

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

**Fundamental unity,
peace and brother-
hood**

**Fearless
non-violence**

**Cultivating a culture
of peace**

**Lightbringers in our
society: Kevin
McArevey**

**Who is a light-
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***The Grand Inquisitor*
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This lecture on Gandhi and treading the path of non-violence without fear, was given by Nandini R. Iyer, in 2007, at the Public Library in Santa Barbara, California. It is as relevant today as it was when Gandhi carried out his non-violent actions. The text is taken from the recently published book *Tribute to a Teacher*, which includes several lectures and articles by Nandini R. Iyer.

Cultivating a culture of peace

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The road to peace is peace. It is a long road. It is work for the long haul. In response to the war in Ukraine, many peace initiatives have been launched. Did they have the intended results? And what opportunities does each of us have in strengthening a culture of peace? One year after the release of our peace issue, we review the situation.

Writers collective
“Each human a peacemaker”



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Editorial

Today's world is one full of major challenges. We fail to adequately solve the global environmental problems such as decline of biodiversity, droughts and major forest fires. Or are we able to solve violence and wars, the latter leading to an immense amount of refugees. However, humanity is constantly trying to solve these problems but does it in the same way of thinking that caused these problems. And this leads to a dead end.

Theosophia starts with a different way of thinking, uses a different starting point. If this will be applied more often, humanity could, as shown in the article on *Universal Brotherhood*, meet the challenges. Universal Brotherhood has always been central to the Theosophical Movement. This article clarifies that it is not an empty slogan, but that Brotherhood is based on the very structure of life itself.

As we live the idea of Brotherhood, we also develop a culture of peace. The article *Cultivating a culture of peace* shows us that we are not powerless but we can actually contribute to worldwide peace.

In this edition of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, we continue our series of *Lightbringers in our society* with Kevin McAreeve, a headmaster of a school in Northern Ireland, practicing Plato. Moreover, in an article we ask ourselves who actually is a Lightbringer. What characterizes them?

Furthermore, we consider the legend of the *Grand Inquisitor*, a text by Dostoyevsky from the 19th century, which is strikingly contemporary and teaches us to understand the deeper background of religion and ethics.

Finally, in response to a question, we give the theosophical view on black holes.

We hope we have again given you enough food for thought and, as always, appreciate questions and comments.



Fundamental unity, peace and brotherhood

Universal Brotherhood, forming a nucleus of it and then actively promoting this idea of unity in the world, is the foremost objective of the Theosophical Society. Universal Brotherhood is a fact of Nature, claims Theosophy. But what is that fact based on? In this article, which is an adaptation of the lecture “Universal Brotherhood: the Way of Peace” by Herman C. Vermeulen,⁽¹⁾ we go deeper into the fundamental unity that underlies this universal fact, so that everyone can test it for themselves.

Key thoughts

» The concept of Universal Brotherhood always had a central place in the objectives of the Theosophical Society Point Loma.

» Fundamental unity is the essence of life. There is no growth without cooperation.

» We are all connected to each other and we should continuously express this, as best we can with our limited consciousness. Whatever we do, we influence the entire Universe, we all give it a flavor together.

» All beings are equal to each other, without exception. Every problem can be solved with the concept of Universal Brotherhood applied in practice.

The evolution of the concept of Brotherhood in the Theosophical Society

From the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875, the concept of Universal Brotherhood has occupied a central place in the organization's objectives. But it has not always had the same connotation, the same comprehension. There was a “learning factor” in it, so to speak, where the universality of the concept has been subject to growth.

Whereas the very first version of the objectives consisted of concrete *do's-and-don'ts* for members, as the organization matured they became increasingly abstract.

In the first version from 1875, the first five objectives (see box on page 36) called on members to actively oppose materialism in science, dogmatics in the church, and instead delve into and spread Eastern traditions and teachings. Only in the last objective of the six do we encounter the concept of brotherhood though

it is said to be the most important: finally, and above all to help form a brotherhood of humanity in which all good and pure people of every race will recognize each other as the equal effects on this planet of an Uncreated, Universal, Infinite and Eternal Cause.

At a time when colonialism was still a given, slavery had only just been abolished in the United States and having servants was no exception, the sixth objective, still raised some controversy. For, how could anyone be equal to his servant? But H.P. Blavatsky and her teachers left no doubt about this and then made it clear to the members that if they could not endorse this fundamental principle, it would mean the end of the organization.

In the years that followed, several other versions of the objectives appeared, until a final version under Blavatsky's leadership was released in 1890, showing a clear evolution of the concept of brotherhood:

Objectives at founding in 1875

The Society teaches and expects its fellows:

1. To personally exemplify the highest morality and religious aspiration.
2. To oppose the materialism of science and every form of dogmatic theology, especially the Christian, which the Chiefs of the Society regard as particularly pernicious.
3. To make known among Western nations the long-suppressed facts about Oriental religious philosophies, their ethics, chronology, esoterism, symbolism.
4. To counteract, as far as possible, the efforts of missionaries to delude the so-called "Heathen" and "Pagans" as to the real origin and dogmas of Christianity and the practical effects of the latter upon public and private character in so-called civilized countries.
5. To disseminate a knowledge of the sublime teachings of that pure esoteric system of the archaic period, which are mirrored in the oldest Vedas, and in the philosophy of Gautama Buddha, Zoroaster and Confucius.
6. Finally, and chiefly, to aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity, wherein all good and pure men, of every race, shall recognize each other as the equal effects (upon this planet) of one Uncreate, Universal, Infinite, and Everlasting Cause.⁽²⁾

To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.⁽³⁾

Not only has the concept now gained abstraction and universality, but moreover, the objectives now start with it. Notable is the change that takes place in 1898 under the leadership of Katherine Tingley, with the term Universal Brotherhood even being embedded in the title of the organization. After tumultuous times in the organization since Blavatsky's passing, under the leadership of W.Q. Judge who died in 1896, the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society was founded at the American convention in Chicago in 1898. An organization established "for the benefit of all men *and all creatures* of the earth". The latter indicates that the concept of brotherhood is being extended beyond humanity already. This is also the moment when the objectives speak of Universal Brotherhood as *a fact of nature*. It is even stated as its main objective to teach this fact, demonstrate it, and make it a living force in the life of humanity.

From a nucleus to an *active* fraternity

This, then, is exactly what is happening under the leadership of Katherine Tingley, the successor to W.Q. Judge. With the outbreak of the First World War on the horizon, her peace activities in America and Europe manage to give a huge boost to the Universal Brotherhood idea so central to the organization. The formation of its nucleus, spoken of in its objectives in 1890, is now no longer an issue. The nucleus had been formed. Now it was a matter of forming an *active* Brotherhood with that nucleus among all humanity. Interesting to also briefly draw attention to is the final note added to the objectives under Katherine Tingley:

This Brotherhood is part of a great and universal movement that has been active in all ages.

This establishes a direct link between the outer organization and the inner force behind it: the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, the Universal movement that goes back to the night of time and from which all spiritual impulses

Objectives from 1898

- An organization, established for the benefit of the People of the earth and all creatures.
- The title of the organization shall be UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD, or THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY.
- This organization declares that Brotherhood is a fact in nature.
- The principal purpose of this organization is to teach brotherhood, demonstrate that it is a fact in nature and make it a living power in the life of humanity.
- The subsidiary purpose of this organization is to study ancient and modern religion, science, philosophy and art; to investigate the laws of nature and the divine powers in man.
- This brotherhood is part of a great and universal movement that has been active in all ages.⁽⁴⁾

on earth originate. This again broadens the concept of Brotherhood to include not only all “creatures on earth” but also those beings – Buddhas and Bodhisattvas – who have surpassed us in our human stage of development.

The universality of Brotherhood

Universal Brotherhood is therefore Universal in the broadest sense. Everything and everyone belong to it, without exception. Yet in recent years, the question occasionally reaches us as to why we talk only about brotherhood and not also about sisterhood? In an earlier article in *Lucifer*, we answered this question at length,⁽⁵⁾ but we can say the following about it here. First, that making a distinction between brothers and sisters turns a unity, one, into two. And that is exactly the opposite of the concept of unity we mean by brotherhood. Therefore, the word brotherhood is not limited to the male gender, it transcends that part of man to which we assign gender. It refers to the real, inner man who is genderless. The incarnating man who builds a new body from life to life that is alternately male, female, or sometimes somewhere in between.

Instead of emphasizing outer diversity, Theosophia emphasizes inner unity. But how is this exactly? How can we be one and yet different from each other at the same time? We will now explore that further.

Fundamental unity

Fundamental unity is the essence of life. This premise of Theosophia cannot be overemphasized. It forms the essence of the many impulses of Theosophia as we see them reflected in the various traditions of, for example, Plato, Pythagoras, Islam, Lao-tse, Taoism, and the many religions. It is always this fundamental unity that plays a role in that. Unfortunately, it is also this idea of unity that is the first to perish when one tries to articulate these philosophies and summarize them into certain precepts. If we look at where in Theosophy this unity idea is described in the most profound way, we come to the first proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*.

An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought — in the words of Mandukya, “unthinkable and unspeakable.” (...) one absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being.

This is the most universal and abstract description that applies to everything and everyone. It is so enriching that we as human beings cannot think about it without short-changing it, as also described in the fundamental proposition. Nonetheless, it is very interesting to think about, because everything comes from it and everything goes back to it, which is further accentuated in the other two fundamental propositions.

But that first one thus speaks of an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable PRINCIPLE. But what exactly is a principle? It is an essence you might say, a flavouring, a fundamental thing that underlies all those things we can look at around us.

It is omnipresent, unchanging therefore, no matter what is happening. That principle persists and cannot change. It is unlimited, eternal, boundless. It has always played a role and will always play a role. If you think about it as a human being, you are short of thoughts. It is so profound that you have to take time to think about it. Something you have to take with you in the background of your thinking when you go to the beach, for example, and just contemplate this quietly, under your parasol, and consider all the consequences that come from this now.

This first proposition is so fundamental that all theosophical teachings and principles as given by Blavatsky and her Masters – and further elaborated in the line of successors – are all based on this principle. In short, it is also sometimes described as Infinity or Boundlessness.

The second fundamental proposition, abbreviated, is about cyclic movement, the periodic appearance and disappearance of Universes in that boundless infinity. In other words, every manifestation is subject to cyclicity, we as humans, the earth, solar systems, and so on. Here we will go into more detail later.

The third fundamental proposition talks about the fundamental equality of every being with the Top of the hierarchy to which it belongs. And that Top in turn is equal to an even higher Top et cetera up to the Boundless Self. So, every being is equal to the Boundless. So, every being is essentially that Boundlessness and therefore has principally the same capabilities, which it expresses more and more, cyclically and according to karmic laws. You see that this third fundamental proposition is inextricably linked to the first and the second. They form a whole that we always must deal with.

Doctrine of the monads

If you study these three fundamental propositions in their

relation to each other, a picture logically emerges of life that is infinite in essence and manifests itself cyclically. What emerges is an essence in every being that is infinite in potentiality and equal in principle. An inference also called the doctrine of monads.

Monad means something like an “indivisible, invisible, spiritual center of life or consciousness-substance”. Or in other words: a SPIRITUAL EGO written with capital letters. And this term “monad” can be found at various stages in our Western, as well as Eastern history, albeit under slightly different names. It always concerns the same intuitive thought formulated in that first fundamental proposition, that everything is unity and interconnected.

A monad is a spiritual entity that is indivisible to us humans; it is a divine-spiritual atom of life, but indivisible because its essential characteristic, as we humans conceive of it, is homogeneity; whereas that of the physical atom, above which our consciousness extends, is a divisible composite heterogeneous particle.

Everything *is* that unity, which means you cannot speak of I, he, we or they. In this context, we like to use the example of a boundless ocean as a synonym of that first fundamental proposition, that first Boundless Principle. In that ocean, waves arise, waves that can only manifest by being part of that ocean. In fact, those waves are nothing but local movements, local and temporary contractions or action, but in their essence, they are that ocean. So, in this light, you can see the concept of a “monad” as an indivisible centre of life-consciousness-substance, a spiritual ego, essentially boundless and with the same infinite capacities. You, me, animals, minerals, cells, divine beings, solar systems, galaxies, universes ... everything potentially has these same capabilities. But the extent to which monads express these infinite capabilities varies. Each monad is in its own unique stage of development, and that is what makes it possible for us to recognize a monad, a being, as such. Hence, we add the adjective, divine, human, animal, or astral and so on. It is a way of indicating, to what level a monad has come, in expressing its infinite faculties. We all, everything that is, is a monad expressing varying capabilities.

Collaboration

However, a monad by itself cannot manifest itself. This is because every being is a hierarchical collaboration of an infinite group of monads. None of us could exist in this outer world without the cooperation of – let us say for the sake of convenience – billions of other consciousnesses.

That makes every being composite, every being is made up of a hierarchical collaboration.

And think not only about our physical existence, but also about our more inner, mental and spiritual existence, which is quite dynamic. Think simply about how our thinking runs throughout the day: what thoughts we have. Thinking thoughts is also a form of collaboration between a human being and thought beings, and that collaboration is constantly fluctuating.

We are never the same for a moment during the day; it is actually a continuous waving motion that we go through. How does that cooperation take place? It happens through attraction, through a process that in Theosophy we call *emanation*, meaning, so to say, “flowing forth from oneself”. But keep in mind that in this infinity everything is already there, and in this “flowing out” nothing is created. It is nothing but an abstract contraction. Technically, therefore, the idea of “flowing forth” or “coming out of you” is not at all correct and it is better to speak of the flowing out of a *sphere*, an attraction, through which there is a cooperation with those other billions of consciousnesses that you need to be who you are at this moment. So if you ask yourself: how did I get all these cells, atoms, emotions and thoughts? Then the answer is that it is a matter of attraction, in that you put out an atmosphere in which all these different elements are attracted.

Is that a static thing? Certainly not! It is a very dynamic process, fluctuating by the minute, by the hour, by the day and by the year.

Spirit and substance: everything is alive

An important fact to keep in mind here is that on all planes there is a balance between substance and spirit. Everything is alive, everything is essentially consciousness, but the stage of development of that consciousness determines whether we call something “spirit” or “substance”. Monads that are highly developed and ahead of us in development we call “spirit” and those monads that are less developed than us in their expression we experience as substance, as matter.

So at every level of consciousness, there are beings who represent *on that plane* the spiritual, or inner side, and beings who represent the outer, or material side.

This is an essential thought. Seen from this light, the word “substance” or “matter” is very unfortunate, because this concept is so absolutized in our current science that it is seen as dead, as lifeless.

But if you take Plato's simple premise in mind, where he

defines the characteristic of life as being able to act and react, or in other words “being able to act and react to each other”, then you can see at a glance that everything is alive. Whatever substance you regard, whatever atom you take, there is always movement, there is always exchange of electrons and there is always cooperation. Molecules created by the contraction of a few atoms that are later released and in turn form other bonds — it is a great dynamic process.

And that brings us to Pythagoras' surely famous statement “that motion is the only reality”. Pythagoras said, “everything is vibration: the dynamic cooperation of learning from each other and growing with each other — the very essence of life”.

Universal Brotherhood: a fact

If we look again at the concept of Universal Brotherhood from this perspective, we see that these thoughts provide the fundamental grounding to show that this Universal Brotherhood is a fact of nature. That everything and everyone is part of it and it cannot in fact be otherwise.

Universal Brotherhood thus has a deeply philosophical background, a deeply religious meaning, which we see reflected in the original meaning of the Latin word “religare”, which literally means “to re-connect” and derived from it “to unite”, to contract again, to collaborate. For everything is connected to everything else.

When you look at Universal Brotherhood in this way, and consider the practical implications, you soon come to the question: “how far does my influence reach?” In fact, your influence reaches into infinity. Not always equally powerful and equally strong of course, depending on the distance at which other consciousnesses are from us, but in essence, therefore, there is always connection. Whatever we do, we influence the whole Universe, we all flavor it together.

Sparks of Eternity

If we look at where we can find this so essential monadic idea in Theosophy, we come across it in the second fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* which speaks of cyclicity — appearance and disappearance. Blavatsky then speaks of:

The Eternity of the Universe in toto as a boundless plane; periodically “the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing,” called “the manifesting stars,” and the “sparks of Eternity.”

She then refers to “sparks of Eternity” in a footnote where she explains that this is another way of expressing the concept of “monad”. A concept we find in the seventeenth century with Leibniz, for example, but also earlier with Pythagoras and Plato. The word “monad” comes from the Ancient Greek word μονάς (unity) derived from μόνος, meaning “one”, “alone”, “unique”. You find this essential idea at many places.

So we are all a “spark of eternity”. But what does this metaphor of a spark mean? What does it mean when a spark jumps off the fire? If we follow this analogy through; does anything happen, creating a monad that is detached from that Infinity? Certainly not, it is just a way of expression to show that that monad is in its essence that Infinity.

Interdependence, universal patterns and growth of consciousness

We have also briefly mentioned the third fundamental proposition, but show it now in its entirety because it is so important. This proposition shows the interdependence of all life, of all these monads, and the universal patterns to which they are subject such as growth of consciousness. It is spoken of in this third fundamental proposition:

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

An important idea in this is the hierarchical structure, the hierarchical cooperation of life. We as individual souls are part of an Over-Soul, of a relative summit as we see it in the tetractys of Pythagoras.

And everything that top has in terms of capabilities, we have as capabilities — latent admittedly, but present in principle. But the capabilities of the top are in turn inspired by an even higher top, and so on into the Infinite. Everywhere in nature you see a reflection of characteristics, of abilities at a certain level, but also of that essential interconnectedness.

Theosophia is tested

Well, you can see these ideas as fantastically beautiful thoughts and theories – which they are – but we want to emphasize here that they have been tried and tested throughout the ages. And it is the duty of each of us to

continue to do so. To see it not as a pleasant intellectual pastime, but to really test whether these thoughts are true. Can you recognize them in everyday life?

In *The Secret Doctrine*, Mme Blavatsky states the following about it:

It is the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings, who watched over the childhood of Humanity.⁽⁶⁾

In other words, Theosophy is something that has been tried, tested and proved to be true for thousands if not millions of years. Does that make it a *fait accompli* and dogma for us? No, certainly not. If we want our individual wisdom to grow, we will have to work on it very dynamically ourselves.

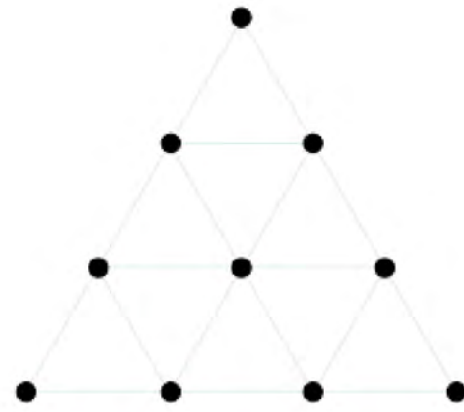
In our past symposium on *independent search for truth*, we discussed how to do this. Testing these three fundamental propositions as a basic idea was one of them. By simply asking yourself, starting with the first one: if there is indeed universal unity, what evidence can you find for it within your limits of consciousness?

Then you should be able to experience that everything cooperates with each other. Keep in mind that cooperation does not always have to mean positive cooperation. Unfortunately, there are also examples of negative cooperation, in case a selfish goal is pursued at the expense of others.

But even in that case, there is interaction and so in fact we always need each other to build understanding and experience; there is no growth without cooperation.

Dynamic harmony

So, Universal Brotherhood is not just an idea or vague ideal. It is a fact in Nature founded on the three principles of Theosophia. We all have the same faculties and are therefore fundamentally equal to each other. Does this mean that eventually we will all be the same and grow into a kind of sameness? On the contrary. There will always be individual differences. Everything is subject to change, and it is precisely through this change and differences that we are able to grow, to make more of our inner faculties active. Universal Brotherhood could therefore also be described as a *dynamic harmony*. As a dynamic cooperation in which everyone, using their unique qualities, helps the totality move forward. We are all connected to each other and we should continuously express this, as well as we can



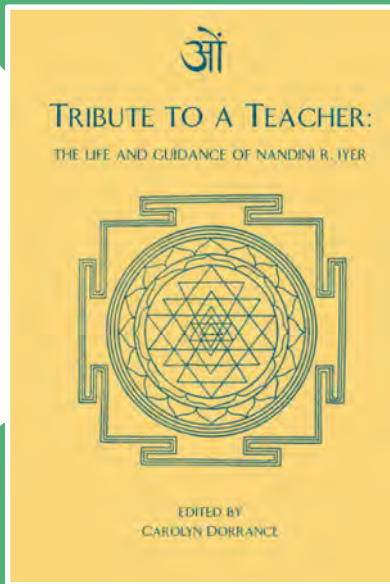
Pythagoras' tetractys symbolises the unity and hierarchical collaboration in the Kosmos.

with our limited consciousness. And the greater your range of consciousness, the greater your contribution in this can be. In our special peace edition of *Lucifer: Each human a peacemaker*, we show how we can bring about this dynamic harmony and what we can do individually and as a society to achieve lasting peace.⁽⁷⁾

There is no problem in this world that could not be solved with the concept of Universal Brotherhood applied in practice. Whether we are talking about refugees, energy distribution, food distribution, earth pollution, and so on and so forth: all can be solved with the fundamental principle.

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Fearlessness on the path of non-violence

The following article on Gandhi and non-violence is taken from the recently published book *Tribute to a Teacher. The life and guidance of Nandini R. Iyer*.⁽¹⁾ Nandini Iyer is a widely known and respected pillar in the theosophical world. She passed away two years ago, and for a year her fellow members of the ULT-Santa Barbara Lodge worked to publish this book. It includes several lectures and articles by Nandini R. Iyer, as well as a contribution by her son and some of her students and friends. Nandini was born in Ahmedabad India on May 11, 1931. After her preparatory studies in India, she attended Oxford University, where she graduated *first class honors* in philosophy, political science, and economics. At the same university, she taught logic and philosophy for eight years. After her marriage to Raghavan Iyer, she moved to Santa Barbara, California, in 1965 and taught at the Department of Philosophy and later at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California. Together with her husband, in Santa Barbara, she founded a branch of the *United Lodge of Theosophists* in 1969 and the *Institute of World Culture* in 1976. This institute aims to promote universal

brotherhood and foster human friendship among all races, nations, and cultures.

Nandini had a broad and deep interest in, and knowledge of, Theosophy, all world religions, art and poetry. However, she was far from a scholastic. She was able to inspire thousands of students during the decades she taught. Her son writes in the preface to this book that wherever she was in Santa Barbara, people came to her to thank her for her inspiring teachings and advice.

Many members of Theosophical Society Point Loma got to know Nandini at the 2010 International Theosophy Conference (ITC) in The Hague, the Netherlands, where she spoke about one of the philosophers she had studied thoroughly and held in very high regard, Spinoza.⁽²⁾ What endeared her to many, was her open mind. She did not care what organization you belonged to. She met everyone equally openly and warmly.

The article included in this issue of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer* about Gandhi and treading the path of non-violence without fear, is as relevant today as it was when Gandhi carried out his nonviolent actions. The article asks us some penetrating

questions that we should carefully consider and answer for ourselves.

Nandini left her outer vehicle on July 21, 2021. She left behind a void and loss in Santa Barbara, as well as with her many friends around the world. However, we know that

death is a temporary goodbye. The people with whom Nandini cooperated so fraternally and whom she inspired, will undoubtedly meet her again in a next life to work together for the realization of universal brotherhood.

Fearlessness on the path of non-violence

Sisters and brothers, I use this form of address deliberately instead of the usual formal one, not only because Gandhiji himself always addressed his audiences in this manner, but because it expresses the essential basis of his idea of non-violence.

On the 30th of January 1948, as Gandhiji prepared to leave Birla house, where he was staying, to go to his usual evening universal prayer meeting held at the end of the garden, he was approached by the Delhi chief of police. The chief of police had received through his intelligence sources more than usually strong evidence of an assassination plot against Gandhi. For quite some time of course there had been many such rumors of death plots against the Mahatma, but this was different, the chief felt. He had a strong feeling that this rumor was truly a very grave threat to be taken seriously. He begged Gandhi to allow him to send a few of his police officers to protect him. But Gandhi, despite the chief's increasingly urgent pleas, refused, saying that to be defended by armed police would go against all the principles that he himself had espoused, had taught, and had tried to live by. He had always decried the use of physical weapons, and this would make a mockery of his own life and principles; would be an act of cowardice and hypocrisy, in other words, of violence.

Remarking that, for the first time ever, the conversation with the chief of police had made him a little bit late for his meeting, he stepped out onto the garden path. Within moments he was surrounded as his followers and sympathizers milled around him, greeting him with folded hands, arms joined, and in a gesture of traditional Indian reverence. A man emerged, who also approached Gandhi with folded hands, as if about to do honor to him. Instead of doing honor to him, in an instant his hands unfolded, a gun emerged, and he shot Gandhi at point blank range. Tremendous chaos followed among the crowds around Gandhi, but those close to him, even in the midst of their terrible agony and astonishment and surprise, noticed not only that he called out the name of God as he was shot, but that he attempted to extend his hand in a gesture of

forgiveness toward his assassin as he fell to the ground. A few minutes later, my uncle, who was his personal physician, had the painful and sad duty of signing Gandhi's death certificate. Surprisingly but perhaps in the end fortunately for India, the assassin turned out to be not a Muslim as many had thought he might be, but a fascist fundamentalist Hindu.

Given the manner of his death – even at the point of death his thoughts were of God and his gesture was one of forgiveness – it is hardly surprising that Einstein thought that “Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth”. The truth about Gandhi's non-violence is that it is not one virtue or form of goodness among many others, but one great virtue or good, which expresses itself in myriad different forms, depending on the context and situation in which it is expressed. Depending on the situation, those around may emphasize the courage, where others may emphasize the self-sacrifice, and others still the love, the forgiveness, the non-retaliation, patience, but so far as Gandhi was concerned, these were all expressions of that one supreme virtue. Plato has said that we think of many virtues but actually the virtue is one, and that is exactly what Gandhi felt. The names of the different expressions of this one virtue differ, but in the end they are facets of the same great energy or virtue.

For Gandhi, as with all the people who have taught this kind of philosophy, virtue is not simply occasionally practiced, nor is it only expressed through specific and discrete acts of non-violence. This one virtue has been of course taught by many long before Gandhi. The great propounders and practitioners of non-violence and love of the past have taught essentially the same thing that Gandhi did, and indeed, he frequently called upon and made references to these great teachers. For Jesus it was love — loving your neighbor as yourself under all conditions. For St. Paul it was what in the King James version of the Bible is translated as charity, and is now translated as love — love for one's fellow human beings, unstinting, uncom-

promising, and all-encompassing love. The Buddha called it *Karuna*, or compassion for all living beings. In the *Gita* it is called being able to see God in all beings and all beings in God. Whether we call it *Karuna* or St. Paul's charity or loving one's neighbor as oneself, we see again that this is THE supreme virtue. For Gandhi, although he spoke both of truth and non-violence, of patience and non-retaliation, the essence of it was contained in *ahimsa*, which means non-violence.

For Gandhi as with all these other teachers, *ahimsa* was not something that you expressed occasionally, on discrete occasions and specific occasions. Of course it must always be expressed in the appropriate situations and occasions, when occasion demands, but these specific and particular actions arise out of an all-encompassing attitude, an all-embracing mental and moral perspective. In short, Gandhi's non-violence, like Jesus's love or Buddha's compassion, is a total way of life, and therefore very demanding. It means that we have to change our entire perspective, and this is not something that anyone, whether it be Jesus or Buddha or Gandhi, expects us to do immediately. But the goal is the basic principle on which we live our lives, which has to be changed — and not just a sporadic expression of it. So it is that principle that becomes the very core of our being. Once we have understood it, once we have, as it were, digested it and made it a part of ourselves, it becomes that which determines and directs the behavior of the body, the manners of the mind, the hungerings of the heart and the sympathies of the soul, in other words, every aspect of our lives. This may make non-violence an impossibly high ideal or virtue for the ordinary person to practice, but let's not use this as an excuse not even to begin to try and practice it. After all, no great ideal is instantly achieved, no virtue is immediately practiced perfectly. We begin in small ways. Lao Tzu, the great Chinese philosopher, says that "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", and that is precisely what Gandhi assured us that we could do. Each one of us can and must begin in our own specific and individual way, and practice in maybe tiny, seemingly trivial ways, but we can still practice non-violence. Perhaps by refusing to retaliate on some particular occasion when a person does something that is harmful or says something that hurts us. We can begin in such small ways but keep always in mind the idea that we should build upon this small incident and next time perhaps practice it in a more difficult situation. We must recognize too that, imperfect and fallible as we are, we may succeed in practicing non-violence once, and

then — drunk with success (and being drunk with success itself is a backwards step!) — we may fail miserably the next time around. It's not an easy path, as Jesus, Buddha and others who walked it warned us. Jesus said, "Straight is the gate and narrow the path that leads to salvation". It's not the smooth easy road that leads in the other direction. And whether it be Buddha, Christ, the Hindu seers — all of them assured us that, fallible though we may be, we carry within us the seeds of perfection. We are all Buddhas in the making, said Buddha. And this was something that deeply influenced Gandhi, who was influenced by the Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim teachings. The ideal, the highest state of perfection, is attainable, Gandhi firmly believed, by every one of us. A French writer once said, "The Ideal is only Truth at a distance". Which is why Gandhi insisted that steadfast hope was an essential in trying to live the non-violent life.

So let us see what the different facets and elements of Gandhi's non-violence might be, and when it all seems too difficult let us remember that as Einstein said, some of us may wonder that such a person actually walked the earth, but he did. He himself, as we know, was not at all agreeable to being addressed or referred to as "the Mahatma" which means "great soul". He preferred to be called "Bapu" or "Bapuji"; "Bapu" means father, and that's what he felt everybody should refer to him and address him as.

Not only in the distant past — as in the time of Christ and Buddha — but since the time of Gandhi we have had several inspiring examples of men and women who, in our own increasingly troubled and complex and violent world, have practiced Gandhian non-violence. We have only to think of Martin Luther King, or Danilo Dolci — the Sicilian Gandhi who saved his country's poor from the clutches of the combined tyrannical hold of the church as well as the mafia. We think of Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar or Burma. We think of the bhikkhu, or monk, Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia. We think of the Dalai Lama, and many other brave individuals who have had the true love and the courage to practice this greatest of all virtues. All of them have dared and have had the courage to walk through the valley of the shadow of death without fearing any evil to themselves.

In terms of Gandhian non-violence, what are the qualities, beliefs, and ideals that these brave souls have in common? First of all, we must understand that Gandhi repeatedly emphasized that non-violence is not the same as passive resistance. It's true that early on in his career in South Africa

he did use the term “passive resistance”, but later he rejected that because he felt it had too much of a negative, weak connotation. There is nothing passive about Gandhian non-violence: it is active, it is proactive, but it is activity of a certain kind arising from an inner peacefulness and love.

Gandhi often said that in war, the external physical violence was only a part of the violence. Most of the violence lay in the minds and the hearts of the participants. Non-violence is not merely the desire not to hurt others and not to harm others. For Gandhi it was the positive desire to wish to extend love to the so-called “enemy” (and in fact he didn’t like to use the word “enemy”). Because it involved a positive attempt on the part of the non-violent practitioner to extend love and understanding to the other person, he didn’t want to call it passive.

The key to understanding Gandhi’s non-violence lies in the complex relationship he envisioned between what he called *satya*, which is truth, the highest truth, and *ahimsa* or non-violence. For him the two were inseparable, like two sides of the same coin, which is the higher reality, or God, though sometimes he said he equated truth with God and God with truth. And from this relation arose a complex set of intimate connections between other qualities that Gandhi highly prized. Now, while it may seem extremely difficult for the ordinary person to understand this relationship between abstract, absolute truth and relative truth, we’ll see that actually we can in our own way understand it in extremely practical, personal, experiential terms. Gandhi maintained that the roots of outward violence lie in an inner, mental, psychological and moral violence. We are all, alas, all too familiar with such inner violence.

Gandhi, although no academic philosopher, was truly a philosopher in the old Greek sense of the term: a lover of wisdom. He read a tremendous amount but never simply swallowed and lapped up the ideas of others. Whatever he believed in, whatever thoughts and ideas he came across, he pondered, he analyzed, he examined, to see how they fit in with what he felt was innately true. So he asked questions, he probed into what he read and heard, he thought things out for himself, and he encouraged everyone else to do the same.

For Gandhi there is absolute truth, which if you like is God, and it is inexpressible. Words cannot contain it. It’s an ideal to be constantly striving after in the human quest for perfectibility. This truth or God is not separate from us – this was very important for Gandhi – but rather consti-

tutes the very center and core of our innermost being. The quest for God is the quest for truth, and both are the quest for self-knowledge. What we know with the intellect and can express in language is relative truth. By honest questioning and deep thinking, we can rise to higher and higher levels of relative truths, more universal truths, more all-encompassing, moving towards the absolute truth.

But what has all this to do with the practice of non-violence? Gandhi believed that it is when we refuse to acknowledge that what we believe is in itself only relative truth – perhaps not necessarily completely false, but partially true, one-sided – that we begin to slide down the precipitous slope of intolerance and towards violence. If I think that what I believe is completely and absolutely true, then if anyone dares to contradict me, if anyone has a different set of beliefs, I am forced to say that he or she is completely false. In saying that they are completely false, I am already doing them a kind of violence — psychological and moral violence. I am in fact saying that they do not have the ability or right to think for themselves. They do not have the right to have their own set of beliefs, and if they are going to walk on the right path, they must adopt mine. Already, then, we have shown intolerance, a lack of civility, and this intolerance, this shutting out of others, refusing to acknowledge their truth as having any validity in it, is the beginning of violence. And this mental and psychological and moral violence that I do to the other person whom I completely reject in terms of his or her beliefs, may well, and often does, result in physical violence.

So, although the relation between absolute and relative truth may seem abstract, we at least have to make the attempt to understand what truth there might be, however small, in what another person is saying. It’s only in that way that we can learn, that we can grow. If otherwise, we become very tunnel-visioned, intolerant, dogmatic. I have to learn to see that the beliefs of others which are different from my own, may be partially false, but they may also have a great deal of truth in them. And therefore I have to learn to understand the other and understand why he or she believes what he or she does. It is only on that basis that I can hope to have civil conversation and exchange of views with them. Otherwise, I cut off those whose beliefs are different than my own completely from the circle of my sympathy. I become hostile. The seeds of violence are already present in my intolerance. I violate the other person’s right to have his or her own beliefs, to think for herself, and from this inner intolerance or violence may emerge physical violence. Gandhi believed that it was im-

portant to be aware of this and try to change.

We could say that Gandhi was very concerned in trying to change what we think and how we live. Of course he was, but he believed that it was just as important, if not more important, to examine and change how we think and why we live. What is the motive for our living? For him, it was non-violence and truth.

And this is where we come to the heart of Gandhian non-violence, fearlessness. “What has fearlessness got to do with non-violence?” we might well ask. “After all, a non-violent person,” people might say, “is not going to fight physically, so what is he or she afraid of? He’s not going into combat.” Such a question would only betray our own ignorance of true non-violence. The non-violent person is not a coward; rather he or she has to instill in himself or herself the greatest courage, both physical and moral. Gandhi used to ask which person shows the greater courage: the person who, facing a so-called enemy armed to the teeth, himself goes to confront him similarly armed? Or the person who, facing an enemy armed to the teeth, goes out to confront him or her with no physical weapons at all? It is clearly the one who goes out with nothing but love as his shield and faith in his fellow human beings as his weapon.

So, Gandhi pointed out that this fearlessness is the essence of non-violence. He did not expect that everyone would have the fearlessness and the courage to be able right from the beginning to sacrifice their lives. There were many who did, and who lost their lives and he himself of course was always willing to do this. But he didn’t expect that all of his followers should be able to do this. He said, “Well, do as much as you can. Maybe you are not ready to sacrifice your life, maybe you are afraid to die, but do as much as you can.” He was fully aware that we cannot immediately all practice this perfect non-violence.

It’s not easy to develop this kind of fearlessness. True, we may say we believe in the immortality of the soul, and that ultimately we are deathless, but though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Our frail personality cringes, it protests against this apparent assault on its most basic instincts of self-preservation and self-defense. Let’s face it, the majority of us, whatever our beliefs might be, are afraid of death. And we are also afraid of physical and psychological harm. Gandhi fully recognized and understood this. He realized not everyone, indeed only the very rare individual, is ready to sacrifice his or her life in a non-violent cause. But he didn’t expect everyone to do so. Everyone is capable to some degree of restraining himself

or herself from retaliating violently to physical force. Everyone is capable of curbing his or her impulses to initiate violence, and perhaps we are all capable at some point of trying to understand and love the other person. Everyone, said Gandhi, however apparently weak, even women and children, is capable of summoning up the power of non-violent action, not only in matters of global and social concern, but perhaps at home in household and family matters. And this, after all, is a beginning. Gandhi gave the example from the Hindu myth of the young boy Prahlad, who faced his father’s torture and threats of death but would not do the wrong thing. And not only would not do the wrong thing in the face of all these threats but continued to love his father.

Non-violence is difficult because it requires great courage and fearlessness and a willingness to engage in some degree of self-sacrifice. It runs contrary to our selfish impulses. Non-violence requires us to respect others and have faith in our own moral strength. The non-violent person does not aim at humiliating anyone but hopes to make him or her see what is right, so that both sides in the end emerge victorious.

In our own time we do see individuals who have been willing to do all these things. Did Martin Luther King hesitate when he was faced with threats of terrible consequences against him and his family, for his non-violent attempts to win civil rights – the birthright of every American – for those who had long been denied them? He and many others of all races suffered and lost their lives in the Civil Rights Movement so that the oppressed might enjoy justice. They were not fighting for themselves, they were fighting for others, and were giving their lives for others. They were facing fearlessly what may be one of the most insidious yet powerful forces of injustice — racial prejudice, intolerance and hatred.

We have also the inspiring example of Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, or Burma, who fearlessly practiced non-violence despite all the attacks on her, and imprisonment. Can we imagine what it must have been like for her? Can we imagine what she must have felt in having to make the decision not to leave when her husband who was living in England was found to be terminally ill with cancer? The Burmese government refused to give him a visa to come and visit her. They told her she could have a visa to go and visit him in England. Think of the terrible, tortuous decision she had to make, and in the end she had the courage to do, not what she herself wanted, but what was good for her people and her country. She knew that the govern-

ment would let her leave, but it would never let her come back into Burma, and so her people would be left without her leadership, without her help and comfort. So, she made this tremendously agonizing decision not to go and see her husband before he died. It requires tremendous courage and love of one's fellow human beings to be able to make this sacrifice.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has the strength to continue to love the Chinese despite all they have done to his country and his people and his religion. He fearlessly continues to insist on a non-violent approach even when some of his own people in exile are vociferously advocating violence as the only solution. He goes about with no concern for his own safety in the face of a sect in his own religion that has clearly shown its intention of harming him, perhaps even killing him. But in turn he has inspired thousands of Tibetans in Tibet to offer non-violent resistance and to show no hatred towards those who oppress and torture them.

We have the inspiring example of the Buddhist Monk Maha Ghoshananda in Cambodia. He's often called the Gandhi of Cambodia. At the height of the almost unimaginable horrors and bloodshed brought about by the Khmer Rouge, Maha Ghoshananda, constantly risking torture and death, went quietly among the people preaching non-violence, love, and non-retaliation against the death squads. When the land of Cambodia finally stopped being the killing fields that it had been, most of the simple, ordinary people of this ravaged country showed a remarkable, almost unbelievable freedom from hatred, anger, and revenge towards their former oppressors and killers.

I myself was there after the war was ended, and I was moved as I have seldom been by the gentle, compassionate attitude of these simple Cambodian people who had suffered so greatly. They simply claimed they were trying to follow what the Buddha had taught. They said, "We are Buddhists; Buddha taught that we should love." And in fact, they would quote what was one of Gandhi's own favorite quotations from the Buddha: "Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love. This is the law eternal." And they said: "If we show feelings of retaliation and hatred, if we want to immediately execute these people and bring torture and death to them, we would be sinking to the same level as those who had oppressed us, the Khmer Rouge. We do not want to do that. We believe in karma. The worst punishment they can get is not from us, but what will come to them under karma."

It was brought home to me with compelling force how right Gandhi was when he said that war and violence can never bring about a true peace. The seeds of bitterness, anger, humiliation are the consequences of any war, and they inevitably contain seeds of further violence and another war. Gandhi said no country has ever become or will ever become happy through victory in war. In fact, a victorious nation, he said, being full of pride, becomes overbearing. It knows only defeat. What is set in motion is a vicious cycle of hatred and bitterness, violence, and war. After all, the First World War was said to be the war to end all wars, but what it did was sow the seeds of World War II, and that in turn sowed the seeds of the Cold War, and its proliferation into other areas, the Korean War, the Vietnam War. On the other hand, some of the consequences of World War II indirectly at least led to the whole Palestinian-Israeli problem and the chaos that we see in the Middle East today. So war can never bring about peace. It may bring about a cessation of physical hostilities for a while but the inner feelings that are left behind are not of non-violence or love.

Non-violence has thus both a moral and a practical justification for it. If war simply leads to other wars, then there is a practical justification or reason not to engage in it. Gandhi would be a practitioner of non-violence. He did distinguish between non-violence as a policy and non-violence as a creed. An individual who follows non-violence as a policy only, because it promises a successful outcome, is of course to be encouraged on that particular occasion. But he is not a true practitioner of non-violence. For if he does not participate in non-violence because of its innate moral value, then on another occasion when the practice of non-violence does not promise to be practically successful, and when it requires too much self-sacrifice, this person will not in fact practice it. The person who believes in non-violence as a creed, that is, who holds it as a basic principle of his life and thought and actions, holds determinedly to it because it is the right thing to do, and not because it will necessarily succeed in the world. It may, and he hopes that it will, but the important thing is to do what is right, what is according to the moral law, to God's law, the eternal law, the universal moral law, whatever we like to call it. Such a person would practice it regardless of the consequences to himself, giving up all thought of personal success or failure. He would practice what the *Bhagavad Gita*, Gandhi's favorite book, calls "renunciation of the fruits of action". This detachment from the personal consequences brought about as the result of the

pursuit of non-violence as something intrinsically right and good — is also part of Gandhi's idea of what non-violence means.

Here we come to another aspect of his philosophy. It is interesting that while many, many others, including the people I have mentioned, have practiced non-violence as well as Gandhi, hardly anyone has thought out the basic principles of non-violence as thoroughly and clearly as Gandhi did. And this in spite of the fact that he was not a philosopher in the ordinary sense of the term. But he said another thing that is very important, about the relation between means and ends. If we use violent or immoral means, in the light of the eternal moral laws and principles of the Universe, it can never lead to a harmonious or good end. The end never justifies the means. This is a principle that we today, in the global social, economic, and political scene need to take extremely seriously.

Gandhi believed that this fearlessness that he advocated springs from a hard-won discipline, a self-transformation and self-transcendence that is accompanied by a detachment from personal desires, and an attempt to show love and justice to all living beings. It's certainly a difficult goal to aspire to, because it involves faith in God or some higher reality or law. It involves trust in one's fellow human beings, hard for us to have. I mentioned all living beings, and it is interesting to note that Gandhi included non-violence, inward and outward, towards animals and plants. He didn't simply say we must show it to human beings, but to the Earth itself. We are the guardians of the Earth, and the creatures below us. We hold the riches of the Earth, he said, as trustees, on behalf of all beings.

He pointed out that the greatness of a nation can be judged by the treatment it gives to animals. We only have to look on the one hand at pampered pets, with their diamond collars and silk cushions, while animals are tortured, blinded, maimed — not only for the sake of medical research, but by the cosmetic companies. Rabbits are blinded in order to try out new kinds of mascara. What is the end? The end is greater profits for the cosmetic company. Gandhi's non-violence was on behalf of all living creatures.

From a Gandhian point of view therefore, our present environmental problems are the result of the violence we have done to all the kingdoms of nature because of our selfishness and rapacious greed. He would say that mere physical changes in what we are doing and in our habits are not enough, and we must realize that for the globe to survive, we have to change our whole attitude, not only to

other human beings, but to nature, to animals, to plants. We have to change our whole set of priorities, of values. We have to learn to curb our insatiable wants. The Earth, as he pointed out, can provide for all our simple needs. But, said Gandhi, it cannot support our ridiculous luxuries.

This brings us to another aspect of Gandhi's non-violence, the vow of poverty. "Passive resistance or non-violence can only be a personal force for the good" he said, "by the performing practitioner if he takes no thought for the morrow for himself," as Jesus might have said. Incredibly difficult as this may be, we can all hold it as an ideal. This effort alone can make non-violence an irresistible force, a "soul-force" as Gandhi called it. An individual who practices this is always, said Gandhi, the victor, not in the literal and external sense, but in the sense that she has not given up her principles, and has maintained the integrity of her inner being by not thinking of herself, but of the welfare of others, rooting out anger and greed and hate from within, and viewing the opposition not as an enemy, but as another human being to be loved, and if possible, understood. Gandhi would have agreed with the nineteenth-century mystic who said, "No man is your enemy, no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers." The Buddha himself disarmed and converted to the true way a brutal murderer simply by approaching him, unafraid and with a heart full of love and compassion. This deep, hard-won integrity or wholeness is part of what Gandhi meant by *Satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* has many meanings, but it literally means "holding onto truth". The significance of *Satyagraha* consists, Gandhi said, in the quest for a principle of life. For him, this was the primary goal of the quest for everyone. The winning of India's independence was, at least for him, only a secondary goal. *Satyagraha*, holding on to truth, soul force, love, these were his deepest concern.

This holding on to truth arises from an ability as we've seen to recognize one's own beliefs as only partially true, or perhaps false, and a willingness to learn from anyone and everyone else. For Gandhi, "truth" was not simply an intellectual, logical, epistemological theory. To be true to the highest ideals meant to "true oneself," as in the old sense of the word: a carpenter "trues" a line, a plane, or an edge, aligning it, so that it is absolutely straight and true. This is a constant process of alignment and realignment, of finding a dynamic and constantly shifting inner point of balance, harmony, equanimity, and peace — the willingness in all humility to admit one's errors. Gandhi himself

often spoke of his Himalayan blunders. In our own political situation today, do we not see the far-reaching terrible consequences of leaders refusing to admit they are wrong? They lack the humility and courage to make such an admission. Gandhi also spoke of the equal distribution of wealth and resources for individuals and nations. He believed that the non-violent approach required the rich to become guardians of the poor. Equality need not be taken literally, so that everyone has exactly the same amount of money, but when an individual becomes a servant of society, earns for its sake, and spends for its benefit, Gandhi believed, then there is non-violence in his efforts. Again he was pointing to the ideal, not expecting everyone immediately to live up to it. Certainly, the following and the practice of Gandhian ideals would prevent the massive exploitation of the poor that is so rampant in our world today. We are horrified at the acts of huge corporations, often in secret alliance with governments, that economically invade poor Third World countries, take control over citizens' resources — water or seeds under the guise of helping the country, and then deprive the people of their most essential resources. In India the takeover of farmers' seed sources and supplies, denying farmers the right to save their own harvested seeds and forcing them to buy seeds from these corporations, has driven tens and hundreds of thousands into debt and, at a very mild estimate, it caused at least 21,000 farmers to commit suicide. Even water has been privatized and sold back to the people to whom it rightly belongs. Under the guise of helping a country, corporations actually sink it into ever-increasing debt and thus eventually gain the opportunity to place their own corrupt puppets into positions of power. But even these seemingly invincible corporations have been known to have their enormous power curtailed, and their invasive tactics stopped by the non-violent resistance of a group of fearless, selfless people. The apparently impossible has been accomplished.

Gandhi's idealistic proposals may seem impossible to follow, but has any great religious or moral leader ever wrought any change for the better by advocating less than the highest principles, goals, or ideals? It is often said that a river cannot rise above its source. The higher the ideal set before us, the more we strive. No moral leader has taught anything less than the highest absolute principles. No one has set petty goals, relative principles, as commandments or rules. No great teacher has expected us to be less than perfect. Even Jesus said, "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

It is this unconquerable hope in the perfectibility of human beings, this unshakeable faith in the goodness of humanity, that has inspired men and women to rise to unexpected heights of nobility and self-sacrifice. Gandhi did no less than this, and we can do no less than to fulfill at least some of his expectations. After all, we have explored all too thoroughly the way of hatred and violence. It has failed us utterly. Can we not try the way of Gandhi, the way of Christ, the way of Buddha, and of the *Gita*? We have nothing to lose and we have everything to gain. We have also not only everything to gain, but we have the possibility of preserving our inmost integrity and purity.

Perhaps we could sum up Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence through the words of Shelley in "Prometheus Unbound", in which he extols the Titan Prometheus, who sacrificed himself, suffering tremendous tortures, so that Humanity might continue to live and to flourish:

*To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.*

Santa Barbara Public Library, January 30, 2007

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Writers collective “Each human a peacemaker”

Cultivating a culture of peace

The road to peace is peace. It is a long road. It is work for the long haul. The workgroup that edited the Peace issue of *Lucifer – the Light-Bringer*, knows this better than anyone else. The thoughts of peace must constantly be nurtured so that they can grow and bear fruit. For the Theosophical Society, this is also a subject that touches on the very foundations of our organization, because in our work we start from Universal Brotherhood. Hence *Lucifer* continues to give unrelenting attention to this so important subject, especially now that for more than a year a dreadful war has been raging on the European continent.

Status quo

Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022, tens of thousands of young men have been killed, wounded or permanently disabled on the battlefield. Millions have been driven from their homes and lost friends and relatives. Entire cities have been destroyed. The suffering the war has caused, and continues to cause, cannot be adequately described.

The situation now is one of stagnation. Both armies face each other, waiting for a major change in the battlefield, but many experts do not expect such a breakthrough in the short term or even in the medium term.

Especially on the mental level, there is stagnation. The opposing camps are hardening in their minds. The judgements about the enemy crystallize on both sides. Not only do they fight each other with weapons, but

also in the fields of culture, economy, and sports. They fight each other to death.

The war has its impact on almost every country on our planet. Much of the world is divided into two camps. Few countries are above the parties and remain neutral.

Why are peace initiatives unsuccessful?

One positive thing is that there are quite a few third-party peace initiatives. The United Nations, some neutral countries, peace groups and others have offered ideas, often in the form of a roadmap, to achieve peace. Normalization of positions must begin as a prelude to negotiations. After all, almost everyone agrees, this war can only be ended through negotiations.

Why do these peace initiatives find so little resonance?

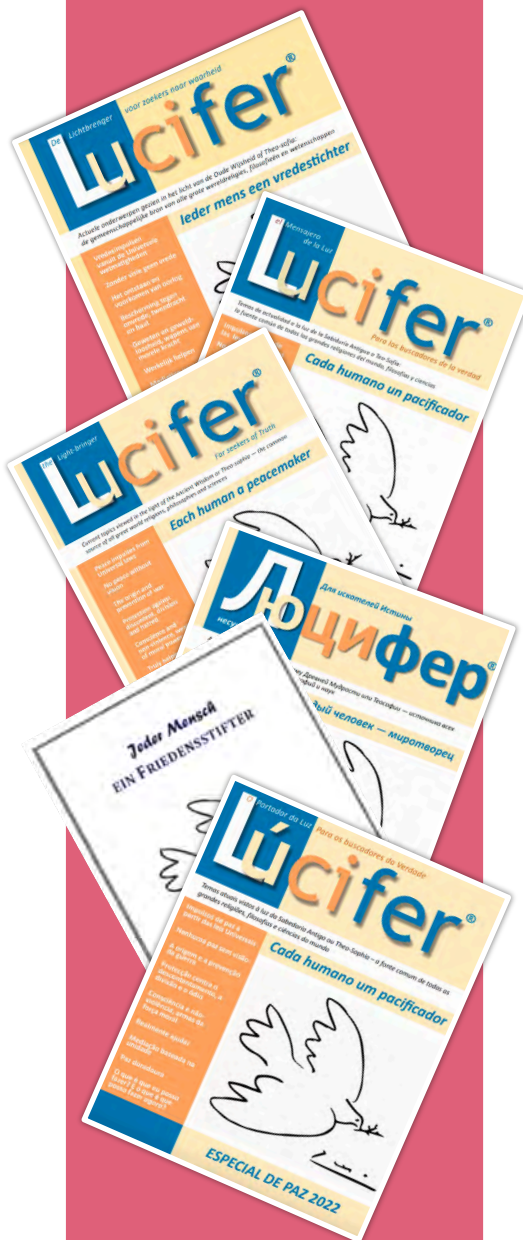
There is a complete lack of trust on

Key thoughts

» Neighboring states do not have to be alike, nor do they have to become each other's "best friends", but can always respect each other's culture and way of life.

» It is the thoughts we think that make our civilization.

» When we collectively build up a force of peaceful thoughts stronger than thoughts of war, we will have taken an essential step toward true peace.



The text below is from an Upanishad. It reflects excellently the culture of peace that brings about real world peace.

Only the small-minded say “one is a relative, the other a stranger”.

For those who live big-heartedly, the whole world is a family.

Māha Upanishad, VI-71-72

both sides. There is unwillingness to work it out together. People point at each other, see that the other is not fulfilling agreements. Both parties regard fighting as a real solution to the problem. However, the more suffering is caused, the more difficult it becomes to build a minimum of trust with the other party. Distrust also prevails among countries that are not directly participating in the war. Economic and strategic interests are involved. Nevertheless, at least some level of trust is needed among all these parties to reach a humane solution to the problem together.

The embattled peoples are now seeking support from other countries, making the conflict increasingly international and adding to polarization. There is a mirrored fear. People are afraid of each other. One is even afraid of a temporary cease-fire, because it is believed that the enemy could take advantage of it by further strengthening his army and calling up new recruits.

In short, if it is to come to negotiations, as a faint beginning of peace, the culture of fear must be broken and there must be at least something of trust. This is not only a task for the fighting parties, but all countries, all people can take steps towards this. After all, the world community plays just as much a role in the conflict.

Maybe you have a Russian or Ukrainian friend, a German relative, English or American neighbors, and you visit Spain or Portugal on your vacation. Then it's good to know: the peace issue of *Lucifer*, Each human a peacemaker, is available for free download in English, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish on our website, (<https://blavatskyhouse.org/magazine/>). And the Dutch edition can be found there as well. The German version is available on <https://theosophy.de/>.

Remember that the more people think peace thoughts, the more powerful the culture of peace becomes.

Peace plan

All peacemakers agree that the first step to peace is to begin negotiations. If all people in all countries of the world increase the pressure for negotiations, at some point they will have to start talking to each other. The prerequisite is a minimum willingness to empathize with the views and therefore the concerns and wishes of your interlocutor. This requires seeing each other as equals.

It would be desirable if there is a neutral moderator. Some neutral countries have offered to act as such. The United Nations also wants to fulfill this task.

A neutral moderator should be above the parties in all respects, but understand the concerns and fears of both sides. In chemistry, we know a catalyst: a substance that accelerates a reaction without being part of it itself. We need people who possess these qualities and who are accepted by both countries. (See also the article *Mediation based on unity*, in the Peace issue of *Lucifer*.)

The dot on the horizon during these negotiations should be, that both countries are striving for a treaty in which there is mutual acceptance.

Strictly speaking, a neutral mediator is not necessary, but given the completely disturbed relations between the parties, it seems very likely that we cannot do without one in this conflict.

Furthermore, those negotiations should involve many more countries than just the parties who are fighting each other with weapons. Both countries are supported by other countries from whom they buy or are granted weapons. Military alliances play a role in the conflict. Those who know something of the recent history know that many countries have created causes for this conflict.

Peaceful coexistence

Accepting another can be very difficult. How awful it is when a neighboring country starts a war and invades your country! But if we want to coexist peacefully, we must understand each other and learn about the other's view, even if it is incomprehensible and rejectable to us.

That view is the result of causes. Fueling of delusions does not contribute to peace. If it is remotely possible, we must remove the sting. As long as there is mistrust, there is no peace.

The underlying cause of the conflict has an origin from many years ago that involved almost all European countries, as well as countries outside Europe. That is what we need to study. That helps us to be creative in the search for peace.

Neighboring states do not need to resemble each other nor do they need to become each other's "best friends," but at least they can allow the other their own culture and way of life. In the case of Russia and Ukraine, this should not be a problem at all, because both countries have cultures and religions that, if not the same, have much in common. Most important is that even if you disagree with each other, you respect the other point of view. Even if one country has no intention of attacking the other, but the other perceives it as such, they will have to talk to each other about this.

Culture of Peace

As mentioned, every citizen of the world can contribute to peace by increasing the pressure in their city or country for negotiations. But you can do more. You can propagate thoughts of peace in your own life, especially by applying them yourself.

It is the thoughts we think that make our civilization. People in every part of the earth can think and act from the notion that others have as much right to happiness and prosperity as they do. And if you want to advance peace even more powerfully, you can live and act from compassion, and put your personal self aside for the greater good. Then we begin to resolve any conflicts in our own lives peacefully and harmoniously. Thereby we not only exert a positive influence in our own living environment, but we strengthen the peaceful sphere of thought of the earth. (See also the article *The origin and prevention of war*, in the peace issue of *Lucifer*.)

When we together are able to build up a force of these thoughts of peace that is stronger than thoughts of war, then we have taken an essential step towards true peace.

There is a flood of thoughts of hate and war, manifesting itself, for example, in a horrendous expansion of the arms industry and the belief that only through a strong army can we keep the peace. It seems that only war language can be thought of.

This mental storm must be tempered, yes, must be put down, by a more powerful mental atmosphere of peace. Everyone can contribute to that atmosphere.

The war between Russia and Ukraine is not an isolated case. Think of this war as an open wound in a body. That body is world society, which as a whole is sick. The cause of that sickness is the prevailing tendency towards group-think, group egoism and by thinking in power blocks. We cure that sick body not by poking into the open wound, but by changing group selfishness into a sense of a con-

What can I do, what can I do *now*?

What can we do here and now as global citizens to make our influence a protective and helping force in the world? We can work for peace anytime and anywhere. See the last article in the Peace issue on this topic to develop a powerful inner immune system in five steps.

nectedness among all peoples. Without a culture of peace, open wounds keep appearing. Then, when the war in Ukraine ends, an open wound will appear on another part of the body. Then new battlefields will come. This takes place in those areas where resistance is smallest, and disharmony is at its greatest at that time. We form a unity with each other. Everything acts and reacts to each other. In short, the culture of peace must be encouraged worldwide. The more universal that culture is, the more powerfully it will contribute to preventing armed conflict.

Fortunately, there are numerous initiatives in this direction. We mention here only the *Mayors for Peace*, in which mayors around the world can join and share thoughts on peace from the perspective of cities. They state that cities can focus on peace, cooperation, mentorship of other cities, inter-city communication, stimulating creativity, intercultural cooperation, social justice, etc. A wonderful initiative, and fortunately there are many more.

The Theosophia teaches us that man is essentially a noble being. All sincere peace initiatives contribute to awakening those noble aspects of our consciousness. Eventually they will be active in everyone. Our task is to inspire people to do so.



Who is a lightbringer?

How do we recognize the lightbringers in our society? And how do we recognize the Lightbringer in ourselves?

In the last two issues, *Lucifer – the Light-bringer* had a new column: *Lightbringers in our society*. By means of this column the editors want to show that, if you keep your spiritual eyes and ears open, you fortunately can see that there are people who place the common good above their own interests and take the spiritual development of humanity to heart.

There are a range of spiritual lightbringers: from those who, without realizing it themselves, are living examples of the ethical laws of nature, to those who very consciously know that they are working for the spiritual awakening of humanity. On the back cover of our magazine, we describe lightbringers as inspirers who initiate spiritual growth and social renewal. They stimulate people to think independently and live in the sense of brotherhood.

You can find these individuals in all walks of life. So far, we have introduced you to two lightbringers: a former prison warden and a singer. In this issue you are introduced to a school principal from Northern Ireland.

The question that was asked of us – and which the editors asked them-

selves – was: who or what is actually a lightbringer? Is everyone who is “good” to his fellow man one? That depends on what you mean by this word. Therefore, from a theosophical perspective, we can say much more on this subject.

Selflessness

Of course, “being good” is one of the conditions for being a lightbringer. Or, to express it more clearly, as we often do: having an unselfish character. Unselfishness involves more than most people would think. By this we mean that you do not think and act from self-interest, from your personality. Unselfishness is closely related to self-forgetfulness. You forget yourself for the benefit of others. You know that you are part of a larger group, for which you work. You do not place yourself at the center, but instead focus on the welfare of a greater whole.

And as that whole becomes more universal, your own attitude will also become more universal, because we can grow in selflessness. For example, a person who identifies with his family, can act completely unselfishly within that family. But when we

Key thoughts

» Lightbringers do more than only trying to realize certain concrete social reforms; they give impulses to ennoble the general way of thinking, the general mentality.

» Lightbringers inspire others to turn inwards and find in themselves treasures of compassion and supra-personal love and bring these into the society.

» The editors encourage you to tell us whom you view as a lightbringer in our society.

look at the broader interests of neighborhood or city, his behavior may still be very selfish. Someone who identifies with his city or country, might make other choices. In the same way, you can imagine that you can always broaden the scope of your mind, making it more universal: from an identification with humanity, to an identification with all living beings on this planet, or even – from a spiritual perspective – with the unity of boundless life, visible and invisible.

This brings us to the next criterion.

Working on the mental plane

The condition of selflessness is an absolute prerequisite for a lightbringer, but there is also another important factor. For example, if you seek social change by changing political structures or imposing laws, you do not belong to what the editors of *Lucifer* call a lightbringer. Why not? Because we think that real social and political change will yield lasting results only if there is an improvement in mentality. Ideas rule the world. A country can introduce fair and righteous social legislation, but if the mentality of the population does not change and remains selfish, not much will essentially change. Very soon the smart persons will know how to find the loopholes. Nor can peace treaties – however necessary they may be – ensure lasting peace if there is no peace-loving spirit in people's hearts. Social change without change in mentality is, to use a metaphor of Helena P. Blavatsky, comparable to the foolish gardener who cuts off the weeds instead of pulling them out of the ground root by root. We do not intend to say that legislation is unimportant, but it should be accompanied by the cultivation in the community of a sense of togetherness and solidarity. And that, living from this realization, people take their responsibility for their ethical choices in everyday life.

That explains why the lightbringers we introduce to you in this column, work primarily on the mental plane. They will first of all develop their own super-personal and unselfish thinking. This should be the guiding principle for their actions. Furthermore, they will continually focus on the supra-personal aspects of others, and inspire them to selflessness.

Inspire

The super-personal characteristic to which we particularly refer, is a human faculty that rises above the intellect – which is already impersonal as such. It is referred to by the Sanskrit word *buddhi*. That word means “awakening” or

“enlightening”. *Buddhi* means spiritual discernment. It enables us to discern illusion from reality and “good” from “evil”. It is the source of idealism, coherence, understanding and insight. It is the realization of the inseparable connectedness of all life. *Buddhi* is also the channel through which the divine inspiration flows into the human heart. Developing this buddhic faculty gives you confidence: confidence in your own qualities, as well as confidence in the qualities of others. When you bring buddhi into action in yourself, your view of man becomes very different from that which is common in our, often cynical, society. You do not see a human as a mayfly, “accidentally” arisen from a fertilized egg. No, man is essentially a boundless center of consciousness, an essential part of the greater whole. Within man there are countless unexplored potentials and powers. Perhaps you cannot articulate it very clearly, but deep in yourself you know that man is essentially a noble being. Lightbringers have awakened somewhat of these divine-spiritual potentialities in themselves, and they know intuitively that these potentialities are also present in others and can be awakened. Therefore, they will not be disappointed if their efforts do not produce immediate visible results. Their primary mission is to inspire their fellow humans. However different their work fields may be, they all have in common that they focus on the higher nature of others. They actively work for inner changes rather than outer ones. They do not strive to create a better world by way of prohibitions or commandments. Changes in the world will come naturally when people have changed intrinsically and live more from their super-personal aspects. Lightbringers will always *inspire* their fellow men to turn inwards and dig up in themselves the treasures of compassion and supra-personal love, and bring these into the society.

The Lightbringer within yourself

The Theosophia teaches that in the distant future, we all will have fully developed our buddhi. We all will one day become Buddhas, yes, everything alive will one day become a Buddha.

In our present age, however, Buddhas are still very rare. Even those who are beginning to express the buddhic splendor in themselves, in their daily lives, are still far from numerous. Therefore, because they do not occur in large numbers, lightbringers will stand out in the environment in which they live. This does not always mean that they are admired or even appreciated. Probably, they will be considered a bit strange by many people. They also evoke

resentment in some cases, because, as they themselves live according to certain ethical principles, they make their fellow human beings feel that they do not take ethics so seriously, in many cases. No doubt there will also be people who do look up to them with some admiration, but many of them will also believe that they are pursuing illusions. Nevertheless, they will always evoke *some* response in their fellow men.

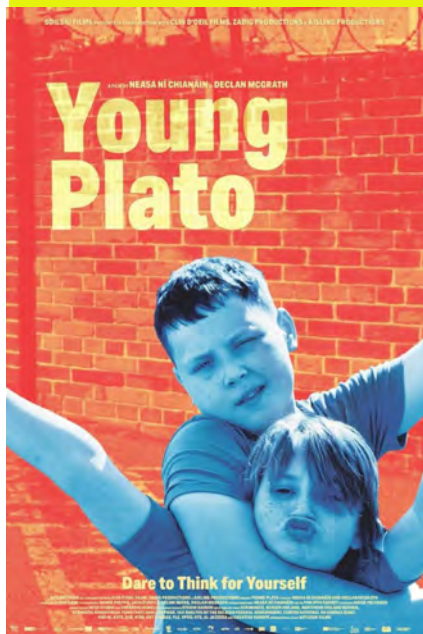
Not all lightbringers will make the columns of newspapers or will be invited on talk shows. Nor will they strive to do so, because they are not after themselves but after the whole. Because they never put themselves in the foreground, some personalities will probably overlook them. After all, to be able to perceive something of the greatness in another, you must have aroused at least part of it in yourself. Those who in no way even suspect that they themselves have (or rather *are*) an *inner* Lightbringer, will not be able yet to recognize even those who spread the brightest spiritual light.

However, we assume that our readers have found their inner Lightbringer, at least to some extent, and know how to illuminate their own lives through its perhaps still faint glow. Therefore, they will also recognize other lightbringers.

Thus, the editors turn to you, readers, with the request to give us some information about the lightbringers you know. This is an inspiring thing to do. You do not need any special qualities for it. You do not need to be a great scholar to recognize them. You just need to look carefully around you and discover the spiritual qualities of your fellow human beings. By doing so, you will activate your own spiritual aspects, more and more. As a result, you will spread more of this spiritual light in the world.

It is not our intention to put persons on a pedestal. What matters is that we inspire each other to express the noblest in ourselves. Those who try this sincerely and for a long time belong to the forerunners of humanity, the first spiritual flowers that usher in a new era for humanity.

That is why we suggest to you: let us know who, in your view, is a lightbringer in our society. And especially, why you think so!



Lightbringers In our society

Erwin Bomas

Lightbringers in our society

Kevin McArevey

All of us have noble, altruistic abilities within us, whether we actively use them or not. There are people in our society who clearly express this in their lives. We can therefore rightly call them “lightbringers”. They deserve our attention, because they can inspire us to activate our inner potential and bring more light into the world. That is why we have created this column in which we always introduce a well-known or less well-known bringer of light to our readers. This time the Northern Irish headmaster Kevin McArevey.

If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. (...) We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by *proper and truly theosophical* education.⁽¹⁾

Education as the key to peace and freedom

This quote by H.P. Blavatsky from *The Key to Theosophy* indicates the purpose of education viewed from the perspective of universal wisdom or Theosophia. This book was published in London in 1889, at a turbulent time when a fierce class struggle

was raging. It was in the middle of the industrial revolution, and there was a great lack of mutual respect, altruism and tolerance. Much has changed for the better since, yet the message of the quote is as timely as ever. For putting these ideals into practice cannot be taken for granted and therefore requires constant attention. Even in our current society, there is growing inequality and polarization, and even now, discontent is lurking that can result in strife or even war between different groups of people. Fortunately, there are also many people working hard to prevent that from happening. And upbringing and education is the place to start with that.

Kevin McArevey is the embodiment of this very conviction. He, too, experienced firsthand how much misery mutual strife causes. His *Holy Cross Boys School* is in the Ardoyne district of North Belfast, a poor deprived area known for the many inci-

dents of violence there during the period of “The Troubles”. This was a longstanding violent conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland that lasted from the 1960s until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The remembrance of this time is still vivid in the minds of many adults, leaving its mark on today's children. Indeed, during the filming of the documentary *Young Plato*, which was made about McAreevey and his elementary school, the school had to be evacuated because of a bomb found near the school's fences.⁽²⁾

You see in the documentary how McAreevey immediately dispels the scare about this on the following day. He assures that the school is safe and praises the discipline of the students who were all outside within two minutes. By always emphasizing the development of the good character traits in the students themselves, he strives in a small measure to maintain and actively promote peace in society.

In an interview, McAreevey explains what he is striving for: “We want successful children who are wise and kind.” And: “We have the children of the future. And it’s about giving them the right skills and the right mindset to take us forward into a peaceful society.”

Classical philosophy in practice

In the documentary, McAreevey makes it no secret that he himself once tried to solve his problems with physical violence. It only brought him more misery. He found his way back up through classical philosophy, through Socrates, Plato and the later Stoics, among others. In it he discovered timeless wisdom, with which every human being can contribute to a harmonious and peaceful society.

In the beginning of the documentary *Young Plato*, we see McAreevey teaching a philosophy class, as the first lesson of the school year. The question he focuses on is, “Should you ever take your anger out on someone else?” He emphasizes that all ideas are allowed to be there. One student keeps track on the board of what is being said. Another small group of students sit in the “Socratic circle” to observe the thinking process and give feedback afterwards: what went well, what could be better next time, and to what extent have my own thoughts changed?

Through the philosophy class, he teaches children to control their emotions and become resilient. Not by lecturing them, but by sincerely listening to them, giving them attention and responsibility. Even – or perhaps especially – when things go wrong. If a student has bullied another, he should report to McAreevey. We see how he asks three questions: “what happened?”, “what should have hap-

pened?”, “how do we move forward?” When the student answers, “saying sorry” McAreevey has him write his ideas on the *Philosophy Board* about what saying sorry means. He challenges the student to put himself in the other person's shoes. The student sees that saying sorry is not just a matter of apologizing. He gives himself a concrete task to improve his behavior in the future.

In another fragment of the documentary, two cousins are arguing with each other. They are clearly still angry with each other when they report to McAreevey. He asks again what happened, why and what the other is experiencing in the process. Then he has them think about what a friend is. And whether the other meets it. And if not, whether this one has ever met it or could meet it again. Both nod in agreement and a moment later walk off the playground as friends again.

Thinking independently

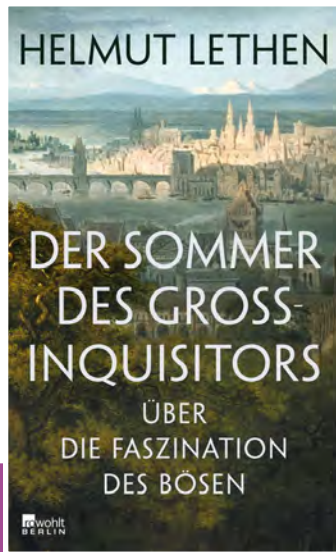
Dealing with anger and violence is a recurring theme. And throughout, McAreevey shows how students can find within themselves the qualities to deal with it. Thus we see how he guides a class that manages to discover in their own words, almost entirely on their own, the ten ways that the stoic philosopher Seneca had devised to manage anger. But it doesn't stop at just the students. He also tries to inspire parents to talk philosophy with their child. And children with their parents. You see how McAreevey struggles at one point with a comment from a student who says that his father tells him that you should always hit back when you get hit. He shows a class the footage of what happened in their neighborhood during “The Troubles”. Students share stories they heard from parents, grandparents and uncles and aunts. It shows how the violence left deep marks. “Violence breeds violence” is the conclusion. He tells his students that, above all, people want you to believe and confirm their side of the story. And how important it is, therefore, to critically examine other people's thoughts and learn to think for yourself. Even those thoughts of your parents. He reenacts with the students how to engage in such a conversation with your parent when they tell you to hit back. By asking questions like, “Why do you want to get me into violence?” “Why do you want me to become like you are?” “I am not you, I am myself. Are you okay with me solving this my way?” Beginning and ending with great respect and love for each other.

All these examples show clearly how McAreevey tries to get his students to think independently, unprejudiced and

unselfishly, as described by H.P. Blavatsky in the quote. In an interview, the director of the documentary tells how impressed he is with the students of this school. They come from a disadvantaged neighborhood with many problems, but nevertheless have a lot of self-confidence and can express themselves very well. Also when you watch the documentary *Young Plato*, you can see that something has been awakened in the students. According to Plato, Socrates was an exemplary teacher because he functioned as “a midwife of the soul”.⁽⁴⁾ Light bringers like Kevin McArevey continue this tradition.

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The Grand Inquisitor

Is man capable of living ethically?

Does the end justify the means? Can “evil” be done for the sake of “good”? These are profound questions raised by the great Russian writer Dostoyevsky in the 19th century and which are still being pondered.

It will not often have happened that an excerpt from a novel has made so much noise in the world. Every time it looks like that noise is dying down, a new storm brews up, bringing the excerpt up to date again.

We are talking about *The Grand Inquisitor*, an excerpt from Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s monumental novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, which saw the light of day in 1880. German cultural historian Helmut Lethen published a comprehensive study on this parable in late 2022 under the title *Der Sommer des Gross-Inquisitors. Über die Faszination des Bösen [The Summer of the Grand Inquisitor. On the fascination of evil]*.⁽¹⁾ This fascinating book shows that this Jesuit priest haunted many writings of 20th century political philosophy. Lethen describes how this parable influenced many thinkers and how it can be interpreted in different ways.

Powerful lesson

The importance of *The Grand Inquisitor* was first noticed in theosophical circles. Master Koothoomi, in a letter dated 21 August 1881 – i.e. shortly after the publication of

Dostoyevsky’s novel – wrote to A.P. Sinnett:

The suggestion to translate the *Grand Inquisitor* is mine; for its author, on whom the hand of Death was already pressing when writing it, gave the most forcible and true description of the Society of Jesus than was ever given before. There is a mighty lesson contained in it for many and even you may profit by it.⁽²⁾

The Theosophist of November and December 1881 published the first English translation of the parable translated from Russian. That translation came from the hand of H.P. Blavatsky, who had founded the magazine and, born in Russia, naturally mastered Russian. As an introduction to her translation, she wrote:

Dedicated by the Translator to sceptics who clamour so loudly both in print and private letters: “Show us the wonder-working ‘Brothers’, let them come out publicly and — we will believe in them!”⁽³⁾

Helena P. Blavatsky points to the

Key thoughts

» This parable sheds light on several issues, such as “what is religion?”, the importance of independent thought and “is man capable of living ethically?”

» All of us have at least some knowledge of the interconnectedness of all Life. This ethical knowledge, gathered in the lives we have already lived, constitutes our conscience. We all know enough to never want to achieve our goal at the expense of others.

disbelief of many in the “Brothers”, or the Mahātmas, human beings who are far ahead of the average person and who possess abilities that seem like miracles in the eyes of others. *The Theosophical Society* was then only six years old and attracted sensation-seeking people, who wanted to be treated to “miracles” and “occult phenomena” and became cynical if they did not get to see them. Why precisely for them Dostoyevsky’s story is a great lesson, we will try to explain in a moment. But first we will briefly outline the story itself.

Jesus back on earth

The Grand Inquisitor is set in 16th-century Spain, the time when the heretic burnings of the Inquisition were at their height. In the story, Jesus returns to earth. He finds himself in Seville where just moments ago, *ad maiorem gloriam Dei* (to the greater glory of God, the motto of the Jesuits), nearly a hundred people were burned alive at the stake. Jesus roams the streets of this Spanish city, healing the sick and reviving a young murdered girl. The Grand Inquisitor witnesses this and immediately has Jesus imprisoned and takes him to a dark cell. There he holds a long monologue defending his cruel policy toward dissenters. Jesus does not answer, but merely looks at him piercingly throughout.

According to the Grand Inquisitor, Jesus has failed and shown no compassion for man. He has set man far too high and demanded behavior from him, of which humans are incapable. “If you had been a little less demanding,” he says to Jesus, “you would have shown more love, for human beings would have had less to bear. After all, man is weak and cowardly, and incapable of accomplishing what you oblige him to do.”

Jesus is no longer welcome on earth, for the church has taken over his task. The church has taken away people’s freedom and thereby freed them from the heavy burden of self-responsibility. Therefore, Jesus must also be burned at the stake, because: “If there is anyone who deserves the stake more than anyone else, it is you, because you want to surrender people again to the unbearable pain of their own conscience.”

Jesus is said to have made three essential mistakes. According to the *Bible* (Matthew 4:1-11), after Jesus had fasted for forty days, he was tempted by the devil, who challenged him to turn stones into bread. Jesus did not do so, arguing that “man will not live by bread alone”. According to the Grand Inquisitor, he should have done so. Furthermore, Jesus did not want to dispose of man’s conscience.

This is an essential error, because man cannot handle freedom. And finally, he did not want to rule the world, because “only your God shall you worship”. But the church has corrected those mistakes. The Church gives bread, rules man’s conscience and rules the world.

“You,” says the Grand Inquisitor, “thirsted for faith in freedom, not miracle-based faith. We had the right to preach a mystery and to teach them that the free decision of their hearts and their love are not involved, but that this is a mystery to which they must blindly surrender. We retorted and founded your heroism on wonder, mystery and authority. And the people rejoiced because they were again led like a herd and at last the so terrible gift that caused them so much misery, was removed from their hearts.”

After his speech, the Grand Inquisitor is silent, but Jesus does not answer and only looks at him. Will some kind of doubt have entered his heart after all, for the parable does not end with the burning of Jesus, but the Grand Inquisitor opens the cell and shouts at Jesus to leave and never to return.

What is religion?

This parable sheds light on several issues. The first we want to discuss is: what is religion? Is it a blind faith in miracles, in the authority of the Church and its representatives? Should one’s own thinking, one’s own conscience be eliminated?

Using the knowledge of Theosophia, we have given a description of what we mean by religion in the box on page 60. On this basis we can answer these questions: no, thought and conscience should *never* be eliminated. Precisely one’s own thinking and conscience are essential to religion.

Unfortunately, we must note that all current institutionalized religions – or rather, creeds – do not respect the principle of free choice. The policy of the Jesuits, so masterfully outlined by Dostoyevsky, is the opposite of religion. Precisely because people regard this blind faith as sacred, they are willing to do truly anything, up to burning innocent people, if they believe that their religion calls them to do so. How understandable, then, that according to Master Koothoomi, two-thirds of all Evil in the world is attributable to religion once it becomes a power factor.⁽⁴⁾

The sad paradox – and Dostoyevsky describes this as well – is that those who exercise religious power in a sense do so because they believe it is right. The Grand Inquisitor sincerely believes that the ethics Jesus preached cannot be practiced by the masses. He believes he is helping them by

What is a human being?

Like everything that exists, a human being is one of the many boundless centers of consciousness (a monad). This monad has always been there and will always be there. It, the monad, is an eternal pilgrim, developing more and more of its inner faculties.

Humans go through a stage of development in which thinking is developed. Thinking is essentially a divine ability, through which we can gain an ever deeper understanding of the Cosmos and our Self. The power of thought can also be used for selfish purposes, which always leads to disharmony.

Thus a human being is an expression of the pilgriming monad on this plane, with the divine ability to think and becoming increasingly aware of the essential unity underlying all life.

What is religion?

There are several possible derivations of the word religion. It is usually derived from *religare*, with the meaning of “to reconnect”. Another derivation is possible: *relegere*, with the meaning of “choosing the right thing over and over again”. If you combine both meanings, religion means self-consciously trying to connect with your own Essence, the Source from which you spring, by the choices you make. Since all life is part of that same Essence, religion also makes you self-consciously connect with all your fellow human beings, yes, with all that lives.

What is ethics?

Ethics is based on the structural interrelationships within the Universe. Everything in the Universe is interconnected and has the same origin. Acting ethically means applying our clearest, most universal understanding to our relationships with our fellow human beings, the animals and plants, and gods. Our view of ethical living will keep growing, if we apply it.

letting the church determine what is right and what is wrong.

It seems absurd that in Dostoyevsky’s story, the founder of the Christian religion is in danger of being killed by his own followers. The story is fiction, of course, but it is well founded in reality. If you look at the policies of the churches – especially in earlier centuries – they were diametrically different from the teachings of Jesus as expressed in the *Sermon on the Mount*. Other religions are not much different in that regard.

So, does this parable overstate the case? Judge for yourself. Don’t today’s religions essentially still suffer from the same flaw, albeit sometimes a little less extreme? And even that

is the question, because there are countries that are hardly inferior in cruelty to the Inquisition of the 16th century. For example, countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia are pursuing similar policies to those of the Jesuits at the time of the Inquisition. They rule over people in every way. In these countries there is no freedom of choice, no freedom of conscience, there is not even freedom in the choice of the clothes you wear. Even in Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, teachings are often cast in concrete. Fortunately, there are adherents of these religions who respect free will; yet, there are also movements in which dogmas are not questioned in any way. That this leads to contempt and hatred of others we can read daily in the newspapers. Even followers of the most enlightened religion, Buddhism, turned full of aggression and hatred against Muslims in Myanmar and against Hindu Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Another consequence of this degeneration is that man eventually loses all faith in a reality existing outside the physical world. Indeed, human thought can never be permanently eliminated and sooner or later one will learn to see the absurdities of the dogmas, but knowing no alternative, one rejects any spiritual idea. In his novel *The Idiot*, Dostoyevsky calls the Catholic religion “an unchristian faith from which atheism has sprung”. H.P. Blavatsky, in her article *Lucifer to the archbishop of Canterbury*, says the same thing when she claims that the atheist is the bastard son of the Church.⁽⁵⁾

In short, the elimination of independent thinking degenerates religion, for as curious as it may sound, blind faith is the cause of the degeneration and eventual elimination of religion. Therefore, it also makes no sense to *believe* in the “Brothers” and in what we nowadays call paranormal phenomena. Such belief in no way stimulates true religious awareness and appeals to sensationalism. And when that is not satisfied, people drop out. Then they become cynical and skeptical. Isn’t that why H.P. Blavatsky dedicates the parable of *The Grand Inquisitor* to the skeptics?

Is man capable of ethical living?

The main argument with which the Grand Inquisitor justifies his policy is that man is incapable of living nobly. Loving the other is too high, he believes. Humans cannot “save” themselves. One needs the Church and its priests. This thought is the cause of degeneration. This causes man to look “outward” for salvation instead of “inward”. Indeed, the essence of every religion is that Man is a child of the Universe and therefore has within themselves all the

faculties that exist in the Universe. Every Man, yes, every being, is a copy in miniature of the Universe. We are all composed of the same Life. There is an essential unity underlying all expressions of life. That is why religion points human beings to their own abilities. The religious path is the inward path. Religion is pre-eminently the connecting element in our consciousness. It connects the personal man with the divinity within and therefore it connects us with the Universe, with our fellow humans, with all that lives.

True religion awakens in us the confidence that we have the insight and abilities to actually apply in the practice of our lives the ethics to which all religions appeal to. Humans are essentially noble beings. That they do not always behave as they know deep in their hearts that they should, is due to the wrong view of life. This is why the parable of *The Grand Inquisitor* is so instructive, because it shows this wrong vision in its ugliness, so that one almost naturally comes to realize that religion is the exact opposite of what the Grand Inquisitor professes.

Gesinnungsethik and Verantwortungsethik

In the book *The Brothers Karamazov*, Iwan, one of the three brothers, tells the parable to Alyosha. Iwan is a materialist and atheist, while Alyosha, the youngest of the brothers, is a young Christian mystic, a compassionate man raised by a “saint” in a monastery. Iwan, the skeptic, places no faith in the miracles of any church, nor does he believe in an afterlife. He has no religious awareness whatsoever. Nevertheless, he feels a certain sympathy for the Grand Inquisitor. Iwan also assumes that mankind is powerless to live ethically and therefore the strong have the right to deceive and manipulate mankind if it is for a greater purpose. This is a theme that Dostoyevsky elaborates on. Iwan proclaims the idea that it is okay to kill someone if that killing contributes to the good of humanity. In the end, the non-legal son of Karamazov kills his father, but in fact he was only the executor of Iwan’s thinking.

The idea that one may do “evil” for the sake of an ultimate “good” has been largely accepted in wide circles, although many may not realize that in doing so, they are actually adopting the ideas of the Jesuits. Lethen shows in his book that several thinkers in the 20th century held this view. Among others, he points to the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), who distinguished between two types of ethics in this regard: *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik*. The German word “Gesinnung” means

“basic moral attitude”. So *Gesinnungsethik* could therefore be translated as “pure ethics” or “ethics *per se*”. Weber calls this a utopian ethics; ethics that seems beautiful, but are impractical. Those who profess it will always remain on the sidelines of world history.

Verantwortungsethik, that can be translated as Ethics of Responsibility, on the other hand, is, according to Weber, the ethics of *realpolitik*. You put some water in the wine, perhaps make dirty hands, but you manage to achieve something. This “ethic” comes close to the Grand Inquisitor and to Iwan Karamazov, in which the end justifies the means and in which, in the extreme consequence, you may even kill someone, if that murder serves the common good.

The parable of *The Grand Inquisitor* preludes the ruthless totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, but more “enlightened” leaders have also adopted ideas from it. According to this “ethic”, it is permissible, for example, to make heavy concessions in one area of policy, indeed to do something against one’s own conscience, on condition that you get your way in another area. Leaders can withhold information from people or even provide misinformation for the purpose of persuading the people to take certain actions. For example, as a pacifist, you may advocate the policy of selling arms to a country at war so that you can thereby obtain a good understanding with another country. The “evil” is necessary to prevent even more “evil”. This is the background to the subtitle of Lethen’s book: *the fascination of evil*. It is as if the “devil” has better arguments than “god”.

However, what is forgotten with the idea of *Verantwortungsethik* is that *every* act produces consequences that correspond to the characteristic of the act. The law of cause and effect or karma is the main argument that punctures the idea of *Verantwortungsethik* like you pop a balloon. An “evil” act produces corresponding consequences. So what Weber calls *Gesinnungsethik* is not utopian, it is the only true ethic that brings lasting improvements for humanity, albeit that in some cases the result is delayed. But it will come. We need patience. The cynic is wrong! No lofty goal can be achieved other than by lofty deeds. The core error of the Grand Inquisitor is that he does not perceive this. This is the blindness of all those who believe that the end justifies the means. It is the blindness of personal consciousness.

In a certain sense, the Grand Inquisitor symbolizes the personal consciousness within us: the I-am-I-consciousness, which constantly wants to prove itself right and cun-

ningly invents all sorts of false arguments with which it tries to justify its behavior. However, if we follow our conscience and intuition, then we are unyielding in our thinking. Then we know what is right and remain calm – like Jesus – despite all the “arguments” others fire at us. Everyone can begin to recognize this distinction in themselves.

Religion, ethics and conscience

The cruel, ruthless policies that have been pursued under the banner of religion have their origin in a distorted conception of religion that leads to a complete misunderstanding of ethics. As we said above, religion can never be separated from thinking. It can only be understood in conjunction with science and philosophy. As we said above, religion is the connecting element in our consciousness. It connects the personality with its divine Self. As you gain more insight into your own higher nature, the awareness of the connectedness of all beings increases. And it is in that connectedness of life, in which true ethics can be found.

Ethics is not a man-made set of rules to make society function well or keep people in check. If it were, then ethics would change as society changes. But ethics is not opportunism. It is founded on the sustainable workings of the Universe itself. The Universe is based on cooperation, whereby one being contributes for the benefit of the whole. No one can be excluded from this.

We humans have an instinctive awareness of it. Since we are rooted in the heart of the Universe, we know – or at least suspect – that all-encompassing love and compassion are the essential characteristics of ethics. Gottfried de Purucker puts it this way:

The heart of the Universe is Wisdom-Love, and these are intrinsically ethical, for there can be no wisdom without ethics, nor can love be without ethics, nor can there be ethics deprived of either love or wisdom.⁽⁶⁾

All of us have at least some knowledge of this Wisdom-Love. This ethical knowledge, gathered in all the lives we have already lived, constitutes our conscience. A religious person never undertakes anything contrary to his conscience. Not every person has the same knowledge about the indissoluble links between all manifestations of life, but we all know enough to never want to achieve our goal at the expense of others.

For too long Western civilization has lived without true religion. As a result, ethics has been regarded as something

that, while very beautiful, is also very impractical. It is time to recalibrate the concepts of religion and ethics, and what better benchmark to use for that than Theosophia.

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Questions & Answers

Do black holes exist?

My question concerns the internet article “Big Bang, Black Holes and Common Sense” by David Pratt (see <https://www.davidpratt.info/bang.htm>). In this article, David Pratt claims that black holes do not exist, although science has discovered and photographed them. Can you explain this?

Answer

A question about an article of David Pratt can of course only be answered by the author himself. What we can do, however, is addressing the general question: “Do black holes exist, from the theosophical point of view?” Astronomers define a black hole in this way (see en.wikipedia.org):

A black hole is a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, including light or other electromagnetic waves, has enough energy to escape it. The theory of general relativity predicts that a sufficiently compact mass can deform spacetime to form a black hole.

They are called *black* because, according to the theory, they do not emit radiation and thus appear black. And the word *hole* is based on this: because black holes would contain a huge amount of mass, they would pull other masses toward them with enormous force, “into the hole”. The researchers describe it as a kind of “sinkhole”.

Recently, we got news reports that a black hole would have been photographed, as the questioner already remarked.⁽¹⁾ Looking at the center of our Milky Way, they observed a dark shadow placed before some strongly luminous substances (located behind it). Whether the object which intercepts light is indeed a black hole or some other light-barrier, we leave to the discussions among scientists.

Do black holes exist?

Do such black holes exist or not? Our answer is, in short: not as the scientists imagine it, but they do exist if we view them as *laya-centers*. We explain this below.

The Theosophia, the Universal Wisdom, never denies *facts*: things that prove to be true again with each subsequent observation. But our *interpretation* of them may differ greatly from that of the current researchers. Whether we agree with some scientific theory, or partially agree, we determine by examining it ourselves: by consistently applying the theosophical principles — principles which, we have experienced, prove always to be correct.

That black holes *can* exist, has been derived by some scientists from the theory of general relativity, formulated by Einstein. So, this derivation can be valid only if the basic theory is correct. However, if this theory is incomplete (and which current scientific theory is not incomplete?), then the existence of black holes becomes correspondingly shaky too.

Why do we believe that Einstein’s general theory of relativity is incomplete? Let us look to the two concepts

which are central in the definition of a black hole (see above): gravity and the curvature of spacetime. First, gravity: scientists have not yet been able to determine the cause of gravity. According to Theosophy, the phenomena of gravity are the effects of a cosmic force not yet known to science. That cosmic force is an expression of consciousness, of cosmic beings, and has not only an attracting but also a repelling effect. And about the curvature of space: SPACE is the totality of ALL life and therefore cannot curve or deform. We deliberately use capital letters to distinguish between a space and SPACE per se. SPACE is not a thing; it is the boundless ALL. Nowhere does SPACE bend: only bodies can bend, but not SPACE.

These comments do not change our view that Einstein’s theory carries some very valuable elements, including his philosophical insight of relativity, and the close relationship between time and space. You can read more about the strengths and weaknesses of Einstein’s theory in our literature.⁽²⁾

What are laya-centers?

We therefore deny the existence of black holes *as they are currently described*. At the same time, we point to the fact that scientists seem to be on the track of discovering *laya-centers*. They are intuitively looking in that direction. So, what are laya-centers, according to Theosophy?

Consider first of all that according to Theosophy, the whole Cosmos is alive. Each body is an expression of consciousness, of a being. Beings exist in many degrees of development. So a

galaxy or a sun is the expression of a *being*, a cosmic being in this case. Dead matter does not exist: also physical atoms are animate. And every being can be seen as a center of consciousness, which acts and reacts to the beings around it, and therefore *radiates and absorbs influences*.

Furthermore, Theosophy speaks of numerous spheres of existence. Each being, during his cyclical periods of outer existence, is active on several levels of existence, from the divine, through the spiritual and mental and astral to the physical level. The physical sphere of life that we perceive with our senses and scientific instruments, is the most material of this hierarchy, its outer shell as it were. In fact, there exist an infinite number of planes which are more ethereal than our perceptible world, and an infinite number of planes which are more material than ours.

In each sphere of existence there are characteristic groups of beings active. And between two spheres of existence there are so-called *laya-centers*, *vanishing points* or channels by which beings pass from one sphere to another. When we fall asleep or, inversely, when we wake up, our consciousness passes through one or more laya-centers. And the same happens during our birth and death process. So, passing a laya-center can be either way: from the more spiritual to the more material or vice versa. Therefore, laya-centers are both vanishing and appearing points, depending on your perspective. You can compare them to the doors of a building, of a soccer stadium for example: streams of people both enter and exit there.

A laya-center is the point where substance becomes *homogeneous* again. So a laya-center is always at the

critical boundary, at the critical condition, which separates one plane from another. Thus, every hierarchy contains a number of laya-centers.⁽³⁾

What does Theosophy add to the present scientific theory?

All things considered, the phenomena of a black hole seem to be the effects of an invisible, underlying laya-center. In this, we have a totally different view of what is taking place, than the purely materialistic picture that most scientists sketch. What dimensions does Theosophy add?

- As has been said, *everything is alive*.
- We are not only dealing with *inflowing*, but also with *outflowing* streams of beings. These streams are not necessarily physically observable. In fact, it is probable that we cannot perceive them while they flow in or out of the homogeneous state of a laya-center — which is *the most spiritual state* of our physical cosmic plane. This state is not perceivable by our present material instruments. Interestingly enough, some scientists have recently forwarded some indications that substances do flow out of black holes.⁽⁴⁾
- Every being, when it is fully embodied, contains a series of laya-centers. And there are countless beings in our Kosmos, small and large: hierarchies within hierarchies of beings. While the scientists, speaking about black holes, only point to the cores of massive stars or galaxies, we say, according to Theosophy, that *laya-centers are everywhere*. Every point in Space is a potential laya-center. In the words of Gottfried de Purucker:

A laya-center is the mystical point where a thing disappears from one plane and passes onwards to reappear on another plane. It is that point or spot — any point or spot — in space, which, owing to karmic law, suddenly becomes the centre of active life, first on a higher plane and later descending into manifestation through and by the laya-centers of the lower planes. In one sense a laya-center may be conceived of as a canal, a channel, through which the vitality of the superior spheres pours down into, and inspires, inbreathes into, the lower planes or states of matter, or rather of substance. But behind all this vitality there is a directive and driving force.⁽⁵⁾

By “driving force” de Purucker means consciousness, intelligence. In this quote, De Purucker outlines the reimpodiment of any being. The guiding, driving force behind every rebirth is the awakening desire in the underlying consciousness to express itself, to become active again in the outer worlds.

In short, we believe that astronomers, in their theorizing about black holes, are on the trail of what we call laya-centers.

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Agenda

Symposium

Religion of the future - connecting through wisdom, compassion and peace

Date: September 17, 2023

Location: online

In every human heart lives a longing for connection and unity. For true connection with others, with the greater whole of which we are a part, with something grander within ourselves, that wants to express itself. No matter how busy we are, this intuitive religious realization keeps popping up. Where does it come from?



That search starts with the question: “Who are we essentially?” Are we all individuals separate from one another — or are we parts of a greater whole? Without exception,

the spiritual teachers of all great traditions point us to the latter. But what *is* that greater whole, and how can we actively live accordingly? These questions flow from the religious thinking within us, a quality present in every human being.

To explore these questions together, we organize the symposium *The religion of the future – connecting through wisdom, compassion and peace*, on Sunday, September 17. More information will follow soon.

See: blavatskyhouse.org/symposium/archive/religion-of-the-future-connecting-through-wisdom-compassion-and-peace/.

Courses

Every year, the course Thinking Differently and the follow-up course Life Wisdom start in October. The courses are held online, via videoconferencing.

Course Thinking Differently

With the course Thinking Differently you can make a positive contribution to the world. Starting with yourself, with your own thinking.

Although one person thinks more consciously than the other, people are thinkers. Our way of thinking determines our way of life. The way of life of humanity as a whole determines the state of the world.

Do we want to see change? Then the conclusion is: by changing our own way of thinking, we change the world. The solution lies in ourselves. An encouraging thought!

Each of us has the ability to understand more of the background of life. We can further develop our thinking independently and self-consciously by investigating our way of thinking and changing it whenever necessary. In this way we grow and we become wiser.

Are you willing to start with yourself and make a positive contribution? Take on the challenge!

Improve your thinking, improve the world.

See: blavatskyhouse.org/courses/.

ITC International Theosophy Conferences 2023

Universal Symbolism of Theosophy

Unveiling the language of Divine Thought

Date: July 19 – July 23, 2023.

Location: online.

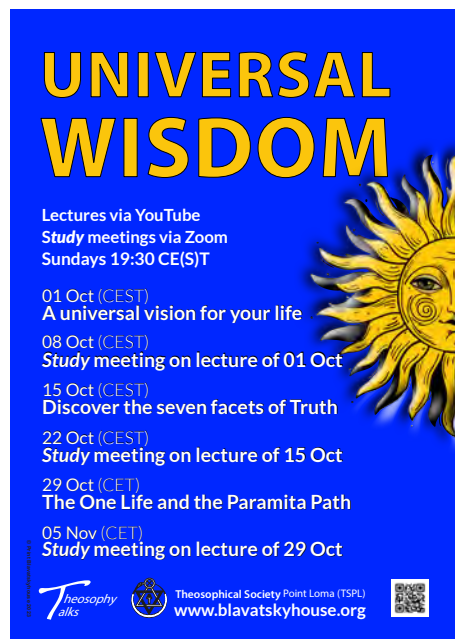
This conference will explore universal symbols, what they are and what they mean.

In short lectures we offer ideas, which are then discussed in workshops. The conference is trilingual: English, Spanish and Portuguese. Students of Theosophy from all over the world can exchange ideas and thus build a powerful universal mind picture, allowing Theosophia to revive in the hearts of more and more people. Everyone is welcome, even if your English, Spanish or Portuguese is not so good. Because we speak from the heart and help each other to understand each other, we will realize a fruitful and inspiring exchange of thoughts.

For further information and registration, see: <https://www.theosophyconferences.org/>

Online lectures

Starting in October, every Sunday at 19:30, there is a lecture or study meeting in which a current topic will be



UNIVERSAL WISDOM

Lectures via YouTube
Study meetings via Zoom
Sundays 19:30 CE(S)T

01 Oct (CEST)
A universal vision for your life



08 Oct (CEST)
Study meeting on lecture of 01 Oct

15 Oct (CEST)
Discover the seven facets of Truth

22 Oct (CEST)
Study meeting on lecture of 15 Oct

29 Oct (CET)
The One Life and the Paramita Path

05 Nov (CET)
Study meeting on lecture of 29 Oct

Theosophy talks  Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL)
www.blavatskyhouse.org 

highlighted from Theosophia. The first series, “Universal Wisdom”, is also an introduction to the course Thinking Differently and the follow up course Life Wisdom. More information will follow soon. The full program can be found at: blavatskyhouse.org/lectures/.

Series 1, October-November

Universal Wisdom

- 01-10 A universal vision for your life
- 08-10 Study meeting on lecture of 01-10
- 15-10 Discover for yourself the seven facets of Truth
- 22-10 Study meeting on lecture of 15-10
- 29-10 The One Life and the Paramita Path
- 05-11 Study meeting on lecture of 29-10

Gottfried de Purucker translated into Portuguese

Sunday, April 23, there was an online book presentation from Brazil of one of the *Esoteric Teachings* by Gottfried de Purucker, translated into Portuguese. It concerns the *Esoteric Teaching* 10, “The Hierarchy of Compassion”. This is the first time an integral work by De Purucker has appeared in Portuguese. The translation follows the edition of I.S.I.S. Foundation, The Hague 2015, including the important foreword by Herman C. Vermeulen.

A small group of Brazilians and Portuguese have discovered the depth and accessibility of De Purucker's works, which helps them greatly in understanding Theosophia as presented by H.P. Blavatsky. Therefore, they want to make De Purucker's work accessible to Portuguese speakers as well. Preparations for the Portuguese translation of one of De Purucker's most important works, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, are at an advanced stage.



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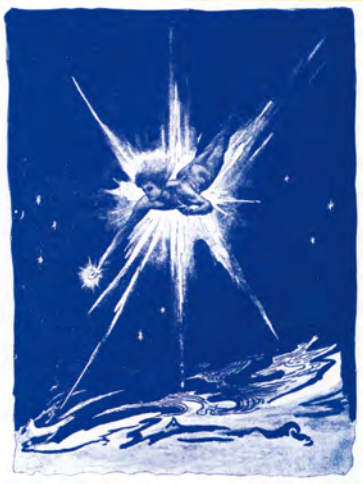
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I.S.I.S. Foundation

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



Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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

For these people this journal is written.

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

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

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