

the Light-bringer

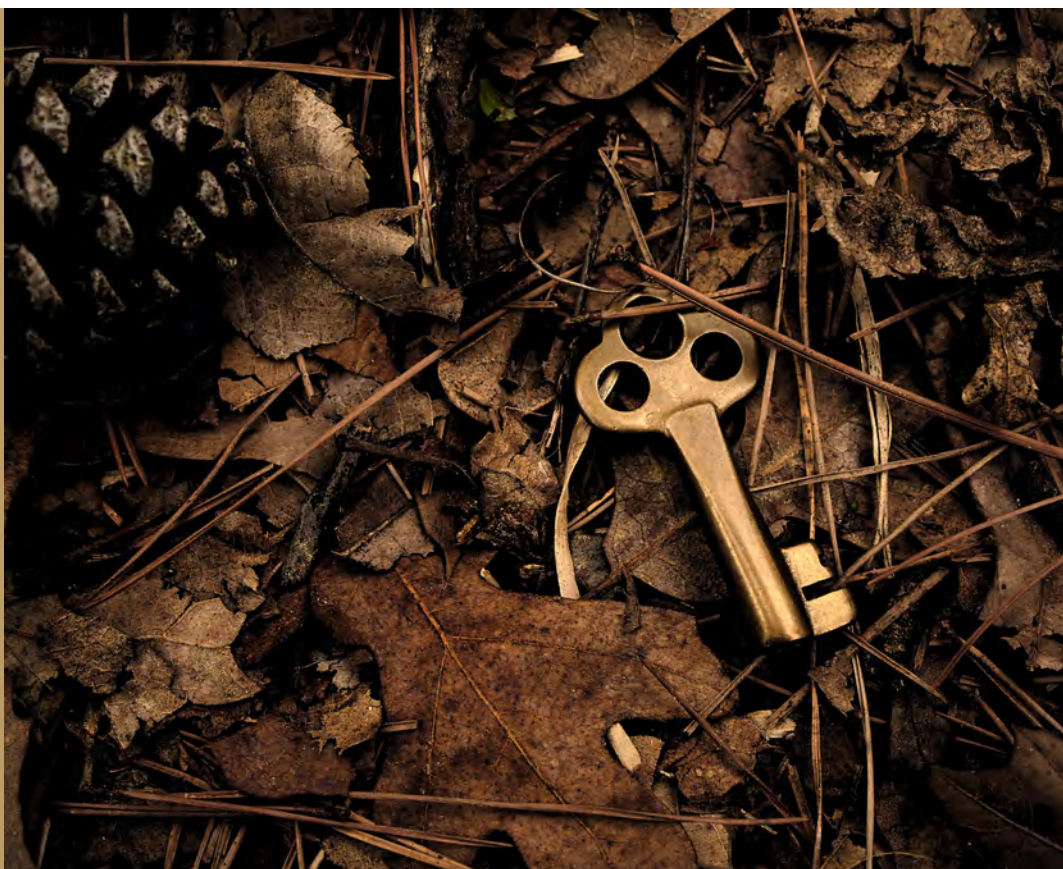
Lucifer[®]

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

Symposium:
The Secret Doctrine
The Theory of Everything

- Boundless Life
- Sparks of Eternity
- Cooperation:
growing in unity
- Consequences of The
Theory of Everything
- Questions after each
lecture



Symposium: The Secret Doctrine The Theory of Everything

Introduction

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A Theory of Everything: does it exist? And if so, how do we discover it?

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Boundless Life

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The first proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* speaks of a boundless unity ... and turns out to be the fundament of The Theory of Everything.

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Sparks of Eternity

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The second proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* deals with cycles and god-sparks. This is the second building block in The Theory of Everything.

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Consequences of The Theory of Everything

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We can draw several conclusions from the three fundamental propositions, like the seven Principles, the seven Jewels of Wisdom and the seven Pāramitās.

Herman C. Vermeulen



Introduction: *The Secret Doctrine* – The Theory of Everything

In the preparation group for this symposium, we quickly came to the conclusion that this year we wanted to present a very fundamental subject to you: the three Fundamental Propositions of Theosophia, from H.P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*. You will hear three lectures and join two workshops, and we will finish the symposium with some conclusive thoughts. As usual, the workshops are meant to investigate and discuss the presented thoughts together. The title of this symposium is "The Secret Doctrine – The Theory of Everything". The concept of The Theory of Everything comes from physics. When Albert Einstein presented his theory of relativity at the beginning of the last century, and all kinds of research in the following years partly confirmed that theory, he came up with the idea of developing an even more universal, all-encompassing theory that could explain all phenomena, all forces in physics. An all-embracing theory: it is still the dream of every physicist. Does this Law of Everything exist? No, not in physics. Not yet, I could say, if I were to take a very positive stance. But it does exist in the Ancient Wisdom — and that is an important thought for us today.

That Ancient Wisdom – known under different names, but in the West mainly under the name Theosophy or Theosophia, the Wisdom of the Gods – has once again resurfaced in the West due to H.P. Blavatsky. She founded The Theosophical Society in New York in 1875 together with a few others. From that moment on she – in cooperation with her Teachers – explained the Theosophia in many publications. Eventually her best-known work was published in 1888: *The Secret Doctrine*. Two thick volumes in which she presents Theosophia in great detail.

Not difficult, but strange to us

The Secret Doctrine is generally known as a difficult book to read. But it is not so much difficult as strange, because in the West we are not really used to the thoughts expressed in it.

That's why H.P. Blavatsky, in her Prologue of *The Secret Doctrine*, indicates how we can best understand this Theosophia. In this Prologue she states that it is absolutely necessary to first become familiar with some of the fundamental ideas that underlie the bigger picture. Our "thinking system" needs them in order to

properly understand everything that follows.

These fundamental ideas can be found in three Propositions with which all questions of life can be solved. That's why we call *The Secret Doctrine* "The Theory of Everything". It is not really difficult, but we need to educate ourselves somewhat. And that will take some time and effort.

Such a Theory of Everything must answer all of life's questions. About what happens to us in our daily life, about all things happening in our solar system, about everything we are going through karmically, no exceptions. From personal details to universal thoughts and details. And that is possible.

How do we find truth?

Questions like "What is everything?", "Where does everything come from and where does it all lead to?" also bring us to the important question: "How do we find truth?" Knowing the three Propositions is not enough in itself. We find truth on two levels. On our personal level we can draw our conclusions from the things that happen to us, what we are dealing with in our immediate environment. We learn "while living" to understand why these things happen and also to make estimates of how things can continue.

We also gain experiences in a larger context. We can look at what is happening in our country, in the world. We have to investigate that if we want to find truth on a more universal level. Then we look at *all* the patterns around us in society and in our behavior. Why do these patterns exist precisely *as they are*? This requires an active attitude. Now an important idea behind the concept of the Propositions is that nobody can prove to us the truth or the correctness of anything. We can only do that ourselves. Nobody can impose anything on us and say: "... and this is right". We will have to experience things, think about them and find the logic behind them. Only in this way it can become true *for ourselves*. When something is imposed, it is not our knowledge and wisdom.

If something is presented to us as truth, we can accept it on the basis of faith, or, still somewhat better, on the basis of trust — for example, if you know someone who has proven his qualities several times, which makes his thoughts more trustful for you.

But accepting something in confidence is still not fathoming something ourselves. Experiencing its *truthfulness* requires you to actively investigate and grow. "Becoming wise" is growing from a personal to a universal level.

Proposition versus hypothesis

The three Propositions in *The Secret Doctrine* are universal propositions that define a universal behavior valid for the entire underlying system. They are universal propositions that describe the big picture and serve as a basis for understanding the details from that comprehensive view. It is *top-down* reasoning: starting from the larger pattern we explain and understand the behavior of the small.

The well-known counterpart of the concept proposition is hypothesis. This last method of reasoning works *bottom-up*: working from the details to a larger whole. With a hypothesis we collect a lot of details. Science speaks of data collection and data-analysis to find patterns, logic and structure, in order to be able to formulate a more general theory and make more predictions. In short, to understand the big picture from the details.

Now the terms proposition and hypothesis are sometimes used interchangeably, or their meaning is seen as the same. But we need to be more precise. From a mathematical point of view, nothing can be predicted beyond the limits of observation. So it is risky to formulate general laws from a limited amount of data.

If you work with hypotheses, you must therefore always continue to investigate and update those data, to see whether they are still correct and whether a better general theory can indeed be developed from them. This often happens in science. The theory works for a while, then something happens that blows up the whole theory and one has to start all over again.

However, science is also used to propositions. Examples are Newton's law of gravity, Archimedes' law about the upward force of a body in fluid and Einstein's theory of relativity. These are good examples of propositions because they start from the general picture, not from the details.

Limitations

But even these propositions are not as universal as we would like them to be. Newton was studying gravity for two years — he was in a kind of lockdown caused by an outbreak of the plague. Newton's gravitational law is, although describing a general, universal pattern, only one side of the story, because there is also repulsion, and that is not described in this gravitational law. Archimedes also came up with a general picture, and we know the famous "in bath"-story in which he came to the latest insights to make a complete, general theory of it: but only about *one* force. And Einstein's theory of relativity is not all-embracing either. When Niels Bohr came after him with

the quantum theory, Einstein was absolutely not happy with it. He saw a number of things in the quantum theory that did not fit into his theory, which led to his well-known statement “God does not play dice”. Why? Because the quantum theory contains a probability calculation. Well-known examples of hypotheses are “the steady state theory” and “the big bang theory”, two ways to explain the origin of the universe. Their limitation is, besides the fact that they are made up of details, the fact that they contradict each other.

Astronomer Edwin Hubble and a number of colleagues made observations of stars and galaxies and the background radiation in the 1920s. They collected a lot of data and based on these, they came up with “the big bang theory”: that the universe started with one big bang and is only expanding after that. Now their findings also contained a lot of data which precisely contradicted the big bang-theory. Therefore, others said that the universe is in a steady state. But that idea has been set aside: it did not fit in Hubble’s theory.

Another well-known example of a hypothesis is Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution: “survival of the fittest”. This is based on the observations of animals that had developed in a specific way on remote islands, although once colonized by the same population. But also here not

all scientific data fits the concept seamlessly.

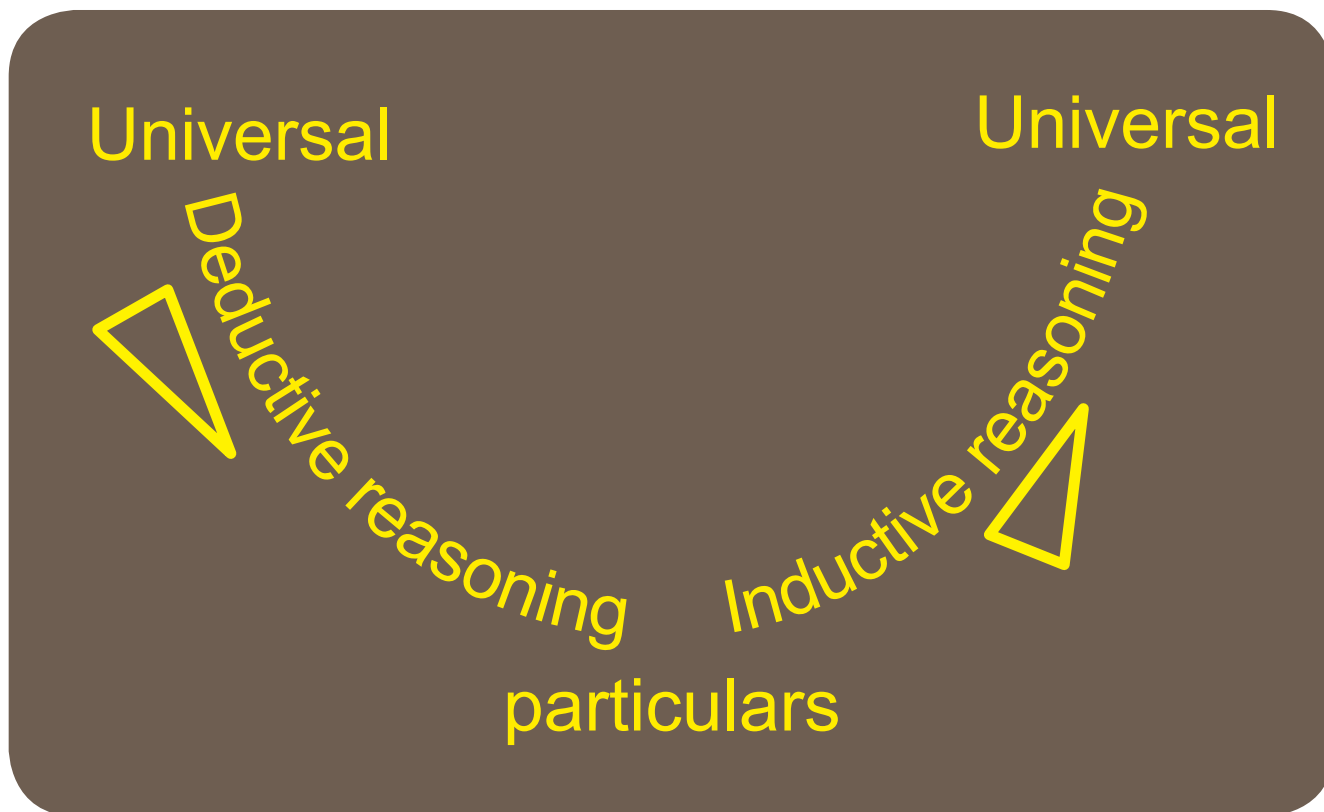
Then there is the nowadays very popular idea “we are our brain”: the idea that we human beings are nothing more than our brains and that these brains determine what we are. We argue that people can easily refute this hypothesis with some self-examination.

The Damodar method

So there is a big difference in principle between a hypothesis and a proposition. The challenging question is therefore: what do we want? Is it wrong to start from a hypothesis? No, but if we hope to understand the bigger picture by collecting enough details, it is a very limited approach.

What we advocate is: start with a proposition, from the general picture. Then collect data in your own environment and see if they fit into the general picture of the proposition. In other words: from the universal via *deductive* thinking to the details and then from the details via *inductive* thinking back to the universal. In Theosophia this is also known as the “Damodar method”.

If such a line of thought is conclusive for us, we have proven that the universal proposition is a fact that is valid *for our way of thinking*. Then we have done something to find truth ourselves.



This is the challenge for today. Take note of the three Propositions, assume them, work with them, try them. If the details fit into the big picture, then you will see a confirmation of that whole. If they deviate, then you have to look further. In this way we can slowly but surely come to a personal substantiation, a personal truth finding of these universal Propositions.

This is what we are going to do:

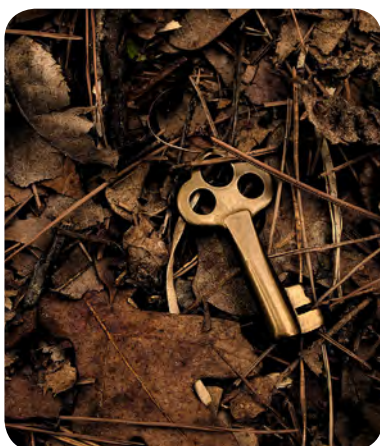
Soon we will present the three Propositions in three lectures: “Boundless Life”, “Sparks of Eternity” and “Cooperation: growing in Unity”. After each lecture there will be time for questions and answers. Furthermore, both in the morning and in the afternoon we have a workshop in which we want to look together to show how practical we can make the challenge of finding truth by yourself. We close this symposium with a small contribution about the consequences of The Theory of Everything, followed by the opportunity to exchange thoughts with each other. I want to conclude with a quote of Master K.H. from Letter 22:

Learn first our laws and educate your perceptions.⁽¹⁾

This is a very important statement. We have to work on ourselves to see and recognize the universal truth.

Reference

1. A. Trevor Barker (ed.), *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*. Letter 22. Online: www.theosociety.org/pasadena/mahatma/mahatma_letters.pdf.
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Boundless Life

Welcome everyone, to this lecture “Boundless Life”. *The Secret Doctrine* is a book written by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. In the Proem of this book, Blavatsky describes three fundamental propositions. This lecture is about the first proposition. The two lectures that follow, will discuss the other two propositions.

Let us dive right in by looking at the text of the first proposition.

An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude.

H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*,
Vol. 1, p. 14.

Well that is a great start! That actually makes this lecture an impossible task, because “It transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude.” This means that we cannot say anything about the first proposition without harming it in one way or another.

Nevertheless, in order to exchange thoughts with each other, we will

have to use words to convey our thoughts. That is why we are going to try our best to give it proper expressions, in different ways. However, bear this important point in mind during the lecture: every expression is limited and therefore unable to fully describe the first proposition, the Boundless PRINCIPLE.

Therefore I have a request: try to adopt an open and comprehensive mind during the lecture. Try to look past the words I use in order to pick up the more universal message. Then, together, we have the best chance of success.

The first proposition

So, there is a PRINCIPLE that is Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable. Let us start by looking at what is meant by these words. When you look up the meaning of the word “principle”, it means a fundamental essence, a foundation. In other words, an all-embracing concept that describes the essence of everything. It defines the basis of everything, without being something itself. The PRINCIPLE is not an object, it is also not a living being. It is not “something”. It is not a boundless object or a boundless being, but points to the boundlessness of all that is. It

is not an omnipresent object or being, but points at the omnipresence of all that is.

The PRINCIPLE, that foundation, is *Omnipresent*. Always present everywhere, it is never not there. The PRINCIPLE encompasses everything and everyone, and leaves nothing out: it is the underlying foundation of all that is. That basis is everywhere simultaneously, without exception. It is not the case that it is sometimes there and sometimes not, no, it is always everywhere.

The PRINCIPLE is *Eternal*.

It is limitless in time. This results in no passing of time, there's only Eternal Duration. Which subsequently means: no past or future. There is only an eternal now. Eternal also means no "death" or "birth"; it is indestructible. So the PRINCIPLE, or foundation, cannot come into being, nor can it perish; it is Eternal and Omnipresent.

The PRINCIPLE is *Boundless*; without boundaries. Which means that the PRINCIPLE extends in all infinite directions, infinitely. So, there is no beginning or end to it. How could you indicate the beginning, middle or end of an infinite rope? That is simply not possible. The PRINCIPLE is infinite in all ways and therefore unlimited; it has no limitation. It's beyond anything we can think of. It is beyond any form.

The PRINCIPLE is also *Immutable*.

It is unchangeable in the sense that we cannot change the PRINCIPLE. But also, the PRINCIPLE itself does not change. In other words, the PRINCIPLE is not subject to change. From another perspective you can also say that the PRINCIPLE encompasses all change. Something that becomes more sensible when you consider that the PRINCIPLE is Boundless and Omnipresent. Reasoning from that point of view, no change can stand apart from the PRINCIPLE. Because all change is included. Therefore, perhaps a better expression would be that the PRINCIPLE stands above change, or is beyond change, because it underlies everything.

In that case nothing is truly new, because everything is or was already part of it. Only we sometimes experience things as new. It is similar to that we cannot *invent* anything. We can only *discover* things, in the light of the Immutable PRINCIPLE. The possibility was already there.

Because the PRINCIPLE is Omnipresent, Boundless in all

ways, will always be there, no matter what change ever takes place, we can say that it always permeates everything. Everything. All that exists, you, me, the earth, the entire universe and beyond. In other words, the world that we can perceive with our senses, but also everything beyond that. An all-pervading PRINCIPLE, beyond space, time and form. It is above it, it is the foundation of everything. That is quite a challenge to comprehend.

H.P. Blavatsky tells us that we, as a limited human being, cannot possibly comprehend and express this Boundless PRINCIPLE in its entirety. However, and this is an important point, that does not mean that we should stop thinking about it! We cannot possibly comprehend the limitless Reality in its entirety, *but we can infinitely learn to see and understand more about it*. In this way we increasingly unravel the mysteries of life and everything around us, and get closer to "The Theory of Everything". So, let us look at what else Blavatsky tells us in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*, to make this first proposition a bit more clear to us. Later she describes the first proposition again, but in slightly different ways.

In other words

She also calls it, on the same page 14 of volume 1 of *The Secret Doctrine*:

... one absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being.

By "manifestation" and "conditioned being" are meant all perceptible and imperceptible phenomena. All embodiments and expressions, like all living beings are for example a manifestation, but also ideas that can be expressed in words. Actually, she says that there is a fundamental force behind forms, one absolute Reality that precedes everything.

... the rootless root of "all that was, is, or ever shall be.

Just as the PRINCIPLE, the absolute foundation, is Boundless, so is the root, that absolute Reality that precedes everything, rootless. It has no beginning or end.

It is "Be-ness" rather than Being, and is beyond all thought or speculation.

If it were "being" it would rather refer to something that is, something like a living being, but the PRINCIPLE is not

a living being. It points to the absolute essence of being: “Be-ness”. It is the Be-ness of everything.

We are not talking about a living being or a God, but about an underlying, fundamental principle. One absolute reality that is the basis of everything, infinitely.

Despite it being the foundation of all that lives, including ourselves, it is “unthinkable” to us, it “is beyond all thought and speculation.” How is that possible? Well, because, like all other manifestations, we are seemingly limited beings. To explain this a little further, we are going to take a little sidestep.

Illusory duality

The only Reality is Boundless Unity. Everything, beyond the largest and smallest aspect of which something is composed, consists of the same essence.

Think, for example, of us human beings. We are infinitely part of something bigger: the earth, the solar system, the galaxy, and beyond. But, we are also infinitely composed of smaller parts: our cells, atoms and beyond. To limit man to this outer scope alone would not give a complete picture. Inwardly we are boundless as well. For example, our thinking, from the highest frequencies from which we are able to pick up thoughts to the lowest frequencies. Those frequencies are also infinitely higher and lower.

In manifestation we perceive existence as a duality: it appears to us as high and low, which we call spirit and matter. But remember, the only Reality is one! Therefore this duality is illusory. Spirit and matter are not different things, they are exactly the same. Matter can actually be seen as crystallised spirit and spirit as etherial or subtle matter. It is all the same. This is a very fundamental thought and important to grasp.

Life is, as it were, ordered consciousness. One being gives “guidance” to another being; is *spirit* to that other being. While that same one being, is a “building block” at the same time, for yet another being; is *matter* to that being. Similar to how we as human beings are “building blocks” or “matter” for the solar system, but at the same time we are a “guiding force” or “spirit” for everything we produce and are composed of.

This reality applies to everything that exists. Everything is both “building block” or “matter”, and “guiding force” or “spirit.” Everything is externally and internally connected, together we are one boundless life, one infinite collaboration. Infinitely part of something greater and infinitely composed of something smaller. One life.

We are not always fully aware of this. In manifestation

we take in a position in this Boundless Reality, we identify ourselves with a limited part of this infinite Reality. Sometimes we limit our consciousness to situations that we are in, or that have to do with things we personally like or dislike. But, we can also expand our consciousness beyond ourselves, then we identify ourselves with a “greater whole”, like a family, organisation or maybe even the whole world.

What we see as a whole is subject to growth. We can develop an increasingly bigger picture of this. But, because the infinite Reality is limitless, we can never fully comprehend it. This explains Blavatsky’s words that it is beyond any human expression or similitude.

It is like a fish in the ocean

Does a fish understand that he lives in the ocean? Does he know what the ocean is? Can he describe the ocean? No, but it is essential to his life, he cannot get out of it. He lives within the laws of the ocean.

This is how we live within the One Life, we are the Boundless Life.

Conclusions

We are now nearing the end of this lecture. Finally, we can draw some important conclusions from the first proposition of the Proem to Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*.

- Everything is in essence boundless
- Everything is in essence indestructible
- Everything is in essence connected
- Everything is in essence equal

When we realize that our inner self, our essence, our potential, is boundless and indestructible, is equal and connected with life around us, then we have taken the most important and fundamental step.

This essential vision forms the basis from which solidarity and compassion flows, because when you live from this vision, you make choices that are in line with the totality of which you are a part. You have confidence in your fellow man and you know that he or she can develop and improve, because you see the boundless potential in everything and everyone. You treat everyone respectfully, because you see that everyone has the same potential and is therefore equal. You deal with your relationships in a sustainable way, because you are connected and look beyond this single life. You move along with nature, because you realize that you are essentially one with it.

In other words, you have adopted a constructive attitude and with this attitude you support the totality. Then, we are able to shape life with positive strength and be a positive force in the world.

With this first proposition, the first step has been taken to build up an idea about “The Theory of Everything.”

Now we can answer the first important question “What is everything?”

- Everything is boundless in essence: is, was and always will be.
- Everything is one in essence, is equal and has boundless potential.

Questions regarding the first proposition

Why did we forget the Oneness of life? If we are the boundlessness, if there is Oneness in life, why do we seem to have forgotten that? How can people cause each other so much harm?

During the process of manifestation, the process of coming into existence, of being born, there is the first phase in which you develop the physical side, or rather: the vehicle side. Then there is a chance that you identify too much with the material side of nature, so you forget your true essence. It is true that we humans are now in the phase in which we have passed the climax of that material development, but we are not yet completely focused on the spiritual side within us.

We are a bit lost in our own development. We have often forgotten who we really are. We often think we are that outer, physical part, while we actually only have to use that outer part as a vehicle. We are, in other words, in a phase in our development in which we have forgotten what the real purpose of life is. We have lost our direction.

So it is not out of evil or an innate cruelty that people often do things which make everyone's hair stand up on the back of their neck, as cruel as it sometimes is, but it is out of ignorance, because we do not know our real inner essence well enough. But we are on our way to getting to know that essence. That is the positive and optimistic message of Theosophy and everyone *can* recognize

it in themselves.

We can add to that, that we are so absorbed in the limited daily events and in the limited actions we perform therein, that we no longer realise what the consequences of our behavior are and how far-reaching our behavior is.

Is compassion inherent in the first proposition?

The book “The Voice of Silence” states that compassion is the LAW of Laws. The first proposition assumes boundlessness. Can you say that this first proposition also implies that compassion is the keynote for all life?

That is indeed the case. As we evolve, we will recognize this more and more consciously. Our image of the whole is always subject to growth. As we develop further, we will see more and more clearly how everything is connected. And the inner conclusion you can draw from that is that compassion indeed permeates all things. So, if the cooperation of which you are a part turns out to be larger and larger, then you cannot withdraw from that; you play a role in it.

Can we experience boundlessness? If humans are at their core the Boundless Principle, then that is a very nice thought, but it is also very abstract. We are omnipresent, limitless, immutable. Is it possible to really experience that? And how can you live from that idea

or shape this idea in your daily life?

Experiencing the boundless, really experiencing it completely, will never be possible. But I do think that we can recognize the *concept* of boundlessness, but in a limited form, because we ourselves are limited. That's why we will never be able to see or experience the boundlessness in its completeness, but we will be able to see or experience the concept of it, for instance on the basis of its consequences, such as everyone being connected. The idea that we are part of something larger, and infinitely composed of smaller particles, we can recognize concretely.

We could consider the following: if the concept of boundlessness is correct, then I have to observe that unity everywhere. In other words, I must see connections in the solar system, I must see exchange between elements in the solar system and the galaxy, but there must also be an exchange between the cells in my body and between the atomic particles which compose the cells. If everything is part of the Oneness, you must see connections and exchanges everywhere; this, of course, within our range of consciousness.

In addition, you can experience a sense of oneness at every level. We refer to those mystical experiences that people have in which they merge into a greater whole. They will experience something of the boundless. You will find this in all kinds of sacred texts, for example

in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, when Arjuna observes for a short moment who Krishna really is. Arjuna then sees universes within universes within universes. He has a kind of experience of infinity. It is never an experience of the boundless per se, because no matter how exalted, it always has a limitation or boundary. But it comes close.

I once stayed in a place far away from big cities: miles around there was nothing. It was a very clear night. I was very surprised how many stars you saw. It was just hard to find a black spot, there were so many stars. You see the coherence and that gives an overwhelming experience. You realise that everything is in fact related and functions as a unity.

What is the origin of a god?

Could it be that the Boundless Principle has brought about a manifestation of a god?

The Boundless Principle can never manifest itself, for it is all that is. So, it cannot “bring about” anything. You cannot say anything concrete about it. It is neither manifested nor unmanifested. Yet it is everything in essence, both the manifested and the unmanifest. Then about that god. A god, like all manifested things, is relative. A god is a monad, just like we are, but he is further developed. He stands in relation to other manifestations: to higher and lower gods, to humans. Everything that is manifested, is a monad, and stands in relation to other monads.

So, a god is not, as is often suggested, an omnipresent being. The Boundless Principle is omnipresent. With respect to less developed beings, we are a god. You see: it is always about co-operation, about mutual relations.

Why do people personalize the infinity? Most religions claim that god is a spiritual guide, but, just as the first propo-

sition, you can see god as a foundation as well. Why is it necessary for us humans to personalize this image to a god who leads us?

In general, we tend to think from our own point of view. We consider our personality to be the center of the world around which everything else revolves. In our course Thinking Differently we illustrate this thought with the well-known fact that, if we rely on our senses, we think that the sun rises and sets, while we know that the earth revolves around its axis.

We call this “reasoning from our own point of view” anthropomorphic thinking. By that we mean that we attribute our own characteristics and properties to others. We interpret the world around us with the ideas we have about that world. And because we cannot grasp the idea of boundlessness, we reduce it, mutilate it as it were, by attributing all kinds of characteristics to it. At first those will still be elevated qualities, universal qualities, but gradually that degenerated image of boundlessness gets a beard and has a chosen people and gets angry. In this way we make our own god.

We do not realise that everything is *within* us, that we are divine in essence. Because we do not realise that, we interpret the greatness of life, the boundlessness of life, with our limited vision. We place the divine outside of us and create our own god.

Now of course you can say: why don't we use the word “god” to denote the boundless? Then you can easily connect with a lot of people, who's starting point is God. However, that word god has been “polluted” by centuries of anthropomorphic thinking and it is precisely this thinking that has caused exalted ideas to degenerate.

Fortunately, in a lot of religions you can still find the old, spiritual thought of

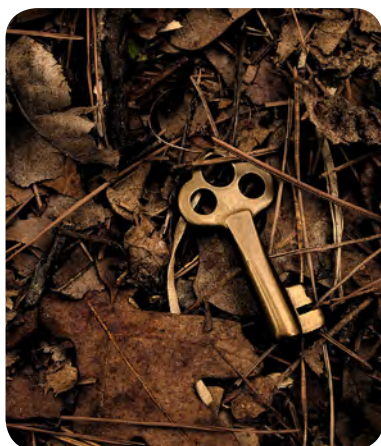
boundlessness. In Taoism one speaks of TAO, a reference to the Boundless Principle. The original idea of “Allah” in Islam also refers to boundlessness, just like Ain-Soph from the Jewish tradition. In the original, Gnostic Christianity “God” was said to have no attributes, he was not a being but a boundless principle. Buddhism, with its idea of the Void, also refers to the Boundless. It is good that we realise this, especially in our communication with our brothers from these different religions. We can point them to the core of their own spiritual tradition.

Is “nothing” something real?

The conclusion from the Boundless Principle is that everything is boundless. Does that automatically mean that “nothing” cannot exist? So, is “nothing” not a part of the Principle?

That is a bit of a play on words, but if you define “nothing” as “no thing”, “not something in particular”, then you have the idea, because Boundlessness is not something in particular because it is everything. However, there can be no question of “nothing” in the sense that something is not there, because all there is, is the Boundless.

If you start from the Infinite, as we clearly state in the first premise, you cannot come to the conclusion that there could be “nothing”. There is always “something”, and if you no longer see “something”, that does not mean that it is not there, but that it has been withdrawn from our powers of perception. There is no vacuum, something which is now fully endorsed by physicists. From our point of view, from the form of manifestation which we are now, a lot of things cannot be seen. There are many more things we cannot perceive than there are things that we can perceive. But they are there!



Sparks of eternity

The first, very essential fundamental idea of The Theory of Everything is boundlessness. After all, according to the first fundamental proposition there is an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle. Everything, from the smallest particle to the most vast cosmos, everything we see and do not see, belongs to, yes is in essence, Boundlessness. But this PRINCIPLE alone is not enough to explain everything. How do things come into being? How do universes, worlds, humans come into being? What is the purpose of all those beings? And does nothing ever change?

Two other propositions are needed to explain all this. In this talk I will give one of them: cyclicity: the coming and going of beings. In boundless life manifestations take place with the regularity of the clock. Although rooted in Boundless Life, these manifestations are limited.

The second proposition

In *The Secret Doctrine* this premise is formulated as follows:

The Eternity of the Universe in toto as a boundless plane; periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and

disappearing,” called “the manifesting stars,” and the “sparks of Eternity.”

“The Eternity of the Pilgrim” is like a wink of the Eye of Self-Existence (Book of Dzyan).

The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.

That is quite a mouthful. We will try to discuss the main elements of this second proposition.

“The Eternity of the Universe in toto.” What is meant by this? “In toto” means completely, in its totality. In other words, this is about the enormous expanse, the incalculable space, and everything that goes with it. It is something which exists for all eternity, has always been and always will be.

Try to imagine it: a plane or an “area” – if we can use that word – that is billions and billions of light-years large, and in which billions of galactic systems or galaxies are located. And now we are only talking about what is perceptible to our senses and that is only a cross-section of all cosmic worlds.

That enormous “area”, which is impossible for us to grasp, is periodically the playground of a coming and going of universes. That may sound

strange, that a Universe is the playground of countless universes. It means that in this gigantic Universe constantly smaller universes manifest themselves and withdraw from it. To put it in human terms: they are born into it, die and withdraw from it, and are then born again into it. This is the law of periodicity or cyclicity.

Universes

So what are these universes?

A universe or a cosmos is an ordered, living whole. In fact, size does not matter. For example, our solar system with its planets is a universe, but our Milky Way, with its millions of suns, is just as much a universe. But man is also a universe, a microcosm. So all living beings are universes, no matter how big or small they are. And all these living beings come into existence, appear, are active for a period of time, and then disappear or, as humans tend to call it, they die.

Is there a difference between these universes?

Now we come to a very important thought. No, there is no essential difference between those universes. That is explained in the following idea from this second proposition. These universes are called “sparks of eternity”. In theosophical literature they are also referred to by another name: monads. Later on we will tell more about these monads, but we can already say that these monads are in essence boundless, so have always lived and always will live. Every universe, including man, but also an animal, a plant, a mineral is a monad, and has always been there. So, there can never be creation in the sense that something appears for the first time; that a being can appear out of nowhere. That is impossible, because everything has always been there.

Eternal Pilgrim

The fact that all beings – including us – have always been there, is expressed in the words: eternal Pilgrim. That Pilgrim is the monad, which constantly grows in consciousness, in wisdom. An important thought that also comes to the fore in the third proposition.

Well, all those monads come and go like the ebb and flow of the sea. They are subject to cyclicity. What do we understand by a cycle?

Cycles

A cycle is a periodically recurring period of time in which an evolving being expresses his abilities.

Take as a simple example the cycle of waking and sleeping

of a human being. Every morning we get up and begin our active period. During this period we can learn, grow in knowledge, skills, consciousness. When that active period ends, we enter a period of rest: this is what we call sleep. The next day we repeat the process, albeit at a slightly higher level, assuming we have learned something the previous day.

What applies to a human being applies to all monads: solar systems, planets but also atoms, you name it. All manifestations are monads, and everywhere monads manifest themselves cyclically.

So with each cycle there is an alternation of a period of activity and rest. The time span in which this takes place differs. A cycle of the four seasons logically lasts 365 days, while that of day and night lasts 24 hours. In the atomic worlds you will encounter cycles of fractions of a second, while in the cosmic cycle it can sometimes be expressed in billions of years. But the basic idea is the same everywhere: the alternation of activity and passivity. The transition into activity is called birth — or waking; the transition into rest is called dying or falling asleep. We could give countless examples of cycles: sleeping and waking, the four seasons, the moon phases, ebb and flow, the beating of the heart. The monad, the living being, always goes from an active period (for humans it is an incarnation) to a passive period. We call this transition “dying”. Death, however, is not an absence of life, but another, a passive phase, through which a monad travels. Then there is another transition into being active. We call that transition birth.

As long as we realize that behind or in a cycle consciousness is at work, a monad is at work, we have the right image of a cycle. In other words: they are monads which constantly manifest themselves cyclically. Let us therefore go a bit deeper into these “sparks of eternity”.

Monads

Monads are indivisible units. They are reflections of the Boundless and are therefore in their core also boundless. Starting from the Boundless, Omnipresent, Eternal and Immutable Principle of the first fundamental proposition, monads are equally boundless. After all, everything belongs to the Principle.

As sparks of eternity they have all the essences in them of what we can figuratively call the Central Boundless Fire. Or to express it with another imagery: each monad is a wave, a ripple in the Boundless Ocean of BENESS. As a wave it is part of that Ocean and it is everything that

the Ocean is. That is why you can also say of Monads that they are Omnipresent. That means that they are everywhere. They do not occupy so much of a place. Of monads is said that the circumference is nowhere and the center everywhere.

They are eternal. So they are not created, they cannot die in the absolute sense of the word. They have always been and will always be.

Furthermore, monads are boundless. In essence they have all potential and possibilities within them. There is no power that you or I, but also an animal, a plant, do not have within us. Whether we have developed that capacity – made it active – is another matter.

Then comes a difficult thought. Monads are immutable. And yet they are constantly changing. How should we see that? Well, in essence they are the Boundless itself, and that can never change. Yet they change all the time. And by that we mean that they always go from one state to another. That is also apparent from the fact that they manifest themselves constantly cyclically. Their changeability consists in giving more and more expression to the UNCHANGEABLE *per se*, in other words to Boundlessness. Finally, there is a very important thought regarding monads: they are essentially *one* and they are always working together. Indeed: they would not be able to manifest without other monads.

Yet monads also differ from each other. In theosophical literature you therefore find terms like human monad, divine monad, animal monad. How can we explain that, when every monad is essentially the same as any other monad?

Stage of unwrapping

The explanation can be found in the fact that not every monad has unwrapped the same faculties, the same qualities, from within itself. In this context we deliberately use the word “unwrap” which perhaps sounds strange, but it exactly indicates the process. Out of the infinite capacities which are “wrapped up” in the monad, the monad unwraps or unwinds capacities; that means: it makes them active.

To clarify this: take two more or less similar seeds of a sunflower. Put one in a pot in March. Soon there will be a stem, then leaves will appear. Do not put the other one in a pot until May, wait a few days and you will see a very small dot above the earth. Does this barely visible plant differ from the other one, which has almost become a sunflower by now? No, it only differs in the unwrapping

stage. The only difference lies in the extent to which both have developed or unwrapped.

We name a monad after its stage of unwrapping. So if a monad is unwrapping the animal consciousness within it, then we speak of an animal monad. When it travels through the human realm, it develops the human – the thinking – consciousness, then it is called a human monad. And so on.

But in essence all monads are the same. They are identical to each other. If we realize that, our ethical awareness grows. We will never despise or discriminate against people and it also makes us look at animals very differently.

Origin of cycles

If we now relate the ideas about monads and cycles to each other, we get a better understanding of both a monad and a cycle. How does a cycle come into being?

There is an interaction between different monads. This interaction arises on the one hand because there is a difference in development, but on the other hand also because there is a characteristic similarity between monads.

Let me try to clarify this with the birth of a human; an example which is always the easiest for us, because, after all, we are human. What happens when a human being is born? The human monad has had its period of rest and feels an attraction to a manifest existence, just as we wake up after a night's rest. We cannot elaborate or delve into that urge now, but it has everything to do with the previous phase in the cycle: so, the previous life. Well, in order to be born, in order to be active again, the human monad needs a body, or rather: a vehicle, because apart from the physical body there are other vehicles which are required to be able to manifest.

Now we said that everything is a monad. So, if we restrict ourselves to the human body, to keep it easy, that body is made up of countless monads: the cells, the molecules, the atoms which compose the body. Let us call them “vehicular” or “material” monads for convenience. They are still a long way from the development level – the unwrapping level - of a human monad. Yet in a certain respect they have the same characteristic. They are tuned in the same tone, as it were, although not in the same “octave”.

Interaction between monads

So it is through this interaction between the human monad and the more material monads that the cycle of a human life arises.

It may be hard to imagine, but we, human monads, play the same role in relation to the monads which are much more developed than we and which we can call divine monads. The gods, those monads who are developing universal consciousness, need us to manifest themselves to the same extent as we need the less developed monads with respect to us.

You see: the whole of nature shows a magnificent and majestic cooperation.

This cooperation and interaction between monads certainly does not end when man is born. Of course, his body remains intact and he has to keep working with those less developed monads. But for his growth, his unwrapping of *more* consciousness, he needs other monads. These are in the first place his fellow human beings, his fellow pilgrims. We learn from each other. Especially also humans who are further developed than we are, our teachers, are needed. What is less well known, is that a human being also needs the monads above the human kingdom, who give, as it were, the spiritual food that the human monads must digest in order to grow further. In this way a human being, in conjunction with others, always gains experience during the active period of the cycle; he processes that experience during the rest period. That is why cyclicity should not be understood so much as spinning in circles, because then you forget the element of growth. You go in circles, but just like with a spiral staircase, you go up in circles. In other words, the process of appearing and disappearing will cause a monad to unwrap more and more capacities from within itself. The pilgrim grows in consciousness.

Cooperation between monads of different levels

So there is always cooperation between monads. They cannot live or exist without other monads. There is no isolation. Pure individual growth is therefore impossible. An important fact for our attitude to life. Collaboration exists mainly because there are differences in level between monads, as we have seen. From this, too, we could draw an important conclusion for how we live our lives.

Furthermore, we have found that there are both more and less unwrapped monads with respect to humans. We call the first group spiritual monads; the second group consists of what to us are material monads. But in essence they are the same.

Spirit and matter are therefore relative concepts. Spirit and matter are *one*. They are two phases of the same life

and depending on your own degree of development you call something spiritual or material. Compare it with the aggregation states in chemistry. Water vapor, liquid water and ice are in essence the same: H₂O. Only the state it is in, differs. Thus what we call matter and what we call spirit is the same LIFE; only it is in different states.

Human monads – i.e. monads which move through the phase of human development – as manifested beings have both a spiritual and a material element. We can choose which side within us we allow to prevail. If we choose to live mainly in the spiritual side, then the process of unwrapping – in other words: our growth of consciousness – will go well. We will be better and better able to express human consciousness. In the next lecture this will be discussed in more detail.

Consequences

Finally we want to give a few consequences of the first and second proposition, which are very important in connection with The Theory of Everything. If we would organize our lives on the basis of the first two propositions – and then we have not even discussed the third – society would look very different. What are those consequences? First of all: there is no absolute end point. We can always grow. Mistakes made in this life can be corrected in the next.

Further: monads – so we humans too – are always different from each other. That makes life rich and beautiful and therefore – if we use our talents for the greater good – we can also grow together. But we are also equal. After all, we are all monads. So nobody is worth more than another.

Another consequence: we have boundless potential. We are noble beings. We can build a splendid, beautiful society. Each one of us can come to a great understanding of cosmic laws, can deify his consciousness, extend it to cosmic proportions.

For that we need each other. We cannot expand our consciousness any further as an isolated being. How unnatural then is selfishness! How ignorant are therefore people who grant themselves, their family, their group or country more rights and more wealth than others, because isolation does not exist. The feeling of separation – thinking you are different, better than others – is therefore the most unnatural feeling. Everything exists with and in each other. There is an all-embracing Web of Life of which we are all integral parts.

Finally: cooperation is a fact in nature. Therefore, we

have to bring ourselves into the big picture, but also make sure that others can do the same.

We want to conclude with a second building block for The Theory of Everything.

What are we? Boundless consciousness.

Where do we come from? Cyclic continuity: we have always been there and will always be.

Questions regarding the second proposition

Immutable, yet ever changing?

Monads are called immutable, but at the same time they are said to be constantly changing. How is that possible?

That is indeed a great paradox. However, a paradox does not mean that something is not true, but that it *seems* to be a contradiction for the personality, for the one who does not look beyond the outer seeming. Therefore, we have to think deeply about it.

Well, every monad is essentially boundless. Everything is essentially boundless. And boundlessness is unchangeable, because if it could change, it would become something it was not before. Then there would be a limit, and the boundlessness can logically have no limits. But when a monad is manifested, it will evolve. It is unwrapping, unfolding, rolling out what is inside. That is a process which goes on for all eternity. This means that a monad as a manifested being is constantly changing, constantly growing, constantly getting more out of itself, constantly awakening more of the unchanging Boundlessness.

You could put it this way: everything that is manifested is constantly changing, constantly growing, but at the heart of its heart, at the core of its core, everything is boundless and that is unchanging. The limitless is the infinite potential, the inexhaustible potential, and a manifested being is constantly expressing and manifesting more and more of that potential; it thus makes

more and more of what is in its heart, active.

There is something more important to consider. Monads will always have to work together with other monads. They will have to work with less developed monads in order to be able to express their abilities. That collaboration is also constantly changing. When you learn, it means that you attract more advanced monads into your sphere of life in which you can express yourself. This happens, for example, with our bodies, in which there is a constant inflow and outflow of cells, and of the beings that compose the cells. These beings stay with us for a while; some of them are only very temporary guests. This extremely dynamic process is constantly changing.

About isolately living people

In the second lecture it was said that isolation does not exist. How do you judge, for example, groups of native Americans who live very much in isolation in the jungle of the Amazon?

I think that Theosophy shows that there is a fundamental unity but also that an individual can very easily separate himself in all kinds of limited situations. At a soccer game there are 22 men on the field and you only support 11 of them. That is a good example of separation at that moment.

The feeling of separateness has a number of phases: as an individual you can feel completely detached from every-

one else; you can also think that your city or country is different from other countries. The people who think so are subject to what you may call a collective feeling of separation. It is our task to let go of all the boundaries in our consciousness more and more, so that you do not only know the connection with the people of your nation but with *all* world citizens. Even this mentality can be expanded, because we are connected to the gods, animals, plants and minerals as well. They are also monads. You see, we must try to expand our consciousness further and further.

Now it is possible that you live in a shielded environment, as in the example of a people in the Amazon. These people may not know any other cultures; their border is their habitat. However, if they know themselves to be one with everything they know in that habitat, then that is the highest attainable thing for them at that moment. So, although they live seemingly separated from other people, in their thinking they can feel at one with everything they know. That is of course limited, but does that not apply to all of us? We also have limits in our consciousness, but we can know ourselves as one with everything we know.

Such a group of people in the jungle may live physically separated from others, but in fact that is not the case. They belong to the same humanity, the same planet, the same solar system as

we do. The same Universal Life flows through them as it does through us. In fact, it is our task to expand our consciousness further and further and to break through our boundaries. If I may take myself as an example, I can easily conclude that during the last forty years in which I have studied Theosophy, I have discovered again and again that somewhere in my consciousness there was a certain boundary, which I broke through by further study of Theosophy. As a result, I have gained more and more insight into how great everything is, how far consciousness can reach and that every boundary is in fact an illusion. That is a process which we can continually develop within ourselves. That is something very beautiful, because you open more and more gates in your consciousness through which wisdom can flow. As a result, you gain more and more insight into the laws of the cosmos.

Are beings indestructable?

You talked about indestructibility.

But what does the element fire do?

Doesn't fire destroy all material manifestations? Can you say that ashes are alive? The wind will blow it away.

What about that?

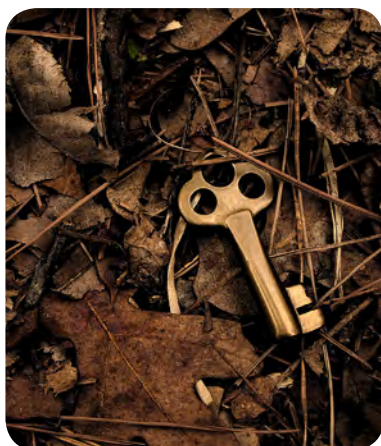
You should not conceive destruction by fire, and, by the way, every form of destruction, as if something were to disappear completely, as if it were ceasing to exist. What takes place is that its composition dissolves. Gottfried de Purucker says that if even the smallest atom could be destroyed, the whole Universe would collapse into an intangible nothing.

What actually happens by burning, or by other forms of destruction, is that an object or a body is dissolved into the innumerable parts of which it is composed. However, none of those parts can be completely destroyed. Of

those particles only the outer side can be lost, but the underlying force of such a particle, the consciousness behind it, always remains. It is indestructible.

Moreover, the composition of beings, assuming that everything is cyclic, also returns in a new cycle. If you take for instance the birth and death of a human being, then a human – the human monad – at the birth process gathers again all the cell beings and atomic beings which he had released at the time of dying. He attracts them again so that the body can be formed again. That body is thus for the most part composed of beings which the human also used in his previous incarnation. They have a certain characteristic which suits that human being. When he dies, he will leave those beings behind again, et cetera.

From this you can conclude that the cooperation you have built up cannot be broken off just like that. There is a consequence to that cooperation.



Cooperation: growing in unity

In our presentation on the Theory of Everything, we have so far been able to answer two important questions based on the first and second propositions of the Theosophia.

In the first lecture titled “Boundless Life”, Lalibel Mohaupt told us what everything in essence is: omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable. Basically, everything is ONE, equal and infinite. During the workshop we were able to experience how useful it is to think about this boundless life. On the one hand it puts the limitations of our present existence into perspective, while on the other hand it always offers us a broader, deeper and expanding view in the here and now.

In the second lecture called “Sparks of Eternity” Barend Voorham explained us where everything comes from and will go to. The boundless sparks of eternity, or monads, manifest themselves cyclically in all areas. It is an eternal breath of appearing and disappearing, of activity and rest, being born and dying. And always in cooperation.

The next important question a Theory of Everything should be able to answer is: what does everything lead to?

Is there a beginning or an end?

Can you control life and how does it work?

What is the meaning of life?

These questions will all be dealt with in the third proposition. From here on it becomes even more concrete: how do we relate to all other Life, how do we develop ourselves and to what end? And of course, this proposition builds on the first two propositions. Let us first read together how it is expressed in *The Secret Doctrine*.

The third proposition

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

We will explain this third proposition step by step and focus on three key ideas. First: the fundamental identity with which the third proposition begins. What does this exactly mean? Identity and equality are very topical themes. The third proposition adds some more dimensions to this, to obtain a real clear view.

Secondly, there is a hierarchical structure, a hierarchical web of life. The con-

cept of emanation also plays a role in this. We will further explain this. This idea is the basis for natural leadership, joint growth and development.

The third and last core idea we want to address, is self-induced development. It is about the evolutionary pilgrimage that every soul, every one of us, goes on. It is the foundation for freedom, independence and responsibility.

Fundamental identity

We will start with the core idea of fundamental identity. Let us read again the sentence from the third fundamental proposition in which it is mentioned.

The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root;

Three levels can be identified here:

The first level is the so-called Unknown Root. This is a reference to the first proposition, the Boundless.

The next level is that of the Universal Over-Soul, an aspect of the former it says. In other words: the Universal Over-Soul is an aspect of the Boundless principle: a top-Soul or *source*-consciousness within whose sphere the Souls are developing, unwrapping or unfolding their qualities. The Over-Soul is a monad that is ahead in expressing its universal qualities, it is the most developed one in a hierarchy. The Over-Soul irradiates this quality to the entire hierarchy. The third level is the Soul. And by Soul with a capital letter, again the monad is meant here.

The Over-Soul is fully connected with all the monads within its playing field and, vice versa, all the monads in its sphere are connected with the Over-Soul as their source, top or primordial ground. Every Soul can be seen as a child monad of the Over-Soul, the Over-Soul thus being its parental monad.

The fundamental equality can in fact already be concluded from the first and second proposition. The cyclically manifesting stars, pilgrims or monads are sparks of the same boundless fire and thus all have the same boundless potential. However, the third proposition also adds that there is a hierarchical connection between the Over-Soul and Soul. This hierarchy, however, does not mean that the Soul is essentially inferior, subordinate or unequal to the Over-Soul, just as a child is not inferior to its parents. They are fundamentally identical and equal.

And starting from boundlessness or infinity there is not one, but there are countless hierarchies. Just think of the

structure of nature, from microcosm to macrocosm: an atom which is part of a molecule, a molecule part of a cell, a cell of a body, a body of a realm of nature, a realm of nature is part of a planet, a planet part of a solar system, a sun or star of a galaxy, et cetera. At any level you can define Souls and Over-Souls. The Soul or monad of a human cell can be seen as an Over-Soul for the beings within its sphere. This cell itself is in its turn also a Soul that develops within the sphere of which we humans are the Over-Soul. So also in that sense every being is a Soul and Over-Soul at the same time and thus there is a fundamental identity.

But there is even more to be said about the fundamental identity, because it concerns not only what a being is in essence, but also the laws of nature that apply to the beings in their evolutionary journey. Let us go back to the text for a moment.

Cyclic and Karmic law

We read: “and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul – a spark of the former – through the Cycle of Incarnation (or “Necessity”) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term.”

In addition to the obligatory pilgrimage for each Soul, we will come back to that later, we find here “in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law”. So, this too applies to every Soul. What does this law mean? Concerning the cyclic law we can be brief and refer to the previous lecture. All life moves cyclically we have said. In fact the karmic law is another aspect of the cyclic law.

It refers to the concept of karma, which literally means action. It is the principle of cause and effect, in which the action's characteristic always comes back in the result. This law is a natural consequence of the oneness of all life. Just as every movement of a fish in the ocean influences that whole ocean in the end. And at the same time that ocean comes with a reaction to the movement of the fish, through which he can swim. So does every action, yes even every thought of ours, have its effect on the whole, and sooner or later it results in an appropriate consequence. If our thought or action is in line with the whole, then that reaction is harmonious. If it is in contradiction with the whole then it will be a reaction to restore harmony.

Think of a jazz improvisation. You create a certain harmony together. In a solo you may have the freedom to set your own tone, but with your fellow musicians you always return to the chord scheme. At least if you want to stay in the band. In this example you immediately see the interconnectedness with cyclicity. The rhythm and the number of bars determine

the moment at which you can strike a certain chord again. Another example: if you are a surfer trying to catch a wave in the sea, you have to start paddling in time and get up on the board at the right moment. If we apply this example to the cyclicity in our lives, this means that incarnations might pass before the right moment or the right conditions for a certain karmic development or lesson arrive. The question is then, have we developed accordingly to seize the opportunity? This law shows that the universe is consistently just. There is no being, no Soul or Over-Soul that can escape the consequences of its actions. Or to say it more positively, any thought or action, visible or invisible, serving the whole will sooner or later give a harmonious result that brings you closer to the whole. Because in essence we are that whole. In the words of Martin Luther King: the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.⁽¹⁾

So, we see that fundamental identity applies not only to what every being in essence is, but also to what every being has to do in order to evolve: the obligatory pilgrimage according to Cyclic and Karmic law. In other words: for every being the same universal law applies, without any exceptions. That is why we also express the third proposition as “so above, so below”, which is also called the hermetic axiom.

It also means that by recognizing the universal law you can deduce how it works on every level of the kosmos. We cannot go into detail here, but it is very interesting and insightful to think about what, for example, the youth of a planet means, or the puberty of a civilization.

The fundamental identity of all beings is a universally recognized universal and ethical value, but there is still much to be gained. It is the basis for justice. We all know what inequality still exists between people in terms of opportunity, property, color, race, gender, rights, etcetera. But you can also extend this to how we treat animals or intervene in ecosystems, for example.

The coherence in nature and our responsibility within it becomes even clearer when we consider the following key idea.

Hierarchical web of life

This key idea is the hierarchical web of life and the process of emanation. We have already touched upon the hierarchical structure in the third proposition by showing the connection between Over-Souls and Souls, both aspects of the Unknown Root or the Boundless.

We now want to elaborate on this connection and then we come to the concept of emanation. Actually, this concept is already discussed in a footnote to the second proposition in *The Secret Doctrine*. We quote:

“Pilgrim” is the appellation given to our Monad (the two in one) during its cycle of incarnations. It is the only immortal and eternal principle in us, being an indivisible part of the integral whole — the Universal Spirit [also called Over-Soul; EB], from which it emanates, and into which it is absorbed at the end of the cycle. When it is said to emanate from the one spirit, an awkward and incorrect expression has to be used, for lack of appropriate words in English.

So, it is not quite the right expression, but “emanation” is the word which comes closest to the birth process of monads or Souls, from large to small, from macrocosm to microcosm, from star to atom. What does this word emanation mean? It literally means flowing out or flowing forth. The “Over-Soul” as a source of consciousness radiates a magnetic playing field – is in fact that field – in which “lower” Souls or monads continually manifest themselves, which in consequence have the possibility to unfold independently.

As an example you can think of the sun continuously flowing forth its rays. Now it is interesting to pause for a moment to consider what such a ray of the sun actually is, because that will offer us many clues for the Soul that you may see as such a ray of the Over-Soul.

First of all, a ray cannot be seen separately from the sun. For example, you cannot cut it off. In the same way Souls and Over-Soul are inextricably linked.

Everything within the reach of the sun is illuminated by its rays. Furthermore, the ray only becomes visible when there is something on which it can reflect. Think of particles in the air or a surface. It is the same with monads that need an instrument or body to manifest themselves in order to become active on a certain plane of being. Only as a manifestation do we recognize the monad as a seemingly separate being. But just as a ray of light shows the light of the sun, in the same way a monad reflects the Over-Soul.

When a ray reflects on something, it also scatters into all kinds of sub-rays. Think of the reflection of the sun on a glass or in a mirror. Each monad is the source of a spectrum of different child monads.

And each ray consists of particles, photons, which, after a long cycle, eventually return to the source, the sun from which they originate. Just as the monads eventually return to their Over-Soul, their source.

The Pythagoreans summarized this concept of emanation in an image called the tetraktys.

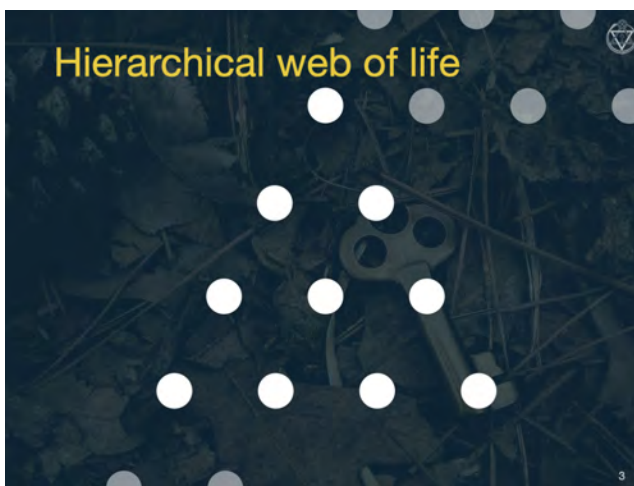
You see an Over-Soul here at the top, a source being, within whose sphere or playground at different levels other Souls,



monads, entities come to being and have their existence.



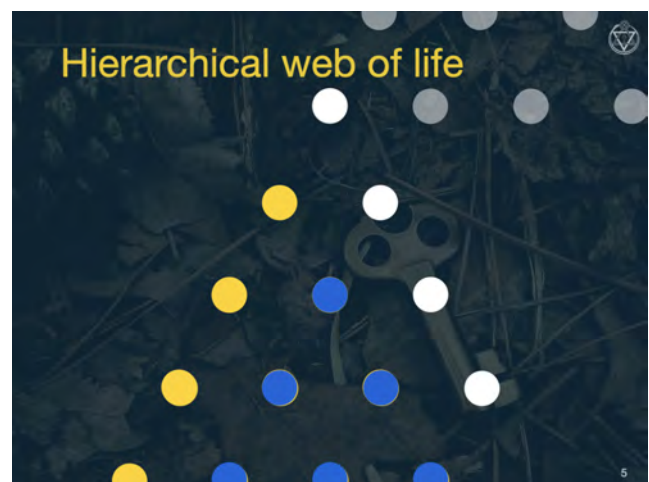
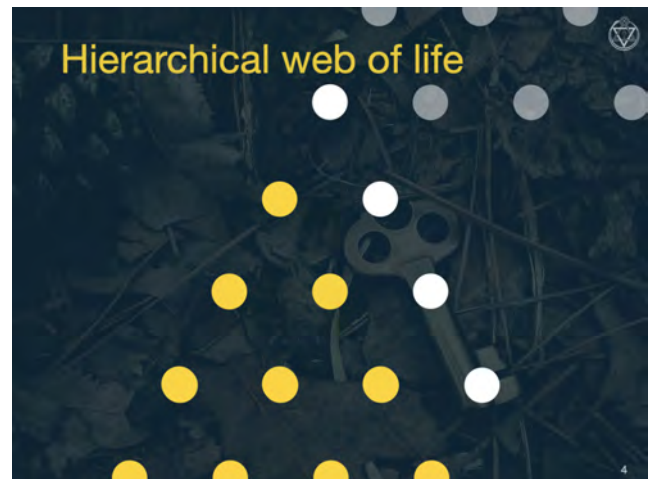
Seen from infinity such an apex with its hierarchical web of life is part of a larger hierarchical web of life.



And also the lowest monads of such a hierarchical web of life are heads of a hierarchical web of life themselves. And

so on till infinity.

There are hierarchies within hierarchies. Each Soul or lower monad provides a playground for even lower monads and is itself an Over-Soul, as shown in this picture and the one after that.



Thus, man is an Over-Soul for all beings who form his body. Here you can think of the countless cells, atoms, et cetera, which have their existence within our sphere and which continuously go through life cycles within the cycles in our body: our digestion, our inhalation and exhalation, our blood circulation, et cetera. Every heartbeat is a cycle of birth and death for countless infinitesimal universes within our sphere of life.

So this process of emanation always proceeds from a relative summit; from an Over-Soul, an apex, hierarch or source being, whatever you want to call it. This being forms the playground for the manifestation of the lower monads.

That co-operation is not coincidental. There is an affinity, attraction or an equal characteristic, which has also been built up in previous cycles and which karmically attracts

the beings to one another. The atoms, molecules and cells in our body do not come to us just like that. Depending on our focus in life they evolve with us or some of them might leave us while we attract others. Think for example of the kind of food you eat. If, for example, you change your eating pattern, you attract other atoms and your body will develop differently. In this way you can also change your mental and spiritual food and then you will slowly change your character. In the third proposition there is further mention of a bond "... during the whole term". In this case during a life cycle of the Over-Soul. But as we have explained, this too is relative and depends on whether you speak of a sun as Over-Soul, a human being or an atom. From macrocosm to microcosm, as above, so below, the process is the same. And because everything follows the cyclic and karmic laws, the cooperation is not limited to one cycle, to one era. We build up karmic bonds and at the next cycle we meet each other again. Just as we meet our colleagues again on the next working day, we attract our building blocks to continue learning and working with them in every incarnation.

With each emanation you see a cooperation of monads, as Barend Voorham already told us. The third proposition adds that this cooperation is a hierarchical structure based on affinity.

Finally, there is an important addition to be made. What makes an Over-Soul *the* Over-Soul? In the third proposition it is explained that every divine Soul comes to an independent conscious existence as a spark of the Over-Soul. What does this mean for the characteristic of the Over-Soul? The Over-Soul functions as a unity, it completely identifies itself with everything within its hierarchy. Just like the sun shines on everybody and everything within its scope. The characteristic is oneness.

This directly represents the essence of real leadership, of which we already intuitively know that what really makes a leader a leader is the ability to identify with others and the wisdom to inspire them, no matter where they are in their development.

Nevertheless, these beings must go on their pilgrimage on their own, independently. Just as a parent cannot walk for his child, so the Souls must go through evolution themselves.

Self-induced evolution

And that brings us to the third and last core idea: the self-induced evolution or unwrapping, as we called it earlier, and the obligatory pilgrimage. Let us go back again to the text of the third fundamental proposition.

We read: "and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul —

a spark of the former — through the Cycle of Incarnation (or "Necessity") in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term." Every Soul – and we have concluded that this also applies to every Over-Soul – goes on an obligatory pilgrimage. But what does that pilgrimage entail? Let us first think about the word pilgrim, because it is, of course, a conscious choice.

We know a pilgrim as someone who travels from place to place, usually sacred places. Etymologically it means "someone going beyond his country" or in a free translation you could say: someone going beyond his state of *being*. Here again it is a synonym for the monad that unwraps cycle after cycle in the different planes of being.

This pilgrimage is obligatory for every monad in the sense that no monad can skip a step in its development. Just as every child in every new incarnation has to learn how to walk, talk and finish school, so every monad also has to go through different stages of development of the hierarchy in question. Think of it as a school of life with various grades. Now you can say that some can skip or redo a grade, but that is only a matter of acceleration and delay. The skills and material that needs to be mastered remain the same, only one may take longer than the other based on his development in previous cycles.

What does this pilgrimage look like? You will find that in the explanatory sentences directly under the third proposition. "No pure (...) divine Soul can have an independent (conscious) existence before the spark (...) – (a) has passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world (...) and (b) acquired individuality, first by natural impulse and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts (checked by its karma), thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, (...) from mineral and plant, up to the holiest archangel (Dhyāni-Buddha)." The development or unwrapping goes through quite a few phases of life. Let us consider this unwrapping.

This unwrapping is in fact another side of the coin of the process of emanation. With emanation the emphasis lies a bit more on the inspiration from the Over-Soul or apex. Unwrapping, development or evolution, the latter being nothing else than the Latin word for unwrapping, is more about the perspective of the monad or pilgrim within the hierarchical web of life of the Over-Soul.

Un-wrapping already says that it is a process which takes place from within. Every monad has in essence boundless possibilities in its core, as we have concluded before. And bringing consciousness to manifestation in the outer realm is what we call unwrapping. For instance, we develop cer-

tain ideals, insights, wisdom, further understanding, learn to help others, et cetera. This process proceeds “during the whole term” according to a certain cycle.

Phases of evolution

You can distinguish three phases in this evolutionary process, and we also quote from the explanation of the third proposition in the Proem. The monad begins as an un-self-conscious God-spark. Goes “... through every elemental form of the world of phenomena ...”. “... by natural impulse ...” The monad goes through different lifeforms, what you can call material unwrapping. In it the monad manifests itself within the hierarchy of this planet earth as an elemental, then as mineral, as plant and as an animal. During this process the consciousness progresses from more instinctive to more and more conscious.

Then the monad reaches a point at which it develops or unwraps self-consciousness, and that is in the human stage. That happens with the development of independent thinking. It is the phase we are currently in. Therein “... individuality ... is acquired”. Self-consciousness is the conscious capacity to identify with something. In other words, it is the capacity to say “I” to something. This self-identification is still limited in the beginning. We identify unconsciously with our body, our desires or preferences from our own personal self. But gradually we increasingly see that our consciousness reaches beyond ourselves as seemingly separate beings. Reasoning from the first proposition, we are the boundless. The self can expand further and further into a Self with a capital letter. A Self that identifies itself with everything that is. This is the more spiritual development. Then we slowly but surely develop into a Self-conscious God, “... by self-induced and self-devised efforts ...”, “... through all the degrees of intelligences...”. Our consciousness becomes more and more universal and cosmic until we realize our unity with the entire universe we are part of and we become equal to the Over-Soul we once sprang from as a spark. An old Sufi saying sums it up: a stone becomes a plant, a plant becomes an animal, an animal becomes a human and a human becomes a god.

Is the pilgrimage finished then? Have we reached completion? No, because in the boundless there is no finish, was already the conclusion based on the first proposition. And according to the second proposition we continue our cyclical path, and a next cycle will follow after this. The third proposition adds that we always grow. That the cycles therefore are spiral. At least, if we follow the cyclic and karmic law of the whole of which we are part.

We can also recognize this great kosmic evolutionary journey in a single human life. From our birth we also develop more instinctively and in a natural way. Until our adulthood we awaken what we have already developed in previous incarnations. That is why the development in our childhood and youth also goes faster. Around the age of seven we start to think independently again, and our self-consciousness is reactivated.

From adulthood, averagely at the age of 21, we are ourselves again up until the extent that we developed our consciousness in the previous incarnation. After that we will further unwrap ourselves, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the attention we pay to this. And usually in the different phases of life there are different attractions: education, finding a job, a partner, a home, children, mid-life, getting older, retirement, et cetera. From a spiritual point of view, you can see a shift from a more material orientation to a more spiritual attraction. This is a copy in the small of the universal process, at least that is how it would be in a harmonious human life.

From this unwrapping of the monad, or the evolutionary march of the Soul with a capital letter, you can see directly how illusory it is to spend your whole life, for instance, collecting material possessions. And also, when we only identify with the “I am I” we live in an illusion. Natural growth is growth of consciousness. And growth of consciousness is the increasing realization of the oneness that we factually are. So, there is really nothing as natural as dedication to the whole. And it is precisely by forgetting yourself that you will find your true Self. In short, this is the meaning of life. It is the destiny of every Pilgrim. To express the Divine Self. These are the three key ideas from the third fundamental proposition:

- The fundamental identity of all beings;
- The hierarchical web of life;
- And the self-induced unwrapping or the obligatory pilgrimage.

Conclusions

A number of important conclusions based on this third proposition are:

- Development is the increasing expression of unity. From the first proposition the boundless unity of life could already be deduced. The third proposition shows that this unity is reflected in manifestation. With the Over-Soul as the summit within which all Souls or monads go through their pilgrimage until

they have realized unification with this hierarchy of being. And there are innumerable of such unities, innumerable universes that are each part of still greater hierarchical webs of life. And so we grow on to next, wider hierarchies in which we can achieve even greater unification, can become even more universal.

- The second conclusion we can draw is that this growth or development is only possible in cooperation with the whole. All living beings are fundamentally identical and inseparable. Real growth is the increasingly broader identification of our consciousness with all other life. With our fellow human beings, the animals, the plants, the gods up to and including this entire planet and the solar system of which it is a part! The karmic law is to cooperate with nature or the whole. This law is not a force working on us from the outside, but we are in essence a force of that law ourselves, because we are in fact that nature, that whole. The fact that we do not recognize this and do not act upon it, is only a limitation of our viewpoint, which is why we create so much disharmony. But that disharmony is in fact nothing but the natural recovery processes of the harmony of the whole. The universe is fundamentally just.

- This directly leads to the third and final conclusion: universal brotherhood is a fact in nature. Trying to express this universal brotherhood is therefore not a naïve unattainable ideal, it is a matter of recognizing a universal fact, and expressing it out of free will.

You do not have to think long about the changes that would take place if people's general outlook on life were based on these three fundamental propositions. It is unthinkable that there will still be some people who own more than half the world's population, who have to live on a few dollars a day. Or think of the way we deal with other life on earth. If we were to live according to this vision we would be much more focused on each other's spiritual development and would make sure that everyone has their place to contribute to the whole. So, what does everything lead to?

In essence to growing in unity, increasingly expressing unity!

Reference

1. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/statement-ending-bus-boycott>

Questions related to the third fundamental proposition

Unwrapping and evolution

You talk about "unwrapping"; why do you use the word "unwrapping" and not "evolution"? What exactly is the difference?

We deliberately chose the word "unwrapping" because it indicates exactly what we mean. All potentials, all faculties are enclosed in our consciousness: they are "wrapped up" and are being "unwrapped".

Of course you could also use the word evolution because evolving, the Latin word, means unwrapping. But we didn't do this because many people think of Darwin's theory when they hear about evolution. What Darwin and his successors called evolution is surely not evolution, because it is actually a kind

of transformation of the outer form.

What we are trying to make clear is that all forces are enclosed in the human consciousness and everything that is wrapped up, so that which is within, can be unwrapped. You may also use the words "evolution" or "development" of course, if you understand what is meant by these terms. There is no difference between these words. But for didactic reasons, to avoid misunderstandings, we use the word "unfolding".

Is there an absolute starting point?

I have a question about the monads being essentially immutable - having the same potential - but not having unfolded the same qualities. So there is a development

from a to b, an unfolding. But don't all monads start from a certain starting point? If they all have the same qualities and have always been there, why is there a difference?

There is no such thing as an absolute starting point. This is because the Boundless Principle does not know an absolute beginning or end. So everything just develops endlessly and has always done so. That means that not all monads can be at the same point. There are countless monads and countless stages of development in which these monads exist. When a group of monads has unfolded to a higher stage or level of development, their place in the hierarchy is immediately taken over

by monads who have just gone through all the previous stages.

It also has everything to do with free will. How quickly a monad unwraps is determined by himself. He unwraps by his own inner strength. That's why each monad is at a different point of development. Yet the monad *as a monad* is always fundamentally the same: a spark of eternity.

Expressing yourself differently is in fact a question of cooperation. Every monad needs cooperation to express himself, to express what it *can* express at that moment. To realize this, he needs other monads, and he attracts those monads that are suitable in quality for that expression. To give a simple example about ourselves as human beings: we all have a body. It consists of monads, our cells and atoms. But we attract these beings according to *our* qualities and *our* characteristics. So every change, every step in our development actually means: setting up a different cooperation.

And that expresses itself in two ways. It may mean that collaborating monads stimulate each other in such a way that they grow together to a higher level, lift each other up as it were, so that they can express more of their essence, of that infinity. At the same time we see, and this is the other possibility, that with every change in ourselves we repel certain monads and attract other monads — monads who are now attracted to our new characteristic.

We may add that the unfolding stage has nothing to do with the value of the being. Because no matter how far or how little you have unfolded yourself, you are always needed in the totality.

What causes feelings of superiority

Why do people still believe in good people and bad people? Why do some people feel superior to others and discriminate them?

Are these monads or people not yet very far in unfolding their latent faculties? And does that also have to do with karma?

Anyone who has become blind to the underlying unity, will see himself as completely separate from the rest. From that sense of separation you can make all kinds of judgments, such as: I think a better soccer player is worth more than a worse soccer player. Now, I can't play soccer at all myself, so I am at the very bottom of that hierarchy ... In this way you can build up thoughts and images of separateness for yourself. But the important thing to realize is that we are essentially all one. We have to grow beyond that idea of "I stand alone", and we can do that simply by looking around us and wondering: "With whom am I connected in whole humanity? What is the effect on them if I do this or that?"

So yes, if you think from separateness, you have not yet fully unfolded, you have "hatched too early", so to say ... Literally every monad is in a different stage of development. If two monads were in exactly the same stage of development, those two monads would not be two but one. But we can never give someone more value because he is a little further than the other.

Everyone can build up, at his own level, an image of the most universal thing *he* can imagine. He can recognize the Oneness as far as *he* can grasp it, knowing that that image is not perfect because there is always greater and higher, because there is Boundlessness. So a person can never be in a developmental stage in which he doesn't have an image of Unity. Only, that image that he has — and that applies to all of us — is never perfect because we can constantly grow. But everyone can know at his own level how to act: this is the ethical awareness that each of us has.

What are the "laws of nature"?

I have been following the public lectures for several years and in those lectures it is sometimes said that actually there are no "laws", because laws are the habitual patterns of living beings. My question is: why is the emphasis now placed on universal laws?

Because, in order to explain Theosophia, we have to use common words, with all their limitations. At the end of the 19th century, Mrs. Blavatsky started to bring out much more of the Theosophia than was possible in the centuries before. And then you continually have the challenge: how do you reach the people, in their language and in their culture, so that they understand what you are saying?

So you have to find words for that. And she herself will be the first to say that there are limitations to the words that are chosen. Her book *The Secret Doctrine* includes a number of Stanzas written in a language that was not known at the time. She herself points to the great difficulty to translate these terms into English.

The thoughts in *The Secret Doctrine* were further elaborated, among others, by Gottfried de Purucker, the fourth Leader of the Theosophical Society Point Loma. He has done a lot in his books to make *The Secret Doctrine* more comprehensible. And De Purucker came with the explanation that laws are habitual patterns. There are indeed no laws of nature in the sense of which we humans know laws: regulations which are drawn up and then apply to everyone. For that would mean that those laws were something outside of us. And if you go — with his explanation — back to Blavatsky and read her works thoroughly, then you will discover this as well. It is indeed true that the laws of nature are made by beings, that they are habitual patterns.

Further we can say this: if we look at the explanation of the tetraktys, as given in the lecture “cooperation: growing in unity”, one can say: the top of it has its habitual patterns, but that habitual pattern is a law for all monads below it. We humans are not able to change the patterns of the top being of our cosmos, so they seem to us immutable facts. Within these patterns we have to conform ourselves, in fact. They can be compared to the laws of a country. They are also a reflection of a mentality, of an average pattern. And we have to obey them too, don’t we?

And by cooperating with less advanced beings, every higher being can learn from what he is experiencing. He can improve his own habitual patterns and thereby evolve. So, “lawfulness” and “laws” are actually a way of speaking. You can find these terms everywhere in our literature. And De Purucker explains: remember, there are no laws outside all those beings, laws which are imposed as it were. Because then there is the question: imposed, *by whom?* What we mean by laws are the habitual patterns of the top of a hierarchy — whatever hierarchy you may have in mind, great or small.

Harmony and disharmony in nature

You say that nature, seen from the theological principles, is in essence harmony. But how can you speak of justice in nature when, for instance, you see animals eating each other? How then should we understand the latter?

That is a very practical and topical question. Recently the question was in the news: should we keep domestic cats on a leash to protect legally protected birds?

How can we understand this? You should not see the different kingdoms of nature as things entirely separate from each other. We humans are actually trans-

forming the flow of life from the higher kingdoms to the lower kingdoms. And because we humans do not always do that harmoniously and in fact often go against the natural patterns of life — because selfishness actually goes against the natural patterns — we imprint certain impressions on the consciousness of animals, according to our character. That leads to the observation of certain behaviors in the animal world which we do not like very much from our human point of view.

The kingdoms above us, the divine kingdoms, cooperate with nature, that is to say, they align themselves with Unity. The kingdoms below us do the same, but unconsciously. But — and we were just talking about it in the previous question — we are in fact the laws of nature. The habitual patterns of us human beings form the natural laws of animals, plants and the other kingdoms below us. So when we see certain disharmonious conditions in the animal world, they can always be traced back to us human beings, to our human consciousness.

About the current discussion about cats eating birds: that problem has everything to do with the human kingdom. We domesticate certain animals and bring them into a habitat where they do not at all belong. The cats walk through meadows, where there are many birds. The cats eat the eggs and young birds, for example of the black-tailed godwits and lapwings. Although we don’t like it, we created this situation ourselves. But the core idea is this: if we humans live from a certain harmony and know our place in the total hierarchy of the 10 natural kingdoms, we will let the flow of life to the animal and the plant kingdoms seep through much more harmoniously. That will result in a change of character in the animal world as well. Of course that will not hap-

pen overnight, but that will take place slowly in the course of the evolution of mankind.

We are fully supported on this point by the statement in the Bible: one day the lion will live peacefully with the lamb. You find the same prediction in other religions as well. You can also easily recognize this human influence for yourself. Take two puppies from the same litter and raise one puppy in a family where there is always quarrel, where people scream, where there is aggression. And you’ll raise the other puppy in a family where there is always harmony. Well, you can be sure that those two dogs will have different characteristics when they reach adulthood. As long as mankind doesn’t fully radiate that harmony, of course we should try to make it happen as much as possible in nature, in that lower nature, with the means available to us: through improvements in animal husbandry, how we keep pets — or stop keeping pets at all — and so on.

Is friction necessary?

Is friction necessary in the Cosmos? Friction can make things smooth. At the same time you sometimes see great disharmony arising from frictions: frictions in politics, in the Middle East with its current wars, and so on. Compare it with the situation in Europe, which has not been at war for some time. How can we look at this from the three basic propositions? What is the role of friction?

I would actually like to ask the questioner what exactly he or she means by friction. If by friction is meant a clash of visions, and both sides have the willingness to acknowledge that the other might be right, so one is open-minded and will consider the other’s point of view — those two “ifs” are very important — then you could certainly come to a larger vision. If you see friction in

the sense of “yes, I’m always right and I don’t listen to you”, well, then you do indeed get results such as in the Middle East. And unfortunately also often in politics and in other areas.

So it is important to be continually open-minded. That does not mean that you beforehand consider each possible standpoint to be right. As Herman Vermeulen said in his “Introduction” on investigating axioms: you have to think these things over. Do not say “he’s right” or “he’s not right” in advance. Can I recognize what someone says in the world around me or not? Can I recognize it myself? That investigating attitude is very essential, for instance with all those theories about how COVID-19 came into being. And with the various conspiracy theories. Don’t assume immediately that such an idea is nonsense, but try to determine for yourself whether it is based on facts. Can I validate it?

If we would act like this, i.e. being open-minded and critical, then friction of ideas would never pose any problem, because it can lead to greater insight. Then you see friction as an opportunity for growth, and not as a reason to perpetuate your own vision. The latter does not yield anything instructive.

Steps towards serving all that lives

As mentioned, no monad can skip a step in its development. What does this mean in the light of serving the whole: are there also steps in this? And can you tell us a little more about the acceleration of development that has been talked about?

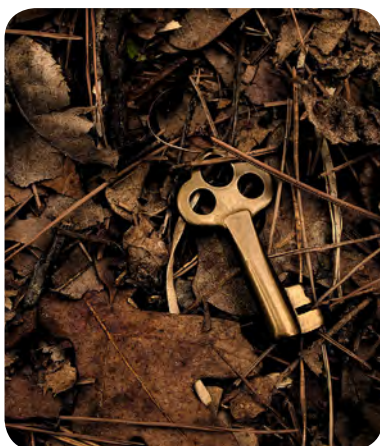
A very interesting question. If you talk about development in the sense of unfolding, unfolding qualities, you cannot do that by jumping forward. You have to experience all qualities, get to know their worth. One can, so to speak, come to an insight in five minutes, while another might need a

year, firstly bumping against a wall five times before thinking: “Might there be a door here?” That is how it works in our development. So the time in which this unfolds is very relative.

But whether you go fast or slow, you can’t skip a step. We have to learn to master and express all those qualities. There is no way of saying: “I skip a certain kingdom of nature, the human kingdom for instance, because it is not so interesting any more for me.” No, you can’t, because here is where our lessons lie.

As far as the acceleration of that development is concerned: there are beings who accelerate first in order to slow down later on, because they realize that they are part of the whole. In other words: they accelerate the development to the next class and if they succeed, they stay in the same class, even though they have already learnt everything. They choose to do this because then they can help others to go through that development as well. And actually, seen from the viewpoint of Oneness, that is precisely what serving the whole is all about.

Yes, actually that in itself is a very natural and logical process. You are a part of the whole, you are a reflection of that whole. So, if you want to help the whole, you’ll have to commit yourself to that whole.



Consequences of The Theory of Everything

At the end of this symposium we will take a brief look at the consequences we can draw from The Theory of Everything. If we study the three basic principles, the three propositions from H.P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, we must conclude that these consequences are enormous. For some, perhaps even shocking.

Now, it is not the case that a world view is completely undermined. However, from these propositions we can see and understand much better what is going on in the world, and why all events take place in a certain way. But above all, if we master these consequences, we will be able to better understand how to solve our problems.

I shall give a few examples below, some exercises in Esoteric Philosophy; for, as also emerged from the working groups, we must be able to consider and analyze all situations in the world with a Theory of Everything, of course.

Unity

We first talked about Unity. The PRINCIPLE, the one Principle, is everywhere, there is nowhere it is not. This is a fundamental thought, for the consequence of this is that wherever we look, whatever we study

– the material world, the psychological world, the religious or philosophical world – one thing is certain: the same basic characteristic works in the background. The one Principle in the background clothes itself in an infinite number of manifestations and forms. The challenge is that we do not look at those forms but learn to discover which characteristics lie behind all manifestations.

Cyclicity

Then we spoke about cyclicity. All phenomena are subject to this. Now it is not the case that somewhere in the Universe there is a big clock ticking, counting down all kinds of cyclic movements. No, cyclicity takes place because of the interactions we have with each other. It is the interaction of consciousness with each other *in a hierarchical structure* that produces cyclicity. As human beings, for instance, we impose a 24-hour pattern on all beings with whom we cooperate. The easiest way to see this is in the composition of our physical body: activity and rest, the necessity of eating and drinking and all the accompanying effects.

From the point of view of Unity and cyclicity there is no such thing as death. It is merely a change in the

state of activity and passivity, passivity in the sense of rest, of repose. So, the dying process of man or any other being is an example of cyclicity, of the temporary stop of a co-operation. The monads with whom we collaborated, are released and can go their own way — in which they will gain their individual experiences. When we start a new embodiment, a new incarnation, we will attract those monads again.

Fundamental equality

Everywhere in the infinite hierarchy of manifestations, fundamental equality prevails. Everywhere the same laws apply, the same patterns play a role. The hermetic axiom therefore says: “so above, so below, so below so above”. That enables us to understand The Theory of Everything. If we wonder how something works on the large scale, let us look on the small scale and project this onto the big picture. Of course we should realize that the form of the expression will vary according to the level in question. From the three basic axioms, the three propositions, very interesting, fundamental thoughts have been worked out, which help us to build a vision of life with which we can find answers to the big and small questions we are confronted with.

Seven Principles, seven Jewels of Wisdom and seven Pāramitās

In the theosophical literature, we find these elaborations in the first place in the seven Principles. They are the seven characteristics which we find everywhere in nature, from the ātmic to the most material Principle, of which we can understand the manasic Principle — the thinking Principle — as a good example.

Next to that there are the *seven Jewels of Wisdom*, seven fundamental processes which play their role in nature throughout all its hierarchies — and therefore can also be understood on the basis of “so above, so below”. Karma (cause and effect) and reincarnation (reimbodiment) are perhaps the best known. Everything is karmic, according to strict justice. And reincarnation is a specific form of the cyclicity that we see everywhere.

If we ask ourselves which mental qualities we can best develop with this knowledge, we find the answer in the seven “perfections”, the *Pāramitās*. They are perfections like mildness, determination and overcoming ignorance. Read about these golden “sevens” in our literature. Try to make them your own. The greater and more universal you become in your thinking, the better you can focus

on those better qualities, the more you will be able to understand and express the totality.

Consequently applying the principle of consciousness

The most essential thought I would like to present to you is the following: if we start from the three basic propositions, that everything is *consciousness*, that everything is therefore *living*, then we must be consistent in that too. Let me give a very practical example. When I take a medicine, it is not just a chemical I take, but in fact a combination of consciousness of a certain quality, that can have a certain effect. It is *that quality, that effect*, that I let in.

And another important factor is: am I motivated to take that medicine? Studies have shown that if you have confidence in your doctor and you take a medicine he prescribes, that medicine has more effect than if you don't trust that doctor. Of course you can say: that is the placebo-effect. But I do not care about that. If the placebo-effect helps me to overcome a problem, it is my pleasure.

And if you view everything as living matter, as consciousness, then the effect of homeopathy is a perfectly logical process. If you use a certain substance, you should also look at the mental quality of that substance. What characteristics does it have in the mental field? In the same way it can be understood that one homeopathic remedy works for one and not for the other. There must be a similarity. Our psychological composition has a certain characteristic, so does our medical problem, and if the remedy has a completely different characteristic, it will therefore not help us.

The principle of consciousness also makes clear how great a mental influence can be. When we enter somewhere, we influence the atmosphere among those present anyway — and that influence can be very powerful. We also see such a mental influence in pets, for example. When a nice dog or cat walks in, the atmosphere of a whole group can change, because people are open to the sphere of influence of that animal.

These are examples of a mental influence, which may have major consequences, especially if we are aware of our own radiation. When we work in a company, we have a part in determining the quality and atmosphere in that company. Thus you can also realize that, when you apply for a job, it is much more important to ask which atmosphere is stimulated by the management, than to ask for the salary. Then you might well come to the conclusion that you do

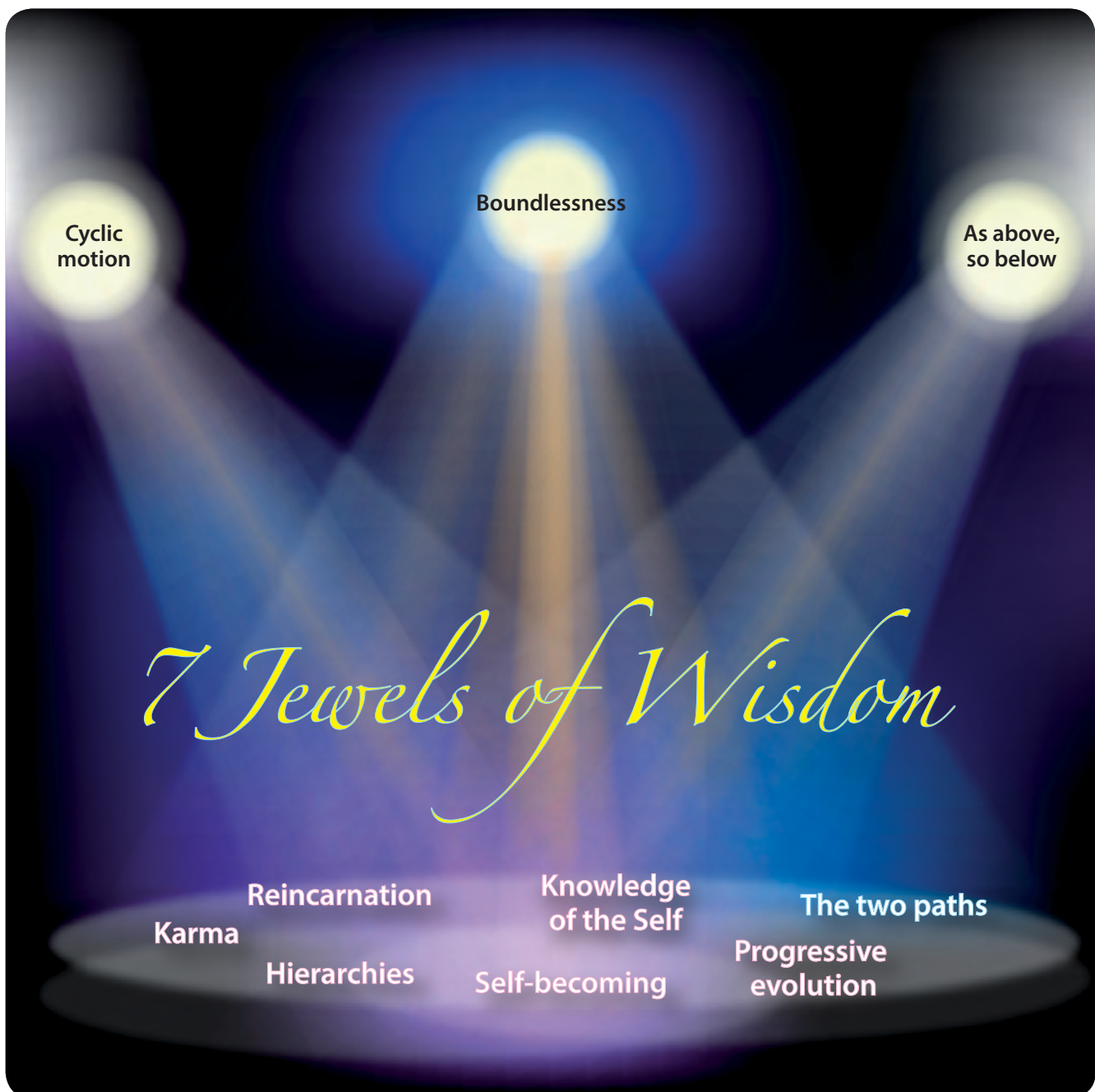
not want to work at that company, because things happen that you cannot stand for in your vision of life at all.

Consciously dealing with each other

With the three fundamental propositions and the resulting Principles, Jewels and Pāramitās, we can be much more aware of how we deal with each other in society. Then, for example, we can realise what effects it can have on others if we spread certain thoughts on social media. When we type in a message, it is not just letters. Our thoughts stick to that text. Every reader of it opens himself up to the sphere of influence that hangs around it. That's why

we should ask ourselves beforehand, whether we want to be responsible for the consequences of sending such a text around.

In this way we can get a sharper view on the interaction of consciousness on each other and the resulting responsibilities. We can then, for example, ask ourselves what the responsibility is of a politician who stimulates a certain program based on the fact that he would like to be elected. Then we will also understand why Plato in *The Republic* comes up with a number of difficult thoughts, "rolling out" a whole system, to allow an ideal society to develop on the basis of qualities of consciousness.



So where do we stand today? We all realize that many things must change. COVID-19 has certainly taught us a number of things. You see that at the moment we are under pressure from the effects of such a pandemic, we realize that the structures we had until now are no longer suitable and a change has to take place. Then almost everyone is quite motivated to participate in these reforms, to think about it. But if the virus outbreak is reduced even a little, we also see a lot of people who already want to keep things as they are, who prefer *not* to change. No, we *will have* to change. We must take our responsibility. We hope that with this symposium and the elucidation of

the three propositions, we have dispelled the myth that *The Secret Doctrine* is difficult. This book is certainly different, with a number of ideas we are not familiar with. But it is not difficult, if we can keep these three propositions clearly in mind when studying H.P. Blavatsky's most important work. Dr. G. de Purucker later published a lot to make *The Secret Doctrine* easier to understand. All this literature can be found on our website. All these sources are tools for learning to live Life with a capital L — so that we are in harmony with the totality. So much for the consequences we can draw from what we have studied together today.

Questions about the entire symposium

Laws of Nature and free will

If the Laws of Nature are the habitual patterns of living beings, do we still have free will? Or do the gods determine everything for us?

Certainly, we have free will. Free will is closely related to consciousness, yes, in a certain sense it is consciousness. And because everything is consciousness, everything also has free will, however limited it may be. So, for us, humans, and for every being, free will is not unlimited either.

The greater the consciousness, the greater is also the free will. Why is that so? Because then the range of consciousness and thus the possibilities on which the will can focus itself, are greater too. Greater, not only in number of possibilities but also – and especially – in depth.

Consequently, we humans have a greater free will than animals. We can think and therefore have more choices. But compared to beings who are far further developed than we are, our free will is very limited. In other words, the range of the free will is determined by the consciousness and the capacities that are developed. For example: we cannot

travel to the Sun or to Venus, even if we would like to. Another example: if we do not know anything about cycles and reincarnation, then we cannot take the next lives into account in our choices. But within the great whole in which we live, we can make choices using the abilities we have developed.

If you look at it very mystically and universally, even the Laws of Nature are not imposed on us, at least not in the same sense a government imposes laws on the population. You should ask yourself why do we live on this planet, in this solar system, in this galaxy? There are millions of galaxies, uncountable suns and planets, but we live on Earth. Why is that so? It is because we were attracted to this planet, this atmosphere. We are attracted to it because we have the same characteristic as this planet, this sun, etc. Has this characteristic been developed by someone else than ourselves? Has there been a god who made us what we are now? The answer is “no”, we have done it ourselves. We have joined, so to speak, voluntarily, from our own inner impulse this Cosmos with the habitual patterns of the divine beings who lead it. We are an

integral part of it.

Now you should not think that developing more consciousness – and developing is unpacking, unfolding what is within us already – and thereby increasing the free will, means that you are going to use that will to go against the flow, or that you are going to detach yourself from the totality of life's expressions. The opposite is in fact the case. You will then become aware of the coherence and unity of life and use your free will self-consciously to express that unity.

For us human beings the most important choice we make, with the perhaps small portion of free will that we have developed, is therefore always: do I align myself with the big picture, am I selfless, or do I go against the Laws of Nature? H.P. Blavatsky said that if you work on with Nature, Nature will regard you as one of her creators and make obeisance. So, if we align ourselves with the big picture, our knowledge and our free will increase.

In short, we cannot step outside the patterns of the gods, nor can a cell leave our body. But within those patterns we can freely determine our path; and as

we grow in consciousness, the possibilities of choice will increase as well.

Do we evolve both in our manifested and unmanifested condition?

In the third proposition of The Secret Doctrine the obligatory pilgrimage is mentioned. I think that “growth of consciousness” is meant by that. Then my question is: does this apply to both manifested and unmanifested life?

Let's first determine what we mean by “growth”. For us growth is the development, the unravelling, the unpacking of the potencies and forces which are enclosed in the monad, and which every being learns to express by developing their consciousness. So growth always goes “from the inside out”. Because every monad is essentially boundless, there are always latent or dormant abilities and properties; abilities that have not yet been made active. Growth means that these latent abilities are activated. Well, everything grows. Moreover, growth always takes place in cyclic movements, as shown in the second proposition. That means: activity alternates with rest. A being at rest is not manifested. But beware: except for the first principle of The Secret Doctrine, the Boundless Principle, everything is relative. What we call unmanifested is unmanifested for us, but for beings which are much further developed than we are, the planes or worlds which are formless or not manifested for us, are manifested worlds for them. Don't forget that everything is consciousness. Thus, consciousness is in a state that we call manifested or not manifested. But that state of being is relative. Now the growth of consciousness is the outcome of the total cyclic process of activity and rest. I mean this: from our perspective the period of rest is a state of not being manifested. In everyday language it is called “death”. By the

way, the period of death has different phases and has different states. In “life” we actively gain experiences and we process them during death. Then the lessons of all these experiences are woven into our consciousness. So, the whole cycle of gaining experiences, discovering new things, learning and processing those experiences and lessons during the rest of death, produces the growth of consciousness.

Helping weaker brothers

How can we best help our “weaker brothers”, those who walk the criminal path, from the perspective of the three propositions?

From the founding of The Theosophical Society in 1875, one of its main purposes has been to be active in helping our weaker brothers, such as those who committed a real crime.

Look, if you approach people in a negative way, if you act aggressively or with disgust, you evoke in them the same characteristics. If you really want to help someone and make him a better person, you have to give him a good example, a good atmosphere, a positive approach.

Lao-Tze says in the *Tau Te Ching*: treat good people well and treat bad people well. After all, being good is your nature. If you want to arouse the good in the other, you have to give him an example. You must also be convinced that the other person *can* become a better person, because if you do not really believe that, then you will not approach him in an inspiring way.

Some people argue for severe penalties; the more years in prison, the better, they think. But what happens to people in prison? What happens when they are free after 10 or 20 or 30 years? We're not saying we should just let everyone have their way. Some people need to be temporarily isolated because they are

a danger to society. But that doesn't mean you have to be cruel to them and approach them negatively. It is much better to teach them self-discipline and cooperation.

If you include the third fundamental proposition in this problem – a proposition which deals with the cyclic and karmic relations and the interaction and mixing of all the monads in the hierarchy of which they are part – then you cannot solve a problem in society as some isolated issue. If you did, you would pretend that crime and criminals have nothing to do with us. You attribute the imbalance in society to one group, and you think you have nothing to do with it. But if there is an imbalance in society, then we are *all* involved.

We tend to see problems as something separate from the whole society, from the whole humanity. We do the same with refugees or any other issue. However, we are confronted with something because it is also our business, because we too have created karmic causes for it. We have helped to create an atmosphere or breeding ground in society, in which these disharmonious situations can occur.

Sometimes, for the protection of society and of themselves, you have to isolate people. But in that time of isolation you have to teach them, bring them into a learning environment, so that they can unfold their true human qualities from within, so that they come to a greater sense of community and can contribute positively to the greater whole. We have examples from Norway and Uruguay where this is already applied, with much greater success than just locking people up.

As long as people do not change their views, their mentality, nothing essential will change. As long as there are violent, aggressive, stealing people – or

in whatever other form their selfishness may express itself – there will be an imbalance. And if those people do not change their mind in this life, then we will be confronted with the same problem in a next life, because we will have to deal with each other again in that next life, as a consequence of reincarnation and karma. So try everything to solve the problem now.

The goal of the pilgrimage

What is the goal of the monad? Is the monad conscious? Or should that consciousness be awakened by the pilgrimage?

The monad itself is a spark of eternity and therefore has no limitations. But if it manifests itself, it does have limitations. There are, as said, monads in different stages of development. However far that stage may be, it always has a limitation.

Consciousness and self-consciousness have to do with reflections, and thus have their limitations. Everything is engaged in the process of increasingly expressing the infinite.

Now you have to realize that in society the concept of “consciousness” is used differently than we do. A logical consequence of the three fundamental propositions is that everything is consciousness, but not everything is *self*-consciousness. To develop self-consciousness you have to unfold the thinking aspect, the capacity to think, so that you are aware of yourself as an independently acting and choosing entity.

Certainly not every monad has reached that stage of unfolding. The natural kingdoms below man have not reached that point yet. They do not have the self-consciousness we have. But they are consciousness. And they too, in the course of their infinite course of development, will someday develop their thinking and become self-con-

scious, just as we human beings will someday develop divine consciousness. We will continue to grow infinitely. That growth is the goal. That growth is the pilgrimage.

Developing perfect wisdom

How can we know that we are approaching perfect wisdom? Can we somehow visualize the goal? Can we reach divine consciousness in one life?

We begin with the last question. That was a question also asked to Gautama de Buddha: can you become a Buddha in one life? The answer was: yes, you can, but it takes an awful lot of effort, because you have to work out the karmic consequences of the past in just one life. It is therefore almost impossible. In theory it is possible, but in practice it is almost unattainable. It also depends, of course, on the point where you start. If you have practiced this spiritual vision in many previous lives and therefore start in this life as someone who is already almost “on the other shore”, then it might be possible to do it in one life. But in general that will not be possible.

By the way, there is something else: do you *want* to have that perfect wisdom? Do you want to have divine consciousness? Why do you want it? When you have acquired that perfect wisdom, are you still able to help your brothers? That is an important question. Do you want that wisdom for yourself, or do you want to acquire knowledge and wisdom so that you are better able to help others?

That answer has everything to do with the first part of the question: how can we approach perfect wisdom, how can we visualize the goal? It is important that you build a mental image in which you contribute to the totality of life of which you are a part. That should be your ideal. That should be, as it were,

the sun on the horizon, to where you are going. If you work for the totality, doing everything in your power, then that is the goal you should visualize. You can determine for yourself whether you are on the right path to that perfect knowledge. And that is precisely when you no longer wonder whether you are on the right path! Then it is no longer about yourself. Then you have developed universal consciousness.

Colophon

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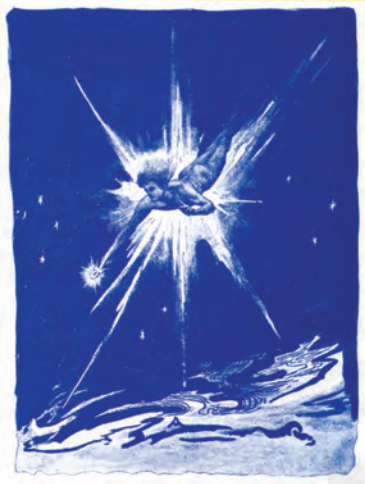
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2. By reason of this unity: brotherhood as a fact in nature.
3. Respect for everyone's free will (when applied from this idea of universal brotherhood).
4. Respect for everyone's freedom to build up their own view of life.
5. To support the developing 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)