

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

Esoteric Teachings
Parts 1 and 2 of
G. de Purucker

**Emanation in world
literature**

**Ubuntu: I am
because we are**

**The birth process of
a planet**

**Relationship
between Planet
Venus and bees?**

**Can animals learn to
think?**



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With the recent publication of part eight of the *Esoteric Teachings* by G. de Purucker, the renewed reissue of the twelve-part series is complete. Renewed in the sense, that it has been made completely identical to the original texts, approved by G. de Purucker. We will discuss this series in the upcoming *Lucifers*, highlighting two booklets each time. Starting with parts one and two: *The Esoteric Path: its Nature and its Tests* and *The Esoteric or Oriental School: Steps in the Initiatory Cycle*.

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Emanation in world literature

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There is a teaching that logically explains how everything became what it is. A teaching that also offers a perspective and shows that life has meaning.

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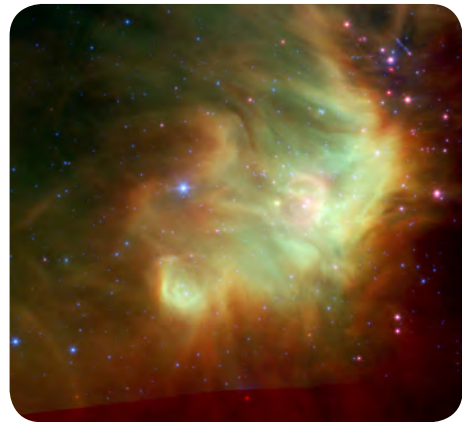
Ubuntu

I am because we are

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As we become more aware of the universal unity of all life, we also find more inner harmony. In Africa we find a special philosophy that, by its emphasis on the interconnectedness of people, embodies this universal vision. In May 2017, Joop Smits gave a lecture titled “Ubuntu – I am because we are”. This lecture has been edited for publication.

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How is a planet born? If everything is alive and all beings are cyclically embodying themselves, then solar beings and planetary beings must have something like a birth process as well.

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Is there a relationship between Planet Venus and bees?

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Within the Theosophical Movement several misunderstandings have arisen about the origin of bees. Some students of Theosophy believed that the bees “came from the planet Venus”. They based this idea on their interpretation of some veiled hints in *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Is this true or not? Is there a relationship between Venus and the bees? And if so, of what character? A fascinating subject, about which we will try to give a little more clarity in this article, which is the last of a series of three articles about bees.

Henk Bezemer

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- » Atlantis and the Rāmāyaṇa
- » Can animals learn to think?



Editorial

Lucifer, the Light-bringer, is gaining a larger and larger readership. This is not only due to the fact that the number of readers of our English edition is increasing, but also because the English *Lucifer* is being translated into Spanish and Portuguese, thanks to the help of some dedicated friends in Spain and Portugal. The Spanish edition has been around for a while, but recently we started to appear in Portuguese as well, and we already have readers, not only in Portugal and Brazil, but presently also in Angola and Mozambique.

Naturally, we are very happy about this. After all, theosophical thoughts are universal and help everyone to gain a better understanding of the Divine Wisdom. And through proper understanding we are better able to apply this wisdom in our own lives. Due to the difficult times we are living in, the light of Theosophy is more needed than ever.

We have again attempted to show the richness of Theosophy in this issue. One very inspiring article is about Ubuntu, the African philosophy that, through the interconnectedness of people, embodies a vision of the unity of all life. Ubuntu is the belief in a universally shared Covenant that connects all of humanity.

We begin with a series of articles on the *Esoteric Teachings* of Gottfried de Purucker. In this issue, parts 1 and 2 are discussed. These two parts are extremely important. They appeal to the responsibility of both teacher and student, a mystical relationship based on unconditional trust, dedication and loyalty.

The article about emanation provides a logical answer to a lot of essential questions of life. Although this doctrine is not very well known, this article shows that it can be found in virtually all religious and philosophical writings in antiquity.

The last article of a series of three about bees deals with the fascinating question: is there a relationship between the Planet Venus and bees? This article also gives a glimpse into the deeper background of our solar system.

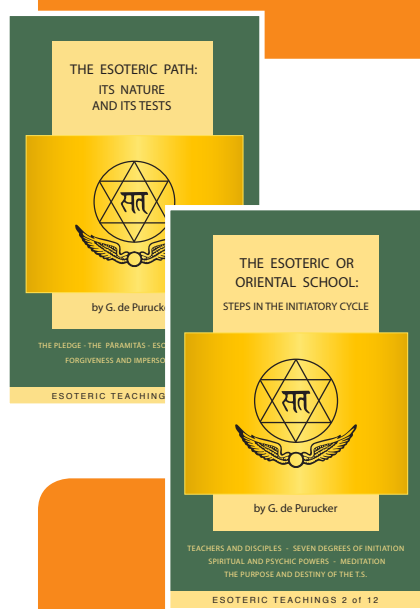
We go even deeper into the subject of the solar systems and planets in the article “The birth process of a planet” in the series “Theosophy in Nature”. It seems impossible to understand this process. But by strictly and logically applying some laws of nature, we can form a mental image of this process.

Finally, in our Questions & Answers section, we address questions about Atlantis, the Rāmāyaṇa, apes, and the developing mind.

We hope this issue of *Lucifer* will contribute to a better understanding of Theosophia. We look forward to your comments and questions.

The editors

Esoteric Teachings Parts 1 and 2 of G. de Purucker



Key thoughts

» There is exoteric or outer knowledge and esoteric, inner, unveiled knowledge. Delving into esoteric knowledge is not without obligation, but it requires a compassionate attitude. If you have not developed the right mentality and discipline, you can never really understand that esoteric knowledge.

» Esoteric teachings appeal to the responsibility of both teacher and student, a mystical relationship based on unconditional trust, dedication and loyalty.

» Recognizing an esoteric Teacher is based on the student's inner abilities to recognize the spiritual qualities of which the Teacher is a living expression.

With the recent publication of part eight of the *Esoteric Teachings* by G. de Purucker, the renewed reissue of the twelve-part series is complete. Renewed because the series has been made completely identical to the original texts, approved by G. de Purucker. We will discuss this series in the upcoming *Lucifers*, highlighting two booklets each time. Starting with parts one and two: *The Esoteric Path: its Nature and its Tests* and *The Esoteric or Oriental School: Steps in the Initiatory Cycle*.⁽¹⁾

Esoteric versus exoteric

In addition to an external, exoteric side, all great world traditions also had and have an inner, esoteric side. Exoteric or public teachings are available to the general public, often brought in the form of parables and metaphors as in the Bible, or in paradoxes as you encounter in the eastern tradition with Lao-tse in his *Tao Te King*. In both forms, the deeper meaning of the knowledge is veiled. The aim of this veil is that without the right key one is unable to understand the deeper meaning. Esoteric teachings, on the other hand, are more or less unveiled teachings which are not directly available to the general public. It consists of direct knowledge of the laws of Nature, the spiritual background of man and cosmos taught by the Great Teachers to a select group of students. A group consisting only of those students who had proven to be worthy and able to carry the responsibility to receive

these teachings.

That is, those who had shown in practice that they would not abuse this knowledge for self-interest.

The twelve *Esoteric Teachings* by G. de Purucker therefore contain in-depth esoteric teachings that were strictly confidential, intended for the members of the Esoteric Section (E.S.) of the Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL). The fact that they have become available to the general public since their first open publication in 1980 basically means that they have become exoteric. Nevertheless, they are of undiminished value and their knowledge is as fundamental and profound as on the moment it was taught by De Purucker in the 1930s. Neither does the publication diminish by any means the great amount of care with which the instructions must be handled.

This care relates, among other things, to the way in which these instructions should be studied. The members of

the E.S. of TSPL were obliged to start with parts one and two, and we strongly advise readers to start with these parts before proceeding with the so-called “technical” teachings of the other parts. *Esoteric Teachings* part one and two, together form the moral foundation, the ethical basis that is indispensable for further study of the other parts. Why is this ethical basis so important?

The right motive

The central question in part one is: why do you want to study esoteric knowledge? What is your motive for delving into it? Are you looking for this knowledge out of curiosity and only for your own development? Or are you looking for wisdom so that you are better equipped to help others? That question is essential. Because, so De Purucker warns, with any motive other than wanting to serve humanity, there is no point in studying the teachings any further. With a selfish motive, the student will only get disappointed. At best, he will not find an entrance to the teachings; in a less favorable situation, abuse of the teachings may lead to adverse consequences for both the student and his environment. Delving into esoteric wisdom is not without consequences, because as it is said: Nature may not be played with.

Mental attitude and discipline

If the motive is correct and the student has chosen to take the first step on the esoteric path, the Path of Compassion, it is important that he trains himself to actually master the teachings. Esoteric teachings are of an inner, spiritual quality, and in order to understand them, the student must develop a corresponding inner quality within himself. A fact that is often underestimated. But just as you cannot understand higher mathematics without proper preparation and effort, you cannot understand esoteric teachings without proper training. Training of developing the quality that expresses itself in compassion and forgetting oneself. Furthermore, esoteric training goes beyond just mental training. Because in addition to the compassionate mentality, the discipline to express this in life, to be the living example, is an absolute requirement. As said before, nature is not to be played with, and therefore it is not a matter of what the pupil wishes to be, but about what he really *is*. The extent to which the student has become a living example of the right mentality, determines how deep he can penetrate into the laws of Nature. Hence the adage that “discipline precedes the mysteries”. Building a compassionate and universal vision alone is not enough,

the student will actually have to live by the consequences of that vision.

This mentality and discipline are represented in part one by means of a vow that the E.S. members had to take, and on the basis of the 7 Pāramitās, the seven virtues that must be practiced. Both as part of the training for the student to practice selflessness and putting themselves in the service of others.

The Seven Pāramitās

DĀNA, the key of charity and love immortal.

SHĪLA, the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action.

KSHĀNTI, patience sweet, that nought can ruffle.

VIRĀGA, indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived.

VĪRYA, the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial.

DHYĀNA, whose golden gate once opened leads the *Narjol* [Naljor] toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation.

PRAJÑĀ, the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a Bodhisattva, son of the *Dhyānis*.⁽²⁾

The fact that even for the practice of these virtues, having the right motive is a prerequisite, is shown by the following words of H.P. Blavatsky from *The Voice of Silence*, which De Purucker cites when introducing the Pāramitās:

To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious virtues is the second.⁽³⁾

The Esoteric or Oriental school

If the pupil then meets the right criteria, when he has developed the right motive, the right mental attitude and the right discipline to be admitted to the Esoteric School, what does the teaching that he receives look like? That is the topic of *Esoteric Teachings* part two: *The Esoteric or Oriental School: Steps in the Initiatory Cycle*. De Purucker begins this part with an explanation of what

the origin of the Esoteric School is: the Hierarchy of Compassion. The primordial source from which universal wisdom, the Theosophia, originates. He describes how this knowledge came to humanity from the inner regions of our universe through the Cosmic Hierarchy of Buddhas of Compassion. Universal wisdom that has regularly been revealed by various Messengers or Teachers and of whom H.P. Blavatsky is best known in recent history.

It was also H.P. Blavatsky who founded the Esoteric Section in 1888, in order to bring together a core of dedicated students of whom she was sure could continue the Theosophical Society and its work. Under the leadership of her successors, this nucleus of E.S. members came under the leadership of G. de Purucker in 1929 through W.Q. Judge and K. Tingley.

Education

The way of teaching is originally based on the same principle: stimulation by the Teacher of what is already present in the pupil. De Purucker says the following about this:

All the mysteries of the Universe lie latent within you: all its secrets and mysteries are there; and, as I have so often said, all progress in esoteric knowledge and wisdom and training is but an unfolding into blossom and fruit of what is already within.⁽⁴⁾

Esoteric education is education in the literal sense of the Latin word *e-ducere*, “leading outwards”, helping to activate what is already latently present within. The Teacher does this by focusing on the higher nature of his pupils and by constantly appealing to their faculty of understanding. It is then up to the students themselves to bring this understanding into fruition on their own and with their own efforts.

So, it is certainly not a matter of “imprinting” wisdom, which is just as impossible as learning to ride a bike for someone else. The Teacher can only inspire; the student must then do the work himself, develop his own spiritual abilities, and while doing so he cannot lean on the Teacher. Part of this training, closely linked to the aforementioned attitude and discipline, is meditation: the exercise of concentrating the mind on higher, universal ideas and pondering over them uninterruptedly. This requires a concentration for which, first of all, all hectic thoughts of a personal nature must be silenced. Silencing the “brain mind” is therefore a means, a prerequisite for starting the actual meditation. In the beginning, it will help to

meditate at fixed times, but ultimately it should be a continuous contemplation; an uninterrupted focus on the universal ideal that needs to be achieved and an acting accordingly. This means constant vigilance to allow only those thoughts and actions that are of the pure quality of that ideal at any time and under any circumstances.

Mystical relationship Teacher pupil

Of course, the role of the Teacher in esoteric education is of the utmost importance. And the Teacher is always there, as a law in nature, according to the fundamental hierarchical structure of the universe. The Hierarchy of Buddhas of Compassion has been briefly mentioned before, a hierarchy also known as the *Guruparamparā*, or the Golden Chain of Hermes: a chain of succession of Teachers that reaches from the inner realms of the cosmos to our planet, and which is ceaselessly active. The Teacher, at every level, is always there and is always ready to teach, but it is up to the pupil to prepare himself, to “make the right knock on the door” to get in touch with the Teacher and be able to receive the teachings. The teacher’s enormous responsibility for passing on esoteric teachings speaks for itself. But there is also a great responsibility on the part of the pupil to treat with great care what he receives. This requires a special bond between the Teacher and the pupil which is described as one that goes beyond that of parent and child. It is a mystical or sacred relationship based on unconditional loyalty and trust.

In addition, the pupil also has a duty to make himself suitable to pass on the knowledge to anyone who knows less than he does. Something that is a logical consequence when you study the teachings from the motive of compassion. Entirely in line with the spiritual Hierarchy of Compassion, it is the duty of the disciple to pass on as much of the Light as he is authorized and capable of. It is a duty whose omission is compared to water, that when it no longer flows, becomes stagnant and thus a breeding ground for moral illness and death.

Goal and destination

The only *raison d’être* of the Theosophical Society is to eliminate the suffering of humanity. It is for this purpose alone that the Theosophical Society was founded in 1875: Esoteric knowledge, which had not been disclosed in tens of thousands of years, was given to humanity. Knowledge that is said to serve as spiritual nourishment for this purpose for the next thousands of years. Keeping the teachings pure and alive is crucial in order to ensure that

they do not degenerate into yet another new religion. To live to benefit mankind and to give all that is in your power to serve humanity, that is the message that De Purucker gives his disciples. Only then the link with the Hierarchy of Wisdom and Compassion will remain unbroken.

Recognizing the Teacher

Finally, how do you recognize an esoteric Teacher? Suppose as De Purucker commences on this subject, someone appears and shows a notarial document, with an impressive seal and a beautiful ribbon, on which is written that he is the new messenger. What is the value of this when a document can be destroyed, forged, set aside or get lost? The recognition of the Teacher is therefore never based on external characteristics, but on the inner faculties of the student to recognize the spiritual quality of the Teacher. Proof of being a true Teacher is not carried in an external document, but within the Teacher himself, in his way of life. A true esoteric Teacher will always be a living expression of those qualities, he will be the living example of compassion, of wisdom, of calmness, of loyalty and of a powerful spiritual will. By the fruits one recognizes the tree. And once again, the student is called upon to his responsibility to develop these qualities within himself so that he can recognize his Teacher. A recognition that no written document can match because it is based on an inner conviction, an inner proof that nothing or no one can ever take away.

References

1. G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric or Oriental School*. Part 1, *The Esoteric Path: its Nature and its Tests*, and part 2, *The Esoteric or Oriental School: Steps in the Initiatory Cycle*. I.S.I.S. Foundation, The Hague 2015.
 2. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*. Fragment III, "The seven portals".
 3. See ref. 2, Fragment II, "The Two Paths".
 4. See ref. 1, part 2, p. 27.
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Emanation in world literature

Our current society seems to know only two answers to the question of how the world came into being: either the world was created by a supreme being or supreme beings, or there is no clear plan, but everything came into being by random, meaningless, mechanical processes. There is another answer, however, which is much more logical and gives meaning to life: emanation. A doctrine found in virtually all religious and philosophical writings in antiquity.

Perhaps it is the most essential question human beings can ask: where do we come from? What is the origin of the cosmos, of the trillions of stars, the countless galaxies? Where does life come from? We launch rockets to planets and asteroids in the hope of finding traces of life. But do we actually know what we are looking for and how to proceed?

The question of where life comes from suggests that it must indeed have come from somewhere. That it has a beginning. Here we already encounter the first bias, for why should it have had a beginning?

Religion speaks of “creation”, by which is meant that the cosmos and life are said to have been created. But what were they made of? And who or what made the creator? Can anything be made out of nothing, as the dogmatic monotheistic religions claim? The idea that life and the cosmos had a beginning is actually quite new; it arose with the rise of these

monotheistic religions. In contrast, several “creation myths” of ancient religions assumed that the creation of the world was an appearance of something that already existed. It was already there, but imperceptible. It comes into being.

Boundless Ocean

The background of all these creation myths is that everything has always existed, and everything will always exist. This is a concept that is very difficult to imagine, especially for people with a Western education, who are familiar from childhood with the idea of the beginning and end of life.

In contrast, imagine a boundless Ocean of Being where there is no shore. Nor is there a bottom or surface. There is only water.

That Ocean represents Life. It is not composed of the matter with which we are familiar. It is composed of what you might call the

Key thoughts

» The substance-consciousness principle is the eternal and limitless foundation of all that exists.

» In the Boundless, a “vibration” commences: a monad prepares to manifest once again.

» From within that vibration – the monad – something flows, to which other monads are attracted. This gives rise to a hierarchical co-operative association of monads, all of whom can gain new experiences.

substance-consciousness principle: living matter or material life. It is spirit and matter as one homogeneous whole. Nevertheless, everything we know stems from, and yes, *is* that Ocean. There are infinite numbers of “ingredients” within it. All those ingredients, every drop, every molecule is life.

That Ocean is the Absolute Reality or boundless SPACE, but these too are but words that attempt to evoke something of an image of the incomprehensibility of Life *per se*. In that boundless SPACE something happens at regular intervals. A process takes place. Something stirs in that Ocean. From within, something awakens.

There are no words in our modern languages that can adequately represent this process. Every word is a metaphor, an image, which never exactly describes what is actually taking place. However, we have no other means than words to represent at least something of that majestic process. Let us therefore call that relatively first beginning a vibration. There have always been vibrations and there always will be. Hence, we speak emphatically of the relatively first vibration. It can never be an absolute first beginning. There can be no absolute beginning or end points in boundlessness. Therefore, the vibration that arises is the result of an earlier vibration that has come to rest again. It is the cyclic process of activity and passivity. So, every beginning is a beginning anew. Every ripple in the Ocean is the reappearance of a world, a cosmos, a being. That is the point where the process of emanation begins.

Monads

That vibration as such is not emanation. Emanation literally means flowing forth, effluxion or outpouring. From what should that vibration emanate? That vibration is a point, a vortex of and in that boundless Ocean. It is nothing but a ripple. You could also call that vibration a reflection or a radiant drop: the drop of water reflecting the entire Ocean. Therefore, in its core, that ripple is as boundless as the Ocean of Boundlessness of which it is a part.

Anyone who makes an unbiased study of the various religious writings of world literature notices that this vibration has been given different names. Pythagoras and others spoke of a monad. In Hindu writings you find terms like Ātman and Paramātmān. You might call it a Spark of Infinity or a Spiritual Seed. Names, however, are not important. There are voluminous books written about the exact meaning of these different names, which in themselves can be very instructive, because they expand

our vision. But in its deepest essence, we can never fully understand that first vibration, because it is essentially boundless.

Emanation

The process that is going to take place when the Ocean has been stirred and the ripple has been created is what we call emanation. How should one picture that?

The monad, that spiritual essence – or whatever name you want to give to that ripple – causes something to emerge from itself, something that will develop into a cosmos: a stream of smaller ripples, smaller waves that are not outside the first wave, but form the more outer parts of it; waves within a wave. The metaphor we often use in this is that something flows - emanates - from the monad. It is that outflowing stream that brings even more stirring into the boundless Sea of BEING. It evokes still more other, smaller ripples, sub-currents.

The Source Monad or the first vibration is connected to other monads from the Ocean: monads that express less of the boundless potentials of the infinite possibilities. We say that those monads are less developed, have “unwrapped” or “unfolded” less of the possibilities from within themselves. In their essence, monads are admittedly identical to each other. They are all reflections of the boundlessness. They differ only in the degree to which they have unwrapped their inherent powers and capabilities.

To use another metaphor, the monad gives rise to an electric current from within itself, which generates an electric field in the Ocean, to which other, less developed monads – which are, of course, equally part of that same Ocean – are attracted. Thus, in a collaborative process, a vehicle is constructed. That vehicle is not the monad itself – the “first” ripple in the Ocean – but the countless other monads that have grouped themselves around that current.

This is suggested as if those less advanced monads emanated or flowed forth from the “first” monad. But even that “emanated from” should not be taken literally as if one being could create other beings; it is metaphorical. The less developed monads belong to the “source”, the “main monad”, because they have a corresponding affinity. After all, they have collaborated with that “main monad” on numerous occasions in previous periods of existence, when a ripple had also been created in the Ocean. The greater the corresponding characteristic is, the closer the cooperation is with the monad that caused the ripple in the Ocean.

Thus, with the help of countless other monads, the “main monad” makes a vehicle – a soul or focal point of consciousness as we call it – through which it can gain experiences and thereby grow in consciousness. That is, it can come to a greater knowledge and greater awareness of that shoreless Ocean in which it is a ripple.

Hierarchies

Now the Ocean of Life has many layers. There are, in other words, many “divisions” which, although made up of the same water, are all in a different state, just as ice, liquid water and water vapor are made up of the same H₂O molecules but differ from each other in state.

The first vehicle – the first soul – which constitutes the monad is the noblest. We call it the divine soul. It has the greatest range of consciousness. That vehicle, too, stirs in the Ocean, or, to use the same metaphor as before, causes a current to flow forth from itself, generating an “electric field” which attracts other monads that have a corresponding characteristic. Such a vehicle-soul functions like a transformer that transforms the electric current to a different voltage.

You have to realize that all those monads are part of the same Ocean and therefore have always been there. In this way, in that sphere – let us call it the spiritual sphere – a vehicle-soul is also formed, which also functions as a transformer. Then the current “descends” still further, into that sphere of the Ocean which we can call the thinking plane, in which something is stimulated to activity and a vehicle-soul is formed: a vehicle-soul with again a somewhat lesser range of consciousness. And also, that vehicle-soul stirs the Ocean at a still slightly “lower” area and in the same manner an “animal soul” is formed, and the relative resting or ending point is that plane – that segment of the Ocean – which we call the physical world: the world which we humans, living on this planet Earth, can perceive with our senses.

It is through the process of emanation that a hierarchy of life emerges, with the more advanced beings being the basis for the less advanced. Not in the sense that they created the others, but because of their present activity they allow something to emanate, to radiate, a certain field, through which dormant monads – all part of the same Ocean – were awakened.

Religions and myths

Anyone who can more or less imagine this grand emanation process will find this image quite easily in the world’s

religious literature, although the metaphors used often differ and the clarity is not always the same. All so-called creation stories – whether you take them from India, Africa, the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, or take the ancient myths of the Native Americans or those of Christianity, – are always emanation stories. Something that already exists is re-expressed through a process of emanation. It appears on the external plane, within a field or sphere that causes something else to emerge from itself.

Often however, over the centuries the imagery has lost its power or the meaning behind the myth has been lost. The imagery is misinterpreted. Every time the so-called “creation stories” are placed outside of man, as if it were a process that takes place outside of us, there is degeneration. Then a doctrine emerges of a god or gods who are outside their own creation. Unbiased study of the original texts, however, makes it clear that the creation of the cosmos and man is always a process of “rolling out”: what is inside flows forth. We would like to give some examples of this.

Bhagavad-Gītā (Hinduism)

Hinduism, unlike the monotheistic religions, teaches the cyclical appearance of worlds. Nevertheless, even in this religion there are priests or believers who speak of creation in the sense of making a world out of nothing. However, there are numerous texts that contradict this. Let us turn to the holiest book of the Hindus: the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Says Krishna:

The entire Universe is permeated with My invisible form;
All beings are from Me, but I am not from them.

Yet all beings are not in Me;
behold My divine Mystery:
Myself causing the existence of beings
and sustaining all, yet not abiding in them.
As the mighty air pervades everywhere and is in Ākāśa,
know that in the same way all beings are in Me.⁽¹⁾

In another chapter Krishna says:

This whole Universe I brought into being
from only a part of Myself
and yet remain separate from it.⁽²⁾

The process of emanation is easily recognized. Krishna, the monad, the ripple in the Ocean, generates something, emanates from himself a stream of life. That stream “de-

scends” through a number of links, locks, transformers – the various formed vehicle-souls – and finds its relative end point in this material world.

The whole Universe comes from Krishna and yet he remains separate from it, for he remains in his own sphere. In this connection Krishna is sometimes compared to a sun, which sends out its rays in all directions, but itself remains in its own area. You must not think of these rays as merely physical, but see them as bundles of life, stirrings in the Ocean.

Nevertheless, Krishna supports the cosmos that he has given shape to with only a part of himself, namely in the sense that he is the force behind or in all those different manifestations. He works through and in those different beings. He has brought them to activity.

Are we not humans actually doing the same thing, albeit on a lower level? When a human being is born, when he awakens from the dreams, he dreamt in the dream world which we call death, he also causes a ripple, he also creates an atmosphere. To that atmosphere all the elements are attracted, who have the same kind of characteristic as he has.

Let us look at the physical body, that is always the easiest for us, because we can observe it. The ovum has been fertilized. A focal point has been created in the physical area, and all the living building blocks are attracted to it, all those atoms and cells that build the vehicle of the human being who is going to be born. The human soul gives birth to and permeates the body, gives birth to it, emanates it, but still remains separate from it. After all, he is not his body. Yet that “whole body”, the “physical mini-cosmos” that is the body with all the building blocks that compose it, is permeated by the human being. Yet the human being is not in the body, is not in the cells and atoms. They are in man, but man is not in them.

Avatamsaka Sūtra (Buddhism)

The idea of emanation is also found in Buddhism, especially in Mahāyāna Buddhism, though of course in Buddhist terms. Moreover, you often find attached to the teaching the idea that every human being – an emanation of the relatively Highest Buddha, what we called above the first ripple in the Ocean of Being – can expand his consciousness to the level of that first Buddha.

The excerpt below is from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (Flower Garland Sūtra). This sacred Buddhist text paints a picture of the intertwining of the One (the Supreme Buddha) with the vast differentiation of beings in all stages of

development, called *dharma*s. “Dharma” is a Sanskrit word that can be translated as Law or Duty, as well as the individual duty of each being, and in that sense, each manifested entity. Are we far wrong if we conceive of the “World Honored One”, or the relatively Supreme Buddha, as the first ripple in the Ocean, and all the dharmas, as the ripples he generated? Moreover, it is clear from this text that he considers it his compassionate duty to raise all those dharmas – all those other beings – to his level.

At that time, the World Honored One, seated on this throne, had realized Utmost, Proper Enlightenment in regard to all dharmas. His wisdom entered the three periods of time as completely level and equal. His body filled all worlds. His sound reached each and every land of the ten directions, just as space contains all things, yet does not differentiate among them; or as space pervades everywhere, impartially entering all lands. His physical form, eternal and ubiquitous, was seated in all bodhimandas. [= state of awakening, or stage of development; B.V.]

In the midst of the Bodhisattva multitudes, the Buddha emitted awesome, magnificent light, as when the rising sun illuminates the whole world. The great ocean of the multitudes of blessings cultivated in the three periods of time had already been purified, and yet he constantly manifested birth in all Buddhalands. His boundless physical marks were perfect and full. His radiance pervaded the Dharma Realm equally and without discrimination. His proclamation of all Dharmas resembled a great cloud spreading out. His every hair tip accommodated all worlds without obstruction. On each he manifested the power of measureless spiritual penetrations to teach, transform, tame, and subdue all sentient beings. His body filled the ten directions, neither coming nor going. His wisdom penetrated all phenomena and fathomed the emptiness and stillness of all dharmas. Every spiritual transformation of all Buddhas of the three periods of time without exception was visible within that light, and all adornments of the lands of all Buddhas throughout inconceivable eons were completely manifest therein.⁽³⁾

The Bible

The process of emanation can also be found in the Judeo-Christian writings, albeit you have to look a little closer. This is necessary on the one hand because the translations of the Old Testament Hebrew of the Bible, whether consciously or not, often violate the original meaning of the texts. On the other hand, centuries of

anthropomorphic interpretation make it difficult for us to objectively assess imagery, because the language of the Bible is not meant to be taken literally.

Despite all this, you can recognize the process of emanation. Take the first verse of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, as an example. It says that the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. What are these waters? And what is the Spirit of God? Don't you see clearly here the picture of the Ocean – or at least one of its “subdivisions” – being in a state of inertia or rest? It is that Spirit of God who passes through the waters like a vibration, stirring the already present “drops of water” – the dormant entities – into activity or life.

Moreover, if you know that the word “God” is a mistranslation of the Hebrew “Elohīm” – a plural word, which should therefore be translated as gods – then the image of a creating god who resides outside his own creation disappears like snow in the sun and gives way to the image of emanation: stirring in the Ocean, with the result that a hierarchy of monads comes back to life.

Ādam – man or humanity – is also not “created” in the literal sense of the word if you understand the text of Genesis correctly. He is (or they are) made in the shadow image (*tselem* is the Hebrew word) of the Elohīm. Humans are the shadows, the projections, or emanations of the gods.⁽⁴⁾ That life emanates in stages, step after step, is explained very clearly in the hierarchies found in the Jewish Kabbalah. The ancient symbol of the tree with its roots in heaven is given in Jewish symbolism the name of Sephiroth, a word meaning emanation. The Sephiroth tree is rooted in En-Soph (the boundless). The roots of that tree are another metaphor for what we called above the relatively first ripple. From those roots emanates, rolls out, a tenfold hierarchy.

The idea of emanation was so widely known at the birth of Christianity, that the ecclesiastical authorities spared no expense to stamp it out, because it was contrary to the newly made ecclesiastical dogmas.⁽⁵⁾

Greeks and Gnostics

Greek mythology has a similar picture to that of Genesis. There is the Chaos. What is meant by Chaos? According to Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (Book 1), it is a lifeless, undefiled lump. It is also represented as Emptiness or the Abyss, but nevertheless it is something where all the seeds are stored that can later grow into existing things. It is further spoken of as Space. It seems as if the Greeks – and later the Romans – were looking for words to express

this idea, just as we still search for the right expressions and have to use words like Ocean and Sea to indicate the boundless.

In any case, it is clear that when some motion surges in the Chaos, the hierarchical cosmos – the world order – is brought into being. Not created, but reawakened.

Gnosticism has yet another metaphor to explain the idea of emanation, as is abundantly clear from the texts found at Nag Hammadi in the desert sands of Egypt. The process of emanation is described in often highly imaginative and pictorial myths.

At the top of that hierarchy is GOD the Father, which is the Gnostic expression for the boundless, for what we called the Ocean. Indeed, God the Father is described only in negations, that is, all that is said of him is what he is not. He has no boundaries, no properties, or qualities, has no size, no form, it is not a being.⁽⁶⁾ If you strip something of all its properties, you have nothing but a Principle, an Abstraction, an Idea, a “mythical Ocean”. From and in that boundlessness, then, a hierarchy of beings arises through the process of emanation. In other words, “somewhere” in that boundlessness there is a primordial point – our vibration – through which a being breaks through again, so to speak, from the unseen, from the unmanifest, into the manifested world and thus causes the turmoil in the Ocean.

The various emanations are called *aeons* in Gnosticism. Aeons are worlds and beings. This makes sense because each world is a being. Each aeon in its turn is the source from which a lesser developed aeon arises. Thus, a great number of hierarchies of aeons arises, many hierarchically ordered rows of aeons, of worlds.

Koran

Those who have the eyes to look behind the letters will also find the idea of emanation in Islam. One of the most quoted verses from the Quran is the so-called Verse of Light, “*al-Nur*”, (verse 35 in sura 24):

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, (and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not – light upon light.

First of all, this verse reveals that Allah is something else than the personal God as many Muslims see Him. Could

Allah (the ALL) not be the same as God the Father of the Gnostics, something devoid of all attributes and qualities? The so-called Shahada, the creed of Muslims, points to this: *la ilaha illa llaah*. Usually this is translated as “there is no God but God”, but literally it says: “there is no God, there is one God”. An affirmation and denial in one assertion. Or there is nothing concrete to say about it. The Verse of Light indicates that from spiritual realms (the light of the heavens), through a number of links, life is transformed into lower realms. It is interesting in this regard that the phrase “light beyond light” is found in exactly the same terms by Plotinus, the Neoplatonic philosopher of emanation, who later exerted so much influence on the Sufis.⁽⁷⁾

The idea of emanation is also reflected in the 99 names given to Allah. A name denotes a property. And if someone has a certain property, then he does not have another property. Therefore, attributes – no matter how exalted – always have a certain limitation in them, whereas the Allah-principle is actually limitless. It may seem that with these names the greatness and infinity of Allah is detracted. Many Muslim scholars of ancient times, such as Ibn Al-Arabi, solved this problem as follows. The unity and omnipresence of Allah cannot be disputed. Allah is supreme above all attributes. That is the basic premise. The manifested exists only through properties, through the names of Allah. So, what are those names? They are the emanations that arise when in the Boundlessness – in Allah – a being prepares to manifest. They are the vibrations, flashes of light, rays that arise in the Absolute Unity, which is called Allah.

The doctrine of emanation was so well known in young Islam, that it formed one of the cornerstones of the *Seveners* or *Batinijja*, at the time an influential movement in Islam. One also encounters the idea among many Sufis.

Answers to life questions

We could give many more examples from the religious scriptures in the world. We could refer to the *Popol Vuh* from Guatemala, to Plotinus and other Neoplatonists and, last but not least, to *The Secret Doctrine*, by H.P. Blavatsky, who, using the Stanzas of an ancient Tibetan book, describes the process of emanation. It is like walking through an alpine meadow in spring, where thousands of flowers bloom but of which you may pick only a few. Nevertheless, from those few flowers we can already draw the conclusion that the doctrine of emanation was known in almost all time periods and civilizations and therefore

deserves serious attention even today. Furthermore, this doctrine has an uplifting implication for everyone who draws the consequences from it and tries to apply it in his life.

Contemplating the fact that the cosmos and life are not created, that everything has always been there and keeps reappearing in cyclic movements, gives man invaluable peace of mind. How further uplifting is the realization that we live in a living cosmos! The processes in Nature are guided by intelligences. There are no mechanical processes. Life arises from a spiritual potential.

Finally, it is true that a being can only develop that which is already in him. And since, in principle, everything that exists in boundlessness is within us, we can continue to grow infinitely. However, growth can only occur in conjunction and cooperation with others. It is that growth that explains where we came from, why we are who we are, and provides the perspective of the potential for wisdom and compassion that is still unexplored within us. It is that collaborative growth that gives meaning to life.

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Ubuntu

I am, because we are

In May 2019, Joop Smits held a lecture series on *A universal vision on life*. One conclusion was that true ethics involves thinking and acting according to our own highest, inner vision of life. As we become more aware of the universal unity of all life, we also find more inner harmony. In Africa we find a special philosophy that, through the interconnectedness of people, embodies this universal vision. The lecture *Ubuntu – I am because we are* has been edited for publication.

An African philosophy in which a universal vision of life can be found — that will come as a surprise to some people. After all, for many here in the West, Africa is a continent where mostly bad news has been reported for some time. But people who have lived in Africa for quite some time have told me that Africa is actually doing quite well, despite the bad news we hear from the media.

So with this article on the philosophy of Ubuntu, we want to show that there is no reason for pessimism, because in the roots of their own culture, Africans have all the ingredients for a great civilization.

In those sources they can certainly find the inspiration to build a great and prosperous continent. Some of the thoughts that they also apply in practice can certainly serve as an example for Western countries. Of course, we hear the news about dictatorship, strife, and famine — sometimes it seems like a lost continent

— but there is reason for hope. Our image is distorted because the history of the African continent as we know it was written primarily by Europeans. Our image of Africa can therefore be called a modern myth, invented by white Westerners who often imagine themselves as superior.

Colony

The name Africa originates from the Phoenicians and means “colony” or “win region”. Interest in the African continent was only awakened when labor was needed in the colonies, plantations, and mines — resulting in a dark page in human history, that of discrimination and slavery. And that page was very long. Apartheid in South Africa was not abolished until 1990.

The actual history of the African continent is largely shrouded in mist. Fossils show that people have lived on the African continent as far back as some three million years ago, but

Key thoughts

» One definition of Ubuntu is: “The belief in a universally shared Covenant that connects all of humanity”.

» The basic ideas of the Theosophia and Ubuntu are in essence identical.

» Ubuntu-inspired justice focuses on restoring balance and working toward reconciliation.

» Ubuntu philosophy is based on human ethics.

very little is known about it. Only about the northern part – particularly Egypt – do we know anything more. Almost nothing is known about sub-Saharan Africa because, as far as we *now* know, no peoples have lived there who knew a script.

Africa has a wide variety of human types, from giant, tall, dark people to very small people with light skin tones. There have also been constant migrations on this continent — in 500 AD, for example, the Bantu people moved south from Sudan, spreading across much of Africa.

The continent had some very well-organized kingdoms in its history, for example Ethiopia in the 4th century AD (with a very mixed population); Ghana and Dahomey (present-day Benin) which flourished in the 11th century; and in the 14th century the kingdom of Mali. That African civilization was not as primitive as many may think. But because of the often aggressive influence from the northern parts of Africa, by Europeans with a Christian background and also by Muslims, it did not get the chance to develop further during many centuries.

Malaika

Now, in general, the evolution of all peoples on earth always shows forerunners and laggards. Those forerunners are not the great intellectuals, the great scientists and the like, but those who have a much greater awareness of the fundamental unity of life and apply their insights with wisdom for the benefit of society. In every nation you find examples of that kind of wise and compassionate people — including in Africa. In Swahili, the main language of eastern Africa, such a rare compassionate person is called a *Malaika*, which we in the West translate as “angel”.

The Theosophia states that each group of people is inspired by a group of highly evolved beings, known as the Order of Wisdom and Compassion. This is also the case on the African continent, as is evident if we study all the traces of esoteric knowledge that can be found in the thousands of stories of the African peoples.

In order to illuminate the deeper background of African culture and the contemporary philosophy of Ubuntu in relation to the ancient Theosophia, we will first briefly summarize the three key thoughts of Theosophy. We can then make comparisons to better understand Ubuntu philosophy.

The three basic theosophical thoughts are:

- *Boundlessness* – There is one Life Principle that is the basis for everything. It is boundless, so any qualifi-

cation would limit it. The ONE, the All; and as the *Tao Te Ching* says: the Tao that can be named is not the true Tao. Because the Boundless is omnipresent, every being in its deepest spiritual core is equal to the Boundless. Everything is life or consciousness.

- *Cyclic motion* – All life moves in a cyclic process of manifestation and withdrawal. The consequence for human beings is that we are a composite being with a spiritual, imperishable core, with a soul as the learning part that is the expression of that imperishable core and a body as the transitional part, as the vehicle through which we gain – life after life – experience during manifestation.
- *Fundamental equality and evolution of all beings* – All beings are essentially equal to each other because they are a spark of the boundless life. Each consciousness has endless possibilities for development. With the continuous evolution of all beings, there are various stages of development. In a spiritual hierarchy, the more developed – the wiser – can inspire the less developed.

The World Egg of the Dogon

Let me give a few examples to show what traces of wisdom traditions and esoteric wisdom can be found on the African continent.

For example, there are several African myths about the origins of the world, in which our world and ourselves are of divine origin — therefore we are also basically divine beings. But even in these myths it was already clear that this world is far from paradise. That is why it is also told that something went wrong in the genesis of the world.⁽¹⁾ For example, in the stories of the Dogon from Mali it is imagined that motion first arose in the so-called World Egg, which existed before the Cosmos existed. Just as we know from Indian philosophy the Egg of Brahṁā. In the World Egg of the Dogon, there are no individual beings in the beginning. Then at some point the first being, Amma, arises. This Amma is seen as the architect who produces clouds of stars in great spirals and, like a spider, let a web emanate from himself and thus gives birth to the Cosmos. Amma then gets sons who are called Nommo, divine beings from which, after much development, mankind emerges. Humans are thus the reflections of these divine beings, but during this very long process of genesis, many things go wrong, so that ultimately the earth is not a paradise but a hard learning school. The purpose of this learning school is, however, to come to realize more fully

through self-guided development, that man is indeed also a divine being.

It is striking that this story – which I have briefly outlined – is very similar to the teachings of the Theosophia. And many African peoples have stories that are analogous to the stories of the Dogon.

The Ancient One

A second example comes from P.G. Bowen, an Irishman who worked in southern Africa for some twenty years at the beginning of the last century. At an early age he got to know a wise African, Mehlo Moya, who was a member of a very old brotherhood — and by old I mean that it went back to the time of the first pharaonic dynasties in Egypt. This brotherhood had different degrees, and members of the higher degrees were called “Those who know”. All these wise brothers were under the leadership of “the Ancient One”.⁽²⁾

Bowen, after many years of study, received permission to publish certain fragments of an archaic work written in a very old, disused Bantu language. It was published as *Sayings of the Ancient One*.

With the knowledge Bowen gained in this ancient African fraternity, it becomes clear how much the basic thoughts of Theosophia also resonate in it.

- The first idea in this African philosophy is *Itonga*, which to ordinary man is explained, in simple words, as “the spirit of the tribe”. But it has the more profound meaning of the spirit that pervades all life and

from which everything springs. Man is a spark of Itonga — his deepest, imperishable core is Itonga and therefore all human beings are spiritually brothers, emanated from the same Oneness. There is connectedness of all beings. This description is essentially the same as the first basic idea of the Theosophia: the Boundless.

- The second idea is the concept of the cyclic motion of all beings, or reïmbodiment; with man as a composite being, consisting of the imperishable core denoted by Itonga, with a learning part *Idhlozi* — which in the Theosophia is the soul that comes to earth cyclically to gain experience, and the vehicle for it, the body: *Umzimba*. This cyclical process of reincarnation continues until, after this long learning process, man realizes that in the depths of his being he is Itonga, connected in unity with all other beings.
- The third idea is that all beings are equal – including all human beings – but differ in their stage of development, and that is the reason why there is a spiritual hierarchy. From this also comes the idea that the wisest in a tribe, the *Chief*, is the one who should inspire others. Thus we see very clearly how this ancient African philosophy is essentially the same as what the Theosophia teaches. Especially when we consider that within this brotherhood also the sevenfold composite nature of man was taught.⁽³⁾

The Ubuntu-philosophy

Now let us have a further look at the philosophy of

Theosophia	Ancient African wisdom
1. Boundlessness <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>everything is alive, is consciousness</i>• <i>connectedness of all beings</i>	1. Itonga: “Spirit of the tribe” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Itonga – Universal Spirit – is the essence of all beings</i>• <i>connectedness of all beings</i>
2. Cyclic Motion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>composition: spirit, soul, body</i>• <i>immortal spirit</i>• <i>reincarnation of man</i>	2. Cyclic motion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>composition: spirit, soul (<i>Idhlozi</i>), body (<i>Umzimba</i>)</i>• <i>immortal spirit</i>• <i>reincarnation of man</i>
3. Fundamental equality and evolution of all beings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>all beings are equal</i>• <i>evolution of all beings</i>• <i>spiritual hierarchy: the wisest inspires</i>	3. Fundamental equality and evolution of all beings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>all beings are equal</i>• <i>evolution of all beings</i>• <i>spiritual hierarchy: the wisest inspires (the Chief)</i>

Ubuntu. According to Wikipedia, Ubuntu is generally described as an ethical or humanistic philosophy from sub-Saharan Africa that focuses on devotion and relationships among people.

Many different translations of Ubuntu are possible, including: “Being One”, “Humanity towards others”, “I am because we are” – the sub-title of this article – and “becoming human through others”. Another commonly used definition is, “The belief in a universal shared covenant that binds all humanity together”.

Ubuntu is particularly seen in the countries in Africa where Bantu languages are spoken. Now the meaning of the word *bantu* is “person” or “human being”. But because *bantu* as a word has become quite tainted because of the apartheid regime’s use of the name in South Africa for some groups, the original meaning has become blurred. The attached illustration shows the distribution of Ubuntu and the Bantu languages. As mentioned, Swahili is a very important Bantu language in Eastern Africa; in Central and Southeast Africa you have the ancient Gikūyū, Lingala and Luganda, in Southern Africa Xhosa and Swasi and in Western Africa, for example, Ibibio. These are very different languages, like the ones we have in Europe in a relatively much smaller area. Ubuntu is centuries old and gained a lot of prominence especially in the second half of the last century, not least because of developments in South Africa.



Tutu and Mandela

South African archbishop and human rights activist Desmond Tutu defines Ubuntu this way⁽⁴⁾: “Someone with Ubuntu is open to and is accessible to others, dedicates itself to others, does not feel threatened by the talents of others because he or she has enough confidence from knowing that he or she is part of a larger whole and is wincing when others are humiliated or when others are tortured or suppressed”.

Tutu chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that worked for a peaceful society after the end of apartheid.

Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-apartheid fighter and later president, said of Ubuntu: “Ubuntu-philosophy is a philosophy of life. Spiritual life force connects the man with his society and nature. The reality is a dynamics of interacting forces. The quest for restoration of harmony and peace in a fragmented world is a crucial purpose. Ubuntu is conciliatory”.

On YouTube you can see an interview⁽⁵⁾ with Nelson Mandela in which this statement is expressed. When the interviewer indicates that he – Mandela – is seen as the personification of Ubuntu, Mandela first gives an example of how, in earlier times, when you traveled through the country and you arrived in a village, you didn’t have to ask for food and drink. You just got that automatically from the people where you ended up. He goes on to indicate that Ubuntu is much more than that. Such a sense of community also makes demands on yourself: you must always work for the welfare and development of the community. If you participate in this way, it is an important contribution to society. Not without reason does the video end with the keyword *unselfishness* as the meaning of Ubuntu.

The Elders

After his presidency, Nelson Mandela was one of the initiators of *The Elders*, a world council of prominent people founded in 2007 to help solve global problems and conflicts, with Ubuntu as a hallmark. Wikipedia speaks of “the idea of the traditional sages of villages as a basis.” In addition to Mandela and Tutu, this international group included former US president Jimmy Carter and UN chief Kofi Annan. Another former UN leader, Ban Ki-moon, is still Vice President, as is Mandela’s widow, Graça Machel, and former Irish President Mary Robinson is currently President.

Since their inception, The Elders have been particularly

active in mediating conflicts and preventing escalations. Unfortunately, this does not always lead to success, as, for example, in the attempts to prevent the conflict in Syria. But they continue to keep alive the idea of helping communities based on the Ubuntu philosophy.

Ubuntu and the ancient African philosophy

The South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose has written a standard work on Ubuntu: *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*.⁽⁶⁾ Ramose is a professor at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and is also a well-known thinker in Western Europe. Ramose makes it clear in his book that Ubuntu has some important ingredients of ancient African philosophy in it but is in some ways a slightly more limited reflection of it.

We just compared the three core ideas of Theosophia with ancient African wisdom; we now make that same comparison between ancient African wisdom and Ubuntu.

- If we dissect the word Ubuntu, *ubu* can be translated as “being in general” or “the all-encompassing,” and *ntu* means “the concrete manifestation of being in the material world”. The idea of being one, being part of a greater whole – such as of nature and the community of people – has been very purely and

clearly preserved in Ubuntu philosophy. We also find this in the expression “I am because we are” and in the saying in Sotho which reads: *motho ke motho ka batho* – a person is a person through other people – which means as much as: to be human is to affirm and respect your humanity by recognizing the humanity of other people and on that basis to establish relationships with other people.

- Ubuntu simultaneously indicates *to be* and *to become*, with which we also clearly find the concept of cyclic movement. As we know the idea *panta rhei* from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: “everything flows”, everything is always in a state of development. This is something very characteristic of Ubuntu philosophy. Ramose also speaks of the “becoming being”, noting that these are cyclical processes that are connected through cause and effect. In this dynamic development we must learn to come into harmony with others and with nature. The notion of this continuous movement is of course also strongly found in the culture of Africa, the rhythm of dance and the experience of art and music. In the light of cyclicity, we must note that in Ubuntu *not* by definition, reincarnation is assumed. Ubuntu considers man as a composite being — not in the form

Ancient African wisdom	Ubu-ntu
1. Boundlessness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>everything is alive, is consciousness</i> • <i>connectedness of all beings</i> 	1. Ubuntu Ubu-: “being in general” and ntu: concrete manifestation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Motho ke motho ka batho” [Sotho] <i>“a person is a person through other people”</i> → <i>collectivity</i> • <i>being part of a larger whole: people and nature</i>
2. Cyclic motion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>composition of man: spirit, soul (Idhlozi), body</i> • <i>immortal spirit</i> • <i>reincarnation of man</i> 	2. Cyclic motion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>composition of man: spirit/soul, body</i> • <i>immortal part: soul</i> • <i>all is continuously in (cyclic) motion (pantha rei)</i>
3. Fundamental equality and evolution of all beings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>all beings are equal</i> • <i>evolution of all beings</i> • <i>spiritual hierarchy: the wisest inspires</i> 	3. Fundamental equality and evolution of all beings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • batho: <i>mutual respect and compassion</i> • <i>evolution of all beings: taking care of each other and nature; solidarity</i> • <i>spiritual hierarchy: the wisest inspires (chief)</i> • <i>support via LeKgotla</i>

of spirit, soul and body but exclusively in the form of soul and body. One speaks of the immortality of the soul and not of the immortality of the spirit. Ubuntu has a tradition of ancestor worship. From our theological point of view, we think it originated in the same way it did in ancient China. Initially, the gods were worshipped with the understanding that they were the source of the earliest humans and therefore were considered their “ancestors,” and humans were a “reflection” of them. But eventually this degenerated into the worship of recent generations of ancestors.

- For the fundamental equality and evolution of all beings, the term *batho* is important in several Bantu languages. It has the meaning of mutual respect and compassion. Taking care of each other, taking care of nature, being in solidarity with each other is paramount. But, also the hierarchical idea that in development there are differences between people and that *therefore* the wisest should act as chief. The wisest is also found in the *LeKgotla*, or gotla. These are meetings where the adults of the tribe get together under the leadership of the *Chief*, where issues and policies are exchanged with each other. In this way, an idea of what should be done is built together, all based precisely on *consensus*. These gotla meetings, in which people want to move forward *together*, are really a foundation under the whole Ubuntu philosophy. We'll go into this in more detail.

The dialogue in the gotla

How does Ubuntu take shape now in society, for example in governance, politics, justice, and economics? In any case it gives a very different picture than we are used to in our Western societies. There are interesting ideas in it, from which we can certainly learn something.

Tribal governance is still important in African society. In gotla's, the adults of a tribe or village form a continuous platform for community dialogue. Open communication, policy making and decision making: the goal is that the wisdom and talents of all present are utilized, in other words the *collective* intelligence. Very important and certainly different from the West is the extraordinary effort that is made to come to decisions that everyone can support, so that there is also support for the decision taken.

The guiding principles of the gotla's are very clearly based on the idea of unity, the importance of community and the concern that there is openness, that everyone speaks

out and has no hidden agenda. With humility, everyone really works to build consensus on an issue. In Botswana they use the typical expression “dialogue is the best form of warfare”, which indicates that people are very willing to go to great lengths to reach an agreement with each other. This is in the knowledge that if you do come into conflict with each other, it can lead to violence. The principles of the gotla can be read as follows:⁽⁷⁾

- Every adult has the right to attend the gotla
- Every voice counts
- There is trust in dialogue
- There is respect for the other person
- Stories are a means of communicating a message
- The truth is shared
- There is perceptive listening
- A decision always follows

In the past it were mainly the men who took part in the gotla, but in recent decades emancipation, partly under the influence of the West, has ensured that more women also take their place in the gotla.

In the pure Ubuntu philosophy, the *Chief* - who leads the gotla - is held to high standards. In Botswana, for example, he is *Chief* by the people, which means that he is only in that position with the consent of the people. If he no longer represents their interests well, he can be deposed. Wisdom is required of him, he must be able to listen very carefully, ask the right questions and uncover the truth.

Above all, the *Chief* must lead the way in building a vision, be the unifying factor and ensure that there is an atmosphere of trust. Of course, he is also the one who ensures that real decisions are made in due time. And in addition to the *Chief*, the former tribal elders also have their specific role within the gotla as guardians of wisdom.

Ubuntu versus western governance

In the overview on the next page, I have tried – perhaps a little bluntly – to make a comparison between the Ubuntu approach to governance and our Western habits in this area.

Although somewhat exaggerated, this comparison does show the real differences. In the West, for example, you see parliamentary democracies in which the general interest becomes the subject of political tug of war because different parties have different interests. This is much less the case within the Ubuntu philosophy.

A parliamentary system with “most votes counts” can sometimes be difficult to function, while in the Ubuntu philosophy people talk until a problem is solved. In fact, we see western technical and quirky skills or ego or group interest thinking versus Ubuntu’s ethical, social and confidence-building skills.

Liberation Philosophy

Ubuntu has played a very important role in the process of decolonization of the African continent in recent decades. Where much of Africa was occupied or taken over by Western powers, the Ubuntu philosophy has played the role of an often humanistic liberation philosophy. After all, it was a philosophy rooted in the own African culture, with the wisdom from the own African culture. In this way, African peoples were able to detach themselves from the Western thinking models from the colonial era on the basis of their own *roots*.

This is why Ubuntu is also seen in recent history as the basis for the creation of the current republic of South Africa. People sometimes speak of an African renaissance, with the idea of making decisions by consensus, with a focus on the collective interest and ethics as a guideline. Nelson Mandela was inspired by Ubuntu during his imprisonment on Robben Island and thought about the future of South Africa from this philosophy. It gave him the courage to put the collective interest of white *and* colored people first and thus enter into a conversation

with the white minority government to get rid of the apartheid system. Between his release in 1990 and the first non-racial elections in 1994, South Africa has been on the brink of a bloody civil war for several years. It is precisely through the reconciliation elements in the Ubuntu philosophy that Mandela has been able to prevent such a catastrophe. His reconciliation strategy continues to inspire many to curb major national and international conflicts — even though people are not always able to tap into that inspiration.

Jurisdiction

Also, in the case of jurisdiction, Ubuntu has some strikingly different accents than we are used to in the West. As far as written down, it is central that it concerns the rights and freedoms of the community and not primarily the rights and freedoms of individuals. Moreover, it concerns concrete situations and not certain abstract legal principles as we know them in the West.

Furthermore, it is striking that the *crime* is central and not primarily the *criminal*. As an example I sketch the story of the cow thief.

In a small village, a man is brought in during a gotla meeting. He has stolen cows and is given the opportunity to tell why. The man explains that it has been a difficult year for him and his large family and that in the end he saw no other way but to steal a few cows to feed his family. After a long discussion, the gotla draws the con-

Ubuntu approach	Western approach
Emphasize the common interest: <i>“I am because we are”</i>	Emphasize the individual interest: <i>“I think, so I exist”</i>
Common solutions	Individual solutions
Maximum result for the community	Maximum result for the individual/own group
Rising above personal interest	Seeking for power and influence for one self/own group
Social skills highly developed	Technical skills highly developed
Focus on being human and common good	Focus on one self/own group
Everyone is entitled to attend the LeKgotla	Only invitees are allowed to attend meetings
Process is focused on trust, dialogue, consultation and decisions based on <i>real</i> consensus	Process is focused on negotiation, persuasion (debate), power and <i>alleged</i> consensus

clusion that the man should be helped. He is not given a punishment, but rather a piece of land and four cows. A year later, during a new gotla, the man is brought back in: again he has stolen cows. The man is spoken to again and now the meeting concluded that the community must be protected against the recidivist behavior of this man and that he can therefore no longer be housed in the village.

Of course, it is the question whether it was fair to expel him from the village, but the story shows the principle of condemning and judging the crime and not the criminal. In addition, African law is positive, that is, it is much more about “you will” rather than “you will not”, because it assumes that you should live by the rules of the community as much as possible.

Restoring Balance

The main feature of Ubuntu-inspired justice is to restore balance that has been disturbed between people and – if it can contribute to that process – to work toward reconciliation. From the Theosophia, this image certainly brings to mind Karma, the universal law of cause and effect, also described as the law of restoration of harmony or balance. In this system, therefore, a crime cannot be time-barred. The idea is that an imbalance, even if it is after forty years, still needs to be restored.

Restoration of balance, reconciliation and redress are central concepts in Ubuntu philosophy. The great example of this is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

When Nelson Mandela was released in 1990 and apartheid was abolished, there was a widespread call for justice for all victims of the regime. The idea of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did create a dilemma. Some argued for all criminals to be brought to justice, others for amnesty for all to start a new South Africa with a clean slate and new legislation.

This “all or nothing” was considered a difficult choice, because prosecuting all the perpetrators was an impossible task, and amnesty for all those people was also out of the question. The core idea was: the people want to go through a kind of mental cleansing process in order to bring the truth and injustice to light. Perpetrators had to be told what they were guilty of and the victims had to be able to tell openly what had happened to them. So they came up with the formula that people who had

done things that were unacceptable during the apartheid regime, would tell it in public and explain their role in the system, and then could be eligible for amnesty. This was one side of the equation to get the fullest possible picture of human rights violations.

On the other hand, they wanted victims to tell what had really happened, also to restore their dignity. Subsequently – in the light of the restoration of harmony – compensation arrangements could then be discussed, so that these people could rebuild their lives.

The intention was to deal with as many *cases* as possible and the committee has been working for years, chaired by Desmond Tutu. There were 22,000 claims from victims, but only 2,000 of them were able to tell their story in public. The first major conclusion from the 1998 report was the condemnation of apartheid as a crime against humanity. The second important conclusion, at least as important in the light of restoring the balance, was that the whites who maintained the apartheid regime, as well as those in the ANC who had used a lot of violence, were guilty of violating human rights.

The committee led a long and detailed process that contributed greatly to coming to terms with South Africa’s collective trauma. It is still seen as a success, despite the difficult aspects of the process. It has played a key role in South Africa’s smooth transition from a country with an apartheid regime to a multiracial state. The focus of justice has always been on restoring harmony, compensation, and reconciliation. The example of the committee has been welcomed elsewhere in the world, but the practice has always proved burdensome.

The example of Botswana

How does Ubuntu take shape in a country’s economy? Here, too, it is essential to think in terms of the interests of the community and the collective. We have already seen how the three principles of the Theosophia and the ancient African wisdom can easily be compared. The simple conclusion is that a country benefits from a sustainable economy, both in a material and mental sense. In other words, with respect for nature, with social facilities, fair wages and prices and also respect for beliefs. This is how you establish a sustainable country with Ubuntu. Botswana is a country in which it was said decades ago that the Ubuntu philosophy is really applied. In 2005 magazine *The Economist* proclaimed Botswana as *the best performing economy*, thanks to the use of Ubuntu. Gotla meetings are not only applied in the government

of the country, but also in companies, in order to use the collective thinking power of the employees and to gain support for the policy of a company. At a national level, it has been a multi-party parliamentary republic since 1966. The different tribes of the country have with their *Chiefs* a seat in a form of senate. It is a stable democracy, without widespread violence and without ethnic tensions. The poverty threshold has fallen from 50 to 19 percent in 40 years. One side note is the turmoil that the wealth of gems in the ground brings — this does split the mind of Ubuntu.

Example of human ethics

In this article I have made a comparison between ancient African philosophy and the basic thoughts of the Theosophia — and outlined that they are identical to each other when you consider the three fundamental ideas about the Boundless, the Cyclic Movement, and the fundamental Equality and Evolution of all creatures. The Ubuntu philosophy is a reflection of this. We must, however, conclude that in the elaboration about what life entails, about, for example, cyclicity in the form of reincarnation and about the composition of man, thoughts are missing or can no longer be called theosophical.

But the idea of collectivity where the Wisest lead, the interests of the community, caring for each other, compassion, respect, and solidarity are clearly paramount. The Ubuntu philosophy is based on human ethics and therefore there is no cause for pessimism about Africa. Ubuntu, with its special interpretation of, for example, meetings and justice, can certainly serve as an example for Western countries in the question of how we can grow towards an ethical society in which everyone feels at home. Finally, some thoughts from a very old Bantu script. It reads as follows:

The Ancient One said:

He who walks the PATH OF LIGHT is marked by:

1. COMPASSION: for he understands the Needs of the Weary Animal, the Sorrows of the Child, and the Mind of the Stranger.
2. HARMONY OF THE SOUL: for his Eye perceives Nature, his Heart comprehends Nature, and his Courage enables him to dwell with Nature.

3. SKILL IN ACTION: for he Loves his Work, he Knows his Work, and he Works with Will for no reward.

4. UNIVERSAL VISION: for he loves all things, he is just to all beings, and he serves the Law with gladness.

O my son, when the Marks of True Manhood are engraved in the Substance of your Being, you will ask no more for Knowledge, nor will you crave to possess it, because you will be KNOWLEDGE ITSELF!

Ngsisi kuve hambaseke kahlese! (Follow thou after Peace!)⁽⁸⁾

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2. P.G. Bowen, *Sayings of the ancient One*. Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar/Wheaton 1985. The work is currently only available from antiquarian. See also B. Voorham, “Afrika deel 2, Een verloren continent of een continent met toekomst?” Article in *Lucifer*, Volume 20, February 1998, p. 4-11.
3. See P.G. Bowen, *The Ancient Wisdom in Africa*. Article in *Theosophy*, Vol. 82, No. 10, August 1994, p. 304-308, (Nr. 3 of a three-part series).
4. See [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_\(filosofie\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(filosofie)).
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6. Mogobe Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*. Mond Books Publishers, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1999.
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A comet is a celestial body in its adolescence phase. When a planetary comet endures all the dangers during its wanderings, it develops into a planet.

Theosophy in Nature

The birth process of a planet

How is a planet born? If everything is alive and all beings are cyclically embodying themselves, then solar beings and planetary beings must have something like a birth process as well.

Key thoughts

- » With each rebirth, a being expresses the qualities and abilities which it has developed in previous lives.
- » The birth process proceeds from the spiritual to the most physical part of the being. Every step is an emanation.
- » In this birth process, other beings are essential: they provide the appropriate environment and conditions.
- » The birth of man and planet differs greatly in form but not in essence.

To understand the birth of a being, it is necessary to take consciousness as the driving force behind the process as a starting point. That is the idea on which the whole Theosophia is founded. Then we can discover *the principles* of the birth process, and apply these to the special cases such as a planet and a human being. The birth process is in essence the same for every being, from an atom to a human to a solar system. But the form in which it occurs may be very different, because all beings vary in character and stage of development. The spatial and time scale can also vary enormously. The birth of a cosmic creature for example, takes millions of years. While in the world of an atom, everything goes, in our eyes, tremendously fast.

What is “being born” from a theosophical perspective?

All things are ensouled. All of Nature is made up of beings. So there is no dead matter anywhere. Every being is a focal point of consciousness. That focal point is in its deepest essence everlasting, timeless, eternal. At the

same time, a being is constantly changing: it is constantly evolving in order to learn how to express that deepest core, its own essence. In every life period it gains experiences and learns to develop a little more of its potential.

It is not our physical parents who “make” us, it is also not the gods that create us, but at birth we express ourselves, exactly like we were at the end of our previous life. *We rebecome ourselves.* We cloak ourselves in a body that fits exactly with our character and possibilities.

Other beings are however necessary during our birth: in all processes in nature, we see an interdependence. These beings provide the conditions that are suitable for us: a protective and stimulating environment that suits our character. For example, we humans are born within the sphere of influence of the planetary being Earth, within the sphere of a particular community of people and within the sphere of influence of a man and a woman, our parents. Our parents are the channels or gates through which we can express ourselves on

this external plane. But they only facilitate, they do not create us. We are attracted *to them* because they are the optimal match: our character is similar to their character.

The initiation of the birth process

In the theosophical literature a lot of fascinating information on the birth process of a cosmos, solar system, and human being can be found.⁽¹⁾ We will now give an outline of the principles.

The process of birth begins much earlier than many people think. For what we see of the birth process with our physical eyes is only the very last step, the growth of a physical instrument (body). But the birth process already begins much earlier, during the period between two lives. After reaching of the, for that being, most spiritual rest phase during its death, the process of “going inwards” turns around, and that same consciousness now flows out step by step. It forms focal points – centers of life, consciousness and substance – on all planes of existence. Firstly in the spiritual realm, then in the mental, and so on, until finally the physical realm is reached. So birth actually takes place *from the inside out*. With the words “inside” and “outside” we here mean different spheres of existence, from the for us most ethereal to the most physical. These spheres of existence permeate each other, they do not lie spatially within or above each other.⁽²⁾

Emanation

Each rebirth is a process of *emanation*: an outflow of consciousnesses into more external worlds.⁽³⁾ If a consciousness wants to manifest in a sphere that is one step more material, it makes a connection with a focal point that is already present on that lower plane. That focal point was dormant for some time, passive, like a dormant seed of a plant in the ground. Through the stimulus given by the ray of consciousness, this center becomes highly active, attracting countless less advanced beings which gradually build “the instrument”, the living center or body on that particular plane. Those lower, relatively primitive beings become the living building blocks of that material instrument.

Birth of a planet

We humans are able to see the last phase of each birth process: in which the physical instrument is formed. So, astronomers can follow the physical birth of a planet thanks to their telescopes. Their observations confirm the theosophical explanation, that we look to a process of

emanation. We indeed first see the formation of a magnetic focal point.⁽⁴⁾ This takes place in one of the “nurseries” of our galaxy, as the astronomers correctly say. That is a good name, because there the conditions for planetary births are optimal. Those conditions are no coincidence, but brought about by cosmic beings, among which the entity that ensouls the Milky Way, our galaxy.

This magnetic center draws gaseous materials towards itself. Remember: gases are not “dead” but are entities of a relatively low grade of evolution. From these huge clouds of gas, a semi-ethereal nebula is created. That nebula starts to rotate and gradually becomes more materialized. Subsequently the nebula starts to move and in time becomes a comet. In doing so, it passes several solar systems within our galaxy, during a very long journey. In each solar system, it gathers those elements that belong to it. Finally, the comet arrives at the spot in the galaxy where it belongs, karmically speaking. A planetary comet for example returns to the solar system which was also *his* solar system in his previous life cycle. A solar comet will return to the constellation of solar systems of which it was part of, in its previous embodiments. It will form a young solar system within that constellation.

Once the planetary comet has arrived, safe and well, into its own solar system, the comet gradually transforms itself into a planet. Its orbit becomes ever more circular-shaped, while its globe becomes more material. Young planets consist of more ethereal matter than adult planets. Planets such as Saturn and Jupiter are young, they are still in their early childhood. Their substances therefore have relatively ethereal characteristics.

Birth of a man

Do we recognize emanation also at human birth?

Definitely. What is happening? The ray of consciousness of the incarnating ego makes contact with a matching sperm and egg cell, or more precisely, with the two cellular entities working in and behind the sperm and egg cell. In some cases, this leads to fertilization. The fertilized egg cell is in fact the magnetic center that has been discussed before. That one cell attracts countless other cell beings and atomic beings, who all have one thing in common: they are attracted to the characteristic of that human-to-be. The father and mother play of course an essential role in the fertilization. Furthermore, the mother is needed as a protective sphere during embryonic growth. In fact, for nine months, the mother functions as a *canal* and a workplace: the entities that the magnetic center of the

embryo attracts, go via the mother to the embryo.⁽⁵⁾

Once the child is born, the parents and all the other people who are involved in the education, have an important protective and stimulating role, until the child is fully mature or adult.

Adulthood means that the human ego has reactivated all aspects of its character and abilities, including its moral and intellectual abilities. Only then it will be able to make its choices independently and responsibly in life.

Can you compare the birth process of man and planet?

Comparing the birth of humans and planets is not so easy, because of the present reproduction method of humanity: with separate sexes, with a father and a mother. We do not find separate genders in planetary beings, there are no male or female planets. In humans, we also see a period of pregnancy within the physical body of the mother. We do not see that in planets either: physical planetary globes do not get physical “baby planets”.

According to Theosophy, this division in women and men is a peculiarity of our *current* phase of evolution. It is temporary.

Before that division in genders took place, about twenty million years ago, we humans carried both sexes in us. And before that we were completely genderless. Our bodies looked very different then: much more spherical and ethereal than they are today. In that first, genderless state, we initially reproduced by division and later by budding. In the future, and not even that far in the future, we humans will use a nobler, less animal way of reproduction. Then there will be no more women and men, but only humans. In that period, we will also have learned to see each other as reincarnating, spiritually growing human beings and we will put less value to the superficial differences between humans.

Can we still find a parallel between planet and man? Sure, but this parallel becomes much more evident if we compare planetary birth to the ancient human reproduction methods: division and button formation. Planets and suns are born because they pull a part of a cosmic cloud towards themselves and gradually split that part off from the totality. You can indeed compare that to cell division or button formation, on a cosmic scale. The analogy is also evident if we look to the many lower organisms on earth, who usually reproduce by division or button formation. We may mention the single-celled beings and many plant species.

The planetary and human embryo

Another parallel between the birth of man and a planet is: the human embryo also passes through a nebula, comet and planet stage, on a very small scale, of course. At first, a lump of cells is created from the fertilized egg cell, in which hardly any structure can be discovered. That is the nebula phase. As structures gradually appear, the embryo travels through the fallopian tube towards the uterus. That is the comet phase.

Once it has arrived in the womb, the embryo is attracted to a specific part of the uterine surface, where it then “roots”. That is how the planet phase begins.⁽⁶⁾

The fact that we are dealing here with a parallel, with a similarity, is also evidenced by the fact that the embryonic phase is the most vulnerable phase in both humans and planets. The attempt to be born fails quite frequently. Astronomers recently discovered that many comets are being swallowed by suns if they do not have the right speed and direction to get safely through a solar system. And we also know that many young embryos die as they travel through the fallopian tube and uterus, usually due to internal weaknesses. In all these kinds of failed births, the underlying consciousness will make another attempt to be born in a relatively short time.

The parents and teachers of planet and man

When a baby is born, childhood begins. Parents, family members, siblings, friends, teachers, and so on, will all, through the interaction with the developing child, help with its physical, psychological and spiritual maturation. But among that large number of people involved, there is often only a small amount that has an exceptionally large influence. For example, an uncle who awakens a musical talent in his cousin. Or someone who awakens idealism in a young person. But it can also be someone who stimulates certain character elements in us “through resistance, through struggle”. For example, someone with whom we do not get along, so that we learn how to deal with people with other characters, or learn to think independently, and so on.

Planetary beings are influenced by literally all cosmic beings in the Milky Way, but for planets there is also a number of entities playing an essential role. Those are certain groups of stars, the solar being of the solar system to which that planet belongs, and seven specific, other planets of that solar system. These seven planets “monitor” the developing planet. They have a strong stimulating influence during all the planets’ phases of growth.⁽⁷⁾

These seven are in the theosophical literature often referred to as “the sacred planets” of a particular planet. Five of the seven sacred planets of our planet Earth are: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. And then we do not mean the physical spheres under that name, but the cosmic beings that work through these spheres. That list of seven also includes the sun and the moon, as we may find in old scriptures. But we should not take these words “sun” and “moon” literally; they refer to two invisible planets — but explaining that is now a side path.

In short, a planetary being also needs educators who directly supervise and stimulate the development of his own character. And just as with humans, there are *more than two*.

Misconceptions around the word “reproduction” ...

We started our article by saying why we included this topic in the series “Theosophy in Nature”. Many people wish to investigate whether a planetary being meets all the characteristics of a living being, characteristics we also find in all other beings. They often phrase their question as: “How does a planet reproduce?” After all, the biologists see “reproduction” as one of life’s characteristics, although there is also a lot of discussion about this.

Until now, we have not used the word “reproduce” because that word is surrounded with all kinds of misunderstandings. Among other things, that a mother and a father “make a baby”. And that the genetic material of the child is determined by a random combination of its parents’ DNA. Both misunderstandings are based on a physical view of reality: that the substance is causal and that consciousness is a kind of by-product of the substance. And this is the opposite starting point of what the Ancient Wisdom or Theosophia is based on.

The sperm and egg cell that seem to come “from the father” and “from the mother” actually belong to the incarnating ego, thus to the child. In fact, sex cells belong to all mankind. Our sex cells are universal cells that we pass on from generation to generation.⁽⁸⁾ As universal cells, they carry all the potentials of humanity, even of man in the distant future.

Each incarnating ego will be attracted to the sex cells that are most suited for him. The latter also explains why his genetic material is not determined by random factors but by his own consciousness, by his own character. The DNA of the most appropriate sperm and egg cell exactly reflects the *physical* characteristics of this reincarnating ego.⁽⁹⁾

Significance

What lessons can we learn from theosophical knowledge about the birth of man and planet?

We see how everything cooperates with everything. Each being depends on many other beings during his birth, in his outer life, and also during the inner journey we call “death”. All beings emanate from a boundless unity, and we notice this from the fact that we see cooperation *everywhere in the cosmos — aimed at the spiritual elevation of all that lives*.

References

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2. G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*, lemma “Ego”, see ref. 1.
3. The process of emanation has been described in: H. Bezemer, “Like a stream from its source - How we emanate from our spiritual core”. *Lucifer the Light-bringer*, No. 1, 2013; and: “Practical examples of emanation, spiritually and physically”, *Lucifer the Light-bringer*, No. 1, 2013, Questions and Answers.
4. G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Teachings IV. Galaxies and Solar Systems: their Genesis, Structure and Destiny*. I.S.I.S. Foundation, Den Haag, pp. 12-38.
5. In our Dutch *Lucifer*, a series of articles has been published about embryology, the first of which is: H. Bezemer, “Occulte embryologie, deel 1”. Dutch *Lucifer*, Volume 28, No. 6, December 2006, pp. 110-117.
6. See ref. 5, p. 116.
7. G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*, lemma “Seven Holy Planets”; G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, see in its index for “Planet, Holy”. For both references, see ref. 2.
8. See ref. 6, p. 114; and: H. Bezemer, “Het geboorteprocess onder de theosofische loep” [“The birth process studied with a theosophical magnifying glass”]. Dutch *Lucifer*, Volume 29, No. 2, April 2007, pp. 58-59.
9. B. van den Noort, “Waarom erfelijkheid zich zo lastig laat voorspellen” [Why heredity is so difficult to predict]. Dutch *Lucifer*, Volume 39, No. 3, Jun 2017, pp. 87-92.



Is there a relationship between Planet Venus and bees?

Within the Theosophical Movement several misunderstandings have arisen about the origin of bees. Some students of Theosophy believed that the bees “came from the planet Venus”. They based this idea on their interpretation of some veiled hints in *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Ocean of Theosophy*.

Is this true or not? Is there a relationship between Venus and the bees? And if so, of what character? A fascinating subject, about which we will try to give a little more clarity in this article, which is the last of a series of three articles about bees.⁽¹⁾

Key thoughts

- » The bees originate from the period in which early humanity was being taught the principles of agriculture.
- » In their consciousness, bees manifest the unity aspect of intellect.
- » Bees are not “imported” from Venus. All beings evolving in the sphere of our planet Earth, belong to the Earth, in its present and former life cycle.
- » Yet, bees (and wheat) may be pure examples of the *Venus-aspect* of the Earth. We humans may become that too! There may be many deeper teachings behind the facts presently known to us.

In this article we frequently use quotes from theosophical teachers. These give each student the opportunity to reflect on the information originally given. Above all, they are meant as an incentive to dive into the primal sources, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, written by W.Q. Judge, *The Secret Doctrine* of H.P. Blavatsky and the various books of G. de Purucker, to study this subject for yourself. Only then you can understand the context of these fragments.

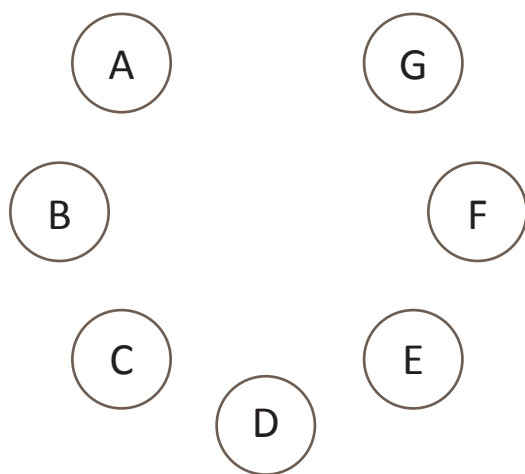
The origins of bees and wheat

We start with a quote from W.Q. Judge from *The Ocean of Theosophy*:

But it may incidentally be said that neither the bee nor the wheat could have had their original differentiation in this chain of globes, but must have been produced and finished in some

other from which they were brought over into this. Why this should be so I am willing to leave for the present to conjecture.⁽²⁾

In our literature, “chain of globes” refers to a complete Planetary Being in all its levels of consciousness and matter. Just as the complete human being consists of divine, spiritual, mental, psychic, astral and physical parts, working together in a unity, so it is comparatively the same for a Planetary Being. All those different planetary levels or “centers of life” express themselves as globes, spherical worlds more or less ethereal in character. Their totality (they form one Planetary organism) is called a “Chain”, a “Planetary Chain”, see the illustration on the next page. At the top of the Chain, leading and inspiring everything, is the Cosmic Being we refer to as “Planet Earth”



A schematic representation of the 7 globes of a Planetary Chain. The globes A and G are centers with a divine-spiritual character, globes B and F manifest especially the mental potencies of the chain, C and E especially the formative potencies and globe D, the most material one of the chain, the physical potencies. We humans presently live and evolve on Globe D of our Earth chain.

or “Planet Venus” for example.

The most physical globe or sphere of the Planetary Chain Earth is the physical sphere in which we humans are continuously reincarnating in our current phase of evolution. Our Planet also has 6 (and according to a more esoteric count even 11) other spheres that are more ethereal than the sphere in which we now live and gain experience. Together these spheres form one complete whole, one organism, lead by the Cosmic Being Earth. The quotation is clearly a hint to theosophical teachings that W.Q. Judge was not allowed to explain in their entirety. So, he gives a general clue on which all students can reflect further. The bees and wheat apparently have such a character, that their original differentiation (i.e. their specific evolution from the basic types or root types of the animal and plant kingdom. See the preceding pages in *The Ocean of Theosophy* which W.Q. Judge devotes to that subject) could not have happened *completely* on our *present* Planetary Chain. A hint that leaves many possibilities open. Is this “other Chain” the previous embodiment of the Planetary Being Earth (of which the moon is the corpse)? Or is it another Planet in our Solar System? W.Q. Judge says nothing about it.

The introduction of agriculture to early mankind

Here are some passages that H.P. Blavatsky wrote in *The*

Secret Doctrine about wheat and the origin of agriculture — and remember, W.Q. Judge mentions the bees and wheat in one breath. Bees and wheat have a common origin, so what we find about wheat may possibly also relate to the bees. And *vice versa*.

H.P. Blavatsky speaks about the period in our human development in which the thinking mind of the majority of people woke up thanks to the stimuli of beings who were one step further on the path of evolution than man himself. These beings are called “Kabiri” or “Titans” in the passages below:

Thus the Kabiri are said to have appeared as the benefactors of men, and as such they lived for ages in the memory of nations. To them — the Kabiri or Titans — is ascribed the invention of letters (the *Devanagari*, or the alphabet and language of the gods), of laws and legislature; of architecture, as of the various modes of magic so-called; and of the medical use of plants. (...) It is the Kabiri who are credited with having revealed, by *producing* corn or wheat, the great boon of agriculture.⁽³⁾

These Kabiri are called in Sanskrit *Mānasaputras*, Sons of Mind. In the early days of thinking mankind, they laid the foundations for all our later civilizations: our religion, philosophy, science, art, government, our techniques. And about agriculture H.P. Blavatsky writes:

“Fruits and grain, unknown to Earth to that day, were brought by the “Lords of Wisdom” for the benefit of those they ruled — from other lokas (spheres). . .” say the Commentaries.⁽⁴⁾

Link this quote to the following information provided by H.P. Blavatsky:

But if it is asserted [by some scientists in her time; edit.] that there are no grains and fruits unknown to earth, then we may remind the reader that wheat has never been found in the wild state: it is not a product of the earth. All the other cereals have been traced to their primogenital forms in various species of wild grasses, but wheat has hitherto defied the efforts of botanists to trace it to its origin.⁽⁵⁾

In short: the appearance of wheat on our physical sphere cannot be explained by the theory that this cereal is a domestication of a former wild wheat species that already grew on Earth. As H.P. Blavatsky points out: a scientific indication for this is that so far no trace of such a prede-

cessor has been found. The archeologists and biologists today have found kernels of ancient wheat – for instance from Egypt – and maybe also varieties that have run wild. But these finds were never older than six or perhaps ten thousand years, which is almost “yesterday” compared to the period of the introduction of agriculture to early mankind, many millions years ago.

From all these passages we can derive the idea that the wheat-consciousnesses (and the bee-consciousnesses) have had a period of evolution in other *loka*'s or worlds, and that these beings developed a certain characteristic that made them very useful for all mankind now. Can we do without wheat? Can we do without the bees, which take care of the pollination of countless crops? The latter is a very topical question now that the bees are not doing well in recent years.

What is this characteristic?

The characteristic of bees

In this article we switch from bees to wheat and back again, because we sometimes find clues about one which adds to our knowledge about the other — realizing that they have a common origin and therefore a common

characteristic. The characteristics of wheat are not easy for us to point out. We do not have enough insight into the plant consciousness that animates wheat. About the bees we can say much more. The first article in our series about bees provides us with several wonderful clues to this question.⁽¹⁾

A colony of bees shows in its behavior that it functions as a unity. The central point is the queen. All bees work together “like the fingers of one hand”. Whatever their role, they are subservient to the whole. Their actions also bear witness to a highly developed animal intelligence: their language, the way in which a bee swarm finds a suitable new place to build a nest, the mathematical precision of their combs, the way in which they react to unexpected difficulties. Furthermore, we see that they rarely kill other organisms: they tap the nectar and pollen of plants and play a crucial role as pollinators. So, they do not kill plants. Nevertheless, they sometimes kill animals: workers will use their sting if their colony is attacked by an animal (or, in their opinion, by a human being). It is also known that if during the season the task of the male bees, the drones, is finished, these drones are carried out of the hive (leading to their death) or, if they try to stay



In ancient Egypt the bee and sedge glyphs symbolized the inner and outer parts of Nature. It was a title of pharaohs, being “master of both worlds”.

in the hive, are killed.

What characteristics do the bees express? Dominant is what we may call “the unity aspect of intellect”: (animal) intellect guided by the principle of unity. But at the same time we already mentioned two examples where the bees do not have a harmonious interaction with other beings: their killing enemies and drones. There is an aspect of violence here. The bees have not yet finished learning!

Now one of the spheres of consciousness of our Planet Earth is the level we can call “higher manas” or “the higher intellect”. Like all other spheres, this sphere permeates the whole Earth. Each terrestrial being that has developed within itself this same character, this same “frequency”, will resonate with this sphere and will act as “higher manas”-center for all the beings within its own circle.

We may entertain the thought that the bees express this characteristic within their realm, the animal kingdom. And perhaps – by analogy – wheat does so within the plant kingdom. Bees are pioneers for other animals: at least for the insects and lower animals. Wheat is a pioneer within *its* natural kingdom. The other animals and plants follow their example: they are stimulated by the influence of bees and wheat to develop similar characteristics within themselves.

Further teachings about the origin of bees and wheat

Where do bees and wheat come from? This is what Gottfried de Purucker (in this quote below referred to as “The Outer Head”) says in a passage of his hitherto unpublished dialogues:

The Secretary: “In The Ocean of Theosophy (p. 133), we are told that the bee and the wheat-plant were brought over from another chain of globes. Was this the moon-chain?”
The Outer Head: Yes; not only the bee and the wheat-plant, but everything on the earth, human beings included. I don’t mean men in their present state: but the Monadic Essences of men, beasts, vegetables, minerals, and of the elemental kingdoms,— all came from the Moon-Chain. Nothing can come to the earth unless it belongs here and nothing ever came to the earth unless it belonged here. Otherwise there could be no attraction. We have heard it stated that the wheat plant came from some other planet of the solar system. That is quite misleading. Also that it was brought here by some ancient magic, or something of the sort, and that statement is not wholly true. The statement is based on a misunderstanding of a passing remark made by H.P.B.;



Varieties of the type of wheat that was cultivated in ancient Egypt.

and a similar remark could be made with regard to the bee. I will add by way of commentary, Companions, that the bee and the wheat are in a certain few respects particularly interesting in this regard. Next question, please.

G. de Purucker thus dispels a misunderstanding that arose in the minds of a few students. In the past they suggested the idea that the bee and wheat in previous periods of evolution were part of Venus, of the Planetary hierarchy which now manifests itself as the Planet Venus. So, they would have evolved within that Planetary sphere, until for some reason they “switched” to Planet Earth. This is not the case, says G. de Purucker. The bees and wheat belonged and belong to Planet Earth, now, and in the previous embodiments of Planet Earth, and in the future. The bees and wheat came from the “Moon Chain”, the previous embodiment of the Planetary Being Earth. And at that point there is no difference with all other beings that belong to our Planet, including ourselves.

Therefore, the bees and wheat are not from Venus, they are no “foreigners”. At the same time G. de Purucker remarks, in line with the hints of H.P. Blavatsky and W.Q. Judge, that there is much more to say about the evolution of the bee and wheat. And he too leaves it up to us to apply the general theosophical principles to these questions and think deeply about it.

Is there a relation between Venus and the bees?

We end this article with the question: is there nevertheless a certain relation between the Planet Venus and the bees, and wheat, and with us humans?

H.P. Blavatsky associates the influence of the Planet Venus with the Higher Thinking, with the Human *Reincarnating Soul*.⁽⁶⁾ The ancient Greeks called Venus Phosphoros, the Light-giver, in his form as morning star and Hesperos as evening star. The Romans translated the Greek word as “Lucifer”, the Bringer of Light, the Transmitter of Light, who prepares the Rising Sun — the deliberately chosen name of the journal of H.P. Blavatsky and of our present journal.

Generally speaking, the entire Solar System is one great organism, a living unit, an intensive collaboration. Every cosmic being within it supports every other cosmic being, just as the organs in our body support the whole and each other.

During his birth and development, our Planet Earth in particular is coached and stimulated by seven other Planetary beings, who for that reason are called the seven Holy Planets. Among these seven Cosmic Beings belongs Venus. These seven Planetary beings provide, by the influence they radiate, the stimuli that wake up the dormant faculties of all terrestrial beings. These seven Beings, together with the Solar Divinity, are the Cosmic family in which we terrestrials grow up. They provide its stimulating environment: each activates a different aspect of our consciousness. The Venus Being, as said before, activates the Higher Thinking in all Earth beings capable of *resonating* with that influence. Including we humans! In the words of G. de Purucker:

Every planet of our solar system has done its own individual part in building a man, likewise in building our Earth. We are all interlinked, all interwoven, with vital bonds and with bonds of consciousness. We are most wonderfully and mysteriously made. There is no separateness anywhere in the Universe. It is “the great heresy” to have that idea. We are at one with the Buddhists in this teaching.

You could put it this way: all humans who act from their insightful, altruistic thinking manifest the *Venus aspect of Planet Earth*: the enlightened thinking. Within their lives they are “lucifers”, bringers of light for all those around them. By analogy we could say that the bees and wheat do the same within their respective kingdoms, although of

course there is no *self-conscious* mind here. But even in the animal and plant kingdom there are qualities analogous to the higher thinking in Man: intelligence which is in harmony with all other beings.

So, coming back to the main question of this article:

Is there a relation between Planet Venus and bees? Yes, there is. Bees express the Venus-aspect of our own Planet Earth as far as they are able to.

Bees express, in other words, the Higher Thinking characteristic of Planet Earth, which is constantly interacting with Planet Venus, whose keynote is also Higher Thinking. The same is true for wheat, by analogy.

What does this mean for us?

We humans can draw daily from the inspiration and visions of the higher mental sphere. We do this by focusing our thinking on the wellbeing of others, by living justly and compassionately, in short, by permeating our thinking with a sense of oneness, with a sense of our connection with all that lives. Doing this, we instantaneously resonate with that higher sphere of thought. We become representatives of it, a kind of “human bees” in the mystical sense of that symbol, as described in the second article of this series.⁽¹⁾

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Questions & Answers

Atlantis and the Rāmāyaṇa

Atlantis was in the Atlantic Ocean but remains, such as Sri Lanka and Madagascar, are located in the Indian Ocean. What's up with that?

Answer

The central land of the great Fourth Cycle, which we now call “Atlantis”, was located in that part of the earth that is now the Atlantic Ocean. However, that does not mean that there were no countries on other parts of the Earth's surface. Do not forget that the period of Atlantis lasted millions of years and in that great cycle there have been many civilizations that were born, had their peak and died.

Humanity is now living in the great Fifth Cycle, the fifth great stage of humanity's development in this Round. In theosophical literature these cycles are called “Root-Races”. These are classes in the school of life of humanity which last several million years. If we look at the short term, at the past centuries, we see that our civilization is dominated by Europe and America. English, for example, is the international language of communication, even for people who do not speak this language as their mother tongue. However, that does not mean that there are no civilizations outside of Europe and America.

Question

How can it be explained that prince Ravana from the epic Rāmāyaṇa gained so much strength in the Atlantean time. Could that have been because of black magic?

Answer

The Rāmāyaṇa, the great epic from India, presents a mythical and symbolic representation of how ancient Atlantis passed into our present great cycle. People in those distant times – at least some of them – had abilities that we no longer have. A faculty or force is never good or evil per se; it is the motive with which you apply that force that determines whether it is good or bad. Rāma, the hero of the great epic Rāmāyaṇa, had powers and abilities that we no longer have, but Rāma used them selflessly. Ravana used them selfishly. That's the big difference.

Question

Is it possible that during the periods described by the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, arrows and bows were used as nuclear weapons by chanting spells? This allowed the users to bring down fire showers and create other special things and cause many deaths.

Answer

Undoubtedly, mighty weapons have been developed in the days of the great epics. The selfish desires of men, at least at certain times of this great cycle, were even stronger than they are now, with all the dire consequences. However, they must have had different weapons than we have nowadays because humans had other powers in those days. We have overcome the challenges of that time. We have grown in consciousness and we have a little more control over our desires, although we still have a long way to go.

We don't believe there were nuclear

weapons at that distant time. We even believe that there were no radioactive materials at all, which are needed for these terrible weapons. Earth's physical evolution was not yet complete. Radioactivity is a sign that matter is falling apart and that we are on the ascending arc, towards more ethereal forms, which is the case now, but not in Atlantean times.

Question

Could it be that in the Tretā era of the Hindus mighty, great apes fought on the side of Rāma against the mighty demon Ravana?

Answer

That is a question that is not easy to answer, because scientists now have such clear-cut views of humans and apes that contradict what Theosophy teaches about them.

First of all, it is certainly not the case that we humans transformed ourselves from an ape or ancestor of ape and man, as the materialistic biologists claim. Man is the ancestor of all (mammal) animals. These animals are offshoots of humans, the original stem. That means, that if you go back in time, the animals looked more like humans than they do now, because they were even closer to their ancestor in those days. We still recognize this fact in the embryonic development of animals. Up to a point it is quite similar to that of humans.

After their emergence, the animal groups specialized in a certain direction, sometimes very specialized. Think of bats that have “taken to the air” or dolphins that have completely

adapted to the water. You must also keep in mind that humans in those distant eras looked completely different than we do now, and they did not yet have self-consciousness or an active mind. This was a long time before the Tretā era, of which the questioner is speaking. We are talking about a time of hundreds of millions of years ago, during the First and Second Root Race, and the beginning of the Third Root Race, as it is called in Theosophy. Those are ages long gone. Ages of evolution have passed. We have gone through many classes in the school of life.

When we talk about man as ancestor of the mammals, you should certainly not think of man as he is now. We are talking about an unself-conscious being, who is constantly in a daydream-like consciousness. His vehicle – his body – is almost unlike the present one. He had a pudding-like, jelly-like, much more ethereal body than now, which, moreover, was very large, measured by our present standards. Vital “cells” that fell from this body evolved during a long evolution into the main classes of mammals.

Great apes and monkeys take a very special place in this process because they have emerged from the inter-course of animal and human beings. Human beings of that time differed very little from the animal beings of that time, who were also very different from the present. The monkeys arose from an initial mixture of the still unself-conscious man and animals. At a much later stage of evolution, during the Fourth Root Race, when man had developed his mind, this “Sin of the Mindless”, as *The Secret Doctrine* puts it – that is, those who had not yet activated the mind – was repeated. In the bodies thus formed, half-human, half-animal egos incarnated. They became the apes. But beware, those

apes were different from humans and form the now living apes.

Now something interesting arises when you compare an embryo anthropoid or a baby anthropoid with an adult and old congener. The younger he is, the more he resembles a human being. The older he gets, the more he actually distances himself from man and becomes more and more apelike, more animalistic. This is a repetition of the great evolutionary process. The apes and monkeys have increasingly moved away from their original stem, humans. Now you should never qualify a being based on its body. We are humans because we have human consciousness; monkeys are monkeys because they have monkey consciousness. They cannot think. But the closer they are to the human beings, the more they imitate that human being. And apes in particular have been very close to humans in their birthing process, so that they had human-like features. The great apes in that distant past must also have looked differently externally, as is also told in *The Secret Doctrine*. Well, it may seem implausible, but in the Atlantean times, millions of years ago, there were indeed great apes who could talk, form armies and fight, as told in the great epic the Rāmāyaṇa. The most advanced apes were able to do this. They imitated humans, their “half-brothers”, just as chimpanzees like to imitate humans even today, albeit at a much lower level. Most of the great apes have become extinct in the long history of our planet, and today’s great apes, progeny of the least evolved great apes of the time of Atlantis, do not have these abilities. They have become less and less human and more animal, although of all mammals they are still the closest to humans.

For more information and explanation on this subject: see the book *Man in*

Evolution by G. de Purucker. [See: blavatskyhouse.org/readings]

Can animals learn to think?

There is a difference between humans and animals. Humans can reflect and animals cannot. But before we became humans, we were animals, so you can say that you can learn to reflect?

Answer

Certainly, everything can be learned. Each being is a monad, or essentially boundless consciousness. The difference between beings has to do with the degree to which they have made that essential consciousness an active force in their lives. Humans have developed or expanded the thinking consciousness. Or rather, we are unfolding the our thinking mind, because we are really just beginning to do this. Because we have learned to think, we also have self-consciousness. That is to say, consciousness that can be reflected on itself. We are aware that we are an ego. We can therefore think about ourselves. We can look at the mental mirror.

Now animals are essentially as boundless as we are. They also have all abilities. One day they will also develop the ability to think. From that moment on, however, they will no longer be animals but humans. Because “man” means thinker. Compare it with a caterpillar and a butterfly. A butterfly can fly, and a caterpillar cannot. Has a caterpillar the ability to fly? Certainly, albeit latent. It’s still sleeping. Only when a caterpillar has transformed into a butterfly, that ability is active. But then the butterfly is no longer a caterpillar.

Colophon

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

Chief editor: Herman C. Vermeulen

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

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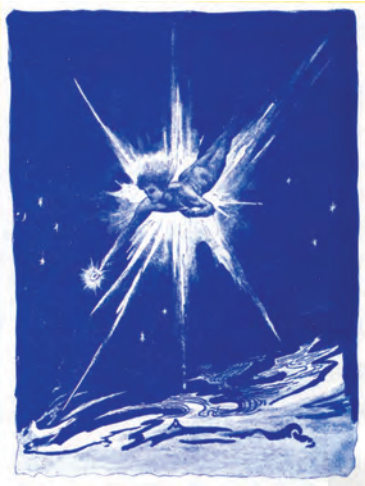
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(Helena Petrovna Blavatsky in the first issue of *Lucifer*, September 1887)