

the *Light-bringer*

Lucifer[®]

For seekers of Truth

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

**The One Life and the
Pāramitā Path, Part 2**

**From axiom to Truth
— The logic of
Theosophia**

**Does a country need
an army?**

**Questions children
ask**

**Consequences of
culturing meat**

500 times a day?

**Questions about the
Masters of Wisdom**



Illustration front cover:
The artwork "contemplating child,"
created by Ferruccio Sardella, stands
in Mississauga, Canada. Children
often ask profound questions.

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Editorial

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The One Life and the Pāramitā Path Part 2

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A series of two articles explores the fundamental reality of manifestation and the way to realize it in our consciousness. These articles are based on the 'Blavatsky Lecture' given by Elton Hall in October 2023, a lecture organized by the Theosophical Society Point Loma. The first part was on the 'One Life' and appeared in the March 2024 issue. Part two on the pāramitās follows in this issue, supplemented by two questions posed to the speaker after the lecture.

Elton Hall

From axiom to Truth The logic of Theosophia

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Searching for Truth is a theme to which the Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL) attaches great importance. That is why *Lucifer* also gives this subject extensive attention. For this article the editors edited a lecture by Herman C. Vermeulen from 2021 in which he highlights the logic of Theosophia with a reflection on the significance of axioms as 'tools' for finding Truth.

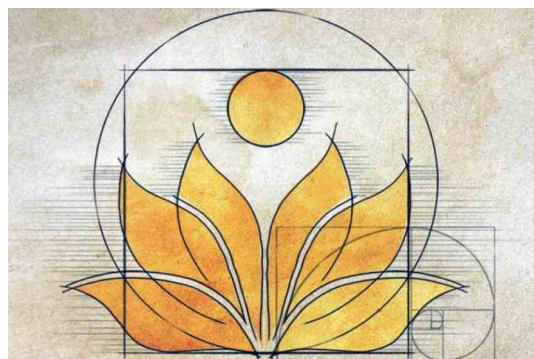
Herman C. Vermeulen

Does a country need an army?

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This article questions the obviousness of an army.

Barend Voorham



Questions children ask

page 54

Young children sometimes come up with particularly profound questions. How do you answer such questions if you don't exactly know yourself? And how do you avoid throwing around incomprehensible technical terms? This is easier than you think.

Astrid Kramer

What are the consequences of culturing meat?

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In several countries, firms are experimenting with cultured meat. Developments in this field are moving very fast. All the more reason to examine this with theosophical insights: what are you doing, and what consequences does this process have for both animals and humans?

Henk Bezemer

500 times a day?

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- » Next International Theosophy Conference

Editorial

In our troubled times, it is often difficult to find a foothold. Events follow in rapid succession. We thought we had some certainties in our modern society, but often it turned out not to be so. We fear the loss of our civilization and democracy. We see conflicts and wars for which there seems to be no solution. Nevertheless, in these rapid times of the Kali-Yuga, it is good to take a pause and look at the problems of the world from an impersonal perspective from time to time. Indeed, if one takes Theosophia as a starting point, the great challenges do not disappear, and they will certainly not be solved in an overnight rush, but we *can* achieve a solution *acceptable to all*. *Lucifer, the Light-bringer* tries to help with this by offering ideas, shifting the focus of our thinking to the durable part of our consciousness. In doing so, we hope to inspire and challenge you to test and apply Theosophia in daily life.

In the article *The One Life and the Pāramitā Path, part 2*, directions are given on how to rise above the illusory world and control desires. Part 1 of this profound article can be found in our previous edition. By following this Path of Exalted Virtues, you not only transcend the raging, often cruel waves of outer life yourself, but you train yourself to be a teacher and helper of your fellow human beings.

That you should never accept Theosophia blindly without thinking about it, is something we have brought up several times in our magazine. But then how do we deal with it? The article *From Axiom to Truth* provides a useful method.

Looking at the world from a theosophical perspective means learning to look differently at certain things that are assumed to be true to almost everyone. Such as: every country has an army to defend itself. But should every country have an army? Few people raise this question. *Lucifer* does it and, moreover, tries to come to an answer.

In this issue we also start with, what we hope, will become a recurring section: questions asked by children. Children do not yet have preconceived ideas, their questions can act as a stimulant for adults and loosen entrenched patterns of thinking. It is a challenge to answer their questions in our best and most principled way possible: probably only by giving a hint, leaving full opportunity for the child to keep brooding on it. We may even be learning more ourselves than the children do.

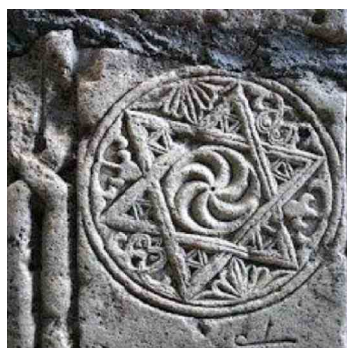
People seeking solutions to the challenges of our time are to be appreciated. But aren't some of these solutions sham solutions? It is good if people question whether eating meat is beneficial to them, to animals and to the environment. But does cultured meat solve this problem? We shine our light on this question.

Furthermore in this issue, you will find an inspiring article sent to us by one of our Portuguese readers. Muslims pray five times a day. Is that enough? What *is* praying by the way?

And in our question and answer section, we try to answer some questions about the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion.

We hope this *Lucifer* shines the theosophical light on the current issues of our world. Please know that Theosophical thought becomes even stronger when you reflect on it and share it with others. For that reason, the editors always welcome all your questions and comments. They will always be answered.

The editors



The six-pointed star with its central focal point is a universal symbol of the sevenfold nature.

The One Life and the Pāramitā Path

Part 2

Key thoughts

» *The Voice of the Silence* teaches us how to rise above any illusion and ignorance, by practicing the pāramitās and always serving the whole.

» To ‘kill’ our desire means: to learn to control it *completely*.

» The Pāramitā Path aims at Bodhisattvahood. The Bodhisattva makes the great sacrifice by stepping back from the merging with the One Life to serve the suffering, struggling humanity.

» Each pāramitā is a virtue that transforms our consciousness and our relationship to the world. It is the key to opening a ‘portal’ composed of all the elements within ourselves that block our progress.

» The One Life, however faint, resonates within us and we are invited to search for it.

In October 2023, Elton Hall gave the ‘Blavatsky Lecture’, organized by the Point Loma Theosophical Society. A week later, a study took place in which participants engaged in conversation with the speaker on the subject. Elton is affiliated with the *United Lodge of Theosophists* and is an internationally known speaker. The previous issue of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer* featured a translation of the first part of his lecture on ‘The One Life’. In this article follows part two on the pāramitās. At the end are some questions from participants about the practical application of the pāramitās, which Elton answered after his lecture.

The Pāramitā Path

H.P.B. dedicated *The Secret Doctrine* to all “True Theosophists” everywhere, for “they called it forth”. Human aspiration called forth this unequalled work, and since true Theosophists exist at many levels of spiritual awareness, the text is written to be read on many levels. Since spiritual growth is possible for each individual, how *The Secret Doctrine* is read and understood will change over time for each one. Hence the need to remember to remain open and fluid in one’s thinking, never clinging even to the most luminous insight, so that one does not get stuck at some level of understanding, no matter how lofty. All truth that can be expressed in thought or even direct awareness is relative. The absolute truth is, to put it simply, unthinkable.

The Voice of the Silence (shortly referred to as ‘*the Voice*’) is simply

“Dedicated to the Few”. While anyone may read the text and see the magnificent vista and possibilities for human beings, the text is aimed at “the few”. Who are these few? One immediately senses that “the few” are those who truly aspire to tread the path that leads to the universal goal indicated in the text. In the dedication, we are warned that, even among those who think they aspire to such an end, only a few truly do so. Why? We find the answer in the *Voice*.

Just as the ‘Proem’ in *The Secret Doctrine* immediately shows what is to be unfolded, the *Voice* sets out the broad features of the Path in the first few pages. One can see that aspiration without steady determination is not enough — not enough to even get started. The reader is not coddled in any way, for the Path requires the whole of one’s effort, one’s energy,

one's attention, and a willingness to sacrifice and suffer. That suffering is *māyā*, of course, but so long as one's consciousness is immersed in that *māyā*, everything experienced will be experienced as quite real.

The very first sentence sets the stage: "These instructions are for those ignorant of the dangers of the lower IDDHI."⁽¹⁾ Once again, the footnote to this sentence speaks volumes. These *siddhis* are "the lower, course, psychic and mental energies". There are higher *siddhis*, but H.P.B. quotes the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as saying that only one who has subdued the senses and concentrated his mind in Krishna can be served by them. So right at the start we are told that the content of the *Voice* is for those who are ignorant of the powers latent in the human being.

How to dispel ignorance

Ignorance is of many kinds. There is the ignorance we have when we do not know something and are aware of that. There is the ignorance of what we think we know when we do not know. And there is the ignorance of being ignorant even of *what* we do not know. Yet as H.P.B. and William Quan Judge tell us, we may know more than we think we know, having lived innumerable lives and doubtlessly gone through spiritual training many times. Such knowledge can be awakened by our resolve to shed our proclivities and learn from the wise. We are not to be discouraged in acknowledging our ignorance. Rather we should refrain from attempting to judge precisely the nature of our ignorance and instead be ready to learn. As we learn, our ignorance will become increasingly obvious and we will discover our hidden knowledge and will begin to discern what we need to do to dispel our ignorance.

We are immediately told that if we are to hear "the Voice in the *Spiritual Sound*", we must learn the nature of Dhāranā, which is "the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon an interior object, accompanied by complete abstraction from everything pertaining to the external Universe, or the world of the senses."⁽²⁾ We likely know where we stand in regard to perfect concentration and abstraction from the world of the senses! Then immediately we are told to seek out the Rajah of the senses, the very controlling source of senses, the thought-producer, for it "awakes illusion". The Mind is the slayer of the Real, and we must slay the slayer. This potent statement shows us that consciousness exists at many levels and there are sensations at all those levels, and these must all be slain. The immediate implication of these statements is given. "When to himself his form appears unreal, as do on

waking all the forms he sees in dreams ..."⁽³⁾ How many of us can see our form – physical, emotional, psychic, mental – this way? It is only when we cease to hear the many that we can discern the ONE — that we can leave the region of *Asat*, the false, and enter the realm of *Sat*, the true. It is only by uniting the soul with the silent speaker that we will hear the ultimate voice, the Voice of the Silence.

Pitfalls along the path

In a nutshell, here is what we must do. But what this means, and *how* to do it, is unfurled in the following pages. We are given three warnings: if the soul sings in its incarnated body – likened to a chrysalis, which is the vehicle in which the lowly caterpillar is transformed into the beautiful butterfly – or if it weeps in this vehicle or seeks to break the antaskaranic thread linking it to the Higher Self — the soul is of the earth. But if it withdraws from the din and suffering of the world into itself, it is unworthy. And if it reaches out into all space and says "This is I," it is caught in *Mahāmāyā*, the great illusion. What we are, in fact, lies beyond the diversity of manifestation, and right here we are told of the ways we can miss the Path of real knowledge. The Path avoids immersion and withdrawal, for the Bodhisattva is engaged and yet apart; the Bodhisattva is in the world but not of the world, to borrow the words of the Initiate Jesus.

After these warnings, we are told that our earthly incarnation is the Hall of Sorrow, the situation of those ignorant of what the human being is in reality. Put in general terms, if we are to know ALL SELF, we have to give up Self to Non-Self, Being to Non-Being. Only then can we rest within the "AUM throughout eternal ages".⁽⁴⁾ Already we are taught that our personalities are utter illusions and even our individualities fall far short of real Truth.

The whole Path is put in terms of the analogy of three Halls. The Hall of Suffering is the Hall of Ignorance, and we recall that these instructions are for the ignorant. We must leave it and move through the Hall of Learning, and here there are powerful distractions, alluring flowers under which serpents coil. They are the astral powers of the astral regions, "supersensuous perceptions" and "deceptive sights", all part of the Great Illusion, *Mahāmāyā*. These are all those lower psychic powers that lie latent in the human being and even the higher ones if not developed with the right understanding. If we successfully pass through that Hall, we come to the Hall of Wisdom, which is not described here. Beyond this Hall "stretch the shoreless

waters of AKSHARA, the indestructible Fount of Omniscience”.⁽⁵⁾ Note that Akshara is not given a limit, suggesting that it spreads out to infinity, beyond incarnate mental comprehension.

To fill out the picture, we are provided with a musical analogy: we have to hear the “mystic sounds” of the Higher Self in six ways, and then we must discard them, which means discarding the personality and even our individuality, which we can take as Buddhi-Manas, and lay them at the Master’s feet, for the seventh sound “swallows” all the others and they are no longer heard.⁽⁶⁾ This Master is within each of us, and is without as well, beyond our conventional conceptions, though invariably helpful when needed. When this transformation into our true being occurs, we are “merged into the ONE” – Ātman – and we live in It. Here is the first reference that points us toward the One Life.

Detaching from the personality

The language of violence appears throughout the *Voice*, and one may be a little taken aback by that — we are told to “destroy” the personality, to “slay” the lunar form, to “crush out” the personality, “kill” desire, and so on.⁽⁷⁾ But if “the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence” as Jesus taught, it means that we must have conquered what has seemed to conquer our real nature. We all know people who deeply identify with their possessions. In America, some so identify with their automobiles that they are personally hurt if their cars are dented or scratched. But most of us think of cars as modes of transportation, put aside in the garage when not needed for travelling between two places. We are to do the same with our personality — our *persona* or mask, for that is what it is — and even our individuality. This reorientation means not identifying with them but rather using them instrumentally to serve some purpose and setting them aside when not needed. For many of us, achieving such a condition is painful, even violent, since we cling so desperately to ‘I’ as distinct from ‘you.’

Staying engaged with the world

We are then given a picture of what must be done to enter the Path, to get going spiritually, so to say. Just as we are not to cling to what is not really us, so we are not to withdraw from the world. We are to hear and respond to every cry of pain in others, but be immune to those of ourselves. Why? Because, diverse as we all are, what we are in reality is one. Until we think and act as if this is the reality, we are

not on the Path, though we may aspire to it. For “Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself.”⁽⁸⁾ We become what we determinedly aspire to, and anything less than the One Life is *māyāvic* in relation to it. We are given instructions to begin and tread that Path, which is *ourself*, both for subduing the personality and for transcending the individuality, only to find that there are two Paths. One Path leads to *nirvāṇa*, which the Mahā-Chohan called an “exalted selfishness”.⁽⁹⁾ Here the sense of a separate self has not wholly been eradicated at the highest levels of consciousness. In following this path, one has failed to understand that one at every level is not separate from all others. The second path leads to the realization of the Bodhisattva ideal, and this ideal is what the pāramitās aim for.

The Pāramitā Path is the path that leads us beyond our transitory *māyāvic* selves, through our individuality, toward the One Life which we ultimately are. It is sometimes called the Bodhisattva path that moves the bodhisattva — with a small ‘b,’ indicating a serious aspirant — towards becoming a true Bodhisattva — with a capital ‘B,’ one who lives in *māyā* only for the sake of all beings. The path can be seen as a dynamic program of self-transformation, dissolving illusion and unveiling our real nature. Here, one might borrow an analogy from Sri Śankarāchārya and say it is the way to remove the clouds so that the spiritual sun might shine through. Though perspectives on the path may vary, all characterize the same Path, which can be pointed to but must be oneself to be tread. As the Buddha taught, all our understanding is but a raft that carries us to the other shore, where mere understanding is set aside for realization.

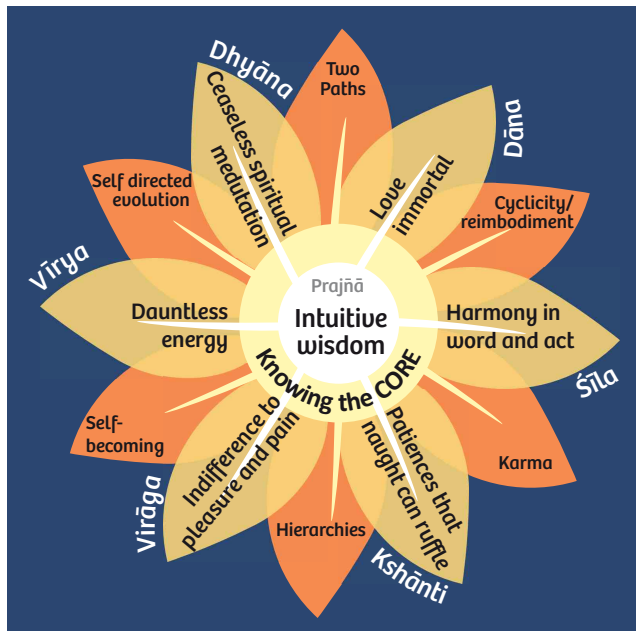
Step one: living for humanity

We are told at some length in Fragment II of the *Voice* what is involved in beginning to tread that Path — which, we recall, is ourselves — and then we are given the powerful if blunt summary statement: “To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practice the six glorious virtues is the second.” The first step is a renunciation of gaining anything for oneself, though, as *The Light on the Path* tells us, we must work as those are who are ambitious for themselves. This first step heralds the last step: “To reach Nirvāṇa’s bliss but to renounce it, is the supreme, the final step — the highest on Renunciation’s Path.”⁽¹⁰⁾ These “glorious virtues” are the six pāramitās, named in numerous Buddhist texts and treated rather differently in the *Voice*.

We are also immediately warned that this “*Secret Path*” may be too “high-winged” for us. Each of us has to decide that for herself or himself. If it is, follow the “*Eye Doctrine*”, the exoteric path as set out in exoteric texts. But, if determined, and no one is denied the opportunity to pursue the secret Path, one may attempt to tread it to the luminous end.

The pāramitās: keys to inner transformation

The pāramitās are not listed here, though they are implied in the text that follows. When they are set out in Fragment III of the *Voice*, they are symbolized as Portals and characterized there.⁽¹¹⁾ Since each disciple is the Path itself, these Portals are profound transition points in the disciple’s nature. A *pāramitā*, literally that which carries one beyond what one thought one was, is a virtue that transforms consciousness, perception, and relation to the so-called external world. The Portals are not named, but the pāramitās are called the golden keys to open each Portal’s gate, which is what blocks an aspirant’s advance, the *saṃskāras* and *skandhas* that are discussed elsewhere in H.P.B.’s writings.



Further explanation of the seven pāramitās and seven Jewels of Wisdom can be found in the 2021 symposium report ‘Help to build the mentality of the future’⁽¹²⁾

Dāna is “the key of charity and love immortal”.⁽¹³⁾ Literally, *Dāna* means ‘giving.’ Immediately we see that *Dāna* is to be understood at many levels. It includes serving others by giving, but “love immortal” implies much more. It suggests a universal love that is no mere emotion but rather an identification with all existence even while ac-

knowledging its *māyā*. Such love reaches beyond appearances and is unconditional — not being affected by what others say and do, for better or worse. It is selfless. One translation might be ‘magnanimity.’ All this, of course, can be done from the standpoint of the personality, but imagine this virtue — this strength, since ‘virtue’ comes from ‘*vis*,’ the Latin for ‘strength’ or even ‘force’ — becoming one’s nature. Here, one is generous, not because one is following some moral precept but rather because it is just what one is and what one does. As a key, its full realization leads one across a Portal where one does not follow a precept but becomes the precept itself.

Shīla, exoterically, morality or ethics, is conduct, “the key of Harmony in word and act”, balancing cause and effect so that there is “no farther room for Karmic action”. What a lofty view of ethics: one *becomes* the balance. On the way to achieving this state, it means thinking and acting with integrity, and that integrity is rooted in and expresses universal unity and causation.

Kshānti, “patience sweet that nought can ruffle” is the ability to remain unaffected by the ups and downs of incarnate existence, essential to living for others. We are reminded here that “The way to final freedom is within thy SELF” and “That way begins and ends outside of Self” — the self that is personal, individual and separate from other so-called selves.⁽¹⁴⁾ We recall that earlier we were told: “Both action and inaction may find room in thee; thy body agitated, thy mind tranquil, thy Soul as limpid as a mountain lake.”⁽¹⁵⁾ Becoming *Kshānti*, one is patient within and without, patient with others who are struggling in their own ways with the issues of life, and patient with oneself, which has much to conquer.

And here H.P.B. introduces a Portal not listed among the exoteric six glorious virtues: *Virāga*, “indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived”. One reason for this addition is that in exoteric buddhist discussions of patience, this indifference is included in the idea of withstanding the turmoil of the world. B.P. Wadia in a letter to an aspirant said that *Virāga* is the fulcrum that underlies all the virtues, and H.P.B. places it here in the very center of the six Portals. We can begin to see that all the virtues are within each virtue as resonances that are preparatory to full realization, that is, to using the golden keys to cross each threshold. Imagine so assimilating *Virāga* that one is now ‘naturally’ indifferent to both pleasure and pain. One knows both, of course, but is no longer distracted by pleasure or disturbed by pain. One is ready to be entirely focused on the task at

hand — serving mankind and becoming a Bodhisattva, a selfless being that discerns the needs of others and meets them perfectly within the bounds of karma.

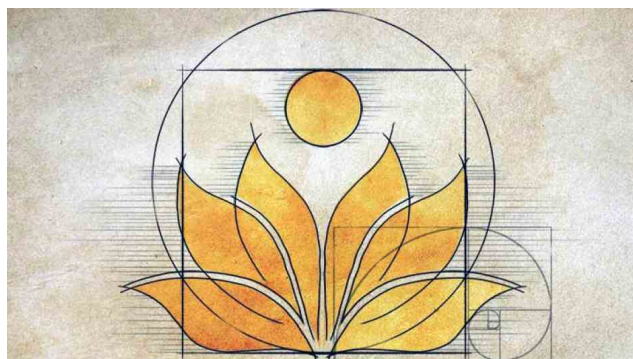
The second three pāramitās requires our deepest understanding to grasp their meanings. *Virya*, “dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial”. Here is total focus on Truth and Reality without distraction or even secondary concerns. *Dhyāna*, the sixth golden key, opens the gate that leads one “toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation”. It is difficult for us to get a sense of being an Adept whose consciousness is in such ceaseless contemplation even as he or she attends to what is needed by humanity. We typically meditate for periods of time and think, perhaps often every day, about Theosophia, but the Adept is always in that condition, no matter what is going on around her or him.

Finally, *Prajñā* is the key that “makes of a man a God, creating him a Bodhisattva, son of the Dhyānis”. This is the wisdom that the Path which is oneself comes to — “the shoreless waters of AKSHARA”, the Truth that is all beings. But immediately we are reminded that before we can approach this ultimate realization, we must master the pāramitās, “the virtues transcendental six and ten in number”.⁽¹⁶⁾ This is the second time the six and ten are mentioned in the *Voice*, and the unnamed pāramitās are not given. Why?

Perhaps the reason for not explaining these unnamed pāramitās was given right at the beginning, when we were told that these instructions are for those ignorant of the lower Iddhi. Exoteric buddhist texts lists them as *Upaya*, skillful means; *Pranidhāna*, perfection of the Bodhisattva vow; *Bala*, perfection of spiritual power; and *Jñāna*, perfection of knowledge, that knowledge which is being itself. Mastering these requires mastering the six and passing the seven Portals, and one who has not done so cannot possess any of these, even though one will find echos of them in the effort to master the six. And it may be that the esoteric meaning of these last pāramitās can only be understood through Initiation. In any case, the *Voice* does not explain them.

The Pāramitā Path and the One Life

The Pāramitā Path is the way to realization of what we are, and it shows that to gain that realization, we must aspire to it and become the Path. The end is in the beginning, as the oak tree is in the acorn. The Bodhisattva does not escape the world but renounces the possibility of escape only



In various wisdom traditions, the lotus is a symbol of man’s complete development up to and including his highest spiritual aspect. In Buddhism, the Bodhisattva is often depicted sitting on a lotus throne or holding a lotus. The Bodhisattva has thus unfolded all his inner potentials, and knows how to use them with mastery for all that lives. The mystical mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum*, about the Jewel in the Lotus, refers to the innermost realization through union with the Universal Self, and thus represents the oneness of all beings, with which the Bodhisattva is compassionately related.

to dawn the veils of *māyāvic* manifestation in order to serve others. The Bodhisattva realizes the One Life, the Truth, Sat, and thus understands all the levels of consciousness and existence below that as masks, a necessary involution and evolution for this realization. The Path seems long and hard, requiring reincarnations to even enter it, and requiring that we give up everything personal, and ultimately everything individual. Yet what is given up is *māyā* at every level. What is a sacrifice for the aspirant – and the *Voice* indicates the many sacrifices that must be made on this Path – will, when passed be seen as no sacrifice but as approaches to the bliss of the undisturbed One Life itself. Then the Bodhisattva makes the much greater sacrifice of stepping back from merging with the One Life so that he or she – being quite beyond identification with gender – can serve suffering, struggling humanity. What more joyous possibility could there be? The One Life resonates, no matter how dimly, within us, and we are invited to seek it out. For: “That which is uncreate abides in thee,”⁽¹⁷⁾ and “The light from the ONE MASTER, the one unfading golden light of Spirit, shoots its effulgent beams on the Disciple from the first.”⁽¹⁸⁾

We conclude with a famous quotation from *The Secret Doctrine*:

Starting upon the long journey immaculate; descending more and more into sinful matter, and having connected himself with every atom in manifested Space — *the Pilgrim*, having struggled through and suffered in every form of life and being, is only at the bottom of the valley of matter, and half

through his cycle, when he has identified himself with collective Humanity. This, *he has made in his own image*. In order to progress upwards and homewards, the ‘God’ has now to ascend the weary uphill path of the Golgotha of Life. It is the martyrdom of self-conscious existence. Like Viśvakarman he has to sacrifice *himself to himself* in order to redeem all creatures, to resurrect from the many into the *One Life*. Then he ascends into heaven indeed; where, plunged into the incomprehensible absolute Being and Bliss of Paranirvāṇa, he reigns unconditionally, and whence he will re-descend again at the next ‘coming’, which one portion of humanity expects in its dead-letter sense as the *second advent*, and the other as the last ‘Kalki Avatāra’.⁽¹⁹⁾

We have been given this great Teaching by Those Who Know through H.P.B. and her colleagues. May we use it well.



Gautama the Buddha (middle figure) descends from heaven, on a staircase, to continue his work on Earth. He is accompanied by Indra and Brahma. Buddhist relief.⁽²⁰⁾

References

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2. See ref. 1, p. 1, footnote 3.
3. See ref. 1, p. 2.
4. See ref. 1, p. 5.
5. See ref. 1, p. 6.
6. See ref. 1, p. 9-10.
7. See ref. 1, p. 12-13.
8. See ref. 1, p. 12.
9. The letter of the Mahā-Chohan can be found here: <http://www.theosophyconferences.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Maha-Chohan-Letter.pdf>.
10. See ref. 1, p. 33.
11. See ref. 1, p. 47-49.
12. Herman C. Vermeulen, ‘Help to build the mentality of the future’. Article in *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, number 4, December 2021 (symposium issue), p. 100. Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/uploads/files/lucifer-en-2021-4.pdf>.
13. See ref. 11.
14. See ref. 1, p. 39.
15. See ref. 1, p. 29.
16. See ref. 1, p. 48.
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19. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine. Volume I*. Adyar, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1978, p. 268 (pagination of original 1888 edition).
20. Detailed image of the Buddha’s descent from Trayastriṃśa heaven, 200-300 A.D. Victoria and Albert Museum (London). Source: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O64919/descent-of-buddha-from-trayastriṃśa-panel-unknown/>.

Questions about the application of the pāramitās

A participant gives a quote from Robert Crosby, who says: “Mankind sins, grieves, suffers and dies thousands of deaths. Because of what? Just ignorance,” and asks this question:

What can students of Theosophy do to reduce this ignorance through the pāramitās in a practical sense, when we consider the huge problems in the world, think of the wars being fought right now? How do we translate them into everyday practice, when we maybe can't speak directly about the pāramitās? So this also refers to how to discuss that with others, who are not familiar. Can you say something about this?

Elton Hall answers: There is one thing that turmoil in the world, human turmoil, allows one to do. It's easy to have a tendency to take sides, and we see this in the world when there are conflicting forces, like in the Ukraine and in the Middle East. Because one is sympathetic to the condition of one side or the other. What one can do is consciously step back and ask, why isn't one sympathetic to *both* sides? After all, these are all human beings involved in this turmoil. And that leads to a self-reflective thought, where one can ask: “What is it in me, that is being reflected out there in what is going on?” An almost childish way of putting this is to say: “If I were king of the world, what kind of tyrant would I be?” And then I begin to gain some insight into tyranny. So, there's inner work that this outer turmoil immediately suggests to us.

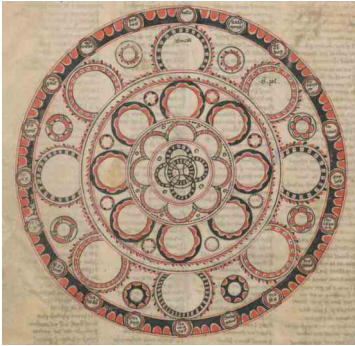
The second is remembering that wonderful phrase ‘to live to benefit mankind is the first step’. Which to me is a mantra. It means we have to see each human being as a human being. Then we can begin to ask what are they going through such that they do this? If we do that, that might give us clues as to what to say now at the very local level where we're encountering people who are obviously suffering. They're going through divorces, they're hooked on drugs, etc. They're just angry at the world or at their job. Taking this approach, we can then apply it locally. I have to begin by listening to and being sympathetic to the fact that a person is struggling. That does not mean that I have to approve or support what they are doing. But if I can understand, to use an old 1960s phrase, ‘where they are coming from’, I may then be able to, quite impersonally say things that they find are helpful, and sometimes that is just asking questions. “I can tell you're feeling bad.

Why are you feeling this way?” And that may give further clues and what one can do is: suggest solutions which are an application of the pāramitās without ever mentioning them.

When I look at the situation in the world, I wonder what phase we are in as humanity, and whether specifically a certain pāramitā would now come to the fore that could lead to peace?

Well, karma is constantly precipitating. But as we have been told, there is personal karma. There is individual karma. There is national karma, global karma. And these are likely to travel in cycles because, take for global karma, as humanity responds to that, it generates more karma, which then comes back. And it appears that we're getting a pretty substantial bit of karma that resulted from humanity's past actions. One suspects the presently incarnated humanity in a previous incarnation, had a lot to do with that.

So, what we can do about it? I think it begins right with the first pāramitā. If we look at it not just as ‘giving’ in some mechanical sense but as magnanimity. Living generously toward others, thinking generously toward others. If a number of us can do that, just as the Dalai Lama believes, I think that would have a positive effect, even if we're not in direct contact with those who are so immediately caught up in the turmoil.



From axiom to Truth

The logic of Theosophia

Searching for Truth is a theme to which The Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL) attaches great importance. That is why Lucifer also gives this subject extensive attention.⁽¹⁾ For this article the editors edited a lecture by Herman C. Vermeulen from 2021 in which he highlights the logic of Theosophia with a reflection on the significance of axioms as ‘tools’ for finding Truth.

For many people interested in Theosophy, the introduction to our literature is not easy. They experience theosophical literature, especially *The Secret Doctrine* of H.P. Blavatsky, as difficult. But also in other works, for example by W. Q. Judge and G. de Purucker, they read so many detailed explanations of developmental stages and compositeness that they often respond with ‘it does sound plausible but I actually have no idea what it is about’.

In this article, I want to shed light on the logic of *Theosophia* from certain principal thoughts, to clarify the underlying structure of Theosophia. When these are clear to us, we can better address all the details regarding individual consciousnesses, humans, animals, cells, gods, in other words *beings*, making the literature much more accessible to us.

First some thoughts about the term ‘Theosophia’. Theosophia is a contraction of two Greek words: *Theos* and *Sophia* and means ‘Divine Wisdom’. This immediately raises the question

of how we should regard this: ‘Wisdom of the Gods’ is of a much higher level than our average human idea of wisdom.

The difference between Theosophy and Theosophia

We must also make a very clear distinction between Theosophy and Theosophia. Let me describe it this way: the Theosophy we know today is *that* part of Theosophia which has been made public by H.P. Blavatsky and her Teachers since 1875. It is therefore a limited part. Its introduction was aimed primarily at the West. Theosophy that people in the West are supposed to be able to understand. All the publications from that time are in English, though often retaining the original Sanskrit names and their meanings.

It was the beginning of making the ancient Universal Wisdom known *again*, with Blavatsky indicating that more knowledge could follow later, depending on how people would receive this part. In other words, are

Key thoughts

- » Theosophy is not a goal, but a path.
- » A smaller truth can be part of a larger truth.
- » Truth-finding continuously requires an ‘open mind’.

We are all an expression of the same Source, although we express it individually and in a limited way.

- » Through the three propositions of Theosophy, we can come to wonderful, applicable insights about life.
- » To find Truth we must grow in our thinking to universal levels.

they willing and is their thinking flexible enough to accept a different line of thought and look at life from a different starting point, a different angle? Can they work with that, gain experience, and increase their insight?

More knowledge indeed followed, for in the decades after 1875 – the year The Theosophical Society was founded – many more publications followed. From Blavatsky herself, but also from her Teachers, the Masters, and later from W.Q. Judge, Katherine Tingley and G. de Purucker.

H.P. Blavatsky published a lot, with one very important milestone in that stream of theosophical literature being the publication of *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888.⁽²⁾ That same year she founded the Esoteric or Eastern School, in which there were also some very profound teachings given to serious students.

In addition to her most important books – such as *The Secret Doctrine*, *Isis Unveiled*, *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence* – all her articles and manuscripts were published in the 15-volume *Collected Writings* of H.P. Blavatsky, compiled by Boris de Zirkoff.

The articulation of Theosophy

Also after her death, much theosophical knowledge was disseminated, especially by G. de Purucker, the fourth Leader of the TSPL. He published very much as a supplement and help to better understand *The Secret Doctrine* in particular. For the greatest challenge that Blavatsky faced – and that we still face today, both as an organization and individually – is how we can most adequately articulate this Wisdom of the Gods.

How difficult that is, is shown by history. Within all the major world religions and philosophies, the description of Theosophia, as a common Source, has led to an enormous diversity in interpretations. Over the centuries, important thoughts from that Source have been lost. As a result, some conclusions have led – and still lead – to terrible situations because the core thoughts from which the religion or philosophy originated, were not and are not understood.

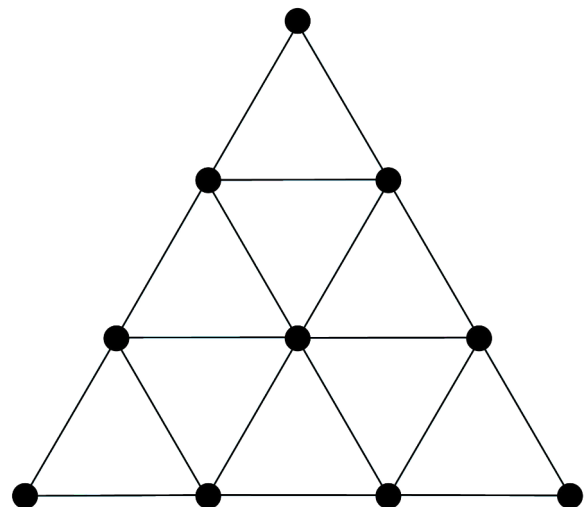
The terminologies used in the past – culture-dependent, tradition-dependent – often fell short of making important thoughts clear. Also, some thoughts became mutilated as they were slowly but surely anthropomorphized, or ‘shaped as I understand it’. If we do not understand something clearly and then state, ‘as I understand it, so it is’, then we have set our feet in accelerated pace on the path to degeneration. And it remains extremely important to avoid that.

In articulating Theosophy, we must also certainly not lose sight of the fact that Theosophy is not a *goal*, but a *path*. Therefore, understanding *The Secret Doctrine* is not something that one can complete. No, it is a path that goes on and on, and is inherent to our evolution. Just as we can read an interesting book, re-read it years later, and then make ‘new’ discoveries that make everything much clearer. Then we indirectly acknowledge that we have undergone a growth, a development. It is important to realize that the development of our consciousness is an essentially infinite road that we are all going on together.

The two levels of Logos

The term ‘logic’ comes from the Greek word Logos. Now in today’s interpretation of the concept of logic we always see a breakdown, such as logic in philosophy, logic in religion, logic in engineering or logic in software. However, this is a narrowing, a downplaying of the original *ideal image*. To understand the key idea, the two levels of the original Greek meaning are important. The Logos *endia-thetos* or ‘the unspoken word’ is ‘the abstraction, the ideal image’ and the Logos *prophorikos* is ‘the spoken word, the expression’. Very subtly, the picture is formed here of hierarchies of knowledge, of consciousness, in which the knowledge at the top is passed on ‘downwards’, hopefully being interpreted properly in the process. Logic, therefore, is ‘thinking from the inner Logoi, the universal ideas’, and logic is no guarantee for absolute wisdom. What matters is how accurately the spoken word represents the ideal. Using an abstract description, we can state: *Logos is the first manifested entity at the head of any hierarchy*.

Or in other words, there is a top-Wisdom, a top-consciousness, with the knowledge and inspiration radiating down to the lower ‘realms’ to activate it there.



We see the hierarchical structure clearly modeled in the tetractys of Pythagoras, with the Logos forming the top. The lower parts of the hierarchy face the great challenge of expressing the inspiration from the top as sincerely and as universally as possible. In this way logic is the application of universal structures. In this regard, one of the most important theosophical fundamentals is that everything we perceive is based on those same universal structures. So that applies to humans, animals, minerals, atoms, cells, molecules, in short, all beings, consciousnesses. The challenge is to learn to understand these structures. The best thing then is to keep the structure itself central and not let ourselves be distracted by variations and examples that might cause us to fail to recognize that structure.

What is Truth?

The question “What is Truth?” can lead to heated discussions. People often talk about *my* truth and *your* truth, not to be confused with the statement in the Bible of Jesus the Nazarene, ‘my peace I give you and your peace I leave to you’. Unfortunately, our current worldview offers many examples of conflicts arising from that opposition of my truth and your truth.

From the theosophical point of view, however, two different truths cannot coexist. Truth theosophically viewed, represents one reality. If we state that two realities can be *diametrically opposed* to each other, which are also both *true*, then that is impossible. We can, of course, have individual conceptions of the Truth, with a capital letter. The picture of it may be much more distorted for some than for others, but it remains one core Truth.

Does Truth exist? Is there a Truth that underlies everything — ‘one absolute truth’? H.P. Blavatsky wrote a marvelous article on this in *Lucifer* in 1888: ‘What is Truth?’. In it she answers that question very carefully. The article can be found in the *Collected Writings*.⁽³⁾ She pictures a Hierarchy of Wisdom, each age having its Sages who understood Wisdom, Truth in its absolute form. But they nevertheless could teach this Wisdom, this Truth, only as relative truths.

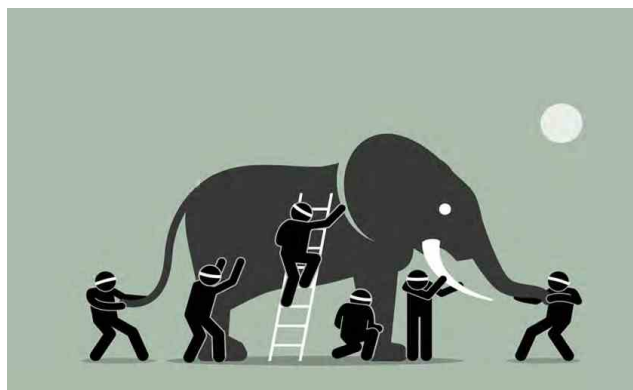
Now this is exactly the same challenge that H.P. Blavatsky faced in 1875. The Theosophia with its knowledge, insights and concepts that were totally unknown in Western society — even in classical Greek literature — she had to phrase and describe them in words that the West did not have. Sanskrit — as one of the most important languages of Ancient Wisdom — she fortunately managed to maintain, providing explanations in the process.

From absolute to relative

In her article, Blavatsky states that from the top — that first Logos — abstract and absolute Truth can only reach the underlying layers in the hierarchies in relative forms. And she also gives the reason for this. Literally she writes: “The greatest adept living can reveal of the Universal Truth only so much as the mind he is impressing it upon can assimilate, and no more.”

If a great expert in a certain field wants to impart his knowledge to someone who is totally unfamiliar with it, it is easy to imagine that the last person needs a long time and a lot of effort to let the thoughts in. He may have to set aside old ideas and let new thoughts in, consider and test them.

If we are open in our thinking to larger truths, we should also be able to make room for the thought that a smaller truth can be *part* of a larger truth. This is illustrated very nicely in the famous parable of the elephant and the blind. In it, a number of blind people are asked to give a description of the elephant they were able to touch. Those descriptions vary widely: long and thin for the one who felt the tail, strong and sharp for the one who touched a tusk, wrinkly for the blind person who stroked the skin, and a rough patch as big as a carpet, for the one who got hold of an ear.



This parable shows very clearly that each of them was right, but to a small part of that whole truth. Had they exchanged their knowledge with each other, they would have arrived at a greater truth. In other words: when we discover a greater truth, we need not downgrade a partial truth to false, but we can see its limitation.

Of course, our emotional preferences can also color our view of reality. For example, after a soccer game, some of the spectators are happy and some are disappointed. But they all saw the same thing.

We use a lot of symbolism, such as the parable of the elephant and, for example, of ‘Plato’s cave’ which even more

extensively shows people's reactions to partial truths.⁽⁴⁾ We also use diagrams and charts, we talk about evolutionary stages for Spheres and Rounds in a V-shape, but that is not what those processes look like in reality at all. They are graphic representations to make something clear step by step. There is certainly no absolute value to be given to them. However, it is meant to activate our higher thinking.

Objective idealism

In the Bible, Mark 4 verse 11, Jesus says to the 'Twelve' (his disciples): "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables." (New King James Version).

In other words, direct knowledge is out of the question: it cannot be received. Only in parables can be hinted at what human evolution and human states of consciousness are all about. And what we *would be able* to achieve.

We might refer to this as 'objective idealism'. We attribute reality to what we experience and perceive, although that is not the essence and therefore also a form of illusion. We are simply not ready for the essence, for this deeper truth. To illustrate, H.P. Blavatsky in her article gives a beautiful example of the sun and the sunflower. The flower can follow the sunbeams of its unattainable illuminator. Human consciousness is like the sunflower: at our present stage of development, we indeed can focus on the Sun. "... each of us can relatively reach the Sun of Truth (...). To achieve this (...) we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature."⁽⁵⁾ If we want to understand the essence of solar rays, we do not yet thereby focus directly on the Sun. We do construct our own image, our relative truths that we ourselves experience as reality. Thus, by focusing on our spiritual core, and by study and experiences, we can slowly but surely grow towards an ever greater understanding, through which we will understand Truth more and more.

At the front of this process are our premises. These deter-



mine how our vision develops. If we start from the idea that consciousness does not exist and there is only matter – and if that is also a dominant view in our thinking – we will interpret everything as such. It will then become very difficult to come to another conclusion.

Universal Wisdom

We speak of Truth and Universal Wisdom. How should we interpret these concepts? As all-encompassing, uncolored and not culturally bound.

This is an important starting point. We can never come to conclusions like 'it is as I think it is, therefore, it is universal'. No, a truth-finding we must want to test with no restrictions in our thinking. Does it fit into the overall picture we have? Is it universally applicable? If not, then we must conclude that we have not yet grasped the universal side of Truth and Wisdom.

Wisdom is also an attribute. We all have it in us — at several levels some of it is already slightly manifest, sometimes, but certainly latent. We can train it. *Being* wise is the ability to actively express the latent, inner wisdom.

The first fundamental proposition from *The Secret Doctrine* – more on this later – states that everyone has everything within them, including wisdom. So, *becoming* wise is an awakening process and the wiser we become, the greater the truth we can see. To find our way in this, we look at the three concepts of *axiom*, *proposition*, and *hypothesis*.

Axiom and proposition

The concepts of axiom and proposition are more or less synonymous. Axiom is a term derived from Greek and used particularly in mathematics. An axiom is defined as *an assertion or proposition not proven but accepted as a foundation*. A very well-known mathematical axiom is: the shortest connection between two points is a straight line. It describes very abstractly how a straight line behaves, regardless of its length and direction.

Another example of a mathematical axiom is the triangle: three points not on a straight line, with connecting lines between those points. The triangle has some interesting properties, such as the angles that collectively are always 180 degrees, and the area that can always be calculated using the formula *base times height divided by two*.

These axioms, these propositions, always turn out to be true. Now, as has been said, a proposition is more or less equivalent to an axiom, and since in Theosophy we always talk about the three propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*, it

is good to become more familiar with them. We can describe a proposition as: a *basis for reasoning, without any assumption of its truth*.

An example of a proposition is found with Isaac Newton. When he drafted his law of gravity in 1687, Newton could not yet prove it. For example, he could not demonstrate that two objects in a vacuum – regardless of their weight and shape – take the same time to fall over the same distance. This was later made much easier by space travel. It is a law of nature, describing the attraction of gravity between objects.

We still work and calculate with Newton's formulas today. Albert Einstein did make some refinements to it in 1905 and 1915 with his theories of relativity, but they did not affect its general application.

Another interesting proposition is by Archimedes (third century BCE), who made his theorem about the law that any object, wholly or partially immersed in a fluid, experiences an upward force equal to the weight of the displaced fluid. We still use this proposition too, and it still holds true.

To establish a proposition, we must want to think *top-down*. That is, looking from the highest perspective to make a *universal* statement. That describes the big picture, as a *starting point for reasoning based on it*. A *universal* statement describes a *universal* behavior of everything within a system. Thus, from the big, general, and abstract picture we can begin to understand the details with all their characteristics.

We will see shortly that this can reach very far.

The hypothesis

Then there is the hypothesis. With our knowledge and observations, we can make a preliminary, more or less complete description of a phenomenon. So, this works the reverse way to top-down: the reasoning is *bottom-up*, or from the details to the big picture. A hypothesis is described as *a proposed explanation based on limited evidence, as a starting point for further research*.

The hypothesis is extremely popular in science. People make a lot of observations on all sorts of fronts, and by relating them to each other, scientists try to get an overall picture of how something works. The best known examples are found in astronomy. Especially with the current technical capabilities, astronomers observe all kinds of things: galaxies, movements of stars, black holes, eruptions of those black holes and the 'swallowing' of energies. They try to arrive at an all-encompassing theory, in which all

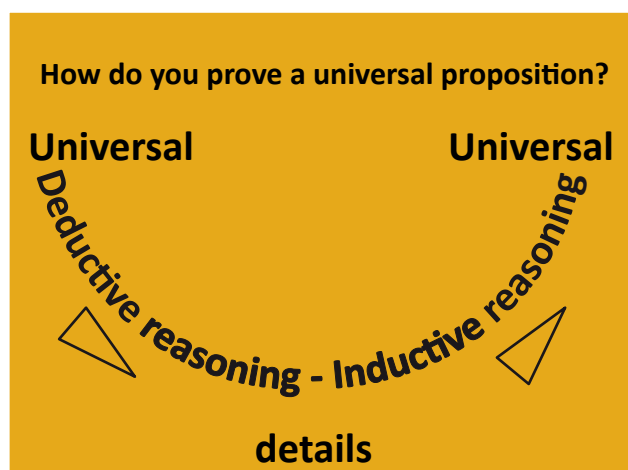
these observations lead to one all-explaining hypothesis. Einstein, too, worked on this for a long time, but did not find that 'theory of everything'.⁽⁶⁾

We also set up a hypothesis ourselves – often unconsciously – for example with our practical knowledge and observations, such as for simply determining the bicycle route to work. Theoretically, route A is the fastest, but if there are too many obstacles there, we try route B and, if necessary, more routes. Thus, we do nothing but gather knowledge and draw the conclusion which route is the best. This works until an obstacle arises there too. And then the hypothesis that this route is the best no longer holds true.

Deductive and inductive reasoning

When faced with the question of what to use – a proposition or a hypothesis – assuming a hypothesis is certainly not wrong. But it is then very important to bear in mind what that hypothesis is fed with. For we limit ourselves greatly if we think that we learn to understand the bigger picture by gathering enough details. So, how can we approach it in a better way?⁽⁷⁾

We can start with a proposition from the general view, then collect relevant data for ourselves and then test it again against the general view of the proposition. In other words, from the universal via deductive thinking to the details and then from the details via inductive thinking back to the universal. If this produces a conclusive line of thought for us, *we have proved that that universal proposition is a fact and true for our way of thinking*.



Thus, we do our own truth-finding, construction. However, we must do this without preconceived ideas, 'with an open mind', and be willing to constantly test our observations, especially when we are already beginning to be con-

vinced that something is true. This is certainly important when we are looking at the three propositions from *The Secret Doctrine*. We must have the wisdom not to *believe* those propositions, but with our accumulated knowledge of truth we should be able to *recognize* them.

Working from the propositions to personal hypotheses and then to supporting those propositions is also a dynamic process. Can we place events in our lives in light of the three propositions? As we grow in consciousness, in perceiving greater truths, we must continue to check for correctness.

The key thought is: are we driven by details or by universal patterns? Once we have come to the conclusion that those universal patterns are true, are we willing to change some of our decisions and lifestyles accordingly?

Becoming wiser is not something you do alone

When we become wiser – when we have really understood a phenomenon – a small truth still remains true and becomes part of the larger Truth.

We see it with Newton: his proposition remains tenable in a limited context but in a larger context something extra is needed — which Einstein added.

Now, of course, we can never jump further than our pole is long: we can never understand more than the wisdom we have developed. But we can train ourselves in that development. For support in studying the Theosophia, you can use our lectures, our Universal Wisdom course or the Symposia — all sources through which we, as an organization, try to make these things clear.

So being wise, knowing truth, is relative and subject to growth. With that relative element, depending on our individual development, it is good to discuss with each other how we arrived at certain thoughts and what conclusions we have drawn from our experiences. In this way we help each other. This is why joint study on such topics always has a very broadening and stimulating effect.

When we work with our most universal, unselfish abilities and insights, we are also able to penetrate to the heart, to the deepest essence of things. And in this way, we can also restore harmony disturbed by karmic causes.

From axiom to Truth

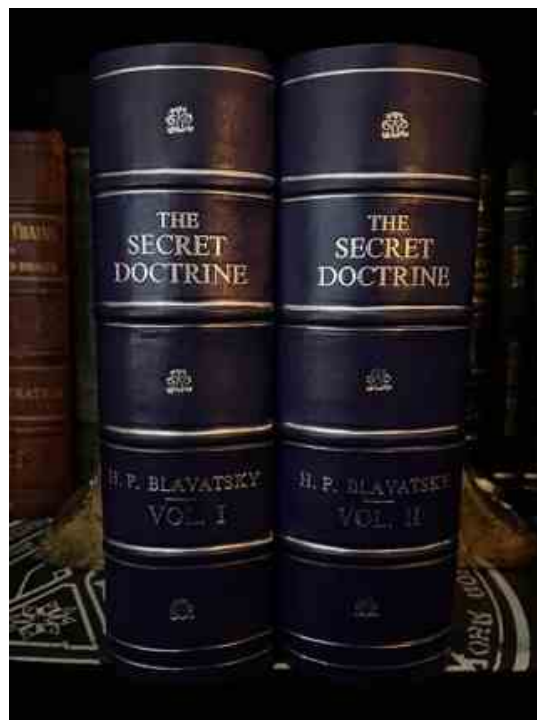
Next, let us look at the three propositions from *The Secret Doctrine* to see how we can get from these axioms to Truth. G. de Purucker writes somewhere that, the way the three propositions in *The Secret Doctrine* are now formu-

lated, they are perfect for our present stage of evolution. *More* than enough to see what they could mean.

We can say that these propositions are basic elements for a wise society. We find them in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine* – an extremely important part of the book – in which H.P. Blavatsky explains the general idea and the further outline of the work. When part I of *The Secret Doctrine* goes on to discuss Stanzas on cosmic evolution, it becomes clear that this knowledge and wisdom can only be given in poetic, symbolic language, in which we will have to do our utmost to build an image of it for ourselves, because we are coming to the limit of what we could understand.

The first Fundamental proposition

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



What is a principle? A tenet, as in the simple example of the axiom of the triangle, the essence of which is that it has three angles. No matter how you distort the thing, it always maintains that essence. Therefore, the Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Unchanging PRINCIPLE means that there is something that underlies everything, totality, infinity. *Everything* is a particular expression of that Principle. Man, animal, molecule, a divine being: it all gives

individual expression to that Principle: Eternal, Boundless and Immutable, an *abiding essence*. Boundless also means that we cannot ‘go back’ to the first Principle, because we always have *been* and always will *be* this Principle. So, all we will do in the future is express the Principle at the level we will have reached by then.

With our present level of development – the human level – any speculation about this is impossible because it is beyond human comprehension. The Principle is *everything*, the most fundamental premise we can have. The unity inherent in the Principle implies that we are all part of the same source, we *are* that same source. We give limited expression to it, but with this thought alone we should already be able to solve any environmental issue.

That we are *always* there also means that life and death are relative concepts. When we die we get ‘out of sight’, but our essence always remains there.

To simplify, let us compare the Principle to the ocean. We see in it waves, whirlpools and currents that cannot take place outside that ocean, because the essence of a wave is that ocean, is that water, the essence of a whirlpool is movement in that water. Or in other words, there is a molding, an expression in that Principle – a very limited one – but that is what we see around us.

Humanity will not be able to solve its problems with ideas like ‘we are all going to Mars’. If we take our present mentality with us, we will still generate the same problems. No, we have to solve them now by learning to live in harmony with this Principle, this Oneness. Therefore, we always have to remain alert whether we are consistent in our thinking.

If, for example, we come to the conclusion that something is disappearing in the sense of being lost, it cannot be in the light of the first Fundamental proposition. That gives us the opportunity to go back to where we started: did we understand it correctly, should we see it in another way? That can be very clarifying.

The second Fundamental proposition

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

‘The Eternity of the Pilgrim’ is like a wink of the Eye of Self-Existence (Book of Dzian.) ‘The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.’

In the infinity of the first Fundamental proposition there is an element of periodicity, cyclicity. And cycles we can recognize very well in our world. We see innumerable examples: life and death, seasons, day and night, the sun and whole solar systems revolve around even larger systems in our Milky Way. Cyclicity is so essential in all forms of manifestation: it shows the great cooperation of all consciousnesses with each other, helping each other to express themselves. All of Nature runs on cyclicity.

The third Fundamental proposition

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

We sometimes shorten the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul to the Hermetic axiom ‘So above, so below’. This is an utmost important idea to indicate that processes are the same on all planes. Constructing Absolute Truth works in this direction: looking through the forms to understand that those processes are in essence the same.

The obligatory in this Proposition derives from cyclicity: the totality does not consist of rest, but of periodic sleeping and waking, life and death, being or not being manifested in this outer world.

Theosophy speaks of *manvantaras*, great cyclic periods of 4 billion 320 million years for the life span of a planet, and of vast periods of rest: *pralayas* of similar duration. Then a new life cycle begins.

But in such an outer period of rest, not everything in infinity will cease. There are many different processes of cyclicity going on simultaneously, which all interact to produce manifestations.

The French mathematician and physicist Fourier already stated that all phenomena in nature are always an aggregation of cyclicities.⁽⁸⁾ If we add these cyclicities together, they lead to all kinds of apparently sudden and less sudden appearances and disappearances. But these are always based on cyclicities that produce aggregates of stimulating or inhibiting certain properties.

This Fundamental proposition also refers to Karmic Law. Karma, the law of cause and effect, flows directly from the Principle. Unity is a harmonious principle and therefore

there is always a movement, a force to restore disharmony. Thus we see that behind all phenomena there is a force — what we often call consciousness. Underlying every external form is a consciousness, an essence. This can express itself as an electron, a molecule, a plant, a mineral, an animal, a human being or a divine being: all are examples of the cooperation of an infinite number of consciousnesses. For every manifestation is composed of the cooperation of a very large number of beings.

Actively searching for Truth ourselves

If we think about these things for a longer time, we can come to wonderful insights about essence and boundlessness. We can also use these three Fundamental propositions to ask ourselves where we then find Truth. On the personal level, we may well achieve results, but we must keep in mind the image of the elephant who taught us a little truth. For Truth with a capital letter, we will have to see through personal perceptions and opinions and consequently follow the essence.

No one can prove the correctness of anything for us; we will always have to do that *ourselves*. If we do not want to fall into belief but really want to come to know, there is only one method: be active in our own research and self-training.

Finding Truth with a capital letter and becoming wise means growing in our thinking from a personal level to universal level.

References

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Does a country need an army?

Owning an army is not an issue that is widely debated. It is considered a *fait accompli* that every country must have one. This article does raise the question of the usefulness of an army.

Key thoughts

- » Fear stimulates the creation of an enemy image, and an enemy image creates fear.
- » Sustainable security can never mean insecurity for others.
- » Building an enemy image creates a bond with the perceived enemy.
- » There are countries that do not have an army.

Since the war in Eastern Europe, there has been a strong call for more armaments. Even pacifist politicians, who were convinced that there was more than enough money going to defense, now think they were wrong and that we have neglected our armed forces.

NATO countries have committed to spending 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. But few countries meet that standard. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, however, there is a strong tendency among NATO countries to meet this standard. Consequently, substantial investments are being made in the war industry. Incidentally, the standard that all rich countries had agreed upon for development aid, 0.7% of GDP, is hardly met by any country, even not approximately.

It is not only NATO countries that are increasing their spending on the military. No matter how poor some countries are, a substantial portion of their budgets is set aside for military purposes.

The increase in defense spending is so obvious that not even the question of whether all this money will bring peace closer is asked.

Stabbing incidents

To understand the underlying drivers of arming countries, it may be helpful to reduce the scale of arming. In many countries, the number of young people arming themselves with large knives is increasing alarmingly. This creates a macabre competition, as each knife purchased must be larger than that of the 'enemy'. Several stabbing incidents have occurred, some of them fatal.

There are some reasons why these boys – mostly they are boys – purchase such huge knives. Besides wanting to be tough and not be inferior to their friends, some interviews revealed that they are also *afraid*. They are afraid of other young people who also have knives and against whom they need to be able to defend themselves.

Now fear is always a bad counselor. Fear narrows consciousness and destroys much more than what you hold dear. The same is true for these young people arming themselves with knives. But why shouldn't it apply to countries?

Safety and insecurity

Countries also arm themselves out of

fear of the enemy, whoever that may be. A strong army gives the feeling of security. But this is only false security, because with a weapon you actually feed the feeling of insecurity. For you make yourself dependent on something outside yourself. And that is never enough. The knife can always be bigger. You can always produce more nukes. Moreover, other countries start to feel less secure, so they too start arming themselves. Actually, an arms race is a race in distrust.

The only way this can be broken is if people begin to understand that security can never be created if it applies only to one nation, or a group of nations. Real security can never exist by the grace of the insecurity of others. Even if people in a country perceive the situation as unsafe although the country they fear has no intention of attacking, that sense of insecurity is as real to them as if the country did have the intention of attacking.

Again, the comparison with youth armed with knives can be illuminating. The degree to which those with the largest knives feel safe determines the insecurity of those with smaller knives, even if those boys say they will only use the knife if they themselves are attacked. Unless you rise above the feeling of safety and insecurity, the safety of some is inversely proportional to the insecurity of others. Only when people trust each other and everyone has surrendered their knife is there *general* safety.

This truth is equally true in the international world. Only when all armies are abolished can we build a secure world.

Mentality

Now weapons in themselves are not the cause of war. That lies in human thinking.⁽¹⁾ But owning weapons means that you assume you will need them someday. You start thinking how and when you are going to use your weapon. You develop a mental thought pattern, which brings the act of violence closer.

If we do not want to harm the other person, then we do not need weapons. It is people who kill other people. Weapons are only the means by which they do so.

But owning guns encourages others to arm themselves as well, especially if they are fearful and feel threatened. In countries where there are many guns in circulation – legal or not – the murder rate is significantly higher than in countries where it is not. The probability of being killed by gun violence is about 77 times higher in the U.S. than in a country like Germany.⁽²⁾ Owning a gun invites one to use it. Just as the armed boys at some point start threatening with their knives or even stabbing with them, the more

a country arms itself, the more likely those weapons will be used.

Fear evokes fear

It is the fear of the other that leads to violence. Fear is a form of hatred: you have a negative image of what might happen. You want to protect yourself from that. Fear is always about yourself, about your own life, your own country, your own security.

Military personnel and many politicians advocate greater financial contributions to the military. That is the best guarantee for peace, they claim. So they assume the malice of the other party. They fear the other. National pride, national selfishness – your own country first – feeds that fear. People are afraid of losing what they have. It is because of that negative image of what could happen that people start arming themselves in any way they can.

The opposite of fear is love. And the more impersonal and universal love is, the less you are going to see another as threatening. This applies to individuals as well as countries.

Now in international politics love will not be spoken of easily, but why shouldn't a nation feel sympathy for another nation? Why not assume that the people of another country desire the same security and prosperity as we do? Why is such an idea not used as a starting point in approaching other countries?

Karma

From the knowledge of Theosophia, we can add another important thought to the above. The building up of the army follows the building up of a thought image about the enemy, perceived or otherwise. In fact, everything begins in thought, for every act is based on a thought. So making a negative thought image about the enemy encourages building or strengthening an army. The more negative we think about the enemy, the stronger we want to make our army.

However, we forget that by doing this, we forge a very close bond with the so-called enemy. Fear is a passive form of hatred. It is the creation of a thought image based on negativity. And thinking a thought is not non-committal. Constantly feeding an enemy image creates a mental atmosphere, which, especially if you think unselfconsciously, you are easily influenced by.

Thinking thoughts is never without consequences. In fact, a thought is the germ of an action. And the law of karma teaches that every action produces in character corre-

sponding consequences.

Thoughts of enmity, disgust and fear, make an impression in your consciousness. And because thoughts, like all living things, recur cyclically, if you keep thinking them and thus keep feeding them, they will keep growing. However, that same fear and disgust will also make an impression in the consciousness of the 'enemy', who will draw the same kind of conclusion. He too thinks thoughts of fear and disgust, but directed at the other. Thus an increasingly close karmic bond based on negativity is created.

Fortunately, politicians and military personnel often control their thinking and do not, like those guys with knives, go on the attack without considering the consequences. Yet history has countless examples where one, in itself small event, gave rise to a bloody war. Even if one is master of his thinking and does not resort to violence, by assuming hostility and maintaining or expanding the military apparatus, the negative bond with the 'enemy' becomes ever closer. Constant glorification of one's own group, accompanied by looking down on, or fearing, other groups, creates a mental powder keg in which only a spark is sufficient to ignite a bitter struggle that never resolves anything. In other words, just building an army out of fear of the enemy must lead to consequences. Unless something changes in the patterns of thought, the likelihood of violence becomes ever greater.

As mentioned, the true origin of war lies in the accumulated mental and emotional tension. The slightest attempt to reduce it contributes more to peace than the acquisition of the most sophisticated weaponry.

Leaving aside the fact that armies are constantly modernizing and the old weaponry is sold to less wealthy countries. It also often ends up in the hands of people from whom you certainly wouldn't want it. And when they do the most terrible things with these weapons, the country that possessed them is partly responsible. One more reason for disarmament.

Finally, we would also like to make the following argument here. Weapons serve to eliminate the enemy by killing his body. However, you do not kill consciousness. From the point of view of reincarnation and karma, by killing the other person you strengthen the negative bond with him, so that in the next life you will face each other as even greater enemies.

How do we achieve peace?

The big question, of course, is: who will be the first to dismantle his army? Who is brave enough to go through life

unarmed?

It is wise to think about this carefully so that you do not make hasty decisions. Change, if it is to be sustainable, must begin in the mind. Therefore, free your thinking from all enemy images. Break down the 'attack army' in your own consciousness. Everything begins with an ideal, an image of a peaceful world. See the other as a fellow human being, capable of noble deeds just like you. Try to see that the other is as much a thinking being endowed with reason and conscience as you are. See him as a brother. If you discard weapons but continue to think in enmity, insecurity and unsafety will remain.

The theosophical teaching concerning the essential unity of all things, contributes enormously to the development of such a conception. We must learn to see that universal brotherhood is not a beautiful sentiment, but a reality. All life comes from the same Source. You can constantly expand your image of the community you are part of: your village, country, continent, and so on. After all, countries together also form a community whose members share the same basic needs. This basic idea helps lay a foundation for peaceful international relations.

Peace work is a long and gradual process. But it must be started sometime. There must be someone who takes the first step, sets a good example and invites the other to lay aside their enmity and weapons.

Costa Rica as an example

Is a country without an army a utopia? Certainly not. There are 23 countries without an army. True, most of them are small states, such as Monaco and Liechtenstein, or they are island states that effectively have no neighbors. Yet even the relatively large country of Costa Rica has not had an army for more than 70 years. This Central American country has even included in its constitution that it does not have an army for reasons of principle.

In 1948 there was a civil war in Costa Rica because of a disputed election result. José Figueres Ferrer, a politician initially exiled, after returning to Costa Rica, had formed an army with which he won the battle. He drafted a new constitution, which included that the country should not have an army. Because his policies were based on strong democratic values - for example, women and people of color were given the right to vote, which was very unusual at the time - and he also pursued social policies, his policies found popular support. The military was retrained as police officers. The six-million-strong country now has a police force of 7,500. Figueres resigned after 18 months,

although he was later elected president two more times. Meanwhile, Costa Rica is one of the most stable countries in the region. Unlike Costa Rica's neighbors, such as Nicaragua and El Salvador, for example, it has always been immune from war. After World War II, Costa Rica purposefully initiated and concluded cooperative and peace pacts in Central America, including *Pact of Amity*, with Nicaragua in 1949 and the *Esquipulas Peace Agreement*, an initiative in the 1980s to resolve the military conflicts that had plagued Central America for years.⁽³⁾

Rather than spending money on weapons, it spends it on education for all, including the internationally renowned University of Peace, which trains international students. The university develops projects on peace education, ecology, human rights and resolution of conflicts of all kinds.⁽⁴⁾ Unfortunately, not all the violence has disappeared. A major drug-smuggling route runs through the country, which the police sometimes crack down on violently. Nevertheless, Costa Rica proves that you can build a prosperous society without an army.

The alternative of nonviolence

In human history, there have been many who called for nonviolence. World teachers like the Buddha and Jesus proclaimed the doctrine never to resist evil with evil. Aśoka, the Buddhist king from the third century before our era, advocated negotiation and not violence to solve problems. More recently, we know people like Tolstoi, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. who sought to achieve their ideal through the path of nonviolence. All of them were reasonable people.

It would be good if the obviousness of an army were questioned and other ways of keeping or achieving peace were considered. One could retrain the soldiers of all countries as policemen to provide peace and order at home. Such a corps would have a serving function, like the watchmen in *The State* of Plato. In addition to domestic security, the officers could assist in all sorts of public affairs and disasters.

Some of them could form a broad international police unit that could protect the waters. A broad public discussion about national security and how to contribute to world peace would be highly desirable. And in doing so, let us dare to broaden our perspective to include the *international community*.⁽⁵⁾

Lao tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 57:

Rule a nation with justice.
Wage war with surprise moves.
Become Master of the universe without striving.
How do I know this is so?
Because of this!

The more laws and restrictions there are,
the poorer people become.
The sharper the human weapons,
the more problems in the country.
The more ingenious and clever people are,
the more strange things happen.
The more rules and regulations,
the more thieves and robbers.

Therefore, the sage says:
I take no action and people reform themselves.
I keep the peace and people become honest.
I do nothing and people get rich.
I desire nothing and people return to the good
and simple life.⁽⁶⁾

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Questions children ask

“Why does the earth rotate?” A question a father faced recently as he biked through the woods with his five-year-old daughter. The question took him by surprise, and he could not manage to answer right away. Perhaps you have experienced it yourself, a young child who, seemingly out of the blue, comes up with a particularly profound question that you cannot answer straight away. How do you answer these kinds of questions if you do not exactly know the subject yourself? And how do you avoid throwing around incomprehensible technical terms? This is easier than you think.

Key thoughts

» It is our duty to answer children’s questions. Questions arise from wonder and enable children to develop their thinking abilities.

» The profound questions children ask are signs of the re-expression of the reincarnating part of man; the immortal part in which lessons learned from past lives are embedded.

» A general or universal answer leaves room for the child, to think it through for himself.

It is important to always answer children’s questions; we might even say that it is our duty to give them an answer. After all, questions come from wonder and enable children to develop their thinking skills. And wonder is an essential step on the road to wisdom and thus to truth. It is therefore our responsibility to help our young *colleagues* getting started. We know from young children that they are still open and uninhibited. They are pure and unbiased, have no preconceived opinion and it is therefore easier for them to ask questions or give answers that are not steeped in facts. Questions that deal with the essence of things. At a certain age, children begin trying to understand the world around them. They wonder about all kinds of things. Many parents will recognize this *why phase* all too well.

This wondering and questioning are extremely valuable traits. By not just assuming something, but investigat-

ing it, children learn to think logically and independently. Plato says with good reason: *philosophy begins with wondering*.⁽¹⁾ This is where the search begins. Wonder stimulates intuition. It challenges. It urges the search for answers.⁽²⁾

Can you imagine what happens when their questions are answered with “*that is something you do not understand yet*” or “*I do not know*” without the proposal to look for an answer? Wondering requires an active attitude. It requires stimulation of the natural innate curiosity to understand life and requires enthusiasm to approach the truth, alone or preferably together. When a young child’s quest is discontinued or hindered early on due to lack of support, this is a great shame.

Above our everyday thinking consciousness

Children can become fascinated by the universe, they want to know

everything about nature or about our humanity, subjects galore. But occasionally there is a question that stands out. What the questions we are referring to here have in common, is that they exceed above our everyday thinking and give rise to thought. “Where do they get these questions anyway?” you might hear parents or grandparents say, when faced with such a question.

The answer is very simple. Children get them from themselves. The profound questions children ask, are signs of the re-expression of the reincarnating part of man; the immortal part in which the lessons learned from past lives are embedded. There is something in the children, something they developed in a past life, that is now coming out again. And this requires asking questions, because the child is curious, it wants to keep developing.

One aspect that we can take into account and that helps us to stimulate a child along the way is the perspective (level of consciousness) from which children ask questions. This is often different from adults. When a child asks a question, you can have a small conversation to find out exactly what she or he wants to know. Is the five-year-old girl waiting for a physics formula to explain why the earth rotates? Most likely the answer is no. Young children are usually not at an intellectual level yet.

A child once asked, “Why do people quarrel?” The child may ask that question because he heard something about war. But the opposite is also possible: a child asks the question “Why is there war?” because his parents are fighting. In a conversation you can find out together that human beings have a composite nature and can act from their Higher or Lower Self. Finding out the right background of the question is therefore very valuable.

Can an answer be wrong?

But what if you really don't know the answer or, even worse, if you give a wrong answer? Are you not sending a child in the wrong direction then?

We can also turn the question around. Is there just one right answer to a profound question? Is there only one way to get a child started by giving it hints so it can think things through on its own? The answer to this is “no”. The answer we give is always related to our own development. The more we understand about a subject, as well as a child's deeper needs, the better we can answer questions about it.

Every answer is limited and there is always a better, more stimulating answer possible. As long as we clearly state that the answer we give is based on our own understanding (‘in

my opinion ...’) and should not be taken as an established fact, you can answer. You can keep in mind here that a general or universal answer leaves all the space for the child, to think it through for himself.

First aid with difficult questions

According to Gottfried de Purucker, the fourth leader of the Theosophical Society Point Loma, children's questions that contain wisdom also require a wise answer that keeps them wondering. But how does one give a wise answer? How do you stimulate someone's developing ability to think, or inspire a child to further investigate something?

In his book *Questions we all ask*⁽³⁾, Gottfried de Purucker describes how we can answer the sometimes profound questions from children. Also in *Lucifer* we have previously addressed this topic, namely in the article ‘Questions children ask ... and what to answer according to Gottfried de Purucker’ by Bouke van den Noort.⁽⁴⁾

An intuitive question deserves an intuitive answer

Do not give a completely rounded answer. A brief suggestion is often enough to satisfy the child at that moment. You can trust that if not, a follow-up question will come naturally. Give the child space to think about it on his or her own. To the question, “Where do we come from?” Gottfried de Purucker gave the succinct answer, “From the past life” and nothing more.

Answer in all simplicity. An intuitive question needs an intuitive answer. Our children's questions touch us because they deal with essential matters of life. Our answer should be limited to the essentials and therefore it does not always have to be intellectual or scientific. When a child asks, “Mommy, you are already 47 and I am 5, are you going to die sooner?”, the answer, “I think so, because I have lived longer, and I will be tired sooner than you. So, I'm going to rest sooner. Because when you are very tired, you have to rest. But I'm not tired for now,” suffices. Always answer. If you really do not know an answer, you can give an analogy in the form of a fairy tale or myth or suggest looking for the answer together. Another option is to ask a counter question. For example, “What do you think of it yourself?” A fun exercise to stimulate wonder together with your child is to read fairy tales and ask each other questions about them that are not easily answered with “yes” or “no.” For example, “Why do you get in trouble if you lie?” (Pinocchio).

Gottfried de Purucker gives us a number of tools to keep the momentum of the question and the process of awakened thinking going. In the box on the previous page we have listed the most important suggestions.

The Final Answer

Unable to answer his daughter's question, "*Why does the earth rotate?*" immediately, the girl's father said he was going to look it up and come back to it.

His search began on the Internet. Soon he came across *YouTube* videos with physics explaining inertia attributing the cause of the rotation to chunks of rock clumping together in the early genesis of the earth and our solar system. Besides the fact that the veracity of those theories could not be verified, the question of why that motion then ever started simply remained. We know from the fundamentals of Theosophy, that there is a force at work behind matter. The fact that the earth rotates on its own axis is not a cause but a consequence of an underlying force.

His search continued but did not lead to a satisfactory answer. His daughter's question called for a different approach, one that focused more on the essence. After reading Gottfried de Purucker's suggestions in *Questions we all ask*, the father's answer therefore was, "*All living beings move, the earth rotates because it too is a living being.*" It felt strange for him to give this answer, but it proved sufficient at the time. The girl was satisfied with the answer.

A question is an answer in progress

A few days later, the girl was at the playground with her mother. She was on a merry-go-round and the mother told her daughter to hold on tight or she would be thrown off the equipment.

As they walked home, the girl asked:

"Mommy, the earth rotates, right?"

"That's right," the mother said.

"Then why don't I fall off?"

The mother was silent for a moment, pondering the question. The girl continued:

"In the playground you told me to hold on because otherwise I would fall off the merry-go-round. Well, the earth spins too and I'm not holding on to it. Why don't I fall off?"

At first the mother wanted to start explaining gravity. Then she remembered Gottfried de Purucker's tips and replied:

"You don't fall off because you belong to the earth. Just like we belong to each other."



What would you answer?

Children's questions will keep coming. That is a gift, it makes us think which allows us to expand our consciousness. We are challenged to take a closer look at fixed ideas again and for that we should thank our children.

The subject of *rotation of the earth* has not come up again with the five-year-old girl and her parents. The topic she is now concerned with is, "Why is the earth warm inside?" We challenge you. What would your answer be to the girl? We'd love to hear it!

In addition, we are curious about your experiences. What questions have children around you asked? How did you answer them? How did this go? We would love to receive these stories. We want to come back to this topic regularly, in *Lucifer*. You can send them to lucifer.red@stichtingisis.org and we will publish (part of) these submitted questions and answers. Your answer may raise great questions again.

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What are the consequences of culturing meat?

In several countries, firms are experimenting with cultured meat. Developments in this field are moving very fast. All the more reason to examine this with theosophical insights: what are you doing, and what consequences does this process have for both animals and humans?

Key thoughts

- » You can cultivate meat cells by growing animal stem cells in a bioreactor.
- » Large scale production of cultured meat requires just a few animals; however, you need large amounts of nutrient-rich growth medium.
- » If you want to understand the consequences of this process, you will only get a complete picture if you have insight into consciousness and reincarnation.
- » Mankind does not need cultured meat.
- » Developments in this field are moving very fast: every reason to keep a close watch on them.

What is cultured meat?

Cultured meat is meat grown from the stem cells of adult animals, in a bioreactor, which is a laboratory vessel that provides a stable environment for growing cells. Cultured meat is also known as cultivated, cell-based, lab-grown or in vitro meat.

How does one attempt to grow meat?

The production of meat from separate cells is still in the experimental phase, especially if it concerns *scaling up*. Numerous variants are being tried out, but the general outline of the process is:⁽¹⁾

1. You extract, by biopsy, some stem cells from the muscle or fat tissue of an adult animal, for instance a cow. By the way, do not confuse this type of *adult* stem cells with *embryonic* stem cells. Embryonic stem cells are universal: they can grow into any kind of tissue. *Muscle* stem cells are more limited in their possibilities.
2. You purify these stem cells and place them in a suitable growth medium, culture medium (liquid

containing growth substances). In addition, you induce these cells to start multiplying. You let them divide dozens of times — what they would never do in the ordinary situation, within the tissues of a cow.

3. Once you have enough stem cells, you add certain signal substances that cause the stem cells to transform themselves into mini-muscle fibers.

4. To turn these loose-floating mini-muscle fibers into real layers of meat, the fibers have to attach themselves to each other. This can be achieved by adding molds (scaffolding matrices) and connective tissue cells.

If you now grow layers of fat cells using the same method, you can later make a mixture of meat and fat to imitate the taste and texture of regular meat.

So, from the stem cells of one cow, you can theoretically grow a large amount of meat. In this article, we use the culture of cow stem cells as an example. But there are also many experiments carried out around the world to cultivate sheep meat, goat meat, fish meat and even leather.

The estimated benefits of cultured meat

What are the (potential) advantages and disadvantages of cultured meat, as currently known or suspected? We begin by mentioning some advantages. These are easily found on websites about cultured meat, especially those promoting cultured meat.⁽²⁾

No animal is slaughtered in the production of cultured meat. If we were to switch to cultured meat worldwide, we would need to keep far less animals. Animal suffering will be strongly reduced compared to today. A small livestock population would also reduce the risk of epidemic livestock diseases such as avian flu and Q fever, and the risk of these diseases spreading to humans. Furthermore, cultured meat appears to be less environmentally damaging in several aspects: less greenhouse gases are produced (e.g., less methane emissions from cattle), and it requires less water, energy, pesticides and antibiotics. And the need for space may be smaller, but that depends strongly on the chosen growth medium. This last selection, which growth medium to use, is a very essential one, as we will show in the paragraphs below.

The disadvantages of animal serum as growth medium

Until recently, researchers often chose an animal growth medium – called ‘serum’ – when they wanted to grow cells in the laboratory. This was convenient because such serum contained all types of substances needed to keep single cells alive and functioning for a longer period of time. They often chose *fetal bovine serum* (FBS). This is made from the blood of unborn calves. These are fetuses in pregnant cows that are slaughtered: cows that go to the slaughterhouse while being pregnant. The blood is drawn from the heart of the fetus while this fetus is still alive (the mother cow has already been killed).⁽³⁾

So we can put a big question mark over the ethical propriety of the method. This serum also has some other major drawbacks, such as contamination with viruses. Therefore, several research groups are intensively looking for alternative, serum-free growth media. This work is still going on, so we cannot say yet whether the investigated alternatives will be suitable.

A special difficulty presents itself when we start *scaling up* the production of cultured meat. Then we need a lot of growth medium with a high concentration of nutrients (such as amino acids and glucose). Where do we get these huge amounts of nutrients from, to serve as food for the growing stem cells?⁽⁴⁾ The various possible sources of nu-

trients each raise questions. We will explain this by mentioning three possibilities.

Properties of alternative growth media

Nutrients could be extracted from the so-called ‘residual streams’ of the current animal feed industry. Such a residual stream is relatively inexpensive. But it seems extremely inconsistent if you design a technique that is supposed to make us less dependent on the livestock industry, and design the process in such a way that you actually make yourself dependent on this same large-scale industry (i.e. the fodder industry).

Another source of nutrients being considered is the cultivation of algae, cyanobacteria, yeasts or plants that are induced by *genetic intervention* to produce nutrients or growth factors. These techniques are already commonly used. You can then extract those substances from these organisms, to create a growth medium for cultured meat. But what are the consequences of such DNA interventions? We have discussed this question extensively in previous Dutch articles in our journal *Lucifer*.⁽⁵⁾ Now we will only mention one point, namely, that we force these organisms to develop themselves in a very one-sided, specialized way. We are making ‘super-specialists’ of them, instead of giving these beings the opportunity to follow their own inner growth path, bringing out *all* their potentials in a balanced way. So, what problems will these beings encounter in the future, when they reincarnate and bring their one-sided experiences with them?

A third possibility is: you get all those nutrients from ‘normally’ grown, non-genetically modified plants. But that means, that the production of cultured meat still requires large areas of agriculture and lots of water. And perhaps also, depending on the crop, manure and pesticides. This nullifies a considerable portion of the hoped-for environmental benefits of cultured meat.

In short: much is still uncertain, in the field of large scale use of growth mediums. Until now there does not seem to be a technical ‘golden solution’. Is this not one of the cases where we humans, in trying to solve a set of problems, resort to techniques that in turn raise a new set of problems — sometimes more difficult than the first ones?

One thing we know for sure: we must continue to watch the rapid developments in this field with great alertness in the years to come.

Why would we want to grow meat cells?

An essential question that cultured meat raises is: why

should we engage with this technique at all? What fundamental need does it fulfill? After all, we can live very well, and function meaningfully as human beings, without eating meat. And if we consider the many disadvantages of large-scale livestock farming, for humans and animals, the landscape, the environment and the climate – facts which are now common knowledge – why not solve the problem at its core, by eating less or no meat?⁽⁶⁾

Meat is not a necessity in life. Many people love it because they are personally attached to it: to its taste, or its image, or the tradition or some other kind of attachment. The development of cultured meat maintains this habit. It still normalizes the consumption of meat. By looking at eating meat from a broader view, we can easily see all the disadvantages for animals, humans and the environment. Those who keep this broader vision in mind will be able to build other habits from their own insights and moral motivation. Theosophy gives us a profound underpinning of that wider vision, as we will show below.

What Theosophy adds to this picture

The description of the process and the potential advantages and disadvantages given above, is based on current scientific and technical knowledge. This description does not take into account a fact taught in every major religious philosophy in the past, namely, that the processes in the outer world are caused and driven by consciousness. Or more precisely, by consciousnesses, by countless beings who can differ enormously among themselves in development, in capacities.

A cow is not merely a body, but is an animal consciousness that has embodied itself in an appropriate instrument, namely the cow body that we perceive. A human being is a human consciousness, enveloped in a for him appropriate body. And all these bodies are collaborations of numerous primitive, little-developed beings: organ beings, cell beings, atomic beings, and so on. These in their generality are called ‘life atoms’ in Theosophy. Every consciousness that embodies itself attracts a particular set of life atoms, which corresponds to its own character.⁽⁷⁾

Consider too, there is reincarnation in all kingdoms of Nature. All beings are eternal at their core, embodying again and again. Each being is born, gains valuable experience during its outer life, dies after a short or long time, and after a rest period returns to the outer realms to be born again. And its experiences in each incarnation normally allows the being to take a step forward in its inner growth.

Looking from the Ancient Wisdom point of view, cultured meat raises many questions. After all, when we talk about cultured meat, we are talking about something ensouled. Cultured meat attracts countless *beings*, for whom this is an opportunity to embody themselves. We manipulate *beings*, to realize one of our desires. And what consequences do we thereby evoke? What are the consequences of cultured meat for animals and humans, and for these organ beings and cell beings and atomic beings?

Everyone understands how important it is to predict what consequences we evoke by new techniques in advance. Only then can we direct those techniques in a valuable direction from the beginning, when it is still relatively easy to do so. We address three questions in the coming paragraphs: (a) does meat from a bioreactor have a different character than meat from a slaughtered animal? (b) what do we do when we grow cells outside the protective sphere of the being to which they belong? and (c) what might be the long-term consequences for humans and animals?

These three questions certainly do not constitute a complete list. But they will hopefully give us some starting points for further research, for building up our own vision, which will later enable us to make well-considered decisions regarding our use of cultured meat.

Does meat from a bioreactor have a different character than meat from a slaughtered animal?

Cultured meat consists of animal cells and therefore has *the same character* as ‘regular meat’. However, cultured meat does differ substantially from so-called ‘meat substitutes’ which are made from vegetal sources.

What do we do when we eat? We feed on the building materials and energies (the life atoms) of the bodies of other beings. These may be animal or plant beings. In either case, karmically, you connect with the beings whose bodies you consume. That is logical, because you influence them. Our human influence can be large or small. Take cow meat, for example. You know as a consumer that a cow has lived in certain conditions – more or less animal-friendly – and that it is slaughtered when it is still relatively young, just a few years old. By the way, bulls rarely live beyond six months, after an unhappy life. These are interventions that cause suffering and also have an inhibiting effect on the inner evolution of the animals involved. So by eating cow meat, you connect with those beings in a discordant way. You build a karmic relationship with them, the consequences of which will sooner or

later have to be harmonized.

A second reason why you connect with those beings when eating their bodies, is that the cellular beings and molecular beings of a cow become temporarily part of our human body. There is a mutual influence. Meat has an animalizing effect on our constitution, which partly depends on our individual susceptibility to it.

Cultured meat has an animal characteristic, an animal vibration, too. Eating plants has a less degrading influence, because the evolutionary difference with us humans is larger. Plant consciousness is considerably less vital and desire-like than animal and average human consciousness. There is less similarity. So, its influence is smaller. Furthermore, many plants, such as grains, are harvested approximately at the time when they would naturally die.

What do we do when we grow cells outside the protective sphere of the being to which they belong?

To consider this second question, it is useful to touch upon another part of Theosophy. As said above, every incarnating being starts a collaboration with a large group of other beings. It attracts less advanced beings, who form his body. That group consists in part of his 'regular team' of life atoms: beings who also formed his body in his previous lives and with whom he therefore has a long-term bond, through several lives.

Those lower beings are attracted to the *force field* that emanates from the guiding consciousness. Within that field, that sphere of life, they find their own place, taking up their role in the functioning of the body. Within this sphere, they find the right circumstances for them to evolve and make inner steps forward.⁽⁸⁾ These 'right circumstances' consist of the *directing, protective and purifying*

influence of the force field of the leading being.

Now, what are the consequences for the cellular beings which are attracted to cultured meat, thus embodying and reproducing *outside* the sphere of influence of the animal 'master-consciousness' to which they originally belong? So, outside the guiding, protective and purifying atmosphere of a specific cow consciousness? It is good to further think about this. We only touch upon a few directions in which to think. Are these cell beings more susceptible to specific external influences, when they are grown in bioreactors? Do these cellular beings build some kind of karmic relationship with the people working in the cultured meat industry, and with the consumers? And how will that bond manifest itself in the future?

What might be the longer-term consequences for humans and animals?

This third question flows partly from the second question. The cell beings who are attracted to cultured meat will sooner or later be reborn in the body of the animal consciousness that was and is their 'master', their emanating source. In other words, the cell beings who belong to the body of a particular cow, and who are temporarily 'trapped' in cultured meat, will sooner or later reincarnate again in the body of that same cow. Do these cell creatures then behave the same as they did before? Do they again conform to the guidance of the animal being?

Consider that in the bioreactor these cellular creatures are forced to do things that are not normal for them. To give some examples: adult stem cells have to divide dozens of times to create cultured meat; they never do that in a cow's muscle. Next: normal muscular tissue is always formed in narrow cooperation with blood vessels, fatty tissue, tendons and nerves. So, muscle cells are used to work together with many other cell types. But in the bioreactor this does not happen; it is just unorganized muscle tissue, at least in the first phase of the process. And even when combined with fat cells, the muscle cells still do not function for the locomotion of some being.

These beings take these experiences with them to their next embodiments as accumulated habit patterns. What does this mean for their future development? Can they still be born in the body of an animal and fulfill their normal function? And if they can, will they become somehow an 'odd man out' in that body? Do they perhaps have a *communication problem* with the other cellular beings and with the leading animal consciousness? Do they perhaps go their own way (tumors)?



Bioreactor for cultured meat.



Implications for humans

So far we have only written about the fate of the animal cell beings ensouling the muscle cells in the reactor vessel. But can cultured meat production also affect human life atoms? It certainly can.

Here is what is going on: the life atoms that build our human bodies travel through all the realms of nature according to their character in the periods when they are not incarnated in our bodies. Some of our life atoms will travel through the animal kingdom.⁽⁹⁾ So they can be attracted to cultured flesh and incarnate in it. After which, sooner or later, they return to the body of the human being that is their source. So, they may return with unnatural habitual patterns.

Conclusion

There is every reason to pay close attention to the developments occurring around cultured meat. Perhaps the newly evoked problems will prove more subtle, more hidden, and thus more difficult to recognize and control, than the already known problems we try to avoid through this technique. In this article we have tried to set out that in artificially bred meat you make use of large groups of living beings, which you attract and influence in a very particular direction. And precisely these same beings form the living building blocks of humans and animals.

We humans are responsible for what we do to other beings, even out of ignorance. Would it not be wiser to unflinchingly rise above our attachment to 'normal meat', and focus on eating much *less* or *no* meat? And so, creating an animal-friendly livestock farming?

We will also have to see these things in the light of the development of the whole society. We see rapid technical development on all fronts, but our ability to foresee all the consequences, and to use these techniques only for the good of the whole, always proves too late and too inade-

quate. To this development is now added yet another new technique (growing meat): one that, if mastered, could probably be applied to human stem cells too. We may be able to create human tissues, of several types. Will we be able to prevent this next step? We see a line in these developments: techniques are gradually approaching the point where we can create *life forms for our own benefit*, for our usually very short-sighted purposes.

Why should we not take the wise road, by focusing our scientific goals on preventing suffering, serving the necessities of life, based on the *fundamental* equality of all beings, whatever their level of evolution may be? We would still use our intellect to its utmost, but always enlightened by our growing understanding of the Laws of Nature.

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Five hundred times a day?

The Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 in the Arabian Peninsula, in the city of Mecca, which later became Islam's most important holy city. He died in 632 in Medina, a city that later also became holy.

One fine day on a mountain near Mecca, Muhammad received an exalted vision. Through the angel Gabriel, he received during several years the message, that would later spread across the Arabian Peninsula and even later across the Middle East, North Africa and then the entire world – the Islam – in the form of a sacred text known as the Qur'an. In the beginning, it was not easy. There was resistance, persecution, assassinations and opposition, but eventually the message caught on and spread.

Muhammad was a caravan driver and merchant. One day a pious man, who was also a merchant, approached the Prophet and asked him, “Muhammad, how many times a day should we pray?” The Prophet looked at him with his penetrating gaze and, after a few minutes of silence, replied, “Five hundred times.” The man looked at him in surprise and replied, “But that is impossible! We have to take care of our children, and raise them; we have to provide for our daily needs, buy and sell goods, sleep and rest, eat, and so on. We don't have time for that!”

The Prophet looked at him again with his penetrating gaze, changed his mind and after a few minutes said, “Fifty times a day!” The man sputtered again and repeated the same arguments: that he had to raise his children, work, take care of the camels, rest from the arduous caravan journey. The Prophet looked at him again, thought for a moment and finally said, “Then only five times a day.” The man thought that was a wise decision, because the prayers were short, it did not interfere with his life, and he called on Allah five times a day from then on.

This traditional story is like a meaningless fairy tale, but it is not. In fact, it is a very profound teaching and a universal message for all mankind. However, we must try to understand it.

When the Prophet speaks of praying five hundred times a day, he is not referring to a ritual to be performed five hundred times. He means that the believer must attain a

state of spiritual elevation that allows for a kind of permanent state of compassion, a permanent willingness to help one's neighbor, a permanent reverence for all beings, a state of wonder at all existence, an attitude of gratitude toward everything and everyone. Everything that comes, you will accept as a heavenly gift. He talks about a sublime state to be attained, a kind of state of permanent prayer, even as you perform the tasks of life; whether it is raising children, herding camels or selling your products.

It is similar to what in Buddhism is called a state of inner clarity. That is, you are in a state of “concentration” twenty-four hours a day, even during sleep. Or it corresponds to the state to which Paul refers in the *Letter to the Galatians*, 2:20 “... not I live, but Christ lives in me.” The Prophet knew what he was talking about and, like all prophets, spoke in figurative, symbolic, parabolic language. And, as another prophet once said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”



Developments in society

What happens when you construct a human embryo?

A group of researchers recently created something resembling a human embryo, without using an egg and sperm cell.⁽¹⁾ They did so by reprogramming ‘pluripotent’ stem cells — cells which have the potential to differentiate into many, though not all, cell types.

Below we briefly describe what the scientists did and what their vision was. Then we show how completely different our vision is from the spiritual point of view: from the fundamental idea that consciousness is the organizing and guiding force behind all things.

How did the researchers create a synthetic human embryo?

To begin with, we must realize that each embryo is surrounded by a layer of placental cells (a layer that later develops into the placenta) and that each embryo has a yolk sac and chorion sac (which, like the placenta, perform functions during embryonic growth). Anyone attempting to make a synthetic embryo must therefore grow all three cell types, and then allow the cells to take their proper place.

The researchers began, as mentioned, with ‘pluripotent’ stem cells. They managed to reprogram these cells through certain procedures into cells that can form *all* tissue types: ‘naive stem cells’. These cells were then treated in three different ways. One group was left as it was. These cells became the true embryonic cells. One group was given a mix of chemicals that made them grow into placental cells, and one group was treated to grow into yolk sac and chorion sac cells.

The surprising thing was this: when the scientists simply mixed these three types together and watched what happened, it turned out that in one out of every hundred cases that mix *organized itself* into something that looked like an ordinary embryo. In short: the embryonic cells were in the middle, they had a kind of egg yolk and they were surrounded by the placental tissue. This structure was created without the use of a fertilized egg.

Why was this attempted?

What use did the scientists see in their experiment? Their

idea was that with a synthetic embryo, scientists are allowed to observe many more processes, do many more experiments, than with a naturally created human embryo (for this there are strict rules worldwide, strict ethical limits). Because, in their reasoning, this is not a real embryo.

A laboratory in Maastricht, The Netherlands, has already exploited the discovered technique: researchers from the MUMC+ and the MERLN Institute are now growing thousands of such synthetic embryos (called blastoids) in special culture plates. Their goal is, among other things, to study how identical twins arise.⁽²⁾ Thus, we should already be talking about a large-scale application of synthetic human embryos.

But that emphatically leaves the question: what is a constructed embryo? An important question, becoming even more important when the scientists manage to create something that highly resembles, and increasingly behaves like, a natural embryo.

What *is* such a synthetic embryo?

What are the scientists actually doing? To shed more light on this, we must ask ourselves what the term ‘self-organization’ means.

And here we encounter the question whether the usual hypothesis among scientists, that matter exists by itself, without an underlying origin or force, is correct. It is generally believed that matter is unconscious and aimlessly obeys certain ‘laws’. That therefore matter is never directed to achieve anything.

We think there is very little evidence for this hypothesis in nature. We see purposeful action everywhere, orderly phases of growth everywhere. And when it comes to embryonic development (of humans, animals and plants, among others) this is even extremely evident.

The theosophical basic idea is, that living beings are the source and organizing force behind all phenomena, and so also behind a cell (there is a cell being working behind it), a chemical atom (there is an atomic being working behind it) and a human embryo (there is a human consciousness working behind it, which is in the process of reincarnat-

ing). These are only three examples: in fact, consciousness fundamentally *everywhere* works behind the forms.

If, in this experiment, one out of every hundred groups of cells ‘organizes itself’, that can only happen *because an organizing consciousness is then operating behind it*. After all, that organization does not come out of the blue. If scientists realized this, they would recognize the need to consult the great religious philosophies and philosophical religions to understand more about consciousness, in short, they would resort to Theosophia, the origin of these systems of thought.

It follows from Theosophia that a self-organizing embryo can arise only if a guiding being has connected itself in the background with this clump of cells and thereby seeks to manifest itself, seeks to form a vehicle for itself. Thus, what scientists do is not free of ethical consequences. They manipulate certain groups of beings. By their actions, *the natural cyclical processes of these beings are interrupted and guided into another direction*, because the researchers offer them an artificial opportunity of manifestation. This manipulation may stem from the ignorance of the researchers, but that does not change the fact, and the damage they may cause.

What beings are we talking about?

What kind of entities could be ‘captured’ in this way? On this we will make no certain statements, partly because more types of beings could be involved, and partly because we do not have the capability to distinguish with precision between them.

However, we can distill some possibilities from the basic theosophical principles. The entities who connect with such an artificial clump of cells with its many kinds of limitations, in an environment that offers far fewer possibilities than the natural environment in the womb, will presumably be primitive, little developed beings with a great urge to connect with the external world. These can be the lowly developed beings who inhabit the astral worlds, such as the so-called ‘elementals’ and ‘elementaries’.⁽³⁾

Ethical action requires: knowing what consequences you cause

In all cases, whatever the kind of beings we attract by these experiments, we influence the cyclical growth processes that these beings go through. Probably, the offered opportunity of physical manifestation re-activates their material attachments. Thus, we delay their detachment processes

— which work precisely for the benefit of these beings.

What we want to say above all is: creating such synthetic embryos goes against the natural detachment processes that some beings undergo. So we are not helping the beings concerned by offering these kinds of artificial manifestation opportunities, quite the contrary. In this regard, we can learn much from the warning contained in the well-known story of Frankenstein’s monster. A forced artificial birth can evoke much suffering, both for the trapped being and for all other people involved.

The researchers began their experiments partly based on the hope, that more knowledge about embryonic growth would lead to better treatments of embryonic abnormalities. Theosophically, healing people sustainably requires a very different approach than doing outside interventions. Seen from reincarnation, karma and the mental influence on our physical condition, we can resolve diseases from within (see for example our special issue on ‘Learning from the Pandemic’).⁽⁴⁾

And what we would further like to underline: there is only one way to gain real insight into the causes and backgrounds of embryonic growth, and that is a study of the Theosophia, including reincarnation and karma. The Theosophia is an inspiring and coherent philosophy of life, by which any current problem can be solved. And that includes the important ethical questions surrounding the creation of synthetic human embryos.

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Questions & Answers

The Masters of Wisdom

How do the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion know who is suitable as their disciple and who is not?

That is a very good question. The Masters have many more abilities than we do. They can discern in people whether they are selflessly working for the well-being of others. One of the Masters compares his situation to someone who sits high on a mountain peak and sees every light in the valley. And then he says: as soon as we see even the slightest *Tathāgata light* – that is the buddhic light of supra-personal idealism – then it is our duty to kindle it.

So this is how they recognize in the ‘world of shadows’ their natural allies. And if you persist in compassionate idealism for a long time, you will naturally come into contact with a Master.

What happens then? The answer to this question is very simple: testing. This is how it happens now and this is how it was always done in the past, such as when entering the Mystery Schools of those days.

The Masters can find out to a great extent what a person's inner state and quality is. They can read us, as it were, as we would read the newspaper. However, they do this only with their esoteric disciples, who have explicitly given their permission to do so. They never do this unsolicited.

It is no problem at all for the Masters

to see what thoughts I have had over the past few days, because for them, so to speak, that is just a sheet that rolls by. Even though they are able to do that, it can still happen that disciples who start out promising, thereafter, in difficult circumstances, turn out to stumble and then ethically succumb. For that reason, anyone who wants to become a *chela* (disciple on the Path of Compassion) is given a *probationary period*, a testing period of at least seven years. In this period, the Masters observe how the candidate behaves during the trials offered by daily circumstances: whether he can indeed uphold the flag of spiritual quality and compassion. Whether he practices his ideals continuously, every hour of the day, every day of the week. In H.P. Blavatsky's time, there were several of her coworkers who insisted on becoming a *chela*, for they wanted to come in touch with the Masters. They chose to enter into such a testing period, although Mrs. Blavatsky had warned them very clearly that you will then be confronted rapidly with *all* aspects of your character: not only the good aspects but also the less than good ones, including many tendencies and attachments of which you were hardly aware until then. And that this confrontation with yourself would occur in the situations of practical life. So these ‘tests’ are not placed on the path of the disciple by others, no, they are the accelerated karmic results evoked by the disciple himself, by his self-willed attempt. In short, the disciple is *testing himself*.

Unfortunately, as it turned out afterwards, there were very few who

passed the trial. Many failed, and sometimes in a very morally unworthy manner. They possibly had a far too rosy view of themselves, and when the lower elements in themselves emerged with vigor, they had no adequate response.⁽¹⁾

Thus, the Masters always judge the suitability of apprentices by a test period during which the apprentice must prove himself in practice. Before that time, it would be irresponsible to give someone deeper knowledge; knowledge which could be misused, with very unfortunate consequences for humanity and the person concerned.

In this regard, it is worth citing that in H.P. Blavatsky's time there was a discussion between A.P. Sinnett, A.O. Hume and the Masters. Sinnett and Hume advocated the establishment of a kind of ‘school of occultism’, in which everyone would be allowed to be introduced to what might be called ‘practical magic with astral forces’. In short: a school in which the things you learned could be used to manipulate, influence things and fellow men. To which the Masters said: our master, the Mahā-Chohan, would not think about it. For, he said, as long as there is the slightest degree of desire for self-benefit among these people, the consequences would be disastrous. The quality of the people we work with now, certainly does not allow for that. In short: every candidate must first be tested and tried for pure selflessness — by himself.

The necessity to protect humanity from the misuse of knowledge was, in the past, the reason for the establish-

ment of the Mystery Schools, which required all kinds of onerous conditions for entering. Eventually, all those outer Mystery Schools, such as those in Eleusis and Samothrace in Greece, had to be closed nonetheless, because the disciples were found to no longer adhere to the inner discipline. But the collaboration of Masters – the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion – with its worldwide ramifications, with its Teachers and disciples, is still there, will always be there, and works continuously (often hidden from the average person) for all humanity.

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How does remote communication occur between Teacher and disciple? And how do you know if you are actually dealing with a true Teacher, or with another person?

In our time, almost everyone has a cell phone: you can just dial a number and you get the desired person on the line. The method of the Masters is based on a similar principle. On the mental plane, the Masters make contact with their disciples by purposefully attuning the thoughts they want to transmit, to the character of the students' mind.

Is the communication between Teacher and pupil always going on perfectly? No, there can be 'noise on the line'. The disciple can also receive influences from people other than the Masters, and must learn to discern them.

When A.P. Sinnett, the author of *The Mahatma Letters*, understood that he could also receive documents (a letter,

for example) from people who pretended to be Masters but were not, he presented that problem to the Master. The Master then agreed with him, to do this: 'if we are aware that this is happening and we can indeed do something about it, then we will make sure that on that particular document, in the margin, is written "not *from* us, nor *by* us", in Tibetan.'

Another example, a somewhat more painful one, is about the writer Mabel Collins. Mabel Collins, she believed, had her writings dictated to her by a Master. Two of the books Mabel Collins wrote (*Light on the Path* and *The Blossom and the Fruit*) contained thoughts that, H.P. Blavatsky later indicated, came from another, 'opposite' source. For the former book, therefore, a note was added to that passage to remove the misunderstanding.⁽¹⁾ In the other book, even before its publication, H.P. Blavatsky made corrections to the final chapters⁽²⁾ Mabel Collins was indignant about the latter. Yes, replied Blavatsky, the content sends the reader in completely the wrong direction, for there was a disturbing influence. This remedial action by Mrs. Blavatsky frustrated the writer greatly. How, she may have thought, could such influence enter into me? Well, so it did, because in her there was still an opening for a misleading influence, which she did not yet recognize.

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Can Teachers also stop unwanted developments? If so, has that ever happened? And if so, why did this not happen in the development of the atomic bomb?

This is an important question in this context. In *The Mahatma Letters* – a fantastic book to read, still; the most useful edition being the one in which all the letters are put in chronological order, because then you understand the developments best – the Masters explain some occult rules.

First, *there is karma*. Every thought and action evokes corresponding consequences, which we will encounter sooner or later on our path. This universal law of cause-and-effect cannot be tampered with by anyone. All beings are subject to it, and no one can prevent it from working out that way in someone else.

Second, *there is free will*. Each human being can and must make its own choices. Each must independently choose his life path and learn from it, for we can only develop our dormant abilities ourselves, by our own efforts. We can most certainly warn each other in the process, and exchange our insights. It is our duty as human beings to help each other. But then the free choice should always remain with the other person.

So if someone uses his free will to make something like an atomic bomb, that is his own karmic responsibility (and that of all those who assisted him). The Masters say very emphatically: the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion inspires, but does not impose. We advise, they say, but do not enforce, because that would be a restriction of free will.

The latter, unfortunately, is often done by people who want to manipulate others for their own benefit. But the Masters never do that, knowing that

each person has his own responsibility.

Could the Masters have stopped the development of the atomic bomb? At the most they could have inspired Einstein, or anyone else who was open to it, in the hope that a light would have gone on in that person. Which might have made that person wonder: what is the consequence of what I am now inventing or constructing? And maybe some hints were given; who among us knows about that?

If you know the history of the construction of the atomic bomb – see for example the movie ‘Oppenheimer’ – you will see that it was mainly Oppenheimer who combined all the necessary techniques. He technically translated Einstein's theory into such a bomb. It is a clear case that his actions were not inspired by the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. The karmic consequences will have to be borne by him — and all who contributed to it, and favored it.

So: (a) there is free will and (b) there is one's own karmic responsibility. We inspire but do not force.

Does the Lodge of Wisdom belong to the top of our hierarchy or is it the top?

That depends on what level within the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion you are talking about. Part 10 of G. de Purucker's *Esoteric Instructions*, which is about this subject, describes the hierarchical structure of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, which has a universal scope. For example, the Masters speak of the existence of their ‘Chief’, the Mahā-Chohan. But also the Mahā-Chohan is inspired by an even loftier being, and so on.

You can imagine it this way. Nature consists of many levels of existence, according to a spiritual-hierarchical

arrangement. At *each* level, all those beings inspired by compassion as their guiding motive, who are self-effacing, group themselves into a branch of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.

The difficulty of this thought is: even in the spiritual realms, which consist of highly developed beings (as seen from our point of view), not all beings need be members of the Lodge of Wis-



dom and Compassion. Only some of them have come to the decision to sacrifice every individual development for the good of all that lives. They are the inspirers and leaders of the other part — beings who, of course, can also grow toward that decision, if they wish.

If you fail in your test period as a disciple of the Lodge of Wisdom, will you get another test period in the future?

That's right, certainly, provided you apply again with the same compassionate motive. William Quan Judge, the second Leader of the Theosophical Society Point Loma, was very clear about that. He said: if you fail, if you stumble, get up and try again. That way you turn your misstep into a valuable lesson, which will help you avoid similar problems in the future. Should you lose courage after failing, you will fall back, which would be very unfortunate.

As human beings, we are all learning. Especially in difficult circumstances, we must learn to maintain the right attitude and vision. And if we once make a mistake in that and possibly handicap our development for some time, so be it: that is no reason not to keep trying. Let us understand this very well: if you live out of compassion for compassion's sake, then you are not concerned with your own development. Then you are only concerned with: can I work for Compassion? And we can guarantee, there is always room and opportunity to work for Compassion.

Agenda

Symposium 2024

The Mystery of Man *We are more than our bodies*

Sunday, September 15, from 18:00 to 22:30 CEST
Admission is free

On location and online

The symposium is on location (Museum Sophiahof - Sophialaan 10, The Hague), but also online via Zoom. You can indicate how you want to participate in the registration form.

Program

18:00 - 18:10 - *Welcome / Introduction*
18:10 - 18:30 - Lecture: Never did I not exist
18:35 - 18:55 - Lecture: The Mystery of Man
Break (5 minutes)
19:00 - 20:00 - Workshop: Get to know your selves
Break (1 hour)
21:00 - 21:20 - Lecture: I am because we are
Break (5 minutes)
21:25 - 22:25 - Workshop: Heal society, heal yourself
22:30 - *Preview upcoming season and closure*

“Man know thyself,” was the stimulating text above the entrance to the Mystery School at Delphi. And with good reason. For when we truly know ourselves, we know the universe. What is meant by this profound, ancient statement?

That we are more than our bodies, is something we have been told by all world teachers. It is the common thread throughout all world traditions. But what *is* this ‘more’? That is the main question we will collectively explore during the lectures and workshops of this symposium.

We affirm that it is possible to know and develop the deeper layers within us — the different selves. If we succeed, we will be more able to eliminate any disharmony in ourselves and thereby contribute to more harmony in the world. Because the more we are able to gain deeper insight into who we really are, what limitless possibilities lie

within ourselves, the clearer the solutions will present themselves before our inner eye. The powerlessness that many are experiencing, will give way to inner conviction. A conviction that we ourselves hold the key to tackling and resolving the suffering that is currently taking place. For information and subscription: blavatskyhouse.org/symposium/.

Course Universal Wisdom

Starting again in October

This course is held online, via videoconferencing. It is based on the core of wisdom that underlies all major religions and philosophies. Everyone can get to know this **Universal Wisdom**.

This core of wisdom encourages spiritual growth. Spiritual growth can only take place with genuine research into Truth. Therefore, do not just believe what we say, but examine it! Only assume that which you have experienced as true through independent research. Only in this way you can develop a practical philosophy that helps to answer vital questions and solve problems in the world.

See: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/courses/>

Next International Theosophy Conference

What is a Human Being? **“Man, Know Thyself”**

Date: July 18-21, 2024

Location: online

We will explore what a human being is in the broadest theosophical sense and hear short lectures followed by study groups.

See: <https://www.theosophyconferences.org/>.

Colophon

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I.S.I.S. Foundation

The name of the Foundation [Stichting] is
'Stichting International Study-centre for
Independent Search for truth'. Its registered
office is in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The object of the Foundation is to form a
nucleus of Universal Brotherhood by
disseminating knowledge about the spiritual
structure of human beings and the cosmos,
free from dogma.

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other speeches and lectures, issuing books,
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earnings. Any profit earned from for
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general beneficial activities. For I.S.I.S.
Foundation, this is spreading the Theo-
sophia. (We refer to the statutes, aims and
principles for further information.)
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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)