

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

Ideas rule the world

**Compassion as a
universal way of
living**

**The climate of
thought – the cosmic
and individual image
gallery**

**Astrology: the kosmic
key actors**

**The origins of
religions and religious
conflict**

From human to god



Cover illustration:
Bodhisattva Guanyin, expression
of compassion.

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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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Editorial

The way we think, our mentality, determines how we interpret situations and respond to them. During our many lives we act and re-act and learn from these experiences. This is how we can improve our mentality towards fully self-conscious beings and masters of thought. For most of us however, this is a slow process. Changing habits turns out to be a difficult thing to do.

Unfortunately, our limited view of life and imperfect thinking is the cause of a lot of suffering. Is there no way to accelerate this improvement? We think there is, by using the insights of Theosophy.

This important question is the common thread through most of the articles in this issue of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*. However, it is not merely a matter of studying Theosophy, it is a matter of applying it. This implies that we focus less on ourselves and more on others, on humanity, indeed, on all living beings. And that requires discipline.

In *Ideas rule the world*, Herman Vermeulen explains how misinformation or limited views on problems may lead to ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’. The article provides a solution how to break through such prejudices and tackle the causes of problems.

Compassion as a way of life is the topic of the article by Bouke van den Noort. The article is based on a Dutch lecture in the recent series of lectures on H.P. Blavatsky’s role in the renewal of world thinking. In this article, Bouke sketches a picture that is both insightful and easy to understand. The article also clears up the many widespread misunderstandings surrounding the word ‘compassion’.

The mentality of all people together determines the climate of thought on our Planet. Until now, most people focus their attention on external, earthly matters. What determines the character of the mental climate in which we presently live? In *The climate of thought*, Barend Voorham talks about ‘Zeitgeist’, the mental network on Earth and the role of the Astral Light in the mental network on Earth.

In this *Lucifer* we continue our series on Astrology. In this second article we give a description of the *astrological key actors*, seen from the basic idea of Theosophy: unity. We live and evolve in the sphere of influence of a group of cosmic beings. Precisely in the ‘force fields’ of *these* beings, we find the possibilities to incarnate and continue our evolution, in line with our character.

Furthermore, we answer a number of questions. In this issue we touch upon the origins of religions and religious conflict, the development from human to god and the development of our thinking over time.

With the articles in this issue of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer* we hope to inspire you to activate this part of yourself, because it is already within you. Our course *Universal Wisdom*, starting in October can also help you initiate this mentality change. In our activity agenda you will find more information about this course.

Editors



Ideas rule the world

Key thoughts

- » Our current mentality is not much better than that of ancient Athens and Rome. So, it is time for us to start learning now.
- » Past civilizations also offer us inspiring examples.
- » One of the major handicaps of our time is mental self-pollution. Sometimes this produces what is known as 'self-fulfilling prophecies'. We will have to break through these cyclic thought patterns ourselves.
- » Sometimes in history there are exceptional moments, when the opportunity arises to bring about fundamental changes.
- » A completely different approach is needed, based on freedom of thought and independent research.

Our current mentality is not much better than in ancient Athens and Rome. Why? One of the major handicaps of our time is mental self-pollution, sometimes manifesting as 'self-fulfilling prophecies'. Why does a thought become stronger and stronger? Can we break through our thinking habits? And how can we prevent that we discover only *afterwards*, each time, how some problem could have been solved?

We can no longer look away with all the information we have

When we look at the current mentality in the world, and especially at how conflicts arise and how we attempt to resolve them, there is only one conclusion possible: that we are in great need of a different approach, a different view: looking from a completely different mentality at the world to see how we can live together, and how we can work to reduce the vast differences in living conditions.

Our current mentality is not much better than that of the Romans and the Germanic tribes a few thousand years ago. We are almost a literal copy of that mentality. Sometimes, information from unexpected sources comes into our hands, that makes this very clear. A surprising example is the Dutch novel *Alkibiades* by writer and classicist Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer. This is a comprehensive book with 150 pages of references alone. The book is the result of his

study of the social and political behavior of the Athenians, based on reports from Plato's time. The author demonstrates how remarkably strong the parallels are in political mentality between Socrates' time and now. The similarities are striking. By the way, the author does not mention the possibility that this is a good example of reincarnation.

Are we slow learners?

We may have a high-tech society with cars, airplanes, computers, etcetera, but the mentality has changed little or not at all, compared to the past. Are we slow learners, or does not everyone learn their lessons at the same speed?

The interval between two incarnations is, as H.P. Blavatsky indicates, approximately two to three thousand years *on average worldwide*. This explains to some extent the lack of progress that has been made.

The question is justified: did we learn anything or not, during those thousands of years? If we are presently just

repeating what we did in our previous incarnations, then it is time for us to start learning now. Because we still see that ‘*me first*’, imagining yourself to be separate from others, is the most dominant mental characteristic, although fortunately there are exceptions. We still see an unbridled competitive mentality, fueled by selfishness. This selfishness can work out to the detriment of tens of thousands of human lives; nothing seems too crazy. Conflicts are approached with the adage ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’. That is the surest guarantee that these conflicts cannot be resolved or can only be resolved with great difficulty.

The past also offers inspiring examples

Was there nothing in the past from which we could have learned valuable lessons? Yes, certainly, but those lessons do not stick with us very well. To name just one example: the reign of Emperor Ashoka in northern India from 304 to 232 BCE. After a very bloody reign by his father and an equally bloody start after he succeeded his father, he decided, to his great credit, to take a completely different approach.⁽¹⁾

The strength of this example is that a completely different society had to be built up, and Ashoka succeeded in doing so. At a time when travel and communication over long distances were much more difficult than they are today, he managed to establish a much more social society: more harmonious and with greater equality for all.

There have also been cultures that had much more efficient ways of resolving conflicts than we do. Even now, we dare to call those cultures ‘primitive’. Examples include the indigenous peoples of North America and the African peoples who lived according to the Ubuntu philosophy: two different cultures on two different continents, that developed a much better approach than we do today.

We can also think of the organizations that were established to prevent a repetition of the misery of the First and Second World Wars, based on the adage ‘never again’: the League of Nations in 1919 and the United Nations in 1945. The International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court are also mechanisms for preventing violence.

But some of these organizations have an inherent handicap: the veto power of some of the participating countries. That veto power has been enforced by the most powerful countries. This greatly limits the ability to make fair and sincere statements and reach agreements. It puts the common good in second place.

Self-fulfilling prophecies

One of the major handicaps of our time is mental self-pollution. By this we mean that we talk ourselves into suppositions, that we believe in things that are based on little or no facts. The consequences of this can sometimes be far-reaching. Sometimes it produces what is known in everyday language as a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. This is a prediction that comes true because the beliefs or expectations of a person or group of persons strongly influence, if not determine, their actions.

This phenomenon can lead to both positive and negative outcomes, depending on the nature of the expectation: based on trust or mistrust. The point here is, that people’s expectations are fulfilled by their own actions.

A classic example of a self-fulfilling prophecy is a bank run. If a false rumor is spread that some bank is insolvent – unable to cover its savings deposits – panic ensues. Then, many savers want to withdraw their money all at once, before the bank runs out of cash. Because the bank cannot deliver, it actually becomes insolvent. Thus, an originally false belief leads to its own fulfillment, even if the bank was not in a bad financial position at all.

The fact that a rumor can have such an effect, has often been proven. The process of ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ is important for gaining a better understanding of human group relationships. Under the right (or rather, ‘wrong’) circumstances, inaccurate social stereotypes can lead to their own fulfillment. Members of groups that are stereotyped as intelligent, competent, or nice can actually become more intelligent, competent or nice than members of groups for which the opposite is true. These ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ can contribute, not only to the perpetuation of stereotypes, but also to the group inequalities that give rise to those stereotypes. However, the impact of these kinds of processes is limited, and the extent to which they contribute to group inequalities is the subject of considerable controversy.

Many of us have experienced the influence of prejudice and rumors ourselves: the example of the bank run clearly shows the consequences.

Why does a thought become stronger and stronger?

The above situations can be fully explained with a little more knowledge of the thinking process. The article ‘The thinking climate’ by Barend Voorham, in this issue, provides a good basis for developing such an understanding. The course of the thinking process is explained by

Madame Blavatsky's Masters in their letters.⁽²⁾ By allowing the entrance of certain thoughts into our minds and giving them a place, i.e. by paying attention to them, they become more powerful and gain more influence in our minds. We feed thoughts by thinking about them.

In turn, we also *radiate* every thought we receive. Our thoughts are received by others who are open to these kinds of thoughts. When these other people in turn give them attention, reinforce them again, and start to act accordingly, a kind of avalanche effect is created. The power of the thought of the initiator – the source from which these thoughts come – is constantly reinforced. Thus, we get a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ultimately leading to the result that all these people think: "You see, I was right."

Breaking the molds of mind

If we understand the above, it is clear that we must start with ourselves. We will have to break through these cyclic thought patterns ourselves. We are all capable of seeing beyond our prejudices and building a different, much more insightful vision. A good example of such a fundamentally different perspective can be found in Lao Tsu's *Tao Teh Ching*. By paradox 49, he gives us a good challenge. In this paradox he says:

**I am good to those who are good, because they are good;
I am good to those who are not good, so that they may
become good.**

Keep clearly in mind here, that 'being good to those who are good' and 'being good to those who are not-so-good' is not the same type of goodness. To help someone to become good, you need a different approach than to someone who is already good at heart.

You are good to good people by helping them to further

develop their existing unselfishness and helpfulness. You are good to the not-so-good people by activating their social awareness and by training their self-control, helping them to overcome their aggression. Unselfishness can be learned, even though it is often experienced as unpleasant by those who are not-so-good, because it goes against their established character patterns.

Besides, this paradox 49 takes a different form in almost every translation. There are more than 150 translations of the *Tao Teh Ching* in Western languages, which can differ greatly from one another.

Preventing problems through understanding

We will have to break through our own prejudices, our own self-fulfilling prophecies, if we want to build visions that address the causes of the problems, so that we do not discover only *afterwards*, each time, how some problem could have been solved.

Sometimes in history there are exceptional moments, when the opportunity arises to bring about fundamental changes, and hopefully improvements, if we know how to make good use of them. That was the case in 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell. At that time, during the period of great upheaval in the Soviet Union, the West was asked for financial aid. If we, at that time, would have aided the Soviet Union by giving a fraction of the 800 billion euros that Europe is now going to invest in military resources, we might have a completely different world situation now. This economic argument may be rather weak in itself. But there are also more compelling – and much more humane – arguments for putting universal Brotherhood into practice. Isn't it time to ask ourselves whether, instead of investing 800 billion euros in armaments, it might be much wiser to invest that money in peace projects?

Another example where we were unable to break through our own prejudices, were the experiments in Canada with the introduction of a basic income and the discussion about a universal basic income, negative income tax, and related welfare systems. The discussion dates back to the 1930s, when the social credit movement had ideas along these lines.

Two important basic income experiments have been conducted in Canada. The first was the Mincome experiment in Manitoba from 1974 to 1979. It was a very successful experiment, but it was a thorn in the side of every economist, because it completely contradicted the Western economic view that had been maintained for 100 years or more.



A second attempt was made in Ontario: the so-called 'Basic Income Pilot' in 2018. The latter experiment was intended to last three years. However, it lasted only a few months, because the newly elected conservative government canceled the experiment. So, it never had a real chance.

The idea behind both experiments was to give people a financial basis to live on, and thus security, allowing them to use their creativity to be good citizens, valuable members of society, instead of constantly worrying about 'how can I survive'.

These are important living proofs on a small scale that in societies where income and capital disparities are smallest, happiness, prosperity, and health are highest. And that therefore a completely different economic vision can work very well.

The alternative: altruistic, independent thinking

Due to the negative power of our own prejudices, and due to the fact that we activate these thoughts in others as well, we create a mental climate that allows all kinds of negative elements to come to the forefront and seize power. And then the question is: how do we get rid of this?

Remember that we will have to deal with the many karmic consequences of our self-fulfilling prophecies for a long time to come. The consequences of what we did, cannot be reversed in an instant. We will have to deal with the karma we already built up. Here too, a refreshing and habit-breaking approach will be necessary. The mentioned quote from the *Tao Teh Ching* gives us a golden key here.

On average, our knowledge of the thinking process is very limited. On the one hand, this is a good thing, because it offers us some protection against selfishness, the dominant characteristic of our contemporary thinking. This ignorance protects us to some extent, because more knowledge also requires more responsibility. On the other hand, we would save ourselves a lot of misery if we realized the consequences of our thinking.

When H.P. Blavatsky arrived in New York, 150 years ago, she spoke the historic, unforgettable words: "*I have come to break the molds of mind of mankind.*" It was already clear to her and her teachers that overcoming rigidity of thought is the great challenge for humanity in the coming cycles.

In her articles, she often wrote about the need for a completely different vision and approach, based on freedom of thought and independent research. We therefore conclude with this quote from H.P. Blavatsky:

... to merit the honorable title of Theosophist one must be an altruist, above all; one ever ready to help equally foe or friend, to act, rather than to speak; and urge others to action, while never losing an opportunity to work himself. (...) no true Theosophist will ever dictate to his fellow brother or neighbor what this one should believe or disbelieve in, nor force him to act on lines which may be distasteful for him, however proper they may appear to himself, there are other duties which he has to attend to: (a) to warn his brother of any danger the latter may fail to see; and (b) to share his knowledge – if he has acquired such – with those who have been less fortunate than himself in opportunities for acquiring it.⁽³⁾

References

1. Many sources, a.o.: H.P. Blavatsky, *Theosophical Glossary*. Los Angeles, California, The Theosophy Company, 1973 (photographic reproduction of the original edition), lemma 'Asoka', p. 35-36.
 2. Master Koot Hoomi speaks about the power of ideas in his letter of December 10, 1880, among other places. See: *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett, in chronological sequence*. Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, Theosophical Publishing House, 1993, letter no. 12, p. 39 (letter no. 6 in non-chronological editions).
 3. H.P. Blavatsky, 'Why the Vahan'. Article in: H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings. Volume XII*. Wheaton, Illinois, Theosophical Publishing House, 1980, p. 417-418.
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Key thoughts

» H.P. Blavatsky has given the concept of compassion an unprecedented depth for the West. Her ethical, philosophical and logic-based foundation for compassion is of unique value.

» Wisdom and compassion are a duality that reinforce each other. Yet it is possible to be fully compassionate when we do not have the necessary wisdom yet. This has everything to do with our *motive*.

» In this article, we explain why compassion is different from pity, why it has nothing to do with 'being a softy', and why the concept of self-compassion is a contradiction in itself.

» Selfishness has a narrowing effect on our consciousness. The more we forget ourselves in our work for others, the more our consciousness opens to the influence of our inner divine nature, and the more we become truly Human.

Compassion as a universal way of living

In the context of *18 million years of Theosophia, 150 years of Theosophy*, the lectures of The Theosophical Society Point Loma during the first half of this year focused on the work of H.P. Blavatsky and the influence it continues to have to this day. The last lecture in the series on H.P. Blavatsky's role in the renewal of world thinking, *Compassion as a Universal Way of Living*, can be seen as a conclusion, but also as a starting point when following the entire series. That is why we are now publishing Bouke van den Noort's adaptation of this lecture. All lectures can be viewed online at youtube.com/@theosophicalsocietypointloma and on our website blavatskyhouse.org.

Welcome to the lecture '*Compassion as a universal way of living*', the last lecture in the series: *H.P. Blavatsky's role in transforming the world-mentality*. This series eventually became a double series, because there was so much to mention, we could not cover it in one month.

During these two months we presented the lectures in pairs of two: each first lecture concerned theosophical teachings and principles: *the spiritual heart of every being, Universal Brotherhood, freedom of thought and conscience*, followed by a second lecture in which we came up with examples of all the social changes that took place, based on those principles. For instance the abolition of slavery and racism, decolonization, up to the many peace activities and the groundbreaking changes that occurred in science around 1900.

When we take a closer look at what

all these changes have in common, we see that there is one principle running through them as a golden thread, and this is: COMPASSION. Compassion as the driving force behind all these societal changes. That is why we conclude this series with a further elaboration on what compassion exactly entails, and what it means to have compassion as a way of living.

Blavatsky, of course, has said a great deal about it. Here, it is always good to emphasize that this was not her personal vision, but the timeless Wisdom she gave to humanity as the messenger of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion. She gave this wisdom stripped of all dogmatism and degeneration, as in fact every impulse from that Great Lodge is a purification of the same Universal Wisdom.

Introducing compassion

The great challenge, however, that

Blavatsky faced in her time, was to convey the ethical depth of the concept of compassion to a society that was not yet of this quality. First, she had to attune her message to the level of the prevailing mentality in order to connect and from there, take people along to gain a deeper understanding. Earlier in this series, we described this mentality by quoting a letter from one of Blavatsky's teachers in which the *Mahā Chohan* – the teacher of Blavatsky's teachers – speaks about two dominating views at the time, on the one hand the dogmatic church, based on blind faith and on the other hand, a strongly materialistic science prevailing at that time, denying any existence of an inner, or higher life.

Why is this so important? Because when we talk about compassion, both views, of “*degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism*”, as it is expressed in the letter, completely undermine the idea of compassion. A blind faith, which paralyzes independent thought, conscience and a sense of responsibility, led to a behavior of superiority and the oppression of other nations. And a materialistic science, which denied any form of ensouled life, or the unity and interconnectedness of life, led to a worldview governed by chance and the survival of the fittest: in the letter referred to as “*the curse known as the ‘struggle for life’, which is the real and most prolific parent of most woes and sorrows and of all the crimes*”.⁽¹⁾

So, both dominant worldviews completely lacked the foundation for ethics and in the midst of this, Blavatsky had the immense task of bringing the message of Universal Brotherhood and compassion.

Development and ever-increasing understanding of compassion

The way Helena Petrovna Blavatsky took on the task was certainly not at random, but based on a pre-conceived plan by her Teachers to first make the connection with the people, as mentioned, in order to gradually build up a deeper understanding. And she did this in roughly four phases, of which, if you look closely, correspond to the four life-phases of the organization that Johanna Vermeulen talked about earlier in the series: *H.P. Blavatsky's mission in the Hierarchy of Compassion*.⁽²⁾

These phases are discussed below.

1st Phase: breaking the molds of mind

Starting with the 1st phase in 1877, with the publishing of Blavatsky's first major work *Isis Unveiled*, in which her task was to first create space in western thought. “*To break*

the molds of mind”, as she herself said, refuting all misconceptions and degenerated ideas in order to make room for the right understanding instead.

The book consisted of two parts: ‘Science’ and ‘Theology’, exactly the two disciplines mentioned in the letter as the two greatest causes of suffering, (when they fall into materialism and dogmatism). And it is exactly this degeneration, which she fiercely refutes in this book.

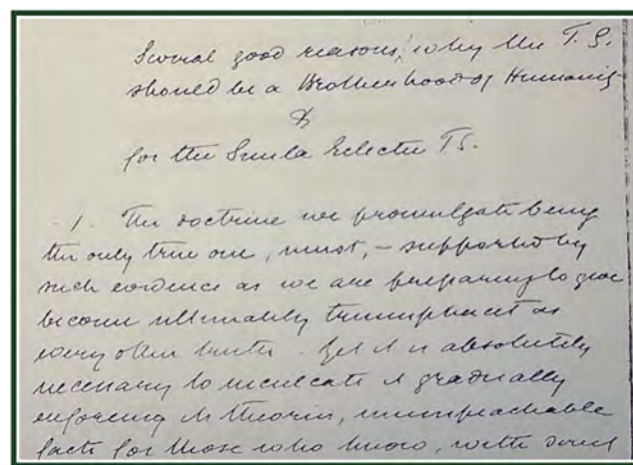
While she breaks down all the degenerated ideas of the various exoteric traditions, she simultaneously shows the common source, the pure esoteric foundation of all those traditions, when you look through the outer form. And by doing so, she introduces two initial thoughts that are crucial regarding compassion:

1. The Divine is not outside, but *within* us. With this she not only gives back the responsibility to man for his own actions, but moreover the idea of *fundamental equality*, since all life shares the same Divine essence.
2. And with regard to materialistic science, she showed that behind the material world, there is a much more real, and causal world. That there is no such thing as dead matter, but everything we can perceive with our senses, is the physical expression of an inner life.

Two fundamental thoughts as a start to be able to get a real understanding of compassion.

2nd Phase: an ethical and logic-based philosophical foundation for compassion

But this start did not yet encompass the depth Blavatsky gives to it in the next phase, when she publishes *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888. This work makes Blavatsky's impulse truly unique, because it provides a fully ethical- and logic-based *philosophical foundation* for compassion. Not just a



Passage from the copy that A.P. Sinnett made of a letter from Master Koot Hoomi about the vision of the Mahā Chohan.

rule of conduct, like the Golden Rule you find in all traditions, but a comprehensive system of teachings that can also *be individually tested*.

This philosophical foundation is presented in its entirety in the three fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*. Three principles that provide, very concisely, the complete foundation for compassion, showing *the fundamental unity and interconnectedness of Life*, since all life is rooted in the same boundless essence, which therefore is also the essence of every being.

This was the subject of the lecture of April 13: 'The spiritual heart of every being'.

And because this spiritual heart is the same in every being, there is an essential *equality* of Life, which was the topic of the lecture of April 27 on 'Universal Brotherhood', in which we showed that Universal Brotherhood is not a human invention or sentiment, but a fact, based on the Laws of the universe.

Both volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* are in fact just a further elaboration of these principles. All the teachings that come along, such as karma, reincarnation, the hierarchical structure of the universe, involution and evolution, may seem technical at first, but are in fact nothing but the basis for compassion. Together they show the total picture of how Life is interdependent in all its interconnectedness.

3rd Phase: compassion in practice as a prerequisite

A next phase starts in the Theosophical Society (TS) in which a mere philosophical understanding of compassion was no longer enough, putting it into practice was now required. The organization had come to a point where a group of members was needed to ensure the future of the TS in the world. To form a nucleus to represent the soul of the organization, as the link between the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion and the outer world when H.P. Blavatsky was no longer around.

During this time, a series of articles appeared in the *Lucifer* magazine – announcing the start of this group called the *Esoteric School* – in which was explained what criteria one had to meet, in order to join. This nucleus, the members forming it, had to be of a certain quality in order to function as a link. That quality was fully determined by the *extent* to which a person was willing to give up his own ambitions and development for the well-being of humanity. In other words: compassion as a mere philosophical concept was no longer sufficient, but now, being the living example was set as an absolute requirement.

4th Phase: disclosing the most esoteric and profound teachings of compassion

Finally, in the 4th phase, the most esoteric and profound teachings of compassion were given with the publication of the booklet: *The Voice of the Silence*. As 'instructions for the Disciple on the Path', dedicated to 'the few', among others those who were accepted to the Esoteric School, who had proven themselves worthy.

The booklet is pure Mahāyāna Buddhism, still unparalleled in its esoteric depth for the Western world, consisting of precepts for 'the disciple on the Path', so those who are willing to give their life for the alleviation of suffering in the world; willing to sacrifice all personal progression for the benefit of the totality, and thus truly being a living expression of compassion.

But ... and this is a crucial thought to end these four phases: although the understanding of compassion had to be built up step by step for the *outside world*, from within the organization, from the very foundation in 1875, compassion has been the sole reason for its existence. This becomes very clear in the following quote from the *Mahā Chohan* Letter: "*Rather perish the Theosophical Society with both its hapless founders than that we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic and a hall of occultism.*"⁽³⁾

In other words, if compassion is no longer the central motive of the members of the organization, it will be the end of it, *as far as the external side is concerned*. The inner side of the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion, as we have shown in the previous series, has *always and will always continue to be active*.

What is compassion?

Let us have a closer look at what we exactly mean by compassion. If we go straight to the core – following the three fundamental principles of the *The Secret Doctrine*, that all life is inseparable, fundamentally equal and one in essence – we can describe compassion as *a sense of oneness, identifying with all life, and therefore to live in service of the totality*. A first important consequence of this description is that compassion is *universal*. 'To be one with all that lives' means that compassion does not entail *any preference*, because as soon as you would prefer one for the other, it simply contradicts this idea of unity and equality. If you consider this for a moment, it has far-reaching consequences: for it means that you are not only willing to help your friends, but also people you do not know at all, or even your so-called 'enemies'. It also means that you do

not limit yourself to a certain group, because compassion *transcends group interest*, no matter how large the group is: whether it is your family, a city, or country. Even choosing for humanity as a group, as a kingdom of nature, implies an exclusion of the other kingdoms on the planet. So, compassion has *no* exceptions, or preferences, because following the universal Law of Unity — by definition it relates to the whole, unconditionally.

It is of course quite something to state that compassion has no limits. Because why then, do we not see boundless compassion around us, you may ask? This has everything to do with the fact that *the awareness of this oneness is different for everyone*. It ranges from people whose awareness is still completely dormant, resulting in total selfishness, all the way up to the great Sages and World Teachers who experience their oneness with each and every living being, and act accordingly.

Because of this vast range in the expression of compassion, one might think that compassion is a relative concept. But that is not the case, and for this, it is important to make the next clear discernment: the *principle* of compassion does not change, the *intention* to work for the totality from a sense of unity to the best of one's ability. This intention is always the same. It is however the *awareness* of the unity, that is relative, because it differs for each one of us and for that reason the expression of compassion varies in practice.

But there is more to it. In addition to experiencing the unity of Life as truth there is another important element that, when absent, means you *can not* speak of compassion. This is the inner urge, the *intrinsic desire to eliminate suffering*. For it is quite possible to be aware of this exalted state of oneness, and only to strive for it, without having further genuine concern for all other life. This may seem a subtle difference, but it is extremely fundamental. For even more than the sense of unity, compassion entails the intense desire to actively support all life, that constitutes it. This is why de Purucker, one of the theosophical teachers speaks of compassion as a state of “*intimate magnetic sympathy with all that is*”,⁽⁴⁾ which expresses itself in the impersonal desire, an unconditional Love to devote oneself to the totality, to do everything in your power to support life, and to eliminate the suffering that is happening around us. If we then conclude with a definition of compassion, which we presented before in these series, we can define it as: *thinking and acting from a sense of unity, from universal, impersonal Love, wisdom and knowledge about the Laws of Nature*.

In this definition we can recognize three aspects of compassion, two of which we just discussed: 1) the sense of unity, the interconnectedness of all life and 2) the universal, impersonal Love that follows from this, the “intimate magnetic sympathy” and desire to alleviate suffering, unconditionally, without exception.

But the third aspect: *wisdom and knowledge about Laws of Nature*, we have not touched upon yet and this will be the next subject. For what is exactly the relation between wisdom and compassion?

Compassion and wisdom

It is not without reason that the Great Lodge of which Blavatsky is the messenger is called the *Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion*. For these two concepts are inseparable, and this connectedness shows in two ways.

The first way we already mentioned and has everything to do with *perceiving unity*. The ability to see the unity through or behind the multiplicity of physical forms and by perceiving this greater reality of unity, see through the illusion of separateness.

Another word, also used for wisdom is *discernment*, because it is exactly this ability, to be able to discern between the true and lasting — the inner essence of life, immortal and ONE — and its temporary external form which is transient. And so, if we define compassion as ‘living for the totality from a sense of unity’, you see that wisdom, this inner understanding of oneness, is directly related to compassion.

In this regard, it is interesting to look at the original Sanskrit word for wisdom, which is *Buddhi* or *Bodhi*, from the Sanskrit root *Budh*, often translated as ‘enlightened’. But rather than enlightened, a better translation actually is ‘awakened’, because it concerns an inner state of consciousness, mostly dormant in us now, but once we have activated this inner faculty, we are so to speak awakened in that state. Which we then call a Buddha.

In the *Occult Glossary* of G. de Purucker, we find the following description of the term *Bodhi*:

It is the state when man has so ‘emptied his mind’ that it is filled only with the Self Itself, with the selfless selfhood of the Eternal.[BvdN: in other words, united with the Universal Self] Then he realizes the ineffable visions of Reality, of Pure Truth.⁽⁵⁾

This clearly shows that compassion, being fully related to this ability, is therefore not just a nice ideal or wish,

invented by people, but *a state of consciousness, based on reality*. And, whether dormant or not, everyone fundamentally has this state of consciousness latent within.

Practical application

A second aspect to this connection between wisdom and compassion concerns the *practical application*. Because if you want to be a helping force as best you can, it is of course important to know, *how* to be one. To illustrate this with a simple example: if you buy a new device and you start using it without a manual, you may eventually figure out how it works, but (a) it takes longer, and (b) you have probably first made a number of mistakes. Mistakes that you may have to correct and that you could have prevented if you had first read the manual. And that is where the second aspect of wisdom comes in: the *insight*, the understanding what action is needed in a situation, how to eliminate *the cause* of the problem.

It was also the longing for this insight, aroused by compassion, that made the Buddha – as Prince Siddhartha still – leave his palace with the vow not to return until he had found the truth about the cause of suffering. Until he had acquired the insight in *the cause* of suffering and *how* to eliminate it. This word *in-sight* can be taken literally as ‘seeing the inner cause behind the outer circumstances’. Seeing with our inner eye what others really need to remove the cause of their suffering.

So, where on the one hand wisdom, stimulates compassion in the ability to see the unity and interconnectedness of Life, the all-encompassing vision of a larger reality, on the other hand it concerns the very individual level, the ability of understanding the other, *what the inner cause of one’s suffering is*, and what someone really needs in order to overcome his own challenges. In other words: being able to connect with others at the level they are at, is essential when talking about compassion, because if we are not, wisdom remains empty knowledge without use to anyone. Or as Blavatsky says: “*Therefore the double activity of learning and doing is most necessary; we have to do good, and we have to do it rightly, with knowledge.*”⁽⁶⁾

Can one be compassionate without wisdom?

Then of course, the inevitable question rises: if the two concepts are so inextricably connected, is it possible to be compassionate without wisdom? This is an important question, because you sometimes hear people say that you first have to work on yourself, become wise yourself, before you can help others. But Blavatsky is very clear about

the fallacy of this claim, and that the opposite is even the case.

Because the interaction of wisdom and compassion also means that there is no faster way to become wiser than by helping others.

This brings us back to the essence of compassion: the *intention* that is all-determining! The motive of wanting to help others, without seeking any benefit for oneself. So, if the so-called manual is missing but help is urgently needed somewhere, you can sit and wait for a manual, but you can also immediately come to the rescue to the best of your ability. And when you do this, and do it with the right motive, the sincere desire to help the other, you are then guaranteed to develop the necessary wisdom most quickly. Blavatsky says the following about this when someone asks her about the ways by which intuition is to be developed:

First of all by giving it exercise, and second by not using it for personal ends. Exercise means that it must be followed through mistakes and bruises until from sincere attempts at use it comes to its own strength. This does not mean that we can do wrong and leave the results, but that after establishing conscience on a right basis by following the golden rule, we give play to the intuition and add to its strength. Inevitably in this, at first we will make errors, but soon if we are sincere, it will grow brighter and make no mistake.⁽⁷⁾

That is also why we find in *The Voice of the Silence* that *Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child*.⁽⁸⁾ Where ‘Self’ is written with a capital because it concerns the Universal SELF, the universal essence of all Life that we gain more insight into, when we think and act out of compassion.

Another one of her quotes is that Philosophy is not only ‘love of wisdom’, but also: ‘the wisdom of Love’.⁽⁹⁾ Exactly the same idea that Love – not personal love for someone or something in particular, but the unconditional LOVE for all Life – leads to deeper insight into the essence of it.

In short you could say that wisdom and compassion form a duality reinforcing one another, as two aspects of the same thing, but compassion always as the leading motive.

Bodhisattva

This all comes together perfectly in the term *Bodhisattva*. A Sanskrit word of which the literal translation is: ‘he whose being has become wisdom’. A Bodhisattva is often described as a being who is just one step away from Buddhahood, and in attaining Nirvāṇa. But a more esoteric

teaching is that a Bodhisattva consciously renounces this state of spiritual bliss, in order to still be able to alleviate suffering on earth. Because, although the Bodhisattva has this unveiled vision of oneness and has totally risen himself beyond the illusion of the physical world, he is fully aware that this material world is *a reality for suffering humanity*, still identifying with it.

And it is for this very realization, this inner Wisdom, guided by compassion, why a Bodhisattva decides not to disappear into the state of Nirvāna, but to refuse it to be a helping force in this world.

What compassion is *not*

I would also like to have a look at what compassion is *not*, because clarity about what something is not, also helps in getting a clearer picture of what it *is*. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to correct a number of misunderstandings around compassion. But in order to do this properly, we first have to have a clear picture of what we are as human beings.

And also in this, Blavatsky has made an invaluable contribution by (re)introducing the knowledge of the *composite nature* of man. She did this in different ways, which do not differ from each other principally, but only in the level of detail. For now I will just highlight the more detailed ones, because in the end, it is the simple twofold division that is actually the most useful to explain the misunderstandings around compassion.

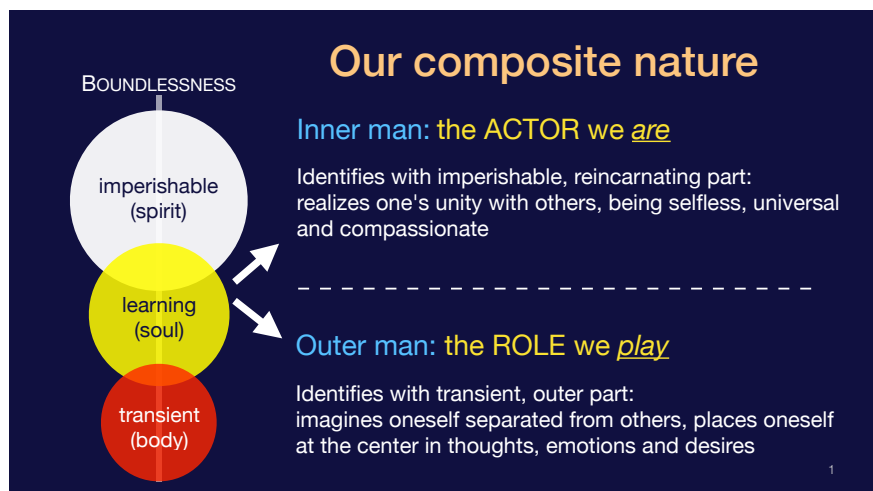
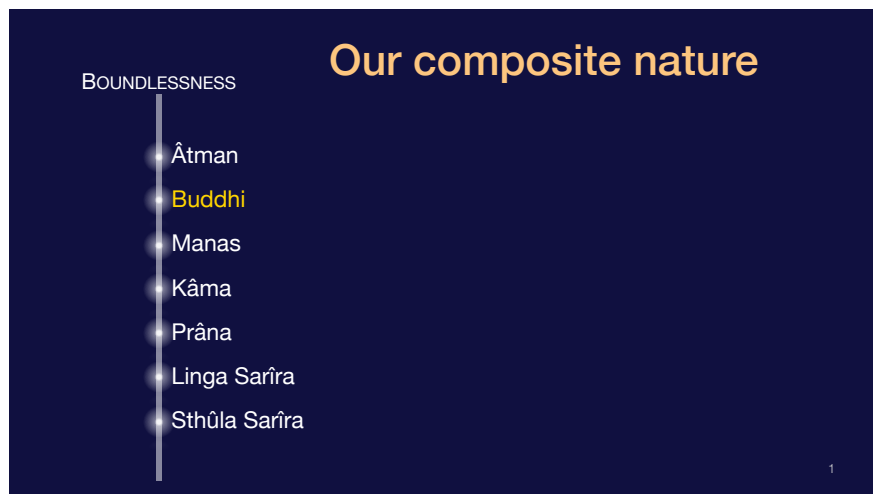
This idea of our composite nature, we always start with the stream of consciousness we essentially are as human beings, infinite in essence, rooted in the boundlessness.

In this stream we can recognize seven levels or *states of consciousness* within ourselves, from the most universal reach, to the most limited (see the first diagram). From Ātman, the Universal SELF, our sense of oneness with the entire universe, to the most limited range of the Stūhla Sarīra, which is our physical body. And everything in between: emotions, desires, visions and ideals that we in our entirety are as a bundle of forces and characteristics. In the diagram we can also see Buddhi located right below Ātman, be-

cause it is our inner wisdom, which allows us to see the unity and inner core in all Life.

This sevenfold division can be simplified to a threefold division with an imperishable (or spiritual) part, a learning, and a transient part (body), of which the learning part is our *human* consciousness, our soul or active mind, by which we express ourselves. Finally, there is another division that Blavatsky also uses, the most basic one of a duality: of the inner and the outer man. The inner, identifying with the imperishable, our immortal reincarnating part, realizing our unity with all life, being selfless and compassionate.

And the outer man who identifies with the transient, physical world, which causes it to feel separated from others, constantly placing itself at the center of all its thoughts, emotions and desires. Blavatsky gives to those two 'selves' in us the terms ACTOR and ROLE, the actor we essentially *are* and the role we *play* as actor. So the actor being the immortal inner man,



playing a new role each life. And just as the actor uses a temporary costume in a play, the inner man uses its personality as the temporary instrument for only this one life (see the second diagram).

Despite the fact that we *are* the actor, merely *playing* a role, we can often still fully identify ourselves with this role. And we do this each time we say 'I' to all our personal emotions, desires and impulses in which we put ourselves central.

But if we, on the other hand, identify with the actor, we say I to our conscience, to our inner wisdom accumulated over lives, our sense of unity, interconnectedness, making us to be forgiving, loving and selfless, without judgment due to our ability to see the inner real potential behind the outer limitations. And it is therefore in this Self of the actor within, to which compassion belongs as a state of consciousness.

So, considering the misunderstandings surrounding compassion, this twofold division is essential to keep in mind. Because when we talk about compassion regarding ourselves, the key question is always, WHICH SELF? the actor we are, or the role we play?

No pity

The first misconception: that compassion is the same as pity. This is not the case. Although you empathize with the other person, when having pity, it stays limited to the emotional plane. You project your own feelings onto the other person's situation, which makes you actually suffer with the other. Using Blavatsky's metaphor, you could say that in playing your role, you empathize with the other person's role, identifying with it, which limits you at that same level.

Compassion transcends the emotional level, because, while you, of course, empathize with the other, being fully aware of his suffering, at the same time you *know* that the other is more than the suffering personality. Because you are able to see the actor, the inner man behind the role, behind the suffering personality. And it is *this part* you connect with, from actor to actor so to speak.

So in case of compassion you do not lose yourself in emotions, but you stay composed and calm focusing on the inner part of the other, that is able to face his suffering. The part in which the *ability and strength* are present to overcome the suffering himself. This is what you appeal to.

Compassion therefore means that you do *not* see the other person *as a victim*, but as someone who is capable of regaining himself. And of course you also give emotional

support, but you do not linger in emotions because the real support is surpassing that level. By transcending the emotion, you help the other to see the cause of the suffering with the inner eye, so he can remove this cause himself.

Not being nice all the time

Being compassionate also does not mean being nice all the time, another misconception concerning compassion. For enabling someone to grow inward, to overcome his own karmic challenges, can sometimes appear to be harsh. Just as it may feel harsh for a child when it is set boundaries, while in fact this is for his own good, enabling it to acquire self-control and selflessness.

In a similar way, compassion is not so much aimed at pleasing the *outer* man, but rather at helping the *inner* man to *master* his own personality.

Blavatsky says in this context that an Adept, a Sage, by his great intuitive ability, *knows* whom to relieve from pain by kindness, and whom to leave in the mire, because at that moment it is his best teacher. That kindness and gentle treatment can in certain cases actually even bring out the worst qualities in someone. So, while not giving in to the desire of the personality may *seem* unkind, the exact opposite is actually true. In fact, there is no greater help possible than to support the inner man with insight to overcome his challenges *himself*. In other words, giving the actor the opportunity to take back control of his role himself.

Not letting others walk over you

Another misunderstanding: compassion meaning being 'a softy', allowing everyone to walk over you. Again, the opposite is true, to stand up for others always and everywhere, without exception, regardless of the consequences for yourself, actually requires enormous inner strength and resilience. To stand up for justice, for those who are oppressed, requires absolute courage. Just think of all the journalists who are currently risking their lives in warzones to expose the truth and injustice to the world. Or the aid workers and medics who risk their own lives to save the lives of others.

If you would ask these people themselves, they often do not consider themselves courageous at all, because to them the choices they make are self-evident. In fact, they often say they *could* not act otherwise, because their sense of justice and compassion is so powerful, that it is stronger than their fear. And this again shows that compassion, as a state of consciousness of the inner man, enables one to forget

himself, to transcend his role and overcome personal fears.

No self-compassion

The last misconception I want to mention is perhaps the most difficult to counter. You hear it so often in society, the idea of ‘self-compassion’. The idea that you have to love yourself first, have compassion for yourself first before you can have it for others. But here again the opposite is true, and I will try to explain why.

First of all, the concept of self-compassion is a contradiction in itself. For if compassion originates in the idea of oneness, thinking and acting for the totality from the sense of oneness, it means by definition that it concerns the totality, a focus on the world around you and *not* on yourself. Of course you are just as much a part of the whole, but to state that you must choose for yourself first is thinking in separateness, and in this regard self-compassion is actually a philosophical incongruity.

This may be a rather theoretical answer however, so let us see where this idea of self-compassion comes from. Here, the metaphor of the actor and the role we play, comes in handy again, for the key to the issue of self-compassion is again: *which self?* The actor we *are*, or the role we *play*?

If we look at where the idea of self-compassion comes from, we see that it is the *personality* that says ‘I’ to the role it plays, continuously judging itself in that role. Criticizing itself, rating itself inadequately, often in relation to social expectations and afraid of not meeting those expectations. The personality continuously puts pressure on itself to perform, to meet a so called ‘perfect image’ (*and* doing a study *and* having that perfect job *and* owning a house *and* showing your perfect life on social media ... etcetera.)

As a counter-reaction of the *personality* to this self-imposed pressure, this self-judgment of ‘not being good enough’, the idea of self-compassion arises. But what happens when, instead of condemning yourself, you start having so-called compassion for yourself? Then *this very same personality remains central*. You keep saying ‘I’ to this illusory role we play, and by doing so, you actually sustain the so called ‘condemner in yourself’.

Instead of sustaining it, you should actually give it no attention at all. Because both negative and positive attention only *reinforce* the personality. So do not judge yourself, do not pat yourself on the shoulder or pity yourself either, but *forget yourself*.

And there is no better way to do this, than changing your attention from a focus on yourself to a focus on the world around you. Find a way how to be meaningful and what

you can do for others. Because the moment you put your self-interest aside for that of others, the personality makes way for the inner actor to take the lead, without judgment and with unconditional Love — including yourself as part of the oneness. And automatically, the condemning and judgemental voice of the personality will disappear.

That is why, in theosophical literature, you find the paradox that you must first *forget yourself in order to find your Self*, with a capital ‘S’. The same idea we find in another quote in the Mahā Chohan letter, saying that: “*All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory apparent self, to recognise our true self in a transcendental divine life*”.⁽¹⁰⁾

However, *for the personality*, this idea of ‘forgetting yourself’, gives an idea of sacrifice, of losing something or having to give something up. But that is only because, from the limited perspective of the role we play, we cannot envision the magnificent wisdom, the all-pervading Love and understanding that will come in its place.

And therefore, I want to show you the following quote from Purucker’s *Golden Precepts of Esotericism* where he shows us this vision, with such power and beauty, because he speaks from his own experience:

Sweet are the fruits of self-forgetfulness — the complete oblivion of your personality in something so beautiful and impersonal that human tongue cannot describe it! For self-forgetfulness, pity, compassion, and peace are the fruits of the Cosmic Harmony, which is the very heart of the Universe.

When you begin to realize this fact, then, within your soul there begins the growth of something which is indescribable, which cannot be expressed in words, but which is at once light, and life, and peace, and wisdom, and almighty Love — impersonal, universal; so that everything that is, everywhere, has a fascination for you, for you love it.⁽¹¹⁾

Becoming more HUMAN

This beautifully shows, that instead of giving up or losing something, we actually become more our Self with a capital ‘S’. Because the moment we expand our consciousness from our limited self to the universal Self, correspondingly this universal part becomes active in us. The more you focus on yourself, the more your consciousness narrows and conceals itself. Just as curtains obscure a room, selfishness obscures our consciousness. And just as light can shine into the room when we open the curtains, selflessness allows the inner light to shine through into ourselves.

Selflessness dissolves the veils of personality, allowing the spiritual influence of our divine nature to enter, making us more Human. Because our human evolution is a spiritual evolution *of consciousness*, of the awakening of our inner faculties, of our divine nature, which expresses itself in all such characteristics as understanding, wisdom, sense of oneness, and unconditional love for all life.

Developing compassion is therefore not just a choice, it is the only way to become fully Human, on our way to Buddhahood. In fact, as long as we do *not* think and act compassionately, we are acting against the natural course of evolution, against *progress*.

Intuitively, we all know this. Everyone knows the feeling of wanting to be meaningful, and to make a useful contribution in life. All the well-known crises that can occur at different times in life, such as *midlife* crisis, 'thirty-something dilemma', *quarterlife* crisis (recently coined), all have one thing in common: they are *existential crises* about *being meaningful*, about the purpose of the role we play as actors in this life. Despite a nice job, or a good salary, we experience an inner emptiness, arising from the realization that there must be more in life.

And the ultimate answer, or cure to all these crises is COMPASSION, devoting yourself to a greater purpose than just yourself. Bringing your talents and qualities to the service of the greater whole of which you are an inseparable part.

Compassion as a way of living

This brings us finally, to the practice of compassion as a way of living, which first and foremost starts with simply applying it, putting it into practice. "*To feel 'compassion' without an adequate practical result ensuing from it is not to show oneself an 'Altruist' but the reverse,*" Blavatsky says.⁽¹²⁾ It is all about what you do and not just what you think. That is why we find the phrase in *The Voice of the Silence*: "*Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself.*"⁽¹³⁾ For you have to be the living example yourself, as in fact holds true for everything. You can learn for example everything about bicycles, all the different parts and how they work, but as long as you have not stepped on a bicycle yourself, you are not able to ride one and you are simply not a cyclist. And this is no different for compassion, you have to apply it, you have to *live* it, in order to be it.

Stages of awakening of the inner God

But just as you start cycling on a tricycle first, compassion is something that develops step by step. In one of her arti-

cles, Blavatsky describes the process of this growing realization of compassion within us. She does so by means of the various stages of the awakening of our inner God, which actually comes down to exact the same thing as the growing awareness of compassion.

In this article she explains that humanity is at the tipping point, having developed the subtleties of his animal nature to their limit, to now come in contact with the divine. So, identifying ourselves more and more with the inner actor instead of the role we play. And she describes the different stages of this transformation, of showing forth the evolution of our Divine quality:

Starting with a selfish person, who, following his animal-like tendencies, is completely focused on himself, not caring about others, but only his own wellbeing. When this person marries and has children, his range already expands to his family for whom he develops compassion. Taking it one step further, this range extends to his friends and relations for whom he feels sympathy, always willing to give a helping hand when needed.

Next, Blavatsky describes a patriot, one who identifies with his country, willing to fight for it, extending his circle to the country's borders, but not yet realizing his connection with inhabitants of other countries.

So far, Blavatsky explains, this expansion of consciousness that is taking place, is still at the level of the *outer man*, because there is still an element of personal affection in it, asserting a form of separateness. Of identifying with a group, however large, but that still does not include all of humanity. It is still the *outer man* who identifies with the *outer form of a group*, and that is where the great danger lies. Because when such a person becomes a fanatic, and out of this fanaticism dedicates himself to his country or his faith, it becomes the very breeding ground for misery, of fighting against 'the other that is not his'.

Blavatsky then continues:

Ascending, however, in the scale of manhood, we come to those who shadow forth the latent God in man in thoughts, words, and deeds of divine self-sacrifice; the prerogative of their God-head first manifesting in acts of real charity, in pity of their suffering fellow-kind, or from an intuitional feeling of duty, the first heralding of accession to divine responsibility, and the realization of the unity of all souls.⁽¹⁴⁾

In other words: beyond the outer form, encompassing the inner side of all life, the *unity of all souls*, the immortal consciousness behind whatever external form. That is true

compassion: without bias, without being selective, but *universal*, encompassing all life.

The choice to work for humanity

And the very moment you make this choice, to dedicate yourself to humanity from this sense of unity, something will happen within yourself. Then, as mentioned before, this divine light begins to shine in you, causing an acceleration of the development of your inner abilities, enabling you to be significantly relevant and meaningful. This expresses itself in two ways: on the one hand, this development of consciousness leads to a growing wisdom, a deeper understanding which enables you to see more clearly *how to be helpful* to others and what your function is in life (the cure for the before-mentioned existential-crises). On the other hand, this expanding consciousness also leads to an increasing range, a growing circle of influence, with a corresponding *increasing number* of people you can help.

It is a gradual process of development in which everyone takes their own unique place. Where we find ourselves on this Path actually does not matter at all, as long as the intention is from the heart, to act and live for the well-being of the whole, without expecting anything in return. That is what really matters. By always asking ourselves in the choices we make in life: what is in the best interest of the greater good? Of course we should not exaggerate in this, but see what we can do, gradually and steadily progressing, trying to do a little better each time.

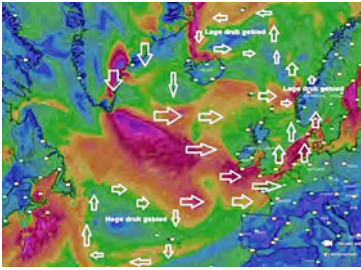
And the actual strength to persevere, lies in the realization that compassion, as has become clear by now, is not a vague wish; not some unachievable ideal; not just a nice quality that some have and others do not, but that *compassion is our deepest essence*, a divine state of consciousness, which we are learning to express more and more.

Therefore, compassion as a universal way of living is in fact the *most natural* thing there is.

It is the development of inner strength that is being released when we forget ourselves in the service of the well-being of the totality. An inner strength that transcends all personal challenges and limitations, and of which the “reward”, as Blavatsky said, “is beyond all description”, that is: “*the power to bless and save humanity*”.⁽¹⁵⁾

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Not only are there high- and low-pressure areas in the physical atmosphere on Earth, there are all kinds of currents in the Astral Light that arise from mental high- and low-pressure areas.

Key thoughts

» Zeitgeist: a reservoir of ideas that prevails in an era. Thoughts can spread quickly and form a mental network: the mental climate.

» The Astral Light is an etheric world or sphere which lies just 'above' the world perceived by us sensually. It is the mold of the entire physical world. There are many layers in the Astral Light, such as the world of feelings, of desire, the mental realm and even a spiritual part of this lower world. In the mental sub-realm there are all kinds of thoughts varying in quality. If you are not a master of your thinking, you are flooded with mental thought images.

» A small group of benevolent and selfless people can build up a noble higher mental realm through their thinking, which can exert great influence.

The climate of thought

The cosmic and individual image gallery

There are those who are so afraid of the warming climate that they believe humanity has no future. But there are almost no people who worry about the thinking climate. We don't want to trivialize global warming, but an even bigger problem than the changing climate is the pollution of our thinking climate. What can we do about it?

Many people are concerned about current events that are occurring at breakneck speed. There is stirring in all areas: the economy, politics, the climate, the refugee issue, and especially war. I think few people are satisfied with the current zeitgeist.

Zeitgeist means a way of thinking that is in vogue. It is the thoughts that the majority of people tend to think. It is a reservoir of ideas that colors a particular era. Few people wonder where the thoughts that define our era come from. It seems like many people undergo these thoughts the way we undergo a storm or a heat wave. The zeitgeist, however, is not a phenomenon outside of us that just falls out of the sky. If you want to know where it does come from, you have to dwell on what thoughts are.

According to Theosophy, thoughts are real things, living things. They exist. They are as real as atoms, cells or molecules. And just as a certain number of atoms in cooperation under a guiding influence of a tree-being can form a tree, so a large number of thoughts can form something as real as a tree. And when those thoughts

reflect the general characteristic of an era, we speak of the zeitgeist. You could also call it the current, dominant climate of thought, which is as real as the physical climate that we worry so much about.

We're going to explain this.

Thinking climate

When Helena Petrovna Blavatsky stepped ashore in New York in 1873, she uttered the famous words, "I have come to break the thought molds of men." By this she meant to break open the patterns of thought ingrained in people's minds. Human thinking habits had taken a deep track, were galvanized into consciousness. They were so stuck in a rut that new thoughts, more in tune with reality, became very difficult to think and take root. There was no room for this, so to speak.

The emerging materialistic thinking and church dogmas were dominant in the 19th century. They largely determined the thinking of the majority of people. In the zeitgeist of those days, war was normal and useful, women and workers had few or no

rights, one's own religion and civilization were elevated above those of others, and bourgeois morals were so stifling that hardly anyone deviated from them.

But how do you break habits, or rather thoughts, for they underlie habits? Anyone who has ever tried to change a particular habit within themselves knows how difficult this can be. So how can you change world thinking?

Let us answer this question first in the negative: you do not break habits by achieving change at the level of habits. As mentioned, thoughts underlie habits. And changing thoughts is not easy. Just try quit smoking or drinking coffee. You will not succeed sustainably until you stop thinking thoughts of cigarettes or coffee.

Thoughts are living beings

As mentioned, thoughts are really existing things. They are not merely streams in our brains. The fact that we cannot perceive them should no longer be an obstacle to assuming that thoughts are real things. Nowadays, we accept the existence of many things that we cannot perceive directly without the aid of instruments. And starting from the theosophical principle that everything that exists, everything that is manifested, is consciousness, it is in line with the expectation that thoughts are living beings.

Like other living beings, thoughts are born, have a certain character, can grow in strength and die again. Thoughts always exist in relation to a thinking faculty, for example that of a human being, the human thinking consciousness. This acts as a transmitter and receiver. When you think a thought, you send out a thought impulse, which someone else, provided he is on the same 'thought frequency', can receive.

This allows thoughts, like viruses or bacteria, to spread. And just as these germs can only settle in a human being if he is susceptible to them, that is, if his 'receiver' is tuned to them, so thoughts can only be received if human consciousness provides the suitable 'ground' for it.

A selfless man will never be able to host a thought that urges him to cheat his fellow man. And a cunning villain will never be able to host a compassionate thought unless, because of some incident, he focuses on a nobler part of his consciousness. Indeed, change of mind is always possible. However, this is not easy because like any living being, thoughts manifest themselves cyclically. Once you have thought a thought, it comes back to you cyclically. It is born again in you cyclically. Anyone who studies his own thought life closely will agree.

Because most people are diffuse, largely unconscious

thinkers, and do not, or poorly control or direct their thinking apparatus, certain thoughts can spread across greater groups of people at lightning speed. Modern (social) media plays an important role in this.

The Astral Light

Now man is not a *creator* of thoughts, at least not in the sense of making something out of nothing. All thoughts already exist.

There is nothing new under the sun. All possible thought images are printed in what is called the Astral Light.

To picture the Astral Light, you must realize that the cosmos is much more than what we can sense, even with the most advanced scientific instruments. The cosmos, containing suns and planets, such as our sun and earth, is made up of different worlds or spheres, all of which in turn are subdivided into sub-worlds and those again into sub-sub-worlds, and so on.

The Astral Light is a world of the lowest or coarsest realm, which is just 'above' the world perceived by our senses. The preposition 'above' should not be taken literally, for all the sub-areas pervade each other. The Astral Light can be imagined as different energies that surround and permeate the entire physical world, the stars, planets, yes, every atom. Compare it to electromagnetic fields that completely permeate each other. For example, radio traffic covers a very greater range of all kinds of frequencies, which pass through each other. A receiver catches that frequency to which it is tuned.

There are many layers in Astral Light. There is a world of feelings, a world of desire, a mental world. And these worlds again are divided into all kinds of sub-areas, different in quality.

The higher regions of the Astral Light are more refined and noble. They gradually merge into the spiritual worlds, which are made up of *Ākāśa*. *Ākāśa* is described as the refined, supersensory spiritual essence that pervades all space. The lower parts of the Astral Light, which are close to the earthly, are polluted by all kinds of earthly mental excrescences. Our physical world is the lower layer, the lees or dregs of the astral realm.

The Astral Light is the place or area where thought images are built up and stored. So it is the repository of all the thoughts we think and that have been thought in the past. It is therefore called a picture gallery. Every deed we do and every thought we think finds its origin there and leaves an impression there, about the same way a photographic plate captures images. Because all our deeds are

recorded in it, it is closely related to karma, cause and effect.⁽¹⁾

It is the lower part of the astral realm that can explain so many physical and psychological mysteries. If our physicists and psychologists assumed it, they could achieve interesting discoveries and make greater strides in their scientific work.

Because the Astral Light is the repository of all that has taken place, scientific, philosophical or religious ideas of long-forgotten civilizations can be retrieved from it, if we tune into the right frequency. Thus it may happen that two people living in different places, independently of each other, make the same invention. However, it is not an invention but a discovery – you take the cover off – for it already existed, albeit invisible to most of us. After all, Columbus didn't invent America either!

The antenna of our thinking

As mentioned, the astral realm consists of many layers, from the very gross to the spiritual. So the astral picture gallery contains an unimaginable amount of pictures for us. Yet you should not imagine it as an immense, dusty filing cabinet, because there is constant interaction between the astral realm and our visible world.

We have already said that our thinking faculty can be conceived as a transmitter-receiver. You could also compare the sensitivity of thinking to the antenna of the transmitter-receiver. Do we focus our antenna on the more elevated pictures from the higher layers of the astral, or do we allow ourselves to be influenced by the close-to-earth regions, where all the lower qualities of thought reside. When we direct our antenna to a particular mental image, we are in fact bringing that image into ourselves, exactly as you bring in a movie that a television station is broadcasting on your own television set. Which movie you want to watch is not determined by the channels. That choice is up to us.

Our own picture gallery

We can take this comparison even further: man himself is a miniature gallery of pictures, which, like the cosmic gallery of pictures, has many layers and sub-layers.

With our consciousness we constantly dwell in the astral region. Virtually our entire constitution is part of it, just as a fish is part of the sea. We are inundated by emotional, mental and hopefully spiritual waves. All our thoughts come to us via and through the Astral Light.

When our mind makes contact with an astral image, it

makes an impression in our consciousness. It makes a local copy, adding a 'picture' to our individual gallery. But because we are transmitter and receiver, we also immediately broadcast that picture again, but with the coloring we have given it ourselves. Another human being can take that thought image back to himself, including the imprinted stamp on it. This can, but need not happen immediately. It may happen only after a year, or perhaps, several centuries. That depends on when someone else tunes into that frequency.

It may also be that such a picture from the mental part of the Astral Light is attractive to many thinkers and spreads to millions of people at breakneck speed. Larger groups of people are thus influenced by these mental images. Then we speak of the *zeitgeist*.

Of course, no one is doomed to tune into anything. But because many are unself-conscious thinkers and do not point their thinking antenna at a point they self-consciously choose – the selectivity of their antenna is not greater – they usually catch the images that are 'in vogue,' that is, what large groups of people focus on. Many people are not powerful thinkers. Their 'antenna' is blown in a different direction by every mental wind. Fashions and trends often follow each other extremely fast.

Streams of thought

In the astral world there are all kinds of qualitatively different streams of thought. These are not necessarily always necessarily good or bad. You could imagine, for example, a thought stream of chess players. All kinds of chess games and tactical moves are contemplated, forming a stream of ideas that have something to do with this sport of thought. Although chess players are known as calm people, strong emotions, turbulences in their thinking can also be recognized. Those emotions can make that flow unsettled and perhaps even murky.

Just as in the earth's (physical) atmosphere there are high-pressure and low-pressure areas, through which winds can carry heat, cold, rain or dryness from one place to another, so in the Astral Light you have all kinds of currents created by mental high-pressure and low-pressure areas.

The Mahātma Letters talk about these thought currents. In a letter, one of the chelas (disciples) of Master K.H. writes to A.P. Sinnett, that the Master himself cannot write a letter at this time because he does not want to expose himself to a stream of thought from beyond Himavat.⁽²⁾ Himavat literally means the 'snowy one'. It refers to the Himalayas. A stream of thought from beyond Himavat is therefore a

quantity of worldly thoughts, which would interfere with the super-spiritual contemplations in which the Master was engrossed at that particular moment.

We also know something like this: you are occupied with a metaphysical book or a spiritual issue. At that moment you cannot concern yourself with the gutter leaking. Or if you are going to participate in a theosophical workshop, just before it begins, it is not wise to focus your thoughts on an argument with your colleagues that has gotten out of hand. In fact, you are closing yourself off from one stream of thought and focusing on another.

Very often, however, we fail to do that. We have too little control over our thinking. The Masters, on the other hand, can self-consciously attune themselves to any stream of thought they need at any given moment.

In another letter, Mahātma K.H. speaks of a northern stream of thought. The instance is humorous and instructive. K.H. had quoted the 19th-century poet Tennyson in a letter, without wondering where these lines of poetry came from. He had plucked them from Astral Light. He says he never forgets what he has seen once. He can pick words from the Astral Light from a distant past or that will only be spoken in the future.

Sinnett was a connoisseur of Tennyson's poetry, but could not find the words in question anywhere. Until years later, he found a small volume of the poet's work, never included in his Collected Works, which contained the poem in question. The Master had found it in a northern stream of thought, and because it expressed exactly the thoughts he wanted to communicate to Sinnett, he used it, without wondering where those words had come from.⁽³⁾

If you think about this further, you also understand that for the Masters there is no such concept as plagiarism. No one can claim ownership of a particular thought or on its wording. Thoughts belong to us all, just as the air belongs to us all.

Pool of thoughts

The Masters can consciously focus on a stream of thought, but most people are not yet able to do so, or not enough. If you cannot control your thinking, then you are like a

swimmer in a pool of thoughts. Sometimes one wave comes over you, then another. Especially when greater numbers of people set a particular wave in motion, many can be affected by it. Sometimes such a wave is extensive and has a lasting character. This is referred to as the prevailing 'spirit of the age', which we call the zeitgeist.

People often live under the assumption that the thoughts they think come from their own brains, but it is mostly the turbulent waves of the thought pool in which they swim that wash through their thinking faculties. And every thought that they catch and to which they pay attention, they give extra energy and thus transmit back amplified and colored, making the wave even more powerful than it already was. In other words, these are powerful pictures in the Astral Light that leave an impression on the thinking consciousness of these unselfconscious thinkers,

who believe that they have invented or created these thoughts themselves.

Note: this need not be the case. First, you must realize that you are voluntarily moving into a certain layer in the Astral Light. This need not always be thoughtful, but you are opening yourself to cer-

tain thoughts. No one is forcing you to go into regions polluted by earthly washouts. If you don't, you also don't open yourself to the impressions of that area. But even if you do, it is wise to quickly realize its illusory nature, so that you will forget those images more easily.

To make a comparison: if you never watch horror movies, you need not fear that those images will linger in your consciousness. But if, unexpectedly, you do get to see images of such films, you can use your critical faculty to appreciate the impressions and not let them affect you. But better, of course, is not to receive such impressions at all.

Interpretation of astral images

Above we said that the Astral Light has many qualitatively different layers or worlds. The unselfconscious thinker has no idea in which layers he dwells with his thinking. These need not always be impure realms. A daydreamer may be completely absorbed in a certain dreamy mental sphere.



Yet unselfconscious thinking can cause a lot of problems, because if you think like that, you can easily 'get lost' in the lower, illusory parts of the Astral Light. And there is nothing so illusory as the astral images.

However, we can see through the illusory nature of the gallery of pictures. We could know that these astral images are the 'tablet of memory' of animal man, as H.P. Blavatsky calls it.⁽⁴⁾ We might as well dwell in the 'tablet of memory' of the higher part of the astral realm, *Ākāśa*. There we find the spiritual images, which of course have an entirely different characteristic. *Ākāśa* is the transcendent spiritual essence that pervades the whole space. Astral Light is simply its dregs.

It is not without reason that Helena Blavatsky speaks of *animal man* taking impressions from the astral, for animals too perceive these images. Of course, their interpretation of their perception is entirely different from that of humans. They have not yet developed thinking and therefore cannot critically evaluate those images or discuss them with each other. They react instinctively to what they perceive.

This can be used to explain numerous things in the animal world. For example, it has been found that animals were already leaving a forest hours before a fire broke out. They must have received that information earlier. Where else could that be from but the Astral Light, which after all also contains the impressions from the past that lead to events that have yet to occur?

Every dog lover must have noticed something like this at one time or another. The moment the owner thinks 'I'm going to walk my dog,' while he does not yet give any physical sign that he is going to do so, the dog already starts pacing back and forth restlessly or stands at the door. Babies, too, in whom thinking has not yet settled in, if at all, are sensitive to astral images. We once heard the story of a mother who went for a walk with her baby in the stroller. Every time she came to a certain place, the baby began to cry, much to the mother's surprise. Until she found out, that on that spot had once stood a slaughterhouse. The slaughtering of the thousands of animals, which is obviously an extremely sad state of affairs, left a deep impression in the lower part of the Astral Light, causing the sensitive baby to cry every time she came to that place.

The polluted climate of thought

This last incident clearly shows how the thinking climate can act on us. It may be confrontational to say, but many

of us are like that baby who, without knowing or understanding, takes impressions from the Astral Light and reacts to them. Usually we react not like that baby by crying, but by allowing those thought images into our thinking and fitting them into our own mindset - our individual gallery of pictures - assuming they are our own thoughts. It is these myriad thoughts of animal-human quality that we consider important. And because we broadcast the thoughts we have gathered, we help ensure that the thinking climate is permeated with these animal-human thoughts.

The craving for luxury, the selfish pursuit of fulfilling every personal desire, the aggression and contempt toward others, the idea that we need to arm ourselves more and better -- it is these kinds of thoughts, in thousands of different variations, that are sucked in by thinking powers. Neither the materialistic philosophy that claims that you only live once, nor the Christian doctrine that we can enter heaven after death, can provide a protective counterbalance to these mud waves polluted by selfishness. On the contrary, they only reinforce this kind of thinking.

The climate of thought is polluted because the essential meaning and purpose of life has been lost for many. Philosophers cannot offer hope and perspective. Religions have lost much of their influence, and if there is any influence left, it is often negative. Lacking a philosophy of life that satisfies heart and head, there is little or no basis for ethics. It is selfishness that rules the roost.

Countries focus on the national interest. Violence and power politics are perceived as normal, even inevitable and necessary. All these kinds of thoughts pollute the lower regions of the Astral Light and thus influence others. It seems to be a vicious circle.

Changing the climate of thought

However, it is not. At least it doesn't have to be. Man has free will. And although you can constrain that free will by always making choices in a certain direction, there is always the possibility to change course. We humans create the atmosphere of thought ourselves and can therefore change that atmosphere ourselves. Just as a painter can paint over a painting, we can change the atmosphere of thought. Every brushstroke is one; every thought gives a certain hue.

It is essential to know this, otherwise we would be under the illusion that things will always remain as they are now. This gives food for pessimism, passivity and indifference to the state of the world. Who is going to try to change

himself and the world if he thinks such a thing has no chance of success?

Perhaps the most important teaching of Theosophy is that every being – including every human being – is essentially divine. Within our consciousness are all the faculties by which we can change ourselves and the world. And although it is undoubtedly a difficult and arduous task, any sincere effort will bear fruit, even if we do not see immediate results.

This knowledge makes us aware of our responsibility for the climate of thought. We must not hide behind the fact that many world citizens put themselves and their country first, thus obviously shortchanging everyone else. Humanity constitutes a unity. Every human being is part of that unity. Any impersonal thought will change the thinking climate, obviously to a limited extent. The only instrument to change the thinking climate is our own thinking.

We do not change it by complaining about it, criticizing it or fighting against it. That is wasted energy. By doing so, you only reinforce the selfish ideas of thought. Fighting against ideas, is food for those ideas, because even with negative attention you feed thoughts.

Better to be a paragon of compassion, kindness and calmness. If you allow nothing to disturb you in your impersonal ideal, you contribute more to an ennobling climate of thought than you may suspect yourself.

But even greater is that influence if you do it collectively.

Core of Universal Brotherhood

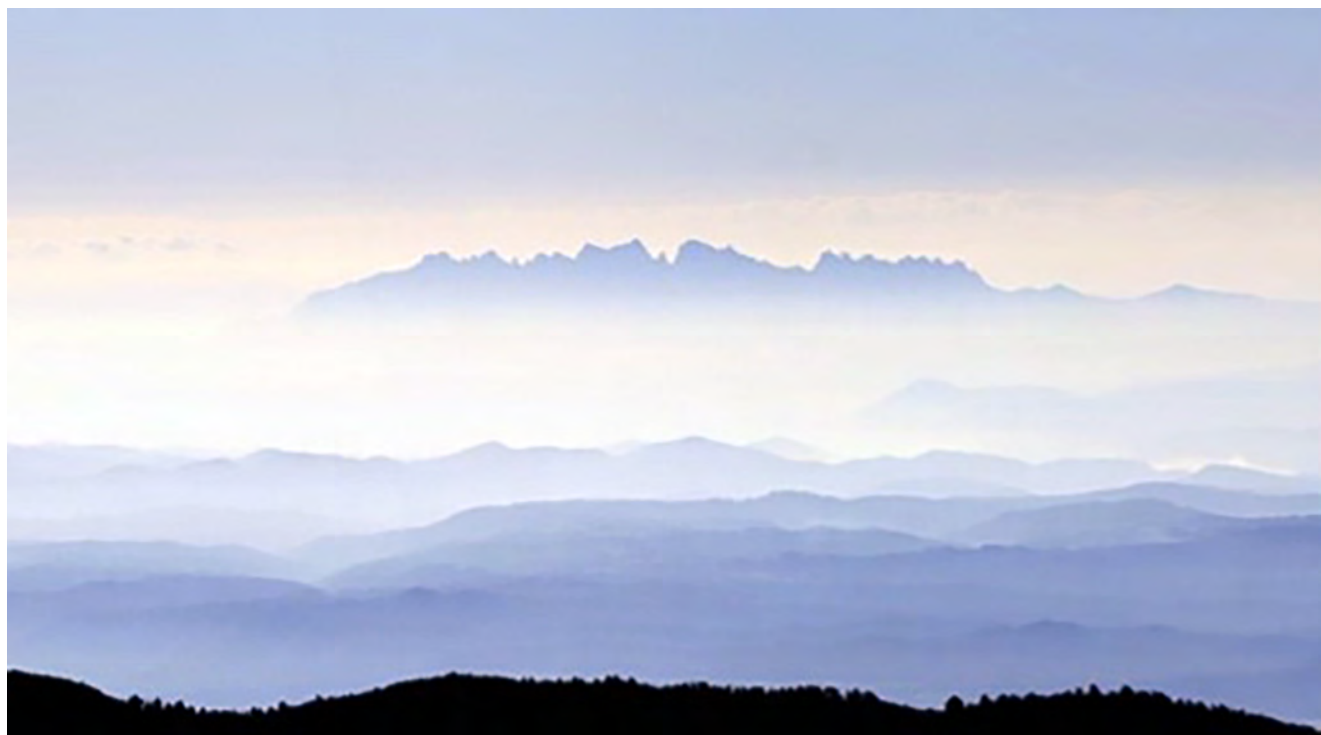
Kind seeks kind. If someone develops a mindset like the one described above, he cannot help but come into contact with people who have such a similar attitude to life. Then it is necessary to leave behind the personal and unite with others; first and foremost in spirit. A small group of highly motivated people can achieve a lot.

Some of us have had the experience of visiting a family, or joining a new department at work, or joining whatever group of people, and immediately experiencing a benevolent atmosphere. 'It was like coming into a warm bath, it felt so nice,' you'll hear them say. Often they don't even know what makes it so. It doesn't have to be because of the decor of the house. That same feeling can arise even in a poor environment.

What is it, then?

It is the thinking atmosphere that such a group of people exudes. As a result, you immediately feel at home. More importantly, you focus almost automatically on the more noble aspects of your own consciousness that correspond to that atmosphere. Certain personal and unsympathetic traits that still sometimes come up, are irradiated by impersonal ideas that evoke such an atmosphere.

In the early 20th century, the headquarters of The Theosophical Society was located in Point Loma, California. Hundreds of adults and children lived there. And the atmosphere was such that the visitors who came there not only sensed it, but were inspired by it. To cite merely one



example, the writer Talbot Mundy wrote many novels, but his best book was written when he stayed in Point Loma.⁽⁵⁾

Now the influence that a close-knit group of benevolent people exerts on the climate of thought is not hindered by the physical location where they are. Images of the astral realm can be reached from anywhere on earth. Nor do these core members of the Universal Brotherhood have to belong to the same club or live in the same city. They find each other in their thinking.

Such a small group of selfless people, motivated to ennoble the climate of thought, is capable of more than a larger group of half-motivated people, in whom the personal element still often plays a role. Their influence will be all the greater if they can show with arguments and examples the spiritual nature of the cosmos, and of man as a child of the cosmos. In Theosophy we find teachings that give heart, head and mood peace.

It is for this reason that Theosophical teachers were never concerned with the quantity of their students, but with the quality. And by 'quality' we certainly do not mean whether they understood well the sometimes difficult 'technical' teachings of Theosophy, but whether they applied its ethical conclusions in life.

A few impersonal people, willing to roll up their sleeves, can cover the thinking climate of the whole world. It is a few grains of salt that can change the taste of the soup. Or as William Q. Judge put it:

If we had five hundred members in the Society loving one another with true hearts, not criticizing nor condemning, and all bent on one aim with one belief, we could sweep the whole world with our thoughts.⁽⁶⁾

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Astrology: the kosmic key actors

Part 2 of the astrology series

This is the second article in a series on the *background* of astrology. In this article we give a description of the astrological key actors, seen from the basic idea of Theosophy: Unity. This means that each being is an expression, a reflection of a Boundless Life Principle.

Key thoughts

» Every being is a child of the Kosmos and therefore contains within itself all the potentialities and characteristics of the Kosmos, and has unfolded them to a certain level. The Kosmic forces can be distinguished into twelve different characteristics.

» We humans live and evolve within the force field of a number of kosmic beings. We are attracted to their sphere because *here* we find the possibilities for evolution appropriate to our character.

» Important astrological key actors are; the celestial zodiac, the Solar being, the twelve sacred planets and the planetary being Earth. Each being has its own zodiac.

The 'why' of kosmic influences

In this article we build on the first article in this series, which appeared in the previous issue of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*.⁽¹⁾ In this first article we explained what astrology is and made a sharp distinction between the original esoteric and today's commonly known astrology. We also addressed the relationship between astrology and astronomy and outlined in very broad terms the 'how' and 'why' of astrological influences.

We sketched a general picture in that first article. You can give the more detailed elaborations provided in this and the next articles their proper place within that general picture.

As a reminder, we briefly touch upon the basic ideas of that general picture. To begin with: there is one unlimited Life principle, an unlimited Ocean of Being. It is the essential Unity of all that exists. (See the first fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*, which you can read on the inside cover of this issue.) This Unity expresses itself in an enormous diversity

of living beings. All these beings can exist only thanks to that Unity and therefore thanks to each other. For this reason, the Kosmos can be seen as a great living organism.

Further: all beings, as parts of the unity, are indissolubly *connected*, so that any action of any being logically affects the whole unity. The corollary is that all beings are in constant interaction with each other — more or less intense.

We also mentioned the unique character of each being. This explains why, say, Jupiter emanates another influence than Mercury. Remember that planets are living beings. And, very important for us humans: that only *those* kosmic forces act on us (effect us) which have similar characteristics with *our* consciousness. In short, it depends on ourselves — on the specific characteristics we have built up — how strongly some influence affects us: greatly, weakly or hardly at all. In addition, we noted that we humans fundamentally have free will, within the capabilities we have developed as conscious beings.

“The stars incline but do not compel”, is an old and true saying. The choice is always ours: do we try to control these kosmic influences or not? Do we try to use them for the benefit of our fellow humans or not? This is a very important question for us all.

Finally, we addressed the question: what is the usefulness that astrology has or *could* have?

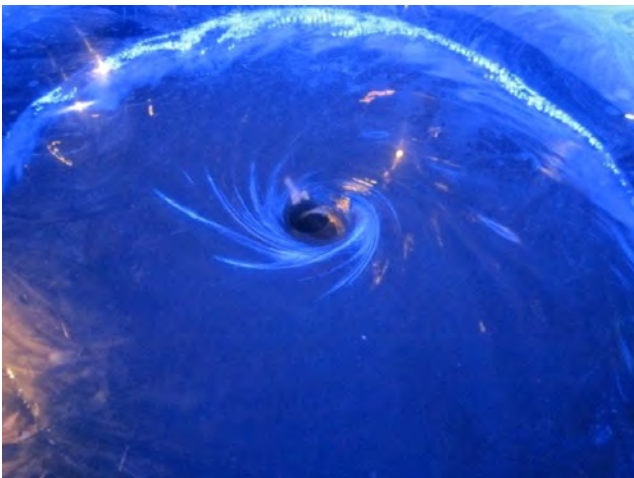
The place of this article in the article series

This article is about the different kosmic beings within the ordered structure of the kosmos, which exert the most powerful influences on our planet Earth and all its inhabitants: the ‘astrological key actors’ *for us*.

What do we mean when we call planets and stars ‘living beings’? The more you understand that, the more you will understand these key actors themselves: the celestial zodiac, our Solar system with its Sun, and its planets.

In the next articles we will address the following questions, among others:

- What *are* kosmic influences and why do we experience periodic changes in them?
- What is the explanation for horoscopes?
- What valuable ethical lessons can we draw from astrology?



Each entity is like a whirlpool in the boundless ocean of life.

What is ‘a being’?

We already said: all beings flow from a Boundless Life principle. That is the first fundamental proposition of Theosophy. On this rest all the insights of Theosophy. However great external differences may be, the core or heart of every being is an eternal, boundless principle. We are therefore all parts of a unity that knows no dividing lines or boundaries. We cannot step out of that unity!

After all, we cannot step out of ourselves. Whichever space voyages we may undertake, we always take ourselves with us.

So what is a ‘being’, an ‘entity’? What are we ourselves? We are, expressed in symbolic language, a spark of the ‘boundless fire’, or, when we take another symbol, a whirlpool in an immeasurable ocean of life. What we mean by this is that each being is a ‘contraction’, a ‘concentration’ or ‘condensation’ of those fundamental endless potencies. Therefore, every being contains within itself *all the possibilities that boundless Life contains within itself*. After all, a spark is not essentially different from the fire, and a drop of water is not different from the ocean.

And further: it implies that we are the Whole and are therefore connected to all other beings. We cannot exist apart from the Whole. No being stands alone, separate from others. Because of this unity, all living beings interact with each other. This constant response to other beings and being the object of the response of other beings, is the basic characteristic of all life.⁽²⁾

Clearly, a being is much more than its outer body. Bodies are born and die, and then are rebuilt in the next cycle of life. Whereas every being is timeless in its core. It has always been there and will always be there. Its true, permanent core is the force that works through its entire being and therefore also through its body.

So what are we humans? We *are* centers of life, consciousness and intelligence — and periodically *have* a body to work through during our embodiments. And we build that body each time from less evolved beings, with whom we enter into collaboration: ranging from our thoughts to the atomic beings of our body. The same is true of the planets and stars we see in the firmament, as above, so below. They are celestial consciousnesses enveloped in a celestial body. And we can only understand something about a planet or star, if we know something about the type of consciousness that it has.

Every being develops its inherent potentialities

These thoughts lead to some clear conclusions. One is: we all carry limitless potentialities within us, as children of the ‘boundless’. We develop these gradually, life after life. The worlds in which we live, the beings with whom we interact (including the planets and Sun and zodiac!), give us the stimuli through which we can awaken our still dormant faculties, and finally learn to use them. All these stimuli give us *the opportunity* to become wiser. It depends on our

choices whether we seize these opportunities, whether we learn from what is happening around us and to us. We ourselves determine how quickly we learn.

Does that path of consciousness expansion ever end? No, that follows logically from everything we said. And this explains the fact that the beings in the kosmos exist in vastly different stages of development. Just compare the unself-conscious, instinctive and docile consciousness of a chemical atom or molecule with the consciousness of a human being – who is now unfolding his thinking faculty with all the responsibilities this entails – and compare our range of consciousness with that of a cosmic buddha, who is even many steps wiser and more responsible than the noblest human being we can imagine: a human ‘buddha’. In fact, the consciousness of a planetary, solar and galactic being is unimaginable to us. How difficult it is already for us to imagine the range of consciousness of a human buddha. A Solar being is even more universal and vast in consciousness.



The tree of life.

And yet ... however advanced they may be, we can develop their level of consciousness too! This is an inspiring thought. Every human being carries within him the capacities to grow into a planetary being and then into a Solar being and then even further.

The life cycles are also different in cosmic beings. Their embodied periods last much longer than ours. For example, one outer life of a planetary being lasts several billion human years. Only then does his death, his periodic rest

period, begin. The outer life of a Solar being lasts much longer still. According to ancient Indian writings, the latter involves a number of years expressed as a fifteen-digit number.

What is the structure of the Kosmos?

The key actors are integral parts of the very orderly structure of the kosmos. This raises the question: how then is the kosmos constructed? It is constructed like any other being within the kosmos, namely: *hierarchically*. To give an example, the Milky Way entity radiates a sphere of influence (called ‘emanation’), in which countless stars and planets in the Milky Way can live their lives. Each star does the same, and within its sphere large numbers of planets find their suitable place for their evolution. Each planet in turn, through emanation, creates the ‘ambiance’, the ‘sphere of life’, for a large number of mineral, vegetable, animal, human and divine beings. And so we can go on, for each of these beings does the same thing in miniature: just think of the organ beings and cell beings who, within our sphere of influence, build our physical bodies.

In other words, each being is a part, a living organ of a greater being, and its body is itself composed of less developed beings. Here the old adage applies: *as above, so below*. The hierarchical structure of the kosmos is also represented as a ‘tree of life’. The source are its roots. Therefore, this tree of life is often depicted upside down, rooted in the boundless Kosmos. From it arises one trunk, which gives birth to many thick branches, each of which gives birth to many small branches, and so on, down to the twigs and leaves.

It is an image to contemplate at length. The more advanced beings need the less advanced, and vice versa.

High and low, low and high, work together allowing all to develop. High and low are relative. Compared to some beings we are, in terms of consciousness, ‘high’; compared to others, on the contrary, ‘low’. Everything supports everything, or rather should, because, as we said earlier, there is free will. We can also lose sight of the fact of universal brotherhood, if we focus on our own desires.

Every being fundamentally the same constructed

Another conclusion we can draw from the fact that every being emerges from a ‘unity that contains everything’, is that every being possesses the same cosmic faculties and ‘levels of consciousness’. As above, so below. However, the

degree of *unfolding* of those same faculties can, of course, vary immensely.

Now what are those aspects or faculties inherent in the consciousness of every being? It is a range ('ladder') of levels of consciousness that runs *from the relatively most divine to the relatively most physical*, that is, till our physical faculties as the most material part. In short, from the most spiritual *for us*, along several intermediate steps of decreasing etheric nature, to the most material *for us*. It is a hierarchy 'in scope of consciousness'. The divine in us has the greatest range of consciousness, the physical the most restricted, material range.

So every being, whether we are talking about a star or firefly, a sequoia or alga, is analogously constructed, in line with the thoughts above. This leads to the conclusion that *in principle* exchange (communication, mutual influence) is possible between *all* beings. In practice, of course, there are always limitations, because each being is a limited, growing being. It has its own character with a limited 'antenna' and limited 'transmission range'.

The aspects of consciousness

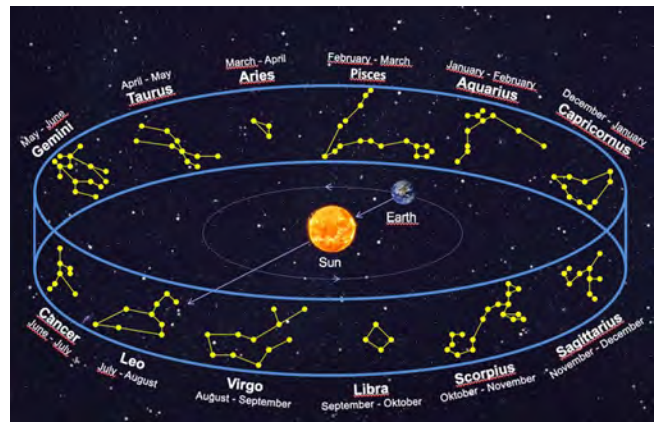
How many of these aspects of consciousness are there? We can give a simple threefold picture by saying that every being is 'spirit-soul-body'. You can also refine the picture, by making more precise distinctions: then you speak for example of four or five or seven or even twelve levels of consciousness within a being. In this article we use the twelvefold division, because it corresponds to the twelvefold zodiac, to the twelve fundamental kosmic characteristics. But the sevenfold classification is also used very often in the theosophical literature.

These aspects or characteristics are not to be seen as separate things, but are like the facets of *one* gemstone: the one underlying Life that expresses itself in diversity.

Our consciousness is constantly radiating forces. Since we carry twelve aspects of consciousness within us, we therefore emit forces of all twelve types. But only one of them dominates in us: that is the keynote of our self-created character. We will return to this when discussing the different zodiacs.

The celestial zodiac

With the insights mentioned above, we can come to a deeper understanding of the celestial zodiac, the Sun, the planets and ourselves, and the intensive collaboration between all of them. We start with the most kosmic beings: the celestial zodiac. What do we mean by that?



The celestial zodiac.

Gottfried de Purucker describes the celestial zodiac as follows.⁽³⁾ It consists of twelve groups of stars located around our Solar System, roughly in the same plane in which all the planets move around the Sun (the plane of the 'ecliptic'). Each group is composed of closely cooperating stars, i.e., solar *beings*. These twelve groups of stars form a kind of band or circle around the solar system. 'Zodiac' is a Greek name and means 'circle of beings'. Each group is known as a 'sign' or 'constellation'. They are generally known: Aries, Taurus, and so on. We will call it constellations here, a word that comes from Latin and means 'collection or association of stars'. The term 'sign' we will reserve for the earthly zodiac (see below).

Our Sun and all other beings within the solar system have established a close relationship with these twelve constellations throughout time. When our Solar being was born, it was drawn to this location within the Milky Way, within exactly that circle of stars.

Each of the individual stars of the zodiac, of course, has its own individual character. But each *group* of star beings has a specific character too. We all recognize this: that in one family there is a different atmosphere than in another. Or, another example, one school has a different characteristic than another. This principle also applies to each constellation of the zodiac. Each group has its own dominant characteristic, namely, one of the twelve kosmic characteristics. *Together they represent all twelve kosmic characteristics.* And they emit these characteristic forces continuously.

And because each constellation functions as a focal point that transforms one of the twelve kosmic influences to our solar system, they are the necessary link between us and the rest of the kosmos.

In fact, there are not twelve but only six different kosmic forces. But each of these forces is bipolar: a more elevated spiritual pole and a lower material pole. Each has a 'plus

and minus side', so to speak (by which we do not mean a positive or negative judgment!). And that, as a whole, yields twelve different foci.

The names of the zodiac

The names of these constellations are culture-dependent. In earlier times, therefore, they had different names. Each name has a symbolic meaning, meant to give a hint about its own characteristic. Let us give two examples from the Western zodiac. For example, Libra represents a characteristic that tends toward harmony, and Aries represents a characteristic that tends toward action, toward trying things out and starting things up. So, these names were not given because the star groups in question closely resembled a scale or ram. In fact, honestly speaking, it is difficult to recognize a scale or ram shape in them, unless you start adding all kinds of elements to them in your imagination.

How old are the names of the twelve constellations? Most of them are many thousands of years old. We find some names already in ancient India, Babylonia and ancient Egypt. But there are, as mentioned, also cultural differences; after all, there are not ibexes in every country to serve as examples. In ancient India, the constellation Capricorn was called 'Makara', a kind of crocodile, a kind of amphibious creature. Ancient Chinese cultures chose totally other images and names.⁽⁴⁾

What role does the celestial zodiac fulfill?

Our entire solar system evolves *within* the twelve zodiacal spheres of influence, as mentioned above. What role does the celestial zodiac fulfill during the evolution of the solar system? Its influence is very great.⁽⁵⁾ In fact, the entire evolutionary course of our solar system, *as far as its principle patterns and processes are concerned*, is laid down in the zodiac. The growth cycles of the Solar System align with those of the celestial zodiac. And since the growth cycles of

the planet Earth align with those of the Sun, they naturally do so with those of the zodiac as well. As a matter of fact, we are told that only very high initiates can truly understand these kosmic processes.⁽⁶⁾

In short, the zodiac consists of twelve groups of stars that can be seen as focal points of forces, representing the twelve basic characteristics of kosmic life. They transform the kosmic forces into the field of consciousness of our solar system. Of the 'key actors' we are now discussing, they are the most kosmic.

Each being creates its own zodiac

We now go a step further. What is little known, but of great importance if you want to understand the interaction between kosmic beings, is *that each being creates its own zodiac*. What does that entail?

We can paint this general picture.⁽⁷⁾ Each being carries within itself all the characteristics of Life and also radiates them — colored and limited by its own character. Well: the interaction between that twelvefold characteristic own radiance and the twelve emanations of the constellations causes each entity to form a similar belt or circle of twelve foci, *within* its own sphere of influence, so, in miniature. The celestial zodiac reflects itself in the microsphere of that entity, because, for instance, the Aries aspect of the entity mingles with the Aries influence of the celestial zodiac. Thus a coupling point is formed. And the same is true of all the other eleven characteristics.

You could compare this somewhat to the following concrete situation. On a round table are twelve glasses, arranged in a circle. Each glass has its own shape and thus a unique vibrational frequency. If a musical instrument nearby emits a powerful tone, always one of these glasses will start to resonate strongly, while the others do so only a little bit (remember that everything is part of the Boundless and thus has all characteristics latent within it). So, for each of the twelve types of influence there is a specific transformer.

In short, the Solar being has its own zodiac, each planet — and thus our planet too — has its own zodiac, we as humans have our own zodiac.

Like the celestial zodiac, the 'own zodiacs' consist of a belt of foci within the entity's own sphere. Thereby each of the twelve foci occupies a twelfth part of the circle. Since Earth's own zodiac belongs to Earth itself, is a part of it, this belt 'travels with it' during its orbit around the Sun. In customary Western astrology, when someone says "my zodiac sign is Aries", this terrestrial zodiac is meant, not the



celestial one. That means that at the time of his birth, the Sun was in the sign of Aries of the *terrestrial* zodiac. That period always begins on March 21 and lasts until April 21. These dates do not change, while the celestial zodiac does shift slowly through the calendar, with time. We explain this in a next article in the series.

The Solar being

The next ‘key actor’ we discuss is the Solar being, the being that works behind and through the solar globe we see. This is the guiding being of our solar system and fulfills in all respects the central role in all its workings.

The solar system can be viewed as a grand living organism that flowed from its top being, the Solar being. The Solar being works through its own, emanated solar system, as we human beings work through our bodies. So, every entity within the solar system intensively collaborates with the Solar being, just as all the cell beings and atomic beings in our body collaborates with our human consciousness.

We said that the Solar being is the most highly evolved being within this system, the *nucleus* of the cooperation. But 'highest' is a relative term: the Solar being is subordinate to even more universal beings, including the Milky Way entity.

The Sun's sphere of influence is formed from the twelve-fold forces flowing out from the core of the Solar consciousness. His sphere of influence encompasses our entire solar system, and by this we mean not only the physically visible world or sphere, with its visible heavenly bodies, but also all the more inner planes of our solar system. And the major part of these are invisible to us. On all these planes, the Solar being is the central, guiding, coordinating center. It is therefore called the 'heart and mind' of the total solar system.⁽⁸⁾ The planet Earth goes through all its periods of development within the framework and under the divine supervision of the Solar being.

All planetary beings form, in a real sense, the various ‘organs’ of the solar system. And like the organs in our bodies, all the planets in our solar system work very closely together, under the central guidance of the Sun.

In one sense, the Solar being is our link to even higher worlds. In this sense, the Sun is a true channel of transformation. Thereby the Solar zodiac performs an essential function.

The twelve sacred planets

After the Sun, we discuss the so-called ‘group of sacred planets’. By this we mean that group of planets that have



an important function in the evolution of the living Earth. Each of those twelve sacred planets is the transmitter, the transformer, of one of the twelve forces radiated by the Sun, towards the Earth and all its inhabitants. They play a powerful, guiding and 'feeding' role for Earth life.

You can compare it in a certain sense to twelve teachers of a child, each of the twelve appealing to another faculty of the child's character, and thus helping the child to develop that specific faculty and build up the corresponding organs. This gives the child the chance to develop harmoniously into a complete being.

How many 'sacred planets' are there? There are twelve in all, seven of them designated by the following names: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The other five belong to the more esoteric-astrological teachings, being five spiritual planets, too ethereal for our senses and instruments to perceive. In terms of their character, *they correspond closely* to five of the commonly known planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The 'spiritual Mercury' and the 'material Mercury', for example, have a corresponding characteristic, but differ in the level at which they express that characteristic: more spiritual or more material.

Surprisingly, perhaps, we speak of the Moon and Sun as two sacred *planets*. This has to do with an aspect of the ancient teachings that is seldomly explained. The Sun and the Moon *in this context* are not meant literally as Sun and Moon, but are the veiled names for two planets we cannot see. These two secret planets do bear a close similarity to the Sun and Moon, respectively, in terms of character.

You will probably have noticed that we did not mention Pluto, Neptune and Uranus in the row above. These three planets (Pluto is under debate among astronomers as to whether or not it may be called a planet) are not among the sacred planets. They are ‘guest planets’ in our solar system. That is, they reside with us only temporarily, before continuing their journey to their own home, to their own solar system. Nevertheless, these guest planets leave a considerable characteristic mark on our entire solar system, and thus also on Earth. Compare it to the situation of a family that has a houseguest. The houseguest is there temporarily, but his or her presence during that time has a specific influence on whole family life.⁽⁹⁾

Planetary being Earth

In our hierarchical enumeration, we have now arrived at our planet Earth. Within its sphere of influence, we humans evolve from incipient to perfect humans, and then to buddhas and even planetary gods.

The planetary being Earth receives influences of the Sun and the sacred planets, and of the celestial zodiac, and transforms them through its own zodiac to all beings within its earthly sphere.

More and more people intuitively realize that our planet is a grand organic community of life. Not for nothing is it referred to as ‘ecosystem Earth’ according to the ‘Gaia theory’.

We humans

We humans are integral parts of cosmic life, and thus are a link in the flow of consciousness that runs from galaxy, celestial zodiac, Sun, planets, Earth to us. And we pass those forces to our fellow humans and to the less evolved beings of Earth. This is a very important teaching of the Universal Wisdom.

We humans are in our entirety, as the totality of thinking beings, an indispensable *organ* of our planet. That means that as an organ (and as individual cell in that organ), we are responsible for our contribution to the harmonious functioning of the whole. You cannot pursue all kinds of short-term and I-centered goals anywhere in the kosmos, neither within the Earth sphere, without undermining or violating that collaborative whole. And since the inner heart of the kosmos is aimed at restoring harmony, all effects brought about by a being are traced back to the causer itself, in the form of certain inhibiting or stimulating conditions – depending on the character of its actions – to restore harmony. So, our fate, our circumstances, are

always *self-made*. This is often called the principle of Karma.

But we don’t have to keep going around in circles by constantly rehearsing our own habit patterns. We can use the many nobler potentials that lie within us more consciously and powerfully every day. The unselfish and thoughtful characteristics that are currently subordinate can be made leading, if we wish.

Why are we evolving within the *earthly* sphere?

We end this article with this essential question: why do we humans live within the Earth’s sphere of influence and learn our lessons here? Why do we not belong to the humanity of Venus, for example? Or to the humanity of some planet of the star Sirius?

This is a profound question. Clearly, our view on ‘celestial influences’ is determined to a considerable extent by getting some understanding of this issue.

We said: every being has a beginningless past behind it, in which it has developed itself in its own unique way. Just look around among humans, and among planets or stars: no being is exactly the same as another. Why are we Earth people and not Venus people? Because the planetary being Earth has its own specific character and, of all possible planets, has *the greatest similarity* to our own character as individual. Only here do we find the stimuli – the challenges – that are similar in frequency to our character. Only within the earth sphere are our dormant faculties maximally stimulated to ‘vibrate’, to resonate. Only here do we find the optimal conditions for learning to express all aspects of our character. On Venus this would not be possible.

Could a tropical bird ever be born at the North pole? Could a human being ever be born at the bottom of the sea? We earthly humans are born on Earth because we are able to live and evolve here. Our ties with planetary being Earth are very old. They stem from the very distant past and we have strengthened those ties again and again, based on corresponding character traits.

It is all a matter of resonance. So the fact that we are under the very powerful influences of some planets, of our Sun and of the zodiacal stars, is not random. It is not haphazard bad luck or happiness but the logical consequence of our *self-evolved* character. Should you ever have the tendency to blame the failures in your life on the cosmic beings – ‘I can not help it, because the stars were not favorable’ – then remind yourself that you have created,



The Pleiades, also called 'the Seven Sisters' or 'Sevenstar'.

yes, you have *willed* your schools of learning, your circumstances, yourself. We are born here because we have corresponding characteristics; we do not have these characteristics because we were born here. Herein we find an important ethical key.

On the depth of astrological knowledge

These are the key actors, about whom we will report further in the following articles. This does not mean that there are no other cosmic beings who may play an important role for our planet. No doubt there are. Hints in that direction are also given, in the theosophical literature, for instance about the Pole Star and the Pleiades.⁽¹⁰⁾ After all: of the original profound science of astrology, only a few small fragments have become known.

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Questions & Answers

The origins of religions and religious conflict

How can you explain the emergence of different religions?

Answer

It is impossible for more advanced beings to convey all their wisdom and knowledge to humanity, which has not yet developed the capacity to understand that wisdom. Compare it to a child who can barely think; you cannot teach them complicated mathematical formulas.

Nevertheless, the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion have always tried to convey *something* of their knowledge. And of course they did so in a way, in a language and in imagery that humans could understand at the time when the message was given. In doing so, they attuned themselves to the degree of development of humanity.

Humans have only just begun to think, relatively speaking. There is therefore always a fair chance that the message will not be understood or not fully understood. In addition, over the centuries, people have interpreted that message in a personal and anthropomorphic way. That is to say, they interpret the thought images from their own very limited consciousness. For example, they attribute human characteristics to gods. People no longer have awareness that they are an inseparable part of the cosmos and place the divine outside themselves, instead of activating it within themselves. Consider also that every human being, and every country or civilization, has its own individual characteristics

(*Swabhāva*) shaped by karma. One nation will emphasize one aspect of the teachings, while another will emphasize another aspect. We all have a tendency to interpret the teachings we have been given based on our own characteristics, sometimes omitting or adding ideas. And as we come to believe more and more in our own conception of the spiritual, i.e., in our own limited vision, a religion will arise that becomes separate, or detached from the original universal wisdom.

In fact, you can no longer speak of 'religion' if you mean by that word that you must practice a certain discipline in order to achieve unity with the Oneness of all life, your own inherent divinity. We are then dealing with the *worship* of gods or saints, whom we do not regard as internal forces, but as forces outside ourselves that we must serve and reverence.

Question

If all religions originate from the work of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion, why do they differ and why are there wars? Religious wars are often the cruelest wars.

Answer

This too can be explained by the anthropomorphic thinking of humans. The Masters have always emphasized self-activity in their message. Humans are essentially divine beings, but they must activate that divinity within themselves. For our 'salvation,' we need no one but ourselves.

However, anthropomorphic thinking led humans to place the divine outside themselves. They felt powerless and small. They created their own gods.

And when a priestly caste sets itself up as a mediator between humans and their god or gods, greater groups of people become very susceptible to manipulation. Priests can stir up fanaticism to such an extent that believers come to see those who adhere to a different religion, as enemies or threats. It is the distorted and illusory image of religion - or rather worship - that inflates hatred toward people of other religions to such an extent that one would prefer to eliminate the other as quickly as possible. Incidentally, this hostility towards other religions does not even have to be born out of hatred, but it often happens that religious people become so absorbed in the urge to convert others that they will stop at nothing to achieve their goal. They live under the delusion that the end justifies the means.

Religious awareness is the noblest thing within us. It dissolves feelings of separation. It is the awareness of unity, of inseparable connectedness. It is the most sacred thing we know. When people consciously or unconsciously manipulate, diminish, or restrict that sacred awareness to only their own group, religious fundamentalism arises, and people are prepared to do literally anything if they believe that others are going against the will of their supposed god. The illusory idea that god or the gods are behind you, makes you wage war with conviction, believing that you are doing the right thing. Hatred towards those who think differently is interpreted as a sacred message and one's own motives for fighting are experienced as 'holy fire'.

This is not natural cruelty, but deep

ignorance and blind faith in one's own dogmas and, above all, in the priests, whatever they may be called. When the most sacred degenerates, it leads to the most unholy.

That is why we always advise people to go to the core of their religion. Then you will see that divinity is within you and that you must 'bring it out'. "The kingdom of Heaven is within you," we read in the New Testament. "I am the Self," says Krishna, "I am in the heart of every being". "Allah, the Divinity, is not created and does not create," we read in the Koran. The divine is therefore everywhere, in every human being. Buddhism also always points to the inner virtues, the inner Buddhist powers in man. When humanity comes to understand that it is one with the cosmos, and that every human being is therefore essentially equal to every other, then religion will unite us with the divine within ourselves and unite us with our fellow human beings. For those who love the divine also love their fellow human beings.

From human to god

Do *all* living beings have a divine ultimate goal?

Answer

All beings are divine at their core and will one day bring that divinity into development. But to call that an ultimate goal...

Let's first take a look at who or what we are *inside*. All beings, including humans, are not their bodies but centers of consciousness, focal points of life and intelligence that work through the body. Our consciousness

is essentially imperishable because it is part of the imperishable, *boundless* Life, just as a drop is part of an ocean. Those who realize this will view their fellow human beings (and all other beings, because the cosmos consists of beings) and themselves in a completely different light. We carry countless capacities within us that we have not yet activated, but which we can actually develop if we want to and create the necessary conditions. There are greater possibilities hidden within every being. That is why all beings are equal, no matter how great the outward differences may be. There are no exceptions. This elevates us above any group interest.

Now back to the question: do all living beings have a divine ultimate goal? Yes, but it is not an *ultimate* goal. It is an 'intermediate goal'. All beings have the urge within them to unfold more and more of their *boundless* abilities. After successfully completing one cosmic school, they will begin the next one: one that is more noble and spiritual. Animals – that is, animal consciousness – can grow toward humanity, we humans can grow toward 'beginning godhood,' and divine beings can grow toward even greater and more universal levels of consciousness — with the corresponding cosmic responsibilities.

But every being *has to work for it, with every concrete step*: inner growth never happens automatically. Everyone must actually learn their lessons from the experiences they gain during their outer existence: either unconsciously, as animals do, or consciously, as we and the divine beings do.

Question

Will we remain 'human' until the end of the Earth's current life cycle, or can we become gods sooner?

Answer

The whole of Nature is an inner school. It is indeed the greater destiny of each of us humans - if we are willing to learn in our lives and seize our evolutionary opportunities - to achieve perfection *as human beings*, to become human Buddhas, during this life cycle of our planet Earth.

To give an impression of the time period we are talking about: it will take more than 2 billion years before our planet Earth reaches the end of its current embodiment, at which point all earthly beings will enter a long period of spiritual rest.

It is true that there are people who reach that very high level of spiritual understanding earlier than others. They have therefore reached the level necessary to start as 'beginning gods' (after a certain period of rest). We ourselves are in control of how quickly we develop our dormant abilities.

However, there is another thought that you should consider carefully. If we develop ourselves in order to be able to mean more and more to our neighbors, we will always want to use the wisdom we have gained for beings who are less advanced than we are. In short, if we have already attained human perfection from that mindset before the average human being, even before the Earth as a whole enters the super-spiritual rest period of Nirvana, we will refuse to enter the state of Nirvana (even though we have a karmic right to do so). No, we choose for it to be so that we halt 'at the gates of Nirvana' in order to remain active within humanity and play a greater and inspiring role for all less advanced beings for countless centuries.

Question

How will we humans – who become perfect human beings in this cycle of

the Earth – return when the planet has completed its spiritual rest period and is reborn?

Answer

That question has in fact already been answered in our previous answer: as beginning divinities. Within the realms of the gods, there are many degrees of development.

We necessarily start at the bottom of the divine ladder. Mr. Kok, the seventh leader of the Theosophical Society Point Loma, called this “little boys among the gods.” We will still be intrinsic parts of the planet Earth, which is much more than just the material sphere, but also includes spiritual, mental, and astral spheres. Within that totality of planetary life, we will then fulfill a divine function.

Inner progress

Is human thinking now more advanced than that of ancient peoples, such as the Egyptians, who were very advanced in building pyramids?

Answer

The average thinking of our generation will be no more noble than that of ancient Egypt. Why? Because for almost all people, their inner unfold, life after life, is very gradual. Almost everyone learns something in every incarnation, becomes a little wiser – because only the very stubborn refuse to learn – but reforming one’s own views and habits is often difficult and gradual. We can experience this ourselves when we try to change an ‘ingrained’ habit of ours. Add to this the fact that the period between two human incarnations can easily last thousands of years, and it

becomes clear that we should view the progress of human evolution in terms of tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of years.

There is also another factor at play here, which makes it difficult to compare ‘then’ and ‘now’. Human evolution never progresses in a linear fashion, like a gently rising road, but always along peaks and valleys. It always proceeds in cycles. This also applies to a human life. You try to correct a character flaw. You manage to build a new habit in a few months, but suddenly you fall back into your old habits. The old thoughts come back to you. It seems as if you have to start all over again, but when you make a new attempt, it usually goes a little better than the first time. In short, it is usually a process of trial and error.

The progress of cultures is also always cyclical. Every culture goes through one or more periods of spiritual and mental flourishing, always followed by a period of relative barrenness. As Plato put it, periods of ‘spiritual barrenness’ alternate with periods of ‘spiritual fertility.’ When the greater pyramid of Giza was built in ancient Egypt – an initiation temple and *not a* tomb – Egyptian culture may have been in a spiritually fertile phase.

When a culture no longer understands its inner values, this does not necessarily mean that individuals are regressing spiritually. The people who make up a society during a period of prosperity are largely a different group from those who live during a more uncivilized period.

Why are these two different groups? Because every human consciousness is always attracted to those circumstances that correspond to its own character, for only there can it express itself. The period in which they reincarnate is not a coincidence, but a matter of cause

and effect. It is a matter of attraction between like minds. And for both groups, the members can take a step forward in each incarnation through the lessons they learn.

When people from the heyday reincarnate, most of them will be attracted to the heyday of a future civilization to a greater degree, and then they will be born. We always reincarnate in groups, because if we have similar characteristics, we are attracted to more or less the same circumstances.

The most universal and compassionate humans try to let go of their attachment to certain circumstances, whether favorable or not. They focus as much as possible on the present and on what they can do for their fellow humans. As a result, they reincarnate sooner and learn faster in every circumstance.

In short, the progress of humanity is expressed in this: the valleys gradually become less deep, and the peaks gradually become slightly higher. And this process of spiritual unfolding never happens by itself: it all depends on whether we truly put our deeper aspirations for understanding and harmony into practice in our lives. For that is the real driving force behind all steps toward a more noble society.

Agenda

Preview of 2025-2026 lecture season

Starting October 19, our weekly lectures on Sunday evening will start again, from 19:30 hrs. p.m. to approximately 21:00 p.m. CE(S)T. The theme for the entire 2025-26 season is Theosophia: the Universal Wisdom that lies at the root of all major spiritual impulses, given by messengers such as Lao Tsu, Pythagoras, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Buddha. We seek the deeper meaning of the many teachings they revealed, using our deeper understanding, moral consciousness and intellect.

The list below gives you an overview of the entire season. For the series of October through December we provide you the titles of both the series and the lectures, for the other series only the series titles. Check our website for the full program.

All meetings start with a lecture. This part can be watched on YouTube or on Zoom. In the second part of the meeting, we exchange insights on the topic to enlarge our understanding of Theosophy. This part can only be followed via Zoom.

We advise you to sign up for the Zoom-session in time via our website www.blavatskyhouse.org. We can then send you the link beforehand.

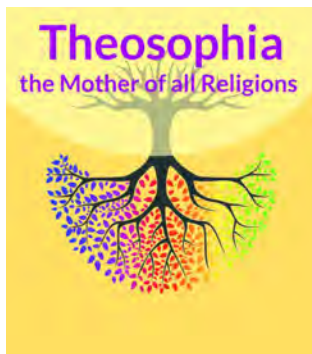
Series 1, October

Awakening Universal Wisdom within yourself

Introduction to the course Universal Wisdom

19-10 Discovering the inner cosmos

26-10 Awakening the inner human being



Series 2, November

Theosophia: the Mother of all Religions

02-11 The Universal Theosophical Movement

09-11 The true meaning of Religion

16-11 Messengers of Wisdom

23-11 The Inner Path

Series 3, December

The essence of Universal Brotherhood

30-11 Universal Brotherhood in its utmost depth

07-12 Universal Brotherhood: recognizable in all religions and philosophies?

14-12 Theosophical education

21-12 The influence of 150 years of Theosophy

Series 4, January

Compassion: the essence of initiation

Series 5, February

Continuity of consciousness: death and after



Series 6, March

Universal Wisdom in the Egyptian-African Tradition

Series 7, April

Universal Wisdom in the Eastern tradition

Series 8, May

Universal Wisdom in the Greek tradition

Series 9, June

Universal Wisdom in original Christianity

Course: Universal Wisdom

Starting again in October

This course is based on the core of wisdom that underlies all great religions and philosophies. This wisdom is known by several names, such as Esoteric Philosophy, Theosophia. The core of universal wisdom teaches us that unity and compassion are the foundations of Life. If anything is clear, it is that these are the missing links that the world today so desperately needs. By applying the wisdom in this course, you will help fill this gap.

The lessons

1. Unity
2. Reality and illusion
3. Seven thought aspects
4. 'Man, know thyself'
5. Interim research
6. Thoughts and ennobling your character
7. Cyclicity and karma
8. Hierarchies of consciousness and the process of emanation
9. Self-realization and progressive evolution
10. Building an image of an ideal
11. Two paths, a principled choice
12. Knowing the SELF
13. Unveiled thinking
14. Theosophical Society – Point Loma

The course is held online via Zoom, weekly from October to May on Sundays at 16:00-18:00 CE(S)T. The contribution for the course is € 60,-

Info and registration:

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

Online COURSE
**UNIVERSAL
WISDOM**
Unveil your thinking



information/registration
www.blavatskyhouse.org/courses/

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)