi and his first encounter with Theosophy in London from P. Nayyar, Gandhi's personal secretary in his later years. Nayyar tells us in his biography on Gandhi that:

He (Gandhi) read Mme. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, and on March 26, 1891, was enrolled as an associate member of the Blavatsky Lodge.⁽⁴⁾

The cumulative effect of Gandhi's fortuitous encounter with H.P. Blavatsky and his subsequent study of Theosophical teachings, is that it helped him to spiritually self-ignite; it kindled and fed what became an all-consuming fire of spiritual aspiration, an ardent search to experience God-consciousness.

Later, in South Africa, Gandhi continued his study of the *Gītā* and of selected Theosophical writings. In his private library in Durban could be found the works of H.B. Blavatsky, Leo Tolstoy and other eminent writers on spiritual ideas. Gandhi also had a deep interest in Esoteric Christianity as well as in *Rāja Yoga*. In addition, he contributed to the activities of the Theosophical Society of Southern Africa — Johannesburg Lodge. While he apparently never became an official member of the Johannesburg Lodge, he did give a series of talks there on the major religions of India.

Gandhi's personal association with Theosophists continued in India from 1915 until his death in 1948. He interacted frequently with Theosophists in the pursuit of Indian Independence and often collaborated with Shri B.P. Wadia, an eminent Theosophist, an original co-worker of Annie Bessant and the founder of the first Labor Union



Mahatma Gandhi (right) with his brother Laxmidas in 1886.

in India. Furthermore, Gandhi freely acknowledged the historical fact that one of the co-founders of the Indian National Congress was a Theosophist. He later repeated his recognition of Theosophy's seminal contribution to the Indian Independence Movement when he said: "In the beginning, the top Indian National Congress leaders were Theosophists."⁽⁵⁾

Three Objects of the Theosophical Movement

In a wider sense, we might say that Gandhi implicitly embraced the "Three Objects" of the Theosophical Movement (but with specific reservations about the Third Object).⁽⁶⁾ As we know, the First Object of the Theosophical Movement is to form the nucleus of a universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color. Gandhi's whole adult life could be seen as an attempt to embody the living spirit of this aim. It was the root inspiration of his fertile spiritual life and of his numerous "experiments with truth". Brotherhood was also the universal constant in his solution to the complex algebra of the religious communal issues that plagued India — and which the British government so

cleverly exploited. As Indian independence neared in the late 1940s, and violent disagreements intensified between Muslim and Hindu Congressmen, Gandhi saw his hopes for a politically unified India wane. In an interview in June of 1946 with Louis Fischer, Gandhi lamented the patent smugness of many Hindus toward Muslim members of the Indian National Congress. He equally lamented the devolution of the Muslim belief in the brotherhood of man into the brotherhood of Muslims only. In light of this sad, dual realization, Gandhi made the following unequivocal declaration to Fischer:

Theosophy is the teaching of Madame Blavatsky ...
Theosophy is the brotherhood of man.⁽⁷⁾

Gandhi was, in effect, making it clear that H.P. Blavatsky was the true teacher of Theosophy and that its essential message of brotherhood was what both Hindu and Muslim proponents were sorely lacking in practice. In the end, the lack of brotherhood in the Indian National Congress led to the devastating division of a unified *Aryavarta* into the separate nation states of Pakistan and India.

The Second Object of the Theosophical Movement is to encourage the comparative study of ancient religions, philosophies and sciences. Gandhi was a Hindu — initially by birth but ultimately by choice. He was also an ardent student of the world's major religions. Since he came to recognize that each religious tradition embodies a profound set of spiritual truths, he declared that "Truth alone is God". This statement parallels the Theosophical motto taken from the Maharaja of Benares: "There is no religion higher than Truth." It is not surprising then that since Truth alone is God, Gandhi believed fundamentally in the following:

... (I believe in) the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which continually purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself..⁽⁸⁾

This notion of an in-born "transcendent-religion" — rooted in Nature and man — was dialectically compatible with, and supportive of, a diversity of religious teachings. Like the full moon simultaneously mirrored in many different lakes, each authentic religious teaching reflects some

portion of Absolute Truth. This calls for more than mere tolerance. It calls for an abiding reverence for the world's multiple religious teachings and a willingness to search for underlying truths beneath constricting dogmas and rituals. It is not surprising then, that Gandhi admired the universal and universalizing spirit of Theosophy. This appreciation was aptly and simply expressed in his "Foreword" to the book *The Brotherhood of Religions*, penned by the Theosophist Sophia Wadia. In Gandhi's "Foreword" to that book, he says:

An understanding of and respect for the great faiths of the world is the (very) foundation of true Theosophy.⁽⁹⁾

In this respect, Gandhi also noted that true religion not only transcends all formal religions – including Hinduism – but also unifies them without destroying their fundamental, discrete integrity. This dialectical outlook is compatible with true *Theosophia*, is it not?

The Third Object of the modern Theosophical Movement is to investigate the hidden laws of Nature and the creative powers latent in man. Gandhi recognized these subtler dimensions of Nature and humanity. To quote from his autobiography:

... (W)e are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite.⁽¹⁰⁾

Karma

Gandhi also deeply believed in *karma* and reincarnation. Furthermore, he recognized that the moral law was impersonal, subtle and many-layered. In the human kingdom, this meant that *karma* works principally through the agency of the mind. To Gandhi, the highest creative faculty in man was pure thought and that faculty was regulated by the impersonal, subtle and multi-layered law of *karma*. His belief in the karma-generating power of thought sometimes created peculiar problems for him. Take, for example, his reaction to the Bihar earthquake of 1934. After the earthquake, Gandhi publicly commented that, in his view, the earthquake was caused by the sin of untouchability practiced by most caste Hindus. Well, as you might expect, many rationalists, scientists and friends were thunder-struck and dismayed by this statement. So was Gandhi's close friend, Rabindranath Tagore. In fact, Tagore publicly chastised Gandhi and stated:

... physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in certain combinations of physical facts.⁽¹¹⁾

Gandhi's retort to Tagore and his critics alike was:

To me, the earthquake was no caprice of God nor a result of the meeting of mere blind forces. We do not know all the laws of God (*karma*) nor their workings.⁽¹²⁾



Gandhi visiting Bihar after the earthquake.

Occult powers versus Universal Brotherhood

While Gandhi recognized their reality, he felt that it was often an unhealthy diversion for mystics, Hindus and Theosophists to focus on hidden and as yet undeveloped psychic powers. Like Saint Paul, Gandhi believed that boundless charity was a far greater possession than the development of psychic powers. Gandhi's concern, as we know, echoes a serious point made in *The Great Master's Letter* in which the aim of universal brotherhood is fervently upheld and the fascination with occult powers strongly criticized. As the Great Master unequivocally states:

... perish rather the Theosophical Society with both its hapless Founders, than that we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic, and a hall of Occultism!⁽¹³⁾

In the last issue of Gandhi's journal, *Harijan*, ironically published on the very day of his assassination (January 30th, 1948), Gandhi wrote the following:

There are many admirable works in Theosophical literature which one may read with the greatest profit; but it appears to me that too much stress has been laid upon ... intellectual studies, upon the development of occult powers, and that

the central idea of Theosophy – the brotherhood of man and the moral growth of man – has been lost sight of.⁽¹⁴⁾

Inner voice

In the final analysis, Gandhi believed that the identity of all life with God and the derivative principle of brotherhood were the keys to the fullest possible life for all. This is certainly compatible with the presiding and moving spirit of *Theosophia*, Divine Wisdom.

But, a final word before turning to the global civilization of tomorrow. What about Gandhi's "inner voice"? Like the Greek philosopher and revolutionary, Socrates, Gandhi seems to have had an "inner voice" which guided him at certain critical points in his life. Unlike Socrates, whose inner voice *prevented* him from doing a particular thing, Gandhi's inner voice *commanded* him to do a particular thing. Gandhi claimed to have always followed the positive guidance he received. Take for instance, Gandhi's meeting with a select group of eminent dons at Oxford in 1931. The friendly gathering soon became an intense intellectual interrogation of Gandhi's views on independence. Professor Johnson, who attended the meeting, describes 'the battle of wits' in the following way:

For three hours he (Gandhi) was sifted and cross-examined. ... It was a reasonably exacting ordeal, yet not for a moment was he rattled or at a loss. The conviction came to me, that not since Socrates has the world seen his equal for absolute self-control and composure; and once or twice, putting myself in the place of men who had to confront that invincible calm and imperturbability, I thought I understood why the Athenians made the 'martyr-sophist' drink the hemlock. Like Socrates, he has a "daemon". And when the "daemon" has spoken, he is as unmoved by argument as by danger.⁽¹⁵⁾

Now, how do we look at Gandhi's "daemon" or inner voice? What framework of understanding do we adopt here? I think that it is perfectly reasonable to regard Gandhi's inner voice as a higher *Bodhisattvic* influence. If so, that further places him within the vast, nourishing current of the Theosophical Movement, of the Army of the Voice.

Part 2, concerning Gandhi's views on the global civilization of tomorrow, will be published in the next issue [Eds].

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What is artificial intelligence?

Key thoughts

» Intelligence bears in itself seven aspects. Two of them are intellect and ability to understand. *Intellect* is our logical-analytical faculty, while with our *ability to understand* we can discover the coherence and unity behind seemingly unrelated facts.

» Computers and robots are an expression of human *intellect*. They are physical instruments, not entities, and will therefore never be able to think.

» The *combination* of programmer+computer is often more skilled than average people, for instance in the case of a medical expert system.

» *Machine learning* means that a computer itself searches for calculation methods that prove most successful. But it is man that defines what is “success”. Man decides which databases the computer uses to improve its methods.

» A computer can never become creative.

What type of intelligence is “artificial intelligence”? Can computers become more intelligent than humans? Will they, perhaps in the distant future, ever be able to think for themselves?

What is a computer?

A computer is a physical, electronic instrument designed to operate information. The computer functions by, among other things, making “decisions” such as “IF this number is higher than a certain value, THEN ...”. The hardware is the instrument itself, the software consists of the instructions that direct the computer. The computer works with information recorded in a binary code, i.e. in the form of zeros and ones. Our usual number system is a tenfold system, ranging from 0 to 9.

A computer has a number of very strong qualities: its speed, its capacity to work with large data files, and its consistent behavior (few errors).

But what stands behind the computer is always the designer, the human being. With his intelligence he designs the hardware, the electronics and the software. And because a computer can do nothing more than to execute programmed commands, the rule is: what you put in, will come out: nothing more and nothing less.

What is intelligence?

What is “artificial intelligence”? To

answer this question, we will consult the theosophical teachings about intelligence. In this case, in our study of computers and robots, the distinction between *intelligence* and *intellect* is particularly important.

Intelligence is synonymous with consciousness. Each being is more or less, in its own way, intelligent. It perceives some aspects of reality and understands these to a certain extent, depending on its range of consciousness. You can describe intelligence – and thus consciousness – as *the ability to act purposefully and react to the actions of other beings*. To prevent a common misconception: purposeful action is not necessarily *self-conscious*. All beings that have not developed self-consciousness, as yet, like animals and plants, do act and react purposefully, “instinctively smart”. But they do not do so self-consciously. The latter requires the ability to think, the ability to recognize yourself as a choosing agent. As there is nothing in the cosmos that does not live, all beings are engaged in a process of inner growth, a process of gradually developing their intelligence. The whole cosmos is

developing: from stars to humans to atoms. And that inner growth is possible because all beings reincarnate. In every cycle of incarnation, beings learn by means of external experiences. They then process these lessons during the rest period we call “death”. This enables them to move forward in their process of inner growth.

There are beings in infinite degrees of intelligence. All beings that have acquired the power of mind may rightly be called “men”, because the Latin word “mens” means spirit, the capacity to think. Other groups are in a different phase of development. The beings in the animal kingdom are learning to realize their desires. They are preparing to enter the human realm in the distant future. The beings in the plant kingdom are learning to grow under varying circumstances. Furthermore, there are countless groups of beings that are beyond the human stage.

In short, all beings are intelligent, but differ in the extent and type of their intelligence. For example, a dog can “feel” when its master is planning to leave. Most people no longer have such a capacity. This example can easily be complemented by numerous other examples, to show the enormous variety of intelligences.

What are the inherent potentials of intelligence?

Intelligence or consciousness is made up of seven fundamental potentials or faculties. These potentials have been made more or less active by each being according to their development, to their evolutionary level. They are listed below:

1. Ability to unite with the One Essence
2. Ability to understand, “enlightenment”
3. Ability to think, to perceive thoughts
4. Ability to realize desires, the power of desire
5. Ability to take vital action
6. Ability to feel
7. Physical capabilities

Each aspect also contains within itself the other six aspects. For example, we can divide our thinking ability into seven types of thinking, because the mind reflects all seven capacities. Every human being can ascertain this themselves. These seven aspects of thinking could be characterized as the following:

1. Thinking from a sense of unity
2. Understanding, discernment, idealism

3. Intellect (this is the thinking aspect of thinking)
4. Desire thoughts (identifying with something you want to achieve)
5. Vital thinking (often expressed by “non-stop doing things”)
6. Sensory-emotional thinking (anxiety, for example)
7. Physical thinking (identifying yourself with your body: “I am tired”, “I feel pain”, et cetera.)

What characterizes the intellectual aspect of thinking?

Our *intellect* is typically a logical-analytical ability. With our intellect we make calculations and recognize the logic of reasoning. It has its strengths and weaknesses. An intellectual analysis disassembles but does not synthesize. The biologist, for example, studies a plant by describing each component. But he can’t say with his intellect why this organism works as a whole and why it reacts intelligently. We can solve these questions by our *ability to understand*, the second thinking aspect, which is synthetic in nature. By means of this higher aspect of our thinking we can imagine how the leading plant consciousness assembles, organizes and directs the lower beings ensouling its body, like the cellular beings.

The general practitioner who examines your blood checks the presence of a list of substances. The outcomes of the analyses are separate pieces of “partial information”. But to discover the relationship between all these values and the disease causing them, you need insight. This is especially true when the findings are new to the doctor, or unusual for him or her.

Computers are an expression of intellect

Now having learned about the seven thinking aspects, you can find out which one is the leading factor when building computers. This is our intellect, because a computer does nothing else than apply logical operations. It is able to search for the correlations between facts, for instance by *machine learning*, but it does so on the basis of intellectual analyses. It has no intuitive, coherent view.

Of course, a programmer may use all his faculties while designing software. Desire usually plays a dominant role: the product must be attractive for people to buy. A programmer can also incorporate certain insights into his programs, for example his insight of the way future users may interpret his program. This allows him to make the interface user-friendly. But these other aspects of thinking must always be translated into an intellectual form, into



Operation robot.

intellectual software.

Our intellect can never do what our understanding and sense of unity can do: getting insights into the essential nature of things, recognizing the causes behind the outer seeming, and the ethical foundations of life. That's why our intellect should always be guided by our two higher thinking aspects. This also applies to ourselves when dealing with computers and their applications. A computer has no goals, no sense of ethical responsibility, no coherent vision. It is only an instrument.

Can a computer ever think?

The computer is an electronic instrument and, just like any other instrument, is a composition of smaller parts put together. It is not an entity and therefore can have no consciousness. So it will never be able to think.

A computer can give answers to our questions that seem to be intelligent. That intelligence is in fact the intelligence of the designers. Maybe the computer does things that go far beyond what most people can do. Just think of a scientific calculator, what you can do with it. But a computer is unconceivable without the human mind behind it, without the thinking, creative designers and the controlling user.

Every form of artificial intelligence is designed to perform a certain function in certain circumstances. A computer is never universal, as we humans are, or can be. We humans, with our powers of consciousness, have to make choices

about all aspects of life. We will, through countless incarnations, be confronted with all kinds of situations, questions and problems, including the problems of others with whom we are involved. A computer can't handle that.

Can a computer be more intelligent than a human?

If by "computer" we mean the combination "designer + computer", then the answer is "yes". In many cases, the combination can respond with more intelligence than a large number of people who are not experts in the field. Think, for

example, of a medical information source, or a tool for carrying out complex calculations.

At the same time, we should realize that a computer reflects the insight that the designer *currently* has. His or her knowledge and insight *may grow endlessly*. The designer can always surpass himself – or his fellow programmers – resulting in better programs.

What is machine learning?

Does *machine learning* change our conclusion that a computer will never think? First of all: what is meant by machine learning? The term means: "the machine teaches itself something". This means that you can instruct a computer to dynamically improve its algorithms (calculation methods) on the basis of correlations found in databases. To do this, the computer generally needs very large databases.

Let's give some examples of machine learning. In May 2017, the computer program AlphaGo defeated the Go-player Ke Jie, who was considered the best Go-player in the world. The program made its moves based on an algorithm that it had perfected itself by trying out many alternative strategies on thousands of Go-games played in the past by the better Go-players. The notations of all these games were therefore necessary to optimize the strategy. The great insight of an expert Go-player proved unable to beat this program.

We must bear in mind that such an intellectual game is

highly limited in character. The Go-game has a small number of rules. Daily life is incomparably more complex. Some other examples of machine learning are: letting the computer compose songs, investigating credit card fraud, discovering physical characteristics that may be early warnings for cancer, making a speech module that learns to react to a specific voice and searching for commercially interesting regularities in a huge pile of customer data (as Facebook does, for example, and then selling the results).

What determines the results of machine learning?

As with any other computer application, the outcome of machine learning depends entirely on what we humans put in the computer:

- a. we determine the intended goal, the touchstone for the selection of the best algorithm;
- b. we determine which databases we give: the material on which the computer will try out all kinds of algorithms. This means that, even though no designer can predict the outcome, this outcome is nevertheless one hundred percent determined by us. There is no creativity involved. Both types of input can have serious flaws. But the most stealthy, hidden effects are caused by the second type of input: the quality of the data. And that is very important to realize, in a world where machine learning is booming. If there are prejudices, discriminatory tendencies or imbalances in the data or the software (in technical terms: if there is *bias*), then that bias will inevitably express itself in the results: there will be prejudices in them, which are more or less hidden.

Here are two examples: a computer program used by US courts to estimate the “degree of dangerousness” of suspects, produced an *unfounded* strong overestimation of the risks of black people. Another program that searches for suitable internet pictures related to some word, showed, when searching for “CEO” illustrations, mainly photos of white, older men.

What are we doing in such cases? We feed the computers with data from our unequal and unjust society. And as a logical result, these computers repeat or amplify these injustices. While creating the false impression of “objectively finding correlations” ...

A second point of attention is the abuse of machine learning for self-interest. Suppose that health insurance companies would have access to data of our shopping and eating habits, our holiday behavior, our jobs, the social status of our residential neighborhood (based on our postal

code), et cetera. These data could easily be used to make the policies of certain groups more expensive and those of others cheaper, in short, to erode solidarity.

Alarmed by these experiences, experts are now investigating how to scan databases for the presence of bias, and how you could remedy bias. This turns out to be difficult. We will have to remain very vigilant here.

Is machine learning a form of creativity?

A computer is not a living being and therefore has no intelligent, creative abilities within itself. What a computer does, may give the layman the illusion of a creative process (composing a song, dynamically adapting algorithms), but it does nothing but blindly execute commands. The results slavishly reflect the choices of the designers, and thus the intelligence of those designers.

If we want to lead these rapid technical developments in morally valuable directions, we must look to ourselves, to our own way of thinking. The computers themselves are not the problem, it’s all dependent upon the controlling people. We must develop our understanding of the nature and influence of technology, of the material and spiritual needs of man, of reincarnation, karma and spiritual evolution. In this respect, Theosophy offers us inspiration and very valuable keys.

Questions & Answers

Fairy tales

Fairy tales are told all over the world. And although there are regional differences, many of these fairy tales are surprisingly similar. How is that possible?

Answer

Fairy tales, but also parables, myths, sagas and legends are often based on a universal truth. That truth was wrapped in a story, so that on the one hand the truth was veiled, but on the other hand it became an incentive for the intuitive human mind to search for that truth. Fairy tales are often so strange, so appealing to the imagination, that you are prone to suspect that there is some hidden message.

What is the reason that these kinds of stories are told all over the globe? Because the origin of these fairy tales lies in Mystery Schools, as we call them, which existed everywhere in ancient times — even well before written history. That's why fairy tales and myths are told by all generations and on all continents. The teachers of these Mystery Schools dressed certain universal truths in images, symbols and stories. This allowed those who were not initiated in these Mystery Schools to pick up something of the spiritual idea, if indeed they used their intuition.

The stories have changed over the centuries, adapting to local traditions or the spirit of the times. Yet, in many cases, you can still recognize the underlying truth within.

Question

Are these Mystery Schools still existent today?

Answer

Certainly, but not in the public domain of our present society. These Schools can only operate in public if the spiritual authority of their Teachers would be generally recognized. But if people have narrowed their minds by dogmatism, superstition and materialism, then such a School must close *on the outer plane*, because otherwise it would degenerate and become a kind of church.

On the *inner planes* however, a Mystery School can never be closed and it is always open to anyone who gives the right knock at the gate. And the right knock is a selfless, compassionate attitude: to live to serve humanity, as H.P. Blavatsky expresses it. Moreover, Mystery Schools still exert a beneficial influence all over the world, although very few people know about it.

Question

Is there still room for fairy tales in our time of internet games?

Answer

I think so. Of course, these tales have to be told by parents, grandparents or teachers. After all, children need to listen to story tellers. Maybe some parents find it easier to put their child behind the PC or the television, and let them watch Disney's Cinderella. But if they are told such stories, I am sure they will enjoy it.

No one knows exactly how old fairy tales are. Despite their antiquity, they still appeal to children. More recent stories usually lack that appeal. Children's books from only a few decades ago, already appear outdated to children

and miss the magic that ancient fairy tales still have. Take a fairy tale like Cinderella. I think that today's young children are still highly fascinated by this story of the girl — who is cleaning up the *dust* — who transforms herself into the Prince's bride. How much wisdom it contains.

Question

How is it possible that children understand the meaning of such stories so easily?

Answer

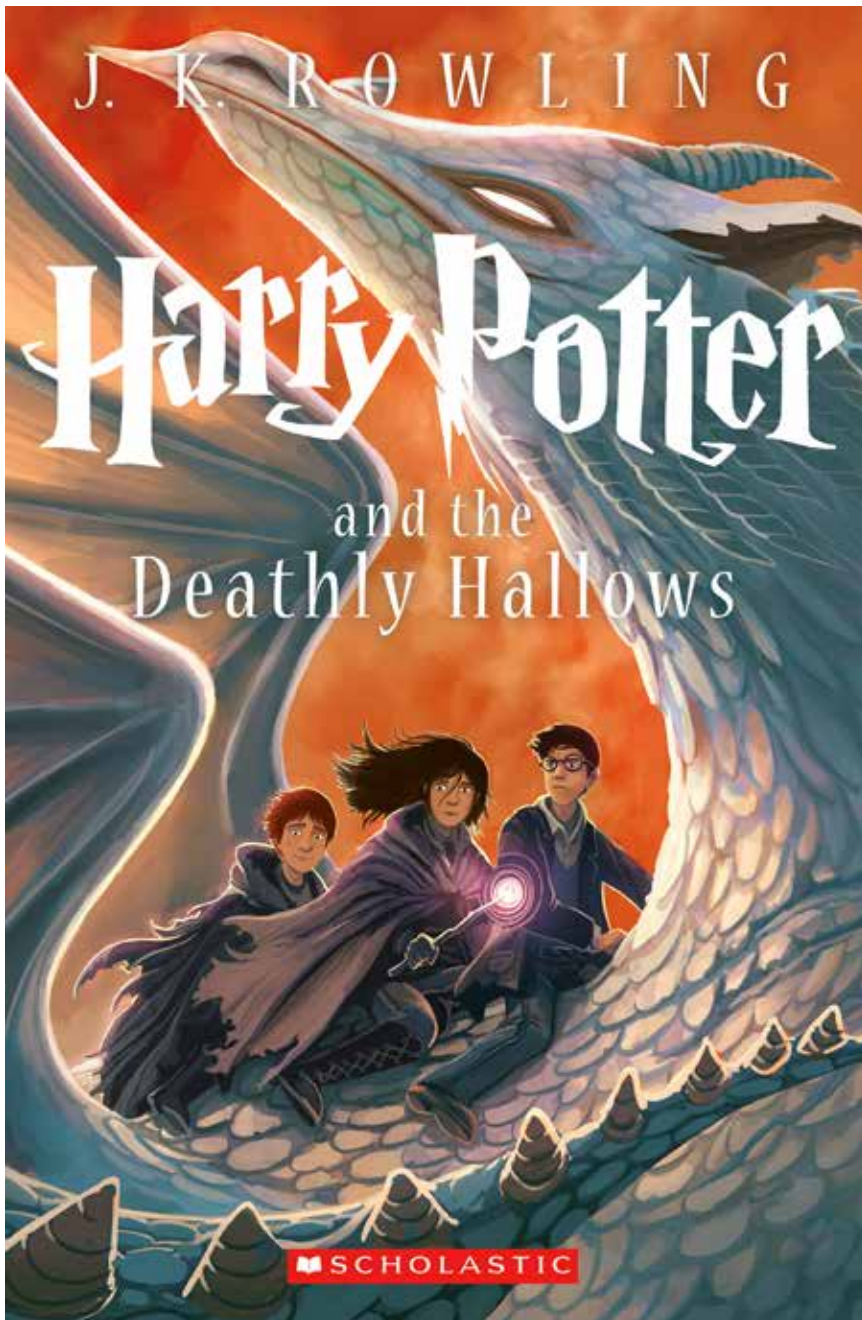
Children listen to stories differently than adults. They will not analyze the fairy tale. They are not listening intellectually. They will not reject certain events as unrealistic, which are illogical or improbable to the intellect. They stay with all their soul in the fairy tale, provided it is well told. Rather, they will experience the truth spiritually, intuitively, without being able to express its message immediately in words.

Question

If you read fairy tales to your child, why wouldn't you tell about the background of the tales?

Answer

Because then you smother the intuition of the child. Let the child think about it for himself. This way he becomes creative and learns to look behind the outward appearance of things. If you give your own interpretation of the fairy tale, you suppress the child's imagination. You stimulate his dependence on others and not his ability to explore.



He will become passive in his thinking. Yet it is good if parents talk to their child about a fairy tale, if you do that by asking things. For example, you could ask if you think the name Cinderella is a good name for the stepdaughter? Or: do you think Cinderella will change if she gets the beautiful clothes and carriage from the fairy? How come the shoe only fits her? Such questions can stimulate the children's intuition even more.

Question

Why should an inner, spiritual process always be represented as something outside of man, like for example the holy grail?

Answer

Because most people are "seeing blind and hearing deaf". In other words, because people have not yet developed the spiritual abilities to see the truth directly. Compare it to the following:

if someone has to explain a difficult mathematical principle to a toddler, he would use simple words and a narrative form. The majority of people can only see a glimpse of the truth by looking "behind" the story and thus learning to distinguish the spiritual from the letters.

Only when we have practiced our higher capacities of consciousness – that is, when we have grown up spiritually – will we be able to understand esoteric truth directly.

Question

In fairy tales there are often heroes. It also inspires to be a hero, right?

Answer

Heroes symbolize *chelas*, disciples, students on the path of initiation. Chelas are the students admitted to the Mystery School. Because they have made certain decisions regarding themselves and their attitude to the world, and thus have developed a certain mentality, they have to face trials. They want to chase away a tyrant, free a captive princess or otherwise correct injustice. In fact, by making a vow to themselves – to their higher nature – they experience many dangerous situations, such as defeating the dragon with a thousand heads: every time you cut off a head, two more will be added.

Please note: all these images are symbolic and therefore not *literally* true. Yet, the accepted disciple of the Mystery School really enters a new life, because the demands made on him are much higher. He will not literally have to kill a dragon or liberate a princess, but must stick bravely to his self-chosen principles and assignments. He succeeds if he calmly focuses on his own inner divinity and ignores the whisperings of the personality.

Everyone will one day enter the

spiritual life of the chela and, as in the fairy tales, perform heroic deeds. In this respect, fairy tales inspire and also give a glimpse ahead to our own future.

Question

Are books like *The Lord of the Rings* and the Harry Potter series also fairy tales? Being invented by a writer, they do not originate from a Mystery School.

Answer

Yet, that's still an open question! Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, was very familiar with ancient Germanic and Celtic mythology. Many of his motifs and story lines come from these sources. In this respect he tries to carry on a centuries-old tradition. Old symbols can also be found in the books by J.K. Rowlings, the writer of the Harry Potter series. But in her case there is something else that should be taken into account. In an interview she once told that she conceived the entire plot of the seven books of Harry Potter, including its main characters, in a train journey from Manchester to London. Now, the question is whether she invented that plot herself, or whether it appeared to her mind's eye. I admit it is speculative, but is it not possible that one of the teachers of the Mystery School, one of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion, showed the idea to her? How long does a train journey from Manchester to London take? How is it possible that in such a short time the complicated plot with all the main characters was conceived? Shakespeare is also told to receive inspiration by the Masters of Wisdom. Couldn't this also happen in our age and time? The Teachers of the Great School of Wisdom and Compassion work in other ways than many of us think. They inspire. They give silent clues. They awaken and stimulate.

For the sake of clarity, J.K. Rowling's craftsmanship as a writer is not in question. She had the open mind, the understanding and the writer's talent to capture the images that were presented – if what we say is true – and to transform them into seven books that children and adults all over the world have read and that have aroused profound ideas about life and death, the meaning of life, the power of selflessness and so on. Millions of children have exchanged views on these subjects. And this is exactly the function of fairy tales, myths and magical stories: to incite one to think, to sharpen one's intuition and to learn to apply ethics in one's own daily life.

Rituals

Do you regard rituals as a kind of fairy tales? For example, we see all kinds of rituals in the Catholic Church. Why are these rituals necessary?

Answer

No, those rituals are not necessary. Sometimes they distract rather than contribute to spiritual growth. Rituals are meant for people who have not yet learned to concentrate on the higher aspects within themselves. In that respect, you can compare them with training wheels on bicycles, which children sometimes need while learning to ride a bicycle. Once they can cycle, these wheels are rather a hindrance than a support. A certain ritual for example – incense, a candle perhaps – can create a certain atmosphere in which it is easier to focus on spiritual matters. In that respect, there is nothing wrong with its use. Most of us need something like that. However, when you think that the truth is in the ritual itself, or that the

ritual is necessary to see that truth, you focus on illusions. The situation is even worse when the priests who carry out the ritual, believe that they are the ones who represent the truth. This is often the case with the Brahmins and in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The ritual gives the priest the appearance of holiness and power. Then it blunts the intuition of the faithful. People do not think for themselves anymore. Spirituality has been degraded to blind faith.

Question

Everywhere in the world there are social rituals. Then you belong to some group. I see that trend growing stronger. I can't imagine that rituals are no longer necessary.

Answer

This too is comparable to the toddler who is learning to swim: he thinks that he can never float without water wings. But if he keeps practicing, he really doesn't need those water wings anymore. Now many people still need a social ritual to feel at home somewhere. But as someone becomes more universal, that need will disappear. He will then feel at home in the entire cosmos.

Colophon

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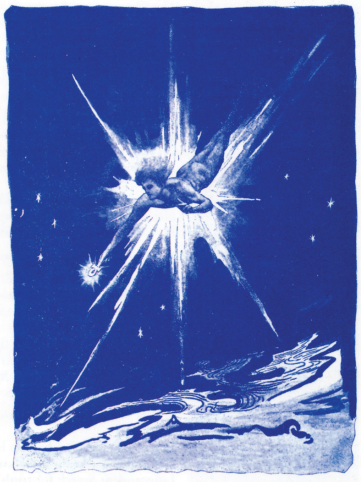
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1. The essential unity of all that exists.
2. By reason of this unity: brotherhood as a fact in nature.
3. Respect for everyone's free will (when applied from this idea of universal brotherhood).
4. Respect for everyone's freedom to build up their 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)