

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

**The Great Passing:
the autumnal
initiation**

**Gandhi on
Theosophy**

Why are we so busy?

**What causes order
in nature?**

**Progressive
evolution**

Future senses



Contents Lucifer — the Light-bringer

No. 3 | October 2019

Editorial

p. 66

The Great Passing **The autumnal initiation**

p. 67

The last of the four large initiations takes place at the time of the autumn equinox. Which mysteries are linked to this initiation, the one that is most difficult to understand?

Barend Voorham

Gandhi on Theosophy and the global civilization of tomorrow, part 2

p. 75

For building a wiser world civilization, Gandhi's ideas on absolute and relative truth, on the sacred and on community life are very relevant.

James Tepfer

Why are we so busy? **And how do we stop being so busy**

p. 83

What does "being busy" actually entail and how did we end up this way? And what can we do to be less busy or at least not feel stressed about it?

Erwin Bomas



Skeleton of the sea biscuit, a kind of sea urchin.

Theosophy in Nature **What causes order in nature?**

p. 91

Modern scientific equipment allows us to look at the microstructures of animal and plant cells. The cell processes turn out to be even more complex, more precise and smarter than we already thought. We find a similar order in many other areas of nature. Where does this come from?

Henk Bezemer

Questions & Answers

95

- » Progressive evolution
- » Future senses
- » Awakening latent capacities



Editorial

In this issue of *Lucifer, the Light-bringer*, we have attempted – as we always do – to show the depth of Theosophia and at the same time its practical value.

The depth of Theosophy is evident from the fourth of the Great Initiations, the Autumnal Initiation. In the northern countries, in the autumn the leaves fall from the trees and life withdraws. It is the time of self-reflection. In the fourth of the Holy Seasons, the initiation of the Great Passing, the initiate can reap ... or he can refuse the harvest of his victory out of compassion. A choice that everyone faces at some point. With this article we conclude the series of four articles about the Esoteric Year.

The applicability of Theosophia is clearly highlighted in the second article about Gandhi. His life and work are still an inspiration for a new, just and harmonious world. This article also extensively reflects on the lasting influence that Gandhi has in the world

Stress is one of the major problems that affects humanity today. Both young and old suffer from burn outs and lack of zest for life. However, we can combat this modern ailment.

The more scientific side of Theosophia comes to the fore in an article in the series *Theosophy in Nature*. This article reflects on the wonderful, universal order in Nature. If you see and understand some of it, it gives you a sense of beauty and it inspires you to live according to these laws.

In our question section we give our vision on progressive evolution and on two senses that have not yet been developed.

Living according to the laws of Nature – cooperating with Nature – is in fact the only solution to all human problems. In this *Lucifer* we have again tried to show some of these laws of Nature in the hope that it will inspire us all to live according to them.

As always, we welcome your comments, questions and suggestions.

The editors



The Great Passing

The autumnal initiation

The last of the four large initiations takes place at the time of the autumn equinox. Which mysteries are linked to this initiation, the one that is most difficult to understand? This is the last article in a series of four.⁽¹⁾

Key thoughts

» During the initiation, the personal man consciously unites himself with the spiritual source from which he originates.

» In the autumn initiation, the initiate gets to know *all* the mysteries of death.

» If the initiate is to succeed, his heart must be as light as “the feather of Truth” and he must be indifferent to joy and sorrow.

As with any seasonal change, people also used to celebrate around the time of the autumn equinox. These festivities are less familiar if compared with the winter festival, which we call Christmas, or Easter, the spring holiday, or the midsummer festival. Yet, we can still find more than enough historical facts from many cultures indicating that there have also been important religious festivities around the 23rd of September, when the summer turns into autumn.

Cycle through the year

The ceremonies celebrated around the autumn equinox always have death as their main theme. This also makes sense. As autumn heralds the end of the year, death is the end of external life.

The celebration of the autumnal equinox must therefore always be seen in the light of the preceding sacred festivals.

First of all, there is the festival of birth, which is celebrated around the 21st of December: the winter solstice.

The spring-initiation on the 21st of March is the Great Temptation. The midsummer festival of June the 21st is known as the initiation of the Great Renunciation. And finally, there is the initiation of autumn, which is called the Great Passing. Anyone can easily see that these four phases of the year correspond with the birth, youth, adulthood and death of a human life.

Furthermore, all ancient peoples also associated these four stages with the four wind directions. North is birth; East is youth; South represents adulthood; and West has always been associated with death. This of course, has everything to do with the sun, which plays a crucial role in all initiations. Seen from the northern hemisphere, the sun is “born” in the north, travels through the east and south to the west, where he “dies”.

Like all sacred festivities, the Christians have also attempted to incorporate the festival of the autumn equinox into their tradition. As the summer solstice has been

associated with John the Baptist, the Archangel Michael was associated with the autumnal equinox. His anniversary is now celebrated on September 29, but this has more to do with the inaccurate calendars that were used in the early days of Christianity.

Moreover, it is certainly not by chance that Michael was chosen as a saint for the celebration of autumn, for he is said to accompany the dead to paradise, just like the Greek Hermes. Furthermore, he would weigh the souls at the Last Judgement, which is why he is depicted with a scale.

The celebration of autumn in Japan

The autumnal festival is not only celebrated in Europe. During this time religious festivities also take place in other countries. Probably the largest of these is the Japanese *Higan*. This festival is celebrated both at the time of the spring and autumnal equinox.

Higan is the equivalent for the Sanskrit word *pāra*, which means “beyond”, “across” or “other shore”. The word *pāramitā* derives from it. You can translate this word with “virtue”.

What this means is that by practicing the virtues, you can reach “the other shore”, so, enter Nirvāna. A symbolic river exists between the external consciousness of our material world and the state of enlightenment, Nirvāna. That river is the flow of illusions, passions, pain and sorrow. On “the other shore” enlightenment is waiting. Therefore, that other shore is definitely not just some location, but a state of consciousness, in which you experience the unity of everything. You experience the indissoluble ties between all expressions of life and act accordingly. Selfishness ceases to exist, because you are aware of the reality of the unity of all life.

The Japanese tradition declares that if night and day have the same length – at the time of the equinoxes – you can best reflect on these exalted virtues and therefore it is easiest to reach that other shore. The popular belief even states that Buddha appears on Earth during this week to lead sincere people to Nirvāna.

Higan lasts for six days; three days before the equinox and three days after. On each day a virtue is particularly contemplated. (See text box on this page.)

Also remarkable is that, especially at the time of the autumnal equinox, respect is given to deceased family members. In this respect, it resembles somewhat the Christian All Souls’ Day on the 2nd of November, albeit the Japanese visit to the cemetery is a cheerful business, accompanied by a joyful, tasty meal. Furthermore, incense

The six *Pāramitās* which are being contemplated during *Higan*:

1. *Dāna*, the key to gentleness and eternal love.
2. *Sīla*, the key to harmony in word and gesture.
3. *Kshānti*, gentle patience which can be disturbed by nothing.
4. *Vīrya*, untamable force.
5. *Dhyāna*, meditation.
6. *Prajñā*, wisdom.

is burned, flowers are sacrificed, and people send prayers to their ancestors for the salvation of the deceased.

Eleusinian Mysteries

Such religious festivities in the fall are not only celebrated in Japan. The Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles is originally a celebration of harvest that was celebrated at the beginning of the fall.

In ancient Greece there were also religious festivities at the time of the equinoxes. In all antiquity, the so-called Eleusinian Mysteries or Eleusinia were reputed. Both in the spring and around the 23rd of September, initiations took place there.

The spring initiations had a more public character. They took place in a small town near Athens called Agrae and were called the Lesser Mysteries. They had the form of a drama, in which the initiate had to undergo certain experiences. It was a prelude to the Greater Mysteries, in which the initiate had to go through in reality what he had experienced in dramatized form during the Lesser Mysteries.

These Greater Mysteries took place in Eleusis, which is about thirty kilometers from Athens. The festivities were led by the Hierophant and the *Dadouchos*, or torchbearer. They lasted no less than nine days.

On the first and second day the initiate arrived and underwent ritual cleansings. The third day was a day of sorrow and fasting. On the fourth day, the *Epidauria*, a procession took place, in which an image of the goddess Demeter was carried. On the fifth day, the initiates, guided by the torchbearer, went to the temple in Athens. On day six, a procession took place. The image of Iakchos, the son or husband of Demeter, was carried from Athens to Eleusis. During the following days the actual initiations took place. The mass walked towards a fig tree. Then, only those who

knew the right passwords were allowed to enter a kind of temple called *Telesterion*. If one wanted to be granted access, then the oath of secrecy had to be repeated.

About what took place after this, has been a great deal of speculation, because we actually don't know anything. It is assumed that during the ceremonies certain mysteries were communicated to the candidates. The secrets stood in the *petroma*, a kind of stone book made from two stone tables. But whether this was the culmination of the initiation, we don't know. Much is obscure and unclear. But whatever happened, it must have been of an exceedingly elevated character, for almost all the great people from the antiquity, such as Plato or Plotinus, were initiated in the Mysteries of Eleusis, or that of another School, and they all praised it very highly.

Degrees of initiation

However little we know about the Mysteries, it is actually a fact that they had a lot, if not everything, to do with death. *Eleusis* itself means "arrival" or "advent". The *Eleusinia* therefore dealt with things that were coming, thus with death. Death had to be known in all its facets. And however strange this may sound, death has many more facets than many people think. Getting to know the depths of death takes place during the initiation of the fall.

The Mysteries also knew different degrees of initiation. First of all, you had the initiation into the Lesser Mysteries. Those who had passed these, were called *Mystae*, or veiled ones. Initiates in the Greater Mysteries were *Epoptae*, those who saw face to face. According to Proclus and Theon of Smyrna ⁽²⁾ this was only the third initiation. The fourth one was referred to with the colorful phrase "tying the head and putting up the crowns". Whoever has undergone this initiation, is a spiritual Teacher and can lead his fellow men to wisdom. In the fifth initiation, there was "friendship and inner communion with God". In our opinion, this last phrase should be interpreted literally, because there was a communication with God, or with the inner divinity. Yes, in the higher degrees of initiation, there was even unification with that innate divinity. In Greek philosophy, this *moment suprême* of the initiation is described with different terms: *Theophany*, *Theopneusty* and *Theopathy*. ⁽³⁾ These terms are very suggestive. *Theophany* originally means the appearance of a god. After all, the initiate comes face to face with his own Higher Self. He becomes one with it. The son returns to his spiritual source.

A lower form of *Theophany* is Epiphany. This word is more

common for us. In Christianity it is presented as if three kings visited the child Jesus. It is celebrated on January 6th. It also means "appearance". In the Oriental Christian Church, it is remembered as the birthday of the baptism of Jesus. The celebration itself is older than Christmas. If unification with the inner God is more or less complete then there is *Theopneusty*, which you can translate as "divine inspiration". The initiate is united with his divinity. The god breathes within him.

Finally, there is *Theopathy*. This word means "suffering a god". However, this god does not suffer himself. That would be an absurdity. It must be considered this way, that the candidate will tolerate the conscious entry of his deity. Man becomes, for a longer or shorter period, his inner god. He and his inner god are one. He has grown in his consciousness so that he can endure his own divine essence in himself. He has become a living god.

Theophany, *Theopneusty* and *Theopathy* are three phases of unification with our Self. In three increasingly sublime initiations, we can achieve an ever more complete realization with our inner god.

Autumnal initiation

That such exalted initiations have taken place in Eleusis can neither be proven nor contradicted, since hardly anything of the higher initiations, as has been said, is made public. It has been noted that the Eleusinian Mysteries had a strong ceremonial character. And as far as the more public activities concerned, that is certainly true. Perhaps some rituals have also taken place in the temple of Eleusis, where only the initiates had access. But would all the great thinkers of the antiquity have been satisfied with only rituals? Could it not be that truly advanced human beings have actually entered the more inner worlds in order to gain first-hand knowledge? If the *Hierophant*, the Great Initiator, had gained first-hand knowledge himself, he would certainly have recognized the pupils who had made themselves ready for initiation.

As we have explained in previous articles, the initiate, initially aided by his Teachers, really leaves this material sphere during these Greater Mysteries. Because you cannot really know something, if you have not, at least temporarily, become it. If you never express love, if you are not love, then you never know what it is. Then you can talk about it, try to understand it, but only the act of loving makes you realize what love is.

So, you can never really know what death is if you do not consciously undergo this and *become* the worlds you are

moving through.

Therefore, at the time of the autumnal equinox, the initiate consciously leaves his body, he moves along the inner paths of the cosmos, to the Underworld, an atmosphere that is even more coarse in structure than our world, and therefore for us an area of suffering. There he must bring light and hope, yet not be moved by this coarse world. If he does not succumb to these trials, he moves through the various planets to the inner Sun. He explores even deeper layers in himself than during the previous initiations. As a result, he now also visits the spheres of other planets. His insight becomes almost all-encompassing. He will know the whole process of death up to the smallest details. And especially, he will also experience life in the spirit, in its full splendor and bliss. To use the Buddhist term, he arrived on the other bank.

In a certain way it is like the end of human evolution. He has learned everything to be learned within the human kingdom. The human seed has been planted, like a seed of corn, and it has grown. Now it is time for the harvest. The seed must die in the soil, if the plant wants to germinate. We must die in this world, move through the portals of death, to be able to live as a spiritual being, a fully awakened Buddha, in the spiritual reality of Nirvāna. The autumnal initiation is the last of the great initiations. At Christmas the neophyte is born spiritually. During the Easter initiation he endured the trials. He has passed the summer initiation and renounced all individual progress. And now there is the harvest.

The scale

The fall is the era of death. The trees lose their leaves. The birds move away from the countries in the North. Animals go into hibernation or become less active. Everything in nature is focused inwardly.

But it is also the season of harvest. September is called the harvest month. A period of repentance, of drawing up the balance, follows. On September the 23rd, the sun moves into the sign of Libra. Before the harvest can be collected however, the balance must be drawn up. Has the personal man become so pure that he can live in the spiritual world permanently?

The scale is preeminently the symbol that represents this process. We already mentioned St. Michael, who is often depicted with a scale. The scale is our inner judge. Are we ready for our harvest? In England, the first full moon after the 23rd of September is called *Harvest Moon*. That moon would seem brighter than the full moon in other months.

In the moonlight, farmers could collect their harvest.

This may very well be the case, but is there not something else to be noted here? The moon takes an important place during initiations. In many nations the moon is said to be linked with death. It plays a major role in the processes after dying.

After death, man harvests the fruits of the past life. After death, you get rid of all superfluous garments. Because of the conventions in social life, you appear often quite different from what you really are. After death you are completely yourself. You harvest what you have sown.

To the same extent this is the case for the initiate: he as well harvests the fruits of his life, yes, the fruits of his whole development. It is like the story of Job, which is an initiation story. Job loses everything, does not have any earthly possessions anymore. He is once again “naked”, completely himself. In this way, he must endure the trials. These trials have only to do with things that come from you yourself. You put yourself on the scale. You cannot offer more or less than what you are. Are you so pure, freed from earthly selfishness and attachment, that you can dwell freely in the spiritual worlds?

In the book *Reu nu pert em bru*, or *Chapters on the onset in daylight*, this is strongly highlighted. This book is known by the name “The Egyptian book of the dead”. And it is understandable that modern scholars have given it this title, because indeed the processes of dying are described in them. To be initiated is to die; only the processes are now completely self-conscious.

As the culmination of his journey through the inner worlds, the initiate appears in front of the throne of Osiris, where the heart is weighed. On the one scale lies the heart, that is to say, the human essential character; on the other scale lies the feather of Truth and Reality.

You should not think lightly about this weighing of the heart if you read the Bible book of Job well. That book is also of Egyptian origin and shows what the trials can be. Initiation is not a game. There are no privileges. There is no forgiveness. It is a matter of the degree of development. If it is too low, you fail. No one can prevent another from successfully going through an initiation, except for the initiate himself. Everything depends on him. Is his heart in balance with the feather of Truth?

We always reap what we sow. And autumn is harvest time. What have we previously sown? Have we cherished our seeds of thought from previous initiations? Have we overcome the trials successfully? The autumnal initiation can never be well understood if we do not connect it

with the previous initiations, just as the old age of a man cannot be understood without his childhood. In a certain sense, this initiation is the harvest of the previous one, and especially that of the summer initiation.

Indifference to joy and suffering

The summer initiation bears the name “The Great Renunciation”. After all, the initiate must forswear any personal gain. He commits himself to dedicate his life fully to mankind.

However, this does not mean that he cannot make any progress. On the contrary. He will undergo even more, and greater initiations. But he never has to make a definitive choice again. He no longer has to choose because he has already chosen. He has chosen for the community. He recognizes himself as part of all that lives.

This does not prevent him from undergoing the initiation of the Great Passing. But his intention is not to stay across the river. He must know all the processes. Death must no longer be a secret to him. He must know the horrible side of it. He has descended into the Underworld. But he also needs to know the splendid side of death. And the latter is perhaps an even bigger temptation than the Underworld. He fully experiences the calm bliss of a life in the divine-spiritual spheres. He withdraws himself into his inner God and is freed from all limitations and imperfections. But there is a danger. If you are too much attached to your own happiness, you can no longer return. Yet again he must descend into that limited and

imperfect world.

One of the *pāramitās* that is not pondered during the yearly autumnal equinox in Japan, but which is called in other, more esoteric Buddhist writings, is the virtue *Virāga*, which is described as “indifference to joy and suffering”. By this the illusion is overcome and nothing than truth is seen. Practicing this Lofty Virtue makes the heart as light as the feather of Truth. That Truth is that there are no separations and that every pursuit of individual bliss, or fleeing from individual suffering, is yielding to illusion. Even if that bliss is of a supernal divine nature.

From carpenter to architect

The truth that separation does not exist is the master key to the understanding of initiation. However complicated the processes are for us, the principle behind it is in fact very simple: you learn, grow in consciousness, *so that you are better able to serve others*. Anyone who does not understand this principle, understands nothing of initiation. Who sees it and – more importantly! – applies it, will go through initiation after initiation.

Perhaps we can best illustrate this principle with an everyday case: the educational route we take in society. Why do we do that? For ourselves? To earn more money, to gain respect? Or do we learn at school, *so that we are better able to fulfill a useful function for the totality?*

Just imagine: a youngster having finished elementary school who is captured by the idea of doing something for his fellow men. He wants to help build houses, because

there is a shortage of houses in his country. He follows a vocational education. He runs an apprenticeship as a carpenter, does his best, shows dedication. But he finds out that if he really wants to give people good living space, he needs to know more. He follows another vocational course, one level up. He now belongs to the so-called middle management. Meanwhile he does not lose contact with the lower staff. Not only does he encourages them to increase their knowledge, but he also knows that their role is a crucial one.

At a certain point, however, he realizes that his knowledge is still insufficient. He continues to work,



Weighing of the heart.

but in the evenings, he follows a bachelor's degree. And if that is not enough, he graduates from a university as a civil engineer or architect. All this time, however, he has continued to show an interest in the "lower" staff. He knows their problems and worries, and although he is at a different working level now, his pursuit is still focused on uplifting his fellow workers. As an engineer, he now has a leading function, which he only accepted after finding a suitable successor who was able to take over the task he fulfilled. And although he now sits behind a desk and designs houses, he keeps in touch via his successor with the world from which he came. He still communicates with all the others in the construction business and tries to assert his influence everywhere possible.

This is of course only an analogy. We could also take the example of a nurse, who studies, because he sees that he can do even more for the patients as a physician.

Of course you can also become an architect or doctor with other motives. You can study to gain something for yourself. You want to become rich, develop yourself, enrich yourself spiritually. But then you assign reality to separateness. Then you see yourself as detached, as different from others. And however clever you may be, you have a false idea of Reality. But if you learn something in order to help others, you follow the natural course of things. This is also recognizable in the different stages of initiation. The moment when the boy of twelve decides to build houses, so that other people can live, is the initiation of the mystic birth. Then the temptation follows. Does he succeed in keeping this ideal? Next, his qualities will undoubtedly be noticed. He gets offers for construction projects that are inconsistent with his ideal. Perhaps exorbitant luxury villas or villas in a nature area. He would be highly rewarded and receive much fame. But he renounces that personal gain. Nevertheless, he is eventually forced to leave the construction floor and take his place behind a desk: the great passing. But he leaves something of himself behind. Through his subordinates, he continues to exert his beneficent influence.

Buddhas of Compassion

Great beings, initiated in the Mysteries of life, follow these stages as well. They are born spiritually, tested, forsake the benefits of their progress and will also be subjecting themselves to the initiation of the Great Passing. But unlike those who actually "pass", they come back, or at least something of themselves comes back.

This is perhaps the largest mystery for us as human beings.

Hence, this autumnal initiation is the most profound and difficult to understand, about which much fewer details are known compared to the other three major initiations. A mystery does not mean, however, that something is not to be known, but only that someone who is not initiated has no knowledge of it. But it can be known by those who think, sharpen their spiritual discernment and develop their intuitions.

Well, the mystery of the Great Passing is dealt with in Buddhism, in the so-called doctrine of the *Trikāya*. *Trikāya* literally means "three vehicles" and it is meant that a Buddha can adopt three vehicles or bodies.

There are three bodies that someone who has reached the state of consciousness of Nirvāna can adopt: the Dharmakāya, the Sambhogakāya and the Nirmānakāya. The first body is the one that belongs to Nirvāna. The Buddha who, as an inevitable consequence of his past compassionate deeds, eventually enters the Dharmakāya state, disappears for ever from our atmosphere. Sambhogakāya is a vehicle that extends to Nirvāna, but also has some connecting points in our sphere. Finally, Nirmānakāya is a vehicle that belongs to the sphere of our physical world. That does not necessarily mean that Buddhas, who choose this vehicle, live in our world, but they are very close to us. Much closer than most of us suspect.

These last Buddhas have renounced the Nirvāna. They have sacrificed themselves completely. They have crossed the river of sorrow, have stayed on the other shore, but have come back. They have experienced the initiation of the Great Passing, but have not departed for ever. Out of compassion with that Great Orphan, which mankind is, they returned to these dark spheres.

Joy unto ye, O Men of Myalba.

A Pilgrim hath returned back "from the other shore".⁽⁴⁾

With these words H.P. Blavatsky ends her booklet *The Voice of Silence*. Myalba is our Earth and esoterically seen a hell. It is therefore the Underworld for Buddhas. Nevertheless, they prefer to live here, because they have become Compassion itself and therefore will never seek bliss for themselves.

The Buddha leaves a Bodhisattva behind

The "return" of the initiate from "the other shore" does not have to be interpreted literally. It does not have to mean that he lives again as a completely reincarnated man among mankind. This is probably one of the most

difficult teachings of Theosophia, because it has everything to do with the composite nature of human consciousness on one side and the unity of all life on the other.

In humans there are actually different forces present. The terms *Dharmakāya*, *Sambhogakāya* and *Nirmānakāya* correspond to the, for us common terms spirit, soul and body. We humans are a spirit, a soul and a body. And with those terms we mean a permanent part, a learning part and transitory part. Three forces work in us. And although these forces collaborate so closely that you can speak of a unity, they are three living forces in their own right. What is it that always takes place at the initiations in the Mysteries, initiations under the inspiring guidance of what is called the Hierarchy of Compassion? A being focuses on a higher being and becomes one with it, but lifts up the lower entity behind him. This lower being now occupies his old place. It is like that carpenter that became an architect. While studying for a higher position, he trains someone else who can take over his task, when he himself has become an architect. He takes the time to do this, because he was never striving for an individual career, only for making houses.

The only thing that is difficult for us to understand is that within the consciousness of one being – within one stream of life – there are different living entities, which are in fact all one, although they are also evolving independently.

It is always the lower being that is initiated. It is the personal human being who becomes one with his spirit, with his Father in Heaven, with his inner Buddha.

But for what reason have you become one with that higher element in yourself? To be freed from the vale of tears that manifested life so often is? To be freed from the earthly inconveniences and imperfections? If this is the case, then you will not have “trained” anyone who comes behind you in order to take your place in human society. It was not about that society, but about your own liberation: although spiritual in nature, yet in its essence selfish.

But if you have become one, because you could, for the sake of compassion, do nothing other than grow, almost despite yourself, then you will have lifted up the lower element within yourself. Then you will, once the pull upwards is so strong you can no longer offer resistance, have developed “tentacles”, living instruments, in which, through which and with which you can work in order to maintain your influence.

That is the idea that is found in the Mahāyāna Buddhism in the doctrine that a Buddha who enters Nirvāna leaves a Bodhisattva behind. It is the Father, who leaves the Son

as he departs for higher places. And through that Son he continues to work, so that his Wisdom and Compassion continue to flow into the world. For this Son – the Bodhisattva – in his turn sends these influences to everyone who has developed corresponding characteristics in himself. In Tibet, for example, the Dalai- and the Tashi-Lama are told to be “overshadowed” by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the Amitabha-Buddha, respectively. ⁽⁵⁾

Tathāgata

The fact that in Buddhism it is never about the individual reaching of Nirvāna, is also shown by the title given to Buddhas of Compassion: *Tathāgata*. This Sanskrit word can be translated in two ways: he who has come and he who has disappeared. He – the being – has come into this world, has gained his experiences, but has departed again. He has left for “the other shore” and has reached it. Exactly as his predecessors have done this.

But he did leave his footsteps, so that others who come can follow the path more easily, although they should choose to follow it themselves. For the holiest duty of the *Tathāgata* – the essence of all Dharma – is to point out the Path that he himself has taken to others. So, by taking the Path himself, he prepares it for those who come after him. A splendid thought, which shows exactly the essence of spiritual Nature.

That path itself leads to the divine Heart of the Universe, the realization of the essential unity of life. To achieve that and, above all, to show others the way to go there, that is the task of the *Tathāgata*.

What is a Tathāgata?

Tathāgata means literally “thus come or thus gone”. In other words: he who has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors, thus following the Path of Compassion. But what is the Path of Compassion? H.P. Blavatsky says in the *Voice of Silence*: “Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS – eternal Harmony, Alaya’s SELF; a shoreless universal essence ...”⁽⁶⁾

The Tathāgata thus expresses what is universal, what always exists, what is in fact outside or above the ordinary pairs of opposites, such as coming and going, external and internal, myself and the other.

The Buddhist scripture *the Lankāvatāra Sūtra* provides an in-depth explanation of this. A translation of the relevant passage from *the Lankāvatāra Sūtra* can be found in *Esoteric Teachings*, part 1, by G. de Purucker.⁽⁷⁾

New Mystery Schools?

Where have the Mystery Schools been? Where is the School of Eleusis, of Samothrace in Greece? Where are those of Abydos, Memphis, Karnak, Abu-Simbel and Thebes in Egypt? Ephesus in Asia Minor, the ancient Mesopotamian cities of Sippar and Ur, the old capital of the Median Empire, Ecbatana, Babylon? Where are the Schools of East Asia? Some of those Schools, like those of Eleusis, had beautiful buildings. However, there were also Schools that were not located in a particular place. The Druids in Europe met in the forests. And did the followers of Mithras, the Essenes and many other groups not come together in underground caves? We just want to say that the location itself does not give any guarantee for the activities of a Mystery School. Gottfried de Purucker therefore claims that the more esoteric Schools were also almost unknown in Antiquity as well. ⁽⁸⁾

But nowadays there are no longer any commonly known Mystery Schools at all. Are they gone forever and if so, why? As we study the history of the Eleusinian Mysteries, we get a good idea why Mystery Schools ceased to exist. They disappear as they degenerate. The candidates no longer take the discipline so strictly. People are “initiated” where they actually do not have the right to be so. Schools can even degenerate so much so that money becomes a prerequisite to be initiated.

The Eleusinia, for example, became state institutions in 510 BCE. Candidates for membership had to pay entrance fees, which was a source of income for the state. However, spiritual knowledge cannot be sold. Where it does happen, degeneration has already started.

At the end of the second century of our era, the situation was so that anyone who had money could be initiated. At that time, the School consisted most likely only of *mystae*: people with a veiled vision. The School was eventually closed, some three centuries later, by the Christian emperor Justinian, albeit at the request of the best of the initiates themselves.

However, the wise men, the *hierophants*, *epoptae*, have never disappeared. On the inner planes, the Mystery School will never be closed. For the great initiates, the Buddhas of the human race, continue to inspire mankind, visible or invisible. Each country, each culture has its own center. And then we do not point to a specific place, but to a spiritual center, shaped by the dedication, wisdom, and compassion of people, who live for nothing but to bless their fellow men. They communicate there where they are allowed. For how weird it may sound, it is not

them who, in a certain way, live outside society, but it is us, people in society, who determine whether and how much communication is possible.

Usually these Masters do not directly communicate with an uninitiated person. But actually, this was always the case. For the *hierophant* of the *Eleusinia* did, so it seemed, also not allow the candidates to see or hear him personally. And Pythagoras taught his novice pupils from behind a curtain in his cave. ⁽⁹⁾ Whether the contemporary *hierophants* teach us “from behind a curtain”, or that they do it more directly, depends on how we receive their instructions. Do we make them ridiculous? Do we see them as a nice but unpractical theory? Or do we commit ourselves to embedding those instructions in our personal life?

Initiation is not something that takes place from afar. The first phases especially take place in our daily life. Live the doctrine. Be selfless. Love others. Forgive injustice that has been inflicted on you. Work for others.

Discipline precedes the Mysteries. As we apply these ethical guidelines, we ensure that the Mystery Schools become gradually more public and, to an even larger extent, exert a calming and uplifting influence on all human souls. ⁽¹⁰⁾

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Ghandi's ashram.

Gandhi on Theosophy and the global civilization of tomorrow, part 2

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*. The life and work of Gandhi is still an inspiration for a new, just and harmonious world, as will be made clear in this second part of James Tepfer's lecture.

Key thoughts

» The ideas of Gandhi have left a powerful mark in the world, as several non-violent “reforms” at the end of the 20th century show.

» For building a wiser world civilization Gandhi's ideas are very relevant: his vision on absolute and relative truth (which smothers any dogmatism in the bud), on the sacred (that doesn't depend on rituals but of an inner awakening, recognizing it in every human being of the ONE divine source) and on community life (that Gandhi's ashrams tried to bring into practice).

» Gandhi's life lets us see how we all can contribute to a wise world civilization: by meditation on ethical high quality subjects, by deliberately cultivation of universal responsibility and by self-correction.

East and West are no more than names. Human beings are the same everywhere. He who wants to will conduct himself with decency ... If we look into the future, is it not a heritage that we have to leave to posterity, that all the different races commingle and produce a civilization that perhaps the world has not yet seen? ⁽¹⁾

M.K. Gandhi

The above quote from Gandhi could not only prove to be true of India – which I revere – but true of my beloved America as well. It is my belief that America will in time grow into its noble vision and join hands across the “great divide” with Mother India. In so doing, they will bring together science and spirituality in such a unique way that it will give birth to a spiritual, intellectual and social renaissance that the world has yet to witness.

Let us now turn toward the uncharted future, toward a possible global

civilization of tomorrow. In doing so, we will humbly embrace Rainer Rilke's intriguing observation that:

The future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens. ⁽²⁾

In this sense, the “global civilization of tomorrow” is here now — in embryonic form.

Our age is often characterized as one of *avidya*; of spiritual ignorance, of intuitive obtuseness, of moral confusion and of the supremacy of material values over spiritual ideals. There is a keen awareness by many of the cancer of greed, the pervasive fear of suffering and death, the debilitating epidemic of loneliness and the unhealthy alienation of many from their cultures and communities. In short, the spiritual has spiraled down and crystalized into a materialistic mentality. But is this the whole story of our tilting “age of transition”? Isn't

it possible that there is more incubating beneath the surface that is as yet unborn – or perhaps even partially pushing itself up through the soil?

Fortunately, there are subtle signs of a dawning Aquarian awareness in which the valorous, creative spirit of man is shown to be as yet undaunted and resilient. The most significant indicator of man’s “solar possibilities” is rooted in the irreversible recognition that human and global interconnectedness are established facts; culturally, economically, ecologically, intellectually and in a thousand other ways we are bound together in a common destiny. No man, no woman, no country, no religion is “an island unto itself”. We are painfully inching our way toward a new kind of inclusive mentality, a new kind of cross-cultural compassion. For instance, there are now a plethora of NGO’s across the globe rendering various forms of timely assistance to the needy and dispossessed. On virtually every continent, spontaneous initiatives to alleviate poverty and ignorance are taking place. What is more, ecological awareness of the fragile web of interdependence that bind together man and nature has made us more conscientious trustees of our natural resources. Even empirical science, with its built-in materialistic assumptions and narrow methodologies, shows signs of becoming more philosophically open if not exactly socially responsible. For example, most theoretical physicists now acknowledge that they cannot empirically prove either “string theory” or the “multi-verse hypothesis” without contemporary philosophers helping them conceive of new, non-empirical criteria of validity. Furthermore, ground-breaking brain research has discovered the power of meditation to create new neuron pathways, to awaken empathy and even compassion. Beyond this, heretical researchers at the University of Virginia’s School of Medicine have compiled over 2,500 case studies of children across the globe who have credibly recalled past lives. These intrepid researchers have concluded that the only rational explanation that fits all the facts is that consciousness, in some sense, survives death and is reborn. Finally, there is the deep feeling amongst the young and the young at heart that the spiritual is open-ended and that it is up to each one to engage in acts of self-definition, self-determination and self-transcendence.

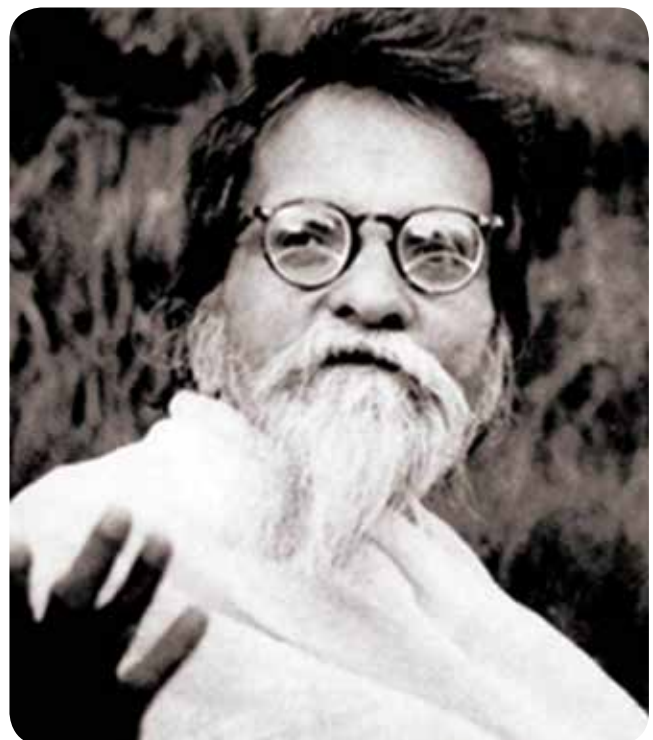
If all of this constitutes an “indicating vector” toward a more hopeful, humane and regenerated humanity, then let us raise an over-arching question: “Could there emerge in the decades and centuries ahead a *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, a “New Order of the Age” for the whole of the human

family?” Yes, there could — if we are only courageous enough to think big, to think comprehensively, to dream and to dare.

Civilizing centers, or *Bhoodan* land reform movement

Well, if a “New Order of the Ages” (or a “City of Man”) is genuinely possible, then it is only appropriate that we turn to Gandhi for pointers toward a more hopeful future. In fact, Gandhi is vitally relevant to the present and to the zig-zag unfoldment of the ensuing epochs. If this is true, then what role might Gandhi’s guiding principles of Truth and non-violence, innovative social and economic reforms and *ashram* experiments play in helping to bring about, if not a global civilization, then at least a multitude of “civilizing centers”; civilizing centers in which the initiative is on the side of inclusiveness, universality, generosity, cooperation and trusteeship rather than of on the side of suffocating tribalism, insatiable greed, self-destructive competition and cowardly coercion?

In answer to that question, let us first recognize that Gandhi has already left his indelible imprint on generations yet to come. Look at what took place on the world stage in the years and decades immediately after his death. First, there was the pivotal incident that took place in India, itself, on April 18, 1951 – almost 100 years to the day of



Vinoba Bhave.

the birth of that great Theosophist, William Quan Judge. On that day in 1951, Vinoba Bhave, (one of Gandhi's truest disciples) began the revolutionary *Bhoodan* land reform movement. This reform movement – in my view – saved India from decades of violence and ideological conflict. This nation-altering movement originated in the following way. For some time, Bhave had been mulling over the problem of what to do about the millions of landless peasants in India. The antiquated and unjust Zamindari feudal system was suffocating the landless. Furthermore, and most significantly, the communists were fomenting violent revolution among the desperate peasants. There was chaos and mayhem throughout the major provinces of Telangana (then called Hyderabad State). To make matters worse, the new, national government of India was struggling with a host of problems and had not yet found a solution to dismantling the Zamindari system or for coping with fiery communist insurgents. Fortunately, Bhave stepped into the epicenter of this dangerous situation and appealed to the wealthy landowners to voluntarily redistribute a small percentage of their land to the starving poor. At first Bhave's appeal fell on deaf, unsympathetic ears. But at the village of Pochampalli, a landlord spontaneously stood up and offered 100 acres of his land to be allocated to forty families in his village. Bhave was delighted and intuitively saw this generous act as providential. This wealthy Zamindari had spontaneously brought together in his concrete gesture the Gandhian principles of trusteeship and non-coercive, social transformation. The Land gift Movement called *Bhoodan* had begun and would, in time, slowly spread across India.

A few months after the start of the Bhoodan Movement, Prime Minister Nehru stood before the Indian Parliament and made the following comment about Vinoba Bhave and his burgeoning land reform efforts:

This frail man has just accomplished, solely by the force of non-violence, what all the military power of the (Indian) Government would be unable to do.⁽³⁾

In the end, Bhave collected and re-distributed over four and one-half million acres of arable land to the landless. And, just as importantly, Bhave – and the gifts of the wealthy – halted a teeming communist revolution.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Turning to America, we have the prophetic observation made by Gandhi during a meeting with an American

Negro Delegation in 1936:

... It may be through the (American) Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world.⁽⁴⁾

This of course brings us to the sterling example of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Christian exponent of non-violent social and racial reform. At a critical turning point in King's early life, he was encouraged by a remarkable mentor to read the writings of Gandhi, which he did. It was only then, he admitted, that he understood that it was possible to take the Christian principle of unconditional love and apply it to the social, economic and racial problems of America. By the mid-1950s, King emerged as the leader of the American civil rights movement and was responsible for initiating economic boycotts and civil disobedience campaigns across the racist South. His activities became a fundamental challenge to the conscience of America. During these creative and tumultuous times, King conceived the wish to travel to India. That wish finally came to fruition in 1959 when he made what he termed a "pilgrimage" to visit the land of his revolutionary mentor, Mahatma Gandhi.

King's five-week pilgrimage to India had a profound influence on his understanding of non-violent resistance and his commitment to America's struggle for civil rights. During his stay in India, King met with Prime Minister Nehru, with the reformed communist and socialist leader, J.P. Narayan, with Vinoba Bhave and, most importantly, with hundreds of local Gandhians, social workers and untouchables across the sub-continent.

On his final evening in India, King made a moving radio address to the Indian people. In that eloquent address, he said:

Since being in India, I am more convinced than ever before that the method of nonviolent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for justice and human dignity. In a real sense, Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation.⁽⁵⁾

King returned to America with a deeper understanding of the dynamics of non-violent resistance and a tremendous appreciation for the Indian peoples and their ancient culture. Four years later, on July 2nd, 1964, the United

States Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act which legally ended racial discrimination across America. This act, and the collective sacrifice that inspired it, continues to sustain all concerted efforts toward American racial justice and equality.

Europe Velvet Revolution

Turning now to Gandhi's influence on Europe, we have the non-violent revolution that took place in former Czechoslovakia in 1989. This revolution of the Czech masses was called the "Velvet Revolution". It spontaneously began on November 17, 1989, exactly one hundred and fourteen years to the day of the founding of the Theosophical Society in New York City. It ended a mere six weeks later. The intrepid non-violent demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience by the oppressed Czech peoples resulted in the peaceful abdication of the ruling Communist Party and the establishment of a Parliamentary Czech Republic. Four years later, in January of 1993, Czechoslovakia separated into two independent countries: the Czech and Slovak Republics. It was a bloodless, non-violent act of political division called "the velvet divorce". It was no less amazing than the non-violent overthrow of Communist rule four years earlier.

Universal civilization

There is now world-wide recognition that non-violent,

non-cooperation is a constructive form of social, political and economic protest to correct perceived injustices. In fact, the word "non-violence" has entered into our common social and political vocabulary. This global fact is Gandhi's gift to our grandchildren's grandchildren.

But the world still has much to learn from Gandhi if it is to give birth to a "universal civilization". The world's seminal thinkers and dedicated revolutionaries have yet to understand the signal importance of Gandhi's philosophical distinction between Absolute and relative truth. Nor have many New Age thinkers and ecumenical devotees quite understood Gandhi's rich conception of the sacred. Nor have social historians ever intuited the broader significance of Gandhi's ashram experiments. Nevertheless, all three are critical to the human family if it is to pass through its current "dark night of the soul", its *nitya pralaya* — the very painful, inevitable process of consciously "dying into a new life".

Absolute and relative truth

As pointed out in *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* by Raghavan Iyer, Gandhi made a crucial distinction between Absolute and relative truth — a distinction which is the heartbeat of the First Fundamental principle of the Theosophical philosophy. Gandhi noted that Absolute truth is ever beyond us while relative truth functions as our immediate guide through the labyrinth

of daily life. Sadly, Gandhi recognized that the failure of sincere religionists, ideologues, reformers and rebels to clearly distinguish between Absolute and relative truth in their own minds and hearts had created many of the world's tragedies. By unconsciously lending a narrow sense of self to our perceptions of truth we create intense attachments to them and a subsequent narrow — heartedness toward the beliefs and practices of others. So many activists, observed Gandhi, fall prey to the tenacious tendency to "absolutize the relative", to take an idea, an insight or a revered truth and to treat it as final, as ultimate, as the only possible interpretation, as the only viable practical application.



Photo of the last of the three protest marches from Selma (Alabama) to Montgomery (Alabama) in 1965. The African-American population took to the streets for voting rights and against racism. During the first two marches the police violently intervened, but that did not prevent the people to keep protesting peacefully.

This mulish perversity spawns the world's political and religious "isms" and increases violence and divisiveness. Despite the clash of political ideologies and religious sects in the present, the men and women of coming decades will need to freely acknowledge the relative truths imbedded in the perspectives, beliefs and practices of themselves and others. They will need to gradually transmute their "absolutizing tendencies" and move closer to the synthesizing power of *buddhic* intuition. It could well be, that out of collective pain, disillusionment and suffering the men and women of tomorrow will gradually learn to honor the Absolute in the relative by becoming humbler in the realm of self-assertion and claim-making. And, because of this, the best minds will grow in their understanding that universalization does not mean homogenization but rather the recognition of "unity within diversity". This flexible attitude will no doubt be aided by the progressive deglamorization of all forms of political and religious power.

Beauty

Speaking of truth, it is important to note that Gandhi saw Truth as the foundation of all forms of beauty — especially moral beauty. Moral beauty involves the harmonic relationship between theory and practice, belief and behavior, knowledge and application. The more one can creatively and courageously integrate truth and non-violence the more one's actions will radiate an intelligent and uplifting influence. From this perspective then, disharmony or "moral ugliness" is not poor practice or weakness of will but hypocrisy or disingenuousness — a lack of inner integrity which leads to soul blindness and a disfigured personality.

Theosophical speaking, spiritual beauty seems to involve the rational integration of the macro and the micro, the global and the local, the parapolitical and the political. This is elusive but will become perhaps the primary focus of the best academies of the future. But more importantly for students of Theosophy in the present, it is important to recognize that beauty is double-edged. It can beguile, seduce, intoxicate and divert us as well as exhilarate and inspire us to persist in our arduous journey to the summits of impersonal truth. Unthinking fascination with beauty, *per se*, can easily mislead and blind us such that we forget the suffering of the world around us. The intoxicating spiritual beauty experienced at times by the student of Theosophy can unconsciously transform his Bodhisattvic commitment to rescue humanity from its ignorance

and suffering into a desire for the ecstatic experience, for spiritual self-absorption, for *nirvana*. This Calypso-like enticement must be resisted. The pursuit of universal fellowship with its trials and tribulations must trump all — even the desire for beauty.

The sacred

Let us turn now to Gandhi's conception and exemplification of the sacred. This is perhaps one of the signposts of the future. While rational knowledge rather than religious belief seems to be a defining difference between the Piscean and Aquarian Ages respectively, reverence is vital for the awakening of spiritual insight. This is because the rational can be infused with reverence, and reverence can be rational; truth is sacred. To Gandhi, the vivifying sacred gives birth to the pervasive feeling of "reverence" for the divine in all its marvelous manifestations: reverence for spiritual teachers, for knowledge, for sacrifice, for moral courage, and, of course, increasing reverence and respect for the bounty of Nature. In this sense, Gandhi saw that not only is God sacred, and Nature too, but humanity is likewise sacred. We, as human beings, are neither hopeless sinners, random cosmic accidents, bundles of instincts nor sophisticated machines. No, we are essentially god-like and worthy of admiration when we act up to our moral, intellectual and spiritual potential. Thus, in the not-so-distant future, the notion of the sacred will cease to be confined to conventional religions only, nor will it be limited to certain holy activities housed in enclosed spaces called temples, pagodas, churches, synagogues or mosques. Nor will the sacred be viewed as something forever somber or grim but as something joyous and elevating. On the whole, there will be such a pervasive feeling of the sanctity of life that men and women will learn to honor the hidden potency of the unblemished divine as it manifests itself in everyday life. The most mature individuals in the centuries ahead will inwardly salute the presence of the divine and the divinely human whenever and wherever they witness acts of authentic selflessness, of moral and spiritual courage, of spontaneous generosity and of voluntary renunciation.

Ashram

Amidst the complex political challenges in South Africa and later in India, Gandhi realized that it was necessary to initiate a new kind of *ashram*; namely a micro-community of committed individuals that deliberately brought together the spiritual and the social through the transfiguring power of vows. Spiritual vows were solemnly taken to

honor certain eternal, guiding principles: truth, non-violence, non-possessiveness, non-stealing and the like. As a result of taking such comprehensive resolves, there was an active recognition and place for diverse religious teachings within the *ashram*. But Gandhi felt that spiritual vows and religious teachings are impotent unless they are creatively related to concrete social needs. Therefore, in addition to preparing for various forms of social and political protest in British India, Gandhi and his *ashram* co-leaders agreed to radically reconfigure Indian society within the parameters of their own miniature community. Over many years, they organically evolved a communal structure which eliminated inappropriate caste differences, purged it of untouchability, re-established the nobility of womanhood, honored the innate dignity of bread labor and integrated the head, the heart and the hand in the education of children and young adults alike.

Gandhi's conception and exemplification of leadership in his *ashrams* was as much modern as it was traditional. His ashrams were structured but not static, egalitarian but not anarchic. While Gandhi was the visionary, the one who took the initiative and assumed primary responsibility for *ashram* activities, he was really the "leader" by virtue of his moral example. As a leader Gandhi was rational, responsible, transparent and totally committed to the importance of public self-correction when called for. And, when important communal issues arose, Gandhi observed the primary rule of the Pythagorean Community of classical Greece; namely, he consulted and deliberated with others before acting. In this sense, Gandhi's *panchayat* council of elders was the living embodiment of the legendary King Arthur's "round table" in which King Arthur was simply "the first among equals."

In the end, Gandhi's *ashram* experiments embodied a new kind of thinking, an original way of bringing together the seemingly separate worlds of religion and social reform by transforming both. His deliberate communal centers became the transformational levers that helped to realign God within man, the sacred within the social, the citizen within the political community. Members of Gandhi's *ashrams* in South Africa and India sought not *moksha* or *nirvana*, but *dharma*, skill in rendering intelligent service to the larger society and to humankind as a whole. Not surprisingly, these pioneering *ashram* experiments generated several internal challenges and problems, all of which were examined and thought out in ways deemed compatible with the vows of truth, non-violence, non-possession and service.

Now, it is rarely brought to the public's attention that there are at this moment thousands of eco-villages and intentional communities busily at work on every continent. These innovative communal experiments have become quiet centers of social, political, religious and even intellectual pioneering. They are visionary, knowledge-based as well as value-bound and are refreshingly unostentatious. They are to be found in inner cities, suburbs, the country side and villages. Their historical roots are many, but they are, in some sense, subtly indebted to Gandhi's own bold *ashram* experiments of the last century.

Psychological level

All that we have discussed so far points to the fact that the global civilization of tomorrow will continue to call for a seismic shift in consciousness — an inner transformation sparked and supported by innovative social and political arrangements at the micro-level. As we have seen, this is already occurring in some fashion. But more is needed — especially at. What is most needed in our own time, is not so much the yearning for a lost Golden Age or the determination to recover some paradise lost, but, more to the point, we need to recover a lost self-confidence — individually and collectively. We need to arouse a deeper confidence in the potential of man to rise from the hell of self-will into the heaven of cooperative fellowship.

How, then, do we ascend step-by-step toward an unshakable confidence in ourselves, in others and in the uncircumscribed future? Gandhi's solution is simple, seemingly paradoxical and very challenging. He says that the fundamental cure for lack of self-confidence is moral and spiritual courage. Most of us, he suggests, are not as morally weak, intellectually confused or as uncertain as we believe we are. Somewhere in our searching minds, we *know* what we ought to do. We *know* what is the decent thing to do. But we lack the courage or the verve to do it. In moments of quiet solitude, when we honestly scan our lives, we can clearly see that so many of our mistakes and tragedies could have been avoided with a little courage, a little daring, a little caring, a little self-honesty, a little detachment from ourselves. If this is true, then what we need to do is to arouse our moral and spiritual courage by making a Promethean resolve to reduce our personalities to a zero in specific moral situations. This unconditional resolve summons the heroic element in us and awakens our altruistic will to act rightly and honorably — without concern for consequences or for self-image. Albert Einstein put this more metaphysically — but just as compellingly —

when he commented that the responsibility of true religion is to help men and women remove the “optical delusion of separative consciousness” from the mind.⁽⁶⁾

Objective idealism and self-correction

However, while timely self-renunciation in daily life is the ideal, Gandhi was no romantic idealist nor a foolish optimist. He was, instead, an objective idealist. He understood that man and society are necessarily full of imperfections. It is part of the human condition that error, sin and injustice shadow all human activities. So, when our actions toward others fail to measure up to our ideals of truth and love, we must have the courage not to lie, temporize or rationalize our mistakes — either to ourselves or to others. We must correct ourselves before life does it for us. Through unwavering resolve, Gandhi became a master of self-correction in every aspect of his life — from the personal to the political.

On one occasion in South Africa, Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba, engaged in a heated argument over her doing scavenger work in the *ashram*. Eventually, Gandhi realized that he had lost his temper badly and was trying to force Kasturba to do something that was, as yet, completely unnatural to her. Gandhi felt badly and, over-coming his righteousness, said those magical words: “I was wrong.” He immediately followed this up with the potent mantram: “I apologize.” These acts of self-correction restored harmony between him and his noble companion and increased their mutual understanding and respect for each other. Gandhi carried over the principle of self-correction into that most difficult of all realms of social encounter, the political. In 1919, Gandhi initiated a mass *Satyagraha* campaign throughout India in response to the British government’s oppressive Rowlatt Act. The British army responded to the non-violent *Satyagraha* campaign by brutally repressing protestors. Eventually, some protestors were unable to measure up to the high standards of non-violent action and turned to violence and mayhem. Gandhi soon realized his mistake and publicly declared that he had made a “Himalayan miscalculation” in thinking that India was ready for non-violence on a mass scale. He took personal responsibility for his error and called off the national campaign despite the heated disagreement of almost all his associates.

In both cases of deliberate self-correction, we can see that Gandhi had the courage to set aside his ego. He was forced by the moral logic of his own vows to swallow his pride, his hurt feelings, his righteous anger, his high expectations, his

deep disappointment and perhaps even his self-image. He consciously chose to follow the morally and psychologically demanding path of truth and non-violence. In doing so, he purified his consciousness and, paradoxically, increased his confidence in his own capacity to learn and to grow morally and spiritually. Clearly, the Gandhian template of selfless action and timely self-correction is vital if we wish to progress toward a better, more harmonious world.

Meditation and universal responsibility

Now it is important to note that self-renunciation is aided by two factors. According to Theosophy, Eastern philosophy and modern cutting-edge science, those factors are daily meditation on high themes and the conscious cultivation of universal responsibility. These inner activities are the keys to positively transfiguring the mind. Meditation is alchemical and is ultimately about Self-gestation. It’s about calmly negating the subtle tyranny of the lesser self and gradually ascending the ladder of consciousness into the empyrean of the transcendent, all-compassionate One. Persistence in meditation, self-study and service helps us to progressively “un-self” the mind. In time, it becomes natural for us to generate an expanding series of inclusive circles of responsibility for others — from one’s family to one’s community and, ultimately, to the family of humankind. In light of this inner dynamic, we can understand why Gandhi was said by many to “breathe compassion”. After all, one of his self-confessed disciplines was daily meditation on the plight of the starving and distraught millions. This golden thread of recurrent meditation was the heart-beat of his rich and fruitful quest for God-realization — gained through rendering timely help to others. Broadly speaking, as a spacious sense of Self dawns upon human consciousness in the decades ahead, the king faculty of creative imagination will become a willing co-partner with impersonal reason. This happy alliance will make the personality of man more plastic, more capable of being self-shaped. If this is true, there will come about a change in the valence of the mind. It will become more noetic, more suffused with luminous insights. In a word, the mind will become more multi-dimensional and capable of inhabiting diverse perspectives and entertaining opposing points of view. Furthermore, man’s empathic I.Q. will increase such that he will suffer and celebrate with others more easily. This new, hospitable mentality is what is really at the heart of “becoming more global”. In this sense, one can live in a village and be global or reside in a thriving metropolis and be parochial. It all depends

on the quality of the individual's state of consciousness or mental purity.

Summary magnanimous mind

In summary then, we might say that within the intentional micro-communities of the future there could well take place the creative integration of the spiritual, the intellectual and the social. If so, this could give birth to what we might call the “magnanimous mind” — the dynamic fusion of the alpha intellect and the alpha heart. The magnanimous mind points to a sublime ethical intelligence. Its unfoldment would re-integrate our mental, moral and spiritual lives. It would be truthful and compassionate, morally upright and tolerant, rationally exacting yet flexible and intuitive. At its best, the magnanimous mind of tomorrow would be permeated with a felt sense of the sacred that expresses itself in boundless generosity and consummate grace. Such a spiritual mentality would evince a marvelous *buddhic* mobility. It would excel at shifting its focus from the theoretical to the practical, from the moral to the psychological, from prose to poetry, from the local to the global and back again. And, what is more, this new kind of mentality would be as much at home in the spacious unknown as it would be in the formulated known.

Because of the emergence of the magnanimous mind, the man and woman of the future will find it natural to be many things at once: a seeker of Truth, a mystic, a lover of science, a viable contributor to the moral uplift of society and a conscientious trustee of Nature's resources. In essence, the man and woman of generations to come will, like Gandhi, learn to be spiritually independent, intellectually open and socially responsible. They will withdraw excessive allegiance to church and state, to sect and party, and, by holding firmly to universal principles, regenerate civil communities within a multi-layered global civilization.

Finally, the magnanimous mind, when nurtured within the numerous micro-communities of coming centuries, could well give birth to authentic “islands of brotherhood” that would grace the globe. Such iridescent centers of culture would summon to our rejuvenated earth *jnanis* from celestial spheres. These magus-Teachers would take birth once again and freely walk among men and women without threat of being “hunted as devils or worshipped as gods.” Such wise magicians of the heart would open wide the windows of perception so that the receptive and the distressed might equally catch a glimpse of the

Divine. They would reorient human consciousness toward a vibrant idealism and offer fresh hope to the ritualists, the materialists and the spiritually downtrodden. If such exalted sages, if such magnanimous teachers, were to incarnate and restore some form of *Rama Rajya* [The rule of the Avatāra Rama; the just and fair rule. Editors.] on earth, then we could all join in chorus with sweet, innocent Miranda in Shakespeare's *Tempest* when she joyously declares:

O wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is.

O brave new world, that has such people in't.⁽⁷⁾

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Why are we so busy?

And how do we stop being so busy

“I am busy.” A common answer when people ask us how we are doing. But it is not just something we say, because at least one out of seven people in The Netherlands actually gets a burnout⁽¹⁾ and books such as *Busy* are on the bestseller lists.

What does being busy actually entail and how did we end up this way? And what can we do to be less busy or at least not feel stressed about it?

What is being busy?

What do we mean when we say we are “busy?” Further on in this article we will work towards a definition, but in general we mean that we have a lot of things to do: a never-ending to-do list, an inbox full of unread e-mails asking for a reply, an agenda filled with appointments and the continuous pressure of domestic tasks as well as other duties in daily life requiring our attention.

Moreover, we usually do not mention what we are so busy with; it is just the feeling that many different things require our attention simultaneously and that we, ideally, want to complete all of these activities at the same time. While we are occupied with one thing, we get the feeling that we should actually be doing something else. Our thoughts jump from one thing to the other. There are indeed things asking our attention: a WhatsApp message that comes in, an update to be installed on our phone, et cetera.

Why are we so busy?

Sometimes you have more things to do than at other times. For instance, when you come home after work and you have to buy groceries, cook, bring your children to bed; a temporary sequence of tasks that needs to be completed. There are also periods in which tasks pile up. Three deadlines following each other at work, a sick member of the family at home requiring care, and a car that needs to be brought to the garage. Knowing that these situations are temporary usually helps us to remain calm and to get through such a busy period. But what if these periods are following each other more and more frequently? What if the hustle and bustle maintain and there is hardly any rest? A first step in order to get out of this situation is to analyze what the deeper causes of this continuous hustle could be. In seven steps we will gradually try to find out what the causes could be. We do not suggest that these are the only possible

Key thoughts

- » “Saying you are busy” is often an excuse in order to avoid complicated tasks.
- » Being busy is a state of restless and unfocused thinking.
- » By controlling our thoughts, we can be busy without stressing about it.
- » A universal vision on life provides guidance and supports us when taking control of our thoughts in a permanent way.

answers, but our attempt is to dig deeper instead of just scraping the surface. So, to start with a frequently heard and obvious answer to the question *why* we are so busy? Well, simply because ...

1. ... there is so much information being thrown at us!

Since the rise of the internet we can be up to date with what is going on in the world at any moment of the day. On top of that we can share every moment of our life with the rest of the world through selfies and tweets et cetera. Historically speaking we can say there is an explosion of information. We receive and process more information per day than ever before in recent history. Estimations state that the amount of content we consume through multimedia each day equals to 174 newspapers! This is already five times more compared to 1986. ⁽²⁾ And the total amount of available information keeps growing every year. Every minute millions of emails are being sent, days of film material are being uploaded and millions of posts are placed on Facebook. ⁽³⁾

Because the popularity of the content is monitored continuously, they know how to cater to our curiosity as we are being served “clickbait”: texts that are written to heighten sensation. Furthermore, there is a strong addictive aspect in a lot of social media which has been incorporated deliberately. ⁽⁴⁾ But are we, through this explosion of information, really busier? Perhaps, but it is quite easy to put the blame outside ourselves. The explosive growth of information around us and the attractive presentation do not necessarily mean that we are obliged to get distracted by it. The next question therefore is: why do we let ourselves be overflowed with so much information? Well, for example, because ...

2. ... it is easier to be busy!

In his book *Busy*, the Englishman Tony Crabbe confronts us with ourselves. “Too busy” is an obvious excuse for not doing something you have to do, he writes. Allowing yourself to be continuously occupied with all sorts of distractions gives you the illusion that you are busy. An organized mailbox may feel like an accomplishment, even though we have not made any progress in achieving something with, for example, a complex project.

The proper planning of tasks, in order to make a timely estimate whether additional activities can be fitted in or not, and especially management of the right expectations, or saying no to people when they ask you something,

usually take more effort, compared to adding something to our to-do list.

The argument “too busy” is also starting to derive status. “Successful” people are always busy, and we admire them for their productivity and versatility. And now almost everyone is busy and it is normal to be busy.

In the end, deadlines do approach and we have to spend time on difficult jobs. With some extra hours we manage to complete our tasks, but we tell ourselves to start earlier the next time. However, in the meantime tasks have piled up during the period we did not have time to pay attention to them. Before we know it, we are distracted by the full mailbox and again we take our e-mails into account one by one because then at least we have completed that. Why do we so often choose this easy road? Probably because ...

3. ... we do not make choices and set priorities?

Being busy is easy and in a way a form of laziness. Because consciously or unconsciously, we avoid strenuous activities and difficult questions while doing this. As long as we keep doing a lot of things simultaneously, we do not have to choose what we find most important and we have an excuse for ourselves not to start with the more complicated tasks.

We hereby overestimate our ability to work on different things at the same time. People who are “multitasking” with digital technology are still sometimes admired, especially the ones who grew up with it are. They seem to be able to talk, WhatsApp and listen at the same time. However, research shows that multitasking is a myth. It is actually switching between tasks extremely fast. Attention is being fragmented, which means that multitasking is mainly lowering our productivity, increasing the chance of making mistakes and in the end having a negative impact on our wellbeing. ⁽⁵⁾

In order to do tasks properly it is necessary to really pay attention when fulfilling them, and in the end that is also most satisfying. ⁽⁶⁾

The digital era with its abundance of information is still relatively young and we are still learning to deal with this in the best way possible. A personal letter has a certain value, different from a commercial flyer. This difference is a bit harder to distinguish in our digital mailbox. Online “news”-messages from a satirical program on Facebook, a gossip magazine, an advertiser or a quality newspaper can at first sight hardly be distinguished from one another. Do we divide our attention well over the different types

of information reaching us? Firstly, this requires that we realize that we have to make choices on which item we want to focus our attention on and set priorities.

But why do we not set priorities? The obvious answer might be: because we are too busy for that! The circle is closed, we are back to where we started. It will not be the last time that someone actually indeed feels trapped in this circle. The flow of information continuously proceeds, so you can always tell yourself you will stay busy.

To escape this circle, it makes sense to dig a little deeper than mainstream human psychology.

If you look at man as an animal responding to stimuli instinctively and allowing itself to be conditioned with “rewards” such as, for example, red dots that disappear when you read a WhatsApp message or an e-mail, or new messages that appear when you scroll on someone’s *timeline*, then we would all get caught up in these programmed cycles. But human thinking is free. We do not have to be guided by incentives, by ease and by pleasure. Not if we really want to. However, as long as our thoughts are stormy, they obscure our view of a point on the horizon to steer towards to. So, we first have to reach calmer “thinking” waters. Because what is the reason that we are not yet making choices or setting priorities? Well, maybe because ...

4. ... our thinking is restless and unfocused?

Here we come to the essence of being or feeling busy. After all, being busy is not the same as having a lot to do. We can perform task by task, concentrated and in peace, as you can relax during the thousands of stitches you make while knitting a scarf. While doing so, we always have the option to repel work, to (re-)plan it or to start it up in collaboration with others. This only requires a certain amount of tranquility and that is exactly what we are missing. Because being busy is rather a state of mind we are in. A state of restless and unfocused thinking. Moreover, a state of consciousness that maintains itself.

Because the most important characteristic of this state of thought is desire, and in particular a desire with a personal focus. What do we mean by this?

The characteristic of desire is a certain tension, such as a tension between shortage and plenty, loss and profit, between two people or between a present and an ideal situation. This tension causes us to move to bridge this gap in order to satisfy the desire. The tension comes along with a certain unrest, and the word “satisfying” indicates that when the desire disappears, a peaceful state follows.

Desire for impersonal, universal matters, such as the search for more knowledge, wisdom (philosophy) or love for fellow human beings (philanthropy) can have an expansive and uplifting effect. Desire then leads us to higher aspects of thinking: the intellect, the insight or the experience of unity. The results of this, such as understanding, wisdom or certain virtues such as patience or equanimity, are imperishable in nature. When we are absorbed in this, the restlessness disappears.

However, desire for personal matters, such as wanting to achieve something “for yourself”, like ambition, possessiveness, greed or curiosity, are treacherous in nature. The materialistic way of living is so variable that there is always a step up on the career path, more possessions or wealth to be gathered and there is always something new to be aware of. And the latter applies particularly to our “information society.” With these desires it is the same as with drinking seawater, trying to quench one’s thirst with it only causes more thirst.

A well-known statement in Theosophy is therefore: desire is the steed, thought is the rider.⁽⁷⁾ In other words: if desire is not controlled by us, as a thinking rider, then desire will take the lead itself. Over and over again it will seek satisfaction or, better said, the tension is constantly being sought, because the desire is nourished by something that you do not yet have.⁽⁸⁾ You have read the latest messages, but your attention is constantly pulled by new incoming messages which you feel obliged to read. If the desire takes over, we keep searching for quick results, which only keeps feeding the desire for more. We do not delve deeper into things and thus we flutter from one thing to the other and continuously feel the tension of what we have not yet achieved. It is exactly the same with being busy. It is in fact an addictive state of desire to achieve something again and again. Vitality, or the urge to act, also plays a role. We always want to do it *ourselves*. We are impatient. We cannot sit still and therefore we keep busy all the time.

When we are constantly busy, we sometimes no longer know how to relax. When we look for “relaxation” through online news, Facebook or Instagram, then we unconsciously feed the same desire we experience when we are busy: we remain restless and unfocused. Continuous tension can then lead to exhaustion and burnout. We have temporarily lost control.

So, if busyness is a state of restless and unfocused thinking, the question then is: why is our thinking restless and unfocused? Perhaps, because ...

5. ... we do not control our thinking?

We can become aware of our thought patterns and experience that we can focus our thinking. That is of course a lot easier said than done. The basic principles to learn this may perhaps be taught in a one-year course,⁽⁹⁾ but that is only the beginning if we really want to achieve actual self-transformation. In this article we lift nothing more than a tip of the veil and refer to our courses and lectures for those who seriously want to get started focusing on their thinking.⁽⁹⁾

The starting point for taking more control over our thinking is to see ourselves – and with this we mean the human being in general – as the rider on the horse: as an independent thinking consciousness. It is that form of consciousness that expresses itself in particular through thinking, through thoughts. Thoughts, conscious or unconscious, precede our actions. Actions that we repeat become habits. And our character is determined by the sum-total of all these habits.

Where animal consciousness, which expresses itself mainly through desire, acts and reacts instinctively, we humans can transcend our instinctive responses with our minds. The better we manage this, the more independent we become as thinkers, the broader our free will becomes and the greater our responsibility.

Another important step in order to learn to control our thoughts is to recognize the distinction between different aspects of our thinking. Our thinking is not homogeneous but consists of various aspects. Although they are all important, they are hierarchically related to each other. And although we can make different divisions, from rough to detailed, the following division in seven is generally recognizable and at the same time offers sufficient distinction.

The 7 aspects of thinking

- **Sense of unity, inspiration**
- **Insight, ideals, intuition**
- **Intellect**
- **Desire**
- **Vitality**
- **Feelings**
- **Physical aspect**

However, we have not yet developed every aspect of our thinking equally.

Although many people intuitively experience a sense of

unity or inseparable connectedness, on average the sense of unity is not yet developed and the experiences of unity that mystics have told about are even more rare. These far-reaching moments hardly repeat themselves in one life, let alone that this experience is permanently within our reach.

Moments of real intuition are also rare; think of the insights of a scientist like Newton, a reformer like Gandhi, a composer like Beethoven or a poet like Rumi. This aspect has only been permanently developed by those few enlightened people who rightfully carry the Buddha title. We have already developed the intellectual aspect a bit more, the logical reasoning or rational linear thinking. We use this aspect, among other things, to program all digital technology.

Nowadays, we see that this aspect is frequently used for the next aspect of thinking: desire. Many intellectually gifted thinkers design digital services in such a way that people become addicted to them.⁽¹⁰⁾ In the end, companies such as Facebook and Google run on advertising revenue, they can only exist by fueling desire.

This “desire thinking” is ubiquitous today. It is also that aspect of thinking that we, according to Theosophia, will learn to control in the current phase of human evolution. In general we have fully developed and are able to control the three lowest aspects of thinking: the urge to act or vitality, the emotions and the physical aspect. However, the fact that we can, does not mean that we always do this, but in general we can say these lower aspects only control a thinking person at unguarded moments. However, the combinations of these lower aspects plus desire are not yet controlled by many people and are often stumbling stones and sources of illusion. Examples are: wanting to do everything yourself, the desire for emotional experiences – “you must experience this” –, desire for eating or drinking or wanting a skinny body.

Controlled thinking means that we make the highest aspects we have developed so far, our leading aspects. This is, by the way, always relative. As humans, we are, as explained above, still developing the higher aspects, and we are not yet able to identify with them permanently. In general, however, we are not active in one aspect only, it is always a mix of different aspects. But there is always an aspect that dominates.

If the lower aspects are leading in our thinking, we usually experience that as disharmonious. For example, with a food addiction, the physical aspect of thinking is predominant. Or if vitality prevails, we speak of ADHD.

By recognizing these seven aspects in our thinking, we can also get a better grip on it. By consciously trying to redirect our thinking, we can gain more and more control over it. As desire plays such a big role in today's society, there is no lack of temptations in this area. In our consumer society there is an abundance of distraction, and especially since the arrival of the internet we seem to have entered some sort of vicious circle in which the biggest companies compete for our attention. But as already noted, our attention is not enforceable. We are not a toy. The cause for our busy existence is therefore not outside of us. It is a result of our own "desire thinking".

Now desire is a neutral force. We need it to achieve things. It just needs to be guided in the right direction. Like a faithful horse taking you everywhere, provided you lead him well in the right direction. By giving the rider, the independent thinker in us, the lead again and by restraining the desire in ourselves, we can break through our own thinking pattern and thereby give direction to our lives. The question is however, whether we have a clear view of that direction. Why do we often lack control of mind causing our desire thinking to be so dominant? Could it be because ...

6. ... we miss direction in our life?

In order to control desire thinking, we have to activate the three higher thinking aspects: the intellect, the insight and the sense of unity. As average humans, we are still developing these aspects, but we can learn from people who have already done this.

In doing so we can look at the three areas of self-study and truth-finding that correspond to these three higher thinking aspects: religion, philosophy and science.

The original meaning of religion is unification (with the One, the divine) through discipline.⁽¹¹⁾ Religion could therefore pre-eminently provide direction in our life.

However, in order to permanently provide direction, it must also be able to answer all practical questions in life, such as what to do in our busy existence? We have already concluded that mastery of thinking is essential for this. Nevertheless, we see that some religious people prefer faith over logical thinking, and in doing so they separate religion from science and philosophy, while these are three ways to come to truth. We think that religion can only give direction sustainably if it, combined with philosophy and science, can not only show *what for*, but also *why* and *how* you can apply it.

As for philosophy, the philosophers of the Renaissance and

the Enlightenment have freed man from his superstition and pointed him to his own freedom of thought and responsibility. Philosophy helps us to study the coherence and direction of life, the *why* of life. The question is whether you can find universal answers without seeing this in the light of unity, that is to say, without the link with religion or, in other words, the link between the human mind and the totality of which he is part. Or even better said, which he essentially *is*. Is this aspect missing? Then philosophizing becomes abstract and of little practical use for people.⁽¹²⁾ You see that the ancient Greek and Oriental philosophers who think from the universal towards the particular, retain their popularity and are apparently able to inspire through the ages.

Science corresponds to the intellectual aspect of thinking and is therefore closest in relation to our development. Science is able to bridge the gap between the abstract religious and philosophical ideas and life in practice by testing them on their universality. It adds the *how* to the *why* and *what*. Due to scientific discoveries, we have left many ecclesiastical dogmas behind us. But for many people it has also led to skepticism and an attitude of "what you do not see does not exist". With this attitude you take away the view on the spiritual fundamentals of life, for which an open mind is needed.

By separating the scientific thinking from philosophical and religious thinking, a new materialistic faith has emerged, in which man is considered as a coincidental product of circumstances, a body just cherishing the illusion of an independent spirit. This materialistic view leads to a large attachment to the physical life, and faith in technology as a product of the intellect, to prolong this life. However, it does not give answers to the actual life questions: what is right? What is the value of life? As such it offers little perspective other than to postpone death as long as possible. With this it feeds the desire to "get everything out of this one life!" and subsequently the selfish pursuit of as much enjoyment as possible. With such a vision on life, being busy is not a strange side effect. Fortunately, there are also many good examples in science, which actually bridge the gap between science, philosophy and religion. For example, the study of the influence of the attitude of life of Buddhist monks on their consciousness⁽¹³⁾ or the research on the coherence of living organisms, who have relegated the original idea of the struggle for existence between individuals – the "survival of the fittest", which has also had a lot of influence on a materialistic philosophy – to the bin.⁽¹⁴⁾



We see that science, philosophy and religion, when separated from each other, are unable to give a stable direction to our life. Religion without philosophy and science quickly leads to blind faith. Philosophy without religion and science leads to an empty framework of concepts without practical application. And science without philosophy and religion leads to cool reasoning, skepticism, and falling into desire thinking.

So, why do we miss direction in our lives? We think the main reason is because ...

7. ... we lack a universal vision on life

What do we mean with universal? Besides the common meaning of something that is all-encompassing and valid and applicable under all circumstances, you can also look at the literal derivation of the word. *Uni-* is derived from the Latin word *Unus* (one or unity) and *-versal* comes from the Latin verb *vertere* which means turning. You could say a universal vision revolves around unity.

However, if we say that a universal vision revolves around unity, we actually mean a spiritual unity, although that unity also expresses itself on a the material plane: we are all part of a Cosmos in which everything reacts to one another, and in which even the fluttering of a butterfly influences the start of a hurricane. Unity in a spiritual sense, however, means that we are not only part of a larger whole, but that the – in essence eternal and boundless – life or consciousness flowing through us is essentially the same spiritual life or consciousness that works behind everything that exists. In essence, we *are* fundamentally one.

It also means that infinite potentials of consciousness lie

within each of us. Each living being expresses this consciousness to a greater or lesser extent. As discussed above, the human consciousness expresses itself through its ability to think.

With this we are further developed than for example the animals with their animal consciousness. But in essence, the consciousness of all beings is the same. The ethical consequence of this premise is therefore that all beings are “brothers” because they have the same spiritual source as a parent and therefore should treat each other as brothers as well.

The practical application of the universal vision, which assumes the unity of

all life, is therefore expressed as working towards a *universal brotherhood*. The moment we live our life realizing that everything is connected, that all is one, we will never again choose only for ourselves. We will then act less and less selfish and more and more from compassion. The result of this is that consciousness, which is in essence one with everything else, will also express itself ever more rapidly and completely.

This development of consciousness always goes gradually and in cycles. We learn a bit more every day and thus develop ourselves year in year out which, considering the consciousness principle, will continue life after life. Every life is a cyclic manifestation, or reimpodiment, by which we as conscious beings learn to express ourselves a bit better every time, to develop ourselves further.

In this evolutionary process of our consciousness we cannot skip steps, nor can we reverse what we have already developed. With the development of the ability to think we, as a human consciousness, have left the animal phase behind us and we are now learning to master all aspects of thinking.

Just like religion in the original meaning of the word, a universal vision has spiritual unity and aspiration as a starting point. Practically, it also means the unification of all aspects of thinking, with the highest, the experience of unity, as prevailing aspect. As a consequence, a universal vision is therefore religious, philosophical, and scientific and additionally satisfies the lower aspects; it calms them down. Because exalted ideas and ideals must also prove their practical value in life and do not serve so much as a denial, but rather as an ennoblement of our lower

nature; think of the *Middle Path*, as taught by Gautama the Buddha.

The three basic principles of a universal vision on life – 1) the boundless or spiritual unity, 2) cyclic manifestation and 3) self-directed development – form a steady recipe to solve all the riddles in life, including being busy. Perhaps we jump quite quickly to this conclusion in an article which does not offer much space to carefully justify the full depth of this vision. Moreover, this is in the end something that has to be tested by humans themselves by applying these principles. Therefore, the simplest answer as a solution of being (too) busy: investigate the universal wisdom or Theosophia and bring it into practice.

But it would be too easy to leave it here, so with the short introduction above as a starting point we will outline below how these principles provide protection against the state of restless and unfocused thinking, which by now serves as our definition of being busy.

A universal vision as a lasting solution

Now that we have come all the way to the essence, it is good to show how applying a universal vision is a lasting solution for suffering when we are too busy. And why are we so sure of this? Well because ...

... a universal vision always gives us direction

All lasting changes in our life come from within. If we are facing a setback, it is our inner values that lead us through all of the challenges. People who have endured great afflictions in their life, like H.P. Blavatsky, Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, mainly followed their inner compass. The values that these people cherished, such as equality and brotherhood, were universal. The virtues by which they were guided, such as love, justice and patience, were also not new and are well-known to most of us.

They are universal values and virtues characterized by the fact that they lead to unselfishness, to compassion. These values and virtues logically emanate from the starting point of the unity of all life.⁽¹⁵⁾ With this we see through the illusion of being detached from the totality and we recognize our influence and therefore our co-responsibility for the totality. Furthermore, we recognize the need to replace our personal interest, the selfish pursuit, as much as possible with the general interest and altruism. Consequently, it also involves discipline, which increasingly leads to unification. It is, to begin with, a mental discipline to think universally, from unity. Acting accordingly is

then a natural result. It is also called the development of concentration, but then concentration on the spiritual unity of all that exists. And our understanding of this can always be expanded, because this unity does not stop anywhere and is in essence boundless.

So, a universal vision always gives direction and offers a clear ideal for ourselves. As we pointed out in the beginning of this article, being busy has no meaning as such, because ... busy with what or what for? If that is not clear, we are usually unconsciously using being busy as an excuse to postpone tasks that require a little more effort, such as thinking about what our inner values actually are. This results, however, from the fact that we have no direction in our life and are therefore working from day to day to handle all the information and tasks that are facing us. Somewhere we feel that we should be working on other things, but we do not know any better. In light of a universal ideal however, you could say it is never too busy. There is, however, a pitfall.

What often happens is that we get enthusiastic quickly for a particular ideal we encounter, radically changing our life to live according to this ideal as much as possible. We then think we live from a universal vision. However, and this may sound contradictory at that moment, we actually do not. Because if we truly put universal principles into practice, we would also understand that radical changes are not natural, usually not so sustainable and also not very wise. Think about, for example, the seesaw effect that people experience when they lose weight very quickly (and gain weight again soon thereafter). Steady cyclical growth, or in other words evolution rather than revolution, is the natural way. In light of the eternity of consciousness, moreover, all haste disappears.

When we change our lives radically, we have in fact not really understood the universality of the vision. It has without a doubt been copied. It is not so much an independently developed vision, but instead just faith. We have not really made the ideals we read or heard about our own. And here the desire thinking comes back again: because for whom do we want to achieve this ideal?

If we truly delve into a universal vision and apply the associated discipline, we will not turn towards desire thinking so quickly, because...

... the direction offered by a universal vision, helps you to control your thinking

The brighter our ideals such as equality and brotherhood are, the more we will take up the responsibility to put

them in the heart of our own lives and follow the ensuing discipline and virtues. And we will have less space and time available to spend on all sorts of personal tendencies or desires. We can already see this happening with parenthood. Because parents want the best for their child, they naturally give up some of their personal interests. Furthermore, the starting point of the one eternal boundless life puts everything in perspective, because considering the aforementioned, there are no end points. Life is never finished or done! This wisdom quiets the result-driven desire thinking.

The boundlessness of consciousness also means that growth is always possible. Which is motivating, because it doesn't depend on reaching a certain end point. The best athletes are not satisfied if they have won a match on points, but keep continuing to improve themselves, just as the best students do not just study for an exam for the best score, but because they want to develop themselves. That could still lead to being busy, but by applying a universal vision we prevent reaching this state because...

... with the control of your thinking, you will no longer be restless and unfocused

As explained above, the "sport" or the training that all people have in common, is the development of thinking. By developing concentration on the unity or unification by mastery of thinking (Rāja-Yoga), we can accelerate this process. In doing so, we learn to weigh every thought more carefully in relation to our universal principles and, where necessary, to further align it with our vision. This way we learn to control our world of thoughts more and more and at some point, we will no longer go back into restless and unfocused thinking. However, this is not a simple task. Thoughts can be pretty tough. The examples of original thinkers are numerous, such as Copernicus or Giordano Bruno, who came up with more universal ideas than the prevailing mentality and who risked their lives or even died while doing so. But if we continue to manage our thoughts, we will, in the end, not stress so much. Fortunately, the perspective of future lives in which we can train this, gives us a bit more patience when we practice this. We end this article with a piece of advice from William Quan Judge from his article *Culture of Concentration*:

But it may be asked, if in the culture of concentration we will succeed alone by the practice of virtue. The answer is No, not in this life, but perhaps one day in a later life. (...)

We must make up our minds to a life of constant work upon this line. (...) The kingdom of heaven is not to be had for the asking; it must be taken by violence. And the only way in which we can gain the will and the power to thus seize and hold is by acquiring the virtues on the one hand, and minutely understanding ourselves on the other. Some day we will begin to see why not one passing thought may be ignored, not one flitting impression missed. ⁽¹⁶⁾

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Theosophy in Nature

What causes order in nature?

Key thoughts

» The whole cosmos is alive and hierarchically arranged. In the network of life, each being leads a group of beings that is less developed than it is. Therefore, each being is a co-creator of the “order in nature.”

» “Leading” means, theosophically speaking: creating the patterns and conditions within which subordinate beings can follow their own path of inner growth. There is always a certain free will, in each being.

» Every being is growing in consciousness. The imperfections that we see around us, can therefore always be overcome.

» Fundamental unity and universal brotherhood are facts in nature. Applying these facts in our lives means: giving every being in our sphere of influence, optimum opportunities for inner growth.

Modern scientific equipment allows us to look at the microstructures of animal and plant cells. The cell processes turn out to be even more complex, more precise and smarter than we already thought. We find a similar order in many other areas of nature. Where does this come from?

In addition to the intricate life of cells, many other things evoke our wonderment: the structure of an atom, the functioning of our heart, our brain and our immune system, the interaction between human beings, animals, plants and minerals within our planet, and so on. We are looking for an explanation for this. In this article of the series “Theosophy in Nature”, we apply some basic theosophical ideas to provide an initial explanation. We will do this by asking ourselves:

1. What is nature, what is a human being?
2. How is nature organized?
3. What do we mean by “leading” and “being lead”?
4. What role does free will play within the cosmic order?
5. Can we recognize that order in nature?
6. Why do we only see *imperfect* expressions of structure and regularity?
7. About the order in our body: an effect, not a cause.
8. Order in nature: a fact, and also an inspiring ideal.

1. What is nature, what is a human being?

What is nature *in essence*? And who or what are we humans *in essence*? All nature, including all its parts, are expressions of an all-pervading Life. Everything is alive, from an atom to a human to the sun. Those countless beings are parts of a boundless whole, and expressions of a boundless Unity. What does this theosophical idea entail?

It means that there is a fundamental connection between all beings. All beings actually and necessarily work together. They form a boundless community, and of course you cannot isolate yourself from a boundless community.

The fact of our connectedness with all other life does not mean that each being realizes this consciously. A person can live “as if that fact does not exist” and only mind the interests of his own group. But the consequence will inevitably be that he comes into conflict with other groups. He can only avoid the suffering that results from that, if he realizes that you will always reach much more with cooper-

ation than with struggle or with an attitude of indifference. Since we are humans and part of a boundless Unity also means *that we carry boundless capabilities in our consciousness*. We can grow infinitely in community awareness, vision and powers.

2. How is nature organised?

As said before, nature together with all its elements is alive, is conscious. Nature is made up of beings. How are all these beings organized? *In a hierarchical way*. Relatively further developed beings lead less developed ones: they lay the generic patterns within which those lower beings can live and grow. Those less developed beings, in their turn, are the leading beings for even less advanced ones, and so on. Through this way we can go down the whole ladder of life, from the most divine that we can imagine to the most material that we know – and in fact that ladder reaches infinitely far. We only oversee a small part.

We also see this hierarchical order reflected in the physical world, the world that we humans can perceive, with or without technical devices. All solar systems are subordinate to the leading consciousness behind their galaxy, while following their own path of evolution within the general conditions – or in other words, the *laws of nature* – of this system. All planets live and develop within the overarching patterns and cycles of their solar system. Man himself, the complete man, is an example of this order in itself. Every person has a divine, spiritual, mental, psychic, astral and physical part, with the higher element always providing the general pattern within which the lower element functions.

This order is also visible in our body. The organs live within the coordinating influence of the central human consciousness. The cell beings live within the coordinating influence of their organ, and the molecular and atomic beings live within the coordinating sphere of influence of their cell.

It is clear from the above that interaction, cooperation and order are the universal rules. Everything lives and every being is part of a larger community, in which there is a certain regularity and arrangement. Nowhere in the boundless All, there is something like “dead matter”: undirected and aimless action, or something like “chance”, haphazard movements. The ancient Greek word “kosmos” means “harmonious arrangement”. This shows that those former philosophers had a thorough understanding of nature.

3. What do we mean by “leading” and “being lead”?

“Leading” in nature means something essentially different from the meaning that most people give to that word. It means *above all*: forming the general patterns in which subordinate beings can live and develop. A being leads because his consciousness radiates a sphere of influence or force field, with a certain character, in which the subordinate beings seek their place and function. It means: creating a number of basic conditions and preconditions, in which there is always a certain amount of opportunity and freedom of choice.

In addition, we humans (and many other groups of beings) can of course also perform focused actions, by specifically directing our body movements. But that is only one aspect of the matter. Active guidance must always be seen in the light of our general role for our body.

4. What role does free will play within the cosmic order?

According to Theosophia, free will plays a fundamental role in nature. Every being basically has a portion of free will. The reason for this is that every being in its very core is boundless, carries boundless possibilities.

Our will is more free as our consciousness becomes more spiritual. Because, if we are more spiritual and unselfish, we are less restricted by all kinds of illusions and lack of knowledge. In the long run, a selfless attitude ensures complete mastery of our self-centered desires and feelings. Only then you can speak of true freedom.

Leading, if we really understand how it works, has nothing to do with imposing what other beings have to do (although all dictators in the world are constantly trying to do that). In terms of toys: the leading being “guards the general rules of the game” and does not dictate the moves of the players.

A wise leader creates an appropriate sphere, a sphere of respect, sense of duty and cooperation. The result will be that almost everything goes without saying. In doing so, he must set the example himself, he must be the living example of all this. Only then can an inspiring, powerful collaboration grow within his sphere of influence. If you look at how children react to their parents and educators, you see that they react much more to the character of their educators, to what they radiate, than to what they superficially say or do.

This is also how it works when we control our body. We humans do not have to instruct our kidney and liver cells

what to do in the coming hours. Very fortunate that those subordinate beings can do that independently — thanks to the inner development (the “training”) they have undergone during all our earlier incarnations.

Orbital periods of the planets of our solar system

Planet:	Relative orbital period	Basic ratio (relative to the Earth)
Mercury	0.24 earth years	1/4
Venus	0.62 earth years	2/3
Earth	1 earth year	1
Mars	1.88 earth years	2
Jupiter	11.86 earth years	12
Saturn	29.46 earth years	30
Uranus	84.01 earth years	84 (7 times 12)
Neptune	164.8 earth years	168 (14 times 12)

5. Can we recognize that order in nature?

We can discover many examples of “laying down a general pattern”. The orbital periods of the planets around our sun are precisely attuned to each other. In fact, the orbital periods of all planets are in a certain mathematical relationship to each other (see the accompanying table). We can compare this attuning with vibrations that together form a harmonic chord.

Those mathematical relationships form the general pattern, the basic chord (the “tonic” in music). At the same time, within that pattern there is always freedom for individual variation. The planets never stick to it exactly. They sometimes go through their cycles a little faster and sometimes somewhat slower. This can also be easily seen in the table. Within human cultures we also see countless examples of “laying general patterns.” In every community of people there are written or unwritten rules and agreements, which provide a general guideline on how all members should interact with each other. Every community of people has its own sphere, its own character, and whoever (even only temporarily) belongs to that community must, to a certain extent, align his own actions with that general character in order not to end up in total isolation.

Within that general pattern, every person has the freedom to make his own choices. After all, the capacity for free will is ingrained in our consciousness. We can always choose to move against the prevailing way of doing things, to row against the current. Both very noble motives (think

of pioneers and whistleblowers) and morally lowering motives (pride, selfishness) can play a role in this.

You see: order does not come from outside. It is never a kind of imposed pattern of an almighty god, or a blind, mechanical natural law. No, it comes from the beings that form that community. It is a reflection of their qualities, their abilities, their vision.

So every being contributes to it. We humans are fully morally responsible for our contribution, because we can think, we have a conscience, we can develop insights about the important questions of life. If we think that the order in our family, in our organization, in our society and in the world can be much better than what we make of it now ... then there is only one thing to do: look critically at yourself and become a powerful example of how it can be done. Start with a different way of living together. The sphere that you radiate will also touch other people and motivate them to participate. This is how all stable reform movements in our world arise.

6. Why do we only see *imperfect* expressions of structure and regularity?

If you study nature, including us humans, you will not find absolute perfection anywhere. The reason for this is simple: *every being is growing in consciousness*, walking a very long path of inner development, and is therefore not perfect.

In short, not only human beings but *all* beings are developing, Theosofia states. Biologists confirm this in their field: recent research convincingly shows that lower organisms such as insects, plants and single-celled organisms also learn. *The order in nature is therefore a growing order.* Because everything is developing, the imperfections that we see around us can always be overcome. The beings will increasingly live from a sense of unity. As a result, they will be more and more able to give all other beings optimum opportunities for inner growth.

7. About the order in our body: an effect, not a cause

The origin of all order, all attunement, is as said *evolving consciousness*. So, when we talk about the order of a cell or organ or body, every order that we see is a reflection of the inner growth of the beings that work through this cell, organ, or body.

What does that mean? This means that as we humans develop our consciousness, the order in our bodies will grow along. But always as a result, never as a cause. We

do not change our character by training our bodies. Our bodies reflect our inner character.

In the distant past, our bodies looked different. They were larger, less refined and therefore coarser. All the mythical and legendary stories about giants are founded on this far part of our history.

As we develop our more mental and intellectual capacities, our bodies will gradually become more refined. You can compare that in a way with the developments that we see in many technological fields. The scientists and technicians are often able to make our devices smaller and more refined. The first computer occupied a large room and could calculate thousands of times slower than a mini-tablet now.

8. Order in nature: a fact, and also an inspiring ideal

We will make an attempt to summarize the theosophical meaning of order and come to the following provisional definition:

“Order” is: to express the actual unity behind the cosmos as perfect as possible. This takes place when all parts (living beings) are attuned to each other in such a way that every being has the optimal possibility for inner growth. This collaboration is always hierarchical: the relatively less developed beings live in the sphere of further developed beings and conform to their patterns.

This definition of order – which can undoubtedly be more precise – is a key to many social reforms, from economics to justice, from education to religion.

If we focus on such an order with all our thinking and actions, we tune into the essential nature of the cosmos. After all, the beings who understand most of the cosmos – the sages among humans and all more advanced beings – voluntarily, by clear understanding and boundless compassion, align their goals and actions with the well-being of the entire cosmos.

True order, true universal brotherhood, is a fact that is practiced in the spiritual realms of our Cosmos. We humans, little by little, are developing wisdom and compassion. For us, that actual spiritual brotherhood is an inspiring example to follow, to unite with, to become *part of it*.

So, working hard for the communities in which you live, and “increasing the order” there, is not a rosy, woolly ideal. It is seeing through the delusion that you could exist on your own. It is understanding what nature is and what we, integral parts of nature, are.

Why is our body not 18 meters or 18 centimeters long?

One of the many physical processes that takes place in an orderly manner is growth. During our youth, growth dominates over destruction. When we are adult, these processes are more or less in balance. As we approach our physical death, destruction dominates over growth. This applies to our body but not to our consciousness, which can continue to grow until the last day, the last minute, of our current incarnation.

In our current evolutionary phase, why does a human body reach about 140-220 cm in length? Why not 20 meters in length? Or 20 cm? You can ask the same question about the physical size of a bacterium, bird, elephant or whale.

First of all, physical size has nothing to do with the quality of consciousness. Everyone can easily acknowledge that. A spiritual consciousness does not have to reside in a larger body than a less advanced consciousness. A human being is smaller than a whale, but much further developed in his consciousness. The cosmic being that animates the *physical* globe of our planet may be far less developed than us humans, although we are, physically speaking, millions of times smaller than that globe.

What are important factors then? In fact, there is – and that is also recognized within biology – an optimal size for every family of beings. Every being tries to follow the path of the least resistance. And this also applies to body size. A being has a body that is optimally attuned to its activities, its environment (which element does it inhabit, is that for example earth, water or air?) and the beings with which it has to deal intensively.

Human bodies express thinking consciousness. As we develop the higher, more spiritual and more intellectual potential of our mind, our bodies will adapt. And by that we mean: they will become more suitable instruments for those delicate mental activities. During the millions of years of our human evolution, our body gradually became smaller and at the same time more refined, more precisely structured. For instance, during the previous evolutionary phase that we call the “Atlantic phase” in theosophical texts, our bodies were 4-6 meters long. Before that period, we had even larger bodies: larger but with less structure. Our current body size of 140-220 cm is therefore a temporary balanced situation, which will shift again in the future.

Questions & Answers

Progressive evolution

If our consciousness is constantly changing and going from one phase to another, then there is a continuous growth, isn't there?

Answer

Indeed.

Question

Isn't that very tiring?

Answer

That depends on how you look at it. If you find it annoying to discover new things, to meet new people, to gain new, greater experiences, to gain greater awareness of the interconnectedness of all things and beings, then that growth may be indeed very tiring for you. Such a mentality is, however, not exactly a condition for growth.

But for me such a growth is a very blissful thing. If there were no growth, no evolution, we would live in a hopeless universe.

Imagine there would be no development. Then everything would always remain the same. Then we would never get new perspectives, never gain new insight. Then we would not grow in knowledge and wisdom. It would be hell!

Question

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

Answer

For sure. And that word "obligatory" does not mean that there is someone

outside of us – a god or devil or whoever – who ordines us to go on a pilgrimage. That obligation comes from ourselves. Karmic seeds from the past are emerging and that forces us to bring out more from within ourselves. We wanted it! Nobody obliges us to get up every day and to continue to live, learn and grow. We are sometimes just a little bit stubborn. We persist in error and then it takes more time to learn something. Learning and growing in consciousness is something very natural. I don't know of any child who doesn't want to explore, to learn or do things it has not done yet. That urge to grow, this desire to go on a pilgrimage, is a force within our consciousness. Every human knows deep in his heart that there is much more to life than he has discovered so far. We know that there are greater possibilities for consciousness. To search for more wisdom is a logical consequence of the nature of our consciousness, yes, of the consciousness of every living being.

If that urge to grow is no longer there, we fall asleep. Then we die.

That urge, however, can never be absent in the absolute sense, because it is an integral part of the relatively immortal consciousness itself. That is why progressive evolution is one of the Seven Laws in Nature.

Question

Is our pilgrimage easier than before?

Answer

Easy and difficult are relative terms. Is learning to read more difficult for a four-year-old than understanding

Pythagoras' theorem is for a thirteen-year-old?

The word "difficult" has the negative connotation of something heavy, something annoying and exhausting. On the other hand, if you take pleasure in discovering greater truths, then the pilgrimage is neither difficult nor heavy. It is a challenge, but challenges give meaning to life. The personality within our consciousness may sometimes sigh and complain, but the impersonal man or woman is always cheerful.

If you live in the lower self then there is struggle, trials and tribulations. But when you live in your impersonal aspects, there is never struggle, and even when you do encounter trials and tribulations in life, you do not lose your peace of mind.

Well, humanity has taken the turning point on its great cyclical pilgrimage. We are about half way of our great evolutionary journey. We are "returning home"; back to the spirit from which we came. We return, however, enriched with all those experiences that we have gained in the material world.

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

Future senses

We humans have seven senses according to Theosophia. Five have been developed. Which two still have to be developed?

Answer

Senses belong to the human vehicle. That vehicle is an instrument that enables us to gain experiences in this earthly sphere. The senses are, as it were, the gates through which we can get to know our environment.

In the course of human evolution, five senses have developed in the following order: hearing, touch, eyesight, taste and smell. In our further evolution, we will further perfect these senses, because they are certainly not perfect yet. Moreover, we will indeed develop two new senses.

It is very difficult to imagine those two not yet developed senses, just as it is very difficult for a blind person to imagine what colors are and just as it was in previous great cycles, when smell was not yet developed, for the then living people – we in previous eras! –

mean physical touch, but something other that brings us into contact with the “inner world”.

A vague indication of this sixth sense is having an idea that it is right or wrong to do something. It is a premonition of things to come and what is therefore better to do or not to do. It is not an ethical awareness: that is a much more inner capacity and is unrelated to the functioning of physical senses. We humans can act continuously from our conscience, from our sense of community, even if we have not yet developed the sixth sense. No, we are referring to a future sense that provides more ethereal information about our environment than we currently get.

It is even more difficult to understand the seventh sense. While the sixth sense belongs in a certain way to the same sphere as the second, the seventh sense

are functions of human consciousness that manifest themselves in a vehicle. By the way: we should not see the seven senses as seven separate organs. They are expressions of only one function, one sense: perceiving. An indication for this is the fact that the senses are interlocked. It is possible to hear with your eyes and see with your ears, or see with your touch. It is well known that some people have this capability, which is called synesthesia.

Awakening latent capacities

How does a teacher awaken something in a student?

Answer

By resonance. The way a string starts to vibrate, when another string tuned in the same tone is struck.

Everyone has infinite possibilities and abilities. But many of those qualities are still asleep. They are latent. They lie like seeds in the winter waiting for the sun in springtime to awaken those seeds.

When a teacher focuses their spiritual attention on the still-sleeping spirituality in their student, they enable that student to recognize and develop those abilities within themselves. That is something that actually always happens. When a parent tells stories to their son or daughter, asks questions or answers questions, they also focus on certain still-sleeping abilities of the child, which are thereby awakened.



very difficult to imagine what odor is. Gottfried de Purucker (*Esoteric Teachings* part VI, p. 28 et seq.) teaches us that the sixth sense has something to do with touch, the second sense. That touch brings us into contact with the outside world.

However, the sixth sense does not

belongs to the sense of hearing, the sense we first developed. You could perhaps best describe it as intuition which you can switch on and off at will.

Both senses will also develop their specific physical organs as the centuries pass. But it is always consciousness that is the leading factor, because all the senses

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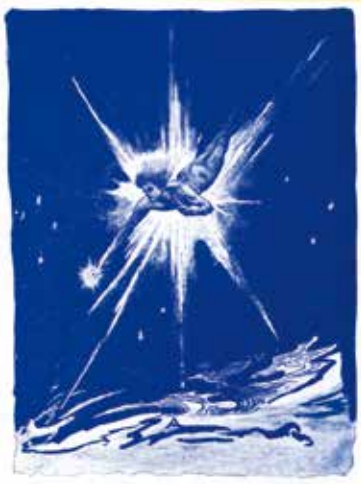
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1. The essential unity of all that exists.
2. By reason of this unity: brotherhood as a fact in nature.
3. Respect for everyone's free will (when applied from this idea of universal brotherhood).
4. Respect for everyone's freedom to build up their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