

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

Use it or lose it

The Golden Chain of Wisdom

How empty is the void?

Do we force people into selfishness?

The basics of astrology

How do we create wonder?

Identity

House plants



Cover illustration:
Jantar Mantar in Jaipur, India:
an 18th century astronomical
observatory.

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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/

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The basics of astrology Clues to understand astrology

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This article is the first in a series, explaining the nature and value of astrology. The series is based on the lectures Joop Smits gave on the subject in January 2020. In this article we sketch an overall picture that we will fill in in detail in the following articles. In this first article we discuss the nature of ancient astrology, the various reasons why people take an interest in astrology, the relationship between astrology and astronomy, the basic thoughts needed to understand the workings of cosmic influences, and the value that astrology *could have*.

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During a lecture, a listener asked a number of questions about the inner urge of young children to ask life questions. We delve deeper into the subject of wonder where the theosophical principles of karma, reincarnation and self-actualisation come in handy.

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Editorial

We are sometimes asked whether metaphysical theosophical ideas are not detached from the often harsh realities of everyday life. Would it not be better to devote our attention and energy to social issues, the enormous gap between rich and poor, the many wars and threats of war, rather than dwelling on cosmic considerations?

These are valid questions. And those who ask them, show that they are concerned about the fate of the world. We can only praise that. Nevertheless, we believe that engaging with the profound teachings of Theosophy can indeed contribute to a more harmonious world, *provided* that these teachings are not seen as an intellectual toy or a pleasant pastime, but as a source of inspiration which, if we focus on such ideas and *understand* them, permeates our entire being. It inspires us, ennobles our thinking, and enables us to apply its ethical consequences in all areas of society. We believe that people are much better able to be compassionate when they learn about the grandiose laws of the Cosmos.

That is why we have posted two articles that reveal something of the depth of Theosophy. First, there is the article on *Śūnyatā*, Emptiness. This Buddhist concept is not easy for Westerners to understand, but if you ponder it a little further – and that takes longer than just reading the article – then vistas of ideas open up and you will find out the Void is not so empty after all.

The second article deals with *Astrology*. Don't think of popular modern 'astrology', but rather a facet of Ancient Wisdom that has been studied in depth by the sages of the past. This is the first in a series of articles on Astrology, in which the basic principles are explained. Studying the real Astrology, we gain insight into the magnificent relationships and cooperation between all living parts of the Cosmos.

As mentioned, we must apply these theosophical teachings. If we do not use them in our daily lives, we will wither away like flowers that do not get water. The article *Use it or lose it* explains this.

How we can live our ideal life is revealed in *The Golden Chain of Wisdom*. The article is about teaching and learning, and shows that each of us can be both a teacher and a student. We can always do something for our fellow human beings.

Extremely useful information on how to implement Theosophy can be found in the article *Do we force people into selfishness? Yes ... but let me explain why*. In our world we see enormous differences in development opportunities between people: spiritually, mentally and socially. To what extent do we – possibly unconsciously – contribute to this inequality? And what is the key to a *dynamic, harmonious* world community?

In our section *Questions that children ask*, we discuss how we can continually stimulate wonderment in children — and in ourselves. Finally, in our question section, we answer two questions, about house plants and the fundamental propositions of Theosophy.

We believe we have put together a *Lucifer* that shows different facets of the Wisdom Religion. We hope to have made it clear, that Theosophy contains profound wisdom which reaches far beyond everyday knowledge, but can also be so practical, that anyone with good will can apply it.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments. They can help us to further spread theosophical ideas.



Use it or lose it

Key thoughts

» *Use it or lose it*, a well-known English saying, has a lot of profound wisdom in it.

» It applies to all areas — from our physical abilities to mathematical calculations and our most profound thoughts.

» Every consciousness, everyone, has a dynamic cooperation with a legion of other consciousnesses of varying qualities. Only in this way we can express ourselves, manifest ourselves, in the many realms of the cosmos

» Thus we form dynamic relations with more spiritual and less spirituel beings. Our cooperation with them is continuous: it cannot be stopped or interrupted.

» We lose relationships with higher and lower beings and build others: not by chance but by the change of character that we induce in ourselves, leading to changes in attraction. It is important for us to realize that.

Use it or lose it, is a well-known, widely used English saying. Many examples can be given, in which this saying is confirmed. Most of us can also see the wisdom in this statement. It has a large grain of truth in it. But whether this saying is used correctly or not in practice is much more profound than we think. Let us see what its theosophical value is. Let us see if we can elaborate on this.

Training or letting go in practice

This saying is often used when talking about our physical body, about rehabilitation, training, and so on. Its truth is then easily experienced by everyone. Every athlete knows that he or she must intensively train, persistently use the characteristics that make him or her a good candidate to become a winner.

Of course, this wisdom can also be used to get rid of things, to detach ourselves from something, although ‘detaching from something’ is often much more difficult than we first think. There can be all sorts of reasons why we cannot completely detach ourselves from it, in the end.

For our statement that this saying applies to all areas — from our physical abilities to deep mathematical calculations and to the most profound

thoughts, and so on — we need some more theosophical explanation. To substantiate this and show its deeper wisdom, we need to take a few steps.

Principles

In Theosophy, there are three fundamental principles, also called propositions, on which all Theosophy is based. These are the three well-known propositions from *The Secret Doctrine* of H.P. Blavatsky. We now need these propositions (they can be found on the inside cover of this magazine).

The first proposition has the following basic characteristics: infinity, oneness, inseparable connectedness, continuous cooperation. It implies that nothing can exist in isolation, separate from everything else. Every consciousness, everyone, has a dynamic cooperation with a legion of other consciousnesses of varying qualities. Only in this way we can express ourselves, manifest ourselves, in the many realms of the cosmos, such as the physical realm. Only in this way we can, life after life, gain experience cyclically, learn and therefore grow in our abilities. Only through our cooperation with other beings we can become wiser, and thus express more and more of our spiritual, higher qualities of consciousness.

Emanation

This cyclic process of cooperation (which, if we learn, repeats itself at ever higher levels of consciousness), this attracting and binding force through which that cooperation can take place, is what we call *emanation*.

This term should be kept in mind for a moment. Every consciousness radiates a force, sends out radiance. We call this process of radiating, *emanation*. This word comes from the Latin word ‘emanatus’, which consists of ‘e’ (meaning ‘out’) and ‘manare’ (to flow). Emitting streams of energies, of light and life from a source such as a sun, human or god, is an act of emanation. Since we, in Theosophy, assume that everything is fundamentally consciousness, you can also see these emitted energies as streams of consciousnesses in various stages of development, entering into cooperation with the source being.

In short, emanation is an outflow, an invisible outflow of conscious beings, of spiritual energy. This emanating force or energy always has the characteristic of its source. Other consciousnesses – beings of different qualities – are attracted by the special characteristic of this emanating energy. This is how we build up a cooperation with them. So, all these attracted consciousnesses have an affinity with us, in accordance with our character, and they work with us for a shorter or a longer period.

Inseparable connectedness

The first proposition gives us the image of infinity but also the principle that everything is one. Every being is there-



Depending on our character and interests, we create magnetic attractions towards certain other beings, resulting in various types of cooperation. If we do not maintain or strengthen these interests, these relationships weaken or come to an end. And if we ennoble our character, we inspire those other beings to ennoble their consciousness too. Then you grow ‘together’ ...

fore an inseparable part of it. We can imagine a being as embedded within that boundlessness yet a kind of spin-off or vortex, which Blavatsky in the second proposition calls a ‘spark of eternity’, a monad.

We already said: based on the unity principle, all beings are inseparably connected to each other, and thus we have collaborations with many other beings, higher and lower in consciousness than ourselves. All these cooperating beings form, so to speak, a series ‘from high to low’, in which we ourselves are the ‘lowest’ link in a series of consciousnesses higher than ourselves, and simultaneously we are ‘the top’ of a series of beings lower than ourselves. This cooperation is dynamic: upward (more spiritual) and downward (less spiritual). Our cooperation with them is continuous: it cannot be stopped or interrupted. Both during our sleeping and waking periods, and also during death, the most important part of these cooperating beings always remains connected with each other, inspired by the highest and everlasting in us.

This idea of oneness, the inseparable connectedness of everything with everything, is also a fact in everyday life, even though it is not always recognizable or coming into its own. This connectedness is much more often perceived negatively than positively. How we perceive it, is a question of the focus of our thinking. If we forget or ignore unity, we still have many lessons to learn. Yet we can also learn in an exclusively positive way. That is how it should be in fact. We do not have to make mistakes. We have the ability to think and by means of that capacity we can think through situations, emerging problems, and devise and work out compassionate solutions.

Cooperation with higher and lower beings

This image quickly shows that we have a continuous cooperation with the beings ‘above’ us, who are more developed than we are, but also a cooperation with the beings who are ‘lower’ than us. Keep in mind that we cannot directly perceive the beings who are much higher than us, but also not the beings who are much lower than us.

This higher group of beings, who are less materialized, play an equally important role for us than the lower beings. We can receive their inspiring influence if we focus our thinking on *their* wavelength. We start to interact with them if we focus our thinking on thoughts of a higher quality, which contain the core of Universal Brotherhood and have the characteristic of universality: which elevate us above what we now generally are. Consciously or unconsciously we then build an ever-stronger cooperation with

these more advanced human beings.

Let us see how this cooperation with higher and lower beings takes place. We first look at the influences from the lower realms. By this I mean all those beings that we need to build a vehicle, to build our physical body, through which we can live and move in this outer world. We attract these lower beings according to our character. And we have built up our character over many lives in a dynamic process.

Our current cooperation with these lower beings is therefore something that we have developed over many thousands of years. Therefore, we do not have to pay attention to which cells need replacing and when we need to breathe in, during the day: these have become semi-automatic processes; our cooperation follows harmoniously acquired patterns.

If we further develop the higher qualities of our human-being, which is also desirable, and develops our universal qualities better and better, then at the same time our influence and therefore attraction on the lower areas also changes. If I now assume the positive case that we gradually become a better person, then we see a dynamic process taking place: we let go of what we are no longer interested in – because we no longer *feed* the binding force – and we develop a new attraction to what we do want to become, which we then attract.

It is a gradual process that always continues, even if we do not think about it, even if we are not actively conscious of it. We lose relationships and build others: not by chance but by the change of character that we induce in ourselves, by the change in attraction. We must realize that this process takes place continuously, consciously or unconsciously, and that, although my examples are aimed directly at us humans, this dynamic law of cooperation applies to all realms. Cooperation always needs maintenance: attention, attraction.

Use the theosophical knowledge (for the benefit of all) or lose it

A very inspiring example of this comes from the early days of the theosophical organization, around 1881. This example can be found in one of the many letters that were exchanged at that time between Theosophists who were active in setting up theosophical activities, and the Teachers of Madame Blavatsky, the Masters. These letters are full of ethical and moral instructions. Here too we come across some important aspects where the principle of *use it or lose it* applies.

This is the letter of August 5, 1881 from Master Koot Hoomi addressed to A.P. Sinnett, the editor-in-chief of *The Pioneer*, an important newspaper in India in those days. Sinnett was very active in the Theosophical Society, in the dissemination of Theosophy in India and in England. He wrote many articles and was at that time writing a book (*Esoteric Buddhism*, published in 1883), a book on the theosophical principles and teachings — teachings that he received step by step from the Master. It was quite a challenge to translate those Eastern deep philosophical thoughts into the Western world of thought, where very often there are no words for those Eastern concepts.

Sinnett therefore frequently asked the Master many questions, in order to deepen his knowledge and to further complete his book. To a letter from Sinnett containing a large number of questions, the Master gives the following answer.⁽¹⁾ His reply begins:

... At any rate, thirst for knowledge was never regarded as a sin and you will always find me prompt to answer such queries — that can be answered. ...

Then, a general remark about receiving and assimilating the Master's answers follows. It is an encouragement to do something with the knowledge given, because it is not intended for one's use alone:

... Certainly I am of opinion that since our correspondence was established for the good of the many, it would prove very little profitable to the world at large unless you do recast the teachings and ideas contained therein "in the form of an essay", not only on the occult philosophical view of creation but upon every other question. ...

Some important thoughts emerge from these quotations:

- a. The Masters work for the good of humanity and not for an individual, unless the individual in turn works for humanity.
- b. The data must be worked with, made to serve the common good of that humanity.

Sinnett is reminded of the responsibility of receiving theosophical knowledge: a knowledge that is not meant for yourself alone as an individual, for it is of great importance to humanity. Hence the resulting obligation to pass it on. A knowledge that should not be seen as an interesting theory, but as knowledge that, if taken to heart, can save humanity many problems.



If you play in an orchestra, you must keep your instrument constantly tuned to all other instruments. If you neglect that, you are very soon no longer welcome. You can apply this to all your engagements in life.

What the Masters are actually saying to Sinnett is: only when you realize and live up to that responsibility, the co-operation between us and you can be maintained, because then there is a mutual attraction. Then the stream of inspiration continues to flow from the Hierarchy of Compassion.

Always and in all areas applicable

We see that *use it or lose it* shows an important process in society, which explains why we lose everything we are no longer interested in, and what we have to do to build something new.

The wisdom of this statement is that if we do not maintain and use something, we will lose it, because the cooperation with it gets lost. This wisdom is much more profound than we think. It shows a picture of a multitude of cooperations that is constantly in motion, is constantly changing. The choice is ours.

Reference

1. There are two major editions of the Masters' letters. One is *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett in chronological sequence*. Quezon City, Philippines, Theosophical Publishing House, 1993, Letter no. 20, p. 70. The other is the well-known *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*. Second and revised edition. Pasadena, California, Theosophical University Press, 2021, letter no. 49, p. 280.



The Golden Chain of Wisdom

Who unfolds the plan?

Key thoughts

- » Learning is in a certain sense: *remembering* the primal images of everything that exists.
- » Further developed beings than us form the Hierarchy of Compassion, also called the 'Golden Chain of Wisdom'.
- » These higher developed beings are not separate from ourselves. They are our Higher Selves.
- » Each of us, if we wish, can become a teacher to our fellow men.
- » Both the spiritual teacher and the student bear a great responsibility.
- » Let us set our foot on the Path, to reach the lowest level of the Hierarchy of Compassion. This is how the divine plan unfolds, this is how we can contribute to it.

The following is the translation of a German lecture by Claudia Bernard. Her lecture was part of the annual symposium of our German Section, held on September 24, 2024.⁽¹⁾ The theme of this symposium was, 'The mystical combination of leadership, wisdom and one's own commitment'. And this lecture was intended to show, how we can give our own commitment and dedication a strong, wise foundation, which rises far above the emotional level of 'wanting to help but not being able to'.

Claudia brings difficult, complicated information down to its simple spiritual core, directly understandable by anyone's heart. A great help for everyone learning about this for the first time. But also for anyone who still has difficulty inspiring others with these ideas. [Editor]

1. Wise learning, wise students

We humans possess a magical ability: we want to know, we want to learn, we want to understand the world. We recognize this even in very young children: they touch everything, put it in their mouths; they want to understand. When they are a little older, they ask a thousand questions: Why does a tree lose all its leaves in autumn? Why does the moon not fall? Where does Grandpa go when he is dead? Where was I before I came to you? Have you ever asked yourself where that urge to 'want to know and learn' comes from and what that urge means?

What is learning?

One thing: we are not talking here about learning from memory, as we did in school, or learning to play the

piano. When we talk about learning in this lecture, we mean learning to develop latent abilities, to refine our character, to gain more wisdom, to recognize more of the truth.

We make many decisions in our lives and have many experiences. Some enjoyable, some neutral and some bitter. If we are not living a superficial, self-centered life, then we are likely to reflect on the experiences we have had, to think about them and process them. Depending on how we do this, we shape our thinking and therefore our future actions. That is learning.

An example: Someone is elected to the parent advisory board because there are hardly any volunteers. Then parents who do not volunteer complain about the decisions of the parent council. This experience may be perceived as quite negative.

Then a reaction might be: “What ungrateful people. Let them figure it out for themselves. I will resign my position.” It might even lead to the thought, “I am not going to commit myself to others anymore.” Another way to deal with the experience might be the following: “The parents are not satisfied. What can we do better to prevent this? Maybe we should involve them. We might ask them what bothers them, and then possibly do that in a different way. Maybe we shall manage to motivate them to actively participate.”

So here we see two different ways of dealing with a negative experience. We can regard both responses as learning. One has decided for himself that he no longer wants to be involved with others; the other is training his ability to cooperate.

Learning means processing experiences, internalizing them in the right way, and thus building future ways of thinking.

Why do some people think toward negative conclusions and others toward positive ones? It depends on our patterns of thinking. We have formed these patterns of thinking ourselves. We are, so to speak, the designers of our thought patterns. We come into the world with the thought patterns we formed in countless past lives, and continue to form them every day, every second (details are provided in the course Universal Wisdom). We create a thought-path with our thinking. And the more often we go this thought-path, the wider and more well-trodden it becomes. So the more often we follow certain thought-paths, the easier it is for us to step into these pre-formed thought-paths.

If we tend to be easily offended, personally hurt or angry, we will quickly point to other people as the cause of these negative feelings. But does this help us in our intercourse with others? Does this improve our character?

If we can truly forgive, if we are empathetic and compassionate, if we can also see the beam in our own eye, then we are more likely to look for what we can learn from a particular situation. Then we will think about it and find a universal idea for “I shall do better next time.”

People have so much undeveloped, latent potential that

they can unfold little by little if they focus on the supra-personal. They can activate their inherent abilities and then actively use them. This is *evolution*: developing faculties that lie within us. But we can only do this if we really start thinking supra-personally. In other words, by encompassing everything, not just myself, not just me and mine, not just me and my village, me and my country, but everyone. Even those who are strange or unsympathetic to me. A child brings with him curiosity about life. The royal path of *up-bringing*, of *e-ducation*, means leading these inner, passive faculties outward. Activating them for the benefit of all.*

Summarizing: we make many decisions in our lives, have experiences, reflect on them, and draw conclusions for our thoughts and actions. We learn spiritually when, in drawing our conclusions, we think supra-personally, and not of our little ‘me’: our personality, the role we play in this incarnation.

How do we learn?

We can learn through our own insights, but also through examples, for instance through the experiences of others. We gain experience by dealing with other people, by handling different personalities, by interaction. We need each other in order to learn.

What would happen if everyone thought, talked and acted exactly as I do? What would happen if everything went the way I had pictured it? Could I grow then? Hardly!

Because we are all interconnected, there is no thought, word or deed that does not have an effect on the whole universal life. Imagine that your thoughts, words and deeds are energies tied to you with an invisible rubber band. You send these energies out into the universe, they touch others, influence them, have an effect on them, but the rubber band always brings your thoughts, words and deeds back to yourself. We are like a sower who sows thoughts and reaps results. And our own harvest, that which in turn works back on us, is our best teacher.

Would not it be a useful ritual to look at the harvest, the harvest of our thoughts, words and deeds working back on us? A ritual to reflect on this harvest and draw positive

*As Plato explains in his dialogue *Meno*: all learning is recognizing anew what the immortal soul has seen before in the Cosmos of Ideas – the primal images of all that exists – before entering the body of a mortal human being.⁽²⁾

In *The Republic*, Plato says: “... Education is not such a thing as some announce it to be; for they somehow say, that whilst there is no science in the soul, they will insert it, as if they were inserting sight in blind eyes.” ... “But our present reasoning ... now shows, that this power [to learn is] in the soul of every one, and the organ by which every one learns ... must, in like manner, with the whole soul, be turned ... to endure the contemplation of *Being* itself, and the most splendid of being; ...” “[Education is] ... the art of his conversion, in what manner he shall, with greatest ease and advantage, be turned. Not to implant in him the power of seeing, but considering him as possessed of it....”⁽³⁾

conclusions from it? At night before you go to sleep, look back on the day: “What happened? Why did something go a certain way? What was good about it? Could it have been done better? What can *I* do better?”

Were our thoughts, words and actions focused on ourselves, that is, *personal*, or were they *supra-personal*, because we included everyone and did not ask ourselves “what is in it *for me*, what do *I* get in return?” What were my motives? Did I make decisions according to my *conscience*, or did I allow myself to be persuaded by the little personality devil on my shoulder saying, “It is not that bad, everyone does it, no one will notice, I am entitled to it, right?” Just when we have such thoughts, we know we have acted against our conscience.

And another ritual for the morning after waking up: ask yourself, “What do I resolve to do today? What do I want to do better?”

We will always make mistakes. Do not let this discourage you. If you notice these mistakes, you are already one step ahead, and if you do not let them make you feel small, you are a second step ahead. Just try to do better. Do not regret anything, because regret ties your thinking to failure.

What is a wise way of learning?

When reflecting on our experiences and adventures, it is advisable to adopt an open, unbiased attitude. Do this in peace, in silence. Try to look at these things as a neutral, wise friend. Can you perceive your inner voice?

Do not fall into self-aggrandizement or the opposite, self-flagellation. Look calmly at the things you have experienced. What can you learn from your harvest? What character trait can you ennoble? Practice the virtue of equanimity and patience; intensely truly forgive; intensely reflect on how to put generosity into practice (and by this is not meant pouring out only material goods on others, but how generously you give a smile, an encouraging word, comfort and trust to others).

Are you curious about other points of view or do you hold on to your own old views and opinions? Do you remain curious, asking yourself: what can I learn, how can I ennoble my character for the benefit of all?

2. Wise teachers

Learning is easier when we have a teacher beside us. Someone who shows us the way, but does not go that way for

us. Because growing, developing your latent abilities, can only be done by yourself. No one can do that for us. Our whole universe is full of spiritual forces that always surround us, that are our helpers out of compassion for us, people of lower levels of consciousness, who are wandering and searching. They do not help us solve our personal, selfish, lower problems. They only help us if we seek to raise *ourselves* spiritually and intellectually to their level, so that we ourselves can in turn become helpers of humanity. These forces have always been there and will always be there. Their partnership has been called the ‘*Hierarchy of Compassion*’ since time immemorial. Gottfried de Purucker says:

Thus we Theosophists have something so much more beautiful and noble [...] something incomparably closer to our human hearts and souls, something wondrously beautiful, gentle, compassionate, always listening, always helping: the Brotherhood of Compassion and Wisdom.⁽⁴⁾

But who or what is this Hierarchy of Compassion and Wisdom? They are beings far above the average human being in development: Mahātmās, angels, archangels, demi-gods, gods, Bodhisattvas, Buddhas, Dhyāni-Chohans.* No matter what name one gives them.

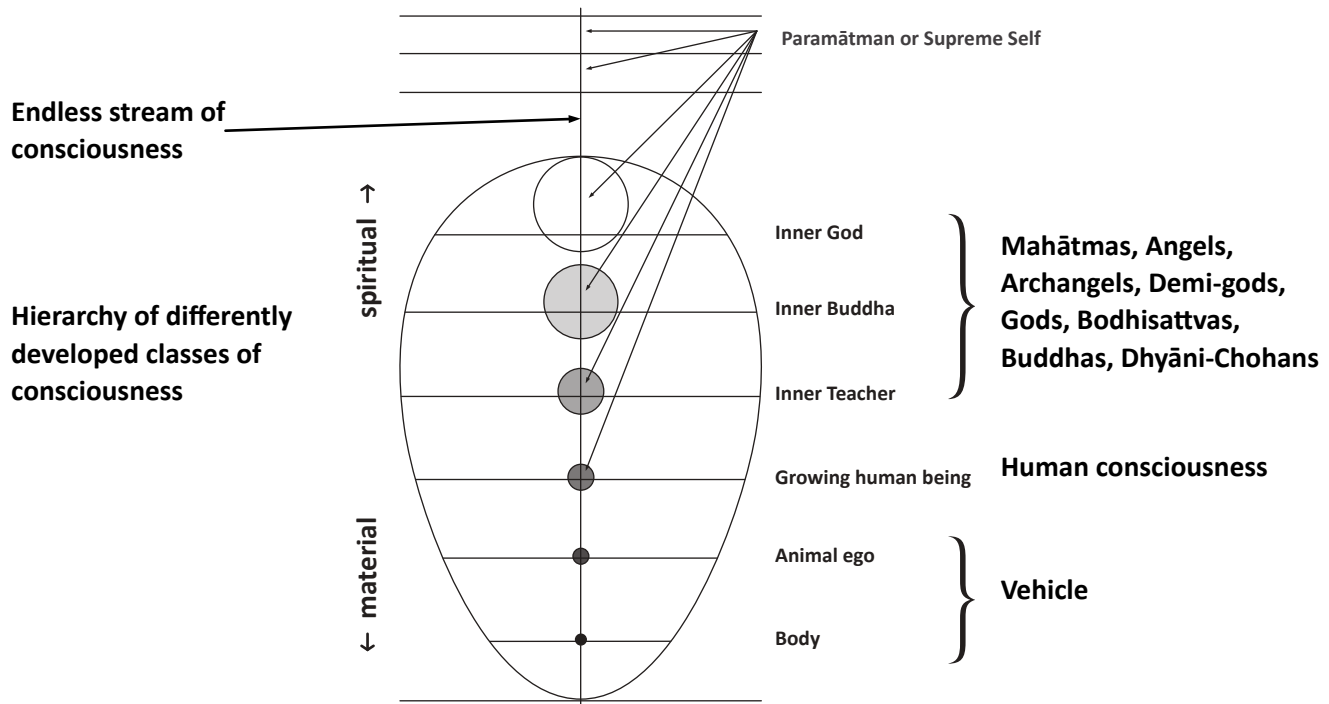
They have already developed many more faculties than we average people. They see more of the truth than we average people. They are wiser, more compassionate than us. These beings form a hierarchy, each at their own level of development. We also call them the Golden Chain of Wisdom.

It is very important, to understand that these higher evolved beings are not separate from us. They are our Higher Selves (plural!). We are part of a stream of consciousness, rooted in Boundlessness and, through various levels of consciousness, reaching further and further into the material depths (vertical line in the diagram on p. 48). Together we form a hierarchy of life. And together we are a distinct being, an organism (in the diagram: egg-shaped outline around the classes of consciousness), which in turn is part of a much larger being.

Several advanced Consciousnesses compose this stream of consciousness. To understand this stream of consciousness a little better, let us first look at our position in that hierarchy and how it all cooperates.

* Dhyāni-Chohans means ‘Lords of meditation in wisdom’.

Hierarchy of Compassion



The growing human being

Because we as humans are intertwined with classes of consciousness above us and classes of consciousness below us, we can say that the human being is a composite being.

We are a manifestation of the Boundless, a consciousness with all the abilities of the Boundless ALL. We are an energy-spirit-consciousness. And this consciousness is connected in an endless chain with higher developed classes of consciousness and lower developed classes of consciousness. We are not ‘only human’, nor are we the ‘crown of creation’. We are a link in an endless chain. Currently, our *human consciousness* has reached the developmental stage of ‘*thinking*’.* It is our task as growing human beings, to develop all the possibilities of the mind: from the lower focus of thought on the material body, on the emotions, activities and desires, via the pure intellect, to the higher thinking aspects of ‘intuition’ and ‘inspiration’.

However, we cannot develop our human consciousness if we have no *material body* that provides us with a suitable vehicle to gain experience on this earth. As explained earlier, we can only learn if we gain experiences and reflect on them. But how could we gain experiences if we were a pure etheric energy-consciousness? We would not be able to develop. That is only possible by having experiences

and learning from them. We have to learn independently to distinguish right from wrong. We must learn by interacting with other people. We must learn to live in harmony with nature, with the laws of nature. And that is simply not possible without a physical vehicle.

Our universe, all of nature, is based on harmony. We small, hot-tempered humans, cause disharmony in the universe with our unbridled emotions and greedy pursuit of wish fulfillment. Because all of our thoughts, words and actions have their feedback on us, we are given the opportunity to learn and develop. This is why our level of consciousness is called ‘the growing human being’. The scope of our consciousness at this level includes the entire living being Earth, of which the physical blue globe is only the vehicle that is perceptible to us.

The inner teacher

Just as closely as our mental consciousness is connected to our material body, it is connected to the Hierarchy of Compassion, to the *higher evolved consciousnesses*. What a sublime thought it is, that we are children of higher evolved consciousnesses. We have the same abilities in us as they do. We just have not unfolded them yet. We are still too much stuck in the material with our thoughts, we

* Animals, on the other hand, develop instinctive consciousness. They are lower than humans on the evolutionary ladder.

regard sensory impressions as the ultimate truth, and therefore we all see ourselves as separate from each other. Me and my kin here — you there.

But because we are closely intertwined with higher classes of consciousness, yes, as we *are* them, we can receive help 'from above'. The first level above 'the growing human being' is the *inner teacher*. The influence from our inner teacher is our conscience. Our conscience is our own spiritual 'truth heritage'. The wisdom and truth that we have learned in countless reincarnations, we can 'summon' as it were. You can grab your own heritage and use it, when you have to make important (!) decisions: Shall I do it or shall I not do it?

The meaning of the word conscience comes from the Greek *syneidēsis*, meaning 'to exchange together'. Who is communicating with whom here? This is obvious: it is the growing human being, exchanging ideas with his inner teacher.

We interpret this influence of our inner teacher as a voice. This is why we also speak of the 'voice of our conscience'. As Johanna Vermeulen explained in her splendid lecture 'Three signposts on the quest for yourSELF'.⁽⁵⁾ when we have to make important decisions, the lower 'voice' of our personality is particularly dominant. It 'chatters' continuously. And this can overrule the quiet 'voice' of our conscience. Johanna's advice was: do not try to silence the voice of the personality. This will not succeed, because this attempt only feeds it. It is better to just *take him along with us*: "Come, let us be silent together and listen to what our conscience has to tell us."

And then we can hear that voice of conscience. To the binary question, "Should I do it or not do it?" we get the binary answer of our conscience: yes or no. Try it! Listening to your own conscience means experiencing happiness. The Greek term *eudaimonia* refers to a successful lifestyle, described as a feeling of happiness or bliss. The term is composed of *eu* = good and *daimon* = spirit, inner teacher. Those who repeatedly do not listen to their conscience enter a downward spiral. Man feels an inner emptiness, a spiritual disappointment in himself, and then tries to camouflage this inner emptiness by using intoxicants such as alcohol or drugs, or by fleeing into distracting addictions (for example, gambling). If he stubbornly continues to close his ears to the voice of his conscience, this will eventually lead him to pure despair, because he has made the inner bond with his own inner teacher thinner, weaker.

The inner Buddha

Higher than the inner teacher is the consciousness class of the inner Buddha. '*Buddh*' comes from Sanskrit and means 'to awaken', 'to enlighten'.

This high level of consciousness encompasses the living being Sun, of which the solar system – the sun and planets visible to us – is only the outer vehicle. If we can reach this level with our consciousness, we can see deeper connections that were previously hidden from us. While we just spoke of conscience as a 'voice', people describe this new experience as 'seeing something'. We see the soul of things, the innermost, the grand coherence. We can take a glance behind the veil and recognize a little more of the truth. 'A light is dawning on me' or 'bringing light into the darkness'.

We call the influence of our inner Buddha *intuition*.*

The inner god

This highest level of consciousness for us humans includes the living being Milky Way, of which this galaxy with its many stars is merely the outer vehicle. In order to have contact with this high level, we humans must have elevated our thinking consciousness to this high level. We must have developed it to a high, very high level. It is not possible, even metaphorically, to describe the sense organ, because we have not yet developed it at our present level of evolution.

This influence is also referred to as *inspiration*, or better, a *state of being*: one is inspired. When we have reached this stage, we recognize the divine in everything, because we are everything.

We are this inner God, but we have not yet unfolded this sphere within ourselves. That is why we speak of 'we are a god in embryo'. Existing, growing, but not yet born.

Contact with our Higher Self

The myriad beings of this Hierarchy of Compassion propel the great masses of less evolved beings inward and upward. Forward to more knowledge, more wisdom. From the dark, material shadow side to the bright light side.

But if we persist in our material thinking and pursue selfish motives, we will not perceive any influence 'from above'. For the world of selfish motives and of thinking from the lower aspects of thought, is too far removed from the noble sphere where the Dhyāni-Chohans reside. We have not knocked on the door. We cannot knock at all.

* The term is often confused with 'gut feeling' or 'instinct', which is far below the sphere of the inner Buddha.

What does ‘knocking on the door’ mean, so that the door opens for us? We have to ennoble our character. We must be letting harmony back into our hearts, into our thoughts, words and deeds — that is what ‘knocking on the door’ means.

If we strive selflessly (!) and honestly inwardly and upwardly, if we seek more knowledge with a pure heart, their help will reach us in silence. You may have seen a Buddha statue with long ears. This symbolizes that no call, no matter how distant or weak, will not be heard.

We must be courageous and have a strong will.

The sincere desire to ennoble our character to serve all humanity enables us to get in touch with our inner teachers. But merely wishing is not enough. Of course, we must also take action.

The outer teacher

As distinct from the inner teachers just discussed, there are, of course, also outer teachers. All sages and philosophers who based their teachings on the universal unity of all human beings, have been such teachers: Gautama the Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tzu, Jesus, Pythagoras, Socrates/Plato, and so on. You know them all.



Confucius, Lao-tzu and a buddhist Arhat, painted by Ding Yunpeng

Their teachings are still known and read and taught today. Why? Because they proclaimed the universal, ancient, divine wisdom, the Theo-Sophia. Madame Blavatsky brought these teachings to the Western world in the late 19th century. And the Theosophical Society endeavors to pass on these sublime teachings to all who are interested. In this respect, anyone who undertakes this task is also an outer teacher. You too can become such a teacher. Inspire your fellow men to nobler thoughts, to moral behavior, to an ethical conduct.

The quality of a wise teacher

Wise teachers are found in all religions and philosophical systems. Their task is to bring the philosophy of life to their students, so that they are able to develop their inner potential in a self-guided way. How can we tell if a teacher we recognize as such is a good teacher or a bad teacher? We can give you two touchstones for this:

- a. The content of his teaching, and
- b. The way the teacher educates.

a. The content of his teaching

The philosophy of life taught by a truly wise teacher must meet the following criteria:

- It must not contradict scientific facts.
- It must be consistent with the universal ideas that are the same in all ancient religious and philosophical systems, however differently they are described. ‘Universal’ means that no one is excluded. The ideas are valid always and for everyone.
- It should provide the natural link between science, religion and philosophy.
- It should provide people with answers to questions about life and death, good and evil, and the question of human suffering.
- It must show the way to a human society in which each individual human being can develop his noble inner potential — a society where peace and understanding are self-evident and not vague ideals.
- This philosophy of life must be for man a safe guide for his thinking and actions.*

b. The way the teacher educates

The way a wise teacher educates is fundamentally different from that of the ever-emerging un-wise leaders of temporary movements (‘cult gurus’):

*Based on the course Universal Wisdom.

- A wise teacher shows his student the way by giving vague hints. He often speaks in metaphors, parables and paradoxes to encourage the student to think about the teachings independently.
- He does not try to convince the student, does not exert pressure or power on the student.
- He does not ask for money.
- He does not invent anything new in the teachings, but passes them on as he received them.
- He is humble because he says, “This is how I have heard it, this is how I have understood it.” He would never say, “This is just what it is.”
- He gives the teachings in the clearest possible form.
- He tries to find out if the student has understood.
- He gives the teachings in small portions and gives the student time to process what he has learned.
- He constantly evaluates his own teaching method (Am I giving the right teachings? Am I teaching in the right way?).

Check if these criteria are met, then you will know if it is indeed a wise teacher you have met.

3. Responsibility

Both the wise teacher and the student have a responsibility. Because, of course, even in a teacher-student relationship it is possible to create disharmony and thus cause karmic effects.

The wise teacher has the responsibility to conform to the above criteria. Teacher and student must work with each other in an open dialogue. The student should let the teacher know *if* he has understood his teachings and *how* he has understood these, so that the teacher can take corrective action where necessary and clarify the facts with other metaphors or other words. Whereby the teacher can monitor his way of teaching.

Also, a serious student must always ask himself whether he is just blindly believing and thus creating new dogmas, or whether he is really, by independent reflection, opening himself to the teacher little by little. We see that a student also bears responsibility.

For the student knows a little bit more than someone who is not yet interested at all (let us call such a person the ‘ignorant one’). By his way of life, his thoughts, words and actions, the student is surrounded by a certain atmosphere, an aroma, which also radiates to the ignorant. In this way, in the beginning perhaps imperceptibly, the student also becomes a teacher, a teacher to the untaught.

4. The Golden Chain of Wisdom –Who unfolds the plan?

Our task as human beings is to develop our thinking in all its facets. These facets or principles of thought are in different spheres: they range from the lowest (“I think of my body”) to the highest (the inner God).

The Hierarchy of Compassion are our own Higher Selves. These higher evolved classes of consciousness help us out of compassion: they put their own progress and development on the back burner, to lend a helping hand to wandering and suffering mankind by inspiring it.

Let us enter the silence, direct our thoughts upward and inward. Let us try to move from personal to supra-personal thinking.

Let us appeal to our conscience in our decisions, let us listen to our conscience: always!

Let us strive to be an example to all people, to inspire by being.

Let us set our foot on the Path, to reach the lowest level of the Hierarchy of Compassion. This is how the divine plan unfolds; this is how we can contribute to it.

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Painting of Nāgārjuna. The snakes symbolize heavenly wisdom.

How empty is the void?

In Buddhism, what is meant by the concept of Śūnyatā?

Key thoughts

» The Boundless Space is for us a formless Void.

» The most spiritually-godly world of our hierarchy appears to us as a Void, because it is beyond even our most exalted imagination. For more advanced beings, however, it is a world of forms.

» All phenomena, like human beings, are *empty* in the sense that as manifestations they are not enduring and are empty of any real meaning.

» Beings cannot exist independently. All phenomena belong together.

» The manifested world is a Fullness of living beings.

» Although the world of phenomena is an illusion, people attribute reality to it. To them, therefore, it is real.

» We can understand more of the spirit-godly worlds if we empty ourselves of all kinds of personal thoughts.

There is a deeper reality behind our sensory world. Plato refers to our world as a shadow world, a reflection of a much nobler world. All other great religious and philosophical systems also recognize other realms of existence, albeit often using different words and imagery to make their ideas clear.

The doctrine of Śūnyatā, Emptiness, developed in Mahāyāna Buddhism, can inspire us to better understand those other worlds.

If you measure the popularity of Buddhism by the presence of the number of buddha images, then this religious philosophy is very popular in the West. However, the question is whether Buddhist teachings are properly understood and applied. Understanding some of the more metaphysical teachings requires a completely different mindset than what is common in the Western world. If you do not have that mindset, and allow yourself to be misled by the words, then misunderstanding arises. This misunderstanding often occurs with some of the core ideas in Buddhism and certainly with the concept of *Śūnyatā*, Emptiness.

As any author of a *Lucifer* article does, on the subject to be discussed, he first consults our Theosophical Teachers. What have they said on this subject? We therefore thought it valuable in this article to first give some excerpts on this subject from our teacher Gottfried de Purucker.

Gottfried de Purucker on Śūnyatā:

Now it is the philosophical teaching of Buddhism, when this teaching is properly understood, that the entire world around us is impermanent, illusory, *māyāvi*; but that all existences are founded upon and builded around something inner, secret, esoteric, hid, fundamental, which the Northern Schools, collected under the great Mahāyāna teaching, call the Śūnyatā, that is, the 'Void,' the Unmanifest as the Theosophist would say.⁽¹⁾

These Buddhist philosophers teach that the only reality, the only fundamental thing, so to say, of Being, is the Illimitable Void. From it in the beginning, or in time, springs forth a Kosmos, or spring forth the universes; and to it they return when their cycle of manifestation is ended. This Doctrine of the Void – please mark – is of a far more spiritual nature than the Doctrine of Fullness.

It is much more difficult to understand than the latter, because our European minds are not trained to the thinking required easily to understand thoughts such as these. We can much more easily, much more quickly, comprehend and understand the fullness of things, than we can the thought that out from the illimitable and perfect void, spring into life all the infinite manifestations of Kosmic being; and that back into the void they sink again when their life-cycle is run.⁽²⁾

The present writer, treating of the same subject, has on different occasions spoken of Space in one of its aspects as *Śūnyatā* (शून्यता), here adopting a profoundly significant mystical word used in the deeper, or more accurately speaking in the esoteric, doctrines of Gautama the Buddha, this word meaning, when literally translated, 'Emptiness', or 'the Void'; and on other occasions, and referring to another aspect of Universal Space, he has called it *Pleroma* (πληρωμα), this being an ancient Greek word, frequently used by the Gnostics, and signifying 'Fullness'.

Now, it should be abundantly evident to any thoughtful man who has not abandoned common sense, that when an object of thought, Space in this instance, is called a 'Void', and at another time called a 'Fullness', there must be some reason for this, and that there is no contradiction in the use of two quite distinct terms.

(...)

... the esoteric term *Śūnyatā*, the 'Empty', the 'Void', signifies, the highest ranges of Cosmic Spirit; and it is precisely because this Cosmic Spirit is imperceptible by any human sense-organ, and precisely because it is even beyond the loftiest reaches of human imagination – since it possesses no form and no 'body' that we human beings can understand – that it is, by graphic use of the familiar term 'empty' or 'void,' called 'Emptiness'.

(...)

When our mind, with its lofty reaches of thought, plunges into and behind the physical sphere, we realize that the physical sphere is but the outer garment or veil hiding vast and incomprehensibly immense inner or invisible Worlds, Planes, Spheres, ranging from the frontier of the physical upwards into the ever-receding vistas of Cosmic Spirit, which last, precisely because it is what we humans call 'formless' and therefore can present to our minds no picture of concrete things or objects or images, we call the spiritual Void, or the spiritual Emptiness, and give to it the name *Śūnyatā*.⁽³⁾

Finally, we don't want to keep from you this paradox from

Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh Ching*.

Thus, constantly without desire, one observes its essence
Constantly with desire, one observes its manifestations
These two emerge together but differ in name.⁽⁴⁾

Difficult doctrine

You will have to read the above quotes thoroughly several times and probably even then everything will not be crystal clear. Therefore, the teaching on Emptiness is not easy. Nevertheless, well-known Buddhist writings write about it at length. For example, the *Prajna-pāramitā Sūtra*⁽⁵⁾ puts this concept at the center. The *Basic Verses on the Middle Way*⁽⁶⁾ by the Buddhist sage Nāgārjuna also deal largely with it.

For those who are not so familiar with these ideas, these books are extremely difficult. The difficulty is compounded because *Śūnyatā* can mean several things, which, by the way, are never separate. For if the concept of Emptiness teaches us anything, it is that everything is related.

We are going to try in this article to understand Emptiness, to make it a little more manageable. In doing so, we will especially elaborate on the brief quotes from Gottfried de Purucker above.



Fragment of a manuscript of the *Prajna-pāramitā Sūtra*.

SPACE

Let us begin by trying to understand *Śūnyatā* in its most universal sense. 'Understand' is actually too high a word,

for we can never *fully* fathom it. Yet there is hope, for it is possible to develop at least some understanding of it, but then we must let go of old prejudices and ingrained patterns of thought. Nor should we focus on words, for Śūnyatā rises above every word.

When we speak of Śūnyatā in its most *universal* sense, we are actually already using a wrong word. For even the word ‘universal’ is still too limited to denote the meaning of the Void. Indeed, Śūnyatā refers to the boundless SPACE, which contains infinite *universes*, and which transcends every faculty of thought. (See the first Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* on the inside cover.) And no matter how immeasurably vast a universe is, there is always a boundary.

Therefore, when you think of the concept of SPACE, do not think of *a* space. Nor think of the scientific definition of space, but of the infinite, boundlessness extending in all directions. Imperceptible to us, yet inspiring to think about.

We humans live on this small, blue planet Earth. We can perceive with our senses only the physical world. Above – or *in* – that world is another world. A world that is more ethereal. Above that – or even further *inward* – is the mental world, which is even more ethereal, and so on. There is a hierarchy of worlds or realms, which become more and more ethereal, more and more difficult for us to notice. A being can perceive something of a world only if it has developed within itself the corresponding consciousness. After all, you can only gain knowledge of something when it also lives in you. So, if we of a world have not developed the corresponding element in ourselves, that world is completely formless for us, and we experience it as emptiness.

That sounds complicated, but it is not. We human beings, thinkers, can perceive thoughts, because to think a thought is to perceive a thought. Why can we do that?

Because we dwell with our consciousness in the mental realm, the thinking realm. We belong in that. Animals or plants cannot. For them the human mental does not exist, or at most vaguely, because they have *not yet* developed the inner senses for it.

Thus, *for us*, the most divine-spiritual realm of SPACE is formless. We cannot make any concrete image of it. That world is beyond our comprehension, beyond our most exalted imagination, beyond the horizon of our consciousness. It presents itself to us as Emptiness: Śūnyatā.

That highest world for us is sometimes spoken of as the Cosmic Spirit, in which, in the word of Paul, we ‘live, move and have our being’.⁽⁷⁾ We cannot give form to the

Cosmic Spirit. We cannot discover any body in it. Therefore, it presents itself as Emptiness, although we ourselves have our existence in that space and are included in it. And yet we experience that space as Empty.

So that Emptiness does exist, even though we cannot say anything concrete about it. The mistake some people make in thinking that this Emptiness is nothing can be compared with how previous generations of Western Orientalists interpreted the concept of Nirvāna. Nirvāna means extinction. And the learned Orientalists believed that man would be extinguished, that is, would cease to exist if he entered Nirvāna. They did not understand that man, as a composite being, extinguishes the lower and limited elements in himself — that is, letting go. He transcends those elements that hold him in the outer realm. Only the limited of the lower self is let go, was extinguished, but the higher parts of the real man came to full activity in Nirvāna.

Similarly, you could misunderstand Śūnyatā as an absolute emptiness, a form of nihilism. To do so, however, completely ignores the meaning of this Sanskrit word. Our Western languages often lack the words for these subtle spiritual thoughts. Hence, Sanskrit words are often translated differently. Therefore, do not get too attached to words. Try to develop understanding.

How relative is emptiness?

The relatively highest world is empty *for us*, but that does not mean it is empty for all beings. We are on a certain step in the hierarchy. We have a certain consciousness, which has a certain range. We have our limits in our perception.

Further developed beings possess a wider consciousness with a more far-reaching range. What for us is empty and formless, there in which we can perceive nothing and imagine nothing, is for further developed beings – we then speak of super-gods – a world of forms, as real for them as our world is real for us. They live, move in it and make their divine experiences in it.

The misconception made with regard to Śūnyatā is that it is understood as *Nothingness*, that is, as actually non-existent. The concept of Nothingness in its literal sense is a Western concept, born of the dogma that God would have created the world out of nothing, a philosophical and scientific incongruity. If you read the first verses of *Genesis* carefully, and use the esoteric key, you will also understand that Gods (Elōhīm) created – or better yet, formed – our world from a higher realm of consciousness.

Emptiness is ‘nothing’ only in the sense that it is *not something*. It is not a thing, not an object, not a being, it is not something in particular. We do not yet possess the faculties to discover any distinction in it, yes, to even perceive its existence. But, as mentioned, there are beings who have developed far more faculties of perception than humans, and for them the Void is not empty at all.

You see: everything is relative. Even the concept of Śūnyatā is a relative concept. It depends on the scope of your consciousness. Only the Boundless SPACE is not relative, because there is no limitation in it and it cannot be in relation to anything else. After all, it is everything that exists.

All phenomena are empty

In Buddhism, there is a second meaning given to Śūnyatā, namely, the oft-cited teaching that all phenomena are empty. There are various views that try to interpret this. Does it mean that everything, phenomenon or being does not exist? We do not think so. Or does it mean that every being is empty *in its essence*?

If you want to develop understanding about this, then you have to become aware that everything that exists in this world of phenomena is an illusion, or as it is called in the East: is a *māyā*. Māyā means ‘the measured’, or ‘what can be measured’. So, it indicates the world of forms, the measurable, the manifested world. Which is an illusion.

However, you must have a correct idea of illusion. Indeed, some understand this concept as nonexistent. For them, the emptiness of phenomena means that they do not exist. The question then arises, how can we perceive them? How can we live in the world of phenomena, if it does not exist? Is this view therefore logical? We think not.

Closer to reality is the idea that all phenomena do exist, but they are temporary. Everything that has a form has a beginning and therefore an end. Even the largest cosmos we can imagine, containing billions of stars, and existing for millions and millions of years, is nevertheless an illusion, therefore transient. Phenomena have no basis of existence in themselves, because they are the consequence, a reflection of an inner force operating behind them.

Therefore, if it is claimed that all phenomena are empty, it means that they are not durable, are temporary and impermanent, and therefore empty. All *forms* are empty of any real meaning.

Empty of self

There are currents in Buddhism that also understand the concept of Śūnyatā in the sense that every being has no

self. Everything that is manifested is empty of ‘self’, that is, possesses no ‘self’.

That word ‘self’ is a translation of the Sanskrit word ‘Ātman’, which is frequently used in the sacred Hindu scriptures, the *Upanishads*. Some Buddhists, however, assume what they call *anātman*. *There is no Ātman, no unchanging, permanent Self*; no abiding essence in man or in any other phenomenon.

We are dealing here with a very profound teaching, which requires careful thought. The question whether there is an unchanging element in man is so difficult that Gautama the Buddha was silent when asked that question.⁽⁸⁾ Later he told Ānanda, his advanced disciple, that any answer he might have given would have led to misunderstanding. Had he said that there is indeed an enduring Self in man, the idea would have arisen that there is something immutable in man; a kind of terminus of all development. And that is not true. Had he said that there is no enduring Self in man, then the idea would have arisen that man – consciousness – would one day cease to exist, which is also not true.

The key to the mystery lies in the idea of *perpetual change*. And change presupposes *something* that is subject to change. If there is *nothing*, then there can be no change.

In short, there is always *something*, which is outside or above or in every form and limitation. There is something underlying every phenomenon. You can call it the Ātmic Principle within us; it is the inner god or monad. All these words refer to a spark of what is metaphorically called the eternal and infinite FIRE. However, do not give absolute value to these names. Prevent thought from crystallizing and creating fixed, immovable thought forms.

It is that *something* that is increasingly being expressed more and more. It keeps measuring itself with different vehicles. All those forms are limitations, temporary enclosures of that *something*. All those forms, all those enclosures, all those manifestations are empty, in the sense that they cease to exist when that *something* has withdrawn from them. But that *something* which produced them, which makes use of them during a certain time, is eternal. And it does not matter whether the period of use of that form is a day, as in the case of a solitary fly, or billions of years, as in the case of a sun. Either way, it is temporary, has a beginning and consequently an end. But its essence is eternal.

That ‘essence’, however, is not static, not unchanging. That *something* too, grows, thus changes. It is constantly developing, although that development is far beyond our

ability to perceive. That means that within that *something* is still a deeper *something*, which even our deepest core does not know and is therefore empty, Śūnyatā.

So although everything that exists is empty, everything that exists is also eternally rooted in Śūnyatā.

Objective idealism

The world of phenomena is therefore illusory. Nevertheless, all phenomena have a limited *real value*, at least for the consciousness that assigns that value to them. This may seem contradictory to the idea that all phenomena are empty and that the manifested cosmos is therefore an illusion. But illusion does not mean that the cosmos does not exist. The external world is not non-existent. It does exist. It exists like a shadow exists. The external phenomena are temporary projections of something that lies behind them. However, if someone does not realize that the world of phenomena is a temporary projection – that is, if one does not see through the nature of the outer world – then one will perceive that world as a reality that stands on its own. What you do not see does not exist. That is to say, it does not exist *for you*. You then think that trees are only trees, the seas only seas. Man is then nothing more than his physical vehicle. Not only does this impose an enormous limitation on your being, it will also often be the cause of suffering.

In fact, you are then in a state of delusion. You interpret the phenomenal world with your limited powers of perception and do not understand that you are attributing reality to something that appears to be other than what it essentially is.

If you are walking in the desert and *think* you see an oasis – which is actually a mirage, a fata morgana – you are in a state of delusion and misinterpreting what your senses perceive.

In fact, the vast majority of people constantly misinterpret what they perceive. This is because all people tend to interpret the world of phenomena in accordance with the way they think. And because most people's thinking is still very underdeveloped, they judge what they perceive incorrectly.

We call interpreting what we perceive with our thinking objective idealism. The *ideas* you have determine how you see the *objects* — the world of phenomena. Your thinking therefore creates its own reality. If you are happy, the world is beautiful and life is wonderful; the same world is gloomy and ugly when you are in a bad mood.

The doctrine of objective idealism is extremely important

because it not only gives us a much better understanding of our own lives, but also enables us to understand others better and help them more effectively. For although people are in an illusory state by attributing reality to something that is an illusion – *empty* – they can still suffer very real pain. Their suffering is very real to them.

Someone who has gained insight into the illusory nature of the external world should therefore be well aware of the fact that the illusory state in which their fellow human beings find themselves is a very concrete reality *for them*. This awakens compassion within you. You set to work to inspire others to develop these qualities within themselves, enabling them to see through the illusory nature of outer life. Teach them to identify with the understanding, the insight – buddhi – within themselves. This will enable them to rise above the limited view of life, which takes what is a passing shadow to be reality. This view of life is the main cause of human suffering.

From a spiritual point of view, lasting help does not consist so much in taking measures to make the outer world more pleasant and bearable, but in teaching people to develop a different view of life. However, always avoid fanaticism. You give someone who is hungry a good meal and do not immediately tell him about Śūnyatā.

Emptiness and Fullness

There is another very important idea that has everything to do with the teaching of Śūnyatā, and that is that all beings, everything that is manifested, is dependent on everything else. In the first verses of Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*, he states that nothing can exist by itself. Everything exists by virtue of everything else. If one thing did not exist, the other would not exist either. In other words, everything that exists is related to everything else and depends on everything else. Beings cannot be separated from one another. They cannot exist on their own. In the Ubuntu philosophy of South Africa, this is succinctly expressed in the phrase: 'I am because we are.'

All beings form a whole: a fullness of life. Nothing in that Fullness can be destroyed. If that were possible, the whole would collapse.

That is the great paradox: the Universe is both Emptiness and Fullness. Emptiness refers to those worlds that are formless to us and therefore unthinkable, while Fullness refers to those areas that have form but have their roots in Emptiness. The difference between Emptiness and Fullness is therefore in fact a difference in perspective. That is why we also read in the *Prajñāpāramitā* that the Buddha says:

(...) form is emptiness and emptiness is form;
emptiness is not different from form,
form is not different from emptiness;
what is form is emptiness,
what is emptiness is form (...)⁽⁹⁾

Compare this with the following: I can describe a human being based on what I *see*: his legs, his arms, his head, and so on. This is the fullness of his outer form. I can also describe his mentality, which is invisible to the senses. How does he think? Although this is less concrete, these thoughts also have a certain form. Then there is his deepest background, something we can call his inner god. Because I have so little affinity with this, it is so formless that it appears to me as emptiness, although I know that it exists.

The fullness of his form, of his body, is essentially the emptiness of his inner god. All the principles that make up a human being belong together, arise from each other, are dependent on each other, *are* each other. They are the expressions of a single stream of life. So, whether a human being is a Fullness or an Emptiness to me depends on where I focus my consciousness, with what I identify myself.

A materialistic person only recognizes the fullness of the body. The mind is a great emptiness to him. A very spiritual person knows that form, the body, exists, but will hardly pay any attention to it.

And what applies to people applies to all beings that make up a certain hierarchy. All manifested beings form an inseparable Wholeness, in which the existence of one depends on the other. All have a common source, the Void. But that Void is relative. It shifts, as it were, further and further as we develop a greater range of consciousness. Where the Void begins for us humans, is a world of form for more developed beings.

Emptying yourself

This philosophy of Emptiness seems very difficult at first glance, but it is actually not that difficult, at least if you use the right keys. It is more a matter of unfamiliarity and therefore awkwardness for people who have grown up in a Western civilization. It takes some getting used to. It is beyond words. It also takes time to master this different way of thinking, based on different principles.

If you want to familiarize yourself with the idea of the boundless SPACE, of the eternal growth of the core that we are, then it is important that you empty yourself of all

thoughts that are focused on the outer world. Do not think in forms. Do not think in physical perception. Detach yourself from all kinds of profane thoughts that tend to nestle in your mind and leave no room for more spiritual ideas.

At the end of the day, consider how many meaningless and pointless thoughts you had that day. How much space you would have created in your own consciousness if you had not had those thoughts! How much easier it would have been to ponder the ideas about Śūnyatā and understand them better and better!

Every mystic strives to empty himself. In this case, by 'himself' we mean the lower self or the personality. This is an active process, although to the superficial person it may seem that you are doing nothing and are empty.



Compare it to a grandfather sitting quietly in his armchair. His grandchild is playing at his feet. When the child looks up and sees his grandfather sitting motionless, he thinks that his grandfather is doing nothing, that he is 'empty'. But his grandfather has emptied himself of all personal thoughts and is filled with the grandeur of the Universe and the inseparable bonds of all beings that shape that Universe. He actively allows the many facets of this majestic mental image to pass before his mind's eye.

Could he ever have thought of this if his mind had been full of worries, if he had been concerned about the inflation that was preventing him from going on vacation, about his neighbor who lastly was being so unkind, or about the bad weather?

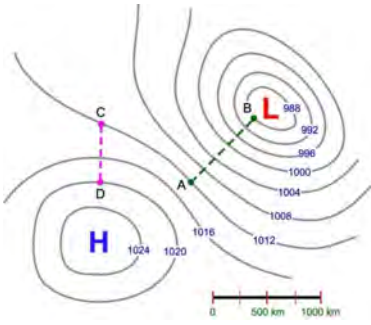
Cast away the personal, the limiting, and the finite from yourself with *self-awareness*. This will not only bring you inner harmony and great peace of mind, it will also enable you to better fulfill your duties in life. Seek and find the lasting element within yourself. When you are quiet, empty of all mundane thoughts, you will know and recog-

nize that which is above the personal in yourself, and you will gradually begin to discern something of what was previously a void for you.

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Do we force people into selfishness?

Yes ... but let me explain why

Key thoughts

» The commonly accepted ideas of ‘the struggle for daily existence’ create continuous shortcomings and suffering, in both rich and poor countries, in both the rich and poor strata of a society.

» Why do the enormous differences in spiritual, mental and material opportunities in the world arise? Do we participate in the causes, unconsciously or consciously?

» Without cooperation with countless other beings, we cannot exist. Everyone can contribute his qualities in the spiritual, mental and material realms of society, and even has the moral obligation to do so.

» Harmony is not an arithmetic balance, but a perfect society where everyone has what they need, can develop, and can learn to express their higher qualities. Then we are not only concerned with our own development, but we work together to help everyone else.

Perhaps your first reaction is: what a strange title, and your answer will be “no”, “of course not, no right-thinking person will force another into selfishness”. Perhaps you will feel affronted by this question.

And yet we see this happening very often. We see a lot of selfishness resulting from social situations that could have been prevented. This does not only take place in a certain layer of society: we see it throughout all layers of society. It often stems from a thoughtlessly followed habitual pattern.

It already happens when you encourage children by saying: “you must get your diploma and do not spend time helping your friends; they have to make it themselves”. Why not motivate children with ideas like: “you must get your diploma so you can help your fellow human beings”? Or, “you have a responsibility to develop and use your qualities for the society you are part of”.

The question is: what is our worldview?

The term selfishness is a broad concept with great social significance. We find descriptions in dictionaries such as, “tendency to favor oneself, egoism, self-interest”. An extreme

and very clear example of a direct appeal to selfishness is the popularized cry *me first*.

But when we make choices in our lives, do we consider the consequences for our fellow beings? I will now try to show that selfishness is often a habitual choice.

Often, we package our selfish choices in an intellectual cover to justify them. Such as “a little healthy selfishness should be okay”, or “stand up for yourself, because someone else will not do that for you”, and so on. Many people generally do not see this as a bad or objectionable trait; competition is healthy, a healthy bit of selfishness is necessary. But how much is ‘healthy’?

The commonly accepted ideas of ‘the struggle for daily existence’, the fight for daily life, create continuous shortcomings and suffering. We can describe this by two extreme examples: on the one hand, living below the bare minimum, as in the case of the homeless. For them, staying alive requires so much effort that there is no room to think about anything else, or do something more, but to or for yourself. On the other hand, we see people living super rich lives, but for whom their very great riches are not yet enough. They have an unquench-

able hunger for more, and so they also think only of themselves.

There is no being that can exist independently and autonomously

A dynamic society is needed to learn from each other. In each society, including ours, there is a great dynamic of interaction and of diversity. In a harmonious society, that diversity is a necessity. Without cooperation with countless other beings, we cannot exist. Thus, Theosophy emphatically teaches us that there is *Universal Unity*: everything is connected to everything. There is no separateness except in our illusory thinking. A society, a cooperation, which consists only of farmers or bankers, or only directors, will not be able to exist for even a week. All layers of society are necessary. Consider that there are times in our lives when the plumber is many times more important than, say, the prime minister. To attach to a position in society, any position, more value is something highly debatable. Diversity is a necessity, but it does not justify discrimination.

In the beginning of Plato's dialogue *The Republic*, he describes a very simple state, a kind of *sangha*, a buddhist monastic community. A society consisting of cooperation and underlying exchange. But that state is quickly rejected by his audience, as being a 'pig state'. They want much more than that. A list of desires follows, and then Plato's response is: *then* it becomes a really complex society.

The cries of despair: the great lack of rights to exist

As soon as we cooperate, the question should be answered: what is the effect, the influence we have on other beings? And: do we want to allow everyone the freedom to develop themselves?

The situation in the world generally shows the opposite. Cries of despair can be heard all over the world, which we can describe as *the lack of the right to exist and to develop*. These cries are coming from both rich and poor countries, from the rich and poor strata of a society.

Of course, these cries are of different character. The cries of despair can arise at different levels and have different characteristics. We can abstractly divide those levels into three characteristics. Remember however, that in practice we see usually combinations of these three. Those three characteristics are:

- In *the spiritual realm*: think about the pursuit of freedom of religion (for the meaning of religion, see our symposium report 'The Religion of the Future'),⁽¹⁾ of

freedom of all religious activities: adhering to the faith or religion you want. If this spiritual aspect is completely missing in people's thinking, they lack a life purpose.

- In *the mental realm*: here, for example, it is about striving for freedom of thought, being able to be the person you are, adhering to the political party you prefer, your freedom of conscience.
- On *the physical level*. Important questions here are: how much physical luxury do you need and how much luxury do you want to live in; does each have access to the minimum necessities to live: food, water and shelter?

We can live in very compelling situations, but we always have the free will to choose how we act in these situations.

When are these three realms of life in harmony?

All three realms mentioned are necessary in daily life. Each has its own place each has its own importance.

It is challenging to find the right harmony between them, rather than prioritizing only one of these three. This inner harmony we determine for ourselves; it is not determined for us. Everyone determines their own 'mix' of these three characteristics: self-consciously or unconsciously.

It should be clear from the above that a harmonious life is much more than just physical prosperity. Consider the place this triad holds within yourself and see if you can find examples of different choices in society. Our choices do have consequences: they can create disturbances in our relationship with our environment, disrupting local harmony.

But the key idea with Plato, which can also be found in Theosophy, is the real understanding of harmony. Harmony seen in this light is not a balance, a proper distribution of material goods such as 'everybody gets a house', and so on, but there is a larger dimension involved in a harmonious distribution, namely, *that everyone can and may contribute his qualities in the three realms of consciousness and even has the moral obligation to do so*. Each contributes what he can, in all three realms mentioned above. To reverse an oft-quoted statement from Christianity, each has to carry a cross according to their strength.⁽²⁾

Harmony in practice

Let me try to make this clear through an example. A company that is in harmony in relation to the three realms

mentioned, is not only a pleasant company to work in, but also a company where everyone can develop themselves: not only in skills, but also mentally. Where each helps to build the right mental atmosphere. Where everyone also helps each other to develop the deeper insights into life. And above all, when deeper insights and greater wisdom have been developed, that it is then natural to share them, to apply them for the benefit of all — in this example of all people in the company. We can speak of a moral obligation to bring our abilities in for everyone's sake. Therefore, such a company does not apply for patents for its own interest, nor is it, for the same reason, reluctant to contribute its greater insights to society.

We can also apply this same thought in the international field. Then, only when the wiser and more developed countries see it as a duty, a matter of course, to share their qualities, can we speak of a global harmony in these three realms. Then, there is no room for any selfishness or self-interest.

You will understand that, unfortunately, this type of harmony is still a long way off: such harmony where everyone is equal and bears responsibility according to their qualities, where everyone works for each other, studies with each other, learns with each other, shares everything with each other, and experiences this as obviously natural.

High- and low-pressure areas evoke currents

When there is harmony in the world, there is enough for everyone. Nature is inherently balanced, if at least we by our behavior do not create imbalance.

Our human behavior is like the weather: it creates high- and low-pressure areas in the three realms mentioned here, which evoke currents as a natural consequence. Nature always works toward harmony. Recall that harmony is not an arithmetic balance, not a balance between two extremes, but a perfect society where everyone has what they need, can develop, and can learn to express their higher qualities.

These three types of currents around the world behave the same as the weather. High- and low-pressure areas determine which way the air will move. Places of spiritual oppression create currents to places where there is spiritual freedom. It is also so in the other two realms, the physical and mental. Take away the need to move, and the current decreases.

Let us be very clear: some currents in these three realms are quite understandable. There have always been movements, exchanges between cultures. We grow, we change,

and we see new possibilities in other places, where we can come more into harmony. As a result, we see gradual currents emerging. But this does not explain the large pressure differences in those three realms, which we now see in the world.



Extreme differences in wealth in Mumbai.

What is our contribution to harmony or disharmony?

Let us dwell on that for a moment and ask ourselves the question: why do these enormous differences arise? Do we participate in the causes? Do we live in such a manner that we bring about these strong pressure differences, and if so, with what motive? For example, by making and exporting products that increase these very pressure differences or encourage the wrong mentality? It is also possible to cooperate with each other in such a way that we share the riches in the three realms, without acting at the expense of the other. We work together and from that cooperation each learns his lessons, so, everyone benefits.

The great law of eternal balance (also called *karman*) implies that nature is fundamentally in harmony, in equilibrium. If we assume this, then we can conclude that where we see extreme wealth, where wealth is obtained at the expense of others, extreme poverty must also occur. If we use more than the portion to which we are entitled to, we can conclude that we are causing a deficit in other places.

This applies to all three realms, including the mental and spiritual realms. There should also be balance, harmony on the mental plane. And that is only the case if there is an exchange between the higher and lower 'mental pressure areas', a decreasing of the pressure difference, by always bringing wisdom where it is lacking. In the religious realm

the same view applies. Religion means ‘becoming one again’. What could be better than having an exchange with each other in order to expand our understanding of how we view the restoration of unity?

Before we come into a discussion of how to divide things, we must realize that the attitude from which we act is all-important. Once we work from compassion, once we do everything for the common good, then the imbalances are gone. Then we are not only concerned with our own spiritual development, from the idea ‘let the others be what they are’, but we work together in order to help everyone else in the spiritual field.

The all-important question is thus: do we take our responsibility toward others?

Do we force, motivate our fellow human beings into selfishness? The answer to the question in the title is YES. Are we aware that we create higher and lower pressure areas? Perhaps we do that unconsciously, without realizing the consequences of our actions. Or we do it consciously, when we do not care how other people fare.

The well-educated people, the so-called ‘intellectual classes’, should be the first to extend the brotherly hand to the less fortunate, the discriminated, for whom the struggle for existence is almost undoable. That upper class should be committed to the whole. But the intellectual upper class is more concerned with fighting an intellectual battle with each other, rather than being solution-oriented for the underclass.

Very worthwhile, in this light, is the following quote from *View of the Chohan on the Theosophical Society*:

Those ‘intellectual classes’, reacting upon the ignorant masses which they attract and which look up to them as noble and fit examples to follow, degrade and morally ruin those they ought to protect and guide. Between degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism the white dove of truth has hardly room where to rest her weary unwelcome foot.⁽³⁾

Many influential thinkers currently have a debasing influence on their fellow men, because they either demand a kind of blind docility for their authority, or – without having carefully examined this view – propagate a dominant materialism, where there is hardly any room for universal brotherhood, compassion, and a spiritual view that underpins the fundamental structure of universal brotherhood.

Hence the call: *do not live at the expense of the whole, but for the enrichment of the whole!*

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Key thoughts

» Astrology was originally a science in combination with astronomy, as it was based on meticulous knowledge.

» Wonder, intuition, practical experience and scientific interests motivated many people to study celestial influences.

» Ancient astrology was an important part of the Universal Wisdom (the 'Theosophia'), and was taught to well-prepared disciples under strict secrecy. Astronomy was one aspect of astrology.

» The basic ideas of the Theosophia offer us a coherent explanation of the fact that *there are* celestial influences and how they work. In this, man's *free will* is fundamental.

» How a society deals with astrological knowledge depends entirely on the selfishness or unselfishness of those who apply it.

The basics of astrology

Clues to understand astrology

This article is the first in a series, in which we explain the nature and value of astrology. And by 'astrology' we mean something quite different from the superficial horoscopes in a newspaper or magazine. The series is based on four Dutch lectures Joop Smits gave on this subject in January 2020.⁽¹⁾

In this article we lay the foundation for the entire series on astrology. We sketch an overall picture, a coherent set of theosophical ideas, which we will fill in in more detail in the following articles. In this first article we discuss the origins and scope of ancient astrology, the various reasons why people take an interest in astrology, the relationship between astrology and astronomy, the basic ideas needed to understand the workings of cosmic influences, and the value that astrology *could have*.

In articles to come, we will elaborate on several subtopics including, 'what are the constellations of the zodiac and what are their influences', 'what influences emanate from which heavenly bodies', 'how can we explain birth horoscopes and predictive horoscopes', and 'what moral-ethical insights can we derive from this knowledge'.

The antiquity of astrology

All ancient peoples regarded the sun, moon, stars and planets with deep

awe, and most peoples also studied their nature and movements. They did so because they were convinced that the heavenly bodies were the vehicles of living beings, of cosmic intelligences, which exert a very great influence on the life of mankind. There are numerous indications that this knowledge was held in high regard by ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Chaldeans, Indian peoples, Celts, Romans, Assyrians, Chinese peoples, and also many peoples in the Americas.⁽²⁾



In the 18th century, the mahārāja Jai Singh II had built five large, stone astronomical observatories ("Jantar Mantars"). The rāja had great interest in mathematics, architecture and astronomy. The observatory above stands in Delhi, India.

We know this study today under the name ‘astrology’. The Latin word ‘astrology’ literally means ‘the science of the stars’, or more precisely, the science of the influences of the heavenly bodies. Astrology in its original non-degenerate form is a science, i.e., grounded in meticulous knowledge. It was mainly applied to serve the highest interests of the whole community, of the spiritual and mental development of all mankind.

Interest in astrology is still strong even NOW. To our knowledge, no political policy is based on it anymore, but a large group of people is engaged in it — despite some scientists who question it.⁽³⁾ Whence comes this interest? While answering this question we will discover that astrology includes much more than the columns in the newspapers with their often superficial commonplaces. And that it is also much more than the drawing of birth charts of individual people, as is frequently done nowadays with more or less knowledge.

Why do people have an interest in astrology?

Interest in astrology can stem from:

Wonderment

Almost all people feel wonder when they look at the night sky in a quiet moment. You then feel ‘lifted’ for a moment from all your pragmatic concerns. It may even be that you pick up and experience something of a much more spiritual, cosmic world in which we live, and with which we, consequently, have a profound connection.

Intuition

As mentioned, many peoples in the past saw the heavenly bodies as the bodies of divine, celestial beings, who exert their influence on our earth and ‘actively watch’, as it were, the stages of humanity’s development. They had the intuition that the Cosmos is fundamentally ordered, full of order, even if they did not understand that order in detail. And the same is true for the more intuitive people today.

Experiential knowledge

Another reason for a long-term interest in celestial influences is practical experience: empirical knowledge. It is known that the germination and growth of plants is related to the seasons (solar influence), the phases of the moon and the signs of the zodiac. Knowledge of this is therefore necessary for each society. Crop calendars have been drawn up on this basis, underpinned by much experience. Biologists see that some animals react very precisely to the phases of the moon. People in health care notice that around full moon some people’s emotional control

diminishes; so, irritations end more quickly in a scuffle and physical injuries. If you work in a hospital emergency room, you may notice such periodic peaks.

Scientific research

There have always been scientists with a keen interest in the influences of celestial bodies. They sometimes succeeded to prove with hard data that there is a correlation between those influences and events in the human world. We cite as examples: the cyclical raging of the potato disease in the 19th century: it turned out to be related to the sunspot cycle.⁽⁴⁾ The same applies to all violent events on the world stage such as wars and revolutions, when we investigate these events from 1749 till 1920 (see the accompanying graph).

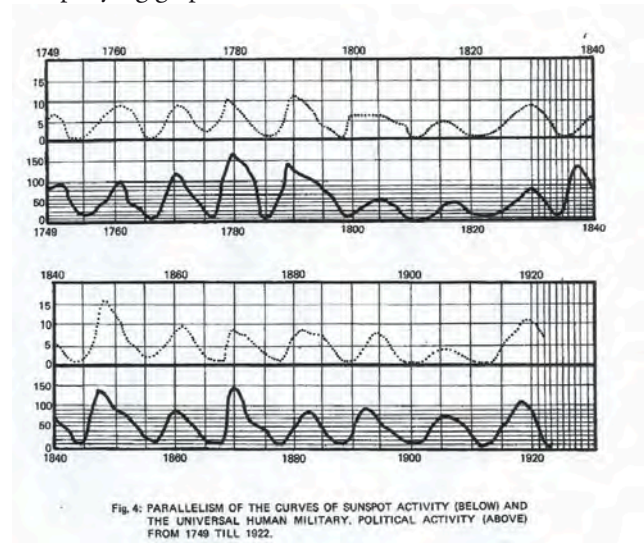


Fig. 4: PARALLELISM OF THE CURVES OF SUNSPOT ACTIVITY (BELOW) AND THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN MILITARY, POLITICAL ACTIVITY (ABOVE) FROM 1749 TILL 1922.

What is astrology?

In answering this question, we must distinguish between modern astrology and the astrology that has been and is practiced by students of Universal Wisdom, of Theosophia, which is the essential foundation of all great religions and philosophies and sciences.

The original astrological knowledge, which is very profound, still exists. This knowledge is preserved and passed on by the *Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion*, which consists of the most highly developed, wise and compassionate human beings. They work together in a very close partnership. The deeper parts of their knowledge of the cosmos was and is always secret. That knowledge is kept strictly secret, because it can be seriously abused by people who misunderstand it and have not yet developed the necessary ethical aptitude. Just think of all forms of potential abuse

for own gain. Nevertheless, fragments of this knowledge have sometimes been leaked.

What is this *original* astrology about? Gottfried de Purucker writes about it: it is the study of ‘the souls of the stars’, or, in other words, the nature and influence of the cosmic *consciousnesses* working through the heavenly bodies.⁽⁶⁾ This includes the knowledge of all the inhabitants of those heavenly bodies. Gottfried de Purucker explains that ancient astrology is “the science of the relations of the parts of Kosmic Nature among themselves, and more particularly as that science applied to man and his destiny as timed by the celestial orbs.” Ancient astrology is not simply a theory, but is “a true and profound wisdom about the evolution of divinity into and through matter, and about the human soul and the human spirit.”⁽⁷⁾

It is in fact thoroughly exact and scientific (but above all religious and philosophical). H.P. Blavatsky explains: it is infallible, under the condition that those who interpret it are equally infallible. But this last condition, she adds, is very difficult to realize and thus is often the great limitation.⁽⁸⁾

What we now know as *modern* astrology consists only of some aspects of that ancient knowledge, which have become public. Modern astrology has thus emerged from only a few small fragments of ancient astrology. The overall picture is missing. Consequently, much of what today’s astrologers say – even if they are honest and sincere, and many astrologers are – are their own attempts at interpretation. The value of their statements and predictions depends entirely on the depth of their understanding, and the latter varies greatly.

How does astrology relate to astronomy?

We mentioned already: true astrology is dealing with the *soul* of the stars, while astronomy is only dealing with the observable material globes: their orbits, cycles and all changes in their movements. Astronomy in ancient times was a part, a small part, of astrology.⁽⁹⁾ It was necessary for describing the spiritual field of forces, at any time, in other words, the cyclical changes of the influences of cosmic beings.

Today’s astronomers usually keep far away from current astrology — and this is well understandable if they only know the horoscopes in the media as examples. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that astronomers have already collected many indications for the actual existence of *spheres of influences* around celestial bodies. We give a few examples. The *heliosphere* of the sun includes the region where

the solar wind is the dominant stream of particles. It contains channels of emitted particles. This gigantic, spherical force field widely encompasses all known planetary orbits. Powerful outbursts from the sun influence the earth: they can severely disrupt our communications with satellites and our power grid.

The *moon’s influence* on ebb and flow is well known. And planet Jupiter has such a powerful *gravitational field* that it attracts to itself many bodies intruding our solar system from outer space. In fact, Jupiter protects the planets located within its orbit around the sun, including earth. It forms a protective belt. You can correctly call it a sphere of influence.

And there is the astronomical theory of the Nobel laureate (1970) Hannes Alfvén, that the interactions between celestial bodies are easier and more precisely explained if you assume that they produce powerful and far-reaching *electric and magnetic fields*, instead of the current explanations based only on gravity.⁽¹⁰⁾ Unfortunately, this theory of attracting and repelling fields has not been sufficiently investigated. But the idea behind it is not strange at all. For we can ascertain ourselves that the principle is a general law. Everywhere we see that beings influence each other by attraction and repulsion, for example in the relationships between people.

These are all indications of the fact that all celestial bodies radiate powerful spheres of influence around them. Astrology adds: these spheres of influence involve not only those that can be measured by our material instruments, but also psychic and spiritual spheres of influence.

There have always been intuitive scientists in past centuries who were attracted to astrology and studied it seriously. Some examples from the past are: Isaac Newton and Johannes Kepler. They laid important foundations for today’s physics and astronomy, so they can certainly not be called ‘small guys’. Some recent examples of scientists who have studied astrology are: the statisticians Michel and Francoise Gauquelin, the psychologist Hans Eysenck and the philosopher Richard Tarnas.

What forms the basis of astrology?

The basis of astrology – the original one – is the Universal Wisdom or Theosophia. This astrology includes the knowledge of the inner and outer planes of the kosmos and their inhabitants, as well as, further, the growth cycles they go through. This knowledge was an important part of the teachings given in the esoteric schools, the ‘Mystery Schools’.⁽¹¹⁾ This Wisdom was passed on to suitable

pupils, so that these pupils could develop themselves into inspiring and compassionate forces within humanity. The teachers and disciples were bound by a very strict vow of secrecy.

Thanks to the worldwide re-spreading of the theosophical core ideas by H.P. Blavatsky and her successors, since 1875, knowledge of the basics of true astrology is now available to anyone who seriously studies Theosophy. In this article, we present some of the main principles from which the whole of astrology has evolved, and by which it can be understood. In the coming articles, we will elaborate on those core ideas, sub-topic by sub-topic.

The cosmos is a community of life

The first principle is Unity: *everything is alive and everything is connected*: being to being and world to world. All things are ensouled, or in other words, there is a consciousness, a being, working through them. This applies to a planet, a star and a galaxy, and to all beings living within the sphere of these cosmic beings.

All beings are part of a boundless Principle: of the all-encompassing *One Life*. They are the individual manifestations of it. For this reason, they are imperishable and boundless at their core. Our present physical life cycle, our present incarnation, is nothing more than but one growth phase in a ceaseless process of growth.

It follows directly from the above that all beings, large and small, are of equal worth. There is a fundamental, unconditional *equality* of all that lives. No matter how large the differences in evolutionary stage are, all beings are equally the expression of Boundless Life. If this one thought would penetrate into the heart and mind of today's humanity, how differently would we humans interact with each other — and with the animals and plants?

Fundamental connectedness and universal interaction

Then the second principle: because of this underlying unity, all beings are connected to each other. They form one whole. This connectedness can be direct or indirect, but it is always there.

So, we form a cosmic community of beings who constantly influence each other. For example, each of our thoughts and actions affects our fellow humans — and, in fact, the entire cosmic community. And in turn, all these cosmic beings affect us.

Connectedness implies constant interaction. For instance: today we experience very pronouncedly that everything that happens in one country has its influence on all the others. But this continual and reciprocal interaction does not only apply within mankind, but also to all relationships between highly developed and less developed beings, such as those between the planets — which are beings just like us — and terrestrial humanity. Only thanks to these interactions can our consciousness function, and can we learn by gradually unfolding the potentialities of our consciousness. And in this evolutionary process, the influences of the constellations of the zodiac, the sun and the planets play a very particular role and function. We will say much more about this in the next articles.

How can those planetary influences reach us? To human eyes, the planets seem so far away from Earth ... The explanation lies in the hierarchical structure of the kosmos. Each being is part of a larger being, and is itself the overarching consciousness within which countless subordinate beings live. Thus, we humans live within the sphere of influence of planet Earth, and not only of our own planet, but also of the planets Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, the Sun, the Moon and the constellations of the



The constellations of the zodiac, the sun and the planets are important sources and transformers of cosmic influences acting on the earth. These influences emanate from the guiding cosmic intelligences working through these celestial bodies.

zodiac. All these spheres of influence permeate each other, just as the radio waves of countless radio stations permeate each other. Even though we live on our Earth, we live simultaneously in the spheres of those other cosmic beings, and so we have everything to do with *their* influences.

Why does each planet have a different influence?

To the picture outlined, we must add this important point: each being has built up a specific, unique character during countless re embodiments, and that character determines the nature – the ‘color’ or ‘frequency’ – of his sphere of influence.

As we all from practice know, each human being has a unique character. How we influence our fellow human beings – whether we encourage them to cooperate and grow in understanding or, on the contrary, encourage an ‘every-man-for-himself’ mentality and isolated groupthink – depends on what we actually are *inwardly*, not on what we appear to be outwardly.

The same applies to all beings, small or large. And thus also for a planetary being like Venus. That cosmic being has a specific nature, a specific ‘frequency’. Therefore, the force field it emits, and in which we also live, has this same characteristic. It is an influence that can stimulate *our* ‘Venus powers’ if we are open to it. And when are you open to it? This brings us to the next theosophical building block:

Which influences do we experience, and which not?

Which influences ‘enter us’, ‘touch’ us, and which do not? To what extent do the influences of the various planets affect us as individual human beings?

The basic idea is: we can only experience those influences which have a *corresponding* characteristic with an aspect in our own character. For example, if we have built up an intellectual proclivity, we are much more open to intellectual cosmic influences than someone who is strongly emotional. An emotional person would be strongly open to the influence of the moon — a typically emotional influence. While someone who is used to looking at all things in a matter-of-fact way, will notice nothing of the changing lunar influences.

Can we control and direct cosmic influences?

Then there is this question: are we determined by cosmic

influences or do we always have the choice of following or ignoring them? Here we come to a very important point if we want to understand astrology. There is an old astrological adage and it reads: ‘the stars incline, but do not compel’. We human beings – because we are boundless at our deepest core – have free will. Even in situations where we are used to react in a certain way, we can always change our habit by reacting differently today. Provided we use our willpower — provided we really want to change. Hence: the stars incline, but do not compel.⁽¹²⁾

We will give an example. At certain periods our planet is under the influence of a great influx of vitality. And suppose we are habitual ‘doers’, regularly discovering only *after* our actions whether they were wise or not. Cosmic influences that increase the vital energy level on earth (such as periods of sunspot maxima) will exacerbate that trait in us, unless we become aware of it and see the importance – against our first impulse – of first counting to ten, sleeping on it for a night, and then acting. At the same time, in hesitant people, this same vital influence may give them the impetus to take an important decision. So this influence is not in itself positive or negative: whether it works out harmoniously or disharmoniously is determined by the way we use it.

Everyone has this freedom. It is *our* freedom of choice to use the cosmic forces in a selfish or unselfish way. Just as we can use fire to cook but also to start fires. The cosmic influences in themselves are always neutral, never good or evil. Whether we are aware of it or not, it is we ourselves who direct these forces of nature. We can channel them and direct them in beneficial directions, applying them for the welfare of all beings we know. The more consciously we deal with them, the faster we awaken the insightful, understanding potentials in our consciousness and become wiser in life.

What is the usefulness of astrological knowledge?

The use of studying astrology depends on the quality of ‘astrology’ we study and whether we really understand its principles, that is, if we can understand it from an encompassing philosophy of life about the nature of cosmos and man. We aim to give you some clues to such a philosophy of life, by writing this series of articles on Theosophy and Astrology. Using those clues, you will be able to build up for yourselves an insight into our place and task as human beings in cosmic life, and in the specific functions that cosmic beings fulfil in the evolution of earthly humanity,

during all developmental phases of humanity.

Above, we also spoke of the experiential knowledge that has been collected by countless peoples, which has been handed down to some extent to the present day. For instance the knowledge of the celestial, cyclic influences on plant growth. For a farmer, the significance of knowledge of the celestial constellations is self-evident: it makes a huge difference whether you sow at a proper time or not. The same can be said for anyone who deals with people on a daily basis, such as care workers, police, teachers: it is useful to take into account periods in which emotions can flare up more quickly.

Many people have their birth horoscope drawn to learn to know their own character. Although we do not deny that this is indeed an entrance to some self-knowledge – if the astrologer has a certain expertise and objectivity – it is also true that we can learn to know our own thinking characteristics much more directly by developing our powers of discernment and regularly evaluating our thinking. The instructions for such a direct investigation, which can lead to true self-knowledge, are given in our course ‘Universal Wisdom’.

A greater understanding of astrology can also give us a growing insight into the wide diversity of human characters. We will realize that we tend to look at things from our characteristics, through our colored glasses. This encourages us to open our mind to other perspectives; perspectives from which we can undoubtedly learn a lot. You will appreciate the specific contribution of each person, in family, work, or any other collaboration.

The role that astrology *can* play

In our view, true astrology, if kept in safe and selfless hands, can be of great benefit to whole humanity in the future. To give just one example: the leaders of the world – if they listen to these wise astrologers – can do what Lao Tzu advised: do great things while these are still small.⁽¹³⁾

The latter requires a profound view on all developments. What is the right moment for a particular compassionate action or impulse, so that it can have maximum influence? In the history of countries, there are regularly brief moments when these countries, which usually see each other as competitors, are open to cooperation, to equal consultation — at which time everyone’s problems could be discussed and solved attentively. In our view, these ‘golden moments’ are almost always missed at the moment. But that is not necessary.

More generally, through the wise use of true astrology

every human group will be able to utilize the cosmic influences for the welfare of the entire world community.

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Questions children ask, part 4

How do we create wonder?

In previous parts of this column, we have explained that children ask questions to learn to understand the world around them. By asking questions and looking for answers, children expand their consciousness and also train their thinking skills.

During one of the Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL) lectures in January, a listener asked the following questions on this topic:

Young children have the inner urge to ask questions. Some questions are real life questions. We don't see many older children and adults doing that anymore, especially when they are in groups. Why do we stop asking questions and how can we help reawaken this essential skill in our development? And how do you change this in yourself, when you are in a situation where few people dare to speak up?

The answer to these questions is fairly complex. The fol-

lowing important theosophical thoughts can help us to answer them:

Karma

The first thought to consider is that karma operates across all incarnations. The cause for an event can originate from this life but can also very well lie in a past life. Currently, we cannot remember those events from past lives, so unexpected or unwanted events are often considered bad luck or unjustified. However, nothing in life is a coincidence. We have sown the seeds ourselves and little by little we get the chance to reap their consequences.

Self-becoming

A second important thought that we should keep in mind is that, during previous incarnations, we have built our own character. Our past lives determine exactly who we



are when we are born. When we are born again, we further *develop* the traits we have built up so far. We unfold our character.

A child is no more or less than what he developed, built up, in previous lives. If it was a spiritual person before and considered other spheres of consciousness, then you can expect more life questions. If it was a person who focused mainly on matter and denied other areas of consciousness, then we can expect fewer or no life questions on these kinds of topics. Some children come back very open-minded and full of questions and other children ask far less questions.

However, in very many children we almost always see the urge to want to learn. There are hardly ever any children who do not want to learn to read or tie their shoelaces. This is logical because if they did not have this urge, they would not have been born. Then they would still be resting in Devachan, the sphere in which we reside before our birth. They want to return to the outer existence to become themselves again.

Generally, we say that we need the first twenty-one years of our life to unfold the abilities and knowledge we acquired in our previous lives. A child learns so fast because, until the age of twenty-one, he reactivates his already acquired understanding, remembers it, just like we do every morning (very quickly) when we remember all the things we were doing the day before.

What we learn after our twenty-first year, always takes more effort because that is “really new”. When we are a baby, these traits are not yet so visible, but the older we get, the more dominant our accumulated traits become. We show more and more of our own character. Of course, even in this period the character can be further developed, after all, there is free will.

We determine where we are born

The next thought that plays a role in answering the questions, is that our accumulated characteristics determine in which family we are born. This happens based on a certain attraction. This attraction can be a combination of a positive and a negative nature. So, we do not end up in a family by chance; we choose the parents with whom we have established a karmic bond. We are born where we can become ourselves to the extent of our own development. You are always born where past causes have led you. You have an attraction with that.

Our environment consists of more than just our parents. Grandparents, uncles and aunts, teachers, neighbors and

friends also have important roles in developing our character. A good teacher or a dedicated grandparent can sometimes have a much bigger influence on a child's development than one of the parents. Thus, a common saying is, “It takes a village to raise a child.”

Wonder is the state of hovering between knowing and not knowing. You have an idea that something is there, but you don't know it yet, and this makes you curious. Wonder opens the door to insight.

When a child has not yet developed the characteristic of wonder, it is quite possible that he will end up with parents, or in an environment, in which that is not developed either. Or, if the child has this desire, it will end up in a family or environment that has developed wonder. Both are a result of the child's developed characteristics.

If a child does not ask many questions of its own accord, because the urge to understand more about life has not yet been firmly built up, and it ends up in an environment in which that does not happen either, then wonder will only set in in a subsequent incarnation or perhaps later in life. If it is drawn to parents who know how to excite and spark the fire, then the child will start asking questions and a world will open up for them.

When a child who wonders and asks life questions is ignored or discouraged by its environment to such an extent, this characteristic can become blocked for the rest of this life. Depending on how strong the opposing thought patterns from the environment are, it may take one or more incarnations for this to restart again. But it may also very well start later in this life.

Different sources of inspiration at different times

So, the fact that a young child does not ask life questions, does not mean that he will never do so at all. It is quite possible that they will not begin to do so until later, for example by meeting a friend, a boy- or girlfriend or a teacher, who inspires them. Sometimes it just takes longer for this part of the character to manifest itself.

It is also possible that children do not ask verbal questions but do so nonverbally in their minds. There are plenty of children who do not talk much and are quieter, but in whom something is stimulated by looking or listening to something.

It is possible that at some point, wonder may be (temporarily) at a lower level. Why does wonder decrease? This is possible, because interests shift to other things, such as the opposite sex, someone's own appearance or a new hobby.

The first half of our life usually shows a shift of focus towards the external life, to achieving a position in society, to finding a partner and building a family.

Deeper questions, the desire for greater understanding, often return after that period. When that is, varies enormously from person to person. Here we should be careful with prejudice. Young people may temporarily turn more to each other with their questions than talk to their parents, family members or teachers. Also, adolescents will often focus on what their “heroes,” role models or idols are thinking and doing, or they may seek answers online. Then it seems like they don’t ask questions, but they do, only those around them don’t notice.

The living example

The questioner during the lecture assumes that every child asks questions and that many children stop at some point. We now know that this is not always the case. We also know that the cause of stopping asking questions is not just environmental, but an important part of a person’s accumulated character.

So, is this a license to stop encouraging these children or (young) adults to wonder? Certainly not. It is our duty to give mental food to all our brothers, young and older. Let them think, after which they can ask new questions.

How do we do this? We do it by being the living example ourselves. Work together to keep a good mental attitude, avoid prejudice, make no assumptions, keep an open mind and encourage wonder. Act for the action and not for the result. Fulfill your role consciously and mindfully.

Through this philosophy of life, we easily see through the very relative nature of the thought “what will others think of me if I ask or do this? We are all on our way to becoming full thinkers and learning a greater truth. Your question or incentive can actually help others. In fact, it is compassionate. Often people in a group say to the person who dares to raise an important point: I was struggling with that question too!

In short, never be too quick to think that you are the only one struggling with something.

Stir up the fire and keep it burning

Just like you regularly have to put a block of wood on a fire because otherwise it will go out, we believe you have to nurture a child’s questions, the wonder. Wonder and an active inquisitive nature go hand in hand, and this requires stimulating answers and questions.

For example, when you read a fairy tale you can ask the

child questions about it. What do you think? Would Little Red Riding Hood do that again next time? Why do you think the stepmother in Snow White wants to be the prettiest? If you include this idea, what could it mean? Give it some thought. If answers are completely rounded and/or leave no room for depth or further investigation, because it is clearly stated that it is “this way and no different,” the child may take that answer for granted and will not further explore the topic. Also, with answers like “you’re too young for that, I don’t know, or you don’t understand that anyway,” we are not helping the child. Likewise, when we give no answer at all. How disastrous it is for the child’s self-confidence when it is constantly asserted that it will never understand the world around it.

But when there is an open, enthusiastic atmosphere at home, talking about all sorts of impersonal things, this can easily awaken wonder in children.

When parents talk about bird migration – did you know that many spoonbills no longer migrate to Africa but winter here? – talk about the stars and planets as living beings we are connected to, or exchange thoughts about interesting developments in society, the children’s attentive ears will pick up a lot of things they might only understand half but they will think about it and this will lead to questions. If the parents also question each other, complement each other in developing an idea or ideal – our climate, development projects, coral reefs, other cultures, etc. etc. – then they create an atmosphere in which consciousness is almost naturally directed to the super-personal topics, leading to wonder and questions.

Realize that every answer is not an absolute endpoint and that there is always more to say about a particular idea.

Keep the wonder!

Questions & Answers

Identity

I am re-reading the three fundamental propositions, now on the inside cover of *Lucifer*, and I do not fully understand the third proposition. Does this mean: a form of being identical to the universal Over-Soul? Can you help me out here?

Answer

We do not know exactly what is meant by 'a form of being identical', but we can say that all souls are not merely a form of, but are essentially completely identical to the Over-Soul. We will try to explain this. Let us first consider the Over-Soul.

The Over-Soul is the top of a hierarchy, the most developed entity in that hierarchy. This being is not an absolute god, because it is itself an aspect of the Unknown Root, or the Boundless Principle, as mentioned in the first fundamental proposition. There are many Over-Souls, because there are many hierarchies. And within each hierarchy there are also hierarchies. And within such a hierarchy there is a complete identity of all souls with the top of that hierarchy, although in the lower realms the essence of the hierarchy is expressed in a more limited way than in the higher ones.

The word 'identity' is derived from the Latin *identitas*, which means 'the same' or 'equality' or 'complete similarity'. However, in current usage, it has acquired a second meaning. A person's identity refers to their typical characteristics. We have an identity card, which contains our name, date of birth, and photo. Sometimes it is even used to mean 'personality'. But

when H.P. Blavatsky uses the English word 'identity', she means it in its original Latin sense.

So all souls are equal to the Over-Soul. How are we to understand that?

H.P. Blavatsky gives us an important key to understanding this mystery, at least to some extent. Those souls are a manifestation of monads.⁽¹⁾ Monads are centers of boundless consciousness. Two boundlessnesses do not exist. So if every monad is a mathematical point of consciousness – the circumference is nowhere and the center everywhere – then it must be completely identical to any other monad.⁽²⁾ And because the core of every being, from atom to sun, is a monad, all 'souls' in a hierarchy, as they are called in the third fundamental proposition, are essentially identical to each other and identical to the Over-Soul. Fundamental identity does not mean, however, that all these souls are the same. A soul is a manifested being, and by definition, souls differ from one another. Every soul is composite. It consists of different monads that together form that soul.

Souls are subject to development. They differ in their form of expression. However, the differences are not essential, because at their core they are a monad: essentially boundless consciousness. That is why the third fundamental proposition speaks of fundamental identity. In other words, in essence, at the core of their being, souls are identical to the Over-Soul.

The Over-Soul is the most developed entity in a hierarchy. It is that hierarchy. It is the supreme being that, in a

process of emanation, has brought forth a magnetic field from itself, on or in which countless other beings can manifest themselves. It has entered into a cooperation with those lower beings.

The difference between all these beings lies in their degree of development. Have they developed many or not yet so many abilities, powers, and qualities from the monad within? No two beings express the monad that they are in exactly the same way. That is why the outer world is characterized by diversity, while its background is essential unity.

The Over-Soul is both the deepest Source and the ultimate Goal or Destiny for all souls within its sphere of influence. Every hierarchy of life is a cosmic school, in which all 'students' pass through many classes that ultimately lead to the highest: the level of the Over-Soul. The influence that the Over-Soul exerts on all of them is a constant stimulus to bring into development within themselves – from their own monad – the same wisdom, knowledge, and abilities that the Over-Soul has already developed.

The second part of the third fundamental proposition, which discusses the obligatory pilgrimage for every soul, shows that all beings within a hierarchy can ultimately develop to such an extent that they become one with the Over-Soul, which is actually their deepest SELF. By the way, this third fundamental proposition contains a lot more profound wisdom. The longer you think about it, the more vistas of possibilities of consciousness you become aware of.

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House plants

What is Theosophy's view on ornamental plants and flowers in the living room?

Answer

There are two important theosophical principles: respect all life and respect free will.

If we want to apply these principles to plants, we must acknowledge that it was not the plant's 'choice' to spend its life as vegetal consciousness in a pot on a windowsill in a closed room. It is reasonable to ask whether we are hindering its evolutionary growth by removing it from its natural environment. After all, it did not walk into our house by itself. Humans once took that plant from nature and further specialized and cultivated it, so that it could grow indoors. Moreover, houseplants – and especially flowers – are often grown with many toxic pesticides, which harm the environment and are also unhealthy for humans.

Based on Theosophy, you could therefore argue against having houseplants and flowers.

But as mentioned above, every person has free will and can draw their own conclusions. We know that many people love their plants and flowers dearly. Some people live in relative isolation and put their heart and soul into caring for their green friends.

Although having houseplants means that we are not cooperating with nature in a certain sense, there are many more serious ways in which we violate nature. If we were to exchange the selfish thoughts and personal desires that many of us still have, for selfless and compassionate thoughts, we would be much more in line with the laws of Nature than if we were to get rid of our houseplants and continue to think selfishly.

In short, we must draw our own conclusions and respect those of others. Karma is the 'doctrine of free will', there is no fatalism in it: we independently and continuously determine which new causes we create, which new seeds we sow — and sooner or later we will experience the 'harvest', the effects of our actions, on our life path: positive, neutral or negative.

Expanding your consciousness

Are there practical exercises to expand your consciousness?

Answer

We know of a very practical exercise: practicing compassion.

This answer may be a little disappointing. Some people ask this question because they expect that we may teach them a special technique. But the most practical way to expand your consciousness is to apply compassion, wise charity, in everyday life. In other words: let your highest motive be to serve the whole, to sustain the well-being of all that lives, in everything you think and do. That is the practical meditation.

Try practicing this for yourself during

one day. That means that you do not stand up for yourself, but for everyone else around you, for a colleague for example. Practice justice during that day. Compassion and justice seem big concepts, but they are very close to us. For one day, you do not defend yourself, but you forget yourself, while doing your duties for all.

You will probably experience a strong field of tension. That is caused by the limited, personal consciousness that is always playing up and claiming its supposed place. On the other hand, there is your broad, more universal consciousness. If you allow the latter to prevail, you expand your consciousness.

Question

Is this actually a matter of concentration?

Answer

Yes it is. You must concentrate on the higher characteristics within you. And you should not do that in a forced way. You do not have to get wrinkles in your forehead, so to speak. No, do it in a quiet, natural, patient way.

You will live then in the higher parts of yourself. These universal parts are, on their levels, already active in you: you only have to learn to live in those higher aspects. That is, you must learn to attune your thoughts to them. And that is a matter of practice.

If you fail in some aspects, try again the next day. By doing this we can accomplish a great deal in a short time.

Agenda

International Theosophy Conference (ITC) 2025

**Celebrating the Heart of Theosophy
(1875 - 2025)**

Friday August 8 till Tuesday August 12

In 1875, 150 years ago, the modern Theosophical Movement was founded in New York. It was a new impetus of Theosophia, the Universal Wisdom, that goes back in the night of time.

This joyous event was the reason for ITC to choose this as the theme for its annual conference.

What thoughts did H.P. Blavatsky and her successors gradually bring into the world and for what purpose? And what influence have they had so far? And above all, what can these thoughts mean for our future, which we are now building? These questions are of great importance for the present and future theosophical movement. As the topic covers so much, it was decided that the conference will last a day longer than usual.

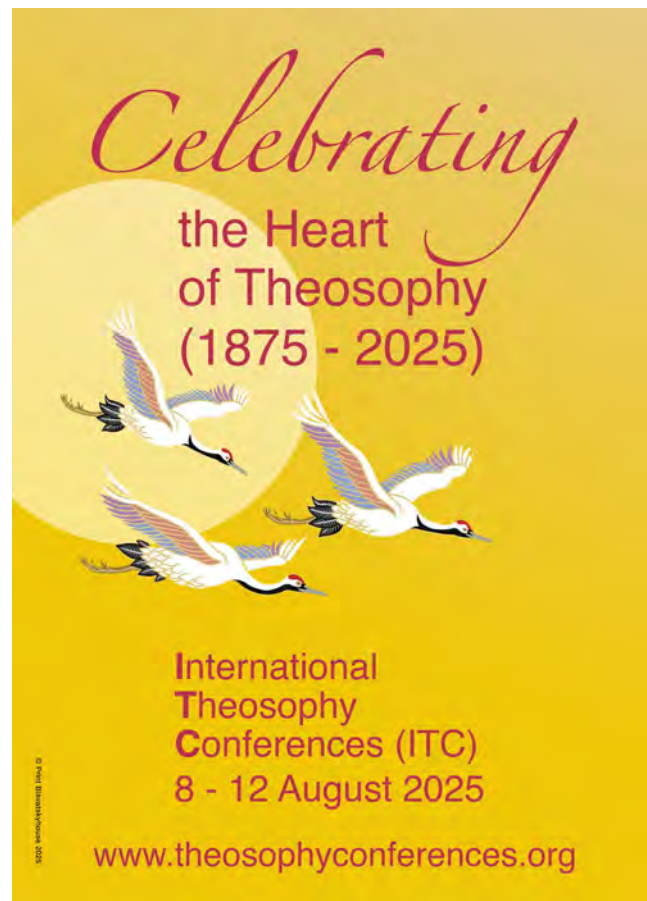
The conference will be held online with Zoom. It offers a wide variety of lectures and workshops and will be held simultaneously in the English, Portuguese and Spanish language.

Program

- August 8: Celebrating the Heart of Theosophia – Continuing H.P. Blavatsky's impulse
- August 9: Tracing the Mahatmic current before H.P. Blavatsky
- August 10: H.P. Blavatsky – The messenger and the message: *ISIS Unveiled*, Religion and Philosophy
- August 11: H.P. Blavatsky – The messenger and the message: *The Secret Doctrine*, Science and the Future
- August 12: The Future of Theosophy and Humanity

Registrations can be made on the website:

www.theosophyconferences.org



Symposium 2025 Theosophical Society Point Loma

Announcement of the theme:
**The logic of the Heart – The stream
of Wisdom, Compassion and Peace**

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The name of the Foundation [Stichting] is
'Stichting International Study-centre for
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The object of the Foundation is to form a
nucleus of Universal Brotherhood by
disseminating knowledge about the spiritual
structure of human beings and the cosmos,
free from dogma.

The Foundation endeavors to accomplish this
object by giving courses, organizing public and
other speeches and lectures, issuing books,
brochures and other publications, and by
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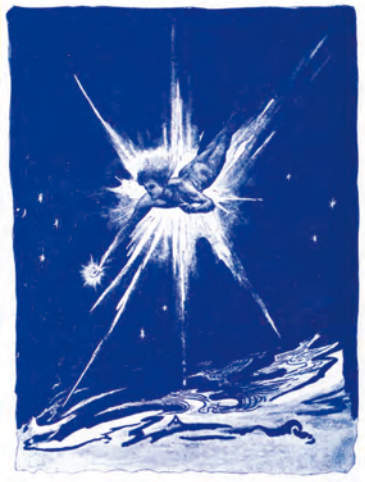
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I.S.I.S. Foundation

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)