

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
Volumes 3 and 4 of
G. de Purucker

The relativity of the
Absolute

The collective
memory

Seeing without eyes,
smelling without a
nose: perception in
the plant kingdom

Conspiracy theories

The cosmic roots of
mathematics



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Editorial

In some countries, the pandemic *seems* to be ending, although we must be careful. In a lot of countries, the corona virus is still rampant. Nevertheless, many people ask themselves: what now? Do we continue to live the way we used to? Must we again, at the expense of whatever, quickly restore our old prosperity? Or should we organize our lives differently? If we choose the latter option, we can make good use of Theosophy. After all, Theosophy gives reasoned guidance on how we can set up that new life.

One of the challenging theses regarding Theosophia is that the Ancient Wisdom can put any issue in such a bright light, that we gain a much greater understanding of it. This applies not only to philosophical, religious, and social matters, but certainly to science as well.

There are a lot of people who had sleepless nights during their school days because of mathematics. They didn't understand a jot. What did all those formulas mean? What was the point? However, if you approach mathematics from the standpoint of Theosophia, then what was initially obscure and incomprehensible to many becomes logical. In that case, it is not so much about the intellectual process as it is about the intuitive understanding.

For some time, a study group has been looking at this intuitive approach to mathematics. The result is two articles. This issue of *Lucifer, the Light-bringer* includes the first one, *The cosmic roots of mathematics*. These articles require no prior mathematical knowledge, just an open mind.

With regard to psychology, the knowledge of Theosophy can also be of very practical help. The idea is that there is an etheric field around and in the earth which can explain many psychological mysteries and therefore provide a better set of tools to help people. The article *The collective memory – The astral plane: storehouse of our experiences* deals with this subject.

We continue our series of reviews of the *Esoteric Teachings* of Dr. Gottfried de Purucker. The teachings discussed in volume 3 and 4, *Space and the Doctrine of Māyā*, are probably the most metaphysical and universal of the entire series. Volume 3 deals with profound topics such as Space, the Absolute, Time and Duration, Reality and Illusion. Volume 4 deals with *Galaxies and Solar Systems: Their Genesis, Structure and Destiny*. The ideas in these books are so profound, that you can ponder on them for days, indeed months.

We are very pleased that the works of Dr. De Purucker are being studied in an ever-widening circle. He knows how to bring profound metaphysic subjects in such a way that they appeal to our intuition so that we are able to understand them. With regard to the Absolute, which is dealt with in Volume 3 of the *Esoteric Teachings*, we have thought it necessary to devote an additional article to this subject, in order to make the idea even clearer, using, by the way, another of De Purucker's works on the same subject.

Our section on *Theosophy in Nature* is about senses, this time. How do we explain that there are plants who can smell without a nose or see without eyes? The key to this riddle lies in the fact that we actually perceive with our consciousness and not with the external senses. Senses are the channels to pass on information from the surrounding world to the consciousness.

In the questions section of the last *Lucifer*, we covered the question about the Rāmāyaṇa. We received a follow-up question to this. Furthermore, we dwell on the particularly important topic of wonderment and intuition.

Please continue to ask your questions. You will always receive an answer. Your comments are also most welcome. It is primarily through interaction that theosophical thought comes alive and that is the purpose of our magazine.

The editors

Esoteric Teachings Volumes 3 and 4 of G. de Purucker



In the previous issue of *Lucifer, the Light-bringer* we reviewed Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Esoteric Teachings* of Gottfried de Purucker (GdeP). I.S.I.S. Foundation has published a renewed edition of this twelve-volume series, which follows exactly the original version approved by Gottfried de Purucker. In this *Lucifer* we discuss Volumes 3 and 4.

Key thoughts

- » We strongly recommend starting the study of these instructions with Volumes 1 and 2.
- » Volume 3 deals with such profound topics as Space, the Absolute, Time and Duration, Reality and Illusion.
- » In Volume 4, G. de Purucker descends into the manifested realm, so to speak. In this Volume he describes the birth of galaxies, of the Universal Solar System and our sun and its planets.
- » He also elucidates the theosophical teachings on the zodiac, the Auric Egg and cycles. Often he clears up all kinds of misunderstandings.

Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Esoteric Teachings* emphasize the development of a certain mindset. This is not without reason. If you seek wisdom out of curiosity, or to benefit yourself, then the study of Esoteric Philosophy is actually meaningless. So, we strongly advise against reading Volumes 3 and 4 if you have not yet read Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Esoteric Teachings*.

Why do we advise this? It is not only pointless but also dangerous, because only if you have the right unselfish attitude, you can understand the profound teachings. Only then will you prevent degeneration of the teachings and will never use them for your own benefit. This will save yourself and others a lot of misery.

Metaphysical and universal

The teachings discussed in Volume 3, *Space and the Doctrine of Māyā*, are probably the most metaphysical and universal of the entire series. It deals with profound topics such as Space, the Absolute, Time and Duration, Reality, and Illusion.

The first pages of Volume 3 provide so many thoughts that you can ponder on them for days, indeed months, as they try to point to the essence of Life, of Being.

Space, GdeP explains, is not the container of other things, but every space is substantial and is in essence a being. This immediately gives a completely different perspective. If this thought is unfamiliar to you, it may be difficult to understand, but if you think about it a little longer, this teaching turns out to be much more logical than the common view that space is empty. Every space is a being, is therefore alive.

Furthermore, you must make a clear distinction between a space and Space. A space – such as that of our solar system, for example, or of the Milky Way, yes, even of an aggregate of countless millions of galaxies, however vast it may be – is not Space *per se*.

Space is the boundless expanse of Being, which has existed and will exist in all eternities. In that boundless

Space there lie the spaces of the infinite hosts of living beings, of universes, however large or small they may be. That's why GdeP also speaks of the spaces of Space.

Fullness and Emptiness

Boundless Space is referred to by different names in the different traditions: the Unfathomable Abyss, the Great Depth or Great Sea, Limitless Depth. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, Space is referred to by the following terms: the lesser-known term Alaya (there is a difference in meaning between Alaya and Ālaya, for explanation see the footnote on page 94) and the much better-known term Śūnyatā, emptiness. GdeP elaborates on Space as both Fullness and as Emptiness, so that you get an ever clearer and broader picture of what Space actually is. Each space is empty in the sense that its highest, spiritually divine aspects are simply beyond our imagination. It is formless *to us*. But that is not the emptiness that we seem to see when we look into the universe with our physical telescopes. That is an *apparent* emptiness. We do not (yet) have the senses to perceive the fullness of worlds, universes, living beings, because those worlds are on a different plane than our sensory world. However, there is no spot in the vastness of Space in which there is no life.

The concepts of Emptiness and Fullness complement each other beautifully, with the idea of Śūnyatā reflecting the spiritual side and the idea of Fullness deriving from the perspective of manifestation.

Parabrahman and Mūlaprakriti

Boundless Space can also be referred to as *Parabrahman*, a Sanskrit word that literally means “beyond Brahman”. Brahman is the highest deity, the most spiritual *of our* universe. “Para” means “beyond”. So Parabrahman means beyond the highest deity, beyond the horizon of our consciousness. Parabrahman is therefore not a being, not an entity. Parabrahman is the boundless, unlimited, without beginning, endless, timeless, immortal Space, inner Space and also outer Space. In short, it is the All (p. 80).

Now in the writings of one of the oldest Indian philosophical schools, the Advaita Vedānta, Parabrahman is said to have a cosmic veil: Mūlaprakriti. Mūla means “root” and prakriti is “nature”. Mūlaprakriti therefore means root nature, primordial nature. Each universe in its essence is both Parabrahman and Mūlaprakriti.

The principal – i.e., applicable to everything – idea behind this is that each space, each universe, has a highest developed spirit side or energy side. This spirit side is expressed

by beings who are very far advanced on the ladder of evolution. The opposite side consists of beings who are still hardly developed and therefore represent the matter side of that space. Thus, each space consists of a collaboration of consciousnesses who are at different stages of development. Everything is consciousness. The life or the spirit could be called the Parabrahman side, the vehicle side is the side of Mūlaprakriti. However, you cannot separate the two because they are essentially ONE; both are expressions of the ONE.

Absolutes

Space and boundlessness are often associated with the Absolute. There is much confusion around this latter term, also among theosophists. There are theosophists who have claimed that GdeP's explanations deviated from what H.P. Blavatsky meant by this term. In this volume of the *Teachings*, GdeP explains clearly what the Absolute is, that there are many Absolutes, and that his interpretation in no way differs from that of his great predecessor H.P.B. In common usage, “absolute” means utter or total. Absolute comes from the Latin *absolutum*, which means “liberated” or “unfastened”. This is exactly the same meaning as the Sanskrit-words *moksha* or *mukti*. That liberation refers to the lower elements of the hierarchy to which you belong, which no longer exert any attraction on you. Viewed from the boundless, however, this liberation is relative, for after all, there are countless hierarchies and there are hierarchies within hierarchies. It may therefore sound strange at first, but “absolute” is a relative term.

The Absolute is the summit, both the beginning and the conclusion of a hierarchy, of a hierarchical universe. You may call it the *One*, the cosmic starting point or root of any hierarchy, from which the *Two* and then the *Three* emerge. It is not the Boundless, for that is the mystical *Zero* (p. 76-77). So, there are many Absolutes, many Ones, but none of those Absolutes is boundless. For a being with a beginning, no matter how great, is finite as an entity, has relationships with other beings, and is therefore relative.

Māyā

Of course, in Volume 3 the concept of *māyā* or illusion cannot be missed. Whoever wants to understand something of Space, and of the universes manifesting in that Space, of its fullness, must dwell on the nature of those manifestations.

Well, all those manifestations are temporary. They have a relative beginning and consequently a relative end. There-

fore, as such, they are not an eternal reality, and therefore illusory.

So, by *māyā* it is not meant that those universes do not exist. That would be a total misrepresentation. It means that beings are not able to perceive the underlying reality, the top or the root of a manifestation. They see only the temporary, continuously changing side of it and therefore live in limitation. That is the idea of *māyā*. When any being perceives only the transient shadow, and identifies with it, he lives in an illusory world. In the final chapters of Volume 3, GdeP dwells on the extremely subtle thoughts that the various Indian schools have regarding *māyā*.

Living Universe

In Volume 4 of the *Esoteric Teachings*, titled *Galaxies and Solar Systems: Their Genesis, Structure and Destiny*, GdeP descends more into the manifested realm, as it were, although he initially dwells in ranges of life that are almost unattainably extensive and grand for us. He first deals with galaxies, which are immense clusters of stars. Then he zooms in on the Universal Solar System – which stands above our “ordinary” solar system in the Cosmic Hierarchy – and then he “descends” further to our sun and the planets.

But before he does so, he pauses on the fundamental idea that the universe – any universe – is a living entity in which an incessant exchange, an interaction, takes place between all kinds of forces, consciousnesses, lives. That interaction never ends.

Every universe is born, experiences its growth, its old age, and finally dies. In the figurative language of the East, this is called the Days and Nights of Brahmā. The metaphor of Brahmā’s exhaling and inhaling also depicts the process beautifully. When there is day, there is manifestation, there is life. And at a night of Brahmā there is rest. We call that death, but death in that sense does not mean the absence of life, but a state of passivity or rest for that life .

The birth of a universe

The principle of cyclicity, expressed in the image of alternating Nights and Days of Brahmā, logically means that when a universe is born, this is never for the first time. This is an essential thought which you should always keep in mind when considering the birth process of a universe — no matter how big that universe may be.

A second thought is that a universe is always much more than what we, with our limited consciousness, and from our standpoint on our planet earth, perceive it to be. A

universe is a multi-layered composition: it has seven (or ten) “departments”, worlds or spheres, each of which can be subdivided into seven (or ten) sub-worlds.

A universe that comes into being after its rest period, is attracted to other universes – and these can be galaxies, stars or planets – and breaks through at a karmic spot in Space. A point is created. This Golden Point is called *Hiranyagarbha* in Sanskrit. It is a point in the most ethereal world of the hierarchy, of the universe being born. After many aeons, the current of life enters a lower plane. This takes place through a *laya center*, a “vanishing point”, which, of course, when viewed from another perspective, is also an “appearing point”, through which life descends to another cosmic plane. In this way, a universe is formed. In fact, the birth of a human being does not differ from that of a galaxy or solar system, although the details differ. GdeP dwells at length on the formation of a planet, or rather a *planetary chain*, for each planet is a close union of seven (or twelve) globes or centers. A globe is a unit within the entire composition of a planetary chain. Using a mathematical term, you could call it a “subset” of a cosmic plane. So, the globe on which we live is part of a planetary chain. It is the most material of all globes. The other globes are invisible to us.

In the final phase of its birth process, the universe to be goes through the comet phase. Both a sun and a planet go through this phase. During its journey as comet, the cosmic being gathers all the old building blocks it needs to create its new vehicle, just as a human child must gather all the life atoms again, to build up its vehicle.

A comet that becomes a planet will be attracted to various suns and planets, until it finally finds its relatively fixed place at a sun to which it karmically belongs. If the comet will become a sun, then this comet, traveling through the galaxy, attracted and repelled by other suns, will find exactly the right place where it can continue to develop itself into a brilliant sun. The magnetic influence of the twelve signs of the zodiac play an extremely important role in this process.

The zodiac

In Volume 4, GdeP also deals extensively with the zodiac, about which so many half-truths and pertinent nonsense are told in exoteric books. The zodiac is a cluster of twelve fohatic (i.e., comprising cosmic vital energy) focal points, represented by a combination of stars that karmically belong together. It contains twelve different, distinguishable characteristics, each having its own fohatic magnetism.

These twelve fohatic focal points project themselves onto the sphere of the earth as the twelve houses.

GdeP explains how the twelve-pole forces of the zodiac express themselves on earth, and exert their influence on all kinds of spiritual, psychological, and even material processes. Each globe of the planetary chain is dominated by one of those zodiacal forces, but that does not mean that the other eleven are inactive.

The doctrine is complicated because everything is inter-related, and everything works through and within each other. But even the little that we may be able to comprehend already gives a tremendously inspiring picture of the cooperation of countless living beings.

Auric Egg

In Volume 4 there is also a chapter devoted to the Auric Egg. As far as I know, nowhere in the theosophical literature is written so extensively and clearly about this subject.

The Auric Egg is sometimes confused with the aura, but GdeP notes that the aura is in fact nothing more than the lowest part of the Auric Egg, that belongs to the physical human being. The Auric Egg, however, spans the entire constitution of man, from his divine part – Ātman – to the physical body. As its name indicates, it has the shape of an egg. The aura, the lowest part of it, can be perceived by some sensitive people.

Each being has its own Auric Egg of corresponding qualities: planets, suns, humans. Again, a hierarchical structure can be recognized: there are Auric Eggs within Auric Eggs. Each Auric Egg is composed of seven characteristics. Therefore, through resonance, beings can communicate with each other, provided there are corresponding characteristics active. So if people develop the characteristics that further developed beings have already developed, they are able to interact with those further developed beings. Isn't that an inspiring thought!

Cycles

In these *Teachings*, the subject of cycles cannot be omitted, as it is one of the most important teachings in the entire field of Esoteric Philosophy. Cycles show how the life energies in the Universe flow in regular, rhythmic processes. In a large part of the theosophical literature, you will find statements about the laws of cycles, at least as far as they are known, but what GdeP emphasizes in this chapter is the causal side of cycles: "As a matter of fact, every being and thing that exists in Universal Nature," he says, "high or low or intermediate, is actually an expression of a cycle

or of a rhythmic pulsation in Nature; ..." (p. 101-102).

There are astounding numbers of beings, all intermingled and existing because of and through each other. Consequently, there are an astounding number of cycles and also cycles within cycles. Whoever oversees all these cycles must be a wise person.

In this chapter, GdeP addresses the different phases and sub-phases and sub-sub-phases in human evolution. He refers to kosmic cycles that cover periods of time that are incalculably long for us humans. Very clarifying is also his explanation of the four *Yugas*, the four ages of the Hindus.

Listen to the Teacher

Of course, we are summarizing both volumes far too short with this discussion. There are so many more teachings given; the teachings are explained with so much more depth. Those who study these books, will quickly notice that.

In conclusion, we do wish to give one advice for reading or studying these esoteric teachings. And when we use the word "study", do not think of intellectually processing the thoughts and recording them in schemes or rows. Nor think of memorizing Sanskrit terms. Furthermore, each volume has an extensive index, in which you can look up a particular term. These volumes are therefore certainly useful as reference books. But if you only use them that way, that will be regrettable, and you will miss the essence. What is striking in each volume of the *Esoteric Teachings* is, what you might call, GdeP's *talking style*. He's not so much an *author* but more a *speaker*, addressing his audience, his disciples, who have tuned themselves into a certain tone, and have adopted the mental attitude that is described so fully in volumes 1 and 2. Consequently, they resonate to the teachings the Teacher *tells* them. The teachings sometimes *seem* abstract, technical, and far removed from our daily lives, for example, those related to cosmic life. But viewed from the third of the three propositions of Theosophia – as above, so below – there is no theosophical teaching that we cannot translate to our lives here and now. So let us try to *listen* to the Teacher.

GdeP was spoken to by his students as "Professor". We may think then of a professor at a university, but you can also translate this term as *Teacher*. If you read the books with your heart, you will hear the Teacher speak. Then you will be carried to the highest part of yourself, approach the teaching from within and see its implications in your own life. For let us not forget, that these lofty teachings are valuable only if we apply them in our daily lives, yes, if we become the teachings. _____

The relativity of the Absolute

Continuing from the previous article, we would like to dwell a little longer on the ABSOLUTE. Not only because Gottfried de Purucker has received quite a bit of criticism on his explanation of this concept, but mainly because a correct understanding of it clarifies the theosophical philosophy. Of course, the opposite is also true: a wrong understanding leads to a wrong interpretation of the Theosophia and thus sows the seeds for degeneration.

Moksha

The word “absolute” is an adjective. It comes from Latin. *Ab* means “away”, “from”, and *solvere* has the meaning of “dissolve”, “loosen”, “liberate”. So “absolute” means “liberated”, “loosened” or “dissolved”. However, the Absolute (a noun) has acquired a different meaning in philosophy. We will discuss this later in the article.

In Sanskrit, there are three words that mean the same as “absolute” in its original meaning: *Moksha*, *Mukti* and *Nirvāna*. The first two words are frequently found in Hindu holy scriptures, *Nirvāna* is used mainly in Buddhism. All three words mean “liberated”, “loosened” or “released”. In contemplating these words, the question arises: what are you freed or detached from?

You are released from the lower elements. Those elements flow from the top of the hierarchy or cosmos of which you are a part. That top is called the One, because all differ-

ences are dissolved there. There is no differentiation. You can call that top the Absolute, which after all means “being dissolved”.

When you reach the status of the Absolute, you are liberated from the cycle of material existence, the spinning wheel of life and death. All the lower elements that hold you in illusion have been left behind. However, you should not interpret this in the sense that you are then liberated forever and ever, that there will be no more changes in all eternity, no, you are liberated from the specific hierarchy to which you belong.

When you identify yourself with those lower elements, you lose insight of who you really are and where you came from. You live in a self-made illusory world, which does not reflect reality. From this you are liberated. You have seen through the illusory side of it and detached yourself from it. The lower elements have been “blown away”, which is the literal

Key thoughts

- » Absolute means “liberated”, “loosened” or “resolved”. However, the word has taken on a different meaning in Western philosophy.
- » In Sanskrit, Moksha, Mukti and Nirvāna mean the same as “absolute” in its original meaning.
- » There are many Absolutes. Each Absolute is the starting point, apex, and goal of a hierarchy.
- » The Absolute is relative because it is related to other consciousnesses and subject to growth.

meaning of Nirvāna and you are consciously united with the top of the hierarchy.

But have you reached a final end point? Have you reached the top of the All? Is there a limit to the Universe? Theosophy states that this can never be the case. Moksha or Nirvāna are therefore relative concepts. Therefore, there must be many Absolutes.

Many Absolutes

As revealed in the discussion of *Esoteric Teachings* Volume 3 in this issue, according to Gottfried de Purucker, there are indeed many Absolutes. Each Absolute is the starting point, the root, the germ of a hierarchy. It is the root of the metaphorical tree rooted in heaven. It is the beginning and end point of the evolution of innumerable multitudes of monads who emanate from that summit, gain their experiences, develop – that is, unfold capacities and powers – and then, enriched by the lessons gained, return to the summit, to the Absolute, in which they are rooted. Therefore, there are many Absolutes, many Ones, because in Boundless Space there are logically no end points, no boundaries. So, there are innumerable hierarchies, each with its Absolute. Therefore, the Absolute is relative because it is always in relation to other Absolutes.

Take our Sun as an example. The Sun – and by this we mean the divine-spiritual entity that works behind or within the Sun visible to us – is the absolute beginning and end point of the multitudes of monads that emanate from the Sun and that eventually flow back to it. They form and populate the solar system. But above, or even more inwardly, than our Hierarchy, our Sun, our Absolute, there is a still more divine and still more universal being, which in Theosophy is called a Rāja Sun, a King’s Sun, which is thus even more advanced, even more grand and divine in its consciousness than our Sun. And behind it or above it is an even grander entity, and this to infinity. The Absolute is also relative in this sense, that it is itself subject to growth. There is a comment by De Purucker that has caused quite a lot of surprise and also disapproval, in which he says that every Absolute was once a human being. But if you understand the idea of the relativity of every Absolute starting point, then it is only logical. For even an “Absolute” has not always been what it is now, nor will it always remain what it is now. In that respect, even a human being is an Absolute. He is the summit, the One, the Cosmos, in which countless multitudes of other monads live, move, and have their being, to paraphrase a statement by the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:28), a statement

that was loved by G. de Purucker. Just as the trillions of beings – cells, molecules, atoms – live, move and have their being within us, so we live as an integral part in the Absolute *for us*: the Sun. But is that Absolute an end point? Is there nothing more than that? Does our growth stop there? Of course not. There is always more, deeper within us. Then we come to the Absolute of the Rāja sun, or the Absolute of the Milky Way consisting of billions of suns. So, is that the limit? No, there are no limits. There is always more and further and greater.

The Absolute in Western philosophy

In Western philosophy, the term the Absolute has acquired a meaning that not only detracts from the etymological meaning of the word but is also illogical in itself. The Absolute refers to a Being that transcends all limitations. It is said to be the (divine) ground of all that exists. With Nicolaus Cusanus (15th century), the term acquired the meaning it still has today: that which is determined by itself, complete in itself. Some philosophers therefore regarded the Absolute as an impersonal abstraction, as the All.

It is also in this sense that H.P. Blavatsky uses the word in a few instances. For example, in the prologue to *The Secret Doctrine*, she writes when explaining the impersonal nature of Parabrahman:

Since there can be neither INFINITES nor two ABSOLUTES in a Universe supposed to be Boundless, ...⁽¹⁾

In explaining the first Preposition on the Boundless Principle, she writes:

The ABSOLUTE; the *Parabrahm* of the Vedantins or the one Reality, SAT, which is, as Hegel says, both Absolute Being and Non-Being.⁽²⁾

Clearly, she connects with Hegel and other Western philosophers. To make herself somewhat understood, she used the language that was common in Western philosophy. But the fact that she knew that applying this word in this sense is factually incorrect is clear from her *Theosophical Glossary*. She defines Absoluteness as follows:

When predicated of the UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE it denotes an abstract noun, which is more correct and logical than to apply the adjective “absolute” to that which has neither attributes nor limitations, nor can IT have any.⁽³⁾

In other words, as soon as you talk about impersonal, abstract concepts such as boundlessness, infinity, or Space, it is better *not* to refer to them with the adjective absolute. That she understood the Absolute to be relative is also very clear from the *Secret Doctrine Commentaries*, an account of H.P. Blavatsky with her students. The subject under discussion is *absolute non-being and absolute non-manifestation*.

I refer to absolute non-being from the standpoint of our finite and relative intellect. This is what I do, but not at all what it would be, because that which is for us absoluteness, perhaps if you go on the plane higher, it will be something relative for those on the plane above.⁽⁴⁾

Beware of degeneration

Now you may object that the use of a word is not that important, as long as the idea comes through. That may be true, but consistent misuse of a word can easily lead to misinterpretation. When we use “absolute” in the sense it does not have etymologically, we degrade the original meaning of the word. Absolute does not mean “boundless” but “resolved”, “liberated”. A wrong interpretation sets the door ajar for an anthropomorphic image: the Absolute degenerates into another name for the all-powerful god. That god, however, “retains” its infinity and boundlessness. And so, a philosophical and religious miscue is created: an infinite being, which is a contradiction in terms, an inner contradiction. For a being can never be infinite and boundless. Were it infinite and boundless, it would not be a being, it would be everything; there would be nothing to which it could mirror itself. Then it was not an ego. Then the degeneration process may continue. The “infinite deity” acquires more and more attributes; those attributes acquire more and more human traits, and eventually we have to deal with an all-powerful god who loves some people more than others and who punishes people eternally if they do not live according to his commandments.

Questions

Even among his own students, Gottfried de Purucker’s explanation of the Absolute raised questions. *Studies in Occult Philosophy* contains an account of a conversation GdeP had with his students. It takes place in an informal setting. His students speak freely. The topic is the Absolute. One student objects to the way De Purucker uses this word. He says that Western philosophers simply use this word in the sense of the boundless, the infinite. Surely

there is nothing wrong with that. (I am paraphrasing his words.) He understands that De Purucker is emphasizing the etymological derivation of the word, so you see the similarity to words like moksha. But this student wonders whether it is wise to do so. After all, you don’t have to use the word “absolutely”. Prof. De Purucker answers:

(...) I deliberately chose that word and tried to point out the inaccuracy of the use of this phrase “The Absolute” in the West in order to signify “Boundless Infinitude”. This is not only an etymological, but a logical, fault, and I desired to point this out. The word as I used it is a true key to great things.

But it will draw criticism, sputters the student.

I do not object to criticism. It arouses comment and thought. My use, outside of anything else, has the virtue of being accurate, of being philosophically exact, of employing a word in its proper, original, exact, etymological sense; and best of all, it is a wonderful key to greater things. It is perfectly indifferent to me if the entire Occident uses a word wrongly, because I am going to use it aright, if by that use I can strike a new keynote of thought, point out a pathway of consciousness, and give a key to a wonderful doctrine. Do you now see? If it arouses comment and criticism, as in fact I knew it would, all the better!⁽⁵⁾

Parabrahman

That keynote, to which De Purucker refers in the above quote, is the idea of boundlessness, of a boundless Space, within which “divine sparks”, “universes”, “monads” constantly appear and disappear, and in which, during the period of active existence, every being has the opportunity to grow in consciousness. It is this new concept, this “theory of everything”, as it was called at the 2020 symposium of the Theosophical Society Point Loma,⁽⁶⁾ that must lay a new religious, philosophical and scientific foundation. In it there can be no place for a creating god, standing outside of the cosmos.

This is why De Purucker explains so precisely that the Absolute cannot be the boundless or Space per se. That is why in many places in his voluminous oeuvre he dwells on the Eastern concept of infinity, *Parabrahman*. This is a better concept than the negating words “infinity” or “boundlessness”, which after all mean no end or no limits. Parabrahman means “beyond Brahman”. Brahman is the supreme hierarch of our cosmos, the Absolute. It

lies, so to speak, on the horizon of our consciousness, our powers of perception. Beyond that, however, stretch the fields of BEING. Parabrahman is therefore not a being, it is SPACE per se.

Parabrahman is closely related to Mūlaprakṛti, root nature or original nature. Mūlaprakṛti is the expansion side, the space side of Parabrahman, which can be called the consciousness side. They are abstract concepts. They simply mean the infinite expanse of Space.

Parabrahman-Mūlaprakṛti could be called the symbolic circle or ZERO. The shoreless ocean of being. The apex, the beginning of every manifestation in that boundless Space, the Absolute, is the ONE of that particular Universe. From it flow the TWO, the THREE and then all things.

By the proper use of the Absolute, Gottfried de Purucker says, he hopes to strike a new keynote in thought, which may point to a path of consciousness and provide a key to a wonderful teaching. We can certainly concur with

this and hope that contemplation of this will give each of us that key.

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 5. G. de Purucker, *Studies in Occult Philosophy*, p. 517-22 (download from the blavatskyhouse.org).
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International Theosophy Conferences 2021

Date: July 29 - August 1, 2021

Location: online

International Theosophy Conferences Inc (ITC) is a platform where Theosophical organizations and individual students of Theosophy gather. Every year there is a conference. Because of the pandemic, this year, like last year, it will be held online.

The title this year is A Mind embracing the Universe. The title is taken from a phrase, appealing to intuition, in H.P. Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine (II, Stanza IV, sloka 160). The theme will be introduced in short lectures. Subsequently, workshops will be set up in which everyone can give his or her vision on the theme, so that together we can come to a greater wisdom.

On the different days, one topic in particular will be central.

Day 1: What is the mind?

Day 2: What is needed to develop a mind that embraces?

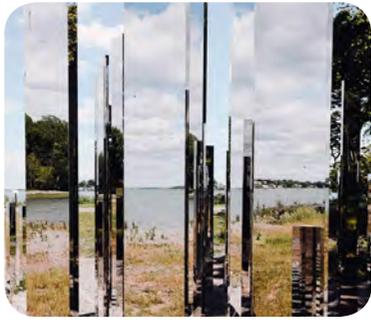
Day 3: How to embrace the Universe with our mind?

On the ITC-website you will find excerpts of texts by theosophical teachers on the subject. Everyone can therefore prepare well for the ITC. We therefore advise everyone to read those texts.

Last year for the first time the ITC was held in two languages; this year the lectures and workshops will be given in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

On the website you will find the full program and the text excerpts. You can register for this conference there as well: <https://www.theosophyconferences.org>.





The collective memory

The astral plane: storehouse of our experiences

If you assume an etheric field that is surrounding and within the earth, you can better understand all kinds of psychological riddles and disorders. Psychology would make a big step if it assumed this astral light.

Key thoughts

- » The astral light is a collective field, in which all events are indelibly recorded. It is the repository of everything that happens on earth.
- » There is a constant interaction and exchange of energies between the astral and physical plane.
- » The astral light has many gradations.
- » Your character or state of mind determines which part of the astral plane you are attracted to.
- » When you lose control of your mind, as in psychosis or drug use, you open yourself to certain images from the astral plane.

Psychology today faces many issues, which it can hardly, if at all, solve. The number of confused people causing problems in the public domain is increasing alarmingly. There are humans with delusions and psychoses, whether or not caused by excessive use of alcohol or drugs. Sometimes the hallucinations are so strong that they cause people to engage in dangerous situations or aggressively attack others, while only hours later they no longer remember their behavior. It is as if their consciousness does not record those events. With an aging population in many western countries, there are also more and more demented people: people who seem to have lost every memory. In contrast, there are people who cannot get rid of their memories. They suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS). The traumatic experience, from their childhood or from a war situation, keeps imposing itself on their consciousness.

Brain

How to explain these mental disorders and diseases depends on your

view of humans. What is a human being? *Is* a human being a body or does he *have* a body? In the former case, you will look for the cause of these ailments, which are often accompanied by great suffering, in the body and especially in the brain. Materialistic psychology therefore traces these ills back to the workings of the brain. The brain is an extremely complicated organ, which has yet to reveal many of its secrets, despite the many modern techniques by which we peruse it. If you attribute the cause of psychological problems to the brain, you also look for the solution in the brain. The drugs that psychiatrists administer, such as antipsychotics and antidepressants, are also intended to exert an influence on the brain, which sometimes does indeed reduce the symptoms, but usually only temporarily. Yet we believe that the real cause of any psychological problem does not lie in our brain.

A world beyond the physical world

The materialistic explanations are

inadequate. In our opinion, they are largely motivated by the tendency to compare our brain to a computer. But the brain is not a computer and does not function as such. The brain is a living organ in which cells are constantly dying and new ones are being born. How could those disappearing and appearing cells serve as a memory!

Theosophia teaches that the brain is a link or antenna to something working behind and through it. In our view, the main shortcoming of materialistic psychology is that it does not want to consider that there is more than the physical substance, which is, by the way, living substance. Science would take a great step forward if it did.

Let us see what new insights and explanations can be obtained if you take as *hypothesis* that behind or within the physical world there is another, more ethereal world. That world or sphere is not separate from the world known to us, but it is not perceptible to the physical senses.

Physics also assumes invisible forces, natural laws, such as the law of gravity. One does not know what these natural laws are, but one does know that they exist.

Similarly, we could assume a world behind the phenomena and see if we can use it to explain things like psychosis, hallucinations, and visions.

Delusions are a reality for those who have them

What is striking about people who suffer from psychosis or delusions is that they are convinced that what they see or hear is real. There is no point in arguing with them that they are delusional, and that the reality is otherwise. They have no doubt that what they perceive is real, even if it is invisible or inaudible to others. Fortunately, sometimes there are lucid moments. At those moments, a good conversation does become possible and makes sense.

If you explain their hallucinations by a certain brain abnormality or by an excess or deficiency of certain substances in the brain, then you are completely denying that someone with psychosis really sees or hears something. But it may be that your assumption is false and that he really does perceive something, albeit not with the physical senses. There must then evidently be a collective field from which you can attract certain things if you are sensitive to it. A person can dwell in that area with his consciousness, thereby hearing voices, seeing images, receiving “assignments” from other beings, and so on. It may also be, in the case of post-traumatic stress disorder PTSS, that you constantly return to a world in which you wander helplessly and in which you can neither fight against nor flee from

any horrible danger that you once experienced. In other words, you are actually living in your past trauma. That trauma is a daily reality for you. But it can also be the case, that you are almost completely cut off from a certain part of this area, so that you have almost no memory at all of (phases of) your own past, as is the case with demented elderly people.

Astral Light

Theosophia teaches that our physical world is actually nothing more than the coarsest layer of an astral world. That astral world, like our world, consists of living building blocks, which are, however, of such an ethereal content that they are imperceptible to our physical senses. In this day and age, when it is known that so many forces and phenomena cannot be perceived by the senses, this idea should not be very difficult to fathom. Just as certain radiations can pass through stone walls, so the astral substance is of a different, more subtle nature than the physical substance. The astral plane is therefore both in and around the physical world.

This astral light is a *collective area*, in which all events are indelibly recorded. Now, of course, people have numerous, in character very different experiences. Each experience is stored in a characteristically corresponding department. To put it in metaphors: for each specific experience, there is a special pigeonhole. Basically, it is accessible to all humans. We can draw the information from each “department” if we can evoke again that specific state of mind within ourselves. As we experience things more self-consciously, the impression also becomes stronger, which also makes it easier to recall it again. *All* the thoughts, feelings and actions of all people make an impression in this astral region. It is therefore a repository for everything that happens on earth. It is sometimes compared to a *gallery of pictures* because it contains the impressions of all the mental *pictures* that have ever been thought. You could call it our collective memory, because it is composed of the collective thinking of all humans.

Thinking is the perception of thoughts. Human consciousness focuses on a thought or a few thoughts of a certain character or quality, perceives it, and thereby also reinforces the thought. Other thinkers can therefore perceive those thoughts more easily. In this way thoughts pass from one to another. Ideas are formed together, and impressions are made in the astral plane collectively.

Now you are never randomly attracted to a particular astral impression. You evoke only those images, which

correspond to characteristics within yourself. So, someone who does not know hate will never be attracted to hateful thoughts. And someone who is always positive and constructive in life will never evoke a cynical, nihilistic astral image.

Thinking is a process in which you are constantly sending and receiving thoughts. In accordance with the characteristic of the thoughts sent, you receive thoughts. If you think thoughts in a certain state of mind and with a certain coloring, then you will receive the thoughts and feelings of the same characteristic. For example, if you have a tendency toward melancholy, you open a door in your consciousness through which you more easily perceive melancholic impressions from the astral light.

All thoughts are present in the astral light. It therefore also contains universal, noble thoughts. The thoughts of all the great world teachers and even those of more advanced consciousnesses of the past and present have also made an impression in the astral light. We can therefore make use of, for example, the wisdom of Plato or Buddha, if we ennoble our character, thus attuning ourselves to the spiritual parts of the astral worlds.

Interaction between the astral and physical plane

The astral realm is not separate from our physical world. On the contrary. There is a constant interaction and exchange of energies between these two realms. As mentioned above, every event makes an imprint in the astral light, but conversely, we are also constantly influenced by it. Life “flows” both from “above” to “below,” and from “below” to “above”. Actually, our world is nothing but the coarsest part or dregs of the astral matter.

The astral realm is not homogeneous. It has several, qualitatively different, stratifications. Close to the physical realm, it is polluted by human selfish desires and feelings. It is not a pleasant place to be. There are also neutral subdivisions. Its higher parts border the spiritual worlds, called *Ākāśa*. The astral substance is actually the precipitation of *Ākāśa*. We can also dwell in *Ākāśa* if we develop in ourselves a noble, unselfish characteristic. Impersonal, intellectual-abstract, insightful thoughts and ideas of unity are recorded in it.

The different stratifications in the astral region correspond to the different characteristics in our consciousness. The more earth-oriented aspects of consciousness, such as certain emotions and desires, belong in the lower regions of the astral plane, while our more selfless, understanding

and spiritual aspects belong to the sphere of *Ākāśa*. There are no sharp boundaries. One sphere gradually merges into another.

In fact, no natural phenomenon on earth can be adequately explained without involving the astral light. This is equally true of psychic ailments. Delusions, hallucinations and visions arise because people perceive images from the astral light.

Are delusions real?

People who suffer from delusions due to drug or alcohol abuse or psychosis do indeed perceive something. Although these are not so much perceptions with the physical senses but more with lower aspects of your mind. Your mind looks into the astral light and perceives something.

However, that does not mean that what these people *experience* from the observations is also in conformity with reality. Because it most certainly is not. Why is that? Because in most cases they misinterpret the observations. Although they themselves are convinced of the contrary, the explanation of the images they see is mostly wrong. It is *their* reality.

Let me try to explain this with an example from our physical world. Almost everyone has at some point seen a shooting star. Knowing nothing about astronomy, you may think that you have actually seen a fast moving or a “falling” star. However, that interpretation is incorrect. What you are actually seeing is a meteor or some other object that enters the earth’s atmosphere, burns up, which creates in us *the impression* that a star is falling.

Now there are quite a few people who have no knowledge of astronomy. They are therefore *collectively* subject to the “illusion of the shooting star”. As more people believe this, the impression of this phenomenon in the astral plane becomes deeper and brighter. Note: the phenomenon itself is real. There really is a flash of light in the night sky. But the explanation for it is not correct.

Collectivity of perception

In fact, the same thing occurs with a lot of people who make an observation in the astral realm. As mentioned, that area has a great many layers. It is like a house with many rooms. You are drawn to exactly the room that corresponds to your character, or the state of consciousness you are in at any given time.

For example, horror films are very popular. The most horrific scenes are portrayed, which, supported with certain music, scares the viewer. Humans are strange beings.

It is precisely that which disgusts them and evokes fear that has a strong attraction. Although some get sleepless nights from it, they still keep watching these films. Now every thought makes an impression in the astral light. So, you can imagine that as more people watch these horror movies, this “department” of the astral light becomes stronger and larger.

Now suppose that a fan of these films loses control of himself, for example because he is under the influence of drugs, has a high fever, or a psychosis. He is then attracted to that part of *our collective memory*, in which these images are recorded. He may even be attracted to them in his sleep, resulting in a nightmare. If something has snapped in your consciousness, so that the higher parts are no longer active, you can begin to see these images as reality. You cannot put them in perspective or in a proper context and you are, as it were, absorbed by them.

No control over thinking

In fact, all psychic ailments, no matter how different they may seem, are due to a loss of control over your mind, temporarily or permanently. As a result, images from the astral light overwhelm the mind unfiltered and uncontrolled. With mastery of thought, one can consciously shut oneself off from parts of the astral sphere or, on the contrary, consciously focus on something which one chooses to perceive in it. If you do not master your thoughts, or you do not master them enough, you may unintentionally dwell in or get lost in certain parts of the astral light.

Take the case of PTSS. People who suffer from this ailment are unable to break free from their traumatic experience. They have opened a gateway so wide, so that the traumatic experience, recorded in a certain section of the astral plane, continues to hurt them constantly.

In the case of demented elderly, the reverse occurs. The higher parts of the mind have largely withdrawn. The abilities of expressing themselves have been taken away from them. Something has snapped. The result can be that an elderly man or woman can no longer focus on the “astral subdivision” that contains the impressions from their past. Even if they wanted to, they can no longer focus on it. Such elderly persons may be overwhelmed by all sorts of other astral images that they do not interpret correctly, which in turn can lead to fear and delusion. It may also happen that they completely open themselves to some, often fragmentary, impressions in the astral plane that they made in their youth, which makes them think

that they are still young.

As we said before, the character of the person determines the influence you experience. Even if you are demented, but throughout your life you have been a paragon of sacrifice, love and humanity, you will automatically experience the influence of the more lovely currents from the astral plane, even if you do not remember what you have done in the past. We know a case of an elderly lady who spent her whole life sacrificing herself for others. All her life she had been full of love for everyone. At an advanced age, she entered the hospital and lost her memory, but, she radiated so much peace and kindness that the nurses came into her room to rest.

To remember something is to “look up” the self-made impressions in the astral world. Sometimes this happens spontaneously. When you visit your old home or meet old school friends, you suddenly go back to that part of the astral realm in which those impressions are stored. You remember all kinds of forgotten details of your childhood.

Collective responsibility

In the case of mental disorders, one opens oneself to certain parts in the astral light, which one misinterprets. Those impressions are never recorded by only one individual. We are constantly influencing each other.

To elaborate on the example of the horror movie. It is not inconceivable that the director and actors in that film were in no way affected by the film they made. They may remember with a smile the fake blood and laugh at the so-called zombie that was supposed to evoke horror. They do not have nightmares. Nor does anyone who is quite level-headed suffer from those movies. Yet the creators of the film, as well as all those who watch it, contribute to the astral image. If someone has opened up to these impressions and attributes an overly reality to those images, then they are also responsible for it. If someone is going to suffer terribly because of that horror movie, it is partly because of them.

In the same way, we may be responsible for the emotional outbursts and misbehaviors of our “weaker brothers”. Even “good citizens” can think the most terrible things and by doing so pollute the lower parts of the astral light, from which people who have no or little control over themselves can freely draw from. The insults and invectives on Twitter, for example, are not only due to the uninhibitedness of those who post such tweets, but also to all those who think such thoughts. The “weak brothers” are nothing but the thermometer that shows that the whole society has a fever.

Especially in modern society, with mass communication and social media, people living in different parts of the earth, build on the same astral image. For example, all over the world there is fear, justified or not, of the coronavirus. Thus, they create a collective astral image.

The whole society shares responsibility for all those humans who suffer psychologically or are strongly open to the emotions and thoughts of others. For example, you cannot entertain yourself with horror movies without consequence. Nor will harboring resentment and hatred ever be without consequence, even if you do not turn that hatred into actions. After all, by thinking thoughts they leave their impression, or reinforce the impression that already exists.

Quick change of mood

Knowledge of the powerful influence that astral images can have on us changes our view of a large number of psychological matters. You have a better understanding of how it is possible for someone to pass from one mood to another so quickly. Many who work in psychiatric care have experienced how clients can change from one mood to the next. They are talking kindly and in an instant, without any apparent cause, they change into an aggressive and violent person.

Changing one's mood regularly is also important with regard to the issue of euthanasia. It has recently been established that the death wish of elderly in particular is not at all durable. If an old man has spent a weekend alone in his apartment, he sincerely believes that death is best for him. But if he has a nice conversation with his neighbor on Monday, that death wish is no longer there. Especially with people who were able to do something for another person, the wish to die disappears. They have then simply opened up to another part of the astral plane.

Master of thought is master of the astral realm.

The solution to the great psychic suffering of so many of our fellow human beings lies in trying to master the mind. And just to be clear, mastering does not mean pushing something away. No, we must be masters of our thoughts. And this is only possible if we live in the higher parts of our mind, with which we can *control* the lower ones. Then we will reside only in those parts of the astral – or even better: *Ākāśa* – for which we have consciously chosen.

Of course, it is very difficult for a mental patient to obtain this mastery. Often the higher parts are (temporarily)

absent. They have no access to them. This may be due to the excessive use of drugs, for example. Nevertheless, in the process of healing this will have to be emphasized. Current psychiatry looks for the healing process mainly in the brain. However, as mentioned above, the brain is only a link, an interface, between the physical and the astral human being. It conducts impressions from the astral to the physical and vice versa. Images and impressions from the astral sphere are “translated” through the brain into the outer world.

Medication or drugs inhibit or stimulate this transfer. For example, if you take antidepressants, certain feelings are inhibited. This does not mean that those feelings are no longer there, but they cannot express themselves. People who take these drugs are therefore not aware of their depressive thoughts, but they often do not “feel” much at all anymore. Drugs like heroin and alcohol, on the other hand, often open the gateway to all kinds of uncontrolled feelings and images. For example, a quiet and shy person can turn into a daredevil under the influence of alcohol. These characteristics are not created by the alcohol, but the alcohol causes them to express themselves, usually to the detriment of the person in question.

Medication can never provide a lasting solution. They do have an effect on the brain. They “mute” or “stimulate” certain processes in the brain, preventing or increasing astral influence from taking shape in us. It goes without saying that this can only work temporarily. Addressing the true problem, which is in the mind, requires a fundamentally different approach: conversations to get the client to understand and control his thinking. True healing occurs when a human is no longer drawn to those parts of the astral plane that cause him to suffer.

Not only patients sometimes get lost in the maze of the astral. How often does it happen that someone says or does something in anger, which he later regrets dearly. Such a person suddenly opens a window in his consciousness, through which a strong astral storm blows in.

When you come to a complete mastery of thought, you can dwell in those parts of the astral world that you self-consciously choose. You can then even “travel” self-consciously in the astral light and, thousands of miles away from where your physical body is, perceive things or communicate with someone. This is only possible for the one who is Master of his thinking. Most people, who are far from being so, can nevertheless begin to control their thinking by contemplating the world from their supra-personal aspects.



Theosophy in Nature

Seeing without eyes, smelling without a nose: perception in the plant kingdom

Scientists are starting to discover abilities in plants which were, up until now, considered impossible. More than a collection of auto-responsive cells, plants turn out to be individuals, conscious beings capable of making deliberate decisions based on an ever-changing environment.

Key thoughts

- » We are using our senses to observe, but the *actual* perception takes place in our consciousness.
- » Senses are the instruments, the channels to pass on information from the surrounding world to the consciousness. For plants this is not different.
- » *At their level*, plants possess the same five senses as humans. It is about the function of these senses, not about the physical form.
- » In addition to external senses there are also inner senses with which we are able to observe in the astral, less physical sphere. Because this form of perception is not bound to the physical body, it allows the plant consciousness to perceive remotely.

The Italian biologist Monica Gagliano performs remarkable research on plants. Unlike most of her colleagues, her research does not focus on chemical processes at cell level, but she considers plants as individuals, as learning beings. With her intuitive approach she tries to expand the general limited view we have of plants. Our vision is so limited because we are quite mistaken in the, at first sight, passive, motionless state of plants. But because plants do not have the ability to move, like animals, Gagliano states, they are extremely alert to stimuli from their environment. These stimuli evoke acute, and therefore very active, reactions in plants.

The aim of her experiments is to reveal the capabilities of plants to perceive. And in doing so, she has remarkable results. She recently discovered for example that plants can 'hear'. With this she now plays a pioneering role in the brand new field of research on bio-acoustics.⁽¹⁾ Yet the ability of plants to perceive is not new in biological science. The

famous biologist Charles Darwin was already fascinated by the ability of plants to perceive and move in a certain direction based on physical stimuli. He wrote a book about it called *The Power of Movement in Plants*.

What is perceiving?

But what is perceiving? And what can we imagine when we talk about perceiving by slime molds and plants? To get this straight, let us start with ourselves first. Through our five physical senses, sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch we perceive the physical world around us. But you may wonder who or what is actually perceiving. If it were our senses, then why are there so many different tastes and interpretations with respect to what we perceive, while what is being perceived remains identical. If you think about this for a moment you will quickly realize that it is not our senses but our consciousness that is actually perceiving. Imagine this, a couple in a museum is looking at a painting, the woman loves it while

her husband could not care less and prefers to head over to the restaurant for some olives. “Gross, olives!” says the woman ...

As you can see, the same image, the same flavor and yet two completely different perceptions. Everyone is familiar with this phenomenon and yet we hardly think about the implications, namely that our senses are only instruments we use. They are channels, through which information from the physical world is passed on to our consciousness – the *real* observer. Our senses are the ports through which the consciousness can “scan” the physical world. They are the physical organs of inner abilities to observe the world around us. If we look at the plant kingdom from this perspective, we can imagine what perception entails in plants. Just like us, plants also have consciousness, they *are* consciousness,⁽²⁾ which is not the same as *self* awareness, to be clear. What we see from a plant is the body of the plant-consciousness behind it, working through it. And just as we do, the plant-consciousness perceives information from the physical world, on the basis of which it takes a specific action. And just like us plants have senses, be it at *their level*, transmitting the information from the physical world. We need to let go of the restricted idea that a nose is needed to smell, and a tongue is needed to taste, et cetera. It is about the function, not about the form.

The five senses

Research into these functions in the plant kingdom step by step reveals that plants analogous to our five senses, have developed their own organs allowing them to do exactly the same at their own level. Scientists are starting to discover that plants have capabilities that up until now have not been thought possible and which have only been attributed to the animal kingdom.

smell

With certain receptors plants can “smell” substances in the air. Acacia trees on the savannah alert their neighbors through the air with signal markers when they are eaten by giraffes, to which members of that species initiate a defense mechanism in response and create a substance that makes the leaves taste bad. In other studies on insect gluttony, for instance, the same mechanism has been observed.

taste

In the case of smell, it is about volatile substances, while with taste it is about liquid substances. With the points of their roots, plants are able to “taste” dissolved substances

in water.

With experiments it was proven that plants promptly let their roots grow in a different direction when those roots “taste” detrimental salt.⁽³⁾ Plants also communicate with their roots. Members of the same species appear to warn each other from root to root with signal markers when a period of drought comes. Those plants that receive the signal, immediately take their measures, in order to evaporate less moisture.



The roots of Arabidopsis-seedlings (left) change the direction of their downward growth when they come across salt (right).

touch

The tactile sense can be seen in the famous plant *Mimosa pudica*, which folds all its leaves at the same time the moment it is touched.

The carnivorous venus flycatcher also folds its leaves as soon as an insect lands on it. Interestingly enough, it does not do so immediately but only when at least two of its probes have been touched so that it is sure that the prey is large enough and cannot escape.



sight

The ability to “see”, to distinguish different wavelengths, has also been established in plants. The same way we have

photoreceptors in our eyes, plants have their own receptors in leaves and stems. This allows them to grow in the right direction, usually towards sunlight. But also, if a plant is facing the risk of being overshadowed, he perceives this. In response, he immediately invests all his energy in the stem to grow quickly above his competitor, with his leaves facing upwards. If this is successful, he “relaxes” again, and will spread his leaves widely in order to receive the maximum amount of light.

hearing

The revolutionary evidence that plants can hear as well has only been provided recently. This special discovery was made by the Italian biologist Monica Gagliano.⁽¹⁾ In an experimental set-up in which she let plants “hear” the sound of running water, she discovered that the roots started to grow towards this sound. She did this by placing an underground plastic tube through which water flowed. Despite the fact that the tube was dry on the outside, the roots still found their way towards it, and there was no other way possible to detect the water other than by “hearing”. Scientists are still kept in the dark about which parts of the plant can register sound.

Inner senses

The question however is whether plants actually perceive the sound of the water or whether there is more to it. It is actually known that plants are extremely sensitive to electrical influences and that they have an electric field that they use remotely, amongst others, to communicate with bees.⁽⁴⁾

If we look at this from a consciousness point of view, this phenomenon corresponds to what in Theosophy is called “perceiving in the astral field”. A sphere or energy level that is just a little less physical than the visible sphere and therefore cannot be observed by our physical senses, but it can be with the type of senses that are suited for this astral world. We all use these *more inner* senses consciously or unconsciously, for example, when we “taste the atmosphere”, or sense someone’s tense state of mind. They are “inner antennae” with which we feel what is not physically perceptible. Because it is a more inner aspect of our consciousness, it is also not bound to our physical body and its scope, which is why we can sense things at a greater distance.

This ability to observe on the astral level is strongly developed in animals. We see this in elephants that flee into the hills hours before a tsunami takes place, in horses

that flawlessly pick up someone’s emotion or in dogs that can warn their owner about an epileptic attack hours in advance.

With us, this ability has moved a bit more to the background because we have actually already outgrown it at this stage of our evolution. As self-conscious beings, we are developing the *mind*. We are active in the thought sphere, by perceiving and transmitting thoughts. This certainly includes emotional thinking, but we are mainly developing intellectual and insightful thinking, our faculty of understanding. This allows us to make a more real observation than scanning the area just above the physical plane. Theosophy, by the way, mentions two other inner senses that are still latent in us today but which we will develop in the course of our evolution as our consciousness awakens in a more spiritual plane. But let us go back to the plants.

Developing the ability to feel

According to Theosophy, plants are in an evolutionary phase in which they are actually developing the ability to feel, which is strongly linked to the astral plane. It is possible that this ability plays a role in observing water while there is no physical exchange taking place. An example in which this remote observation, this scanning on the astral plane, must play a role for sure is the fascinating phenomenon of a common bean, a climbing plant that, in its search for necessary grip, manages to grow flawlessly towards a mainstay which is up to a meter away.⁽⁵⁾

It becomes even more interesting when two common beans are competing for the same pole, which can be beautifully seen in a video by the biologist Stefano Mancuso, who conducts scientific research into consciousness in plants.⁽⁶⁾ Initially they both rapidly grow upwards after which they move towards the pole, but as soon as the first one has reached the pole, something remarkable happens: number two immediately stops his attempt and turns away from the pole, looking for other support. This happens without the plants touching each other. Each time the experiment is repeated, the outcome is the same. These experiments show that plants are indeed aware of their environment and also capable to anticipate to it immediately.

Finally, another example closer to home in which we can recognize the sensitivity of plants. We all know someone with the typical “green fingers”. Someone whose plants are always forcefull and lushly in bloom. Someone who really cares about his or her plants, loves them so to speak, and who also radiates that atmosphere. Even if that person

forgets to water every once in a while, the influence of such a person goes beyond just performing the right actions.

A new perspective

Why are these scientific findings so important? Because, says the Italian biologist Gagliano, this insight is fundamental to our vision on what plants really are and how we deal with nature. A plant is more than just a static object, an automatically responding set of cells. No, plants are *individuals*, living, sentient beings. With an inner, instinctive urge to develop, to evolve and to do exactly what is needed to achieve this. It is the same inner urge that gives a seedling the strength to grow from the dark soil right through the asphalt towards the light. Beings that, just like us, need rest and literally become exhausted when their day and night rhythm is disrupted. For example, trees in the city that are constantly exposed to artificial light at night, die much sooner than individuals from the same species who do get their night's sleep.⁽⁷⁾

Even though it is quite primitive, plants have their own character and a consciousness with which they make deliberate choices at *their* level. The recent scientific insights contribute to this realization that hopefully will grow into a more ethical view on how we deal with nature and the plant kingdom.

In her research, Monica Gagliano went a step further and besides the ability to perceive, she has shown that plants are even able to learn. In the next article of this series, we will elaborate on this and see what insights Theosophy can give on the ability of plants to learn and yes, even remember!

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Conspiracy theories

One of the side effects of the corona crisis is an increase in the number of conspiracy theories. How can this be explained and what can we do about it?

A global disaster evokes many reactions. In addition to the mainstream explanation of how the pandemic originated and how we should behave, there are all sorts of alternative explanations. The virus would be deliberately created to reduce the world population to 500 million. A vaccine would be developed for each world citizen, which would give those in power control over people. Who those rulers are is not entirely clear; some mention China, others the United Nations or even aliens. The virus is also associated with the 5G network. There is also an idea that the virus does not exist at all and was made up by those in power. Governments would use the non-existent virus to suppress the population and restrict or abolish all kinds of democratic rights. We call something a conspiracy theory when there is no empirical evidence for the theory and when it assumes an underlying plan of those in power, which the population is not allowed to know, but which in the end turns out strongly to the disadvantage of all of us. How could it

be that this conspiracy thinking is growing so much?

Fear, suspicion and passive thinking

Several factors come into play in conspiracy thinking. One of them is fear. Perhaps not even fear of the virus itself – although that certainly plays a part as well – but fear in general. Fear of the government, of the loss of wealth, the loss of identity. Fear always creates a breeding ground for thoughts devoid of logic.

Furthermore, suspicion plays an important role. There is a strong suspicion towards all authorities: the politicians, banking systems, journalism and science. Many people feel ignored. It is striking that many conspiracy theorists themselves have had a burnout or have otherwise gone through a deep valley, sometimes even have a post-traumatic stress disorder. It seems that this has made their minds susceptible to something that unfortunately is quite common in society.

Also among people from New Age circles, who often distrust main-

Key thoughts

- » We create our own truth by attributing reality to something.
- » By testing each proposition or assertion with your intellect, your understanding, and the laws of nature you are aware of, you dig up your “evidence” – conviction of the mind – from within yourself.
- » Man has latently within him all the faculties to know a greater truth.

stream science, the belief in conspiracies is increasing. Sociologists call this phenomenon *conspiratoriality*.

Often their distrust is understandable. They have been treated unfairly by the government, by banks or employers or other powerful institutions and do not have the means to defend themselves against it. They experience the outside world as hypocritical and untruthful and do not expect any solutions from politicians.

Politics is also often only concerned with itself. Many politicians proclaim only their “truth”, which fits into their line of thinking. Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of them worldwide who sell pertinent lies as truth and present fake news as facts.

We sometimes read in the newspapers that scientists, too, do not take the truth very seriously, with the sad low point being scientists who make up their own data. Often contradictory signals are given. Face masks are useless, some experts say. They are useful, claim others. Vaccinations are dangerous, claim some virologists. They are not, others say.

Even though perhaps most scientists are people of integrity, their authority is declining. They are considered arrogant. They assume, it is claimed, that they are right and ignore or ridicule alternative ideas. They are also unable to explain often complicated issues in a way that non-scientifically trained people can understand.

Journalists often follow general ideas. They believe that as professionals they know better. They often lack the time to investigate issues in depth or deliberately choose not to investigate further.

Everyone creates his own truth

Yet the dividing line between conspiracy theorists and the rest is not as great as it may seem at first glance. After all, everyone assumes they are right. Therefore, how many people are inclined to always filter out the information that does not fit in with their own view? How many articles give only arguments that support the writer’s opinion, while leaving out the counterarguments? And if it is said that conspiracy theorists’ ideas have no empirical evidence, then we should note that for the “authorized” ideas there is often no evidence either. This is particularly true in economics. While one economist asserts with certainty that austerity is the way out of a crisis, another claims with equal certainty that the government must invest in crises. The only difference that distinguishes a conspiracy theorist is his conviction that there is a conspiracy behind certain policies and events.

A conspiracy thinker will not label himself as such. After all, his truth is not a conspiracy to him. Some call themselves “complete thinkers”. In their own opinion, they see and understand more than others. In their eyes, they combine separate facts into a large, overarching whole. That is *their* truth. They believe they are entitled to their truth. They are afraid that their world view, in which they feel safe, will be undermined by “forces” stronger than they.

Added to this is the fact that many, especially in New Age groups, have an aversion to intellectual reasoning. If someone says that they *feel* something is not true, then the exchange of ideas actually stops. Mere feeling is also confused with intuition. An intuition must always be reasonably explainable, which certainly does not happen with feeling. Moreover, feelings are fleeting and often change. Truth based on feeling is therefore anything but sustainable.

Now, we all of us make our own truth. Truth is that which we call true, with which we identify, to which we attribute reality. That is why more information does not usually make a conspiracy theorist change his point of view. He does not ascribe reality to that information. It does not fit his picture. In that respect he is somewhat delusional. You can talk for hours, but if someone sees ghosts or leprechauns, words will not make his perceptions disappear.

Rather, what is needed is a thorough revision of the way we think. And that certainly does not just apply to conspiracy theorists. If we all did that, if we had already learned to do that in school, the breeding ground for conspiracy theories would be much less fertile.

Provide your own evidence

We may be surprised that without any empirical evidence conspiracy theorists have such, in our view, weird theories. But what is evidence?

Evidence is not a separate thing. It is conviction for thought. And you can only get to that conviction by thinking independently.

Therein lies the crux. The basic ideas of both the “mainstream” views and the conspiracy theorist’s views are rarely questioned. They are taken for granted. A conspiracy thinker may be so convinced that he does not question his theory. But do others question their ideas?

When a banker or a chief executive officer of industry picks up a salary that is many times over that of the cleaner of that bank or that company, it is invariably argued on the

grounds that he has more responsibility. The underlying idea, however, that more responsibility should lead to a higher salary, is not up for debate.

Another example: in mainstream biology it is assumed that humans evolved from ape-like creatures. Around that – unproven – thesis, the facts of each bone found are modeled. People are stuck in their own point of view. Anyone who claims otherwise is not taken seriously. But is it a truth that humans evolved in ape-like form? How then should one find truth?

In an earlier issue of *Lucifer – the Lightbringer*, we gave some ideas on how you should approach Theosophia.⁽¹⁾ Although in that article we applied this methodology only to the theosophical principles, you can apply it to *any issue*. We stated in that article that you should ponder the theosophical propositions or theorems for yourself. How do you do that? Develop hypotheses that arise from those propositions. See what implications they have. You can test these against your intellect, your insight, the events in the world, the laws of nature insofar as you can recognize them, and against the knowledge and wisdom of people in whom you have confidence. That is sometimes a long and continuous process. You have to do something for that.

In other words, if you really care about the truth, you must not assume a priori that an assertion or proposition is true or false, even if it is very different from what you hold to be true. By being open and by adopting an inquisitive

attitude you build up truth for yourself, and in this way, you dig up “the evidence” from within yourself.

Sending and receiving

It would be preferable if political, scientific, religious, or economic authorities also appealed to people’s critical thinking skills. What is the background to their assertions or actions? What arguments do they have to support them? And are there also arguments that do not support the assertion? When authorities clearly show what they know and do not know and on what basis they think they know something, they stimulate thinking. Real *authority* is not afraid of the truth. It will therefore encourage critical thinking by others because that alone can produce more truth. In this way, you cultivate trust.

But even those over whom authority is exercised have a duty to remain critical and to check whether what is claimed corresponds to what they believe to be true. You do not acknowledge authority by blindly following it, but by reflecting on the views of the person in authority and asking for further explanation if necessary.

In a well-functioning society, there is a constant exchange of thoughts. The authorities transmit certain ideas. The populations ponder about them and by doing so, they return those ideas, possibly slightly modified or corrected. This is a very dynamic process. It goes wrong when sender and receiver are on different wavelengths. If there is a sound situation, those in authority are wiser and therefore



ensure proper alignment. In doing so, they must start from the general interest, because it is precisely partial interests that create disadvantaged groups where conspiracy theorists are so numerous.

There is another aspect, which we want to mention. Those in power often have a negative image of man. This image plays a role in their policies. As a result, distrust creeps into the system. The more the government listens to the people, organizes public participation evenings before a policy measure, the fewer conspiracy theories there will be.⁽²⁾

If that alignment is nonexistent, then after a short or long period the recognition of authority will fade away. Distrust and fear will take its place. Not having learned to assess ideas or policies with an open mind, people will embrace alternative ideas or seek explanations for certain phenomena. As more people take these ideas on board unconsciously and, as a result, emit them again, a psychological epidemic may arise in a short time, which in size and suffering far exceeds the present pandemic. This could have terrible consequences.

Between 1348 and 1351, the plague ravaged Europe. Jews were accused of being the cause of this all-destroying Black Death. They were said to have caused the plague epidemic by poisoning wells and water holes. Many Jews were killed or had to flee.

Trust in our Self

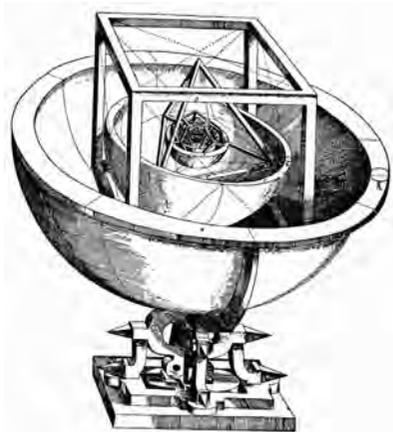
There is another important element we want to mention. Some think that we will never know the truth. We think that this is not so.

According to Theosophia, human beings are essentially divine beings and have all the faculties in order to know truth. The point is to develop those faculties. And you do that by examining the propositions carefully. And when you have found truth, you can apply it to your own life. *Man is an essentially divine being*, is one such proposition. The implication of that proposition is that we can trust that in our inner Self truth can be found. Can we explore this proposition? Can we find in our own consciousness those divine capacities? What are the implications of that? So, that means we can have confidence that in our deeper Self we have the instrument to distinguish truth from illusion. But how is it that we are not yet acting divinely? By clearly asking such questions, which we can ask ourselves in response to a claim that seems at first glance to be bold, we open a door to knowledge from within. Let us turn these questions into research questions, hypotheses, so that we can find more truth.

You might think that this may be true for philosophical questions, but not for practical matters. Often, we simply lack information to make a proper conclusion. For example, did the coronavirus originate in the market in Wuhan or in the laboratory in that city? We do not have enough data to get an answer. Well, better no answer than a supposed answer. Then we keep our minds flexible and nimble. Then we do not fall into the pit of sought-after assertions, which only increase illusions. Just as a lithe and limber body is better able to successfully complete physical challenges, so a “trained” thinking faculty will be better able to distinguish illusion from truth. Let us therefore keep a careful eye on our thinking process and learn more and more how it proceeds. This will safeguard us from any delusional thinking.

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The cosmic roots of mathematics

Many people see mathematics just as a tool for calculations. But how can we explain the interesting fact that great thinkers of antiquity, such as Pythagoras and Plato, emphasized the importance of a *deep* understanding of mathematics so strongly?

In ancient times, mathematics had a fundamental role in religion, philosophy, and science. Nowadays, mathematics still plays an important role in science and technology, but only as a means to model and calculate the processes in nature. So, its role changed: mathematics has lost its deeper significance. This also explains why many people associate mathematics with something boring or ‘dry’. If you are one of these people, we recommend you to keep reading!

This article is the product of a study group of the Theosophical Society Point Loma, a group we abbreviate with “SC”. The goal of the article is to show the soul of mathematics, which is explained by the Theosophia, the universal wisdom behind all religions, philosophies, and sciences. We will do this by making a distinguishment between *practical mathematics*, mathematics as it is commonly used today, and mathematics as the language of universal truths, *philosophical mathematics*. We will first describe the current

role of practical mathematics, its scope, and limitations. Then we go to the spiritual root of mathematics, which is the fundamental idea that the cosmos is ensouled and led by *consciousness*, by countless beings.

A language of patterns

Practical mathematics describes the patterns in nature. So, it is a language, a means of describing processes by logical models. This is reflected in Wikipedia’s attempt to describe mathematics (mind: there is no generally accepted definition):

Mathematicians seek and use patterns to formulate new conjectures; they resolve the truth or falsity of such by mathematical proof. When mathematical structures are good models of real phenomena, mathematical reasoning can be used to provide insight or predictions about nature.

All processes in nature follow certain patterns. We can notice this in all areas of life. All around us we see

Key thoughts

» Mathematics describes the patterns and rhythms in Nature. Mathematics is therefore a language, a means of expressing ideas.

» Practical mathematics is a means of calculating. Its origin, however, lies in philosophical mathematics, which is the description of the habitual patterns of cosmic beings.

» Philosophical mathematics has traditionally been a lofty branch of study in the great esoteric schools. It served as a stepping stone to the study of the divine Ideas, the Universal Wisdom or Theosophia.

that causes produce their corresponding consequences, whether we look at spiritual, mental, or material, practical examples. Take for instance the connection between hot weather and sunstrokes. You can record the daily temperature and the number of people who needed medical help. And you can put such a correlation into a formula. However, that does not mean that we always recognize these patterns and rhythms. In complex processes, as with the current climate change in the world, it is often difficult to find the dominant causes and the determining preconditions. If we did know them, we would be able to optimize our predictions.

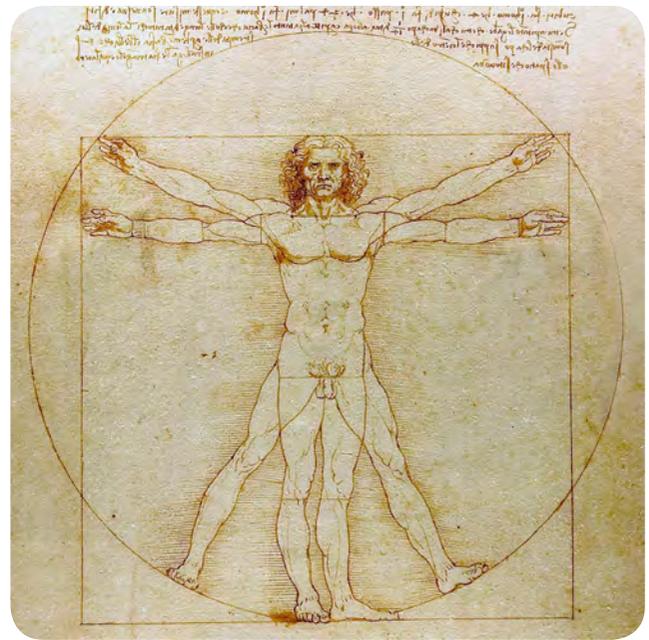
Strict, coherent rules

The many mathematical rules are all derived from a small number of propositions (called “axioms”). Therefore, they form one consistent whole. There is no mathematical rule that varies in its nature or reasoning from another rule. For this reason, mathematics could be called a perfect language — just like Sanskrit by the way, because in Sanskrit all rules are, without any exceptions, always valid as well, so the rules are all attuned to each other.⁽¹⁾ Mathematics may be seen as a perfect language, but that does not mean that every mathematical formula is correct for that reason. Compare it to written language: a sentence may be grammatically correct while at the same time not making any sense, lacking any connection with reality. As soon as you know this, you will not be impressed by the “scientific appearance” of mathematical formulas anymore, even if a formula is packed with symbols — just like you will see through well written sentences that are based on the wrong premises.

The nature of mathematics can be described concisely: “whatever you put in the mathematical grinder, comes out”.⁽²⁾ Or in even simpler language: “junk in means junk out”. But it also means: “relatively accurate premises in – relatively accurate values out”.

Practical mathematics: touchstone in all sciences

Scientists often think they have discovered some sort of a pattern. Is that a real pattern or not? The mathematical formulations can then be used as touchstones. How? With a formula or mathematical model, you can make a prediction about the outcome of subsequent observations or experiments. If this outcome matches the prediction, you can provisionally assume that, as far as you know, the pattern is correct. If the outcome doesn't match the



The ratios we encounter in all parts of our human body are based on ‘ideal proportions’. Each person shows his own expression of those proportions, based on his individual character. But this does not change the aforementioned fundamental fact.⁽⁹⁾

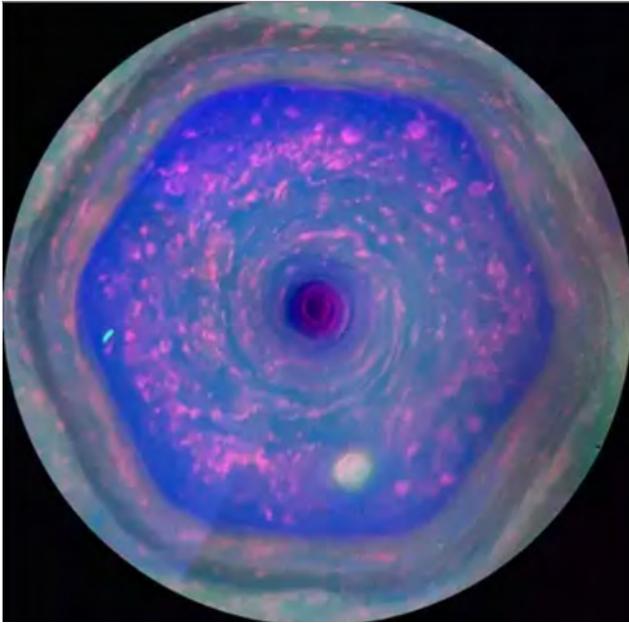
prediction, you will need to do more research to improve your understanding.

A famous example of mathematical modelling was given by the German astronomer Kepler (1571-1630). Kepler first thought that planets orbit the sun in *circles*. But the outcome of his calculations based on that circle-hypothesis, were not in line with the precise observational data he had. This incited him to continue searching, with great efforts. And finally, he found out that the planets follow an *elliptical* orbit, which he could prove by his mathematical computations. Without mathematics, there would have been only guess work.

How universal are the formulas of practical mathematics?

In nowadays science, we could say that there are no real universal formulas, as we can only investigate that small portion of the universe where we can do scientific research. Nowadays science usually works inductively, “from the outside to the inner patterns”, from the observations to the general laws. This means that, with insufficient knowledge of the general laws, you will never know if a formula that works out reasonably well in one field of research, or in one situation, or in one level of organization, or in one application, will also work well in another one.

An example. The formula of the correlation between weather and sunstrokes in the Netherlands, should not be



Every structure and process in nature reflects mathematical relations. Sometimes this is very clear, like this beautiful hexagonal pattern of the clouds on the north pole of Saturn. This pattern rotates with a period of 10 hours, which is the same as the period of the radio wave emissions from the interior of the planet.

applied in a country where people are very well adapted to hot weather.

Let us give you a second example from physics. You can describe the fall velocity with Newton's formula of gravity. The formula contains a multiplier called the gravitational constant. The value of this constant has been experimentally determined, by many measurements within the atmosphere of the Earth. By our experience with space missiles, we know that this constant is reliable enough for our purposes in the space between planets. But is it also valid in another solar system or in another galaxy? That, we do not know. We only know it is valid in the area that we have currently been able to investigate.

Furthermore, many physical models are simplifications, like the climate models, or the models that calculate the resistance of air or water. They do not try to incorporate all influences, even if we do know them, as these factors would make the calculations too large for our computers. If the approximations have some practical value, it may be enough for the time being. So, they have no pretention of universality at all.

In search of the backgrounds of mathematics

Now, let us raise some fundamental questions: what *are* mathematical relationships, and what is their *origin*? There

are two essentially different theories addressing this. The first one is based on the supposition that *visible substance is the one and only reality*. From this viewpoint, we humans came up with the idea of a rectangle by looking at many rectangular objects and recognizing the common shape in them (4 angles of 90 degrees each). Much remains unexplained by this theory. Whence do we get this abstract idea "rectangle"? The point is, when you look precisely, there is not one rectangular object that is exactly rectangular. And why is this same abstract idea recognized by every normal, thinking person? These things remain a mystery. The other, fundamentally opposite theory is, that *there is a force at work behind all external forms*, and that this underlying force, as we humans understand it, *always works by means of ideal patterns or proportions*. This latter theory is consistent with the Ancient Wisdom or Theosophia.

What is this force behind the phenomena?

The patterns we currently find in nature are usually called "laws of nature". But that designation does not help us much, because it does not tell us where these laws come from.

Theosophia gives us the key that explains the riddle. All external forms exist as a result of the action of consciousness. Behind an atomic body works an atomic soul, behind a human body works a human soul. Behind the planets and solar systems there are beings, consciousnesses, with a cosmic scope at work. The whole cosmos, and everything in it, is alive. *It is consciousness that attracts all the elements (which are living beings in themselves) of a physical atom or human body or planetary globe and makes them function in an orderly way.*

Each cosmos, and each living entity within a cosmos, is therefore a totality of cooperating beings. This cooperation between each and every being is a principle that cannot be changed. Why? Because it is an expression of the Unity, the boundless Unity, which is the source and essence of each entity. Each entity can be seen as a drop in a shoreless Ocean of Life.

This fundamental, indissoluble unity reflects itself in the outer worlds as the interconnectedness of all entities with all other entities. You may choose to investigate each being you choose, and you will ascertain that it can only exist and function because of the existence and actions of all other beings in the Cosmos.

The hierarchical order in nature

This fundamental connectedness of all entities with the

totality, and with each other, is manifested as a hierarchical order. A modern-day scientist would call it “different organizational levels”, the higher levels encompassing the lower ones. The so-called *system theory* is focusing on that subject.

With the key provided by Theosophia – consciousness is the leading factor behind all manifestation – we come to the following picture. All beings live within the sphere of influence of some larger being. This relatively larger being emanates a “force field” or “atmosphere” in which many lower beings (with “lower” we mean less developed consciousness) find the appropriate conditions and materials for their embodied existence. There they find the suitable circumstances to evolve, to gain the experiences necessary for their inner growth.

An example is the beings who build our bodies, the beings who live within the sphere of influence of our human consciousness. We, in our turn, live within the sphere of life of the Earth’s consciousness. The Earth ... within the Solar System, and so on. Deep insight on this is offered by the Theosophical doctrine of emanation.⁽³⁾

What are the so-called “laws of nature”?

We can now answer the important question: what are the “laws of nature”? Every being, in the course of endless time, has built up a certain habitual pattern, a certain character. And it is his character that determines the nature of its sphere of influence, so, it determines the specific patterns for all those beings that live within this sphere.

To give a recognizable example: our mind determines, so to speak, the “laws of nature” for our cellular beings. When we are nervous by nature, our digestion is rapid, and our breathing and circulation have a corresponding rhythm. If we spend an evening focusing on harmonious thoughts, this will immediately have a harmonizing effect on our body’s automatic processes.

So, what we call the “laws of nature”, are in fact the habits – you may also say the fundamental characteristics – of cosmic beings, of beings whose sphere of influence extends to our whole Galaxy or Solar System. These laws are the results of the interaction of consciousnesses.

What is philosophical mathematics?

The aforementioned self-conscious beings who guide and inspire a solar system or galaxy are much more advanced than we humans are. The habitual patterns of these cosmic beings are based on a cosmic sense of unity, and absolutely harmonious action, inspired by beings that are even further

developed than they are. Their characteristic forms the basic patterns for all beings within their sphere, for which they carry responsibility.

There are no limits to life: the cosmic beings are in their turn subordinate to the influences and patterns of even higher – to us unimaginably divine – beings. And the most primitive being we can imagine, forms the basic patterns for even lower beings. Theosophy paints a grand picture of cooperation and expanding responsibility!

And we as rational beings, recognize these harmonious patterns as mathematical relationships. For example, as the laws that govern the orbits of the planets. We recognize them as the rhythms, the frequencies we find everywhere in nature. And these frequencies are often attuned to each other. One orbital cycle of the planet Jupiter for example, corresponds to one sunspot cycle of the sun. Our heartbeat, averaging 72 beats per minute, is also tuned to a cosmic rhythm.

Philosophical mathematics can therefore be defined as: *the study of the nature and habits of cosmic beings*, for example, of our galaxy. So, true mathematics is much more than a calculation tool: it is an important branch of the Universal Wisdom. In the following sections, we will explore the value and implications of it.

The lower copies the higher being – on its own level

The lower always copies the higher being. To give an example: the wisdom and harmony of the cosmic beings is reflected in all the lower beings, who fundamentally strive for balance. The ball rolls to the lowest place. Each chemical reaction continues until a new balance is reached. If we allow great differences in wealth and developmental opportunities between cultures, large groups of people will emigrate, in order to build up a future with more possibilities. So, we see the same fundamental urge for harmony and inner growth always working in the background of mankind.

The lower copies the higher, but never exactly. It does so according to its own capacities and character. Furthermore, every being has a certain amount of *free will*. Therefore, we see *variations* on the basic patterns everywhere: an astounding display of variability. Inner growth always takes place within a certain freedom, within a certain room to wiggle around, and each being follows a unique path of evolution.

We humans, with our free will, apply the universal forces of nature in our way. All the consequences of our choices

we will experience in the future. The effects we produce, may manifest themselves after a short or after a long time. If we act according to our noblest insights, we reap harmony. If we deviate from the universal pattern of mutual help, we create disharmony — disharmony with other beings, with whom we cannot do without. Depending on our motive, we strengthen or disrupt the cooperation on which our society is based.

Not only we as thinking humans, but also unselfconscious beings use a certain degree of free will. Their consciousness is much more limited than ours, consequently, their use of free will is also proportionally more limited. Yet, even in elementary beings we see some free will in action, for example, during the physical experiments in which a small percentage of particles do not follow the established mathematical rule. Every researcher is familiar with that phenomenon, also known as outliers.

Mathematics as a mirror of cosmic truths

Theosophia explains the structure of mathematics: all the mathematical rules are logically derived from a small number of theorems or axioms. This structure copies the fundamental structure of the Cosmos. The infinite multiplicity of natural processes can be derived from seven basic processes, the seven “Jewels of Wisdom”, which in their turn are derived from three fundamental propositions.⁽⁴⁾ Therefore, the principles of our cosmos are reflected – on

composed of a boundless number of points.

Compare this axiom with the theosophical doctrine that each point in Space is a center of consciousness, and that each such center of consciousness is indivisible and indestructible. Therefore, each such center is technically called a “monad”, a “one”. Every being, including ourselves, is a spark of the in essence Boundless Life. You see: philosophical mathematics has everything to do with ourselves and our view of life.

Are the laws of nature universal?

An essential question is whether the laws of nature are only valid within our cosmos, or if they have some kind of “boundless” validity. If we remember that all cosmic patterns are based on the habits of an overarching consciousness, then the answer seems to be: the validity of these laws will be limited to the sphere of influence emanating from that cosmic being. For example, within the circle of our galaxy.

Now this may give a wrong impression. For it is not possible that in other galaxies arbitrarily different laws apply. If we were to think that way, we would forget that each group of galaxies are in turn subordinate to an overarching consciousness. And so on. We would forget that the endless manifestations flow from one boundless *unity*.

No, the thought we present is much more like this: as we grow in consciousness, we will be able to understand

Geographic figure	Number of dimensions	Symbol	Indication of its meaning
Point	0	•	Center of consciousness: an indissoluble part of boundless unity
Line	1	—	Polarity of spirit-matter arises
Plane	2	△	Cooperation of spirit-matter brings forth active consciousness
Spatial figure	3	□	Unfolding of lower nature as emanation and instrument of the leading consciousness working behind it

the level of abstract ideas – in the mathematical axioms. One such axiom is the definition of the mathematical point. The Greek mathematician Euclid described a point as “that which has no parts”, in other words, a point is indivisible and dimensionless. Mathematical space is

and articulate the fundamental processes of nature in an ever more universal form. Gradually we will overcome our current limitations, of view and understanding. H.P. Blavatsky informs us that the three fundamental propositions expressed in her book *The Secret Doctrine*

are “accurate enough” for us at our stage of evolution. Yet, more advanced beings will be able to define these propositions in a more universal way.⁽⁵⁾

As for mathematics this will mean, that we will understand the ideas behind mathematics gradually better and better.

Philosophical mathematics applied

In a subsequent article in the next issue of *Lucifer, the Lightbringer*, we will discuss several formulas which, in light of philosophical mathematics, gain an extra dimension. To give you a small glimpse of what you can expect, we will elaborate on an example from the philosophy of Pythagoras, the great sage who founded a very influential esoteric school in the sixth century BCE.

We already mentioned the mathematical point, which finds its explanation in the idea of a center of consciousness. We will now add the line, the plane, and the spatial figure. These form an essential quartet (see the table). If we study this table, we will see that in these four basic figures we can read the spiritual origin of every being. These figures offer us an invaluable starting point for a deeper understanding of the cosmos and ourselves.⁽⁶⁾

Why mathematics was held in high esteem by the Ancients

Mathematics as a means of calculation may have great practical value when used for the benefit of others. For example, to calculate how thick the pillars of a bridge should be to carry a certain weight over a certain length. But that does not help us gain more understanding of what matter is, or what forces are, or what space is.

Philosophical mathematics shows us that behind all external phenomena lie abstract models, and that those models are, so to say, the way we humans perceive, by our intellectual “antenna”, the characteristics of cosmic beings. As the Greek Neoplatonist Proclus said in somewhat veiled terms: “Before the mathematical numbers, there are the self-moving numbers; before the visible numbers, the vital numbers.”⁽⁷⁾

Philosophical mathematics is a steppingstone to study *divine Ideas*, as Plato would put it — a steppingstone to the more profound teachings of Theosophia. This explains the high regard in which all the great Ancient Thinkers held mathematics. It explains the rule from the school of Pythagoras, that no one was allowed to study the deeper teachings until he first mastered the four “mathemata”: the theory of numbers, geometry, astronomy, and music (the study of rhythms and cycles).⁽⁸⁾

As mentioned before, in the subsequent article we will illustrate the spiritual value of these mathemata through a number of examples.

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Questions & Answers

Nuclear weapons in the Rāmāyaṇa?

In the previous issue of *Lucifer*, the question was asked whether nuclear weapons could have been used during the period of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. You replied that this could not have been the case, because the material evolution of the Earth was not yet completed, so there were no radioactive materials, which are necessary for these terrible weapons. I have my doubts about this, because in the *Vimāna Shastra* the great Atlantean war is mentioned where vehicles flew, powered by atomic energy, and where they used atomic weapons. Since the knowledge of the “gods” was also misused, *Isis Unveiled* talks about “King Thevetat”.

Answer

What do we mean by “Atlantean”? It is the designation of a growth phase of humanity, the phase preceding our present phase. So, *we* were the Atlanteans then. This Atlantean period lasted several millions of years, producing a great variety of cultures. Its heyday was circa 4-8 million years ago, so in the distant past, many reincarnations before our present incarnation. The *Vimāna Shastra* is a Sanskrit work of the early 20th century, in which vehicles are described that could fly (see Wikipedia). As far as we have been able to ascertain, this work – which can be found online – does not speak about these vehicles being driven by atomic power.

The *Vimāna Shastra* is not an ancient Sanskrit scripture and certainly not one from the time of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. It must therefore be judged in the same way as, for example, contemporary books on UFOs.

According to some, the contents of this *Vimāna Shastra* are based on dreams. Perhaps the author, Subbaraya Shastry, picked up images from the Astral Light. The Astral Light is the storehouse of all events that have taken place and are taking place on the Earth. It is the image-gallery, in which everything is recorded. So, the undoubtedly ingenious machines of the Atlanteans made their impression in the Astral Light as well.

For to be clear, we too claim that the ancient Atlanteans had ingenious machines, of which some could fly, although we cannot judge whether those are the same vehicles described in the *Vimāna Shastra*.

It is also obvious that these techniques were often not used for noble purposes. King Thevetat, about whom H.P. Blavatsky speaks in both *Isis Unveiled* and in *The Secret Doctrine*, is an example of how magical power – which is not essentially different from technical ingenuity – can be misused and ultimately also leads to the downfall of those who misuse it.

The point here, however, is that the techniques used at that time were different from those we use today. In fact, the Earth and its inhabitants were at a very different stage of evolution. The living building blocks (atoms) that compose our physical world, were then at a different stage of development. In one aspect, the techniques then were

much more subtle than the rather gross way we now propel our airplanes, for example. We would probably now regard those ancient techniques as magic, although they were based on natural laws.

We humans tend to judge everything from our own point of view, from the situation where we live *here and now*. But in earlier times or in other places in the universe, conditions may be different. Our habitual patterns may not apply there. In the distant past, the states of being on Earth were different than they are now. The laws of nature had a different effect on the material plane. This explains why these ancient Atlanteans probably did not use atomic power. To understand that, you have to know something of the great phases of development of the planet Earth. In the first half of Earth’s life, there is evolution of the living material side of nature. We call this the descending arc. Matter becomes coarser and more solid. The more advanced beings, such as humans, must use those living building blocks to manifest themselves. Hence, the bodies of the Atlanteans were much coarser and larger than ours.

Halfway the life of the planet, there is a turning point. Then, the evolution of matter stops and its involution starts. Since that turning point (halfway the Atlantean phase), the substance becomes less coarse. This involution of matter is accompanied by an ever-increasing *evolution of the spirit side of nature*. For example, humans become more intellectual and as time progresses more spiritual.

It is because of this process of involution of the living atoms, after the turning

point, that some chemical elements disintegrate. That is what we call radioactivity. It takes first place in the heaviest elements, such as uranium. The disintegration of elements was not yet going on during the descending arc and therefore, according to this theosophical teaching, the Atlantean humanity could not create atomic weapons, or hardly any, because radioactivity was only starting to appear during the second half of the Atlantean period, after its heyday — which coincided with the turning point mentioned before.

Intuition

Intuition is described as seeing through events in advance. Being guided to the place where you need to be, is also intuition, isn't it? Only later does it become clear why you needed to be there, and intuition is also a bit of wonderment, isn't it?

Answer

Intuition is immediate knowledge of the truth. This capacity is certainly not yet fully developed in most people. But occasionally we have flashes of intuition and really *know* what something is, we really get a clear vision of the truth, without any intellectual consideration beforehand. A characteristic feature of intuition is, that we see perfectly clearly at that time why we should act in a certain way.

In the question it was stated that only afterwards did it become clear, why you had to be somewhere. In this case there is no intuition active, but rather something we would call a presentiment. Intuition is like a clear vision, a spiritual view.

Intuition is often confused with instinctive feeling, which also occurs without the operation of the intellect. But with mere feeling, the “I” always

plays a dominant role, whereas intuition transcends personality.

Because intuition occurs only sporadically, it often amazes one. This kind of amazement is not wonderment. It is amazing because you understand something you had not previously thought possible.

Precisely because intuition is not yet our “common daily practice”, it is wise to check an intuitive hunch or thought against the intellect. This will prevent you from confusing mere feeling with intuition. When you have expanded your consciousness and have lived more in the spiritual aspects of your consciousness, you will more easily distinguish intuition from feeling, and you will no longer be so surprised at every moment of intuition. You have learned to trust your own spiritual qualities.

Question

Does Theosophy assume that intuition can only come from within yourself? Or is there also the possibility that your intuition is influenced by beings outside yourself?

Answer

Everything a person thinks and feels comes from within himself. This also applies to intuition. Therefore, it is not outside of us. We are not guided by intuition “from outside”. It is our insight, understanding, and what we do with it is up to us. We can ignore it and we can live by it.

But that does not mean that we cannot encourage others to develop their intuition. All great Teachers of humanity do that.

Read, for example, the dialogues of Plato, in which Socrates constantly challenges his students to answer his questions. This leads them to develop their insight. Read the Sūtras from

Buddhism, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao Tzu. All scriptures of the world's spiritual literature speak to our intuition.

Good teachers often do not give sharply delineated answers, no chewed-out teachings, but point to a direction where the seeker of truth can find answers on his own. They provoke the intuition.

Question

Is intuition the only gateway to wisdom?

Answer

Intuition is the immediate recognition of truth, making one a little wiser. It is the *buddhic* aspect of our thinking. We see connections. We see things in a more comprehensive view, their place in the totality. We see the interdependence of seemingly unrelated things.

We can also try to develop that buddhic capacity in ourselves through reason. We can purposively try to discover the laws in nature. Thus, after long puzzling and thinking, you can get the well-known “eureka moment”. You *understand* suddenly how something works. In this case we do not speak of intuition. After all, there was no immediate knowledge. You arrived at *buddhi* – wisdom – via the intellect. Often this is the best course of action for us. Of course, you can wait for an intuitive hunch, but this usually does not come by itself.

You can self-consciously learn to think in tune with the buddhic nature within you, by developing a supra-personal attitude toward everything in life. When you live from a supra-personal ideal, you will more readily get insightful answers to your questions. Here too, the more familiar you are with your own sevenfold nature and the more you have developed the habit of living from your above-personal ideal, the

easier it is to tune your “inner radio” to buddhi. Practice makes perfect.

Supra-personality and compassion

Feeling at one with another person, is that an example of supra-personality?

Answer

That depends on who you mean by “the other”. Do you mean one person? If you feel at one with your beloved, with a bosom friend or a family member, then you sense exactly how he or she thinks and acts. Of course, you will always stand up for his happiness. You would never do or think anything detrimental to him. That in itself is wonderful. But if you feel this only for that one person, then the supra-personality is very limited. Then I would rather speak of group selfishness.

A real supra-personal attitude means that you are full of sympathy for everyone: friend or enemy, relative or not, fellow countryman or stranger. Of course, you can grow from a limited supra-personality to an increasingly universal attitude, until you love Humanity as a whole in a supra-personal way. And even that is not an end point!

Question

How can you have compassion for someone who commits immoral deeds, for example, someone who hurts another person?

Answer

Compassion is different from pity. With pity, you see a sad event, someone suffering, the violence of war, a sick fellow human being, a death, and it disturbs your own rosy picture of life. You feel an urge to help. Often that pitiful feeling lasts only a short time.

Soon life offers happier experiences, and you forget about the suffering of another.

Compassion is something quite different. Compassion is not a feeling. It is a state of consciousness in which you realize the unity of life. You realize that the same life flows through everything and everyone. You know yourself to be one with others.

Compassion comes from a clear, supra-personal view of life. You know that all life is interconnected by countless threads and that together we form a great web of life. From this realization you live your life. This realization makes you rise beyond any sense of separateness.

Well, through a criminal, through someone who hurts others, the equal fundamental life flows. He is as much a “leaf of the universal tree of life” as a saint. His condition is actually miserable. He is in a state of dark ignorance. He does not know who he really is, he does not know who his fellow men really are. His acts stem from ignorance.

Compassion does not mean covering someone’s misdeeds with the cloak of love: tolerating someone as he is and letting him have his way. Doing this, is more likely motivated by cowardice or indifference than by compassion. On the contrary, compassion compels us to protect people from the aggression and selfishness of others.

Nevertheless, we should try to be compassionate to someone who hurts others. And that means that we should appeal to his supra-personal, noble aspects, which even the worst criminal possesses. Is that easy? Of course not. But the more we ourselves live in our higher aspects, the more easily we can discern in the other person something of his higher nature. That is what we need to focus on.

Punishing or isolating “bad” people does not help. Often that only reinforces in them a sense of being different, of being a victim, prompting them to develop more feelings of hatred towards society. They are thrown even deeper into the abyss of their own selfishness. Only when they begin to see that there are other aspects in them, that they too are connected to others, that they carry responsibilities, will they change. The more we are compassionate towards them – and again, this does not mean that we should just let them do what they choose – the faster we will arrive at a stable harmonious society, in which everyone realizes that we must live together: not hinder each other, but support and help each other.

Colophon

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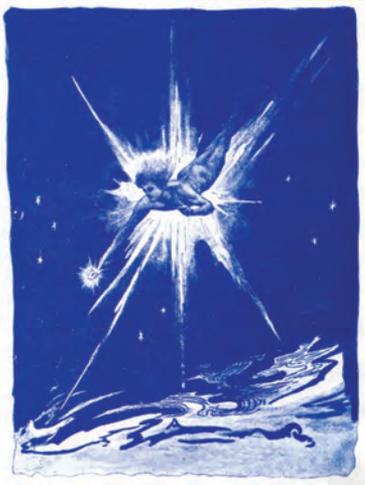
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2. By reason of this unity: brotherhood as a fact in nature.
3. Respect for everyone's free will (when applied from this idea of universal brotherhood).
4. Respect for everyone's freedom to build up their own view of life.
5. To support the developing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



Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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

For these people this journal is written.

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

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

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