

the Light-bringer

# Lucifer<sup>®</sup>

*For seekers of Truth*

*Current topics viewed in the light of the Ancient Wisdom or Theo-sophia — the common source of all great world religions, philosophies and sciences*

## Symposium 2023

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## The Religion of the Future

connecting through

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### One life

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What is the origin of our craving for unity, for fundamental, harmonious ties with all others? Is there actually an underlying *Oneness*, and how do we recognize it? And what does it mean, when we align our lives with the One Life?

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We cannot do without ideals. If they are impersonal, having the well-being of all humanity as their aim, they are travel guides to a better world. But if we fail to maintain the ideal and it degenerates into dogma, it actually stands in the way of a brighter future.

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In conflicts, antagonistic thinking quickly prevails among the various parties. But the potential to live from impartial compassion lies within each of us. In this article we describe two initiatives that have put this ideal into practice for many years.

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# The Religion of the future – connecting through wisdom, compassion and peace

## Introduction Symposium 2023

Welcome to our symposium, where we aim to break centuries of misunderstandings and fanaticism about the concept of religion and all that is related to it. Religion is a heavily loaded subject. In the name of religion, a lot of suffering and misery has been brought about and still is. Throughout history, religion has been used as a justification for some of the most monstrous abuses committed by mankind. Furthermore, religion is often spoken of in a very uncritically, blind way. Many have built up strong prejudices towards this subject. It has a negative meaning for many. So you see, it is a very challenging theme.

### Very vague terms

The words we currently use to express what religion is, are vague, unspecific and coarse. In daily life we use two terms: *religion* and *worship*, the last word meaning “serving god or the gods”. These terms are often used interchangeably, as having the same meaning. Many people can no longer distinguish between religion and worship. We will explain today that there is a significant difference between them.

### Theosophists are no atheists

Let me state this: where do theosophists stand? Theosophists can be called “atheists” according to the *Western* definition of the word “atheist”. We do not assume the existence of one almighty God who determines everything. However, we are not atheists from the standpoint of *Eastern philosophy*. The Secret Doctrine does not teach atheism (a vision of life without faith in a god or gods), in the sense that we are total deniers of the existence of advanced beings, of further developed consciousnesses. We do not deny that. We are more what the Hindus

mean by the word *nāstika*. A *nāstika* is someone who *rejects idols*, including any anthropomorphic god. We deeply respect higher beings, but do not worship or idolize them. In this sense, every Occultist is a *nāstika*.<sup>(1)</sup>

### Building a better image from the ground up

Today, we will be exploring what religion is, together with you. We will build up a nobler concept of the idea of Religion, based on a few fundamental ideas. We will build up a new image of what Religion is from the ground up. We will build a basis for the future that has a positive meaning. That's why our subtitle is so important: *The Religion of the future – connecting through wisdom, compassion and peace*.

The challenge we are facing in this symposium is to break the negative prejudices and to give the concept of Religion its proper place and meaning again. We want to work together with you, to restore the concept of Religion to its original meaning, to help to build a Universal attitude to life, to express ONENESS.

### Reference

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1. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine. Volume I*. Many editions, p. 279 (original English edition).
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# One life

## Recognizing inner truth

Do you know that thought, that impression, which is actually more an inner knowing, that there is something within us that is continuously showing us that we can do better? Perhaps you recognize the thought that we can act more justly, that we can live more harmoniously with each other, and more in tune with our inner truth? If your answer is “yes”, then you recognize during those moments the possibility and desire for a grander, more ethical, and more interconnected way of life. This desire for greater harmony we may also experience when we look at the disharmony in the world today, the conflicts and refugee flows; the injustice, poverty, and environmental issues we see around us.

In those moments we look, as it were, at the world through two windows. Through one we see the world as it is, through the other as the world *can* be. When we look through the latter window, it is abundantly clear that we all can do much better. And when we connect directly with that insight, then we will not only acknowledge it, but we will also want to do something about it.

## Homesickness

When we look at the world in this way, we experience the lack of some-

thing we once were connected with. This is a kind of homesickness, which we may call the homesickness of the soul. It is an intuitive longing for the state of harmony in which we have once been, and which we long for again, in the inner depths of ourselves.

On the website, in the announcement of this symposium, you have read that we maintain that in every human heart there is a longing for connection and unity. For true connection with others, with the greater whole of which we are part, with something greater within ourselves that wants to express itself.

And that no matter how busy we are in our lives, this realization always keeps presenting itself, constantly encouraging us to move forward. That realization can be called our spiritual instinct, the homesickness of the spiritual soul within us, welling up from the depths of our hearts. That spiritual soul within us, we can think of as our innermost and most abiding core. It is the immortal part in us, that constantly gives us impulses to evolve and develop ourselves, to do better. It is that part in us that shows us how to live together in peace and compassion, in which every human, animal and plant has a place under the sun, can grow and flourish, outwardly and inwardly. It is the core or

source of our consciousness. It is that part within us that we can see as the guide in our lives.

## Awakening compassion

We experience these inner impulses sometimes strongly and sometimes less strongly. Less, for example, when we are primarily focused on the outer world, or on obtaining material things that are temporary in nature and only benefit ourselves. On the contrary, we can experience this connection much more intensely when we turn our gaze inward, to the inner, more ethical realms, by forgetting our personal interests and focusing our thoughts and acts on the development and well-being of the whole.

In those moments when our attention is directed inward, we let go of the continuous noise of personal concerns about the outer life, and thus can connect with the deeper visions and intuitions present within us. In those moments, we can perceive the imbalance in the world so clearly, we become so keenly aware of the suffering in the world, that compassion within us awakens. Sometimes, when we manage to shut ourselves off from any distractions from the outer world and our gaze is completely turned inward, we may even feel for a passing moment completely at ONE with the cosmos. Then we realize that there is something greater. Then we see the underlying force or unity, in which all things live and are inseparably connected: in which all beings have their existence and fulfill their task.

## What is the underlying Unity?

So, we see that this longing for a deeper dimension comes from our inner awareness (our inner knowing), that behind all outer forms there is an underlying force. That underlying force is the One Life. The search for an understanding of it begins with the question: “Who are we

in essence?” Are we all individuals separate from one another, or are we part of a greater whole? Without exception, the world teachers of all the great traditions point us to the latter. But what is that greater whole, and how can we connect to it and actively live by it?

What is that One Life, which is boundless, everywhere present, and eternal? It is the source from which all beings in the universe manifest and to which they all inseparably belong. We *are* essentially that One Life. We are, so to speak, like the drops in a great ocean of life, like the sparks of a cosmic fire, like the colors from a white ray of light split through a prism, like the branches and leaves of one great tree of life, through which flows the universal, cosmic stream of life.

## The One Life: everything is alive

Truly everything, then, is alive, everything is living. There is consciousness operating behind all manifestation, and you can recognize this by the fact that all beings respond to all other beings. In the universe there is nothing that is not alive — from the smallest atom, to the mineral world, to plants and the planet we humans are part of, to the galaxy and beyond, everything is alive. All life is rooted in the One Life, our deepest base of existence.

Therefore, the idea that we can be separate from this unity as distinct individuals is a misconception. This sense of separateness isolates one human from the other, and this sense — as we have seen — is not reality. For when we realize we are a part of the Unity of life we will, in effect, awaken thoughts of a higher quality in ourselves, such as responsibility for one another and wanting to contribute to the unfolding of all life.

## Life within Life

How does this big Whole function and what is our own

## Man and the Universe are essentially one

One of the fundamental ideas of the primeval wisdom of mankind is that Man and the Universe are essentially one. This idea is the very keystone of the Temple of the Ancient Wisdom. If you understand it, if you feel it, if you grasp it, your whole life is changed, your whole outlook on existence is radically altered. You then recognise yourself to be at one with all that is, a partaker, in time, of all that the Universe has and is, journeying towards a destiny so sublime that the utmost imaginative efforts of mankind cannot at present sketch even a fragmentary outline of what the far distant future has in store for us. This destiny is simply the unfolding, as evolution proceeds — and unfolding is what evolution really means — of the inner unto becoming the outer, the bringing forth of what is locked up within, not only in man but in Mother Nature herself. It is Mother Nature and her divine, spiritual, psychological, ethereal, and physical reaches that is our Universal Home — a Home which is Universal because it is everywhere.<sup>(4)</sup>



## What is the One Life?

- The Source
- We are essentially that One Life:
  - like drops in an ocean of life
  - like sparks of a cosmic fire
  - like colors split through a prism
  - like branches and leaves on a tree of life
- Everything is alive
- Life within life
- Boundless potentialities



place in it? In the ocean of infinite life, everything is part of something greater. It has an orderly structure, in which each being is in turn a part of a larger being, which we call Life within Life. A simple example of this are the living cells and organs that are part of our bodies. And similarly, man is part of the *living* earth, which in turn is part of the *living* solar system, which in turn is part of the *living* galaxy, and this goes on infinitely. There is one great boundless co-operation of life within life, so, all living beings are inseparable links in the great whole. From this we can conclude that there is not one supreme god who creates life, because every being is eternal, is in essence the One Life, without beginning and without end.

### Inner development

Because the One Life is boundless, every one of us has boundless potentialities within themselves. We can, during our successive incarnations, express more and more of these. We are therefore on a journey with each other. Each being is at a different level of its inner development, and this explains the variety of beings we see around us. That diversity, if you pay attention, is immense. There is no star in the firmament that is exactly the same as another star. There is no human being with exactly the same character as any of his fellow human beings. Every leaf of a tree, yes, every cell in our body is not exactly the same as the others. Why? Because, during the endless past, all these beings have gone through a unique path of development, of unfolding. So, we are all on a spiritual pilgrimage within the boundless One Life. We have, to take up the earlier analogy, emerged from the cosmic fire as unconscious sparks, and are going through a journey of inner growth, to be able to return to the ONE Life self-consciously. Our boundless potentialities are the origin of our urge to

bring out more of our Selves. By going further and further inward and upward, a path is formed that leads us back to our source, the ONE Life. This return to our source is the key to understand where the homesickness of our soul, which we just talked about, comes from. It is the memory of our deepest core of its sojourn in its original spiritual home, the ONE Life, which as a vague memory is still present in us, and is the origin of all our ideals, intuitions,

and aspiration. This deepest core always encourages us to expand our understanding and live more nobly. When we do so, we *connect* more and more with our own core. You can also say: we *reconnect* with it, because after all, we came from it, it is our source. We all emerged from a state of unity that we were not aware of at that time. We were like babies feeling harmony, but not self-consciously realizing it. Our challenge now, as self-conscious thinkers, is to purposefully learn to know that unity, familiarize ourselves with it, and eventually become it. H.P. Blavatsky put it this way in her book *The Voice of the Silence*: “Thou shalt not separate thy being from BEING and from everything else, but unite the Ocean with the drop and the drop with the Ocean.”<sup>(1)</sup>

### Religion is Self-conscious reconnection

This self-conscious reconnection we can call *religion*. The word religion is derived from the Latin *re-ligare*, and that means “to reconnect”. You reconnect with what you essentially are and from which you were in fact never separate: from which you perhaps *thought* to be separate, for some time, but now you see through the illusion. So, to practice religion in this pure sense is *to reconnect with your own spiritual core*. And by reconnecting with your spiritual core, you *reconnect with all that lives*. You discover that your core is in no way different from anyone else's core. You recognize your fundamental equality with the whole world and all its inhabitants, and start supporting them in every way possible. Knowing, that every being is perfectly equal to every other being. In this inspiring sense, religion is relevant to all of us. For every human being is potentially religious, whether a person currently experiences it that way or not. After all: the deepest core of every human being is rooted in Boundless Life, in Unity.

# What is Religion?

- Religare: Self-conscious reconnection
- Seeking Truth and consciously connecting with it
- Living from Unity as fact

## Religion is seeking Truth and consciously connecting with it

Is practicing religion a matter of *believing* or *seeking Truth and consciously connecting with it*? It is the latter. You can investigate whether behind the multiplicity of beings there is a Unity underlying it. You can investigate whether all things are inseparably connected to each other, interact with each other and thus continually influence each other. You can examine whether every human being longs in his deepest layers for harmony, for mutual understanding, for mutual support. Because true religion is *self-acquired understanding* of life, you can apply it independently in all circumstances, even under very difficult circumstances. You never have to lean on authorities. You can always appeal to your own capacity for understanding.

## Religion is living from Unity as fact

What are the consequences, if we assume that boundless Unity is a fact? The first consequence is perhaps a very surprising one. It is, that we need never again *seek for* unity, neither in the world nor in the community in which we live. For that unity and connectedness *is already there*, is already very fundamentally present. The great challenge is to live from that basic idea, from that realization. We no longer strive for unity, but use it as starting point, and *live* by it.

The second consequence is of an ethical nature, it concerns the development of one's own moral compass. The desire to strengthen unselfishness in the world is the logi-

cal consequence of our sense of unity. After all, what happens to other beings has as much to do with us, as what happens to ourselves. Ethics, then, is grounded in the nature of the Universe. Those who think only of their own personal benefits not only go against the fundamental Law of the Universe, but also go against the fundamental Law of one's own immortal part — thereby increasing both the disharmony in the world and in oneself.

In the book *The Voice of the Silence* by H.P. Blavatsky we find this thought beautifully expressed: "Help Nature and work with her; and Nature will regard you as one of its creators and bow down before you."<sup>(2)</sup>

## Infinite development and our precursors

If we now look at religion from the idea of the boundlessness of life, we see that there is no endpoint in our attempts to live more religiously, there is no limit to our self-conscious understanding of our connectedness to the Unity. We can always learn to live more in harmony with the Unity, each on its own inner path and at its own pace. This is a thought that can surprise us: an inner growth that can go on forever. But it is the logical conclusion from all the above. After all, every being is boundless at its core.

This thought also implies that there exist more advanced beings, who have already developed that sense of unity in a much higher degree than any of us. And in the minds of those more advanced beings, what may still be a vague image of unity *for us*, has become a crystal clear vision for them. For them it is not a theory, but self-conscious and

evident knowledge and experience. These spiritual fore-runners incessantly point humanity to the reality of the ONE life. So that message can be received by all humans in each age.

These precursors of us, are the ones who periodically give the keynote of Unity a new impulse, to inspire humanity. The more people who listen to this impulse and do something with it, the stronger will its development in the world grow. Indeed, all people who act from this keynote, will then learn from each other and thereby inspire each other.

We can say that where we find disharmony in the world, people do not sufficiently recognize and understand the Unity of Life, yet. The various world teachers therefore always bring the same message with the same essence into the world, namely that of the Unity of Life, harmonious cooperation, compassion for all that lives, and using our growing qualities to contribute to the One Life. It is up to us to understand that essential thought better and work it out for ourselves into clear ideas, which others can understand in their turn. By growing in understanding, we will, step by step, create together an atmosphere through which the inspiration from that ONE universal source can flow and flower in the world.

### How can you recognize the One life?

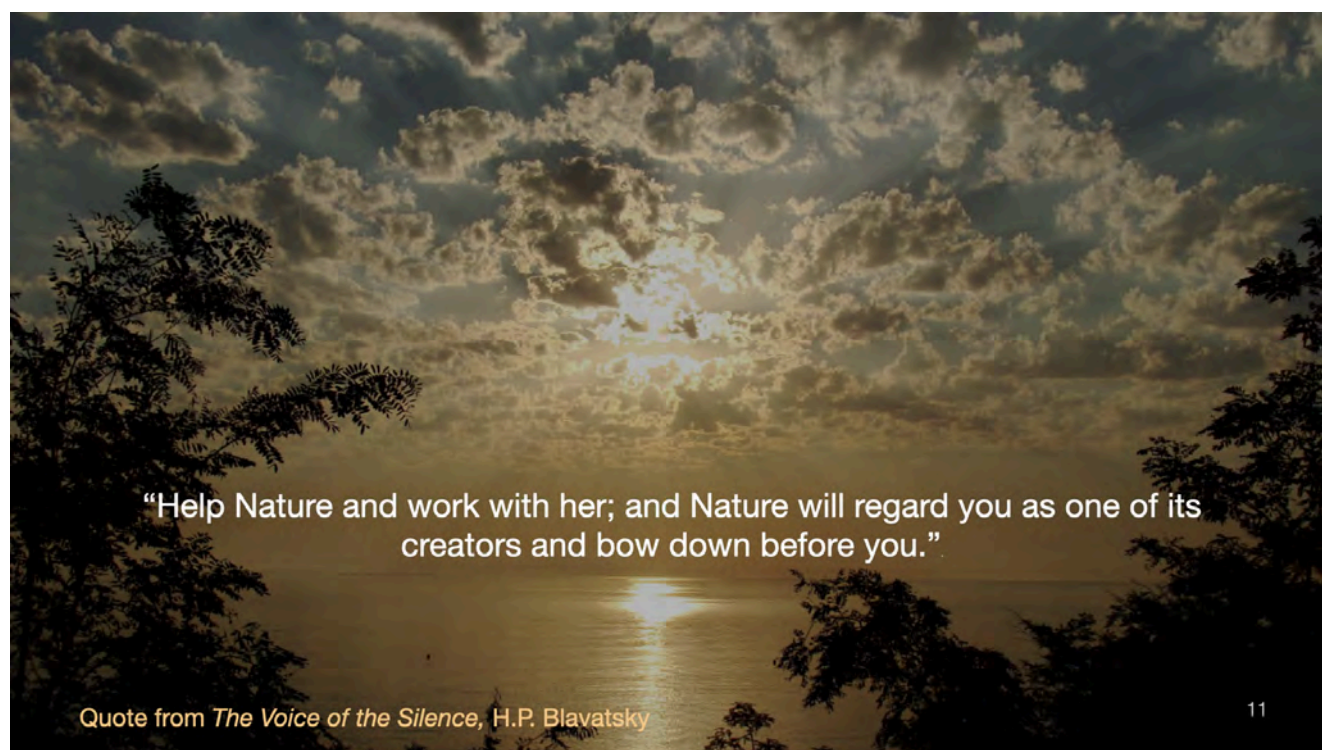
After this introduction to the One Life we will enrich our

thoughts together in the workshop, titled, “How can you recognize the One Life?” To conclude this first lecture, we will end with the following inspiring quote from the book *The Secret Doctrine* of H.P. Blavatsky:

“Lift up your head, O Lanoo; do you see one or countless lights above you, burning in the dark midnight sky?” “I perceive one Flame, O Gurudeva; I see numerous non-separate sparks shining there.” “You have spoken well. And now see around you and within yourself. Do you have the impression that the light that burns within you is in any way different from the light that shines in your Fellowmen?” “It is not different in any way, although Karma keeps the captive in chains and although its outward garment deceives the ignorant and makes them say ‘Your Soul and My Soul’.”<sup>(3)</sup>

### References

1. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence. Fragment 3, “The Seven Portals”*. Many editions, verse 24 of this fragment.
2. See ref. 1, Fragment 1, verse 68 of this fragment.
3. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine. Volume I*. Various editions, p. 120 (original English edition).
4. G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Teachings. Volume XII. Death and the Circulations of the Cosmos 2*. The Hague, I.S.I.S. Foundation, 2015, p. 19 (p. 3 in first edition, 1936).







# Religion is a workout

## How do we become aware of unity?

In the first lecture, we explained that an important universal meaning is hidden in the origin of the word religion. Religion, derived from religare, means to reconnect. That means we connect with something we have already been connected to before. And we discussed that this interconnect-edness is rooted in the unity of all life. We emerge from this unity, we return to it, and in essence we are that unity. We are therefore connected to it even now in this very moment and we always will be in the future. But do we actually realize this? This is the first meaning of religion: *to become aware* of this again. Becoming aware of the One Life that we essentially are, consciously reconnecting with it. But there is a second meaning. And this second meaning has everything to do with how we can *realize* that awareness.

Because how do we do that? How do we put this into practice? That is the topic of this lecture. We will return to that second meaning of the word religion in a moment.

In the first lecture, we presented a view of the One Life. That One Life is ever present, everywhere and is in essence boundless. That means that consciously becoming one again with

that One Life is a continuous process that goes on endlessly. It is an ever growing and deepening understanding of the unity, identifying with it more and more. A realization of being one with another, with your family, your relatives, your country, with humanity, with this planet, with all living beings, with the universe, et cetera. But this does not happen automatically, it can only happen by consciously putting effort in it, consciously choosing for it and acting accordingly. This requires the necessary self-efficacy and discipline. It is not any different than achieving mastery in any other discipline. Mastery can only be achieved through intensive, persistent and incessant training.

## World-class, peak performance

Take for example a world-class musician, a top notch researcher, a true craftsman or a professional high-performance athlete. How many hours do they dedicate to their profession? Just consider the things they have to give up to achieve perfection in their music, discipline or sport? Even when relaxing, or carrying out their daily duties, their ideal is always in the back of their mind, like an active meditation.

## Religion as *religare*

- Literally: to reconnect
- Rebecoming aware of our connection with the One Life



So, if this holds so evidently true for physical, mental, cultural or artistic disciplines, why should it be any different in the case of spirituality? And all the more so because work in the spiritual field is universal. It applies to every discipline of life and at the same time transcends them all. It is about the greater whole, about the One Life as a whole.

In other words, if you take religion seriously, in the sense of becoming aware of the unity that we essentially are, then that also requires deliberate choices. Not just on special occasions throughout the year, or on a particular day in the week, or just a few times during the day. It requires continuous discipline, practice, training, patience, perseverance, but above all, a sustained mental attitude, *twenty-four-seven*. A mental attitude characterized by wisdom and compassion, and that at the same time offers peace, joy and the highest fulfillment. Religion is peak performance. Like the highest quality of art, craftsmanship, top notch research or world-class sport. This is what that second

meaning of religion is all about.

## Religion: choosing the right thing

Let us look again at the other etymological derivation of the word religion that points to this meaning. The Roman philosopher and statesman Cicero speaks of a derivation coming from the Latin word *relegere*, meaning to read again or put into practice.<sup>(1)</sup> He connects it with, for example, the word *elegant*, which means choos-

ing or good selection, or the word *intelligent*, which implies understanding and discernment. All these words share the same root *lex*, which means law. And this does not mean just any law, but the laws of Nature. These Laws of Nature are theosophically the habit patterns of the spiritual side of Nature. They are spiritual or divine habits. So according to this derivation of the word, religion means choosing or selecting higher, spiritual habits to follow. And if we start from boundlessness as the first principle, then we do not have to seek those higher, spiritual habits outside ourselves. For we are essentially that oneness, we are not separate from the boundless. Just as everything that lives is not separate from it. And therefore, not separate from ourselves either!

## A choice within ourselves

But when it comes to a choice within ourselves, who exactly is choosing and what is there to choose between? As told in the first lecture, as human beings we often stand at the crossroads between two parts in ourselves. Our outer part instinctively reacts from its own personal self, out of fear or other emotions, out of restlessness, our own desires, our self-preservation or self-interest. When we identify with this, we actually imagine ourselves separate from the oneness that we really are.

However, in our inner part, which we also called the spiritual soul in the first lecture, we are one with everything. And when we listen to our inner part,

## Religion as *relegere*

- Literally: to read again or put into practice
- The conscious effort to think and act based on unity



through our conscience and our intuition, we also act according to the interconnectedness, the coherence, the unity of all life.

As human beings, we are learning to make our inner part the guiding force over our outer part. And that does not mean that we need to oppose, fight against or chastise that outer part, as it is sometimes portrayed. We need our outer part to be active and significant in the world. We just need to properly direct it and ennoble it. And as human beings, that all begins with directing our thoughts. For as thinkers, we consciously or unconsciously are choosing our thoughts. We can better direct ourselves and our lives if we become more aware of the thoughts we think, and encourage those that are in line with the unity of life, and forget all the other ones slowly but surely. *Religion is the conscious effort to think based on unity within oneself, from which follows action based on unity in the world.*

## Two directions

That means that when we talk about religion, about the awareness of unity in practice, we are combining two directions. The inward direction, achieving inner enlightenment, and the outward direction: passing on the light to others. It is like lighting other candles with your own flame. These are two directions that are in fact one. For the inner direction, the emphasis is on connecting through wisdom. And for the outer direction, the emphasis is on connecting through compassion. But actually, the former can just as well be called outer and the latter inner, and also wisdom and compassion can hardly be separated, so forget about the words and, hopefully, the meaning will become more clear.

## Connecting through wisdom

Our starting point is that we are essentially the One Life, that ONENESS, that one boundless REALITY. Now wisdom can be defined as knowing TRUTH. Because following what is not true cannot be wise. Therefore, if reality consists essentially of the One Life, then wisdom is our vision of that One Life. How and where do we find wisdom? First, if you examine all the great religious traditions worldwide, you will see that they all originate from one and the same Wisdom. And also the Teachers who were at the origin of these traditions always point to one and the same Wisdom. It was one of the main tasks of H.P. Blavatsky to make that common source of wisdom of all the great traditions known to the world, and her book *The Secret Doctrine* is full of examples demonstrating this.

However, when it comes to knowing truth, research into the ancient religious traditions is only a stepping stone.

## Religion, philosophy and science

The point is to find that wisdom within yourself. And then religion, actively connecting with the unity of life, is only one of three views of reality. Because if wisdom equals knowing truth, then we can activate and deploy two other inner faculties in addition to the religious awareness of oneness. Consider seeing coherence, developing universal insight, understanding and intuition. This is rather the domain of philosophy. And in addition, we also have our logic, the ability to analyze, organize our thoughts and reason. The domain of science.

If the development of wisdom is essentially about truth-seeking, why not use all our faculties to form a vision of the unity of life? True religion, therefore, cannot be separated from philosophy and science. And true philosophy and true science cannot be separated from religion. There can be only one all-encompassing REALITY or TRUTH, and then it must be explainable in religious, as well as philosophical and scientific terms. True wisdom, then, satisfies not only our innermost *ethical* sense of oneness, but also our most *universal* understanding or insight, and furthermore is *logical* and consistent with the facts as we know them.

## Self-knowledge, the child of loving deeds

Finally, an important statement about the development of wisdom by H.P. Blavatsky from her booklet *The Voice of the Silence*. She writes there about the development of the Knowledge of Self with a capital S. This higher Self is expressed through these same higher powers of thinking: our sense of unity, our insight or intuition and our intellect. So, this Self-Knowledge is equivalent to wisdom. And she writes, “Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child”.<sup>(2)</sup> In other words, we only become wise when we start living for others. And see immediately the connection between wisdom and compassion.

## Connecting through compassion

Because you may so far be thinking that it is all somewhat theoretical: searching for truth, bringing together religion, philosophy and science, searching for what is ethical, universal and logical, et cetera. But, of course, wisdom that you do not *practically* apply is not true wisdom, but merely book wisdom. And this is where both directions come together, where you see that they are actually one

and the same. Because to be wise is to act wisely. And to act wisely, to act from a sense of oneness, is to be compassionate. Because when you recognize that everything is essentially one, then you are also acting accordingly. You realize more and more that you are the other and do for the other exactly what you would do for yourself.

## Compassion

Allow us to dwell a little more on this concept of compassion, because people often confuse it with pity. To begin with, when you build up an understanding of how you experience something yourself, you are also better able to help others. Because suffering has two meanings: to suffer from something or to endure something. You can suffer by passively undergoing something and being sad about it, but you can also suffer by bearing, tolerating or enduring something with your head up high.

In the first case, you see yourself as a victim of circumstance. You then actually suffer from identification with your outer, transitory part. You identify with your body that may be in pain, with your feelings that have been hurt, or your personality that has taken a hit. But deep inside you realize that all these things are only temporary and will not help you move forward.

Because you can also bear or endure something from the wisdom or inner knowing that there is meaning in everything you experience or face in life. A lesson you can learn, provided you are open to it.

Actually, there is no longer any suffering at that point. You are then capable of viewing a situation from an inner, unselfish and above-personal motive: knowing that it has meaning, that there is an educational lesson in it, that it is a consequence of a once self-created cause, a disharmony that had to be restored. You do not suffer, but take control and lead the situation. And because you do not lose yourself in emotions but can respond from calmness, insight and wisdom, you can also help others in this process and offer solutions to achieve harmony. You recognize the suffering of others as if it were your own. And because you can see through the suffering in yourself, you can also help others see through it.

And that also immediately shows why wisdom helps us to be more compassionate. Because if we do not have the wisdom to recognize and express the inner part in ourselves, then we cannot help others with that either.

## Inner as well as outer

So religion is a parallel process of the more inner connec-

tion with the wisdom in ourselves and the outer connection through compassion with the world around us. And these two reinforce each other. Inner exercise, outer practice. Like as a world-class musician or professional athlete, you can only play or achieve something after a lot of exercise or workout. And once you have reached a certain level, you will also have to prove yourself more and more in practice, in all kinds of concerts or tournaments. Except that religion is not just about one moment, or one particular discipline or field. You are continuously practicing your inner wisdom, in every aspect of your life. You are continuously practicing your compassionate attitude towards everyone.

This union of the inner with the outer is something that can also be found in all the great wisdom traditions. For example, in Socrates' invocation, "O father Zeus, lead me so to live that the outer man on earth and the inner man may be at one!"<sup>(3)</sup> or in Jesus' statement "Love your god above all else. And equal to this: love your neighbour as yourself."<sup>(4)</sup> And, as you understand by now, in both cases it is not about a god outside yourself, but the inner god within ourselves.

## Religion is a workout

This is also consistent with the self-efficacy that true religion requires of us. It is the self-efficacy that spiritual Teachers from East to West have been pointing us to. "All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work out your own salvation with diligence," were the Buddha's last words.<sup>(5)</sup> "Take the Kingdom of Heaven (which is within you) by force,"<sup>(6)</sup> Jesus spoke, and Plato writes that "learning equals recollection," awakening what is already in our souls. We cannot receive any favors from outside, we can only become aware of our oneness with everything, if we also consciously engage in this sense of oneness in our own thinking and action. Religion is a workout. Religion is to manifest your self-accumulated wisdom, your vision of oneness, in a sustainable way in yourself and through your compassionate actions in the world.

## Peace

Is the focus we place on conscious choice, hard work, the comparison to craftsmanship, professional sports, top-notch research or world-class music justified when religion should, after all, also lead to harmony, peace and calm? This contradiction is only seeming. It is precisely the paradox that the Chinese sage Lao-Tse also cites in his *Tao Teh*



## Religion is working together for the world

- Working together based on unity
- Natural division of labor
- Self-activity



*Ching*: “the Sage does nothing (*Wu Wei*), but leaves nothing undone.”<sup>(7)</sup> This doing nothing does not mean that the Sage does not act at all, but that he knows how to do exactly what is needed at a moment and that he does not value the result of those actions. Moreover, he acts calmly and peacefully because it is the most natural thing for him to do, even though it may involve something that others would find hard, complicated or stressful. It is the peace of action that results from connecting through wisdom and through compassion, when the outer is guided by the inner. The outer acting from inner sense of unity is then so completely in harmony that it is totally unnoticeable. For example, a good tightrope walker appears reasonably calm and peaceful walking on the rope between two skyscrapers, but of course this outer calm and peace is the result of sustained, inner practice and concentration. Peace, then, requires continuous activity, of both our thinking and acting. It comes from active compassion, from actively applied wisdom.

### Working together for the world

Finally, with all the emphasis on self-efficacy, one might wonder if religion is primarily an individual matter? This too is a paradox. Individual work is precisely what is needed to contribute better to the world. And the better you will act as an individual based on a sense of unity, the stronger also will be the collective that you will gather around you.

Because also spiritual work naturally goes much better when you work together. You can imagine that when compassion is central to a group of people, it produces an enormous inspiring interaction. From the shared ideal, you help each other to independently become a compas-

sionate and wise force in the world. And with good cooperation comes a natural division of labor, in which the one who is best suited is also given the responsibility to help oversee the whole, to help slow down or speed up, and to adjust where necessary. Such a leader knows that wisdom does not come from outside, but always develops from within. Hence, such a leader never dictates or imposes, but always inspires.

And when working well together, the individual “soldier” also needs

few orders. Each goes about his work self-actively out of compassion and a sense of unity. This in turn attracts even more others who independently want to make wisdom and compassion more central in their lives. And is this not the work that is most and desperately needed? For how different would the world not be if people actively worked to connect through wisdom, compassion and peace? Is not that what the religion of the future should be?

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# The religion of the future

## The characteristics of being religious

The future comes over us from behind. If we want an inspiring religion tomorrow that brings out the best in people and creates a dynamic-harmonious society, we must work on it NOW, because the future begins NOW. For each of us, the religion of tomorrow can already be a reality *today*. If you wait and do nothing, nothing will happen. Then tomorrow will be devoid of a new religion. But acting without a plan, without proper thought, is not desirable either. Therefore, we must think carefully about what religion is, and to which it must comply if it is to be a solid foundation for the harmonious society that we all so crave.

In the first lecture, we spoke of homesickness, the longing for a greater Truth. However, that longing is not an end point. We need to identify the characteristics of this religion. Based on the previous two talks we have identified three general main characteristics that we would like to discuss with you. Of course, these characteristics are not set in stone. They can certainly be sharpened and added to.

These three general characteristics that we have identified cannot be

separated, they form a unity. But for the sake of clarity, we have divided them into Wisdom, Compassion and Peace.

## Wisdom

Let us start with the first main quality, wisdom.

Wisdom is activated in us when we no longer interpret phenomena as separate, but recognize that everything is inseparable. A child who sees that the butterfly has everything to do with the caterpillar has already developed some wisdom at his level.

It becomes easier to see the connections between all these phenomena if you start thinking from the spiritualist premise. Then you realize that behind everything we observe there is life or consciousness. That life has a common origin. So, everything is alive and everything is connected in a gigantic web of life in which nothing is separate.

In this web there are what are called *horizontal* connections. These are the connections between beings on the same level, on the same plane of existence. For example, the relationships between people on this planet Earth. There are also *vertical* links. These are the connections between the different realms of nature, such as



humans, animals and plants, as well as the realms of beings more advanced than humans, which we can call the kingdoms of the gods.

Everything is interconnected. There are also vertical relationships within each individual being. In other words, every being is a hierarchy in itself. Think of the human being as a stream of consciousness that contains consciousnesses that are much more advanced than the personal human being. In other words, within each human being lives a god, our inner deity. And with this inner God we are intimately connected, even though we often do not realize it.

Becoming aware of this inseparable connection between all beings, far and not far developed, can be called the element of *religare*: connecting with your inner core, which is the inner core of all that lives. If you are aware of the oneness of all being and act accordingly, then you are a wise person.

Of course there are degrees of wisdom, degrees of awareness of oneness. You can grow in wisdom. You can practice in it. How do you do that?

Study the relationships between beings. Open your heart, be intuitive and try to see how everything works together. Studying Theosophia helps tremendously because in Theosophia the relationships between all beings come out so clearly.

Then imagine this oneness. Imagine a society, a world, in which there is a realization that we are connected in a great web of life and that we have a common origin and a common destiny. This need not be an abstraction. Imagine an ideal world: one in which people live in this awareness of oneness. How do they think? How do they live? What

does a world look like that is so noble that you have to stand on your toes to reach it?

### **How to achieve spiritual insight?**

People often talk about meditation to gain spiritual insight. And meditation can indeed give you a tremendous boost in your spiritual development. But then you have to see meditation as an active process in which you consciously create the mental

image of Oneness. See the other as part of yourself. Yes, see the other as yourself. Identify with the other, with your friends, with your enemies if you have any, and try to realize that you are all of them.

Early in the morning, as the sun rises, is an excellent time to think about this. You can read a passage from an inspirational book and then let the meaning sink in. How differently you begin the day's commitments when you do this, as opposed to going to work hurried and irritated.

If you practice this, you will eventually be able to carry such a sublime image with you 24 hours a day. It is always present in the background of your consciousness, even as you fulfil the obligations of the day. All your thoughts and actions are colored by it. It gives you an inner peace which you radiate to those around you.

At night, before going to bed, review the events of the past day, and if at any moment the stress of daily life has caused you to forget the ideal, resolve to do better next time. Forgive any wrongs that may have been done to you. If you are honest with yourself, you will quickly grow in wisdom. Now something paradoxical happens as you grow in wisdom. For you realize more and more that there is much you do not know and that there are people who are much wiser than you. In other words, the fact that there are wiser people than you becomes more and more a reality for you. This realization also belongs to religion, to the connective aspect of your consciousness. For you are connecting more and more with the light side of nature.

Now you can only recognize wisdom in others if you have developed at least some wisdom within yourself. You are making contact with your inner teacher. You are experiencing more and more the influence that flows from your

inner God. As a result, you begin to recognize outer teachers as well. At the same time, you feel an obligation to inspire, teach, and support others who know even less than you. You are both student and teacher.

This creates a wonderful cooperation between all people, regardless of their position in society. Everyone contributes to the whole and the whole enables everyone to contribute.

When you start from Oneness, you know that we all belong to each other and that we have built our society together. Then you realize that it is possible for everyone to make their specific contribution. Everyone is essentially a divine being and has developed certain abilities that can be used for the benefit of the whole.

Finally, another aspect of this unifying religious power: as Erwin Bomas mentioned in his talk, religion should never be separated from science and philosophy. If you do that, you cripple yourself in your thinking. It is the synthesis of religion, philosophy and science that contains true wisdom.

## Compassion

Let us now turn to the second main characteristic of religion: compassion.

We understand compassion to be *a state of consciousness in which you experience the oneness of all life and think and act accordingly, whatever that means to you*. You always see yourself as part of the greater whole. Wherever you are and whatever you do, you recognize the oneness and act accordingly. You can do nothing but act in accordance with the image of connectedness.

We have linked compassion to the element of *relegere*:

choice. What do you have to choose between? Exactly between the part of you that experiences unity and the part that does not. The first is the *impersonal*, or rather the superpersonal within the human being. We call it the Higher Self; the second part is the *personal* element in us. This personal element is the mask, the instrument through which the real, superpersonal human being manifests itself. The personal does not know the sense of oneness and lives in the illusion that we are separate from each other. *Relegere*, then, is the choice for the superpersonal.

Now, above we spoke of vertical and horizontal connection. On closer inspection, however, they are the same. When you connect with the Higher Self, you are simultaneously connecting with your fellow human beings. After all, the Higher Self lives in the awareness of Oneness.

The same idea is found in the Gospels of the Bible, where Jesus says that there are two commandments that are actually one. Loving your inner God is the first commandment, which is *the same* – it says so literally in the Bible – as loving your neighbor. And that makes sense, because when you love the Oneness of Life, you love everything, because everything belongs to the Oneness.

## Practical compassion

The religion of tomorrow is not a theoretical treatise with dogmas, rituals, creeds and prayers. It is a realization that permeates all your thoughts and actions. It is a mindset that is very practical and is practiced every moment of the day. Not just on Sundays, not just when you pray five times a day. It is a constant awareness, a constant focus on the superpersonal within you. Compassion is a state of consciousness, we have said. Think carefully about this state.

It is not so difficult to be good to your family, to your friends, to your countrymen, the people you like. But that is not compassion if you exclude others at the same time. That is setting boundaries, because you are distinguishing between people, between friends and non-friends, whereas compassion knows no boundaries and is universal by definition.







As a compassionate person you are always above parties. You have no sectional interests. For you, there is no division between country people and city people, between Russians and Ukrainians. They are all human beings, all on a pilgrimage, following their homesickness for the ultimate Reality. Some get lost on the way. All the more reason to fulfill your function as a signpost.

And do not think that compassion means just being nice to each other. Of course we always respect the sincere views of others, but if someone is being unjust, a compassionate person will take a stand against it. He does not take a stand against the other person, but against the unjust situation.

Every human being is a god in the making, but very few still have a sense of that. And some of us have strayed so far from our own core that we can do the most terrible things to others. A compassionate person, despite the limited wisdom he may have, will always try to teach the other person to look at life in a different way, so that disharmony is restored, or at least the victims of cruelty and brutality are protected.

Keep this in mind with refugees, for example. Determine for yourself, with the wisdom you have developed, assuming and choosing unity, what your mental attitude is toward them. Be calm and compassionate, and do not get caught up in the emotional waves that this issue has created in so many countries.

Also determine for yourself what your mental attitude should be towards our “weak brothers”. And by “weak brothers” I do not mean those who cannot stand up for themselves, but people who break the laws of the land and ignore the whispers of their conscience. Some of them end up in jail. Some of them do not. How do we help these

gods in the making, for they are too latent deities?

It may have happened to you that you have been wronged. For example, you may have had something stolen from you, or someone may have dented your car and driven away. We are not saying that a compassionate attitude means that you should just let it happen, but rather that you should continue to assume the oneness of which everyone is a part. Do you have feelings of revenge

when something like this happens to you? Do you wish misfortune upon the other person? If so, think again about *relegere*, about choosing between your Higher Self and your lower self.

These are not theoretical exercises. Life itself is the school of learning in which it will become clear whether you are truly compassionate or whether it is nothing more than an idle intention.

It is always a matter of developing a mental attitude of compassion. This is the most important thing. Even if your wisdom is limited, if you sincerely practice compassion, you will quickly learn how to better shape unity in cooperation with others.

## Peace

What happens to us and our environment when we actually begin to practice the religion described in this and the previous lectures? Within ourselves, the focus will shift from the outer world to the inner world. Choosing the Higher Self becomes natural, and the Oneness behind the phenomena we will increasingly experience as reality. This will bring us tremendous inner peace.

When you know for sure that you are an indestructible part of a great whole, all kinds of fears, frustrations and worries naturally fall away. You know that nothing *really* serious can ever happen to you. Of course, certain discomforts and difficulties will not disappear overnight, but you will interpret them in a completely different way. You know that the condition you are in has a cause that you (partly) created yourself. This gives you the conviction that you have the means to handle any challenge and bring it to a good solution. You do not blame others, an attitude that can often lead to frustration and even depression. You

act with peace of mind according to what you know deep down inside.

This mental attitude undoubtedly has an effect on your fellow human beings. You may have experienced that in a painful or precarious situation there was someone who remained calm and calmed the others. Even if someone is treated aggressively, perhaps even physically threatened, and yet remains calm, this can have a calming effect on the aggressor. The aggressor may even immediately change his attitude, turn over a new leaf, and apologize for his aggression.

When you purify your thinking, it affects your behavior, because there is a thought behind every action. Think kindly of others, and you will treat them kindly. Gentleness leads you to stand up courageously for others. Be frugal with yourself, then you can be generous.

Do not place yourself above others in your thoughts, and your proper humble conduct will be noticed, and people will regard you as a true leader.

This influence of the truly religious man can reach far. Every man is a thinker. All our thoughts create a mental sphere. Are we always aware of it? Do we realize that a selfish thought can negatively affect the mental sphere and make people aggressive? On the other hand, true religious thoughts can ennoble the mental sphere and inspire people to be compassionate.

The religion of the future will cause the mental sphere to be purified of all selfishness and hostility. The mental sphere will increasingly reflect the idea of unity by which we are all inspired. This will create dynamic harmony. The religion of tomorrow will not lead to a standstill. On the contrary. There has always been and always will be change. In such a state of dynamic harmony, people will increasingly come to perfection, knowing that there will never be an end point in the growth of consciousness.

## Sowing time

We began this lecture with the thought that the future comes from behind. The seeds we sow today will bear fruit tomorrow. Well, the time for sowing has come.

In today's *zeitgeist*, one personality is pitted against another; one country or bloc of countries is opposed against another. But this selfish mentality has no future, it is in fact a past station. The idea of interconnectedness and unity has a future, and the more we succeed in spreading this idea, the faster this future will become a reality.

The challenges facing humanity are great. We can only meet them together. But if we want to, we can!

The future begins NOW. Right now, our thoughts and actions can be guided by wisdom and compassion, the ingredients of true religion. The choice is ours. We can be a forerunner of that inspiring, driving force that propels everything forward and makes us realize that we are all rooted in the same life, and therefore are brothers to one another, with a common destiny.



“Painting for the temple” by Hilma af Klint.

## Key thoughts

- » An ideal is a perfect, universal image, which can only be actualized in the future.
- » An ideal, like a human being, consists of a spirit, soul, and a manifested part.
- » Decay of an ideal occurs when its soul dies. The soulless thought can encourage the opposite of what the original ideal intended.
- » Since everything is cyclical, ideals, as well as their decay, also recur cyclically.
- » People who make themselves receptive to universal ideas and ideals can align with them.
- » An ideal can never be actualized with actions and/or thoughts that violate the ideal. Peace and harmony, for example, can never be achieved through violence.

# The soul of an ideal

**We cannot do without ideals. If our ideals are impersonal, having the welfare of all humanity as their aim, they will be travel guides to a better world. But if we do not maintain our ideals and they degenerate into dogma, they will actually stand in the way of a brighter future. We can see this, for example, with the ideal of democracy, inclusiveness, or our dealings with refugees.**

Studying history can sometimes be depressing. You often see that a certain spiritual or social impulse, born out of a great ideal, weakens and disappears over the years. This is food for cynics, for those who claim that things will never work out for humanity.

There is nothing wrong with the ideals themselves that initiate such impulses. Why is it then that they are diluted, disappear, or degenerate into exactly the opposite of what they originally intended?

We are going to try to answer this. To do so, let us first examine what an ideal actually is.

## Inspiration

From a theosophical perspective, an ideal is fundamentally more than what the human imagination can comprehend or yield. Ideals appear through a process of inspiration.

Inspiration is derived from the Latin *in-spirare*, “to breathe in”. This points to a source elevated above ordinary human consciousness, from

which such an ideal is “breathed into” us. A person can only be inspired by it if they live from the same characteristic as the source of inspiration.

Ideals are inspirations from higher Cosmic realms. They are prototypes that come to us from the Cosmic mind, the higher consciousnesses of the hierarchy to which we belong. However, we can receive them and work with them only if the inspiration resonates within us. In other words, we must have developed the right qualities.

Inspiration is not a coercive force. It does not disable our free will. Exalted ideas and ideals from the Cosmic realms can, in other words, be “breathed into” us only if we attune ourselves to them. Thereby, the degree of our attunement determines the degree of the “blowing in”. It is our own responsibility to do this.

For the sake of clarity, we add here that these ideals are quite different from the ability to create mental images of sensory experiences to which

we attribute a certain reality. The ancient Greeks called these last the *phantasmata*.

### **What is the source of inspiration?**

A human being can be inspired by his own higher nature, the root of his existence. We are referring to our real SELF, our inner, essential divinity. From there flow streams that can be received by the personal man, at least if he turns inward and attunes himself to his inner source of inspiration. When we do so, we receive ideal conceptions, which as mere human beings we mostly perceive only vaguely. Other spiritual beings can also inspire us. These can be more advanced humans such as the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion. They can present us with ideas or ideals, which, provided we are properly attuned, we can “breathe in”. Perhaps the Masters will have to attune their ideas somewhat to us so that we can grasp them. We ourselves will also have to fine-tune ourselves somewhat to understand and process the ideas.

### **The ideal**

An ideal is a perfect, universal image, the realization of which can only take place in the future. That may be the distant or near future, depending on our effort to realize it. Everyone has desires, but an ideal is not a wish or desire. It is a vision of the future based on an inspiration from a higher Cosmic realm.

Many do have an image of a better, distant, or near future. So, everyone does have a personal “ideal”. But ideals as we consider them are, by definition, *impersonal*. The image of a nice new house, a well-paying job or a handsome partner are not ideals but is wishful thinking.

An impersonal ideal involves the expectation of a happier, more perfect future of *all humanity* or *all* living beings. The more universal the ideal is, the loftier the future will be when the image has become a reality in the outer world. The ideal image in itself may be very bright, but for now it exists only in the world of ideas. The expectation, however, is that one day it will be realized.

### **Thoughts are living beings**

Now Theosophia teaches that thoughts are living beings. Like other beings, they are born, grow by the attention with which we feed them, and will one day die if we forget them and thus fail to feed them. Furthermore, they can spread and have a character of their own. Acknowledging that thoughts have a character of their own can be difficult, and hard to discern because thought character and

the human character thinking the thought correspond to one another.

Now thoughts are very primitive beings. They are therefore called elemental beings because they are at the (relative) beginning of their evolution. You could compare them to atoms, which follow the patterns of nature almost will-lessly. Just as iron and metals containing iron are automatically attracted to a magnet, we attract thoughts which have corresponding characteristic with the vision of the ideal we build. Thus thought-beings follow the impulses of human consciousness. Therefore, the orientation of our consciousness also determines the quality of thoughts we think.

Let us therefore see, very briefly, which aspects belong to being human.

### **Spirit, soul and body of an ideal**

The spirit of an ideal is, to us, the formless and abstract, universal idea. Not an idea as we use it in common parlance, but *The Idea*, as Plato uses that word. It is like an archetype, an inspiring primal force, the fuel that nourishes every ideal. It is the core, the abiding part of an ideal. The soul of an ideal is the archetype translated into human thought. It is a thought image of a future world, in which each works for each and harmony reigns. It is an image in which the dynamic cosmic harmony is shaped into concepts and words understandable by human beings.

Ideals, like humans, are subject to cyclicity as well. A human being embodies for a short time and then he enters the resting period of death. And if he has learned something in his life, he will reincarnate a little wiser. In this way an ideal lives and dies and comes back, if all goes well, a little improved and elevated.

Finally, there is the body or vehicle of an ideal: the elaborate plan of how to organize society. That body is almost constantly changing and can always be improved.

Let us illustrate this with an example. The spirit of an ideal may relate to the inherent divinity and related intrinsic dignity of each human being. That soul is then, for example, the articulation of all the rights and duties of each human being. The vehicle may have to do with an association that stands up for human rights in the most practical way possible, anywhere in the world.

### **Aristocracy: the wisest rules**

We will give another example, concerning an ideal human society. The spirit of that ideal is the essential unity underlying all expressions of life and the inseparable bonds be-



tween all beings. That grand ideal must be reflected in the form of the state.

At the top are the wisest men and women. They have the greatest range of consciousness. They realize the inseparable ties between all people in the country and those of other countries and therefore can make the wisest decisions, which benefit the welfare of all. They do not have self-interest in mind. They are not concerned with financial gain or other privileges. Their task is to make the entire society function as harmoniously as possible.

In such a society, everyone fulfills his task according to the qualities he has. Everyone can grow in his task. No job is valued higher than another. Everyone can make his contribution to the whole.

There is a constant exchange of ideas: from the top to “below”, but equally from “below” to “above”. After all, the country's leaders can make wise decisions only if they know what is going on among the people.

In such an aristocracy – the form of state where the wisest is in charge – the focus will not be so much on material prosperity; it will be primarily on mental and spiritual well-being and growth.

## Democracy

Of course, recognizing wisdom in others – and thus accepting leadership from wiser people – is not always easy for the individual. You must have developed at least some wisdom yourself if you are to recognize it in others. After all, wisdom is not determined by the majority of votes.

Therefore, democracy is a degenerate derivative of the spiritual ideal. After all, now the leadership is not in the hands of the wisest, but of the entire people.

In a democracy, if the people have developed some wisdom, the citizens will choose the best leaders, but if people are driven by self-interest, they will place those at the helm of the ship of state whom they believe best represent their interests.

## Democracy as an intermediate stage

Now you can also conceive of democracy as an intermediate stage, as an ideal that should ensure that the wisest people sway the scepter and pursue policies that promote the general welfare. Such a form of state is at least better than when power rests with an absolute monarch or president who is selfish, or with a small group of people who place themselves above the masses.

A form of democracy existed in Athens centuries before our era. The ideal died and was largely absent for many

centuries. In the 19th century it was reborn as a mass movement. It was certainly not exactly the same ideal as that of ancient Athens, but now too there was the image of residents of a country sharing joint responsibility for the policies of the state. Although at first the ideal was not so universal – women, for example, were excluded – but over the years it grew and became more universal.

The *true* universal image of an ideal society – the spirit of the ideal – is the essential unity that underlies every expression of life. That is the enduring aspect. Society must reflect that essential unity. People with a democratic ideal esteem this universal ideal highly. The soul of their ideal then is *equality* with the recognition that people have developed differently. That is the cornerstone of society. Policies in a country aim at the welfare of every citizen. Whatever stage of development you are in, you are partly responsible for it.

Thus, in this more universal conception of democracy, it is not so much about electing people which are accountable for their policies, as it is about shared responsibility for the ups and downs of the country. In such a system, every person matters. Everyone is entitled to their own ideas, even if they differ from the majority. Those ideas may be proclaimed unless they affect the rights of others.

The soul of the ideal is then shaped into a practical plan, the vehicle of the ideal. This may include, *for example*, the writing of a constitution, which formulates fundamental rights that apply to everyone. Since the entire population cannot take charge of a country, a system is designed as to how this can take place. For example, the idea arises of a parliament in which citizens elect representatives and in which they themselves can be elected. Or perhaps a system where people elect the president is preferred, or both.

The translation of the ideal into a practical vehicle may vary from country to country, depending on a country's culture, customs and past. But if the soul penetrates it, it is actually of secondary importance.

## The coming and going of ideals

Now, an impersonal ideal need not fade into the background of thought or be diluted. We can make it a permanent, living force. Nor are people who form a civilization doomed to let their society degenerate.

But people die. The civilization they formed dies with them. And if the generations after them focus more on the form rather than the soul of the ideal, society will reflect this decline. Eventually, the whole ideal may be completely forgotten.



Near the Indus, thousands of years ago, a lofty civilization arose, known as the "Indus Valley Civilization" or "Harappa Civilization". Those who built this civilization will have reincarnated one or more times by now, taking with them their selfless ideals and accumulated wisdom.

Now death is a temporary absence of man, although, from our human perspective, it lasts a long time. During the rest period of death, man is in a blissful state in the more spiritual realms. This is a compensation for the suffering on earth resulting from the fact that the spiritual ideal could not be fully realized. During this period of rest, spiritual aspirations are woven into human consciousness. Therefore, when man returns in the next life, he will again "take" his ideal with him. The old spiritual ideas are born again. The degenerate society flourishes again in spiritual well-being.

This pattern is often seen. Periods of spiritual flourishing alternate with those of spiritual poverty.

## Decay

This spiritual poverty finds its origin in the fact that more and more emphasis is placed on the vehicle, the physical side, of the ideal. The real background is lost. People forget that the ideal has a soul. You get a formalistic system. The letter of the law becomes more important than the spirit. It is no longer so much about the equality of all people, but about one's own advantages or power. A group can impose a certain opinion on others. People no longer listen to each other. The general interest gives way to sectarian interests.

Unfair propaganda arises. The people are swayed, the truth is hidden or distorted, other parties are maligned, with the sole purpose of gaining the majority in parliament and pushing through their own vision.

If the losing party cannot in any way realize its ideas – or merely part of them – frustrations, distrust or indifference arise. In many democracies, there are large numbers of people who do not even bother to vote.

While outwardly a country can be democratic, the soul of the ideal – the shared responsibility for the ups and downs of a people – has been lost.

## Exclusion

The vehicle of an ideal can express the soul of that ideal well in language. A country has a Constitution and social laws, which express the soul of the ideal as well as possible. For example, the first sentence of the first article of the Dutch Constitution is a brilliant example:

*All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances.*

However, when people focus their thinking on the "outside" vehicle of the ideal of things, the essence of these laws, as wonderful as they are, dies away. When that hap-



pens, it has repercussions throughout society, the Constitution notwithstanding. Then it can happen that even the authorities ignore their own laws. In a lot of democracies, ministers and parliamentarians have been caught in cronyism and corruption. And although the Constitution requires that everyone be treated equally, in some democracies there is even institutional racism.

Government does not stand alone. It represents the general mentality of a people. If there is a general trend in a country to discriminate against others or even to “seek out the edges of the law” and sometimes even go over it, it is reflected in those in government.

The soul of the democratic ideal means that everyone is included, that everyone can have their specific input, physically and mentally. It is everyone’s responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the whole to the best of their ability and from their deepest conviction. No one should be excluded, even if the other person’s vision differs from yours. Although the law – the vehicle – expresses this ideal, it has little or no effect if its soul does not live among the people.

## Cancel Culture

We can even *de-soul* our ideal to the point of excluding others from participating in social life. Since the late

2000s, partly due to the rise of social media, cancel culture has become a powerful phenomenon worldwide. *Cancel culture* is defined as boycotting, shunning, or ostracizing someone who is believed to have failed to live up to the ideal considered righteous by a group of people. Curiously, this is mostly done by people who cherish the *ideal of inclusiveness*. By this they mean that everyone should be able to participate in society. Even if you deviate from the general pattern, you are included. So, the paradox is that people who strive for inclusion exclude people whose views differ from their own. This exclusion can even occur based on language use. Certain words and expressions are declared taboo. Those who do not adhere to them are *cancelled*.

This leads to situations that would be laughable if they were not also so sad. The author of the Harry Potter books, J.K. Rowling, was removed from a Harry Potter chat group. The group members felt that she, as a newcomer, did not know a thing about Harry Potter. She had logged into the forum anonymously but had to leave the chat room because members took offense to her opinion. She was also cancelled by many and even her books were burned because she had a different but nuanced view of trans women.<sup>(1)</sup>



## Refugees

An even more poignant example is the attitude toward refugees. After World War II, there was a collective shame in the Western world over the refusal of refugees. Still fresh in the mind was the memory of Jews fleeing from Germany, who were not welcome in the Western democracies of Europe and North America and were sent from one country to another. Some of them eventually ended up back in Germany and ended their lives in the Nazi gas chambers. Such a thing should never happen again, it was felt. The ideal of hospitable countries accepting refugees without restrictions was born.

The spirit of this ideal is also here. *The Idea* of essential unity: all people come from the same source. They should therefore behave kindly and in the spirit of brotherhood toward each other. The soul of the ideal is, that every human being who flees his country finds a hospitable welcome in another country. The vehicle of the ideal became a refugee convention. In 1951, an agreement was drafted in Geneva by the United Nations. Initially the treaty covered only European war refugees, but an additional protocol removed all geographical restrictions and gave it universal validity. Democratic countries ratified the treaty.<sup>(2)</sup>

## Decay of refugee convention

However, when the soul of the ideal is gone, the vehicle loses its value. The life-giving spirit is gone. The reality today in the European Union and in other democratic countries is that many duties to which each country committed itself when it signed the Refugee Convention are not being fulfilled.

The cornerstone of the 1951 Convention is the principle of “non-refoulement”. This principle of international law prohibits a country from returning asylum seekers or refugees to a country where they fear persecution because of, race, religion, or political opinion, or because they belong to a particular social group or nationality.

Of course, the convention allows for the possibility of refusing people, for example, if they have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity. Moreover, there will also be people who do not have refugee status but still seek asylum.

However, many independent bodies have found that numerous countries are not fulfilling these obligations. The ideal of receiving people is being diluted.<sup>(3)</sup>

## Cyclicity

We wrote above that thoughts, like all living beings, are

subject to cyclicity. Now thoughts can only manifest themselves in conjunction with human beings. Certain types of thoughts – and ideals – therefore have the same cyclicity as the people who think them. When people incarnate, they take their old thoughts with them.

We already pointed out that democracy died off in ancient Athens and was born again in the 20th century. But also, the tendency to erode and abuse the democratic ideal already existed in Athens and is embodied again in today’s populists. The Dutch novelist Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer shows in his novel *Alkibiades* that even the language of the populists of that time is the same as that of today.

We see more striking similarities. In ancient Athens, and later in Rome, there was also a kind of cancel culture: banishment from the city. Persons who went against general opinion or displeased those in power were expelled from the city. In Athens, this banishment was even formalized. In the public assembly, political leaders were banned for ten years in a voting procedure. This is known as ostracism (literally “shard court”). Any citizen could write on a shard the name of a politician he disapproved of. The shards were collected and the one whose name was written the most on shards was exiled. It is pretty similar to the *likes* and *dislikes* on social media. If you have too many dislikes, you may not be expelled from the country, but you are socially and morally killed.

Another example of how the ideal can be diluted is the following. In the Roman Kingdom, every citizen had the same rights and duties wherever they lived and wherever they came from. (Slaves did not count.) In today’s European Union, the same is true. Portuguese can work in Sweden, Poles in France, and so on. A wonderful situation that guarantees equality for all.

But with the Romans, that equality did not apply to those living outside the Empire, because like us now, they were afraid of foreigners. Now the Roman Empire existed for many centuries. There were also times when it had to defend itself against marauding, armed groups that threatened the Empire. But even in calmer times it closed its borders to the “barbarians”. For example, Emperor Hadrian had a great wall built in England so that foreigners could not enter the kingdom. The wall still stands today. Although the barbed wire fence that Hungary erected on its border with Serbia is not made of stone, the idea behind it is, of course, the same. Furthermore, Hadrian, and later others, made agreements with some countries bordering the Empire to keep barbarians from entering. Does not the EU now make deals with countries



like Tunisia and Turkey to buffer the influx of foreigners, with no regard for any human right?

## The horrors of the degenerate ideal

The decay of ideals can ultimately lead to the pursuit of exactly the opposite policies to the original ideal. It explains why every revolution eats its own children.

Especially when a religious ideal has degenerated into mere form, the most terrible crimes against humanity can occur. In a previous article we pointed to Dostoevsky's story, *The Grand Inquisitor*, in which the Spanish Inquisition even wanted to burn Jesus at the stake.<sup>(4)</sup> The soulless form of an ideal – and in this case the Church of Rome – becomes so important that it must be pushed through by force, whatever the cost. The end justifies the means.

Unfortunately, this story is not mere fiction. The horrors of Islamic State are still clear in our minds. The degenerate ideal became a nightmare.

These atrocities of IS were not unique in human history. The triumph of Christianity in the 4th and 5th centuries shows strong similarities to what, for example, the Taliban have done and are doing in Afghanistan.<sup>(5)</sup> Although the Savior of Christianity preached love and tolerance, the Christians, having conquered power in the Roman Empire, acted exactly the opposite. They destroyed thousands of “pagan” statues and temples, burned books, tortured and killed people who would not convert or who continued to profess the old religions or philosophies. It seems as if many of them are now reincarnated in Afghanistan where the current soulless ideal of Islam causes the same kind of unbearable suffering among the population, although the ideal of Islam is tolerance and love as well. The Qur'an emphatically states that there is no compulsion in religion.<sup>(6)</sup>

The importance of keeping the soul of the ideal alive can hardly be stressed enough. As the form becomes detached from the soul, evil increases. The ideal is no longer lived, it becomes a goal outside of oneself, which justifies all means. One wants to change *others* by imposing something on them: by laws, rules, or violence.

If we do not reconnect the ideal with the life-giving spirit, it will return again and again, in a highly degenerated form, under a different cloak, and again pour misery on humanity.

## Return of universal ideas

Fortunately, not only thoughts that erode the superpersonal ideal are returning. Universal ideals are also sub-

ject to cyclicity. In this context, it is good to carefully read the following quote from H.P. Blavatsky:

Occultism teaches us that ideas based upon fundamental truths move in the eternity in a circle, revolving around and filling the space within the circuit of the limits allotted to our globe and the planetary or solar system; that, not unlike Plato's eternal, immutable essences, they pervade the sensible world, permeating the world of thought; and, that contrary to chemical affinities, they are attracted to, and assimilated by, homogeneous universals in certain brains exclusively the product of human mind, its thoughts and intuition; that in their perpetual flow they have their periods of intensity and activity, as their durations of morbid inactivity. During the former, and whenever a strong impulse is imparted on some given point of the globe to one of such fundamental truths, and a communion between kindred eternal essences is strongly established between a philosopher's interior world of reflection and the exterior plane of ideas, then, cognate brains are affected on several points, and identical ideas will be generated and expression given to them often in almost identical terms.<sup>(7)</sup>

Mrs. Blavatsky speaks in this quotation of ideas based on fundamental truths. It is these truths that always form the spiritual background of the impersonal ideal, which is, after all, an expression of cosmic laws. The spirit of the ideal always remains, but the soul periodically withdraws and then reappears. Above we said that this is related to the fact that people and civilizations die and are born again. Therefore, the ideal is not gone in the absolute sense; it keeps coming back. People will always crave truth and justice again.

H.P. Blavatsky speaks here of an impulse being given to these universal ideas. So, there are beings who, when the time comes, are an inspiration to us. They give another spiritual impulse, new food for the soul of impersonal ideals.

Now the giving of such an impulse makes little sense if there are no people who have made themselves receptive to receive such an impulse. The quote above speaks of “brains” that can assimilate the universals — the fundamental truths. So, there must be people who live – or at least try to live – in the impersonal part of their consciousness. Their thinking will absorb these universals. They can transform the soul of the ideal to the society they are part of.

## Making ideals alive again

It is these great human beings who usually do not interfere

with the body of an ideal. Of course, an ideal must also be put into a physical form. There must be associations, by-laws, regulations, and goals, which are the guidelines to manifest the ideal. As long as that outer form is nourished by the soul, it can be a useful tool.

Yet, if the soul of the ideal lived in everyone, laying down an ideal in regulations and laws would not have to be

necessary. In fact, the need to do so is already the beginning of decay, because then it no longer takes place naturally. This is the background of the paradox of the Chinese sage Lao-tse: “The more laws are posted, the more robbers and thieves there are.”<sup>(8)</sup>

A country can never change through legislation. The real change in society comes from reform of human mind. External reforms without a change in mentality are meaningless. Blavatsky compares this to a gardener trying to rid his flower bed of poisonous plants by cutting them off just above the ground rather than pulling them out by the roots.<sup>(9)</sup>

Theosophists are open to these cyclical, universal ideas. These are not necessarily men and women who are members of a theosophical organization, but those who *live* Divine Wisdom. Their task is on the mental plane. They have to keep the souls of the *Utopias* alive, to make them powerful, so that a beneficent influence may emanate from them on society, and the twisted half or completely dead ideals may rise again from their death or lethargic state.<sup>(10)</sup> This is a gigantic but not impracticable task.

## Make hearts and minds receptive to human kindness

When the universal images of Unity and actual Brotherhood, and of Consciousness as the driving force behind the world of phenomena, are more strongly present in the mental sphere, they will exert their influence in all areas of human activity. Democracy will again be thrust toward the idea that each citizen is responsible for the welfare of the entire population. The refugee issue would be stripped of the selfish emotion currently attached to it and sustain-



able solutions would be sought. The gap between rich and poor will not be solved by various emergency measures such as allowances, but by distributing wealth fairly.

All people active in any sub-area of social life will be nourished and inspired by the overarching universal ideal — the soul of the ideal.

This picture is presented in the well-known pithy manner by H.P. Blavatsky in a letter to the American Section of the Theosophical Society, in which she says of Theosophists:

Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the conditions of mankind. We are the friends of all those who fight against drunkenness, against cruelty to animals, against injustice to women, against corruption in society or in government, although we do not meddle in politics. We are the friends of those who exercise practical charity, who seek to lift a little of the tremendous weight of misery that is crushing down the poor. But, in our quality of Theosophists, we cannot engage in any one of these great works in particular. As individuals we may do so, but as Theosophists we have a larger, more important, and much more difficult work to do. (...) The function of Theosophists is to open men's hearts and understandings to charity, justice, and generosity, attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being. Theosophy teaches the animal-man to be a human-man; and when people have learnt to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think, they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice, and generosity will be done spontaneously by all.<sup>(11)</sup>

## Strive or live

Every idealist can draw from the above some very important conclusions regarding their own ideal. First of all, think deeply about the ideal society and not just one aspect of it. Form a picture of a society in which everyone contributes their own talents, yes, contributes themselves, while society enables them to do so. If everyone does this, there can never be conflict. If an ideal is truly impersonal, it can never conflict with another impersonal ideal. Of course, there may be differences in vision as to how to realize the ideal. There is freedom of conscience. Some are wiser and see more than others. But that need not lead to conflict.

Next: never be guided by the form in which the ideal is cast. It is not about a party, an action group, a strategy, an ideology, a system. If you focus too much on that, then dogmatism and party interest arise, and the ideal disintegrates and loses its soul. Of course, organization is always needed, but it is the means and not the end.

If you are too attached to the form of an ideal, then the chances are very high that you place the ideal outside yourself. It becomes an external desire. You see all kinds of obstacles as to why the ideal cannot be realized. You believe that the president, the government, your boss, the law is preventing you from realizing the ideal, with the result that you start fighting against others instead of fighting for the ideal: the idea of how it should be as you know deep inside.

Therefore: do not strive for your ideal, *live* it. Be the ideal yourself. If you strive for it, you place it outside yourself; if you live it, you focus on its soul.

A wonderful example of living an ideal took place in some *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. During the covid pandemic, those slums were deprived of all kinds of amenities. People could not work. Stores had no food to sell. Hygiene measures were barely practicable. There was a lack of everything. Instead of waiting for the municipal government to take action, the residents, as best as conditions allowed, took the necessary measures to survive the pandemic. Distribution of food and mouth caps was organized. Since not everyone had access to water, people were encouraged to share the available water. Despite social isolation, keeping a distance from each other, a wonderful cooperation developed.<sup>(12)</sup>

Everyone can live their ideal. "No one is so busy or so poor that he cannot create a noble ideal and follow it," said Helena P. Blavatsky.<sup>(13)</sup>

Therefore: do not wait for others. Look to the soul of your

ideal. If that soul is alive, we will undoubtedly find the creativity within ourselves to shape the ideal in society.

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# Impartiality: guarantee of peace

## Key thoughts

- » The potentials for living in fraternity with each other lie within each of us.
- » The first step out of the spiral of hatred, is to get to know and respect each other.
- » Dare to stand above parties, no matter how difficult that may be at times. Every effort bears fruit.

The recent outbreaks of violence between Palestinians and Israelis, have filled many with despair. Journalists speak of the hopelessness of the situation. Politicians no longer know a solution. Both warring parties only believe in violence, in eliminating or disempowering the opponent. Those hit by the violence are desperate. The general mood is that things will never become right again.

From the knowledge of the Theosophia, we cannot agree with this desperation, although of course we fully understand it. One of the essential theosophical teachings is the inherent divinity of man. The potential for living in peace and fraternity with one another lies within each of us. The tragedy, however, is that we have not yet developed these potentials, or only slightly. We have not yet learned to avoid conflicts and certainly not to resolve them. We still have a long way to go. And it is high time to start doing so. Not tomorrow, not after another incident of violence, but NOW.

## Love and hate

The major obstacle to achieving real solutions to the war, is that one side sees the other as the personification of evil. The blame for the conflict lies with “the enemy”. We hate the

enemy, see him as a fiend, a brute.

However, hating the enemy solves nothing. Every sensible person knows that. For at least 70 years, the conflict in the Middle East has been characterized by one retaliatory act after the other. Every revenge is food for a counterattack. With open eyes, we slide into an ever-growing hell.

Even if we kill the other, yes, even if we kill a whole group, the conflict has not been resolved. It has only become more severe. That may sound strange, but if you understand reincarnation and karma, it is only logical.

There are two binding forces in life: love and hate. The more we hate the other, the closer our mutual relationship becomes. If we have killed a fellow human being through an act of terror or bombing, we will meet him again in a next life. We have forged or strengthened a bond. Of course we created a negative relationship, but it is no less real than if it were based on love and positivity. We choose our friends and enemies ourselves; in this life and in the next.<sup>(1)</sup>

## *The Parents Circle Families Forum*

The first step in getting out of this spiral of hatred and revenge, is to be open to each other so that we learn to know each other. We should start



talking to each other. Of course, it is difficult to love and respect the other person after losing a loved one killed by the other party. But some neutrality should be possible, especially when you realize that the other person has also lost someone through violence, and that retaliation will not bring back your murdered loved one.

This idea was the basis for *The Parents Circle Families Forum* (PCFF). This is an Israeli-Palestinian nonprofit organization of more than 600 families, all of whom have lost an immediate family member to the ongoing conflict. PCFF's main goal is to bring together grieving people from both groups and let them tell their stories. Palestinians and Israelis explain to each other why they have chosen dialogue instead of revenge.

PCFF members organize dialogue meetings for youth and adults in schools, community centers and other places. These meetings are led by two PCFF members, one Israeli and one Palestinian, who tell their personal stories of grief and explain their choice of dialogue over revenge. Each meeting lasts 90 minutes and includes the facilitators' personal story, their journey to reconciliation and a brief representation of PCFF activities. There will then be time for questions and answers. Meetings are held in Hebrew, Arabic and English, depending on the audience. Over the years, PCFF has gathered around them a large number of communities engaged in a wide range of activities.

PCFF is also active in other areas. For example, together with other groups, they organize a remembrance day where participants offer each other comfort and hope.

PCFF has come to the conclusion that the process of reconciliation between nations is a prerequisite for achieving a lasting peace. The organization therefore uses all available means in education, public meetings and the media to spread these ideas.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **Meiser and Metzger: peace is possible**

Even better than resolving conflicts, is preventing them. If people know each other, respect each other, yes, love each other, then conflict will never arise. In fact, this is very simple and applies to all people, whoever they are and whatever faith they have. It also applies to Palestinians and Israelis.

In the Haifa district in northwestern Israel lies a small Arab village, called Meiser. Nearby is Metzger, a Jewish kibbutz. The residents of both communities have lived in peace and friendship with each other for already 70 years. When, just after World War II, the Jewish residents started building their kibbutz, there were hardly any facilities. For example, there was no water source. The residents of the Arab village offered theirs for use for as long as the kibbutz had no water. In addition, they taught the Jewish newcomers how to work the land. In this way, a close



The inhabitants of the Palestinian village of Meiser and the kibbutz Metzger live together in harmony from the very beginning. The residents see, speak and help each other.

friendship was born, which continues to this day and is experienced as quite natural by all residents. Both the Jewish residents and the Arab population regard both communities as one family. Symbolically, both water sources are connected, as outward proof of their partnership.

A peace monument has been erected, symbolizing the hope that one day all of Israel-Palestine, whatever outward faith one may have, will live in peace and harmony with each other.<sup>(3)</sup>

### Impartial involvement

These two examples show that if there is some degree of impartial involvement, good peace results can be achieved. Let that become a lesson to us. Those who stand above the parties can contribute to peace and harmony. Therefore, do not take sides. Choose for the *whole*.

If you feel more sympathy for either camp, then you should ask yourself whether you are really contributing to a solution. Many discussions about this lingering conflict lead the camps to cling even more tightly to their righteousness, and become even more intolerant towards each other. For relative outsiders, as most of us are, you could wonder if discussing this conflict with others makes any sense, if you are not convinced yourself that you love both sides equally.

The Dutch journalist Joris Luyendijk pointed to the psychological phenomenon where people tend to turn the pain inflicted on them by violent actions, into anger. The anger makes you not feel the pain. It makes you feel less powerless. But it does nail you even more firmly to your own sense of righteousness.

That anger can lead to dehumanization. You no longer see the other person as human and therefore believe that you do not have to treat them humanely. Dehumanization leads to more dehumanization. It is the age-old eye-for-an-eye that blinds the whole world.

Even if you live outside the conflict zone, you are in danger of being swept away by the one-sided view of one of the parties. It is like being forced to take a stand. Luyendijk advocated swimming against the current by *not* taking a stand and continuing to see the humanity in each person.<sup>(4)</sup>

We have heard people say that they feel more compassion for one side than for the other. They then exhaust themselves by putting forward all kinds of arguments and non-arguments, historical truths and untruths, to support their opinion. But it is impossible to feel compassion for one party and not for the other. Compassion is universal,

knows no boundaries and is, by definition, non-partisan. A compassionate person identifies with all.

So, dare to stand above the parties, however difficult it may be. Only if we are able to do this, will we be able to discover in the representatives of both groups their true humanity and encourage it. And let us not forget that there are countless conflicts in the world: that the wars in Eastern Europe, in Sudan and other places are raging too, in all their intensity. We must radiate our sympathies to the *whole* humanity in order to change the streams of thought on this planet.

We need a lot of patience and perseverance. But every sincere effort within our own circle bears fruit. We can overcome the pain inflicted upon us, and instead of acting from anger, constructively offer the other the hand of peace. The examples mentioned above demonstrate this. Jews and Muslims can live as one family. *All* of humanity can live as one family.

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# Questions & Answers

## What makes a symbol *universal*?

A symbol may be called *universal*, if it expresses one or more teachings of the Theosophia, which is the universal knowledge about Man and Nature — knowledge that is therefore always and everywhere applicable. The Theosophia encompasses, in its purest form, the truths of Kosmos and Man. So we can investigate and test all the theosophical thoughts for ourselves.

Symbols are one of the mostly used methods to depict and teach these truths. These symbols were passed over and explained, from age to age, by successive generations of Adepts. They can take the form of mathematical figures, myths, fairy tales, hero stories, and also architecture and other forms of art. Universal symbols express an aspect of Theosophia — and conceal, veil, hide it at the same time, for if you lack the keys to unravel the deeper layers, you will not be able to see deeper than to a certain level. For this reason, the Sages often use symbols to pass on Universal Wisdom. You cannot get more out of them than you can process at any given time.

For instance, when we see the symbol of the cross, then it will be nothing more for most of us than a geometrical figure, until we make a deeper study of the philosophy behind it. Then we will discover that it has many important meanings, one of them being the manifestation of consciousness (the vertical line) into a material world (the horizontal line). The imperishable consciousness forms an active center in a more material world in order to gain experience and

fulfill its role in the network of life there.

So, a symbol can only become a meaningful universal symbol *for us*, if we have made ourselves fit to understand them. Did we awake in ourselves our own capacities of intuition and impartial thinking? Did we study the teachings of the Teachers of Humanity, in which we find essential clues? Only then will we be able to discover (some of) the truths hidden in universal symbols. So, each person has to prove and experience the worth of symbols for himself, by his own active research.

## How do universal symbols help us to lead wiser, more inspiring lives?

Universal symbols were deliberately spread among all nations, by the Wise people of these nations. They did that, because they knew that these symbols could awaken and preserve the deeper intuitions of these peoples. Symbols stimulate us to search for their significance and to look behind the outer forms of the material world for the processes working *behind* them. Our “matter of fact” thinking is not able to do that. We must appeal to our deeper abilities, which are more universal, to find their meanings.

That’s why symbols may certainly help us to lead wiser and more inspiring lives. To the extent that a symbol helps us to realize our true nature, our divine core, and our fundamental links with all other beings, to that extent they stimulate us to wise living, more

in accordance to our true Selves. Then, such a symbol becomes for us a *living* symbol: its meanings become the leading factors in our lives.

Each wisdom tradition contains all key thoughts of Theosophia. Yet, when we study them, as far as their scriptures have been preserved, we will remark that unfortunately these traditions more or less degenerated throughout the ages, and furthermore, that they often emphasize some aspects while neglecting other aspects. So, each ancient philosophy has its “specializations”, although no doubt there are also many similarities. Therefore, it is worthwhile to study the symbols of *all* these traditions. Thus, you train yourself to find the hidden meanings which are common to all. And you get a more complete picture of Theosophia, by combining the different aspects into a greater picture.

## Is there a symbol for compassion?

Compassion is an attitude, a motivation. It is the decision that you will slow down or stop your own spiritual progress, each time when that is needed to help other people on their Path of development.

That attitude is not easy to express in a symbol. Yet there are some beautiful examples of symbols which may awaken our compassion. For instance the image of the Bodhisattva or Buddha with the 100 arms, reaching out to all other entities. Or the Bodhisattva who is not sitting with crossed legs, but with one leg extending downwards, touching the ground —





Thousand armed Avalokiteshvara, bodhisattva of compassion.  
Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.



Avalokiteshvara, with one leg reaching downwards (symbolizing the outer world of men). Source: Pulitzer Arts Foundation, Saint Louis, USA.

symbolizing the outer world in which we humans cyclically reincarnate and try to find our way.

A more abstract example is the *crux ansata*, the Ankh-sign, by which we mean the circle (or the egg) placed above the T-cross. This symbol has many significances, and one of them is: the Divine source (the circle, the ONE) sacrifices itself by emanating from itself the Universe with all its entities (the T-cross), in order to enlighten and elevate the MANY.

Still another symbol for compassion is the *guardian wall*: the protecting sphere or “force-field” of universal and unselfish thoughts, built up and maintained by all Sages. This sphere surrounds humanity at large and protects it against very serious dangers,

that the average person is unaware of.

### What is the best way to study symbols?

The first requisite is an *open mind*: the choice to be receptive for other and deeper truths, for only then we are able to become a beneficent force in the world. Theosophia is infinite in its reaches, so her symbols are too. There are at least seven ways to interpret universal symbols. So, when you are glad to have found one meaning – assuming that you really obtained a relative insight – that certainly does not mean that you can stop searching, in the illusive impression “now I know what it means”. Each symbol has many layers of meaning, and no symbol can

be fully understood without combining all these layers, and without involving all the other ancient symbols. They are like the facets of one diamond. So, studying and practicing symbols is in fact *a way of life*. It does not end.



# Agenda

## Online lectures

Every Sunday at 19:30, there is a theosophical lecture or study meeting. Each series is highlighting one of the seven “Jewels of Wisdom” and discusses their significance for our daily thoughts and acts. The full program can be found at: [blavatskyhouse.org/lectures/](http://blavatskyhouse.org/lectures/).

### Series 2, last part, January

#### Karma: your destiny!

- 07-01 Lecture: Understanding karma: the ultimate weapon for peace
- 14-01 Study meeting on lecture of 07-01

### Series 3, January - February

#### Work on with Nature

Nature is having a hard time and it worries us. We refuse to be discouraged and may even want to rebel to force something. But is not every battle won from within: by first developing a different mentality, from which acting differently follows naturally? If you look closely, you can see that a new mentality is emerging. Precisely because of an old thought, which you find in the origin of every wisdom of the world: that Nature is *one ensouled, living whole*. From that thought, your true influence as a human being becomes clear and you can become a co-worker with Nature.

- 21-01 Lecture: What are the Laws of Nature?
- 28-01 Study meeting on lecture of 21-01
- 04-02 Lecture: Migration: how life pulsates through and on earth
- 11-02 Study meeting on lecture of 04-02

### Series 4, February - March

#### How free are you really?

##### *Mystically, mentally and socially*

In our society, many seek their happiness in maximum personal freedom. At the same time, we are every day confronted with the fact that the freedom that one person takes, often comes at the expense of the freedom and well-being of many others. What is the explanation of this? What is the nature and power of our free will, mystically, mentally and socially? Are we defined by our heredity, our upbringing and our current environment? Or do we

choose our own path in life, building our own future? In these two lectures, we present the universal insights of the Theosophia, to come to a fuller understanding of these life questions.

- 18-02 Lecture: Who am I?
- 25-02 Study meeting on lecture of 18-02
- 03-03 Lecture: How free are you really?
- 10-03 Study meeting on lecture of 03-03

### Series 5, March – April

#### Evolution: one joint path of inner growth

Evolution means development, but development of what exactly? The change of form we perceive with our physical senses is a fact, but what causes this physical change? What is the driving force we recognize to be innate in all life? In the first lecture we discuss the essence of life and evolution. The second lecture we will focus on our future: what role technology plays in the progress of human evolution?

- 17-03 Lecture: The evolution of consciousness. Struggle for life or cooperation?
- 24-03 Study meeting on lecture of 17-03
- 31-03 Lecture: Technology and the future of humanity
- 07-04 Study meeting on lecture of 31-03

## The course Universal Wisdom

This course Universal Wisdom starts from a great universal image. This is the basis of true wisdom, which everyone can recognize. This wisdom is not new; it is the core of all great religious, philosophical, and scientific systems.

In this course we will give you instructions on how to get to know this wisdom. This begins with yourself, with unveiling your own thinking. Through independent research and exchange with fellow students, ideas will become clearer. Thus, you will gradually build a philosophy of life, with which you can solve every question of life and thus contribute to a more harmonious world.

The course will begin in January 2024. Check our website for registrations and further information:

<https://blavatskyhouse.org/courses/universal-wisdom/>

## Colophon

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Reactions:  
The Editorial Board reserves the right  
to make a selection and/or shorten  
incoming documents

Subscription:  
This is the 34th free sample of *Lucifer*,  
*the Light-bringer*. For subscription:  
mail the editorial office:  
lucifer.red@blavatskyhouse.org.  
The price of our "paper" issues will be  
about € 4,60 and € 9,20 for a double  
issue, excluding postage.  
Payment by Internet – creditcard (see  
website).

Publisher:  
I.S.I.S. Foundation, Blavatskyhouse,  
De Ruijterstraat 72-74,  
2518 AV Den Haag,  
tel. +31 (0) 70 346 15 45,  
email: lucifer.red@blavatskyhouse.org  
internet: www.blavatskyhouse.org

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The name of the Foundation [Stichting] is  
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The object of the Foundation is to form a  
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structure of human beings and the cosmos,  
free from dogma.

The Foundation endeavors to accomplish this  
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other speeches and lectures, issuing books,  
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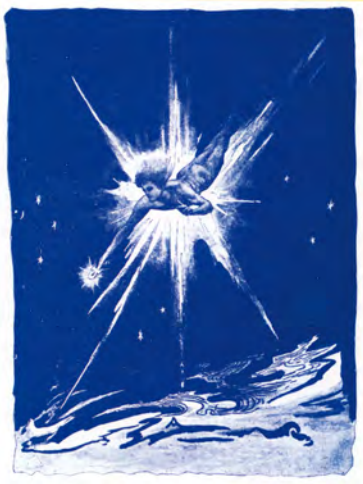
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## I.S.I.S. Foundation

The activities of the I.S.I.S. Foundation (International Study-centre for Independent Search for truth) are based on:

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)