

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

18 million years of
Theosophia, 150 years
of Theosophy

*Fundamentals of the
Esoteric Philosophy*

The danger of being
against

Dealing with psychi-
atric patients

Why do we travel?

Questions children ask
- part 3

Good example does
follow well

2025



18 million years of Theosophia,
150 years of Theosophy

The three fundamental propositions of Theosophy

As far-reaching as the Theosophical teachings are, they are based on three fundamental propositions. For a proper understanding of Theosophy, it is necessary to consider them carefully.

The first fundamental proposition: Boundlessness

*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. (...) One absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being.**

And although unknowable, this absolute reality is the foundation for all life.

The second fundamental proposition: Cyclicity

*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'.**

All beings are imperishable 'sparks of Eternity', passing alternately through phases of active life and inner rest (sleep or death), in a ceaseless cyclic process.

The third fundamental proposition: The essential equivalence of all life

*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.**

The same One Life flows through the hearts of all that exists. Everything is alive. There is no dead matter. Therefore, everything is essentially equal. Everything latently possesses the same faculties as the greater whole of which it is a part (Over-Soul) and gradually unfolds these inherent faculties, re embodying itself continually (second proposition). This growth of consciousness always takes place in interaction and is boundless (first proposition).

* Source: H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*. Volume I, p. 43-47 (pagination original edition).

For more explanation, see our website:

blavatskyhouse.org/about-us/what-is-theosophy/

Interested in our lectures?

Watch them on our YouTube channel:

[youtube.com/
@theosophicalsociety-tspl](https://www.youtube.com/@theosophicalsociety-tspl)

Editorial page 106

18 million years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy

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In the English lectures from February till June 2025, we will place the impulse given by H.P. Blavatsky and her Masters in 1875 in a much broader context. What did the modern theosophical movement achieve and what are the challenges now?

Herman C. Vermeulen

Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy

A collaboration between Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker to deepen the understanding of Helena P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*

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In October 2023, the Portuguese translation of *Fundamentals of Esoteric the Philosophy* by Gottfried de Purucker was presented. For this occasion, Johanna Vermeulen gave a lecture on the inspiring role Katherine Tingley played in the realization of this book. This lecture provides insight into the age-old esoteric teaching method used by Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker.

Johanna Vermeulen

The danger of being against How do we hold on to our ideal?

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If the pursuit of an ideal means being against others whom you assume are hindering the ideal, it will never be realized.

Barend Voorham

Dealing with psychiatric patients

page 120

An article on psychiatric patients and how we might best help them.

Barend Voorham

Why do we travel?

page 128

We travel a lot these days. It is almost a given to fly to the most exotic destinations during vacation. Why do we travel? And why does the wise Lao-tse say: "Without going out the door, you can know the whole world."

Erwin Bomas

Questions children ask - part 3

page 133

On a radio program, the host talked with children about reading and books. One of the children asked during the conversation: "How many empty books are left?" What vision would be behind that question? How would you respond, in such a way that you stimulate the child's wonderment?

Astrid Kramer

Good example does follow well How an elementary school teacher made her pupils eager readers

page 134

Elementary school teacher Anne Steenhoff was shocked by the reading level of her pupils. Instead of waiting for the principal to take action, she took things into her own hands to improve the situation. How? By being the reading-example herself.

Bouke van den Noort

Developments in science page 137

» What is the character of a solar being?

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» Lectures on Sunday

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Editorial

Since the dawn of the human mind, efforts have been made to inspire man. The article *18 million years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy* reflects on that. This article also announces what actions the Theosophical Society Point Loma will undertake to bring the theosophical impulse deeper into all sections of society.

We live in troubled times. It is Kali-Yuga. But this ‘iron age’ does not mean that everything must go the wrong way. It much more means that developments are taking place at a furious pace. It is up to us to move those developments in a more spiritual and compassionate direction. That is *Lucifer – the Light Bringer’s* mission.

To turn these developments in a more spiritual direction, requires a different vision of life. That vision is explained clearly and profoundly in Gottfried de Purucker’s *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*. That book has been translated into Portuguese and at its presentation, a fascinating talk about the role of Katherine Tingley was implied, which we include in this issue.

The will to change society can lead one to fight against the current system or against those in power. This is not without danger. There is a wiser way to achieve a different society, as we read in the article *The danger of being against*.

In our present time, for many, the pressure is so high that they ‘freak out’ and contract a mental illness. There is tremendous suffering in these respects. Medication does not *cure* someone with a mental illness. But what then? The article *Dealing with psychiatric patients* offers some ideas, which by the way, are important for everyone because the line between a psychiatric patient and a ‘healthy’ person is paper-thin. Another phenomenon of our time – as of almost all times, for that matter – is that people travel. Some refugees have to. And there are also labor migrants. But it seems that travel is an almost natural thing. Why do people travel and is there such a thing as an *inner* journey? The article *Travel* goes into this in depth.

Lastly, in *Good example does follow well*, we describe an enthusing example of what it means to be a teacher through inspiration and resonance. And what results you obtain then ...

Since we consider interaction with our readers very important, we always welcome questions. In this issue you will find some questions on a wide variety of topics together with our thoughts on them. There are, of course, the wonderment-inducing questions from children. We are delighted to continue our series on questions asked by children. By the way, we invite you to come up with your own answers to these questions.

In a short article we answer the question: what is the character of a solar being? We will relate this to the starquakes that astronomers observe. Then there are three scientific questions: one about the artificial sweetener, *sucralose*. There’s a question about our solar system, and in particular about a slow-moving planet even farther away from the sun than Pluto. And a question on history is not skipped either: why did the Romans make metal dodecahedrons, which is still a mystery?

As Plato rightly said, ideas rule the world. The ideas that we hope to spread with *Lucifer the Lightbringer* – and we are doing so in four languages – can help us continue our pilgrimage together to a more spiritual and compassion-based world. And you know: the more we think about these ideas, the stronger they become. Therefore, we welcome every question, comment and response.

The editors



Key thoughts

» 2025 is an anniversary year for the Theosophical Society. In our lectures, we wish to show that the impulse of 1875 stemmed from an organization which already has been active for 18 million years.

» New insights give us more light, but also show us what needs to be cleaned up, otherwise no progress can be achieved. Understanding Theosophy and its consequences properly, requires a rigorous and disciplined approach.

» Theosophy is certainly as scientific as science can be. To appreciate the methods of the Masters at their true value, one needs a knowledge of Theosophy.

» Our attempt is to make Theosophy more popular, but always in accordance with the principles explained in the original sources.

» The more you understand Theosophy, the greater the area it covers.

» As Theosophists, we cannot do enough to spread this knowledge. And the best form of dissemination is to be a living example, showing its value in practice.

Herman C. Vermeulen

18 million years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy

The end of the year, long live the new year

We look back on a troubled 2024. It is a year filled with problems, including wars. It is a year in which the dove of peace had no place to land. A year in which Theosophy can and could do much, but in which it has not always had the opening it deserves, or found openings, to let this wisdom shine through.

In that light, the coming year is important. In 2025, it will be 150 years since the *Theosophical Society* was founded. So it is an anniversary year. H.P. Blavatsky and her Teachers gave the impulse in 1875 that resulted in a theosophical organization, which branched out into a number of different theosophical organizations after Blavatsky's death (in May 1891).

The coming period is going to be an engaging and intensive time for the Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL). In the second half of our 2024-2025 lecture season, from February 2025 through June 2025, the TSPL is hosting a series of important lectures. We want to bring the 150th anniversary of this impulse in a much broader light than just focusing on

Blavatsky. We wish to show that she was the figurehead of a much larger organization, which already has been active for 18 million years and which is not, or very little, known in our world. The founding of the theosophical organization in 1875 has been one of its many attempts to spread Theosophia again among humanity, carried out by beings beyond ourselves, in order to help humanity to become more human and rise above animal behavior. Hence, our lecture series until June 2025 has as central theme: *18 million years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy*.

What do we want to disclose in these lectures? We will build up a coherent picture of the central theme by viewing it from a number of perspectives. This article does not have the space to elaborate on all of these. We will do that over 5 months in 20 lectures of about 1 hour each. We hope to release the contents of these lectures in an integral publication at the end of the lecture season.

In short, we would like to give attention to the entire iceberg, not just its tip. We would like to explain the 1875 impulse, led by Blavatsky and her Teachers and their associates, as

an expression of an organization that has been active for 18 million years, and known, among other names, as the *Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion*.

That for the past 150 years Blavatsky has served as the face for all the theosophical knowledge spread in the world, in pure or polluted form, cannot be doubted. But more on that later.

More information about the lectures you will find on our website www.blavatsky.org. Did you miss a lecture? Our lectures can be watched again on our YouTube channel, Theosophical Society Point Loma - Blavatskyhouse.

We are now 150 years on

The question is justified: where do we stand now, after 150 years; what has been achieved? Have we achieved what we wanted to achieve? We hope to discuss this in detail in the lecture series in the first half of 2025.

These 150 years have not been trouble-free. Far from it; growth must apparently be accompanied by pain — although, according to our view, it does not have to be, if we live more in harmony with the great laws. New insights give us more light, but also show us what needs to be cleaned up, otherwise no progress can be achieved.

These insights can be applied for the benefit of humanity in the broadest sense, but can also be used for one's own benefit — knowledge brings with it responsibility. There is no doubt that misuse of Theosophy for one's own benefit has occurred during the last 150 years. Understanding Theosophy and its consequences properly, requires a rigorous and disciplined approach.

Scientific method

The 150th anniversary of the theosophical organizations has not escaped attention outside theosophical circles. Indeed, scathing articles have been written about the work of H.P. Blavatsky and her Masters — which in itself is nothing new — by historians who claim to have scientific standing. What I am most troubled by, is the fact that scientific historians who have investigated Theosophy, the methods in Blavatsky's time, and the organization, the Teachers and their pupils, come to the simple conclusion in their publications that it is all fake.

Let us take a look what is needed to write a scientifically sound article and get it published. Suppose I want to get an article published on the scientific view of relativity, in a well-reputed scientific journal. Then I need to show what course of study I took and at which universities I studied, in relation to the scope of the topic. I must indicate which

professional colleagues support my article and what their background is. If I have not studied the topic my article is about, my article will be rejected outright.

Our point is: did the historians mentioned above, take time to study Theosophy before drawing conclusions? In Theosophy we talk about forces and energies that are hardly known even to current science. People who have not studied Theosophy, have trouble with that. Yet it is a scientifically recognized method to tentatively assume such a proposition (the existence of undiscovered forces) and then see if it is supported by the facts.

It is not uncommon in science to work on the basis of a hypothesis or proposition. For example, the speed of light is still not definitively determined. Einstein assumed, stated, that light propagates equally fast in all directions. This is a statement that to this day has not been proven. And let us be clear: proving that theorem is certainly not a simple matter. But the speed of light is the unit by which we measure the entire universe. Suppose Einstein's theorem does not always turn out to be true, what remains of our present view of the universe?

Studying the Masters' methods

Theosophy is certainly as scientific as science can be. And to recognize that, you have to delve into Theosophy. One of the great stumbling blocks is the value of historical theosophical documents. The largest part of the correspondence from the Masters is kept in the *London Library*. Those letters were precipitated. That process means: you create letters or other documents by precipitating carbon from the air onto paper, in the form of handwriting. Now every day many hundreds of thousands of photocopiers do exactly the same thing, electrostatically, by precipitating carbon or more suitable substances (we call it 'toner') onto paper. How strange it must have been when this was done in Blavatsky's time (late 19th century)?

Another process that is not understood is the communication between the Masters and H.P. Blavatsky, and between the Masters and their disciples. Consider this example: if I call someone now via my and their cell phone, and ask him, "Will you write down the following text for me and pass it on to xxx?" And I also call someone else, also via their cell phone, and I quote an additional text to the first message, asking, "Please combine the two." So what is the result? A document consisting of different handwritings that may also show a somewhat different use of language. This same principle explains the different styles sometimes seen in the Masters' writings.

To appreciate Blavatsky's work and the methods of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion at their true value, one needs a deeper knowledge of Theosophy. But even more important is to test this knowledge independently and then *live to it: being* this knowledge. Only by applying it in daily life does one experience the value and power of this knowledge.

Struggle to keep the teachings available in its pure form

True Theosophists are engaged in a constant struggle to keep Theosophy pure: to keep it available in its pure form, but also to keep alive the knowledge about its source and the way of working of the Hierarchy of Compassion. Often, with the best of intentions, Theosophy is popularized to attract more interest. But we should not want to compete with the attractively made social media. Theosophy is of an entirely different character. On social media, we are certainly not the most popular channel.

Now the attempt to make Theosophy more popular is certainly not wrong. But this should not be done by adapting original sources and documents where we feel it is needed, thinking it is an improvement. Write or speak in popular terms, yes, but do so in accordance with the original sources. This is quite a challenge. State clearly: "As I understood the principles."

Is Theosophy definable?

This is another important question, if we want to keep Theosophy undogmatic. The word Theosophy comes from the two Greek terms 'Theos' and 'Sophia', drawn together to form 'Theosophia': the Wisdom of the Gods.

This knowledge is not a confined field. The definition of Theosophy depends on who is studying this wisdom and what that person has understood about it. So, an exact description or definition is virtually impossible. The more you study Theosophy and the more you understand about it, the greater the area it covers. Consider the definition that W.Q. Judge uses in his book *The Ocean of Theosophy*: "Theosophy is that ocean of knowledge which spreads from shore to shore of the evolution of sentient beings; unfathomable in its deepest parts, it gives the greatest minds their fullest scope, yet, shallow enough at its shores, it will not overwhelm the understanding of a child."⁽¹⁾

The aim of our theosophical work

The fact that Theosophia was made known again to the world under the name Theosophy in 1875, has had a great

influence, directly and indirectly, on human thought. Although, mankind has not been aware or started to become aware of that.

This wisdom has been spread for 18 million years, with the main motive being *Universal Brotherhood*: a brotherhood based on the Laws and knowledge of the Universe, and on the Wisdom derived from this. The notion of Brotherhood should give us the understanding of how to interact with each other. How we can further develop as human beings, without falling into battles with each other, but rather by helping each other.

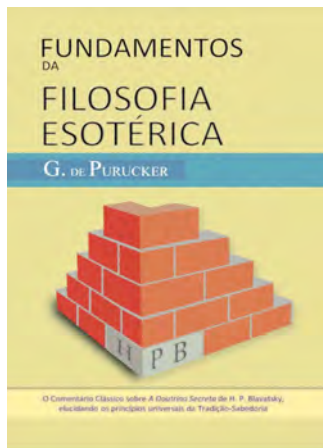
Humanity was and still is at the beginning of a new cycle, a new phase in its evolution. We are therefore living in a critical phase. Much depends on it, for most of humanity: it will determine much of humanity's progress. Therefore, as Theosophists, we cannot do enough to spread this knowledge. And the best form of dissemination is to be a living example, showing its value in practice.

We express the wish, on behalf of all our fellow Theosophists, that the coming period will bring us to deeper understanding.

Reference

1. William Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Several editions. Chapter one, first sentence.
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Johanna Vermeulen



Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy

A collaboration between Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker to deepen the understanding of Helena P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*

In October 2023, the Portuguese translation of *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* by Gottfried de Purucker was presented. On this occasion, Johanna Vermeulen gave a lecture on the inspiring role Katherine Tingley played in the creation of this book. This lecture gives insight into the time-honored esoteric method of teaching that was used by Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker in the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society at Point Loma — a method that shows deep psychological insight. Since this lecture is also very valuable for English-speaking people interested in Theosophy, the editors decided to publish it in our magazine. And a welcome announcement: as of recently, this Portuguese translation is also available on our website and can be downloaded for free.

Friends, it is a real joy to be part of the presentation of the Portuguese translation of Gottfried de Purucker's wonderful book *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*. Our Brazilian friends asked for some background information, for a better understanding of its value and place in the Theosophical Impulse from 1875 up to now. And I would like to start with two thoughts.

First, before you start reading the book, please read the two short introductions. One from Trevor Barker and one from Kenneth Morris. These two combined form a real eye-opener. And the second thought is that although everyone sees it as a

book by Gottfried de Purucker, this is not *quite* true. Yes, his name is on the cover as the author. Yes, all the words in the books have been spoken by him. But when you know a little bit of how esoteric teaching works, then you understand that it was in fact his Teacher, Katherine Tingley, who was the real inspirer.

Let me explain it. In 1924, the year that the studies in *The Secret Doctrine* started that eventually were published as the *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, Katherine Tingley was the Leader of the Theosophical Society with its Headquarters in Point Loma, California. In 1891, William Quan Judge took over leadership from

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and Katherine Tingley succeeded William Quan Judge in 1896 and held this position until 1929.

The mission of Katherine Tingley

It is easy to understand what her mission as Leader was. She worked along three lines.

First, she trained and inspired students of Theosophy, especially members, to *live* Theosophy. She trained the members to build, and to ennoble their character. She trained self-discipline in selflessness.

Her whole Rāja Yoga education was based on this — to develop *wisdom* instead of mere *knowledge*. Only then can one recognize the given teachings in their inner depths. For it is the task of members now and in the future, to pass on the original teachings of H.P.B. and the Masters intact and unvarnished.

The spiritual impulse of 1875, initiated by the Masters Kuthumi and Morya and put into words in books and articles and instructions by H.P.B., came at the beginning of a new Messianic cycle of 2160 years. Meaning these teachings given from 1875 should remain intact for over 2000 years, accessible to all.

Her second line of working was that she trained her successor, Gottfried de Purucker in *teaching*, that is, in explaining these teachings in such an inspiring way that the heart of the listener awakens so that its deeper meaning can be understood.

Her third line of activity was her task to put *The Secret Doctrine* back in the center of attention among seekers of truth. From 1896-1924 (which is 4 times 7 = 28 years) she dedicated all her time and energy, supported by her well-trained team in Point Loma, to give a firmer foundation to the original teachings, as given from 1875-1891 by Helena P. Blavatsky.

Was this necessary? Yes, indeed. Over the years, these original teachings had fallen into the background worldwide, sometimes ignored altogether. An example: In some theosophical organizations, during that time, people were encouraged to study other writers, such as Krishnamurti, for example, *instead of* Helena P. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

The esoteric study method

In late 1923, Katherine Tingley made a call to begin a study of *The Secret Doctrine* to introduce Gottfried de Purucker's deep knowledge of *The Secret Doctrine* to her members. She started a series of studies which lasted 4

years, from January 4, 1924 to 1927. She made that call to members at the Theosophical Society Headquarters in Point Loma, but especially to the members of her esoteric school, the Lodge of Light. She thus gathered around Gottfried de Purucker a group of members who had studied *The Secret Doctrine* for many years.

She used the eastern method of study that one also finds with Plato — starting from the universal ideas and then going further and further into details, cycle after cycle, lesson after lesson. That is the way both the head and the heart *unfold* new insights or, as Plato says, *remember* these insights again from past lives.

Gottfried de Purucker's brief explanation of that method can be found on pages 288-289 of his *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*:

“We all possibly have heard of “contradictions” in *The Secret Doctrine*, or in our esoteric teachings. There are no contradictions there; there are *apparent* contradictions, if you like, but an apparent contradiction is really the figure of speech called a *paradox*. It is the famous old way of the ancient Schools of Occultism, to teach by paradoxes or by parables, as Jesus is said to have done. There is manifest a profound knowledge of human psychology in basing teachings on this principle. The aim is deliberately to arouse the mind, to astonish, to make the hearer *think for himself*. You cannot teach a child to eat or to walk by walking for it or by feeding yourself for it. It must learn to feed itself. It must itself learn to walk.

Similarly, students, neophytes, must learn to think for themselves, to stand upon their own feet. It is, I repeat, a very profound knowledge of psychology, of human thinking, which made the ancient Teachers, and makes our Masters of Wisdom today, to follow the same old principles, a method which our Teacher here has instructed us to follow when these studies were begun. You will have noticed that in no case has any subject been at first openly and fully stated or followed to its ultimate, first because it is impossible; second, because it was obviously necessary to say certain things first, trying to arouse attention, trying to arouse *honest* objections — not merely criticisms — but honest objections in your *own* mind which you yourselves must solve; and then later other aspects of the subject were brought out and other sides of the teachings were given. Some of you know this fact, of course; but I am speaking more particularly of our younger and newer members. This method is a system of teaching diametrically opposite to that pursued in the Western world since the downfall of

the Mediterranean civilizations. The popular method today is that of the pure brain-mind, of that mind which is mortal and goes to pieces with the death of the body. Its *forte* is the mere memorizing of times, places, names, dates, etc., in short, everything that can be memorized from books or daily occurrences, and stuffed into the brain; and this mind dies. That is one reason why we do not remember our past incarnations, because our minds were puny and dealt with little and evanescent things. But, Comrades, the memory of our past incarnations nevertheless inheres and remains in our higher natures, for this nature deals only with principles and generals; and some day, when we shall have passed out of and beyond our planet, we shall remember those past lives, ...”
That is what Gottfried de Purucker told his students.

The structure of the book

The first two meetings of January 4th and January 11th, 1924, are not in the original 1932 edition of the book. But the English text of these meetings can be downloaded from our website, and in the Portuguese translation you find the text just before chapter one. Why are these two meetings so important? Because Gottfried de Purucker, guided by Katherine Tingley, covers the most universal ideas of Theosophy: the three fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*. Therefore, please read this addition first before starting chapter one.

Each of the chapters of the book is the elaboration of the stenographic records of one session each. So after the three fundamental propositions, Gottfried de Purucker explains in the first 15 chapters – that is, the records of the first 15 sessions – the Seven Jewels of Wisdom, the seven main teachings of Theosophia. He addresses them one by one. But not as totally separate laws, but integrated in the larger vision of the three fundamental propositions. A seven-color rainbow — derived from *three* primary colors — derived from *one* white light.

In the next 30 sessions, chapters 16 to 45, he goes cycle after cycle each time a little deeper into all Seven Jewels or main teachings *in their combination*. He combines them into a greater understanding.

In the last three chapters, 46, 47 and 48, Gottfried de Purucker does not focus on *The Secret Doctrine*, but on the consequences of the knowledge in *The Secret Doctrine* for the student’s life: our decision to become a disciple on the Path of Compassion and, with the now acquired wisdom, to dedicate our life to the service of humanity. And this decision will eventually lead to becoming a Buddha, to

becoming at one with the Heart of the Universe. These are topics that H.P.B. teaches in her booklet *The Voice of the Silence* and in her *Esoteric Instructions*.

And almost all 48 chapters begin with a text from *The Secret Doctrine*, which Gottfried de Purucker elaborates on in that chapter. So my advice to understand the book even better is: find that same text in *The Secret Doctrine* itself and also read it there in its context.



The inspiring guidance of Katherine Tingley

Throughout the whole book you can recognize Katherine Tingley’s inspiring influence in the background. Three examples.

On page 9, immediately after a quote from *The Secret Doctrine*, Gottfried de Purucker says:

“We choose this as the general text of our study this evening. Following the Teacher’s instructions, as we understand them, it seems not only appropriate but necessary to open our study of the more secret matters of which *The Secret Doctrine* treats, by asking in what manner or by what method do we obtain an understanding and a realization of these doctrines?”

And on pages 37 to 38, he says:

“These meetings, as our present Teacher has told us so often, are not for purposes of intellectual study only, nor to amuse ourselves with abstruse and mystic knowledge; but mainly, firstly, principally, for the purpose of gaining a right foundation for right views, which shall govern human conduct. When we have this foundation we have the beginnings of all laws; we can affect the world not only by our own views and by our own acts, but by those of other members who will come in and swell our number; and, further, we shall be able in time to affect for good even the

governments of the world, not directly and immediately perhaps, but at least indirectly and in the course of time. All the horrible things that perplex and confuse and distress mankind today arise wholly, almost, out of a lack of right views, and hence, a lack of right conduct.

[...] We state here at once that the core, the heart, the center, of the Ancient Mysteries was the abstruse problems dealing with Death. These teachings we still have, and when the Teacher says that it is time to give them out, they will be forthcoming; she is the judge as to when this shall be.”

To show you how Katherine Tingley alertly ensured that Gottfried de Purucker *constantly* gave compassion a central place in his teaching, a third example. On page 303-304 he explains how the continents where the various Root-Races live, are destroyed at the end of such a Race. He states:

“When our Root-Race shall be drawing towards its end, the coming catastrophe will be shown by immense systemic and minor seismic and volcanic disturbances, announcing the submergence of our continental system and the emergence of new lands for the following Sixth Root-Race, the working of fire. When the Atlantean system fell, when the Atlantean continental system had its catastrophe which slowly overwhelmed it with flood, it was water which caused it. ...”

Then Katherine Tingley interrupts. She says:

“I would like to ask Professor de Purucker if he will make an explanation – which I think would be satisfactory to you, and which he could do much better than I – and show what will be the state of civilization, what will be the state of humanity, at the ending of these different races — when the end comes? How will evolution be marked? Will not those people who will seem to be the “victims” of the terrible catastrophe which comes at the end of every race, have the knowledge of the secrets of death, and look upon rebirth as a glorious release?

Prof. de Purucker.

I think certainly so; yes, it is so. The end of every race brings with it a perfection of what that race was striving to accomplish. And I dare say that if we could look back and know what took place when the continent of Atlantis sank, we should realize that even those comparatively few who by death left the physical body during that catastro-

phe, had the realization that what they had to undergo was no more and no less than merely one form of death inevitable to all men sooner or later. They knew better than we do now, although far more sunken in matter, that life is eternal, for, actually, *there is nothing but life everywhere!*”

The coming 2000 years of Theosophy

See here, friends, 48 chapters, 48 study sessions spread over four years. All recorded stenographically with the intention of publishing — to enable later generations of theosophists, you and me, to more easily understand the groundbreaking spiritual ideas in *The Secret Doctrine*. And it works! In our Point Loma Theosophical Society we have studied *The Secret Doctrine* and *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* side by side with our members, including members who had only been members for a short time. And their response has always been: “Now I understand so much better what H.P.B. means in *The Secret Doctrine* and what I can do with it in my life.”

Exactly as Katherine Tingley had wanted and anticipated, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* was officially published for a wider audience in 1932, during the leadership of Gottfried de Purucker. Nine years earlier, Trevor Barker, a lifelong close friend of Gottfried de Purucker, published *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*. Two standard works, in which the heart of Theosophia is anchored. Friends, with this short introduction I gladly contribute to the fantastic work done by the small group of Brazilian and other Portuguese-speaking theosophists. By *translating* this book, but above all by *studying* and *understanding* it, they have helped Theosophy to take another step forward, to remain available intact during the present Messianic cycle of 2160 years, for all who are seriously searching for truth. All praise and heartfelt congratulations on this achievement. I am wishing everyone here much inspiration in your study of this book *combined with The Secret Doctrine*.

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The danger of being against

How do we hold on to our ideal?

If the pursuit of an ideal means being against others whom you assume are hindering the ideal, it will never be realized.

Key thoughts

- » Ideals are never built by negative thought images. They are not realized when you focus on what you do not want and on those whom you think are standing in the way of your ideal.
- » Thoughts get stronger the more attention you give them.
- » Fighting against something, is counter-productive.
- » Violently destroying old structures unleashes destructive forces in human beings, which can never lead to a harmonious society.

Why is it that so many idealistic movements or individuals cannot hold onto their ideal? We see this strongly with politicians who, when in power, seem to have different ideas than when they are attempting to come to power.

In revolutions, this tendency does emerge very strongly. In a few months, the French Revolution, whose motto was Freedom, Equality and Fraternity, ended in an unbrotherly massacre. Even the revolution's initial leaders ended up under the guillotine. Other revolutions did not fare much better. Why did they fail to hold onto the ideal?

The fight against the other

Now complex questions usually do not have unanimous answers. Therefore, you can look at this question from different angles. You can ask to what extent an ideal is really an ideal. Is it perhaps just a cover with which you try to gain prestige and power? But there is perhaps an even more important reason. Which is that ideals are often fueled by negativity,

which clouds them and eventually makes them disappear altogether. By this I mean that for many it is easier to fight *against* something than *for* something. In your mind then, the injustice, the despised government, the corrupt president *takes* a bigger place than the positively stated ideal. And instead of fighting *for* your ideal, you fight *against* the government or *against* the president.

Don't we see this very often in society, even among people who in themselves have the world's best interests at heart? Campaigners, for example, are against the emissions of CO₂ or nitrogen and they fight against institutions that cause these emissions. There are actions against the war in Ukraine, against the occupation of Gaza, against admitting refugees.

The aversion to a group or person can even be so great that you ignore your own ideal because you fear that by doing so you are playing into the hands of 'the enemy'. A cynical example of this is when the European Parliament sharply weakened the

Green Deal – the policy to ensure nature’s recovery – for fear that otherwise, in the approaching European elections, people would vote for radical right-wing parties. Those right-wing parties had loudly announced their opposition to the Green Deal. So politicians let go of their own ideal because they are *against* these right-wing politicians who are *against* the Green Deal. Why, you wonder, did they not put their energy into activities to make it clear to the people that this Green Deal is necessary and better for everyone?

Thoughts

If you know what thoughts are, you understand that fighting against something is counterproductive. Fighting against something, even if with positive alternative proposals, is a negative way of being opposed.

In fact, thoughts are real existing things. They are as real as human beings, animals or plants. The Theosophia teaches that everything that exists is a living being, including thoughts. They are born, grow when nurtured, have their own nature and also die.

Thoughts are beings that have barely developed. They have no self-awareness and, like atoms – which are also alive – they automatically follow the laws of nature. And we humans constitute for them the laws of nature. That is, our habitual pattern determines which thought-beings we repel or attract and make grow.

Think of man as a being who is constantly sending out and receiving thoughts. What kind of thoughts we think – and therefore emit – depends on our character. Where do we focus our ‘antenna’? On thoughts full of selfless idealism? Or on thoughts of resentment and hatred because we are against something or someone?

Our attention is like food for thoughts. So the more we are against something or someone, that type of thought becomes stronger. Eventually there will be a host of thoughts of various orientations around a given subject.

Now thoughts, like any living being, are subject to cyclicality. That is, periods of activity, being present, alternate with those of passivity or rest. Humans themselves determine that cyclicality. Many of us will think a certain kind of thought in the spring, which returns the following spring. This cyclicality means that it is not easy to get rid of a thought because it has the karmic tendency to return to the person who thought it. Therefore, we should not feed thoughts that we no longer want to think. We should do that with persistence, because our attention, our focus on thoughts, is their food.

The best way not to feed a thought – or a certain type of thought – is to think thoughts of an opposite characteristic. Because your focus of thought determines what thoughts you think.

Therefore, think not what you *don’t* want, but what you *do* want!

Making your enemy stronger

When you fight against something or someone, you make your opponent stronger. You then feed that thing or that person with your thoughts. Without wanting or realizing it, you make the thoughts of what you *don’t want* more and more powerful.

As a result, not only do you yourself become increasingly negative, but you open the gate, so to speak, to the thought world of your opponent. After all, you are emitting thoughts, creating a mental atmosphere, which others can more easily be influenced by, and you yourself are drawing that influence into yourself. Moreover, you make your opponent’s thought world stronger.

Performing artists know this phenomenon. Many say they don’t care if a review of their performance is positive or negative. Bad is when they are not written about. Because even negative reviews draw people to theaters.

Something similar was observed in schools where the danger of drugs was strongly emphasized. In some cases, this actually encouraged young people to use drugs.

Something similar occurred to someone who began to think seriously about reincarnation because in her religious environment, the idea that the doctrine of reincarnation comes from the devil and stands in the way of true faith was constantly being hammered home. This negative attention eventually led her to accept reincarnation as truth.

Being against makes one blind

There is another important reason why *being against* can be dangerous. It blinds you. You focus so much on the enemy that at some point you no longer know what you yourself are for. You have become the embodiment of the negative ideas surrounding it. Conscious thinking is severely hampered and in the worst cases becomes completely disabled. You become preoccupied by negative emotions and thoughts, leading to a severe narrowing of your consciousness.

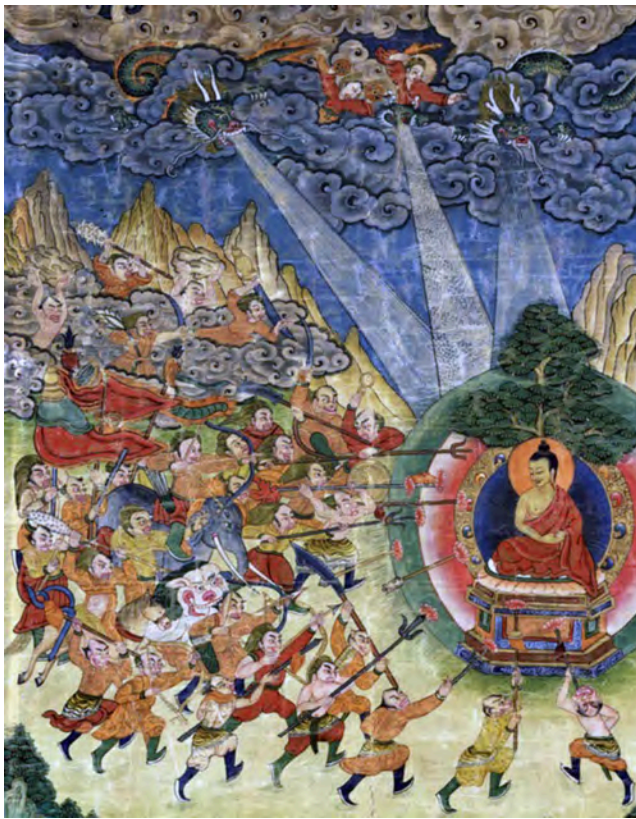
A clear example of this is the anti-corona protesters. They have such an aversion to government policy that they forgot what they themselves actually wanted. Their distrust

of the authorities dominates to such an extent that they unnecessarily oppose what the authorities are for, even if it goes against all logic. Extreme illustration of this is their sudden sympathy for Russia. Their dislike of the government eclipses common sense, and because Western countries consider Russia an enemy, they consider Russia a friend, even though this country has unleashed a brutal war and violates all human rights domestically.

The real Human Being

You can avoid this negative spiral if you realize that you can never be against the real Human Being. Every human is the expression of an essentially boundless consciousness. The essence of one human does not differ from that of another. It is the personalities that are opposed to each other. And by opposing a personality, you only make it stronger and provoke a counter-reaction.

Note: You don't have to agree with someone else's ideas. Those ideas can be downright despicable. Someone may be for slavery or deliberately pollute the environment because it benefits them. But abject ideas you fight by better ideas and not by reviling the person who proclaims them.



Temptation of Siddārtha by the evil forces of Māra. Siddhārtha does not fight but focuses on his ideal; he is above it all.

The ideal as a diet

Every person who quietly reflects on themselves will be able to perceive in themselves an impersonal ideal, because everyone is essentially a divine being. Although ideals may differ from one another in specifics, many characteristics will be the same. In that better world, there is always harmony, people treat each other kindly and compassionately. There is peace and justice. People can clearly see the beauty and correctness of this mental image.

However, if they harbor a desire to realize this ideal, it can fall out of focus in the harsh realities of daily life. Their attention is drawn to people and circumstances that prevent it from being realized. They focus their – negative – attention on their executive, politicians, big landowners, landlords or capitalists. They start fighting against them and against their ideas, forgetting their silently perceived, impersonal ideal.

Becoming aware of an ideal and the desire to live by it can sometimes become like a diet you resolve to follow. It works for the first few days, but then when cakes are offered at work, you forget your resolutions.

If we elaborate on the comparison with a diet, you can see how strange human behavior actually is when one tries to achieve one's' ideal by fighting against something else. Because in the case of cakes at work, you would then have to fight against your colleagues who treat when it's their birthday, or against bakers who bake cakes. Isn't it much more efficient if you stick to your diet!

Cyclical process

Now, acquiring new habit patterns takes time. If your body has become accustomed to a certain amount and type of food for a good number of years, then the atoms that tend to compose your body will naturally be attracted to you again. It is like a coiled piece of rope that when you unroll it, tends to coil up again. Moreover, all your actions – including your eating patterns – are based on thoughts. And like any living thing, these come back to us cyclically. It takes time and perseverance to change habits. A short-lived intention to eat less will bring little success. Every intention carries within itself the danger of not living up to it, even though deep down you know you should. It is like a vague statement of intent that you can very easily forget. This is why the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Real change always begins in thought. After all, underlying habits are thoughts. If you do not think substantially different thoughts structurally, your ingrained habits will constantly spring up like a jack-in-the-box, just when you

are trying to fight them.

If, on the other hand, the ideal really lives in you and colors all your thoughts, then you will not compromise with the wishes and desires of your personality. Then you make a *decision*. You appeal to your willpower, the spiritual will.

Living up to an ideal demands constant attention. You cannot slack off. The focus must remain on the ideal. You will have to be patient, because real change does not happen overnight. If you are impatient, you are going to force things, and the tendency soon arises to implement the change by means that are not so nice. Then you start to focus your thinking forces on those who, in your opinion, stand in the way of the ideal. The result is that the ideal degenerates and eventually finds itself in its opposite.

Does this not explain the psychological phenomenon that every revolution eats its own children? Doesn't negativity overgrow all noble thoughts? As with the diet you so easily forget, do the negative thoughts crowd out the mental image you perceived when you were quiet, gazed inward and knew how to be and how to act?

Henriette Roland Holst, expert by experience

Someone who can certainly be called an expert by experience when it comes to seeing an ideal lost is the Dutch poet, writer and active socialist, Henriette Roland Holst (1869-1952). Raised in a well-to-do family, she was struck by the immense poverty of the workers of her time. She devoted her entire life to uplifting these outcasts of the earth, both materially and spiritually. As a delegate of the SDAP (Social Democratic Workers Party), she met prominent politicians such as Karl Liebknecht, Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg at international conferences with whom she discussed on equal terms.

Initially she sympathized with the Russian Revolution of 1917, but it soon became apparent that the ideal of a world in which everyone shared in the prosperity and in which the rise in spiritual level of the population was being sacrificed to cruel power politics. Several times she found that the political party she was a member of no longer represented her ideal. She therefore felt compelled several times to drop out of a party. Harsh power politics, she ex-



Henriette Roland Holst.

perienced, did not lead to a better world. In the philosophy of Tolstoy, and later that of Gandhi – about both of whom she wrote a biography – she found, after much inner struggle, the inspiration for the ideal of a harmonious world, which she never renounced. She discovered that it is the *gentle forces* – impersonal love and compassion – that ultimately lead to the much-desired revolution.

Although she continued to use the term socialism in all her work, with her it was stripped of its political connotation and took on the meaning of a society based on Universal Brotherhood, which can only be realized, if the workers (humanity) discover the nobler forces within themselves.*

Can you build up by breaking down?

In her book *The spiritual turnaround and the new task of socialism*, Henriette Roland Holst, matured by sometimes painful experiences in her outlook, argued that an excessive focus on breaking down the negative – *being against the enemy* – ultimately misses the mark and creates a society as unhappy and disharmonious as the one you were fighting.

Speaking of the radicals who think socialism can only be built on the ruins of bourgeois society, she states:

For those who think this way, the primary concern is the destruction of what exists. It inevitably follows that their direction appeals primarily to the negative drives of its

*The Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL) is an above politics organization. Therefore, we never interfere in political matters. Nevertheless, we can note that the socialism of Henriette Roland Holst's time had a number of core values, which were very clearly expressed by her and which correspond to the principles of the TSPL, such as the unity of life, the interconnectedness between all human beings, the notion that we are co-responsible for each other and, above all, Universal Brotherhood.

adherents. It thereby commits a great and fatal psychological error. For these urges always assert themselves in opposition to the social feelings, and, what is inseparable from them, they push forward at the expense of the formative, creative forces in man, as well as of the human feelings of belonging and responsibility. Even if it were to succeed in overthrowing the old order through the unleashing of negative, antisocial drives in the masses: hatred, vindictiveness, blind fury of destruction, extremely little had been achieved for the building of a socialist community.⁽¹⁾

And referring to modern physics insights showing that everything is connected, she said:

This insight into the intimately connectedness of different grounded factors, whose togetherness and cooperation constitute the world or the universe, has very important consequences for our conception of life and our feeling for life. And it also has for socialism. For it follows from the aforementioned insight that a socialism, which regards the material, that is, the economic, basis of society as the only social reality, lags behind the development of science. Such socialism is obsolete today. And it also follows that a socialism which concentrates entirely on the conflicting interests in society is one-sided. It follows that only a socialism, which is filled with reverence for the higher life, which reveals itself in all men, and makes a constant appeal to the human sense of belonging and the sense of mutual obligation; a socialism which recognizes the co-responsibility of every man for the ups and downs of all mankind, which binds the present to the times to come, because, after all, all events are interconnected, because every man, every action, yes, every thought is an element in the infinite whole of forces which constitutes the world, — that only such a socialism is in harmony with the new orientation of spiritual life, that it can truly claim the name of scientific, and can give lasting satisfaction to its adherents, consciously or unconsciously. Togetherness of all parts of the All, and this togetherness in the very strict sense of general and reciprocal functional dependence: this, current science teaches us, is the essence of the world, the organic law of its genesis. To act in the spirit of this understanding best guarantees us that our actions would be fruitful.⁽²⁾

Live the life

Henriette Roland Holst understood well that real changes in our society are not brought about by a different economic model, by different leaders, nor by a different

political system, but by the realization that everything is inseparable. Such a change in mentality occurs when people start from the spiritual-godly potentials, which are in every human being.

Do not fight what you think is wrong. Live as you know deep within yourself how to live. Therefore: develop your impersonal ideal, think about it constantly, ennoble it and express it in your own life.

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Dealing with psychiatric patients



Key thoughts

- » The line between psychiatric patients and non-psychiatric patients is very thin.
- » The causes of mental illness lie not so much in the brain as in human consciousness.
- » Medication does not cure, but prevents the ailment from expressing itself.
- » Healing lies in developing a different pattern of thought.
- » The heavy but important task of the caring staff is to help and encourage the 'patient' to develop a different thought pattern.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health problems are increasing worldwide.⁽¹⁾ Psychiatrists, psychologists and especially medical personnel are facing great challenges: how to deal with this problem. In fact, the help we can offer to the psychiatric patient is the same as the help we offer to a 'healthy' person, because the dividing line between the two is very blurry.

This article came about after intensive discussions with someone who has worked in psychiatric care for many years.

Humans are strange creatures. The super-intelligent young person becomes socially derailed, unemployed, vagrant and eventually ends up in a mental institution. The 'nitwit' who never got along well at school 'succeeds' in life and becomes the owner of a well-run business.

Every human being – as it turns out time and again – is unique. Each person is a unique amalgamation of many characteristically varying forces, sometimes latent, sometimes active.

Therefore, psychiatric patients are certainly not such a special group as it may superficially seem. First of all, we should note that there are of course many different patients. They all differ from each other, both in their problems and in their humanness. So they all have their specific difficulties and problems and therefore must all be treated differently. Some suffer only temporarily from their ailment; others struggle with it their whole lives. It is exactly as with

non-psychiatric patients, all of them have their own difficulties as well. And just as the latter group can solve, or at least manage, the problems they face, so can psychiatric patients, although they may need support and guidance in doing so. But they too can participate in society and fulfill their function there, whether their problem is chronic or not.

Nevertheless, we can observe that in psychiatric patients the problems are more difficult to handle. This is not so much because they have different kinds of difficulties, but because the extent of the problem is much larger. In this article we want to explore what causes this and how it can be dealt with.

No one is crazy

If there are so many different psychiatric patients, obviously there are also many different causes for their ailments. Therefore, let it be said at the outset, that each 'case' stands alone and always differs from others, to a

lesser or greater degree. Nevertheless, we can mention some general causes.

Above we stated that man is a composite being, in which different forces, different principles of consciousness, operate. Because man expresses thought-consciousness, his mind reflects these different aspects. It is, in other words, with his thinking consciousness that man controls himself, his own composite nature, or not.



The different principles of consciousness have to work together harmoniously, and that happens when man thinks in a balanced and controlled way. If he does not do this, then a certain degree of disharmony or mental disorder arises.

In most psychiatric patients, there is disharmony in the constituent elements of thought. Usually, emotion dominates. The intellect is active but does not work harmoniously with the other aspects of thinking. Sometimes the intellect also makes too few or no connections.

At this stage of evolution, it rarely happens that a human being completely controls his mind. Hence, most people have some mental ailment to a lighter or more severe degree. The Brazilian writer Guimarães Rosa can therefore rightly say that no one is crazy. Or else everyone.⁽²⁾

The only thing that distinguishes psychiatric patients from non-psychiatric ones is that their ailment causes serious trouble for themselves and others. Therefore, they need a certain amount of expert help to function, although again, this needs to be nuanced. However different our situation may be in relation to others, we all need the support of others to live in this society, if only to earn a living. Everyone exists and lives thanks to the whole of which he is a part.

Causes

In the scientific world, which is still largely based on materialistic theories, the cause of mental illness is naturally sought in the body. Initially, it was also thought that up-

bringing could be a cause, but this idea has now been completely abandoned.

In some cases, such as in people with a bipolar or manic-depressive disorder, one can indeed foresee the patient's physical condition as well. This is done based on lithium levels. Lithium is a substance found in the entire body, including the brain. This substance, which can be measured by blood tests, is said to be directly related to manic-depression. Other mental ailments are also attributed to certain hormones or other substances, which are present in too great or too small amounts in the brain.

Theosophy, however, uses a different starting point: consciousness. The latter is the basis of matter, that is, of the body. Hence the occurrence of certain bodily changes may be correlated to mental states, but these bodily phenomena are never the cause, they are the effect.

Theosophy is very clear in its teachings. Everything that happens to a human being, everything that a person is, can be traced back to man himself, to human consciousness. Man is his own cause and effect. He has made himself. Therefore, he is not a blank page when he is born. He has already lived many times and in those past lives has done deeds, thought thoughts, thereby sown causes, which will lead to consequences in this and future lives. A human being is not born 'by chance' into a particular situation, country and family. It is his self-created causes that got him there. If a person 'suddenly' develops mental problems around the age of twenty and is diagnosed with schizophrenia, the cause of that ailment was already inherent in his consciousness. He had already laid the causes for that in previous lives.

The cause is always yourself. This is equally true when there is social maladjustment or social ostracism. Of course, the latter takes place, and of course society is very often hypocritical and unjust when it imposes demands on people on how to behave. Yet, even in such cases, the deepest cause can again be traced back to the human being himself. If, for example, someone is laid off by an employer after many years of loyal service, does not find a new job, and as a result develops psychological problems, then the breeding ground for these problems was already present in himself. He had created it himself, perhaps because he had always nurtured the thought that he would be spared from such things. Someone else in the same situation would not get into trouble at all.

Yet, the law of cause and effect can only exist by the grace of the greater whole. Hence, we all contribute, to a greater or lesser extent, to the spiritual well-being of others. We

are not separate from each other and we are responsible for each other. Therefore, we must make every effort not to create conditions that cause people problems. But that does not take away that each individual creates his own character, with few or many mental problems. Maybe this viewpoint sounds harsh. You can no longer ‘blame’ your parents, education, society. After all, the cause you have sown yourself. Nevertheless, in our view, this position provides an extremely solid basis for the elimination of the problem: we caused it ourselves, so we can and should solve it ourselves. In this, too, the psychiatric patient is no different from other citizens, because who does not have problems? And in the end, we will all have to solve them ourselves.

Medication

When we talk about psychiatric *patients*, we do so because that is the common term. But we wonder if you can catch them under that name. ‘Patient’ suggests an illness and a possible cure. But there is no healing process at all for psychiatric patients, at least not in the classical sense of the word. There is no medication that cures their ailment.

From the theosophical point of view, this makes sense. As was stated above, no ailment, not even a psychic one, ever has a physical defect, a brain defect as its cause. No, the cause lies in consciousness, in *man* himself, not in his body. And if medications solely work in the body, they can therefore never solve the ailment.

This is by no means to say that the ‘patient’ is doomed to live forever with his ailment. On the contrary. Consciousness contains everything that exists in the boundlessness. All forces are present. Every human being possesses all possibilities for harmonious thinking and living within himself. Therefore, people with mental problems can learn, as well as others, to overcome their disability. However, they cannot do so by taking pills.

This is not to say, that medication is not used. Many drugs are prescribed by doctors. But all these pills do not aim to cure the ‘sick person’, they rather serve to limit the *manifestation* of the ‘disease’, so that the ‘patient’ does not suffer from it or suffers from it less. In other words, the drug has a certain influence on the brain that prevents or limits the expression of the mental discomfort. In fact, the activity of the brain is somehow paralyzed. As a result, certain feelings or thoughts cannot express themselves. By the way, the opposite also happens: medication allows certain feelings or thoughts, which were previously suppressed or ignored, to express themselves. Often this happens in an

uncontrolled flood of emotions. The doctors themselves often do not even know exactly what is happening in the brain. They can only note the effects.

Obviously, mistakes are made in the process. One is often tempted, if the ailment becomes unmanageable for the patient, to prescribe a higher dose. It is always ‘more of the same’. If 1 mg doesn’t work, then we try 5 mg. But in some cases, 1 mg may not work, because that dose is too high.

Even within the psychiatric world itself, medications are viewed critically. We can totally agree with that. We do not claim that medications should never be used. A patient can be so confused, thereby so aggressive, that medication needs to be used. But the aim should be to limit medication to the utmost and to teach patients how to cope with their ailment by other means.

Before delving deeper into these other paths, let us first consider some theosophical teachings that provide a strong evidence base, that these methods have their effect.

Character reform

Theosophy teaches that nothing in nature stands still. Everything changes, everything moves. Therefore, what we call a character is not something static, something that remains the same in perpetuity. This fact, which we see confirmed everywhere in nature, constitutes the great hope for all those with psychological problems, all those who know that their character is not perfect. And who has a perfect character?

Human character is in fact the pattern of habits accumulated in different lives. Each habit is the total sum of the actions one performs. And underlying each action is a thought. It is, in other words, thought that determines who we are. It is through our thoughts – which are actual existing ‘things’, real, living energies – that we can change ourselves.

Thoughts now tend to return cyclically to the one who once thought them. Just as all life manifests itself cyclically, so are thoughts ‘born’ again and again in a person. This is also exactly why a person can be, for example, pathologically depressed. After all, the thoughts of depression keep coming back, sometimes to such an extent that they overwhelm all other thoughts. Just like weeds choke the other plants in a garden, certain thoughts can take possession of consciousness and cause other thoughts to die off. Just as a cuckoo chick kicks the other birds out of the nest to get all the food for itself, an overwhelming depressive thought banishes all other thoughts.

Similarly, some suffer from suicidal tendencies. These thoughts recur also cyclically. This means that when a suicidal patient is in a 'good mood', he is not inclined to commit suicide. But at any moment, those suicidal thoughts can return in all intensity.

We often see the same pattern in people suffering from psychosis. Certain thoughts and actions recur in a fixed regularity. We know of a case in which the patient always wanted to eat grass at the end of his psychosis. If this tendency arose in him, the nurses already knew that the attack was nearing its end.

In the case of someone with a manic-depressive disorder, we even see that two opposites moods – the manic, or sickly cheerfulness, and the depression – alternate cyclically. Thus, the professional term for this ailment is bipolar disorder. The 'excited' thoughts are born, while the depressive ones die. The mood of morbid cheerfulness dies after a certain period, and the depression is reborn. Yet, this disorder rarely takes place continuously. There are also 'rest periods'. In other words, this ailment also manifests itself cyclically.

In this 'law of periodicity', the cyclical recurrence of thoughts, also lies the solution to any mental ailment. At the same moment that a thought of depression, a hallucinatory thought or whatever 'psychic-problematic' thought arises, one must think another thought. This will not be easy. But it can be done. For example, if one is very depressed, one may not be able to think a thought related to one's own happiness. But then think a thought related to another person. Be happy for the sake of someone else. Try, in however small a degree, to think a thought of a completely different characteristic.

This has a twofold effect. The first, problematic thought is thereby deprived, so to speak, of part of its energy, thus becomes less powerful. But at the same time, a thought of an opposite characteristic is created, or rather, perceived.

Of course, a single effort will not solve the psychic ailment. But the law of periodicity is universal and always applies. In other words, if the compulsive, depressive thoughts return again – and they certainly do – then 'stuck' to them is that thought of a totally different character. On that thought, as much as one is able, one must focus. If one applies this consistently, the thoughts one wants to get rid of will at some point have given way to new thoughts.

The problem with many psychiatric patients, however, is that they are so deep in the pit that they can hardly think other thoughts. The nurse's job is to provide those, or

better yet, to let the patient develop them himself.

Being ready for the patient

Many workers in psychiatric care are purebred idealists. You don't have to work there for the money. In many countries, a nurse earns a salary far below that of others with equivalent training. Not to mention the extremely physically and psychologically demanding work and irregular shifts. Psychiatric patients undoubtedly notice a nurse's selfless attitude. Often that can be an incentive for them to overcome their limitations. But nursing staff can do more. How can they assist their fellow human being? Let us mention some valuable points.

As we already noted, the dividing line between the 'normal person' and the psychiatric patient is blurry. In many cases, the latter can and often has participated in society in a normal way. But because their emotional nature sometimes 'plays up' too much, because they are more sensitive to all sorts of phenomena, they can sometimes feel excluded and end up being institutionalized. Our society is harsh. If we don't meet the exact requirements, we are cast out. Many psychiatric patients feel ostracized. They have been fired, cannot find a new job. Sometimes they are abandoned by their partner, by their family. They have no friends. They are lonely, have little or no contact with others. They have sometimes been abused. They constantly think the thought that nobody wants them, that they are of no use and so on.

One of the tasks of psychiatric caretakers is to show that there are people who care for them. They need to feel secure. The example set by a person, who, without serving his own interests, does something for another, is contagious to everyone. So certainly, also on the sensitive nature of a psychiatric patient. If someone dedicates himself unselfishly, it will cause astonishment, and the first thoughts of another characteristic will creep into the patient's consciousness.

Nurses must gain the trust of these suffering people. They must pick up signals that are usually unnoticed by a hurried world. Often the patient begs for attention. He wants assurance that he 'belongs' to something, is part of something. For example, when a patient asks for a 'fag' from a nurse, behind this desire to smoke there is often a much more concrete question: do you like me enough to give me a cigarette? A blunt refusal in such a case can push the patient even further into isolation. This of course does not mean that his wishes must always be met, but it does mean that an attempt must be made to create and grow the feel-

ing that he is liked.

People with mental health problems often suffer excessively. This suffering is sometimes worsened by the fact that the outside world does not recognize it. Therefore, nurses must always try to empathize with the patient's miserable situation, but without connecting with it emotionally. Their attitude must radiate something like: "I see that you are in the pit." Then they acknowledge the suffering of their fellow man. That is much better than saying: "Come on boy, we are going to make something of it!" Because the patient may then get the impression that his grief is trivialized.

The way you communicate is really very important. It must be aimed at gaining the patient's trust more and more. Much depends on the creativity and intuition of the nurse. For example, if a patient asks if the nurse would like to have coffee with him, he or she can of course refuse, citing the amount of work. He or she can also treat this request with: "Yes, I would really like that. Unfortunately, I have some work to do right now. But you know what, we'll make an appointment." And then, of course, that appointment must be kept. Nurses should always be there when patients need them. They should be on the ward if possible and not in the office.

So, nurses, by their example, provide other kinds of thoughts to the patient, who may thereby, slowly, begin to show the first signs of healing.

This includes teaching him how natural and nice it is to do something for others. Therefore, let people do something in return, even if it is just pouring a cup of coffee.

Independence that one can handle

Dealing with psychiatric patients can in some way be compared to raising children. Of course, this comparison should not lead to infantilizing the patient. What we mean in this regard is that rather than trying to put knowledge and skills 'from the outside' into the patient, you should help develop the inherent talents and skills that are already in them. In this regard, one could also compare psychiatric patients well with students in Theosophy.

Every human being possesses the abilities to solve the problems, which he himself has caused under the law of cause and effect. Caregivers should therefore also encourage patients as much as possible to invent their own solutions to their problems. Because, indeed, this makes the patient 'look for' thoughts other than those that brought him into the miserable situation.

Even if one has the patient's best interests at heart, there is



no point in forcing him to participate in certain therapies or activities. One must have the patience to wait until the patient himself is ready. The patient must perceive the idea that these activities contribute to his healing. Of course, stimulation is allowed, and ideas can be suggested – nothing better than that – but one can never decide for someone else.

For example, in many institutions there are therapies, in which people can learn certain skills, yes, even learn a profession. Similarly, there are certain activities, which take place inside and outside the institution. But it is counter-productive through soft or hard coercion to get people to participate in these. Because if you do that, they will not start thinking new thoughts, but rather reinforce the old ones. In fact, they will then become more attached to those old thoughts, which, although they have plunged them into misery, at least they have chosen for themselves. Another example. Patients who learned to live independently to some extent are allowed to live independently. That is, they will, under minimal supervision, run a household independently, in their own home. But people who would qualify for this, must apply by themselves, by their own free will. After all, they themselves are in the best position to foresee whether they can already handle this freedom. However, those who know they cannot yet do so may be able to cook for themselves. Then encourage them to do so.

In doing so, one must make small strides. Some people are so tangled up with themselves that they have no energy to do anything. If they remain passive, they push themselves deeper and deeper into their depression. After all, the living thoughts, which return cyclically, increasingly overrun their consciousness. Hence, the nurse must try something — even if it is so small. If someone lies in bed all day and has no energy to even brush his teeth, go to the sink with him.

In dealing with each other, patients must also learn to solve their own problems. In an environment where you deal with each other a lot and have little money, friction can easily arise. Nurses, rather than acting as referees in that situation, should be mediators. Their advice should be: start talking to each other and try to come to an agreement.

Just as in society, much irritation sprouts from little trivialities. One patient plays loud music in his room, while another one wants to rest. Often mutual agreements can solve the difficulty. But practical solutions like headphones and earplugs can also save a lot of inconvenience.

These practical solutions, by the way, help a lot. If a patient knows the nature of his disability well he can, with some creativity, deal with it in such a way that a social life is certainly among the possibilities. Take the case of a schizophrenic patient. Such a person lacks the filter through which he can select and manage all stimuli coming from the outside world. Four hours of interaction with people is a limit for him. Well, if he knows this, he can, for example, spend half a day among people. The rest of the day he performs occupations by himself. Through part-time employment, he can provide for himself. And if his environment is aware of his ailment, conditions can be created with minimal adjustments, allowing him to live a meaningful life.

Aggressiveness

An increasing problem in psychiatric institutions is aggression. This is not so much because the average patient is becoming more aggressive, but because in many countries it is found easy to cut back on health care. A civilization is characterized by how the weak are treated. And often health care gets so little funding that there are waiting lists and patients cannot be admitted to proper facilities.

There is a tendency to just lock up patients who are a danger to society. As a result, aggression increases within the institutions.

Obviously, as a nurse, it is extremely difficult to deal with aggressive patients, although many caretakers themselves hardly experience it as a problem. In any case, you must have the necessary professional knowledge.

There are, roughly speaking, two types of aggressive patients. The first group has behavioral problems. People belonging to this group want to push their way through at all costs. When they are thwarted in their desires, they start hitting. The worst of these people are psychopaths who have an innate tendency for crime. Needless to say, this group is unfortunately not confined to psychiatric institutions, where they do not belong at all, although they do deserve our support. They need to be corrected.

The second group are the real psychiatric patients. They say, for example, I heard a voice telling me to start hitting. Outsiders are usually not aware of the immense suffering these people are in. They derive no ‘pleasure’ from their violence. This is evident simply from the fact that the violence can just as well be turned against themselves. Self-mutilation is unfortunately a well-known phenomenon. We know the story of a young woman who constantly cut into her own body because she knew that at least one day

this *physical* pain would stop. We said it before: the suffering of many is indescribable.

How should nurses deal with these kind of conditions?

First of all, it must be said, that sometimes ‘emergency measures’ are required, partly because of staff shortages. Sometimes an aggressive patient must be confined in an isolation cell, or at least in a space in which he cannot harm himself. It goes without saying that this confinement should be as short as possible and that, through a glass wall or otherwise, contact with nurses should be possible. Within such an enclosed space, the patient can listen to music or perhaps read something, at least calm down. In some cases, this calmness has set in after only a few minutes and the patient can go outside. Some, by the way, have no desire to go outside and want to prolong their stay in the isolation ward.

Sometimes, too, aggression is kept in check by medication. While we do not claim that this is inadvisable in all cases, we do believe that it should be limited as much as possible.

In some cases, it may be better to discharge the ‘patient’ from the institution. The institution is for the patients, so that they learn to cope with their ailment. And as stated above, this can only be successful if the patient wants it.

But the only real solution to the problem of aggression – and here again the psychiatric world is not essentially different from ‘normal’ society – is the triumph of reason. Thoughts of aggression are always unreasonable. The thoughts must die off by thinking other kinds of thoughts. Therefore, reason is the only lasting solution to violence.

Unfortunately, there are no plug and play methods for evoking that reason, but it is certain that it germinates through conversation rather than through coercion, which, after all, is itself violent. But again, the fleeting thought of peacefulness and reason makes the strong thought of reasonless violence at least a little less powerful. And as one feeds the fleeting thought, the strong, aggressive thought will slowly die off.

Of course, we must always prevent aggression from arising within ourselves. Nurses who can do this, by their attitude alone, contribute to the solution or at least to the control of the problem. And if aggression threatens to arise in the other person, we should try to contain it. Leave someone alone for a while. Give him time to come to his senses. If aggression has broken out, we have actually already failed. But if that mistake has been made, we should not persist in it.

One of the most wonderful examples of this was given by

a nurse who, after a patient had slapped her, quietly said, “I refuse to fight with you, but I would like to talk to you.” Not every nurse has reached this high ethical level, so this nurse, who was chief, told her subordinates not to imitate her in every case. But one important lesson everyone can take from this: always remain calm yourself. That calmness has its effect on the other person.

Suicide

When you see no way out of your dire situation, the thought of suicide quickly looms large. Many patients struggle with this thought from time to time. On the one hand, of course, this has to do with the great suffering in which they find themselves; on the other hand, thoughts – we noted it above – are real, living beings, which can sometimes take on epidemic proportions.

Suicide attempts are much higher among psychiatric patients than among others. Consequently, every nurse in a psychiatric facility has had to deal with suicidal behavior at one time or another. How should it be handled?

First, any signs from a patient, that he wants to commit suicide, should be taken seriously. No one threatens to end his life for no reason.

Furthermore, and this is obviously very difficult, efforts must be made to slowly turn the thought of suicide into making sense of life. Thoughts of an opposite characteristic must be developed.

These encouragements need to be extremely nuanced. Comments such as “Come on, life is beautiful” can be counterproductive. It is much better to encourage the patient to come up with his or her own solutions. Perhaps in a question-and-answer discussion he or she can regain some sense of the meaning of life. Such thoughts should be nurtured, and the nurse can provide them again and again.

Furthermore, nurses can very consistently put forward, that for reasons of principle they are against any form of suicide. That is what they stand for. Thus, the steadily fading norm, among other things by euthanasia practices accepted in some countries, can be shifted back a bit in the direction of respect for life.

Obsessions

Many psychiatric patients suffer from obsessions. They hallucinate, see creatures or hear voices. Sometimes it seems as if more persons dwell in one person.

For example, there are cases where a patient screams loudly. “Prefer not to do that,” says the nurse. “I don’t,” is

the reply, “*they* do.”

From materialistic science, such phenomena are dismissed as hallucinations or delusions. Theosophy recognizes that a certain force, an entity, can indeed ‘assault’ a person’s consciousness, for obsession literally means ‘assault’. There are, according to Theosophy, more realms of consciousness than just the gross material world that we can perceive with our senses. And in one of these other worlds, consisting of another degree of materiality – the astral world – there indeed live many kinds of beings, of varying characteristics. We do not wish to go into this further, because this teaching is rather complex and therefore, if not dealt with in detail, easily gives rise to misunderstanding.

There are many kinds of obsessions. And it may actually be, that one or another being is trying to exert its influence through a person. The obsessed man does not control the astral world from which he is influenced. This is evident from the vague indication of the ‘voices’ that speak to him or the ‘figures’ he sees. Sometimes, therefore, the patient cannot tell what those voices are whispering to him. All this does not alter the fact that this ‘other world’ is indeed a reality for him.

Theosophy teaches that we make our own reality. Something is real if we attribute reality to it. And because man with his obsession ascribes reality to the voices and figures of the astral, it is a reality *to him*.

Nurses in such cases may try to generate interest in our world. They may try, through their professional and human knowledge, to find out what fascinates the patient. Humor often works very well. This brings the patient back into this world. But sometimes reward or simply human warmth also helps. If the patient feels that he is appreciated, respected, yes, that the other person feels affection for him, then he will naturally feel an attraction to this world.

“I think it would be so nice if you came out of your room for dinner sometime.” The patient who hears such a message and realizes that it is sincerely meant, if only to please the nurse, will get out of his bed and eat with him.

It is certainly not an easy task, but try to rekindle wonder. Show that life is full of mysteries, full of unexpected and fun twists and turns. Small things can sometimes achieve this. When, out of the blue, for no reason, all psychiatric patients were awakened by the nursing staff with tea and rusks, it was felt that the day held secrets. Consequently, all the patients got up and looked forward expectantly to the day to come.

Trust in the Self

The underlying cause of all cases of psychiatric patients is that, somehow, they have lost faith in themselves. They do not realize that they carry within them treasures of knowledge, of wisdom, of inspiration. For this very reason, the dividing line between them and others is very blurred and, in fact, barely exists. Indeed, does not virtually all humanity suffer from this malady?

In the words of Katherine Tingley:

To reconstruct mankind we must arouse more faith in the Self. The spiritual failure becomes such because he has lost faith in himself. That is always the initial step. Then comes loss of faith in his friends, then in mankind as a whole, and soon he finds himself living in a strange house: the house of the lower nature.⁽³⁾

In fact, the healing process of the psychiatric patient – or better yet, the entire sick world – consists of exchanging this idea of mistrust in oneself for insight and trust in the Higher Nature of each of us, which is an inseparable part of all Universal Life. That is the great challenge we face, to whatever degree we have psychologically handicapped ourselves. Or, to conclude with Mrs. Tingley:

So that with all my soul I urge you to *look within*. Even to the man who has lost faith in humanity and in himself, even to the pessimist who dares not think a week ahead in hope — to such as these I say, Look into the chambers of your soul, for truly you are a soul. Rediscover the energy and strength of your manhood. Take time to think, not in the ordinary way, but deeply, and the laws that govern life will be revealed.⁽⁴⁾

References

1. See for instance: <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Are-Mental-Health-Issues-increasing.aspx#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health,health%20conditions%20are%20increasing%20worldwide>
 2. “No one called anybody crazy, for nobody is crazy. Or maybe everybody.” In: Joao Guimarães Rosa, *The Third Bank of the River*. (The book can be found online: <https://www.thereader.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Third-Bank-of-the-River—Joao-Guimaraes-Rosa.pdf>)
 3. Katherine Tingley, *Theosophy: the Path of the Mystic*, p. 32. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/katherine-tingley/theosophy-the-path-of-the-mystic/>).
 4. See ref. 3, p. 38.
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Why do we travel?

Key thoughts

- » Man is a composite being, to be represented according to a tripartite division as spirit, soul and body.
- » The human soul expresses itself through the thinking faculty; man is a thinker.
- » Important steps in the development of thinking are becoming aware of one's own mental sphere, learning to discern the quality of thoughts and learning to direct one's own thinking.
- » Travelling is entering and experiencing different mental and physical spheres.
- » You can travel for yourself or for others.
- » You do not need to move externally to travel internally.
- » Man is essentially an Eternal Pilgrim, making an infinite evolutionary journey to become one with all life in the boundless realms.

We travel a lot these days. It is almost a given to fly to the most exotic destinations during vacation. International airports are becoming increasingly crowded.

It is only since the early 20th century that people got vacation. And now there is 'vacation stress', the social pressure to go on vacation, and overtourism.⁽¹⁾

But what is travel anyway and why do people travel? Is it an end in itself or just a means to get from A to B? Who exactly is travelling and when can you say you have been somewhere? And why does the wise Lao-tse say: "Without going out the door, you can know the whole world."⁽²⁾

Who is travelling?

Let us start by asking who is travelling. At first glance, it does not seem much different from the movement of a human body over some distance in the external world, or according to Wikipedia: "Travel is the movement of people between distant geographical locations".⁽³⁾

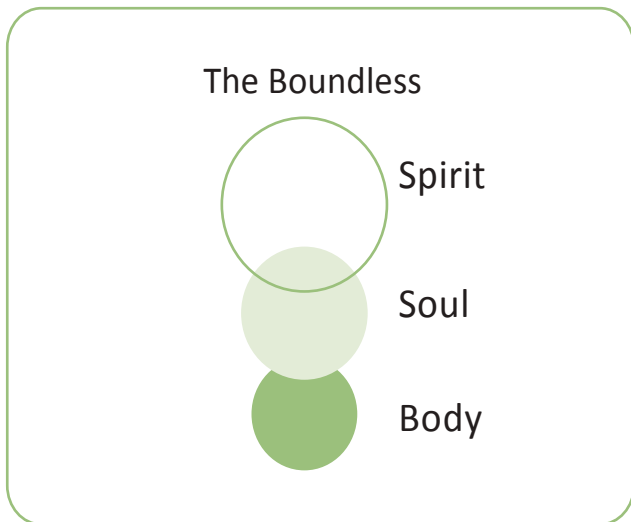
But when we travel, we usually do mean more than just moving our bodies around the earth. We consciously and unconsciously experience much more during our travels, meeting new people and having all kinds of new experiences.

Now, every person has a certain character and so we see that the same journey is experienced differently by each person. Our character also changes over time and so we experience the same journey differently at different points in our lives. And so you may wonder whether there is a core in us that remains the same

during all these journeys. And if there is, who or what is it?

This is the same question that has been asked in all ages when searching for the underlying essence of every human being. Major world religions and philosophical systems speak of a spiritual essence. Something that cannot be seized or grasped in the outer world because it is in another realm: the inner that precedes the outer.

It recurs in all these traditions in different terms. What the Christian Paul calls 'spirit', the Buddhists designate as the 'inner Buddha', Plato calls 'the divine', the Hindus 'Brahm', and the philosopher Leibniz, following the Pythagoreans, depicts it as the 'monad'. It follows that man is a composite being, consisting of at least two parts: a consciousness and a body that the consciousness makes use of, or in other words a driver and his vehicle.



Now that division can be depicted in a little more detail with a tripartite division of spirit, soul and body, as Paul did. Through each body or vehicle works the spiritual essence, a centre of universal consciousness. Every living being is essentially an expression of such an infinite life core or spirit. The soul, or intermediate nature, is characterized by what a being has learnt to express from this spiritual-divine core. The soul is thus a learning part and makes a being what it is: an atom, plant, animal, human or superhuman consciousness like a Buddha or 'God'. In humans, the spiritual-divine center of consciousness expresses itself through the thinking faculty. Noting that body, soul and spirit cannot be separated, we focus initially on the human soul as a thinking, learning pilgrim or traveler.

The human being as a traveler

Humans are thinkers. Our mental character defines who we are. Thoughts precede everything a human being does, either consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, from Theosophia, we see thinking in a much broader sense than just intellectual, rational or logical reasoning. We have many kinds of thoughts. Thoughts of a physical, emotional or desiring nature to thoughts of a more universal nature, such as insightful or compassionate thoughts.

As humans, we are in the process of learning to think consciously and independently. We can learn to gain mastery over our thoughts and thereby direct the development of our character. Important stages – that may overlap – are the following:

1. becoming *aware* of one's own world of thoughts and its influence on oneself and others; in this stage the soul awakens;

2. awareness of the scope of the thinking faculty and the *discernment* between limiting, selfish thoughts and expanding, unselfish thoughts and the ability to choose between them; the soul thereby sees through the illusion of the bodily part and becomes independent;
3. *directing* one's own thoughts and their influence on one's character and thus the world around us; the soul gradually ascends to the spiritual part.

Why do we emphasize this? First, because for humans, our thinking defines who we are. And second, that this allows us to define 'travel' in the domain of the *human* soul.

What is travel?

With man's background as a thinking soul, travel can be defined as *entering and experiencing different mental and physical spheres*. We can experience that our mental part is most active when we travel. We are constantly gaining new impressions, comparing what we experience with what we ourselves carry with us as mental baggage and possibly adapting to new habit patterns.

Thus, according to this definition, travel is much more than crossing a physical distance. It is an inner activity as well. Travel is thus a relative concept that depends on the mental perception of the person experiencing it. For one person, an intercontinental flight is merely 'commuting' and for another, a visit to the local market is a 'trip around the world'. Thus, everyone has built their own mental frame of reference.

Travel as a process of growing awareness

Travel as entering and experiencing different mental spheres plays a particularly important role in the first stage of our development of character as thinkers: *becoming more aware*.

Whether one travels for leisure or adventure or to learn about other cultures, a journey always brings certain elements that can stimulate our inner growth or development of character. Every journey functions as a mirror for ourselves. Now reasoning from karma, that applies in general, also for our everyday experiences. But during travel we usually have quite different experiences than our daily routines. So, the experiences tend to stand out a bit more. For instance, we can get to know ourselves better in new situations that awaken something in us, or when we come into contact with certain people for the first time.

This reflection can start already with the preparation of your trip. We often find that we can survive with just a

few material resources: a roof over our heads in just a tent or in a basic (hotel) room at the place of destination, one or two suitcases or bags with some clothes and bare necessities, a credit or ATM card, a passport for when we go abroad, a laptop to do some work and maybe a few books to read. It shows us what our basic needs really are.

Once abroad, we are confronted with new customs and habits. Different food, different language, different manners, these are all things that make us more aware of our own habits and how much we hold on to them. Can we easily abandon our morning rituals? What things from our own culture do we cling to? And what is it that we want to take home with us? For example, a certain hospitality that we have experienced in another country.

In the process, we also learn more about our own character. Do we easily make contact with others in a new environment, even if they sometimes speak a different language? What kind of people are we attracted to? Where do we feel comfortable? What do we want to do, et cetera. There are many choices we make during our daily routines at home, but when we travel we sometimes have to engage in making new choices, and in doing so we get to know ourselves better. We can also experience at times what it is like to be thrown back on ourselves. For example, the train you are on, cannot go any further, and something is being called out in a language that you do not understand. This can make you a little insecure, but at the same time you can experience that there are always people who are there to help.

Sometimes it turns out that when we spend longer abroad, we encounter exactly the same problems as at home: we take ourselves along with all our characteristics and see that others react to them. At other times we transform as we go along and discover new sides to ourselves that we can profit by back home.

We also experience that when we spend some time abroad, that people essentially do not differ much from ourselves. People want to be there for others, want to contribute something to the community through their occupation or in other ways, and look for answers to the challenges they face in life. This can make us aware of our connectedness with others.

This stage of awareness in travel occurs when we are open to new experiences and especially when we are going somewhere for the first time or being in a new place for the first time. Perhaps this is why travel holds an attraction for us especially when we are young, when we are figuring out who we are and exploring the world.

Judging from the definition of travel as entering and experiencing different mental and physical spheres, it becomes clear what impact travel can have on us. It is therefore good to reflect on why we travel.

Why do people travel?

Travel, as described above, can make us more aware, provided we continue to wonder. But the degree in which we will be more or less open to new experiences depends on our motive — the reason why we travel. Many people are not aware of this motive, as evidenced by the existence of a phenomenon such as vacation stress: people who do not even want to do it themselves, travel because they think their social circles expect it of them. Even if some people are not aware of their motive to travel, a trip can always be a means of awareness and thus the first step to mental development of character. From that point of awareness, we can discern in ourselves different motives.

This learning to discern different aspects of thinking and our underlying motives is an important second stage. Basically, there are two opposing motives in our thinking, namely: selfish and unselfish. Selfish motives are limiting; we then focus particularly on our self-interest. Unselfish motives are widening and proceed from unity, the interest of the whole. There is usually a mixture between these two types of motives in people.

Traveling for yourself

An example of a more selfish motive for travel is desire for status. One hopes to impress others with a distant or adventurous trip. Often this impression with others is only fleeting. After all, if others show interest in you because of a distant journey, it does not last long, compared to, say, their interest in you because of some character trait you have. Besides, there are always people who come up with surpassing travel experiences. The craving is thus further fueled toward even more exotic destinations, places “no one has ever been before,” or more extreme experiences that “you only experience once in a lifetime”. This craving for more feeds a spiral of competition and consumption in which people lose sight of the effects on the harmony of the whole. Consider, for example, the inequality exemplified by rich travelers who only want to stay in luxury *resorts* in Third World countries, or the climatic effect of the many flights to faraway destinations. Moreover, if people want to impress others with their exotic, adventurous or luxury experiences, they will have limited awareness of what they mentally experience in another culture. For

example, as they rush from one tourist attraction to the next, they are hardly aware of and in touch with local people and culture.

Traveling for others

On the other hand, we see people traveling for more altruistic motives: to recharge themselves for their work for others, to learn from new peoples or cultures, or precisely because of a certain connection with others abroad. For example, the latter might be for a visit to a friend or relative in a distant country, to help fellow human beings in difficult circumstances, or to organize something together with people from different corners of the world for some shared cause.

Seen from this motive, travel is then only a means and not an end in itself. The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy illustrates this beautifully and lucidly with his story of two old Christian men, who in order to make their lives complete want to travel to the holy Jerusalem. On the way, one of them comes across a needy family. He breaks off his journey and helps the people despite the fact that it prevents him from continuing his journey. Yet inwardly, he may reach the holy Jerusalem much more than his friend who continued his *physical* journey to Jerusalem.⁽⁴⁾

Outer travel

If travel is mainly a mental process, what would be the purpose of outer travel? Do you need to travel to discover other spheres? Or is that form of travel merely something illusory?

Historically, it is fairly unique that a vacation trip abroad is commonplace for so many people in Western society. One hundred years ago, travel was mainly domestic, and another fifty years before that, vacations hardly existed. In the theosophical Rāja Yoga school of Point Loma during the first half of the 20th century, children had no vacation at all. With up to three hours of classes in a school day, lots of physical exercise and time in the evening for music and theater, they ensured that there was a healthy balance of physical, mental and spiritual work, which obviated the need for vacation time.

Some people can write or tell so vividly about certain places, even without having been there themselves, that you get the idea of actually being there. And then when you actually go there you get the impression of having been there before.

One can ask to what extent someone can truthfully claim to have 'been somewhere', because no place in the world is

ever permanent. Every place you visit today is different tomorrow. Just like yourself, for that matter. If you go to a familiar place again tomorrow, you will perceive it differently again depending on your thinking. And the more you move mentally, the less the memories of a particular place will pull you back into the same atmosphere again.

The illusory nature of outward travel is also evidenced by the fact that, in the physical realm, we continuously cover vast distances without being aware of it. Our planet revolves around the sun, and our sun in turn makes a circular motion around the center of our galaxy at a staggering speed of many hundreds of thousands of kilometers per hour (720,000 km/h according to recent scientific calculations).⁽⁵⁾ And even our galaxy itself does not hang still in space in one place. So we are heading through the universe at a tremendous speed, entering new regions with our 'spaceship earth' every second.

Therefore, judging from the definition of travel as entering and experiencing different mental and physical realms, this can be done even without any physical movement across this planet. In this sense, we can also speak of travel when we read a book, watch a movie or even when we have a conversation. So travel for the human soul is mainly but a mental activity. So what does travel mean in the larger context of the inner journey we take as human beings to express our character?

Inner travel

Here we come to the third stage of development of character: if we have become aware of our thinking and can discern the motives that underlie our thoughts, then we are able to *direct our thoughts* and thereby also to direct our character and the effect we have on our world. We then travel without leaving our home. The sage Lao-tse wrote about this in his *Tao Teh Ching*:

Without going out the door,
You can know the whole world.
Without looking through the window
You can see heaven's Tao.

The farther you go,
The less you know.

Thus the Sage
Does not travel, yet knows
Does not look, yet sees
Does not strive, yet accomplishes.⁽⁶⁾

The more we learn to know and control our thinking, the more easily we can reach certain spiritual states of consciousness inwardly. Through these other states of consciousness, the possibility opens up of traveling into spheres other than these outer realms. With the development of our imagination and idealism, for example, we already mentally enter other realms and train ourselves to perceive within inner spheres. These inner spheres we also enter during sleep or during the great sleep we call death. Then the higher part of our soul temporarily ‘travels’ along with the spiritual part. Because our inner powers of perception are not yet sufficiently developed, we are not yet aware of this.

The Eternal Pilgrim

In the theosophical literature, which reveals the heart of all religions and philosophical systems, the spiritual part of man is also referred to as the ‘Eternal Pilgrim’. It is the core of consciousness in each of us, essentially infinite in potentiality, in range of consciousness, in growth. The Eternal Pilgrim is that part in us that remains the same through countless embodiments. It is ‘non-local,’ as said by some scientists; like a mathematical point, with its ‘circumference nowhere and its center everywhere’. The entire Kosmos is its home.

The journey of the Eternal Pilgrim is the endless evolutionary journey through the boundless.

The (human) soul is like a child of the Eternal Pilgrim. We learn to express more and more of our spiritual part — the Eternal Pilgrim who ‘radiates’ us. The more we develop ourselves life after life, the more we can become one with this spiritual part.

Conclusion: why we travel

Travel is now more popular than ever. Perhaps because many are not familiar with other ways to experience different mental spheres and thus to become aware of the higher parts within themselves. Humanity in general is still searching for a purpose in life. People have lost sight of the ancient wisdom with its universal teachings such as reincarnation, karma and self-directed evolution. Means of growing awareness, such as travel, are then quickly elevated from a means to an end. Travel as a goal in itself, aimed at self-fulfillment.

Nevertheless, thanks to the occult law – as above, so below – outer travel can lead to greater awareness. Travel can be seen as an evolutionary pilgrimage in miniature. A journey can function as a mirror for people, can make people more

aware and allow them to learn of new mental spheres and cultivate a sense of connectedness with all people. And in any journey, even in the outer realm, we never travel alone. Our inner parts are always waiting for the moment we open our minds to them, taking us along on an even greater journey than the one we can imagine.

Seen from Theosophia, a more universal definition of travel is: becoming one with all life in the boundless realms, our infinite journey of evolution. This travel itself, without end goal, is our real journey.

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Questions children ask - part 3

In our last issue, we called on readers to answer the question “Where am I when I sleep?” A grandmother sent us the answer she gives her two-year-old grandson when he cannot sleep:

I tell him then that when he goes to sleep that he will be in the resting area of the world on which we live. The area that he might remember before he rejoined his mom and dad. The area where you go when your time here is over again. And miraculously he understands that and becomes very calm and goes to sleep.

Children can come up with a deluge of questions, and sometimes there are some pretty profound ones among them. Fortunately, children marvel at the world around them and try to make sense of what they see, hear, feel, smell and so on. You probably all know the ‘why phase’ they go through. An endless stream of questions which are not strange at all. Good research requires curiosity, an open mind *and* usually raises even more questions.

As adults, we want to answer these particular or profound questions well. But ask yourself: how well do you think about the questions that come your way? Do you actually understand the question the child is asking before you answer? Have you ever wondered why the child is asking this question? What exactly he or she means by it?

As we wrote earlier in our journal, knowing the background of the question is important. After all, we want to give an answer that encourages the child to think further on its own, so that it can increase its own understanding.⁽¹⁾

A question provides a great opportunity to engage the child in conversation. By talking about the question and asking questions yourself, you find out what is going on and an answer to the initial question may not be needed at all.

Questions about a question

During a Children’s Book Week, a conversation with children took place on the radio. They talked about reading and books. During the conversation one of the children asked: “*How many empty books are left?*”

Whether the question was answered, is not known to us. The question that comes to mind is what the young questioner meant by his question. What could be behind this

question?

- What kind of books is he thinking of?
- How does he envision the books?
- How did he come up with the question?
- How long has he been wondering about this?
- What should those books contain?
- How will they be filled and who will do it?



Children’s wonder is a valuable quality we should encourage. Behind the questions there are often deeper thoughts. Could the child who asked the question about the empty books, on his own *childish* level, not have had a deeper view about this?

We don’t know. But let us not ignore such profound questions by answering hastily. After all, with wonder begins philosophy. As we engage in conversation with one another, we will learn that the question is an answer in the making, for the child and for ourselves.

Astrid Kramer

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Good example does follow well

How an elementary school teacher made her pupils eager readers



Key thoughts

- » The principle of resonance is well known in the physical world. But the same principle holds true on a more inner level, a *mental* one.
- » This is where Anne's great success comes from: that she *herself* is an avid reader and by being one radiates her infectious enthusiasm to the children
- » Whether a fruitful resonance indeed occurs depends, first of all, on the *quality and intensity* of the one who is the example. But there is a third important element for the resonance to take place optimally, and that is the *tuning* to the receiving mind.
- » It is *cooperating with nature* to express what is essentially within us. To give the example by being a natural teacher, that is, through inspiration and resonance. And the result is fantastic.

Dutch elementary school teacher Anne Steenhoff was shocked by the reading level of her pupils. Instead of waiting for the principal to take action, she took things into her own hands to improve the situation. How? By being the reading-example herself.

The level of literacy and enjoyment of reading among children in the Netherlands has been declining for years and currently fallen to an alarming low. Whereas in 2018 a quarter of Dutch pupils left secondary school low-literate, by 2022 this low part had risen to a third. The Education Inspectorate is sounding the alarm, as Dutch schoolchildren finish at the bottom of the list of all Western European countries. What is going on here?

"I hate reading, I prefer to be on my phone, have no concentration ..." are some of the reasons children themselves give. But who is to blame? Are children today less intrinsically motivated? Are they perhaps less able to concentrate because of all the digital distractions surrounding them?

A convincing answer recently came from elementary school teacher Anne Steenhoff: No, it is not the children, it is the example they are given. Children today are just as capable of concentrating on a book as they used to be and, what's more, they will do it with great pleasure, if the right condi-

tions are created. Within a year and a half, Anne got her sixth grade pupils – according to the children themselves – addicted to reading. But perhaps even more impressive is the increase in the reading level of her class. Against all national trends, it had risen in the same period of time, to the level you need to pass the exam of senior general secondary education!

How did she manage to do this?

Understanding the cause

Back to the beginning, when Anne was still an intern at an elementary school. During the 15 minutes reading time she was also reading a book herself. "Nothing better to do?" her internship supervisor asked her as she tapped her shoulder. "No, actually not," Anne thought. A justified thought as it would later turn out. It was the first incident that made her aware of what was wrong in reading education. Gradually, she began to notice more things, such as the sub-standard level of books offered on

the bookshelf, causing students to structurally read below their level.

But decisive for Anne, was the moment she overheard a conversation in the hallway between a teacher and the school principal about purchasing new children's books. When the teacher asked for advice, the principal had replied: "just do something". This was the last straw for Anne. How could such a careless and disinterested answer be given, on a subject of which days before in a teachers' meeting was shown to be such a problem? By the very people responsible for the quality of education?⁽¹⁾

A small leap forward in time. Anne had completed her internship, was now teaching herself and had decided to do things differently. She had taken a few measures, the first of which was to extend the reading time: the 15 minutes of reading she prolonged to half an hour. Her children had to be given the chance to spend at least fifteen minutes of concentrated reading, and by the time everyone had their books in front of them, that fifteen minutes had already passed.

Secondly, she went along the bookshelf with a garbage bag and removed all (comic) books that were below the reading level of her students. But perhaps the most important change was that – just like during her internship – she started *reading along herself*. Not hidden away in the back of the class, but sitting pontifically on top of her own desk! Why was the latter so important? Because by doing so, Anne herself set the example. She did not use the time to do something for herself or to check homework, but to lead by doing the same herself. Children are focused on their teacher by nature, but what makes it so successful in this case is that Anne herself is so enthusiastic about reading. And radiating this enthusiasm is contagious. Each time, her children are curious about what she is reading.

The power of resonance

The process taking place here can be summarized in one word by the term *resonance*.

The principle of resonance is well known in the physical world. Strike the low E string of a guitar and the high E string immediately starts to vibrate along with it. There are countless physics tutorial videos on the Internet in which someone strikes a tuning fork near another, that immediately starts vibrating too, producing its own tone.

But as well-known as this fact is in physics, so unknown or underexposed at least, is the fact that exactly the same principle holds true on a more inner level. Not a physical resonance, but a *mental* one. How does this work? How

Mental resonance

The principle of mental resonance does not only apply to reading books. We *always* radiate what we are inwardly, whether we want to or not. Therefore, proclaiming a certain opinion makes little sense if you yourself are doing the opposite of what you are saying. If you advocate sobriety but surround yourself with luxury, you will not inspire anyone to sobriety. The same is true if you claim to aspire peace but constantly think hateful and aggressive thoughts. You are then contributing to enmity rather than peace. If, however, we ourselves *are* peaceful and harmonious, always thinking benevolent and loving thoughts of others, then we contribute in a very substantial way to a peaceful world – even if we do not communicate this verbally with anyone, or if the other person does not seem to care.

can you make someone resonate inwardly? For that, the first necessary condition is that that inner vibration actually takes place. Quite obvious, you might say, but I emphasize it because it implies something fundamental, for this resonance cannot be faked or pretended. In short, you must *be* the vibration.

Just as the second tuning fork will not vibrate if you only *pretend* to strike the first, a child will not be inspired if the teacher is not: if the teacher him- or herself is not enthusiastic about what is being taught. And children in particular sense unerringly whether something is being feigned or genuine.

This is where Anne's great success comes from: that she *herself* is an avid reader and by *being* one radiates her infectious enthusiasm to the children (see box 'Mental Resonance'). In this process of resonance, a few factors are important. We always radiate an atmosphere: there is always an influence emanating from us whether we want it or not. But whether a fruitful resonance indeed occurs depends, first of all, on the *quality* and *intensity* of the one who is the example. In this case determined by the teacher's knowledge and reading skills (quality) and her great enthusiasm and genuine desire to convey this to the children (intensity).

But in addition to these two, there is a third important el-

ement for the resonance to take place optimally, and that is the *tuning to* the receiving mind. In other words, connecting to the level and the experiential world of the pupil. Anne does this by talking with her pupils and finding out where their interests lie. Based on that, she picks out specific books that she then starts reading herself first. “They eagerly look at the book I’m reading right now and ask me to hurry up so they can start to read it themselves,” she says.

Instruction versus education

Resonance is the process of generating, bringing into vibration, or activating of what is already latent within. If something were not already present, it could not resonate. The word ‘education’ is derived from this same process of awakening from within. It comes from the Latin word *educere*, which means ‘to lead outward’: leading outward the abilities that are contained within. The process of *inspiration* also takes place in this way.

On the other hand, opposite to education, is *instruction*: providing information from the outside, telling the pupils to follow some commands or learn some method. This is the dominant form in today’s educational system. Let me explain this with the following example. Out of curiosity, I took a look at the Education Inspectorate’s website to see what measures are mentioned there to avert ‘the national reading disaster’.

Below are some excerpts from the website that are written to promote reading levels, based on a ‘focus group of experts’ and a so-called ‘master plan’.

With a proper focus on reading comprehension, more attention to higher-order skills (such as interpretation and evaluation), and use of insights about effective reading instruction, better results across the board are possible, according to the focus group.

[...] *This, according to a consulted focus group of reading experts, could be even more fruitful if, in the process, more attention is paid to how pupils actually read texts well and if more use is made of so-called rich texts. This does require further expertise development and professionalization of the teachers’ actions.*⁽²⁾

There is even talk of initiating a *BookTok*, based on the popular TikTok but now applied to ‘set online reading goals’.

Do you see the difference? Mainly *external* measures and

goals focused on outer results and efficiency, but a total absence of inner stimulation, intrinsic joy for reading and enthusiasm.

How big a contrast this is with Anne’s method of real attention, genuine wonder for a story, enthusiasm for reading and for passing this on. The atmosphere of inner concentration and pleasure that she evokes and radiates as a natural leader of the group, to which her pupils can ‘resonate’, being infected with the reading virus. It is the natural principle of true teachership: to stimulate in the pupil the latent abilities that are already present within. In Eastern traditions this approach is also known as the Rāja-Yoga method, or: the Royal Way. Royal because we are stimulated to develop our inner abilities by ourselves, and gain mastery over them. And for the teacher, that means being the living example.

Becoming a natural teacher

Anne, meanwhile, has written a book in which she exposes the problem of the lack of good example in the training for elementary school teachers.⁽³⁾ Research shows that as many as 40% of the students never voluntarily read a book, nor are ever encouraged to do so. Often there is uncertainty or not knowing where to start, Anne notes. She advocates to help and encourage these students, so they *do* reach the right level and enjoy reading. And that if, after this support, they are still not willing to read, they had better choose another profession. Because if you, as a future teacher, do not have this skill, how can you ever be the living expression of it to your pupils?

Anne was able to get her sixth grade children to the reading level of graduating High School students within a year and a half. I repeat it again, because it is an astonishing result, that cannot be achieved by any focus group, master plan, reading goal, or any external measure. It is at once distressing and hopeful. Distressing because there is so much ignorance of this basic principle among policy-makers in the education system, resulting in unfortunate decision-making, against their better judgment. But at the same time it is hopeful because the solution is so clear and simple. After all, how much effort did it take Anne to achieve this success? A success that came from simply being herself, because it is her own inner motivation, her own wonder and enthusiasm that she radiates. It is *cooperating with nature*, so to speak, to express what is essentially within us. To give the example by being a natural teacher, that is, through inspiration and resonance. And the result is fantastic.

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Developments in science

What is the character of a solar being?

The Dutch *New Scientist* featured an interesting interview with Conny Aerts, a Flemish astronomer.⁽¹⁾ The article had the remarkable title: 'The melody of stars reveals their hidden insides'. Conny Aerts is a pioneer in modern astronomy. She laid the foundations for so-called 'asteroseismology', the study of starquakes. One of the goals of asteroseismology is to get more insight into the inner layers of stars, and here we do not mean the astral and mental and spiritual layers working behind each physical heavenly body, but their physical interior, their physical core.

We will quote part of the interview. Naturally, Conny Aerts will describe the current view on stars — a view based on the idea that there is nothing more than physical matter and physical forces. After the quote we will give the theosophical view, based on the idea that the Cosmos and all its parts are ensouled, being the product of *centers of consciousness*. Starting from this basis, our views often differ greatly from current astronomical theory. For instance: according to us, a solar globe is neither hot nor cold, and its body is not a 'ball of gas or plasma' *as we know* gases and plasmas on our earth. We will deal with these two points in this article.

But now for the interview:

How is that possible, exploring the interior of stars? It is several million degrees Celsius there normally. No entity or instrument will ever be able to operate there.

"Indeed. Yet we have found one method: via investigating starquakes. That is what my doctoral research was about."

Starquakes?

"Yes. Any object in nature can tremble. If I knock on this table, that table also vibrates for a moment. Then that vibration dampens again. Our planet also has local quakes that come and go. Stars, due to their extreme dynamics,

constantly generate rhythmic vibrations throughout their bodies."

So does our sun?

"Yes, it trembles every five minutes."

What does such a quake look like?

"In the simplest starquake, the star expands, then shrinks.

Over and over again. But usually the patterns are much more complicated, also because you are dealing with colliding waves, which produce new patterns. That effect sometimes creates hundreds of simultaneous vibrations. It takes years of measurements to unravel that tangle of quakes into the basic quakes. We describe that with beautiful mathematics."

How does such a starquake give insight into the interior of stars?

"Compare it to earthquakes. These produce waves that bounce against the iron core of our planet and then head back toward the surface. During their journey, they are affected by everything they encounter. Seismometers measure the vibration frequencies and from these data we can deduce what our planet is like: what the pressure is inside, the density, the temperature. We do exactly the same thing. But with balls of gas."

Does each star in the sky trembles in its own unique way?

"Exactly. So each star is a unique three-dimensional musical instrument. Because what do you get when you change the pressure, temperature and density of gas? Sound waves. That happens too when I talk. I make gases vibrate and therefore we hear each other. So you can say that the melody of stars reveals their hidden insides."

Conny Aerts and her colleagues have discovered, she explains, that each star is characterized by a *unique* pattern of quakes: that each star produces a unique melody. What is the cause of that? How can we explain it, theosophically?

What is a star?

When we talk about a star like our sun, we are talking about a *cosmic entity*, an entity with a cosmic magnitude of understanding and activities. Like all beings, it reembodies itself, and in each life moves through the phases of youth, adulthood and old age. Much outer knowledge about these life phases has been accumulated by astronomers: they know what a newborn, a young, an adult and an old star look like — until the solar being ends its cycle and *in a flash* retreats its consciousness (and with it all the entities within its system) into the super spiritual regions: until it *dies*, to start its rest period.

During its periods of imbodiment, it works together with countless less evolved lives, that build up its bodies. The solar being, when starting its rebirth, creates an atmosphere, a force field, an ‘aura’. This force field attracts countless other beings, for whom it is the most appropriate place to live and evolve. Those subordinate beings form the various ethereal and material ‘instruments’ through which the solar being operates. Most layers of the Sun are ethereal, and for our physical instruments not perceivable. So, please regard a star as a mighty community of beings, of all levels of development, working very closely together.

So when we think about the structure of the physical globe of a star, about its outer layer and multiple layers within, we are talking about *groups of beings*, who have their appropriate place within the total sphere of the sun, just as all the employees of a large company take their place where they can perform their duties.

Vibrational frequencies are expressions of characteristics

Each being in the Universe has its essential characteristic, the nature or essence of its consciousness. In Theosophy that is called its ‘swabhāva’.

This keynote or swabhāva is reflected in its body. The leading consciousness puts its ‘stamp’ on its body which, as said, is built up of countless less evolved beings. Therefore each body is precisely suited for, and corresponding to, the leading being. In addition, each body also reflects (sometimes with a delay) the continuous changes in the consciousness of the being. It follows the inner growth stages of that being.

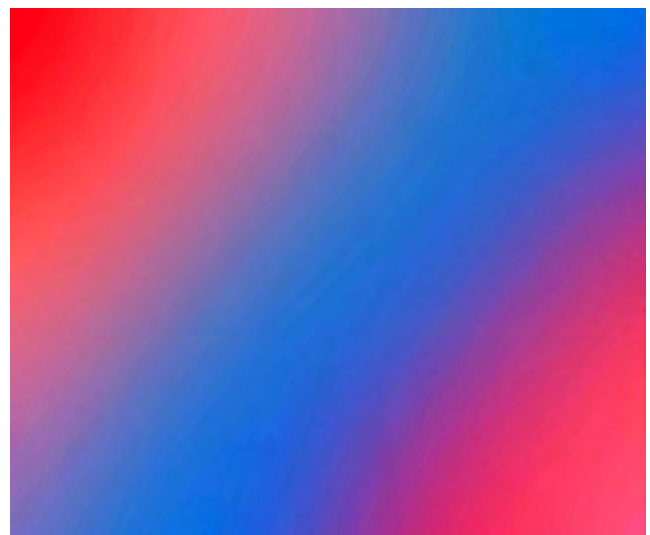
This applies to sun beings too. A solar being reflects its specific character in *all* its manifestations, and among these, in the type of radiation it emanates (its ‘light spectrum’) and in the pattern of its quakes. Researchers like

Conny Aerts use the data gathered by specialized cameras in satellites and mathematical methods of analysis, to figure out what a star’s basic rhythm is. What its self-vibration is, so to speak. With the sun, she said, that is once every five minutes. But behind such sober numbers lie differences in *characteristics*. We will explain that with an example.

Consider, for example, the spectrum of visible radiation. Red and blue light have different frequencies, and you can measure these. But the color red has a different emotional impact on us than blue: red feels warm, activating and sometimes alarming; blue feels cool, distant, is more calming.

That colors express a certain characteristic, also applies to stars. Take a red and blue star, for example. And then we mean the color viewed from an observation point outside our earth’s atmosphere, because our atmosphere can greatly modify incoming radiation, make it appear different. Red, says Gottfried de Purucker, is related to the characteristic ‘force of desire’. Indigo blue is related to the character ‘higher thinking’. But, De Purucker warns us, that does not mean that all reddish stars are spiritually less developed than bluish ones. It is not that simple.

First of all, it is not that simple because *each color* has a spiritual, highly evolved aspect and a material aspect. Secondly, from one perspective, the visible color blue as such indicates a *relatively material* property. Why? High-frequency radiation is known to be hard radiation, as it behaves more like a particle. Within the spectrum of colors that our eyes can see, blue has a much higher frequency than red. In this respect, red is a sign of relative ethereality.⁽²⁾



Most people experience the red parts as foreground and the blue part as the quiet background.

In all cases, each being manifests precisely the characteristics of its *consciousness*, it cannot do otherwise.

What is inside the glowing solar sphere we see in the sky?

Conny Aerts explained that the sun's quakes give us clues about its internal structure, just as earthquake waves do about the internal structure of the earth. It has been calculated, for example, that the internal layers of the solar sphere rotate faster around their axis than its exterior, resulting in a huge dynamic interplay of flows and vortices. So the question is: what is *inside* that glowing sphere we call 'sun'? The theosophical teaching on this may seem surprising: we do not even see the true solar body!

The true physical body of the sun consists of a miraculously small core, composed of physical substance in its *most spiritual* state.⁽³⁾ It is invisible to us, at our present stage of evolution. "The sun itself, its core, we could hold in the palm of our hand," Gottfried de Purucker wrote.⁽⁴⁾ So small. Yet that core is the focal point, the gateway, of gigantic cosmic forces, entering and leaving.

The solar globe we do see is an illusory phenomenon. You can see it as a radiated 'aura' of an ethereal nature. You can compare the solar globe to a street lamp in the middle of the night while it is foggy or raining softly. Then you see a kind of round sphere of reflected light around the lamp, rather than the actual lamp itself (which cannot be seen, or only vaguely). The visible sun, that extremely bright sphere that we cannot look at with our naked eyes during the day, is a *sphere of influence*, an aura. It hides its true structure!

Now you may ask: the researchers have shown the presence of all the known chemical atoms in the solar orb. Then why do you call this orb 'ethereal'?

The clue is: these atoms (remind, they are beings) including hydrogen and helium, are in a very different state during their stay *within this solar aura* than during their stay on earth. Their fundamental nature is the same: hydrogen, for example, is still hydrogen, but the hydrogen beings within the sun are in a much more ethereal condition. They behave differently, *much more dynamically*, than on earth. This explains the extreme dynamics of material and magnetic flows we observe in the sun. It also explains why solar quakes never 'bounce back' but move through the whole solar orb.

Now we can also answer this question: why do scientists believe that the solar orb is very hot, while we state that it is neither hot nor cold? The point is: *on earth* only very hot

gases behave somewhat like the solar substances do. Thus, the scientists concluded that the surface of the sun must be around six thousand degrees Celsius. But the aura of the sun is not hot, although some heat can arise at its outer layers; its enormous radiation is caused by the relative ethereal character of its components. For more explanation on this, see reference 5.⁽⁵⁾

Future discoveries ...

Conny Aerts, as mentioned above, has made a major contribution to the study of star quakes. For this she received the Kavli Prize in 2022, informally known as 'the Nobel prize for astronomy'. Perhaps interesting to note: she was born into a simple working-class family. Nevertheless, she had her intense interest in stars even as a young child. For her, evenings and nights were periods of great wonder. And thanks to the alert principal of her elementary school, she got the chance to study.

By listening ever more closely 'to the melody of the planets and stars', we believe, important discoveries will yet be made. To give a hint. The Masters of Wisdom made this prediction in the late 19th century: science will begin to *hear* rather than see certain invisible planets.⁽⁶⁾

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Questions & Answers

Predicting environmental effects

It was recently reported in the press that a widely used artificial sweetener, *sucralose*, seems to have a negative impact on the growth of blue-green algae and diatoms (a certain group of algae), and thus on the entire marine ecosystem. After all, both groups of unicellular organisms play a crucial role in that ecosystem.⁽¹⁾ With the knowledge of Theosophy, could you predict *in advance* the effects of substances, that is, before they have been brought into the environment?

Answer

Each year, a great number of new substances are being created in our laboratories, by combining physical atoms in a specific way. These substances often do not occur in our environment. If they end up in our environment, they sometimes turn out, after several years of use, to have unexpected and adverse effects on humans, animals or plants. With man-made substances that are extremely difficult to break down (called *persistent* substances), a significant additional problem arises: their unfavorable effects can persist for a long time. Examples include DDT, CFCs, PFAS and microplastics.

However, what most scientists do not take into account, because it does not fit in the current materialistic world view, is that those physical atoms are *living beings*. The latter is the basic idea of Theosophy: everything is alive. Even a physical atom is a form of life: it is animated by an atomic being. Although atomic beings are highly

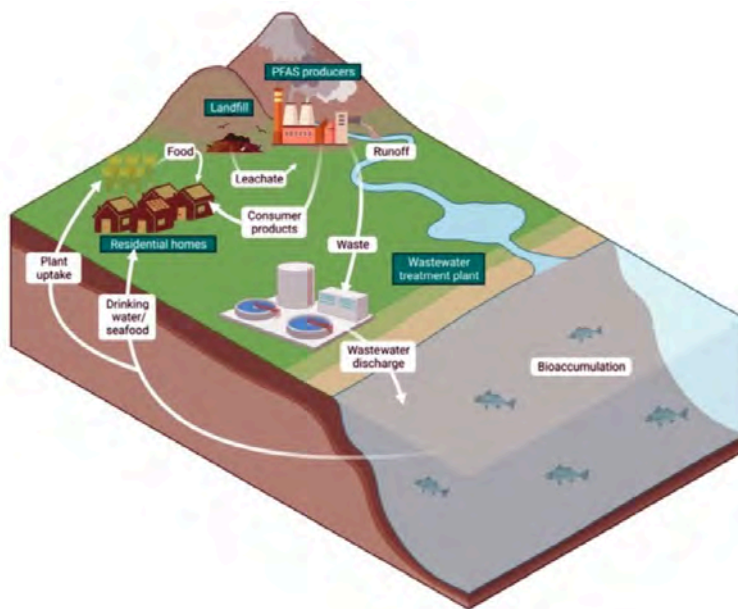
unselfconscious beings, each type of atomic being does have its own characteristics and inner impulses. Their characteristics are expressed in the type of influence they have on other substances (= other beings). That influence can be very powerful, as we know from radioactive substances, highly toxic substances, and so on.

What do we do when we create molecules in the laboratory that normally do not occur anywhere on Earth? Then *we allow molecular beings to be born that do not belong to the current stage of evolution of our planet*. Their characteristic may belong to an earlier phase, as is the case for the so-called 'transuranic elements': artificially manufactured, very heavy radioactive atoms. These transuranic elements belong to a period when the planet had a much more material character. In our present phase, they are therefore unstable: they are highly radioactive, which means,

they disintegrate relatively quickly back into atoms that do belong to our phase.

Now back to sucralose, and other persistent substances. That they break down very slowly means, that they do not participate in the 'recycling methods' of our current planet. In other words, they are 'ecosystem-foreign' substances. So how can we expect these molecular beings to interact harmoniously with the other beings in our environment? They accumulate, often in unwanted places. They do not belong in our evolutionary period. Therefore, they will always cause some kind of disharmony: for instance by clogging or poisoning.

Can we predict in advance which effects newly constructed molecules will have? Theosophically viewed, that is very difficult. That requires an in-depth knowledge of their characteristics and of all the cycles in nature.



Environmental fate of PFAS, a persistent substance. It accumulates in land fills, ground water, animals, plants.

But let us take a step further: is such a prediction really necessary at all? Why should we make substances which do not break down, anyway? Do we think sufficiently about the next generations of humans, animals and plants? ‘Nature’ – that is, the immense collective of all kinds of living beings – will in the end return to harmony, but that will usually be accompanied by smaller or larger disasters for humans.

From this we can draw at least two conclusions. Making persistent substances, substances that hardly break down, is always advised against. The second conclusion is, we need to look much more critically at our motives and actions. In the case of *sucralose*, there is only a ‘luxury’ desire: to give your food and drinks a sweet taste without making you fat. While we all know that with a little discipline, you get used to food that is not sweet at all.

Reference

1. For instance: Megan Winslow. ‘Study reveals environmental impact of artificial sweeteners’. University of Florida. (Source: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/07/240708222354.htm>).

Is there a ninth planet?

Some scientists suspect the existence of a ninth planet in our solar system: a large, slow-moving planet, even farther away from the sun than Pluto. Recently, that idea has been substantiated somewhat further.⁽¹⁾ Does Theosophy give a clue about its possible existence?

Answer

This hypothesis, the astronomers themselves say, is still uncertain. The reason they put forward this theory was, that the orbits of the numerous small debris beyond Neptune show an

arrangement that could only be explained by a, as yet unknown, external force. That ‘external force’ could be a planet.

How could scientists find this out? They can apply the gravity formula to the entire solar system. Then you get a complex equation, which describes the mass (‘weight’) and orbits of all known celestial bodies. If the calculated orbits then deviate slightly from the observed orbits, there must be other celestial bodies that have not yet been discovered. Because only *their* influence would explain those deviations.

According to Theosophy, we see with our physical instruments only the most material manifestations of the cosmic beings which we call ‘sun’, ‘planets’, ‘comets’, ‘moons’, ‘asteroids’, and so on and so forth. Everything is alive, and every consciousness in the cosmos expresses itself on many planes of existence, from a relative divine to a relative material plane — so, also on all the planes of existence in between. We see only the most exterior appearances of only *some* groups of cosmic beings that belong to our system.

Furthermore, Theosophy says that our

solar system contains dozens of planets, most of which are not perceptible to our present senses, because they are more ethereal or more material than our plane of existence. Yet we will be able to detect some of them indirectly. One of H.P. Blavatsky’s Teachers once predicted: we will discover some planets firstly by *hearing* them, rather than seeing them.⁽²⁾ So there is much more to discover!

Back to the question: could these scientists be on the trail of a ‘planet nine’? Sure, it is one of the options, as the number of planets in our solar system is *much* larger than eight. And if they really found a ‘planet nine’, there are at least two possibilities: it is either a planet that belongs to the family of our solar system – which means, that it has been fully part of this solar system during several of its embodiments – or it is a guest planet. Neptune, for example, is such a guest planet. Guest planets reside a relatively short time in our solar system, after which they continue their long journey through the Milky Way. Their journey will end when they too have returned to *their* solar family: there they will settle.



Planet Neptune is a guest planet of our Solar System.

Keep in mind that planets are living beings and are in constant interaction with all the other cosmic beings, gaining valuable evolutionary experiences.

References

1. K. Fesenmaier, 'Caltech researchers find evidence of a real ninth planet'. (Source: <https://www.caltech.edu/about/news/caltech-researchers-find-evidence-real-ninth-planet-49523>).
2. *Mahatmas M. and K.H., The Mahatma letters to A.P. Sinnett*. Compiled by A. Trevor Barker. Pasadena, California, Theosophical University Press, 1979, letter 23B (letter 93B in chronological order), answer to question 14.

Why did the Romans make metal dodecahedrons?

The Romans made many instruments and often in a skilled way. Very interestingly, there is a group of Roman objects whose usefulness or purpose is still completely unknown. These are metal *dodecahedrons* (solids with twelve five-sided faces, see the picture). They were often found near temples. Recently, another one was found in England.⁽¹⁾ What might they have been used for?

Answer

What we know about them, if we consult scientific sources, is: they are skillfully cast from combinations of metals, and no traces of weathering have ever been found (which would be the case if it had been an instrument such as a knife or die). They range in size from a golf ball to about a soccer ball. About 130 of them have been found in Europe, dating from the first to the fifth century AD. They are neither discussed in any Roman text (that we presently know of) nor depicted anywhere on a vase or mural



or mosaic.⁽²⁾ Are not these remarkable facts?

We too, cannot say anything for sure about it. But we can offer a suggestion that we think is worth further investigation. A key to the riddle may be this: the Platonic School, the mystery school founded by Plato, remained active until 529 AD, when the Roman Emperor Justinian (on the advice of the last spiritual Teachers of that school) closed the school. Well, the dodecahedron is one of the five Platonic bodies mentioned in Plato's dialogue *Timaeus*. Plato sees it as a symbol of the structure of the kosmos, as evidenced by his sentence: "One other construction, a fifth, still remained [the dodecahedron; ed.], and this one the god used in the delineation of the whole universe."⁽³⁾

The cosmic meaning Plato gives to this figure may be the reason why this form, cast in metal, was used in temples: for *symbolic esoteric* instruction. Perhaps these objects also had certain psychomagnetic properties.

Such a possibility also fits with the fact that no descriptions of these metal dodecahedrons have been found from

Roman times. Remember, that in the ancient mystery schools and temple-colleges the deeper knowledge was always passed on *orally* by the hierophants to their accepted pupils, under strict confidentiality.

In short: in our opinion, this seems a possible explanation.

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1. Darren Orf a.o., 'An unbelievable relic from the Roman Empire is baffling archaeologists'. (Source: <https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/archaeology/a60664370/roman-dodecahedron/>).
2. See ref. 1.
3. Plato, *Timaeus*, 55c (universal Plato pagination). Our translation is a combination of the translations by Benjamin Jowett and by Donald J. Zeyl. (For the first, see: <https://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html>) ("There was yet a fifth combination which God used in the delineation of the universe"). The second: "There was yet one other construction left, a fifth, and this one the god used for the whole universe, by embroidering figures on it." In: *Plato complete works*. John M. Cooper (editor). Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, p. 1258.

Agenda

Lectures on Sunday

English lectures can be followed via YouTube.

English *study* meetings can be followed via Zoom (via our website blavatskyhouse.org).

Sundays 19:30, from Oct 27th 2024 CET, from March 30th 2025 CEST.

SERIES 3, December – January

A non-political view of the global political climate

15-12 Half the world's population goes to the polls. What is the point of voting? Our right, duty, responsibility to vote

A well-known, intuitive expression is: 'every country has the government it deserves'. That suggests at least a great responsibility for every individual as an integral member of society.

In any case, thinking carefully about what a real democracy should entail is a must. For example, about questions such as: is the majority always right and what are the rights and duties of every human being in a real democracy? In short, what determines the meaning of voting?

22-12 Study meeting on lecture of 15-12

The possibility to register for this study will be added a month prior to the study. If you want to participate it is advisable to have watched the lecture.

05-01 A wise democracy

When we look at election campaigns worldwide and the daily practice of governance, the question arises: do wisdom and democracy actually go together? Is a wise democracy a utopia? History shows that wise governance is indeed possible. How does it work and how do you recognize wise leaders?

12-01 Study meeting on lecture of 05-01

SERIES 4, January – February

The Mystical Birth

19-01 The four sacred moments of the year

There are four sacred seasonal points in the year: the winter solstice, the spring equinox, the summer solstice and

the autumn equinox. At those times, the spiritual currents emanating from the sun throughout the solar system are most favorable for initiation into the Mysteries of Life. The four training stages preceding initiation are like staircases. They are an acceleration of the evolutionary process, because in a short time all that is hidden in man in terms of greater qualities of consciousness is made apparent.

26-01 Study meeting on lecture of 19-01

02-02 The Silent Watcher as Initiator

The Silent Watcher is part of the Hierarchy of Compassion. He has learned everything there is to learn within our sphere of life. But in his growth process, the Silent Watcher has abandoned any thought of reward or individual advancement, and dedicates his life to inspiring the world, just until everyone has achieved the same wisdom as he has.

What does this Wondrous Being have to do with man's initiation into the Mysteries?

09-02 Study meeting on lecture of 02-02

LECTURES ON 150 YEARS THEOSOPHY

2025 marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society. At least six generations have worked worldwide since 1875 to replace old, limited visions and prejudices with new, broader, more universal visions.

Our team of speakers has chosen an *active* way to address this. Five lecture series in 2025 have the theme '18 Million Years of Theosophia; 150 Years of Theosophy'. They form one continuous lecture, so to speak, in which the stimulation of humanity's growth is followed step by step. From the most universal network of spiritual world reformers, to the small social improvements and freedoms, which everyone now takes for granted but which were fought for each time by a small group of pioneers.

We hope to show the organic interconnection between all these larger and smaller activities, so that you can discover for yourself *if*, and *what*, you *yourself* would like to contribute to this spiritual awakening process of humanity. And one thing is certain: everyone can.

During these five lecture series we have also slightly

changed our Sunday evening meetings. Instead of our usual weekly alternation of lectures and study meetings, we now offer a lecture *every* Sunday evening, the last 30 minutes of which will be devoted to a joint study of the topic.



The first two of these five lecture series, in February and March 2025 are:

The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, of all times

In all times and worldwide, there are people who have actively taken to heart the moral-ethical development of humanity as a whole. They have united in a cooperation known as the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. This Lodge belongs to the Hierarchy of Compassion.

Who or what is this Hierarchy? For what purpose and how does it operate? How do we recognize it, and what does it mean for us today?

In this series we highlight the work of the Hierarchy of Compassion, up to the impulse of H.P. Blavatsky.

- 16-02** The Hierarchy of Compassion – worldwide, of all times
- 23-02** The awakening of humanity
- 02-03** Mystery schools: the fountain-source of every religion, philosophy and science
- 09-03** Spiritual impulses before H.P. Blavatsky (1875)

H.P. Blavatsky's mission in the Hierarchy of Compassion

This series will focus on Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and her work. Four lectures, not on her as a person – for there is nothing more boring than looking at old photo albums – but on the *function* she had in the work of the Hierarchy of Compassion.

Her work was not a one-time solo performance but a group event, together with teachers and teachers of teachers, reaching into the inner layers – the soul and spirit – of this living planet earth. Understanding these deeper layers gives us insight into the place and task of *ourselves* in this group event, which is still ongoing to this day.

The *how* and *why* of her actions is the subject of the first lecture of this series. The other lectures focus on the three spiritual impulses she gave to humanity's thinking. Three explosions of new ideas, new visions, that changed the mentality of humanity permanently. The first impulse was her work in New York, where she founded the Theosophical Society. The second impulse was her work in India and the third impulse was her pioneering work in Europe.

- 16-03** H.P. Blavatsky: the Mystery (exoteric and esoteric)
- 23-03** Unveiling the invisible worlds
- 30-03** Unlocking the Eastern Wisdom
- 06-04** The Secret Doctrine and the Esoteric School

International Theosophy Conferences (ITC)

Announcement of the theme of the 2025 conference:

Celebration of 150 years of modern Theosophy

Date: 8 August 2025 – 12 August 2025

Colophon

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The object of the Foundation is to form a
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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,
brochures and other publications, and by
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Foundation, this is spreading the Theo-
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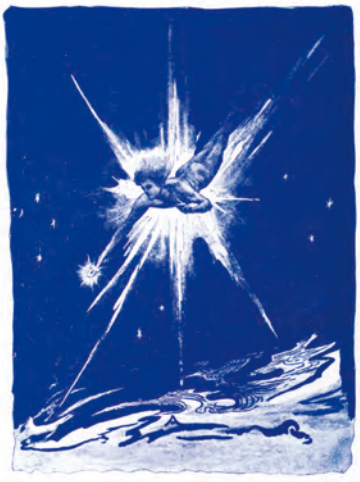
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I.S.I.S. Foundation

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

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



Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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

For these people this journal is written.

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

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

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