

The Light-bringer

# Lucifer<sup>®</sup>

*for seekers of Truth*

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

The secret behind  
the Sermon on the  
Mount – part 1:  
The Beatitudes

The cry of the  
nations for peace

You perceive what  
lives within you

The challenge that  
freedom offers us

Theosophical  
education

The birth chart –  
backgrounds of  
astrology, part 4

Karma is Ātman



# 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/](http://blavatskyhouse.org/about-us/what-is-theosophy/)

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Bronze sculpture of Jean Marais on Place Marcel Aymé in Paris.

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Last year marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society. Its goal, in short, is to achieve universal brotherhood. What has this impulse brought about after 150 years? The viewpoint from which this question is asked determines the understanding of the answer. That may sound somewhat abstract, but we will explain it in this article.

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Freedom. Few things evoke such a wide range of associations as freedom. In all its forms and types: freedom – or the lack thereof – is always a factor in our thinking and therefore in our perception of the world. In this article, we want to show how our thinking about freedom puts us to the test.

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Emancipation and freedom monument on Brown's Island, Richmond, Virginia.

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In our series of articles on the background of astrology, we have now come to the question of what a birth chart is, why it reflects our character and what parts it consists of. We will also discuss its possible usefulness. In doing so, we will build on the overall picture we outlined in the previous three installments.

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# Editorial

Theosophy covers a vast field of thoughts and ideas. Everything is connected and interrelated. The editors of *Lucifer the Lightbringer* often find it challenging to stay focused on the core of their topic and not digress into side issues, which are interesting in themselves. Sometimes a single article is not enough to convey the theosophical vision on such a topic. This is certainly true for the all-encompassing teachings of esoteric astrology. This edition features the fourth article in that series. The writers are probably more aware than the reader that there is still a very great deal we have not mentioned about this subject. Nevertheless, these four articles provide a very clear view of the universe and humanity, as an inseparable part of it.

There is also much to say about the, relatively short, text from the *Gospel of Mark*, the *Sermon on the Mount*. In three articles, we want to demonstrate its depth, and even then, we will certainly not have said everything there is to say about it. In this edition you will find part one.

Readers who have been raised in a Christian tradition may be surprised that there is so much esoteric knowledge in the *Sermon on the Mount*. All readers will have to conclude that if the ethics of the *Sermon on the Mount* were already only partially lived, our turbulent world would be much more harmonious.

But how do we learn to live according to those ethics? Should we start with the youth? Then we need to have a good education method. In the 150 years of the Theosophical Society's existence, we have gained quite a lot of experience in this area. But it is not only young people who need to be educated; the same educational principles can be applied to adults: we then give each other much more spiritual and mental – and of course also physical – opportunities of development.

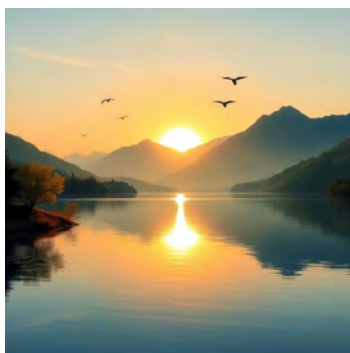
Educators often believe that people should be given the opportunity to grow up as free individuals. But can freedom exist without responsibility? The answer to this question shows that freedom poses major challenges for people, especially about their inner motives. How are we able to use our freedom for the common good?

That common good – or living of Universal Brotherhood – is one of the main pillars of the Theosophical Society. It is sometimes thought that theosophical metaphysics is separate from this. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is precisely when we open our 'inner eye' and perceive the inseparable links between all expressions of life and see through the illusion that our 'outer eyes' try to make us believe, we understand that ethics is not based on human conventions.

Finally, in this edition you will find a comprehensive answer to the integrating remark of one of the Mahātmās that Karma is Ātman.

We have once again attempted to compile a balanced *Lucifer the Lightbringer*, which we hope will provide food for thought, but also inspire the application of theosophical ideas in life. The world needs this more than ever.

**Editors**



# The secret behind the Sermon on the Mount – part 1

## The Beatitudes

### Key thoughts

» In religious symbolical language, climbing a mountain signifies elevating oneself to a higher state of consciousness.

» In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus represents the Teacher of a Mystery School.

» The ethics in the Sermon on the Mount are universal and are based primarily on Buddhism.

» The *Beatitudes* describe the qualities that a student in a Mystery School must meet.

» The first *Beatitude* has been mistranslated: it does not refer to 'the poor in spirit,' but to those 'who hunger for spirit'.

» The doctrine of karma is interwoven in the Sermon on the Mount.

» Those 'persecuted for righteousness sake' refer to the trials that the disciple must overcome.

**The *Gospel of Matthew* contains the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, which is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. In three articles, *Lucifer – the Light-bringer* demonstrates the value of this Christian jewel.**

There is something strange about the Sermon on the Mount. On the one hand, people consider this speech the sublime summary of Christianity, but on the other hand, only a few Christians try to apply the teachings in their lives. It would not be practical, they say. Yet it is assumed to contain the words of Jesus. Theologians believe that Jesus did not necessarily speak these words literally. It is said to be a compilation of several of his speeches. There are corresponding statements in other gospels, such as the apocryphal *Gospel to Thomas*. Nevertheless, the Sermon on the Mount rests on *logia*, on the words spoken by Jesus the Christ.

Behind the Sermon on the Mount, however, lies an esoteric secret. The key to this secret lies in the fact that, as the name suggests, this to Jesus attributed speech is delivered on a mountain.

### The function of the mountain

To a superficial reader, it might be an

unimportant detail that this speech of Jesus is situated on a mountain. In the universal symbolic language however, a mountain symbolizes the construction of the cosmos. Its peak points upward toward the spiritual worlds. The base is formed by the material worlds, the worlds in which we live and exist. In a religious story, when human beings climb a mountain, it means they are elevating themselves to the more spiritual, divine worlds. This was true for Moses when he received the Ten Commandments. The first verses of the *Koran* were revealed to Mohammed on a mountain near Mecca. The gods of Greek mythology lived on Mount Olympus, just as there are countless sacred mountains in the Himalayas, the dwelling places of divine beings. And there are countless Buddhist sūtras in which the Buddha, like Jesus, climbs a mountain in order to teach his disciples. So, when Jesus climbed the mountain, he elevated himself to the more spiritual worlds, to higher realms of consciousness.

## Opening the mouth — Teacher in a Mystery School

Jesus took some people up that mountain. It is even emphatically said that he took them away from the noise of society, from the masses. Literally it says, “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.”<sup>(1)</sup> It is as if he is fleeing from the crowd.

Next it says, “And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying...”<sup>(2)</sup> In modern translations of the Bible, this phrase has been omitted, assuming that it is logical to open your mouth when you speak. Ignorance of the mystery language causes further degeneration, because this opening of the mouth, *apparently* an obvious remark, has a clear meaning for those who know the language of symbols. We will explain this by pointing out the role that Jesus plays and who the men are that he takes with him up the mountain.

Jesus is a Teacher and he is addressing special disciples who have already taken some steps on the inner path of expanding of consciousness. They are students who have taken the solemn pledge to endeavor living in their higher nature. They are disciples of a spiritual Master. They go up the mountain. That is, they thirst for spiritual, esoteric knowledge. They are taken apart by Jesus and given special instruction.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in the famous passage of pearls not to be cast before swine, it is emphatically stated that these teachings are not for the masses. Spiritual teaching is not without obligation. Therefore, it is only given to those men and women who have demonstrated in the practice of their lives, that they are worthy of receiving those teachings. All of this shows that the Sermon on the Mount is a representation of a Mystery School.

Mystery Schools have existed throughout antiquity. They are schools in which the Ancient Wisdom – Theosophia – was studied. They have always exerted a beneficial influence on society.

Whoever had authority in that Mystery School – whoever had come to know the teachings as correct, based on his own experiences – was allowed to act as Teacher. He was allowed to speak. In the ancient mystery languages, this was called ‘opening one’s mouth.’ So, Jesus was someone who could speak with authority, because to him the teachings were not just theory, because he had experienced them himself, as being true. He lived according to that truth. Therefore, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount

it says that the people were amazed, because he taught them as “one having authority and not as the scribes.”

### The Sermon on the Mount [Matt. 5-7] is composed of the following elements:

- Jesus takes the disciples up the mountain. (The teachings intended for disciples on the inward Path).
- Beatitudes.
- The task of the disciples (the salt of the earth; fulfilling the law).
- The demands made of disciples: do not kill, do not wrath, reconcile with your brothers (be kind to other party), do not commit adultery, do not swear, do not resist the evil one (after striking the right cheek, turn the left), love your enemy, do good without expecting a reward for it (do not let the right hand know what the left does).
- Praying in silence (Our Father).
- No hypocrisy (during fasting no gloomy countenance).
- Live in a state of poverty (do not accumulate treasures on earth).
- Live unconcerned.
- Judge not.
- Give the teachings only to those who are fit for it (no pearls before swine).
- Pray and it will be given.
- Entering into the Kingdom is for the few.
- Beware of false prophets (by the fruit one recognizes the tree).

## Buddhist Sūtra

Anyone familiar with religious literature – especially that of the East – will not encounter anything original in the Sermon on the Mount. Above all, there are many similarities to Buddhism.

Buddhism is the doctrine taught by Gautama Siddhārtha, the so-called historical Buddha, more than five hundred years before the alleged appearance of Jesus. Under his leadership, a monastic order was also founded, in which people joined who withdrew from worldly duties – such as starting a family – and devoted themselves entirely to developing spirituality.

There was a hierarchy in that order: the more esoteric teachings were reserved for the more advanced students, who had shown themselves capable of meeting a stricter discipline.

After the Buddha’s death, his teachings gradually spread to

broad strata of the population. About three hundred years after his passing, the great King Aśoka reigned, grounding the *Dharma, the Universal Law*, as taught by the Buddha, in broad strata of social life. Emissaries spread the *Dharma* to all corners of the world. For example, sons of Ashoka are known to have brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka. But Aśoka's emissaries also went westward, to what is now called the Middle East and beyond.

At that time, a motley array of people lived in the Middle East. Hellenism had taken root through Alexander's wars of conquest. The influence of the ancient Persian faith was great. And further, there were many Jewish groups and cults, such as the Essenes, the Therapists and others. Many of the teachings of these groups are unknown, but what we know of them today is that their ideas are quite wonderfully in line with what can be called monastic Buddhism.

Of the Essenes, for example, their vegetarianism, their life of seclusion, their strict non-violence, their asceticism, their sexual abstinence are known. These are things that are equally among the customs in Buddhist monasteries

and called for in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>(3)</sup>

With that we have basically indicated the source of the Sermon on the Mount.

Hidden in the Sermon on the Mount is a code of conduct of a Mystery School, and specifically that of the Essenes. Those Essenes were in fact Buddhists.<sup>(4)</sup> They adhered to the teachings of wisdom as given by the great Gautama the Buddha and transmitted from the East by his disciples. Those teachings were closely aligned with certain Jewish esoteric principles and doctrines.

This in itself makes sense because the teachings are universal. Therefore, they are known under many jackets and names. The great sage who must have had the name Joshua the Nazarene and who is now known by the name Jesus the Christ, had been trained and formed within that group of the Essenes.

So there is a direct line from Buddhism to Christianity, just as, by the way, there is a direct line from Gautama the Buddha to Jesus.

In essence, the Sermon on the Mount is purely Buddhist. There is no doctrine, no commandment, no advice, no

### Pratimoksha Sūtra

To the discipline of the *Bhikshus* (monks) an entire *Sūtra* – a sacred scripture – is dedicated. This so-called *Pratimoksha Sūtra* contains 227 rules to which *Bhikshus* must adhere. These 227 Prati-moksha rules can be thought of as vows that one takes. Together they constitute what is called the *Vinaya*.

*Vinaya* is usually translated as discipline, and in itself that is a correct translation. Literally the word means 'to carry away'. This means that mistakes are carried away by following these rules. *Prati-moksha* means individual liberation. So, the rules – the discipline – are required if one is to attain that liberation from suffering.

The 227 rules could be divided into four categories:

1. Nonviolence
2. Relationships
3. Possessions and sacrifices
4. Good way of life for the Bhikshu (monk).

*Nonviolence* means avoiding doing harm to others at all times and by all means. This means that you should not kill either human beings or animals. Even a plant should not be deprived of life. You should never repay evil with evil.

Under *relationships*, it is described how *Bhikshus* should treat others: lay people and monks; women and men. Among other things, *Bhikshus* are expected to live a strictly celibate life.

A *Bhikshu* may only call his habit, mendicant, and a few more trifles his possession. These rules amount to a paean to poverty.

Finally, the rules describe how *Bhikshus* should teach the *Dharma*. For although they live secluded from what can be called society, they are also part of it. Therefore, they go out to beg for their food, but equally they teach the *Dharma* to everyone. Also, one of the rules for example is that a *Bhikshu* should never boast of any psychic abilities or psychic gifts.

principle that is not found in the Buddhist scriptures and especially in the Pratimoksha sūtra. This sūtra contains the rules for the monastic order of buddhist monks.

## Beatitudes

So, we have seen that Jesus is allowed to open his mouth, that is, he can teach with authority. The first thing he presents to his disciples, are the so-called Beatitudes or the Blessings. These are purely Buddhist in character.

Now the words ‘beatified’ and ‘beatification’ have taken on a rather unpleasant aftertaste because the Roman Catholic authorities have often beatified people out of selfish contemplation. The pope declares that a deceased person is in heaven and may be publicly venerated. And among those who have been beatified are men who in no way followed the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. If we study the original Greek text, we see that something quite different is meant in the Sermon on the Mount. Beatitude or blessed, is a translation of the Greek *Makar-ios*, which is derived from the Greek *makar*. That word in turn is said to be related to the Sanskrit *mahā*. This Sanskrit word, which literally means ‘great,’ always indicates spiritual-godly aspects of consciousness. The word *Mahātman* – ‘great Soul’ or ‘great Self’ – is a clear example of this.

The Greek *Makarios*, meaning ‘blissful,’ ‘blessed,’ ‘beatitude’, represents qualities that are also given to the gods. Therefore, there is also a relationship between this word and immortality. After all, the gods are the immortals.

When *Makarios* relates to man – as is the case in the Sermon on the Mount – it is about the immortal part in man, that is, about the spiritual-godly aspects within us. That part does not come into being or arise suddenly when you die but is developed on earth.

Taking this into consideration, we can conclude that these beatitudes mean something quite different from what is generally assumed. Namely, we are blissful – living in the higher part of our consciousness – if we have developed some characteristics. Jesus opens his mouth and declares that the following people are blessed:

- they who beg, the starving for spirit
- the mourners
- the meek
- they who hunger and thirst for righteousness
- the merciful
- the pure in heart – ‘the peacemakers’
- the persecuted for righteousness’ sake
- those persecuted for Christ’s sake

## The begging for spirit

The first beatitude differs greatly from the ‘official’ version. While we speak of those who beg for spirit, the Bible speaks of ‘the poor in spirit’. Apparently, many people do not think about what the Bible tells us, because it would be very strange and unlikely if the poor in spirit were blessed. Would the man be blessed who only has eye for his own interest, who sits mindlessly watching TV or playing video games all evening and who is only startled when his own interest is in danger of being disturbed? This proves that people do not *read* their Bible, or else they would have noticed this incongruity immediately.

But do theologians not read their Bible? Did they not learn Greek during their studies? Perhaps they do not notice this translation error because they have a certain idea of man as a poor sinner who depends on divine grace for his salvation.

Whatever the case may be, the original text does not state that the poor in spirit are blessed. That is a mistranslation from the Greek. It is important to understand this well, because the first beatitude is essential for understanding the others.

To demonstrate the incorrectness of this, it is well to cite the Greek original. Which reads, in transliteration: *Makarioi* (blessed) *hoi* (the) *ptoochoi* (beggars) *tooi* (to) *pneumatic* (spirit) *hoti* (for) *autoon* (theirs) *estin* (is) *hè* (it) *basileia* (kingdom) *toon* (of the) *ouranoon* (heavens).

The main issue here revolves around the word *ptoochoi*, which is translated as ‘poor’. However, *ptoochoi* is the plural of *ptoochos*, which means ‘beggar’. Beggars are poor, but not all poor are beggars. Therefore, the translation is incorrect. Only those who realize they are poor and ask for food, are beggars. Those who are begging for spirit, those who long for the spiritual worlds, those whose consciousness is focused on them, are blissful. That makes sense.

We can compare this well with Socrates. This Greek sage was called the wisest of Athens by the oracle of Delphi, although he himself knew that he was not wise. But he was like a beggar for wisdom. He hungered for wisdom.

Focusing on wisdom, on the spirit (*pneuma*), leads to inspiration of that spirit. Inspiration literally means blowing in and *pneuma* literally means ‘breath’. When you ‘beg’ for ‘spiritual breath’, you focus on that spirit, on *pneuma*. You are inspired by it, become *Makarios*, blissful.

## Agapè

What is further striking is that, in fact, only those are blessed who, in the general views of today and apparently

also of two thousand years ago, are the weak. Strength is commonly associated with physical strength, with muscles, with weapons, with ruggedness, with a strong personality.

But what these beatitudes suggest, is that there is another kind of strength. The power of *agapè* as the Greek word goes, the power of love. People grieving, being merciful, being persecuted, they all announce that other kind of power, and that power is much stronger than brute physical force.

These are, in other words, a number of characteristics that the disciples, amassed on the mountain, the symbol of the spiritual worlds, must develop. In the following article, we will take a closer look at *agapè*.

You should therefore study these beatitudes and the characteristics that each of them represents in their entirety. We must develop and perfect these characteristics to meet the demands placed upon us, at least if we want to be a student of Jesus' Mystery School.

### **Cause and effect**

Therefore, all these people who are beatified – and who therefore represent a certain characteristic – are promised a

reward. Or actually, it is not a reward. It is a consequence of the characteristic they exhibit. In fact, there is an allusion here to the law of cause and effect, to karma. A thought, by the way, that is not foreign to the Bible. For example, Paul writes to the Galatians, "...for as much as man sows, so shall he reap".<sup>(5)</sup>

So the cause of a certain characteristic leads to a certain consequence. This is clearly evident from the Beatitudes. Just look:

"Blessed are the beggars for spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

This is an extremely logical line of thought. If you are focused on the spiritual, then as a result you will live in those spiritual realms of consciousness; you live in the Kingdom of Heaven.

### **Kingdom of Heaven**

*Ouranos* – or in the genitive plural form *Ouranoon* – which is correctly translated as 'of the heavens,' is a philosophical Greek concept, related to the Sanskrit *Varuna*, the god of water. This sea god, however, is not Neptune, but the god of the Waters of Space, over which, according to *Genesis*, the Spirit of God (the *Elohim*) hovered.<sup>(6)</sup>



The Kingdom of Heaven denotes a cosmic state in which one experiences the unity of all things. That state the beggar for spirit attains. Not as grace, but as a result of them being focused on spirit. You reap what you sow. You get what you identify with. Identify with the spirit, then you will be blissful, because material existence involves suffering and sorrow, but the spirit rises above that.

## Suffering

Then: “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”<sup>(7)</sup>

What do people actually grieve over? Is it not mostly for material things? Matters of the earth, of the illusory side of nature? Everything passes. You lose your youth. You become weaker and perhaps ill. You mourn the loss of loved ones. You realize that all happiness passes. This simple truth was formulated by the Buddha as: *All manifested things are accompanied by sorrow and suffering*. However, if you think about it more deeply, you realize that suffering has a cause and can be removed. Then consolation arises. You can only explain this beatitude, if you link it to the previous one, the fact that the beggars for spirit are blessed. For then, you have realized that in the material itself there is never any lasting satisfaction.

No one can grow in true spirituality, unless he has suffered. As a result, your heart and soul have attuned themselves to the sufferings of the world. Suffering is therefore our friend because it makes us realize the relativity of outer existence, expands our consciousness and allows us to coincide with our brothers on the inner path. If you have experienced that unifying force with the rest of life, then you will be comforted: comforted by the spirit. Thus, the harvest of ‘the meek’ will be that they inherit the earthly kingdom. And those who ‘hunger and thirst for righteousness,’ will be satiated. ‘The merciful’ shall have mercy. (Here the law of cause and effect is shown quite clearly. If you are merciful, then mercy will come to you.) And finally, whoever is pure in heart will see God.

## The God of the Sermon of the Mount

Who is the God from the Sermon on the Mount? Is it the same God from the Old Testament, the cruel, jealous, partial and tribal God, who had a chosen people? Even a human being rarely discriminates so crudely. Therefore, the answer must be ‘no’.

But then who is this God?

What is striking in the Sermon on the Mount, and for that matter throughout the New Testament, is that this

God is particularly often referred to by the name Father, or by Father in the Heavens. That should already give us a clear clue.

A father is a being who gives birth to another, from himself. And when Father in the heavens (*Ouranos*) is spoken of, it is further emphasized that this Father remains in its own divine, heavenly sphere, when bringing us forth from itself. Therefore, what this Father brings forth must be of the same divine quality.

A rose brings forth a rose; a lion always brings forth a lion. God, the Father, brings us forth. We, personal human beings, are the offspring, the corollaries, of that Father, and we are, for that reason, essentially of the same divine quality.

Therefore, can we not rightly say that that our Father is our inner god, a universal aspect within us from which we, personal human beings, have sprung? Is it not also said that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us? A little further on in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that we must go into our inner room if we want to come into contact with our Father, if we want to communicate with him — or maybe we should better say *It*. That can only mean that this deity is within us.

Moreover, Jesus promises us in the Sermon on the Mount that if we follow the commandment to love our enemy, we will be perfect, “as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>(8)</sup> Does not all this indicate that this god, the Father, can be nothing else than the highest principle of consciousness within us? If we love everything indiscriminately, we will be perfect like the inner God.

## The perfect ones: the initiates

Theologians, who assume that man is evil, have never been able to explain the term ‘perfect’ adequately. According to the dogmas of the Christian churches, man is sinful and can only attain salvation through grace. But how do they explain that Jesus tells us that if we love all things and especially our enemy, we will be perfect as our Father — our Higher Self?

Paul also uses the word ‘perfect’ frequently. It is a mystery term, used to denote initiates. Those initiates are human beings who have made contact with their inherent divinity. In fact, every human being is the child of his inner god. We are a ray of our inner god, shrouded in matter. And when a human surrenders himself to that matter, to selfishness, violence and separateness, he alienates himself from his Source, from his Father, his primordial ground from which he sprang.

However, if he rids himself of those earthly excesses – that is, if he is “pure in heart” – he is absorbed into the Source from which he came. Then he will see his own inner God. We must be pure in heart. We must have pure motives and unselfish goals and through the process of initiation, we shall come face to face with our Father in Heaven and even become one with Him.

In line with this is the following beatitude: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”<sup>(9)</sup> Infinite peace and harmony are the attributes of inner divinity. When we make peace among warring groups – humans who live in disharmony – we translate these divine attributes into the practice of daily life and are thus children of our inner God.

### **Persecutions: trials**

Finally, “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>(10)</sup>; and if you are persecuted for “Christ’s sake”, the reward is also great in heaven.

What do these prosecutions relate to? To something outside of you? To tyrants persecuting you? Or does it have to do with *inner tyrants* persecuting you? Could these last two beatitudes not indicate something we call trials and tribulations?

After we knock on the mystical gate of the Mystery School and it is opened to us, and we promise through a holy pledge to practice and live the principles of Theosophia, then our lives suddenly seem much more difficult. All kinds of challenges and problems overwhelm us. Friends turn away from us, unknown difficulties loom ahead, and all these trials arise “for my sake”, for the sake of Christ.

But you should ask yourself whether Christ here is the Teacher of the Mystery School, or does he refer to the inner Christ, the spiritual, impersonal idealism and understanding in man, which has been awakened? It is difficult to uphold the ideal in a world ruled by selfishness and desire.

These challenges can be so great and intense that they make us ill. They give us a fever. In the Mystery Schools, this psychological state was referred to as pledge fever. It is as if we are being persecuted. Restlessness arises in us.

The nature of tribulations is the discord within us. An inner struggle is taking place within us. This is symbolically represented by the sword that Jesus brought us and with which we must fight.<sup>(11)</sup> But it is not a battle against dictators, it is an inner battle between our lower self and higher Self. Those trials arise because we have appealed to our

higher nature, to our Father in Heaven. Therefore, we are persecuted by all those lower aspects, those worldly aspects, the more material sides of our consciousness. We can call that with a general term our personality.

The personality is tested, and that is good, because through that we can be ‘saved’, provided at least we know how to pass those tests.

### **Summary**

If we are to summarize these nine beatitudes, we can say that it is not the grace of an unknown god that makes us blessed. There are certain qualities that we can develop, that will enable us to attain bliss through our own efforts. This is the first and perhaps the most important lesson Jesus teaches his disciples on the mountain.

In the following article, we discuss how the Sermon on the Mount teaches us that you should never resist evil with evil.

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  5. *Bible. Galatians 6:7.*
  6. *Bible. Genesis 1:2.*
  7. *Bible. Matthew 5:4.*
  8. *Bible. Matthew 5:48.*
  9. *Bible. Matthew 5:9.*
  10. *Bible. Matthew 5:10.*
  11. *Bible. Matthew 10:34.*
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# The cry of the nations for peace

It is a great reflection upon the mind of a nation that there should be war instead of peace, brute force instead of the forces of mind and soul. For human thought is measureless in its power, and the Spiritual Will could bring about universal peace and absolutely maintain it, would man but evoke it.

The nations are praying for peace; but lasting peace can never be attained until the spirit of true Brotherhood is manifested in the hearts of men.

We could not expect universal peace at once; I know too much of human nature for that. We must learn to trust each other first, individuals and nations both, and we must broaden our ideas as to the meaning of Brotherhood. In all the nations today we find great minds bent upon this problem, sincere men and women who are profoundly interested in the welfare of the world. But oh, the time that is wasted, the brain-oil used, the faculties energized, to bring about a new order of things in the name of peace — while they have lost sight of the true, the simple, the only way to do it. Brotherhood is the way; that is the keynote of the new age. Universal Brotherhood means Universal Peace.

Men may talk of peace, and work for peace, but it is mockery unless they try to find peace within their own natures. You cannot gain the power to adjust civic affairs, let alone international affairs, until you begin self-adjustment.

“But,” some judicial mind may say, “how can we hold the nations of the world at peace when differences exist, seemingly irreconcilable differences?” My reply must be: What holds together a family when differences arise? Kinship, the basic love of brother for brother, that is teeming within its life. That will suffice to hold it together always if it has grown and evolved in the spirit of justice. Why not, then, the larger family of the world?

Why is not humanity aroused to its great need before disasters come? Why cannot we help each other before we are challenged by suffering or by war? Why cannot we move out beyond our limitations, in true compassion and with true love of justice, and ingrain into human life the spirit of Brotherhood? Spiritual growth — that is the ideal. It is the only guarantee of permanent peace.

Yet in spite of enormous limitations a larger work for humanity is being done, the real work is truly going on.



International Theosophical Peace Congress, Visingsö, Sweden, June 1913, organized by Katherine Tingley.

But it is being accomplished, I believe, largely in the silences of life. I believe that the great divine Voice of Humanity in its nobler aspect is even now trying to reach you, trying to attract your vision to the grander life, to broader horizons, to more infinite vistas, that you may dream, if only for an hour, of better things.

Let us give way to the eternal processional of the Peace-bringers, the currents of Divinity ever ready to flow through every man who will take down the bars and evoke their passage. We are fixed; they change ever. We are me-

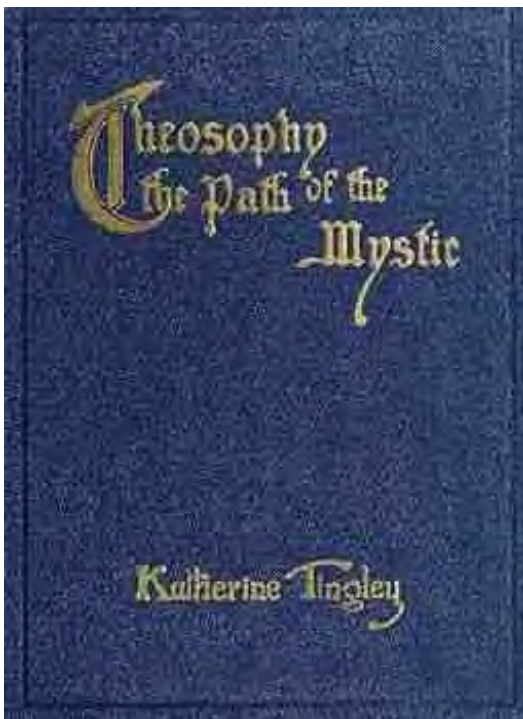
chanical; they are spontaneous. Fatigue is ours; they are immortal, ever-born and never-fading.

Let us, by playing our part well, evoke the God of Peace, that it may brood over our fair land and breathe into the hearts of all a larger tolerance and a greater love for each other, for all nations and all people.

Not long after she founded the Theosophical Society, Madame Blavatsky wrote, “Our theosophical brotherhood must strive after the idea of general brotherhood throughout humanity; after the establishment of universal peace.” The primary object of her work was to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. The logical result of that must necessarily be Universal Peace.

A living wedge is cleaving the darkness of the darkest age. We are witnesses to that Compassion which is the Light itself. The hour of right action is here.

The crest-wave of spiritual effort! A sublime and unselfish purpose will carry us to that high point — and then will come the power to love and serve in a new, a diviner way.



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# You perceive what lives within you

## Don't focus solely on what is visible

Last year marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society. Its goal, in short, is to achieve universal brotherhood. What has this impulse brought about after 150 years? The viewpoint from which this question is asked determines the understanding of the answer. That may sound somewhat abstract, but we will explain it in this article.

Last year we celebrated the fact that 150 years ago the Theosophical Society was founded by H.P. Blavatsky on behalf of her Teachers. H.P. Blavatsky was merely the channel for this spiritual impulse. The actual initiative came from the Lodge of Wisdom and Compassion.

This Lodge is a partnership of people who are much more advanced than the average human being in human evolution. But the members of this Lodge slow down their own evolution to help everyone who comes after them. They do this, among other things, by regularly sending messengers who spread some of the Ancient Wisdom or Theosophy to make the world more compassionate, wise, and peaceful; to activate universal brotherhood. The founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875 was one of a continuous series of cyclical impulses undertaken by the Lodge of Wisdom for the benefit of humanity.

What has this impulse brought about after 150 years? In fact, this is only a

small beginning. The significance of this impulse is still greatly underestimated. Wisdom has been revealed that remained hidden for thousands of years. Wisdom that offers solutions to all the problems in our lives and in this world. Wisdom with which everyone can protect their fellow human beings and themselves from many pitfalls and thus spare them suffering. Wisdom that therefore deserves much more attention in today's world!

But it is also good to examine this very question, "What has this impulse brought about?", because the viewpoint from which we ask the question determines our understanding of the answer. That may sound a bit abstract, but we will explain it in this article.

### Uniting Theosophists

The Theosophical Society was founded to put universal brotherhood into practice. Today, countless people around the world are working

### Key thoughts

- » The external world is merely a reflection of what is happening internally, in "invisible" realms.
- » If you only look with your "outer eye" in the short term, you will miss many of the inner causes that you yourself have laid down in this and previous lives.
- » You perceive what you have developed within yourself, what lives within you.

to improve the world. They work for an ideal, protect, help, or teach others, and let nothing and no one stop them. No matter how much the world resists, they always find the strength to continue and never give up.

These people can be found everywhere, and they are an inspiration to those around them. In a sense, they are the true Theosophists, because they live theosophically, consciously or not. These people have always been around. The founding of the Theosophical Society provides an opportunity for these people to unite, to work together for universal brotherhood, to gain more wisdom, and to tackle problems at their root. In this way, they themselves can form a nucleus of active brotherhood that slowly but surely expands.

There are people, both beginning members of the Theosophical Society and those interested in Theosophy, who sometimes feel desperate. They sometimes get the idea or feeling that breakthroughs or changes are not happening. This is not surprising, because when we look around us in today's world, we unfortunately still see a great deal of injustice, violence, hatred, and discontent. They begin to doubt whether what they are doing makes any sense, whether a better world is achievable, and they ask themselves: where are the tangible results? In this article, we explain that you can only find the answer to this question within yourself: you only perceive what you have developed within yourself, what lives within you. If you start from the Laws of Nature and bring them to life in your own life, then there is nothing left to despair about.

### **How our existence mainly takes place in the invisible realms**

Our thinking has not yet developed into perfect insight. As a result, we see the world through limited lenses. It is still difficult for the average person to recognize the limitations of certain ideas about reality. That is why there is so much focus in this world on what is outwardly perceptible, what is visible. This is strange in a way, because most of our lives take place in the invisible realm. Think about it. What we actually see with our senses is a tiny cross-section of reality. The spectrum of colors we perceive with our eyes is only a small part of an infinite spectrum of vibrations. What we perceive at one moment is gone a fraction of a second later and has become history. What most people see as the present or the here and now is only a tiny cross-section of eternal duration.

In everyday life, too, much of what we do is invisible. The thoughts we think, the knowledge and experience on

which we base our actions, what we communicate, the promises we make. Even if it is not expressed, that does not mean it does not exist.

This means that who we are is also largely invisible. We are no longer the child we once were. How we were raised is no longer apparent. The choices we have made in life are no longer externally discernible. Yet few people would deny that they were once children, that they had a certain upbringing, and that their choices in life have made them who they are today.

### **The outer world reflects the inner realms**

According to Theosophy, our character is the sum of our thoughts and actions from both this life and previous ones. We are not a blank slate when we reincarnate; we inherit ourselves from previous lives. Theosophy states that there is one absolute Reality, which precedes all that is manifested and limited. The boundless One Life flows through the entire cosmos, from the smallest to the largest we can imagine, visible and invisible. There are universal Laws of Nature in the living Cosmos, such as cyclicity and the law of Karma or cause and effect. This law states that every action produces a consequence that is similar in character. And that also applies to 'actions' such as thinking a thought, even if the effect or consequence is not (immediately) perceptible.

Theosophy also teaches us that life manifests itself in hierarchies from spiritual to material, from inner to outer. Just as thoughts can lead to actions and move toward the outer realm, so the outer world is a partial reflection of what is happening inwardly, in "invisible" realms. Things never happen by chance; they always arise from causes that were laid down earlier.

We humans are just one of many stages of consciousness in an infinite series. We learn to focus our consciousness from the external realm to increasingly internal realms, such as the realm of thought. Plants and animals, for example, are more focused on reacting instinctively to what comes their way in their external world. We humans, on the other hand, are learning to reflect on those experiences, to think ahead, and to use those thoughts to shape the external world to our liking.

We humans therefore work from an invisible inner realm of thought in this external visible realm.

Does all this mean that we should just believe things without ascertaining them, because so much takes place in invisible realms? No, because you yourself can investigate the reality behind the outward appearances, behind what

is visible. By learning to look at external matters not so much with the 'outer eye', but with the 'inner eye', looking at their causality. This does not mean that we deny the world we perceive with our senses, but that we interpret that world very differently with our thinking consciousness. Instead of seeing the outer world as the only reality – the narrow-minded idea that “what you don't see doesn't exist” – we come to understand that it is the result of a force that works behind it, within it, or through it. Based on a well-known Zen story, Gottfried de Purucker describes three stages of seeing Truth in line with this.<sup>(1)</sup>



The story tells of how someone comes to realize that the visible and invisible merge, from attributing reality to the visible through the invisible. When he sets out to investigate, he initially sees the mountains and rivers as just mountains and rivers. Then, at a certain point, he realizes that the mountains are not the mountains and the rivers are not the rivers. They are merely changeable external phenomena that arise from an underlying invisible force. A force that is more real and that we can call living consciousness. But then he realizes that, although the mountains and rivers are changing phenomena, they are not separate from the underlying force or consciousness, which is in fact everywhere and clothes itself in every

being, every atom, and is in essence also that atom. With his inner eye, he sees that everything is in fact one, visible and invisible.

### **You perceive what you have developed within yourself, what lives within you**

Theosophy helps us learn to see with that inner eye. By offering universal truths that have been tested time and again – and continue to be tested – by those who have gone before us. Theosophy teaches us that we are an integral part of the Whole. All realms therefore also exist within us, from the spiritual to the mental, from the psychical to the material. And we can therefore explore these within ourselves.

We can test these ideas ourselves. Take, for example, the law of Karma or cause and effect. This law states that every action will have a consequence that is similar in character to the action itself. The character of an action is often complex. If you exert force on an object, you will feel a counterforce that is equal to it in purely physical terms. But what we usually do not consider is that all our characteristics also play a role in this. For example, if the 'object' is a person's shoulder on which you place your hand, then, of course, your motive also plays a role. Is it an expression of affection or of disapproval? Without this necessarily being accompanied by words, depending on which of the motives, this will already trigger a related emotional response in the recipient. Moreover, the action is accompanied by all kinds of thoughts in the mental realm. Thus, in all kinds of areas, there is an interaction of forces, of actions and reactions.

Sometimes the effects are immediate, sometimes delayed. For example, you may only hear a reaction to something you said much later on. And so, certain consequences only take place in subsequent lives.

If you don't start from this law, you will simply accept many things that seem to happen by chance and not think about them any further. You may then be less likely to question yourself when someone reacts to you in a certain way.

If you do assume this law to be true, you can start looking for patterns. You will then assume that there is a connection between everything you experience. You will be more inclined to investigate which characteristics underlie certain events and also which characteristics determine how you react or would like to react.

In short, what you perceive and how you interpret it depends on how broad your view of reality is. You can only



recognize that part of infinite reality that you have explored and experienced as true.

If you are actively engaged in recognizing the unity of life, you will be more likely to see opportunities to put this unity into practice. You perceive what you have developed within yourself, what lives within you, like a carpenter who sees the world through the eyes of a carpenter. Universal ideas slowly but surely become increasingly alive within you, and you begin to realize them more and more. The invisible becomes visible. You perceive patterns, you recognize universal laws that others completely miss.

If you live from this understanding of inner causes, you will also understand why some things come to fruition in a day, and other seeds need several lifetimes to germinate. When you see that this is how it works, that things change from the inside out, you will not so easily fall into the trap of attaching yourself to visible results as a consequence of inner work. As the *Bhagavad-Gītā* says: be careful that the fruit of the action does not disappear because of your attachment to it.<sup>(2)</sup> The advice: act without acting. In other words, without attachment to the result. As Lao-tsu says: the wise man does nothing, but leaves nothing undone. Forget yourself in working on your ideals.

### Help from inner realms

If you work from this trust in universal laws, the Dharma or Law, from the knowledge that if you do your best, sooner or later it will bear fruit, no matter how remote the realization of the ideal may seem, then nothing will hold you back. And you will experience that you are not alone.

You are never alone if you do not behave as if you are alone, if you always act from the awareness that you are one with others. If you forget yourself, you cannot be alone. The paradox is, as our theosophical Teacher Gottfried de Purucker writes: “by forgetting yourself, you will find your Self”. And by this Self with a capital letter, or our Higher Self, we mean the channel to higher inner realms of consciousness, from which inspiration always flows, which we sometimes receive as intuitions of wisdom and compassion.

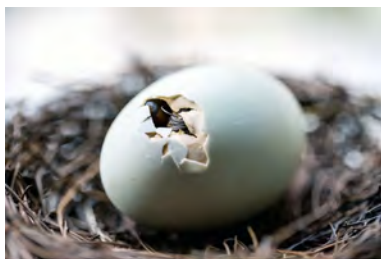
We started this article with the question: “What has this impulse brought about after 150 years?” Anyone who

brings the ideals of Theosophy to life in their own life will at some point no longer ask this question, because they themselves have become an expression of the impulse.

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# The challenge that freedom offers us

**Freedom. Few things evoke such a wide range of associations as freedom. In all its forms and types: freedom – or the lack thereof – is always a factor in our thinking and therefore in our perception of the world. In this article, we want to show how our thinking about freedom puts us to the test.**

On the world stage, we see examples of war, oppression and injustice in which everything that should be free is held hostage en masse in a stifling lack of freedom. On the other hand, in this same world, we see examples of actions to protect and help people everywhere and to stand up for freedom of thought and action. These are two extremes.

What is freedom? Let us mention three different examples that show how difficult it is to speak in absolute terms of (un)freedom.

We rightly regard freedom of expression as a great good. But a statement that deliberately contains inaccuracies or lies is sometimes unjustly presented as an opinion. Another example is the freedom of parents to raise their children in accordance with their own beliefs. This is also a great good. But if the child is not given the opportunity to learn to think independently because of a narrow-minded environment, this hinders his freedom to develop his potential.

And then there is the criminal who, in his cell, comes to the realization that he must change his life. Is he as unfree as the criminal next to him who is already plotting his next crime?

Thus, we see that freedom does indeed offer a golden ray of light on external and internal peace and development, but also that it imposes conditions on us. We must have the ethical awareness that freedom is the foundation of a dignified and just existence for everyone. A freedom that is anchored in society, so that individual freedom can never be elevated above the common good. We must always take each other into account.

The essence of what freedom means lies in thinking. After all, we are thinkers. Only with our thinking do we determine how we deal with freedom — regardless of how free we are, or think we are. H.P. Blavatsky describes human freedom of thought as: (...) a fundamental and essential prerogative, that of untrammelled and entire liberty of thought and conscience.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Key thoughts

- » The essence of freedom lies in our thinking.
- » Freedom without responsibility is a utopia.
- » We do not *have* free will, we *are* free will.
- » Happiness is the freedom to help humanity.

A fundamental and essential prerogative! Because as human beings, we are able to perceive thoughts *of our choice*, to embody them — or to ignore them. Of course, there is a risk involved as well: this freedom does not impose any conditions on the ethical quality of the thoughts we use, consciously or less consciously. It is not without reason that Blavatsky also mentions conscience, which can strongly influence the ethical content of a thought. The meaning we attach to freedom is, of course, highly dependent on many external factors. If we live in a free country, with social conditions that allow us to express ourselves freely, and if we are not burdened by psychological and physical problems, then we can experience this as a fairly great freedom. But such relative prosperity does present us with challenges. Do we use that freedom to be aware of what is happening in the world, or are we attached to a comfortable life without much interest in all that does not affect us directly?

### **Further developing our thinking skills**

This brings us to the focus or direction of our thinking. Therefore, we need to look at human beings as composite beings, made up of different aspects of consciousness. Everything is consciousness, and the natural cooperation between these aspects is aimed at increasingly expressing and *activating* the noble, spiritual faculties of our consciousness. These are our steps on the spiritual ladder of evolution that reaches to unlimited horizons.

Further developing our thinking abilities makes us more human. This concerns the spiritual quality of thinking, and not so much just our intellectual IQ. In this process, our personality is the 'I am I' that experiences life from its own position. On the path of spiritual development, we are the student-thinker. But we have already progressed so far that we can also perceive qualities of consciousness that go beyond identification with the 'I'. *If we want to*. If we know how to focus our thoughts in such a way that we learn to experience Nature as Unity. And therefore, there are no alternatives to cooperation and brotherhood. In this way, we can grow from personal thinking to supra-personal thinking by activating our buddhic faculties. In this way, we develop love for all that lives, and our personality plays a serving role in this. We move from I-am-I to *I-am*.

### **Experiencing freedom**

This naturally translates into a difference in the experience of freedom. In short: the personal freedom to satisfy the self versus the supra-personal freedom to serve the com-

mon good. The path of our spiritual development lies in choosing the common good. This is a process that takes many lifetimes.

On the path from personal to supra-personal thinking, we must learn to free ourselves from the stress of wanting to achieve something for the benefit of our personal lives. We often cultivate this stress under pressure from our social and societal environment and also from our upbringing. Thoughts are living beings, and the more we feed them, the more powerful they become. With the thoughts and actions that follow, we also build up karma. As eternal pilgrims, we attract the consequences of a stressful, self-centered life, but also those of a selfless life.

Of course, one fine day we can take the radical decision to be exclusively supra-personal from now on, but we will always have to deal with our karmically accumulated causes and consequences. That need not deter us from such a radical decision; let us not hesitate about that. But in order to purify the contents of our karmic backpack, we must also give ourselves time to grow in supra-personalism. And we can certainly experience that process as 'happiness'.

In the first century AD, the Stoic philosopher Seneca stated that cooperating with Nature is "a journey to happiness". How can we achieve that happiness, according to Seneca? "By rejecting pleasure and pursuing only virtue."<sup>(2)</sup> In a society where entertainment and enjoyment occupy such a prominent place, many people will not follow Seneca's advice and will not observe the responsibilities that come with it.

### **Freedom and responsibility**

Being free in our thinking means that we are free to choose virtue or pleasure. The thoughts we employ for this entail corresponding responsibilities. Freedom without responsibility is a utopia, not only in the external world but certainly also in our thinking.

People who put their own interests and comfort first are sometimes accused of having little sense of responsibility. But it is rather a one-sided focus in thinking. How does it work?

Thoughts are very primitive life forms. Thinking is, in fact, the perception of thoughts. Our consciousness is the director of the transmitter/receiver of our thoughts, and therefore, we are responsible for all incoming and outgoing 'traffic'. The less aware we are of this process, the less selective we are in our directing. And responsibility, as a higher quality of thinking, is something which requires selecting.

Our conscience, the light of the ethical lessons we have gathered from our previous lives, wants to help us with that selection, like a warning light. When the light is on because we are in danger of making an unethical choice, we will recognize our responsibility very clearly.

By putting the common good first – virtue as our guide – we also see through the illusion of personal freedom. Then we are free from the addictive need for pleasure. And then we can weave the spiritual impulses we receive through supra-personal thinking, into our habits, and thus also into our character. The old rule is true: sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character.

To be clear, pleasure has nothing to do with the happiness Seneca speaks of. The personality within us often sees freedom as the ability to choose pleasure at any moment. But ultimately, personal, self-centered pleasure is not liberating. It is addictive, whereas the pursuit of virtue is truly liberating. With self-control, for example, we remain master of ourselves and do not allow ourselves to be carried away by all kinds of temptations. Courage gives us more opportunities to act, even in circumstances that others shy away from.

In virtue we find true, lasting happiness. This happiness is the joy of the freedom to experience how we can help humanity with supra-personalism, or to put it more broadly: to serve Life.

## Freedom and free will

What does free will mean to us as human beings? It means that, in any situation, we have a choice. That choice may be extremely limited by all kinds of circumstances, but we are always free to focus our thoughts, to select the thoughts that seem right to us. It is also good to view free will in the theosophical sense: we do not actually *have* free will, but we *are* free will. Free will springs from our highest Self, our essential core that imposes no limitations on our inherent abilities.<sup>(3)</sup> Herein lies the essential freedom on the path of our spiritual evolution. A beautiful quote from Gottfried de Purucker shows it:

**We are drops in the ocean of Cosmic Life, and the heart of each such drop contains its portion of that Cosmic Ocean's free will. And a man's free will becomes progressively freer precisely in proportion as he can outgrow his humanity and become more divine, which means become more alike unto his own inner center of being, the heart of things, the heart of the Universe, Parabrahman, THAT.<sup>(4)</sup>**

This is the sublime beauty of freedom to grow towards spiritual Light. Regardless of whether we live in relatively safe and comfortable circumstances or in difficult and life-threatening situations, this invitation from Nature itself is always there for everyone.

When we reflect on all this, it is instructive to consider the extent to which the essence of what freedom should mean worldwide has already taken shape. And in line with this, we can also understand why this is not yet the case for large parts of humanity. We see oppressive, authoritarian regimes and unstable democracies, but we also see international organizations that promote peace and freedom and are committed, for example, to protecting the environment and providing aid to the many millions of people in need. We also see the many forms of legislation and regulation that are intended to guarantee freedom and justice where people fail to do so themselves. And the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a good example of how important freedom and human dignity are in today's world.

We are faced with the choice of living for ourselves or dedicating our lives to the greater good. Will we heed the call of our higher self to explore and embrace our spiritual potential, or not? We have the freedom to develop ourselves further, to rid ourselves of our bondage. For ourselves and for the world. That is the challenge that freedom offers us.

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# Theosophical education

## Key thoughts

- » The development of the child into adulthood is the reactivation of the qualities that the child already possessed at the end of his previous incarnation.
- » The goal of theosophical education is to develop all levels of qualities in the child, with each quality taking its rightful place and function in the whole person.
- » In this article, we discuss six important ‘pillars’ of theosophical education. These are partly put into practice in 20th and 21st century educational innovations.
- » The central aim is the Rāja Yoga principle: familiarizing the child with his own inner ethical compass, enabling him to face life’s challenges with understanding, hope, and courage.
- » It all starts with us as educators being real examples ourselves to inspire children.

**How would education and upbringing be shaped by the principle of the underlying Unity — the central principle of all major religions and philosophies in the world? How do we raise our children in the light of universal laws such as reincarnation and karma? The purpose of this article is to provide a broad view of this, including a number of suggestions for putting the principles into practice.**

There is an overwhelming amount of opinions and theories about education and upbringing in the world. In which direction should education and the school system develop in our current times? Ideas on this subject go in all directions. Should we return to more traditional language and math lessons in primary school? Or should there be more room for creativity and understanding, so that our pupils can cope with our rapidly changing society? And let us remember: children and young people are the ones to whom we adults must pass on our civilization.

We begin with the question: when is education *theosophical* education? It is education based on Universal Wisdom, on the essential knowledge and insights that lie in and behind all the great philosophies and spiritual impulses in the world. What has been made known of that Universal Wisdom since 1875 is called Theosophy. Theosophical education is based on knowledge of what Man is and what

the meaning of life is. Only with a certain understanding of these great questions of life will you be able to wisely guide children and young people into adulthood.

## What is Man?

So, first we need to get a picture of who we really are. We humans – in fact, all beings – are *centers of consciousness*. We are not our body, but we are a spiritual, imperishable center of life that works through the body. And we can better understand ourselves, as total human beings, through the threefold division of spirit, soul and body.

Our *spiritual core* is rooted in the spiritual-divine realms and is an inseparable part of Boundless Life. It is a spark of it. It is therefore also imperishable: uncreated and ‘indestructible’. And as an inseparable part of Boundless Life, our consciousness carries within it all the potentials and powers of Boundless Life. An amazing idea, to ponder at length.

In addition to our spiritual core, the Heart of our being, we as humans are also a *soul*, our thinking consciousness. Our soul, in turn, expresses itself in each incarnation in an *outer vehicle* or physical instrument.

What is our soul? It is the link between our spirit and our outer instrument. Our daily active consciousness is seated in that intermediate part. And for us humans, our active consciousness is our *thinking faculty*, our ability to perceive thoughts and to consciously focus on certain thoughts by giving them attention. Our soul contains all the qualities that we have developed so far from our limitless potential, during our previous lives and our current life. Our soul is, as it were, the 'current stage' of our continuous growth process.

We need our temporary, transitory instrument to gain experience in the outer world and fulfill our tasks here: to play our role in the totality of Life. That instrument consists of more than just our physical body that we can see; it also includes our astral body, which is slightly more ethereal than our physical body, as well as our vital energies and our power of desire. We let go of those four elements when we die and are ready for a more spiritual period of rest.

Life after life, we activate, develop and express our dormant abilities. This is a process of development *from the inside out*, in which we learn to express in our soul what we carry latently in our spiritual essence. Our insights and skills do not come from outside; they are not put there from outside. They are the fruits of self-development. We have been engaged in this process of self-development for countless lives, and we will need countless more lives to perfect our human potential.

## **The fundamental urge to develop our potential**

In every human being there is a fundamental urge, from his deepest Core, to realize more and more of his dormant potentials in his daily consciousness (soul). We can see the workings of this fundamental urge in every child. The child wants to express itself and get to know the world. At least, if the educators do not nip those impulses in the bud. These theosophical principles explain why we all come into the world with a unique character and a unique set of qualities. After all, that is exactly what we have developed up to this life. In that respect, we are all unique.

What does the developmental process of a child entail? Growing up as a child to adulthood is the *reactivation of the characteristics that the child already possessed at the end of*

*his previous incarnation*: his spiritual, mental, psychological, and physical qualities. This implies something very important for all educators and teachers: every child is a reincarnating being, an eternal pilgrim, whom we now have temporarily under our care. We are responsible for guiding its *self*-development until the child is mature and his free will is fully active again, so that he can continue his evolutionary journey independently. Until he has reached the stage of adulthood: then our protective and guiding task as parents, grandparents, or teachers is accomplished.

## **The broader, universal, sustainable qualities in our thinking**

If we want to give a child the best possible chance to grow into a *complete* human being, with his (potential) spiritual, mental, psychological, and physical-emotional qualities, it is very useful to distinguish between the seven levels of thought that every human being can focus on. We will discuss all seven:

Our two *universal* characteristics or levels of thinking allow us to look deeper and give us an understanding of the causes behind all external things. They belong to our permanent, imperishable nature. As a result, we see what all people have in common, what even all beings have in common. Then we realize that we are part of a Unity from which we can never depart. That, precisely because this unity exists, we are responsible for every action, because all our actions influence all our fellow human beings.

Those two higher aspects of thought are our sense of unity (the most universal) and our capacity for comprehension. We can experience the workings of our capacity for comprehension when we really understand something, sometimes in a flash: seeing a connection, gaining a clearer overview of a situation. Sometimes this happens spontaneously. Then we call it intuition.

And the third aspect of thinking, viewed 'from top to bottom', is our intellect, our analytical ability. This enables us to organize all phenomena logically. But with our intellect alone, we cannot look deeper than the exterior of things, the processes of the outer world. In order to understand the processes behind them, such as reincarnation and karma, we need our comprehension and unity thinking.

These three higher thinking abilities form our *supra-personal* thinking. This is a very appropriate term, because all three types of thinking mentioned are broader, more universal, and more enduring than our personal (changing) moods, our ego-centered desires, and any hobbyhorses in our personal views.

## Our externally focused, instrumental levels of thinking

In addition, we also have four levels of thinking that are focused on our functioning in the outer world. They belong to our temporary instrument in this incarnation. They are therefore transient. They enable us to live and work in the external world: to fulfill our tasks. They consist of four levels, which are, from etheric to material: our power of desire (the ability within us to pursue and achieve our goals); our thinking focused on vitality (our drive to act); our emotional thinking (our feelings, which are strongly linked to our senses) and, as the most material aspect of thinking, our thinking that identifies with the ups and downs of our physical body.

These four levels of thinking form our *personal* thinking, because they are limited by their nature and often ‘emotionally colored’.

When you look at this total picture, you will quickly come to the conclusion *that we cannot do without any of these seven thinking aspects*. Otherwise, we humans would be lacking. At the same time, we recognize the importance of learning to base the important decisions in our lives on our sense of unity, our understanding, and our reasonable thinking, so, our transpersonal thinking. Only then will we be able to see beyond the ups and downs of our own outer personality — beyond our personal thinking, which is, so to speak, ‘short-sighted’.

## Core objectives of theosophical education

With these seven qualities in mind, we can now clearly discern the two core objectives of theosophical education:

1. To stimulate the child in such a way that he can bring all seven of his mental faculties to relatively full development, *to the point where he was in his previous life*.
2. And secondly, to impart the knowledge and skills that the child needs to find his way in outer life, in the ins and outs of family, school, and society as a whole. This type of knowledge is culture- and time-dependent and must be learned by each incarnating human ego after his rebirth.

The first type of guidance can rightfully be called *education*. The word education comes from the Latin word ‘to lead out’, *e-ducere*. The goal of theosophical education is to develop, to unfold, all qualities that lie in the child, *whereby each quality will take its rightful place and*

*function in the whole Human Being*. In this way, you equip the child for the art of LIVING, which means much more than just taking care of the child’s outward well-being. You familiarize the child with its own inner compass, enabling it to see the many challenges of life in a clear light and to face them with courage and inner self-confidence. This aim can never be reached by imposing our beliefs and standards on the child, but to give the child the opportunities to develop its own inner wisdom and spiritual vision. We help it to be spiritually reborn. We are a spiritual midwife for this reincarnating ego. And if you do this in a balanced way, guided by understanding, reason and cautiousness, you give the child enough time to process everything itself, to search out things for itself, stimulating a balanced inner growth.

The second type of guidance can best be called *instruction*, from the Latin verb *in-struere*, which means something like ‘to build up in an orderly manner’. Instruction and education are both necessary, because only then can a person function in the world as a complete human being.

## Rāja Yoga education

Theosophical education is also called *Rāja Yoga education*. ‘Rāja’ means ‘royal’, and ‘yoga’ means union. Together: royal union. The combination means: making your daily consciousness so compassionate and understanding that you unite your mind with the Divinity within you. It means: opening your spiritual windows to receive its inspiring rays and translate them into practice. So, you do not have to bring the divine in from outside, because you already are it. It is always THERE. It is the source of everything noble in us. We can learn to express the divine within us, just as seeds germinate when we give them care, good soil and water.

In terms of education, *Rāja Yoga education means: stimulating the child to achieve Self-knowledge and acquire Self-guidance*. Even from a very young age, we can teach children to recognize the difference between their own social and helpful Self and their ego-centered, greedy self. And that understanding gives them the golden key to let the former guide the latter.

These principles of Rāja Yoga are very old. Katherine Tingley, the third leader of the Theosophical Society Point Loma, applied these principles in the education and teaching of children and young people. In 1900, she founded the *Rāja Yoga School*, at the site of the then international headquarters on the Point Loma peninsula in California.<sup>(1)</sup> That school operated until the 1930s, and



At the Rāja Yoga School of Katherine Tingley, the pupils made music every day.

many thousands of children and young people received their education and training there. The school was a very international community, as the children came from many parts of the globe.

### **Some basic principles of Rāja Yoga education**

We will now present some important principles of Rāja Yoga education, offering you a number of universally valid building blocks, that you yourself can translate into practice attuned to your own situation. These are the building blocks of an inspiring ideal that we can continually enlarge and deepen. There is certainly much more to say about it than we will do now, but our intention is to give hints rather than to be supposedly ‘complete’.

We will discuss the following pillars:

- Creating a harmonious, selfless living environment.
- Paying much more attention to awakening the child’s potential than to having the child imitate things from outside.
- Developing true self-discipline.
- Cooperation, never competition.
- Learning to understand each child’s individual character, and to attune to it.
- Focusing much less on isolated facts than on comprehensive insight.

We will now explore these educational pillars one by one and give examples of how you could put them into practice, especially in schools.

### ***Creating a harmonious, selfless living environment***

The first pillar is creating a harmonious environment in which people care for one another. This is the first condition for putting a reincarnating ego under our care back on the path to its own inner divinity. And by living environment, we do not only mean the physical surroundings, but above all the sphere of influence that all the inhabitants of a house, or all the people in a school or some other organization, radiate.

And what do we radiate? That is our own character, what we really are as consciousness. In other words, we radiate our thoughts, and these can have any of the seven characteristics mentioned above as their keynote.

The key to theosophical education is therefore sincere, understanding love on the part of the

educators — which is quite different from emotional love, which is often blind and personal. To love selflessly, we do not need extensive intellectual knowledge. Parents who have had few educational opportunities may give their children much more things of lasting value than parents who have a lot of external knowledge but have forgotten the spiritual and ethical foundations of life.

Therefore, being an educator or teacher really requires something: not to be, so-called, ‘perfect’, but to be constantly willing to learn, to reflect, become wiser, and become more universal. To focus our thinking as much as possible on unity, understanding, and idealism, and to learn to control the personal elements in us. Only those who engage in daily *self-education* and *self-reform* can encourage the same habit in others. Then we will be able to inspire young people. Then we will not be ‘playing’ the role of parent or teacher, but we *will be* it.

### ***Awakening the potential that lies WITHIN the child***

The second pillar is: awakening the potential that lies WITHIN the child. As mentioned above, all inner growth takes place through the development from within of the divine, spiritual, mental and outer potencies that every child has.

Due to the enormous emphasis currently placed in our society on success in external life, attention to the true human being in the pupil is often neglected. After all, as we hear so often, you also have to meet all the final exam

requirements. And without good grades, you have less chance of getting a good education and job later on. Nevertheless, we believe that if we recognize the importance of children's immortal capacities, the world would look very different than it does now: because then we would remove the sources of ambition, greed, and indifference.

In theosophical education, you awaken all the abilities, powers, and tendencies in the child *in such a way* that the child simultaneously learns to control his lower abilities by means of his higher abilities. Then he learns to channel them into valuable pursuits.

Intellectual development is a natural part of this overall education, but so are all other capacities, whether dormant or active: artistic, philosophical, social, psychological, physical, emotional, religious, and scientific: simply everything.

In practical terms, this means that young people are engaged every day in the development of all these aspects of their consciousness: theoretical subjects can be alternated with practical crafts – building a wooden bench together, for example – and with music, drama, going outside and working in a garden, helping to care for bees, or having a philosophy discussion group. And, of course, gym and sports. At the Rāja Yoga school at the theosophical headquarters in California, between 1900 and 1940, the girls did just as much sports and gym as the boys, which was definitely progressive at the time.

At that Rāja Yoga school, music and theater were a fully integrated part of life. So it was not just preparing a one-time musical at the end of the school year (which is valuable in itself), no, you were actively practicing music and theater *every day*, and even from a very young age. Music and symbolic drama, selected with insight, can appeal directly to the spiritual Heart life of human beings.

### ***Developing true self-discipline***

Another important aspect of theosophical education is the development of true self-discipline. This has nothing to do with coercion, threats, or social pressure. True self-discipline stems from *insight and a sense of community*, and is not a struggle or internal battle, but a choice for collective happiness rather than individual happiness. Such insight can only flourish without external pressure.

But guidance is needed: the child must learn to see the difference between his selfless Self and his 'me-first' self. True self-discipline is the fruit of Self-knowledge. The word 'discipline' is derived from *disciple*, pupil; it is there-

fore something that everyone can learn. Namely, that there are two forces in our human consciousness competing for dominance: our three more universal levels of thinking and our four materially oriented levels of thinking. Both of these forces are necessary, but only one of them can be in charge at any given moment. From an early age, you can let your sense of justice and community spirit take the lead and subordinate your instincts and external desires and wishes whenever necessary. Then you learn to take responsibility for your thoughts and actions. Then you stand up for the things you say YES to.

An important point here is: never punish the child or young person. Punishment means trying to frighten a child. This actually reinforces his animalistic selfishness, rather than his understanding of his role in the whole. In the Philippines, there is the *Golden Link College*, a school founded by Vic Hao Chin, a Theosophist. It is worth looking up more information about the *Golden Link College* on the internet.<sup>(2)</sup> At that school, punishment is never used, nor are threats made. Only on a reasonable basis are all children consulted when there are problems.

### ***Cooperation, never competition***

Another insight is: cooperation, never competition. The tendency to want to be better than others, to be the best at schoolwork, gym, or art, is one of the major sources of the world's problems. Think of the countries that are competing for political and economic power and trying to acquire as many of the world's raw materials as possible for themselves. Or think of religious groups that view all those who think differently as inferior, sinful, or misguided. A wise education strikes the opposite tone: every human being is equal, whether or not that *fact* suits the high opinion we may have of ourselves.

There are so many possibilities for cooperation: from thinking together with the students about what the class rules should be, to doing group projects, and the student council, and all kinds of services that the pupils can provide in the neighborhood for the benefit of the neighborhood residents.

What is the principle of theosophical cooperation? It is this: you make your family or school a *mini-society*, in which everyone contributes his talents and abilities to the development of the whole, and in which each supports and encourages each other to make that contribution. We once heard of a school in Scandinavia where many retired elderly people deliberately play a role. There, the students interact with people of all ages on a daily basis.

### *Attuning education to the individual character of the child*

This brings us to the next pillar we want to present to you: attuning education to the individual character of the child. Many schools today recognize the importance of this. But there lies a major difficulty in the fact that classes in the Netherlands are relatively large. This often means that you only have a minute and a half per lesson for each pupil. At the Raja Yoga school in Point Loma, all students lived in groups of up to 12-13 children. Each group lived in a round house, always with a mentor. This allowed the mentor to get to know the children very well. During the classroom lessons, the groups were also never larger than 12-13. After all, every child arrives in this incarnation with a different baggage of experiences and insights. Not every child has learned the same amount of spiritual lessons in previous lives. Each child therefore needs a unique approach: to awaken and nurture the understanding and idealistic sides of himself, and to compensate for any one-sidedness in his character.

### *Placing all separate facts within comprehensive insights*

Finally, a principle of theosophical education that is certainly not the least important: placing all separate facts within overarching concepts. What is the value of factual knowledge, or of memorizing mathematical tricks, if you do not know what it is about or what that trick does? A different, more integrated approach to all standard subjects is possible: including languages, science, mathematics, history and geography. The principle is: first build a

coherent picture before filling in that overall picture with details. Then you *first* appeal to the student's imaginative powers. This increases his insight. And experience shows that such an understanding is not easily forgotten, unlike the dry facts he has memorized.

In geography, for example, you can start by looking at planet Earth from space and studying those images together. In languages, you can start with precisely those words that appeal to our higher aspects of thinking. In Tingley's Rāja-Yoga School, the first language lessons for young children began with the three words 'attention', 'concentration', and 'perseverance' — and especially what they mean. That may sound surprising when you think about how most schools start with language today.

In mathematics, you can start by letting children discover that the shape of all objects around them is based on just a few basic mathematical shapes. In history, you can discuss the question with your students: when is someone a hero? So, who are our heroes? Which people from the past are worthwhile to look up information about?

You can also integrate subjects. A few years ago, a school was founded in The Hague, the *John Dewey College*, which in principle attempts to transfer all knowledge through integrated, cross-curricular projects, which is very progressive.

### **Educational reforms in the 20th and 21st centuries**

We have now built up a general picture of how you can implement and develop theosophical education, as a first step. H.P. Blavatsky and her successors William Quan

Judge, Katherine Tingley, and Gottfried de Purucker provided inspiring ideas on this subject, based on Universal Wisdom.<sup>(3)</sup> And it is a fact that at least some of these ideas can be found back in the present field of education. Various innovative forms of education attempt to put those ideas into practice to a greater or lesser extent. Just think of the approach of the Montessori, Dalton, and Steiner schools, or de Vredesschool ('School of peace') in Almere.

And for many schools, it is no longer just a matter of memorizing facts; teachers try to instill a certain understanding in their pupils. But it is clear that there are still major inner steps to be taken in the field of education.



Classroom in John Dewey's experimental 'Crow Island Elementary School' in Winnetka, Illinois. Photo from 1940, when the school had just opened.

## The common thread running through these ‘pillars’

There is a common thread running through these pillars of theosophical education, which can be expressed in three ideas:

\* *The essence of theosophical education lies in our sense of unity:* based on the fact that we all originate from the same Universal Source. This sense of unity directly gives rise to our sense of connectedness and equality: towards every human being, towards children or grandparents, towards neighbors, towards friends or so-called enemies. We know that we are *one*, in our immortal core, with the immortal core of the other.

In the case of a child, this is a fellow human being who has returned to earth life, with whom we have already shared joys and sorrows in several incarnations. Because according to the karmic law, the law of cause and effect, we are always attracted to the people with whom we have worked together in the past, or with whom we have been in conflict. Our children are our children for a reason, and the teacher has students who are his or her students for a reason. We have already worked and lived with them in previous lives. Perhaps our current children were our parents back then.

\* *Be convinced of the inner possibilities within yourself.* Theosophical education can be put into practice under all circumstances. It is not something vague that is far away, or for which you first have to become a Buddha. If you start living according to your own ideals and insights, you will always find opportunities while learning and trying.

\* *Be also convinced of the inner possibilities of every child.* Parents and teachers can make big mistakes in this regard, for example by saying to a child: “Oh, but you will never be able to do that: you cannot sing, you have no talent for math.” Or more subtly: “You do not need to learn that, it is only for those pupils who go to college.” That has fatal consequences. Everyone can learn everything, of course at his own pace. Children are generally capable of much more than is commonly believed.

A striking example of how to reach the higher thinking of adolescents was given by a teacher in France. He worked at a school with students who were known to be very difficult, in short, a kind of ‘last chance education’. He taught French and every lesson he came up with a quote from one of the great French thinkers or writers, phrased in beautiful French: a quote that really made you think. And that quote was discussed and then given a serial number. All the students had to memorize the sentence and its

serial number.

Each lesson began like this: the teacher would call out a number, and a student would come forward and recite that quote. So, the idea was repeated over and over. And it went on like that for a number of quotes. Later, a student who had been in his class said: I still remember almost all of them, and I have carried those ideas with me throughout my life. It is just one example, but it shows that you should not underestimate even the ‘difficult’ students.

## And then: *self-education*

When we reach adulthood, we enter the important phase of self-education. We then make all important life choices independently. By the age of 21, we have developed our free will to the point where we were in our previous life. We can and must now take full responsibility for every decision we make and its consequences.

Those who realize that our life is one in a continuous series of lives will understand the golden opportunity that adulthood offers us: we can NOW make our thinking and acting deeper, broader, and nobler than it was at the end of our previous life. We can overcome all kinds of weaknesses and thus mean more to our environment: spiritually and materially. We can work purposefully toward a way of life that is much more harmonious and peaceful than what the world generally is today.

And we do this through self-guided efforts, or *self-guided evolution*. In short: as adults, we can give our thinking and our lives a more compassionate color and tone. That choice lies before us, every day.

## References

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1. For more information about the principles of the Rāja Yoga School at Point Loma, see the report of our symposium ‘Rāja Yoga Education of the Reincarnating Child’ in *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, number 2, June 2015.
2. See, for example: <http://theosophy.ph/goldenlinkcollege.html>.
3. See, among others: H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*. Many editions. Section XIII, chapter ‘Theosophy and Education’; K. Tingley, *The Wisdom of the Heart*. Many editions. Chapter VII, ‘Basic Principles of True Education’; G. de Purucker, ‘Young Folk and Theosophy’. In: *Wind of the Spirit*. 1st edition. Covina, California, Theosophical University Press, 1944, p. 108-110 and ‘Common Sense in the Home’, p. 138-142. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/gottfried-de-purucker/>)



# The birth chart

## Backgrounds of astrology, part 4

### Key thoughts

» We humans live within the sphere of influence of a hierarchical group of cosmic beings. Our human life path is therefore inextricably intertwined with the lives and cycles of these cosmic beings.

» We are reborn on Earth at that moment in which the position of the planets, the Sun and the zodiac, and thus their combined influence, corresponds to our own character.

» Our character is the essential characteristic of our consciousness: no two beings in the Cosmos are exactly the same. We are constantly developing – hopefully ennobling – our character in a certain direction through the thoughts we are now thinking. Our birth chart is thus a ‘snapshot in time’.

» You can use horoscopes to think deeply about the connection we humans have with cosmic beings, and about our responsibility to more advanced and less advanced beings.

In our series of articles on the background of astrology, we have now come to the question of what a birth chart is, why it reflects our character and what parts it consists of. We will also discuss its possible usefulness. In doing so, we will build on the overall picture we outlined in the previous three installments.<sup>(1)</sup>

### What is a birth horoscope?

A birth horoscope shows the position of the heavenly bodies and the signs of the zodiac at the time of a person’s birth, as seen from the place of birth. An example of a horoscope according to Western astrology is shown in the following illustration:

The center of the picture is your own position at birth. Successively from the outside to the inside you can see the 12 signs of the zodiac, the posi-

tion of the planets and the numbers of the Houses (the gray circle). And within this gray circle you see connecting lines, showing which planets make special angles with each other. The symbols represent the signs of the zodiac and the planets, and the dragon head and tail, which are the points where the Earth’s orbital plane intersects that of the Moon’s (see the tables to the right).



☉	Sun	♈	Aries
☾	Moon	♉	Taurus
☿	Mercury	♊	Gemini
♀	Venus	♋	Cancer
♂	Mars	♌	Leo
♃	Jupiter	♍	Virgo
♄	Saturn	♎	Libra
♅	Uranus	♏	Scorpio
♆	Neptune	♐	Sagittarius
♇	Pluto	♑	Capricorn
♈	Dragon's head	♒	Aquarius
♉	Dragon's tail	♓	Pisces

Example of a birth horoscope. The meanings of the symbols used are listed at the right. The dragon’s head and dragon’s tail are the two points in the sky where the plane of the Moon’s orbit around the Earth intersects with the plane of the Earth’s orbit around the Sun. These two points are always exactly opposite each other. In this horoscope you will find them in the sign of Pisces and Virgo.

## **Our consciousness is constantly evolving**

Is it true that our birth chart reflects our human character at the moment of birth? Yes, and in the coming paragraphs we will outline the reasons for this, its logic.

First and foremost, every being in the cosmos is a center of consciousness. It has, from its deepest spiritual core, the urge to bring out more and more of its cosmic potentialities and does so through the alternation of active life (embodying itself in the outer world) and spiritual rest in the inner realms. Each outer life offers a being opportunities to take another step forward, to expand and ennoble its consciousness.

So this also applies to us as human beings. Our consciousness is constantly evolving. When we were born in this incarnation, we already had a long – yes, *infinitely* long – past behind us. The qualities we had developed up to the moment of our birth, in our past lives, formed our character. Our character is self-created, and each incarnation offers us opportunities for inner growth, unfolding. It is ‘work in progress’. So our character during our birth is a snapshot in time.

## **What is our character?**

The question of what our character essentially is, has to do with profound teachings. For it is more than just the sum of all the thoughts, feelings and actions we have thought and done in our past lives. It is more than a certain mix of tendencies and abilities that we have developed. The spiritual core of each being has a different ‘color’ or characteristic. Therefore, no two beings in the gigantic cosmos are the same. In our literature this is called the ‘doctrine of self-becoming’ (in Sanskrit *Swabhāva*).<sup>(2)</sup> If we focus on our spiritual core, our higher nature will inspire our daily consciousness.

Thus, our character is not given to us by some deity, nor did it arise somehow by chance, but we have shaped it ourselves. We humans determine for ourselves in what direction we change our present character *now* by the direction we give to our present thoughts and desires, day by day. We shape our thought patterns ourselves and can therefore always reform them ourselves. Therefore, countless opportunities for growth lie indicated in each birth horoscope: spiritual, mental and psychological. Whether we use them or not, depends on our choices.

## **Why does a birth horoscope reflect a person’s character?**

Why does the position of the heavenly bodies during our

birth reflect our character? It is related to the fact that we humans – and all other beings – are inseparable parts of Cosmic Life, and the growth cycles we humans go through can never be separated from the larger cycles that the star beings of the celestial zodiac, the Solar Being and planetary beings go through. After all, we live *within* the spheres of influence of these cosmic beings.<sup>(3)</sup>

That attunement is very precise. We are reborn on Earth at that moment, in which the position of the planets, the Sun and the zodiac – and thus their combined influence at that moment and at that place on Earth – *corresponds to our own character*.<sup>(4)</sup> Herein we see the exact working of cause and effect: the type of thoughts we were thinking in previous lives, the character we unfolded then, has the logical consequence that we are reborn on Earth at that particular moment.

Only then can we bring out what we are inwardly. Suppose we could be born into a culture and period with circumstances that are completely foreign to us (which would never happen, because ‘cause and effect’ is always operative) then the people and events would mean much less to us. Instead, we are always drawn to an environment that has meaning for us *because it reflects our own character*; both the harmonious sides of our character and the discordant ones. To give a concrete example: we encounter again the people with whom we had an affinity in any previous life, positive or negative. Both love and hate are binding forces.

Thus, the zodiac signs and planets do not ‘make’ our character. They reflect at the moment of our birth, through the synthesis of their characteristics, a cosmic condition to which we resonate very strongly. They display our character.

Therefore, you can use birth horoscopes to describe a person’s characteristics, broadly and even in detail, at the moment of their birth. At that moment, because, as mentioned, our birth chart is a snapshot. Astrologers usually choose the first breath as the starting moment, although there are other ideas about this. What choices we make in this incarnation determines the further development of our character.

## **The horoscope of organizations and other human communities**

Birth horoscopes can also be calculated at the birth (founding) of organizations or other partnerships, including, therefore, companies and countries. They too are ‘born’ in a sense.

One of the difficulties with the horoscopes of organizations, however, is that an organization (think of the United Nations, for example) always has several points in time that you can see as its starting point: when the idea for the organization was conceived by the initiators, when that idea was worked out, the first day the organization actually worked, the official opening, and so on.

### **What can you do with a birth horoscope?**

What can you do with it, with the knowledge of your birth horoscope? You can use it to get to know your characteristics (which, by the way, does not help every person, as it may also work as a handicap). You must always realize that if you let someone else interpret your horoscope, that interpretation carries the color and limitations of that astrologer's thinking.

Is it necessary to get to know yourself through a horoscope? Certainly not, as countless people have proven that you can develop deep self-knowledge without ever engaging in astrology. The direct path to self-knowledge is to study independently the nature of your thought streams and their karmic consequences. This requires honesty and balance. But there is great value in monitoring your thinking in this way, for you thereby call upon your own powers of discernment. You are training your own insightful potentials. In the Universal Wisdom course of the Theosophical Society Point Loma (TSPL), the student receives the instructions by which he can independently examine his thinking in order to learn to guide himself and thereby give wise direction to his life and destiny.

In this connection, it is also good to know that the calculation of personal horoscopes is something of the last few thousand years. In the further past there were civilizations that possessed much more knowledge of cosmos and man than our present civilization. The astrologers of that time used their knowledge only *for the good of the total community*. It was rarely, if ever, used for individuals, because the latter usually awakened the lower thought aspects of those involved: the desire to find a 'good' partner or to know when to open a store or to achieve commercial success. No, astrology in its original depths was then considered sacred knowledge to be exploited only in the service of humanity.

### **Why are horoscopes geocentric?**

We discussed this question in a previous installment in the series, but it makes sense to repeat it briefly when we talk about birth horoscopes. A birth horoscope shows the in-

fluences that act *on us* from different celestial directions, and is therefore naturally viewed *from our point of view*, from the Earth's point of view; in jargon: 'geo-centric'.<sup>(5)</sup>

You can compare it to the way we perceive wind. When we talk about a *north wind*, we say that from our point of view the wind comes from the north. But almost all wind currents are part of large vortices, so someone who is in a different place within that same vortex may experience that wind as a west or south wind. But for us, it is a north wind.

### **What data do we find in a birth horoscope?**

Western birth horoscopes are limited to three types of information, which one tries to combine: the *Earth* zodiac, the planets and the Houses, as we mentioned in the beginning of the article. We discussed the nature of the zodiac, planets and Houses in a previous article.<sup>(6)</sup> What we want to emphasize is that all possible types of characteristics in the cosmic beings are also *present in us*. As human beings, we are a cosmos in miniature, containing everything that the cosmos contains. As we have unfolded some characteristics much more than others, some of them are already active in us, while others are still largely latent.

We are now going to elaborate a little more on the role of these three elements in the birth horoscope, starting with the question: what is the difference between the celestial and Earthly zodiac?

### **The difference between the celestial and Earthly zodiac**

The celestial zodiac consists of 12 cosmic centers, located outside and around the Solar System, from which a great influence emanates to our Solar System. Each center has its own characteristic influence. 'Zodiac' is a Greek word and means 'circle of living beings'. These 12 centers, located on *the same* plane as that of the physical Solar System itself, we know as the 12 constellations. You know them: Aries, Taurus, and so around the circle. We can observe these constellations at night.

Well: the Earth revolves around the Sun in a year. If we look at which constellation is behind the Sun every year on March 21, we see that it changes very slowly. Every 2160 years (on March 21) there is a different constellation behind our Sun. In 72 years – you can say one human incarnation – the Sun moves up an angle of 1 degree. Currently, the Sun is in the sign of Aquarius, with the previous era, the Age of Pisces, having ended fairly recently. So, in 2160 years we will be living in the Age of

Capricorn, the subsequent sign.

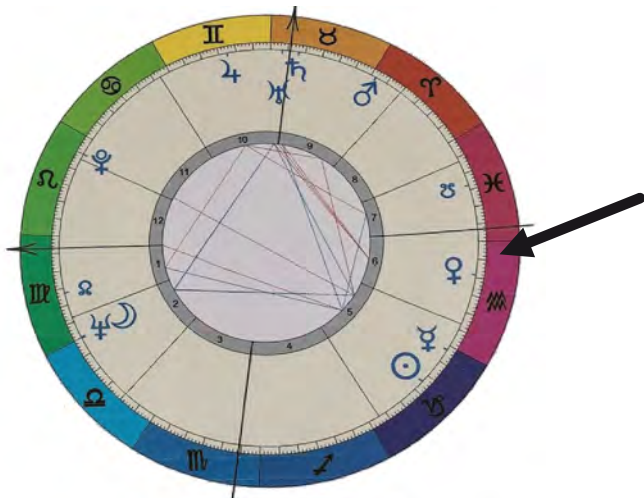
Why does the Sun make a journey through the zodiac in this way (from our point of view)? This is because the Earth's axis is spinning very slowly.

Now we come to the Earth zodiac, and what the difference is between the celestial and Earth zodiac. In the previous astrology articles, we pointed out *that each being has its own zodiac, which you can think of as a 'repetition in miniature' of the celestial zodiac.* As above, so below. Our planet Earth has its own zodiac, its 'circle of power centers' around it. The position of that Earth zodiac is linked to our Earth sphere. As a result, *it always aligns with our four seasons.* Around March 21 the Sun always enters the sign of Aries of the Earth zodiac, around April 21 it always enters the sign of Taurus, and so on, all along the zodiac, during one year. So in this case, there is no small shift, every year.<sup>(7)</sup>

The twelve characteristic forces in the celestial Zodiac we call 'constellations' in our articles. These same forces in the Earth zodiac, we call 'signs', to discern one from the other. Indian astrology uses the celestial zodiac in its calculations, and therefore in drawing horoscopes. Western astrology pays no attention to the celestial zodiac. So, theosophically, both have grounds for their respective choices.

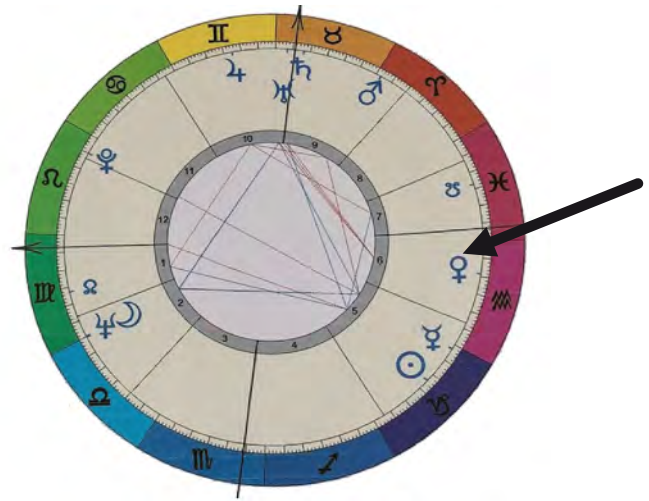
### The 12 signs in the horoscope

We will now go through the three basic components of a birth horoscope. And we always use the same horoscope as an illustration.



You see the 12 signs of the Earth zodiac depicted in the outer ring (see the arrow). The ring with 12 sectors depicts from which part of the sky which force flows. In fact, each of those 12 signs has a noble, uplifting, universal side and

an outward, personal, restrictive side. The signs of the Earthly zodiac play a major role in the interpretation.



### The planets in the horoscope

In the birth horoscope above, you can see the position of the planets in the sky indicated by the arrow, signified by planetary symbols. The sign (that part of the sky) in which a planet is located, determines what 'coloring', what 'tone' that planet's characteristic is given at that moment.

Each planet has its own characteristic (see article 3 in the series) and this influence, like that of each zodiacal sign, has a divine, spiritual, mental, astral and physical side or 'frequency'. So each planetary influence also has its universal, inspiring, uplifting side. It depends on us, how we use our free will, to which of these 'frequencies' of a planet we open ourselves.

A very important point is the question of what *angles* the planets make with each other, as seen from Earth. When planets are at certain angles to each other, what physicists call 'interference' occurs: waves interacting. At what angles does this happen to a great extent? This is true for angles of 60 or 120 degrees (one-sixth and one-third of a circle), and for angles of 45 and 90 and 180 degrees (one-eighth and one-fourth and one-half of a circle). With the first two, the two influences interact harmoniously; with the last three, on the contrary, they do not, and tensions arise: difficulties that must be resolved. And when 2 planets (as viewed from us) are in the same place, they reinforce each other to a great extent.

Astrologers call these special angles 'aspects': then 2 planets make an aspect with each other. These are indicated in a horoscope by a connecting line between the positions of the two planets in question. In the above horoscope you see those connecting lines in the middle, inside the gray

circle. The red lines are the aspects that indicate frictions.

### The planets form a ‘close team’

In the previous article in the series, we discussed in detail the ‘seven sacred planets’: these are those planets in our Solar System that play a very important stimulating role in the evolution of our planet Earth. But there are even more planets that belong to the ‘cosmic family’ of our Solar System (most of which, by the way, we cannot observe). All those planets actually form a kind of family, with our Sun as father-mother. We ‘grow up together’, you might say. We too have our responsibilities to the other planets of the family. You cannot see the planets in isolation. We should not think of them as separate influences in a horoscope.

All planetary beings belonging to our Solar System have *aligned* their activities to each other, spiritually, mentally and physically. For only then can they work together like the fingers of one hand, among themselves and with the Solar Being as the guiding being. That is the reason why the growth cycles, the evolutionary growth phases, of the different planets are not separate from each other. This alignment is reflected on the material, observable plane in their orbital periods around the Sun. These are in fact attuned to each other. The accompanying table shows this.

Orbital periods of the planets		
Planet	Relative orbital period in Earth years ( <i>now</i> )	Basic ratio to Earth (‘ideal’)
Mercury	0,24	0,25
Venus	0,62	0,6
Earth	1	1
Mars	1,88	2
Jupiter	11,86	12
Saturn	29,46	30
<i>Uranus</i>	<i>84,01</i>	<i>84</i>
<i>Neptune</i>	<i>164,8</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>Pluto</i>	<i>247,94</i>	<i>248</i>

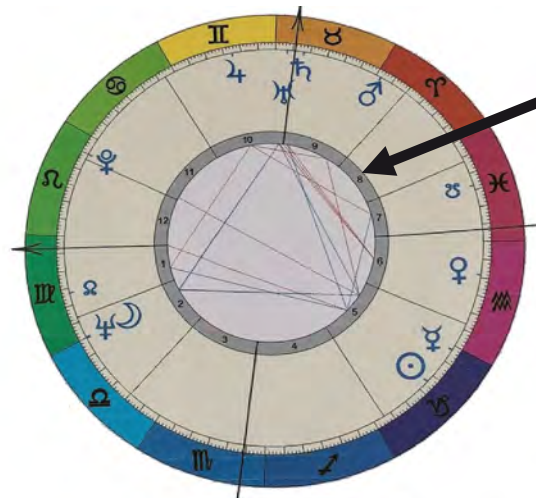
Here we see the orbital periods of the planets as exact numbers (middle column) and rounded to whole numbers (right column). This shows that their orbital times are mathematically aligned. They form one chord, so to speak. The small deviations from the ‘ideal’ mathematical

ratios are temporary and originate in the *free will* of each planetary being.

The planets Uranus, Neptune and possibly also Pluto (the red data in the table) are ‘guest planets’.<sup>(8)</sup> They are temporarily in our Solar System and thus are not members of the Solar Family. They will one day continue their great journey through the galaxy and bid farewell to our Solar System. Nevertheless, as long as they are there, they have a powerful influence on the entire Solar System. You can compare that well to a family, when a distant uncle or a friend comes to stay for a few days. That can also have an enormous influence on the course of events in the family. The fact that they have influence can therefore be used when calculating horoscopes. Western astrologers have estimated, as accurately as they could, which influences these are, by looking at what life events occurred in someone’s life course when Uranus or Neptune or Pluto made certain aspects with other planets. By collecting many examples from very many people, they tried to estimate that.

### The 12 Houses

In the previous article of the series, we introduced the 12 astrological Houses.<sup>(9)</sup> Like the signs, these also form a subdivision of the sky into 12 ‘pie slices’. The figure shows the numbers 1 to 12 of the Houses in the gray-colored ring.



The Houses, as mentioned earlier, bear some resemblance to the characteristics of the 12 signs of the zodiac, but *expressed in social and personal areas of experience*. They are the most concrete factor in a birth horoscope.

Thus, each planet is always in one of the twelve Houses at a certain time. Its influence is then expressed mainly (but certainly not only) in the concrete situations belonging to

that one House. For example, a planet located in the 7th House is expressed primarily in human relationships, how you treat your fellow human beings, because that is the concrete theme of the 7th House.

The almost horizontal, thin black line represents the horizon at the place and time of birth. On the left side, that axis has an arrow pointing to the left: that is the eastern horizon. That is also where House 1 begins and House 12 ends. That point is usually called the *ascendant*, and it plays an important role in horoscope interpretation. The word 'ascendant' means 'rising': it indicates which sign of the Earth zodiac is rising in the east, during our birth. The point opposite, on the western horizon, is the 'descendant'. It tells us which sign is currently in the process of descending below the western horizon.

Now we have reviewed some important elements of the birth horoscope, about which much more could be said, of course. Determining the *combined* influence of all the signs, planets and Houses is a complicated job, requiring, in addition to meticulousness, especially a great deal of insight. This is the great challenge for anyone trying to interpret a birth horoscope.

### Final thoughts

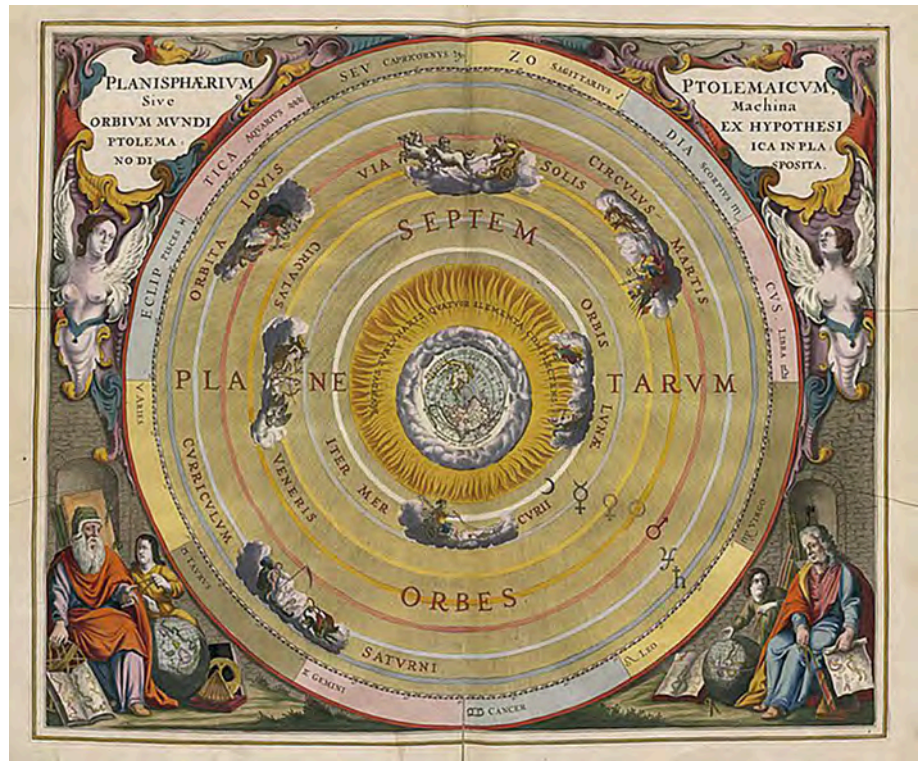
You can look at a person's birth horoscope in several ways. You can look at the combination of cosmic influences as an aid to knowing more about a person's character. That is how it is usually looked at. But you can use that same horoscope to think about its spiritual roots: that we as individuals cannot exist without the totality of Life. All of the cosmos flows from an underlying unity. Therefore, cooperation is its keynote, from high to low, and from low to high — whether we realize it or not. Therefore, what we do and think matters a great deal to the fate of all beings who receive our influence.

In the birth horoscope, when we put on these insightful glasses, we see the cooperation between us and the cosmic beings. In their sphere of influence we live. They can ex-

press themselves thanks to and through us, relatively lower beings. And we can express ourselves only because they provide the cosmic conditions necessary for us. Suppose we have a pattern of thought in which the Venus characteristic is leading, then in a sense we represent that Venus influence within planet Earth, within our own circle of life. Hopefully we do so super-personally, by expressing the noble sides of that characteristic, and not the I-centered, blind and instinctive sides of it.

We can also realize how closely intertwined we are with our fellow human beings. We share one destiny: they too live here on Earth because they are attracted to exactly this planet, during exactly these cosmic conditions. We are students in the same evolutionary school of learning, learn the same kinds of lessons, and thus can – should – help each other tremendously on the path of consciousness development.

Finally, we can reflect on the influence that our current character, represented in the birth horoscope, has on many beings less evolved than us. These include the unselfconscious beings who compose our outer nature; who form our desire nature, emotional nature and our physical body. We 'stamp' our characteristics on them and are therefore responsible for their effects on their further development.



The cosmic spheres, according to Ptolemy: 7 planetary spheres, in a hierarchical relationship, surrounded and permeated by the sphere of the twelve constellations of the zodiac.

Every step we take in our present life toward compassion and balanced thinking also helps them. We are *never* ‘stuck’ to the character we are born with (the birth horoscope of this incarnation of ours)! We can take steps every day in reforming our thinking, and thereby our character, by developing the noble, uplifting, universal side of the signs and planets within ourselves.

Now that we have explored the topic of birth horoscopes, we have laid the foundation for the next topic: predictive astrology. We will discuss the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of astrological predictions in the next article in this series.

## References

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1. The three already published installments of this series are: ‘The basics of astrology. Clues to understand astrology.’ Article in: *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, number 2, June 2025, p. 63-68; ‘Astrology: the cosmic key actors. Part 2 of the astrology series.’ Article in: *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, number 3, September 2025, p. 98-105; ‘On the nature of cosmic influences. About astrology, part 3.’ Article in: *Lucifer – the Light-bringer*, number 4, December 2025, p. 131-139.
2. G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition. Volume II*. 2nd edition. Point Loma, California, Theosophical University Press, 1940, Chapter XXII ‘How man is born and reborn II’, p. 673-678. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/gottfried-de-purucker/the-esoteric-tradition-vol-1-2/>); and: G. de Purucker, *Occult Glossary*. 1st edition. San Diego, California, Theosophical University Press, 1933, lemma Swabhāva. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/gottfried-de-purucker/occult-glossary/>).
3. G. de Purucker, *The dialogues of G. de Purucker. Volume III*. Covina, California, Theosophical University Press, 1948, p. 324-327. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/gottfried-de-purucker/the-dialogues-of-g-de-purucker1-2-3/>).
4. See ref. 3, p. 5-6.
5. G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*. 2nd printing of 1st edition of 1932. Covina, California, Theosophical University Press, 1947, p. 280. (Source: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/literature/gottfried-de-purucker/fundamentals-of-the-esoteric-philosophy/>).
6. See ref. 1, the second and third article in the series.
7. G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Teachings. Volume 4. Galaxies and Solar Systems: their Genesis, Structure and Destiny*, Appendix I, p. 127-134 (I.S.I.S. Foundation edition, 2015), p. 87-93 (Point Loma Publications edition, 1987).
8. See ref. 5, p. 175-176 and 452-453.
9. See ref. 1, the third article in the series.

# Questions & Answers

## Karma is Ātman

Where does the expression “Karma is Ātman” come from? I have never heard of it before.

### Answer

It is indeed an expression that you don't come across very often. As far as I know, this expression appears only once in theosophical literature. It is found in an undated letter from Mahātma Morya to William Quan Judge. This letter begins as follows:

*Brave soldiers need neither orders nor constant encouragement. Pursue the lines laid down long ago, and “we will look out for results.” As said by me in S.D. [Secret Doctrine]: Ātma is Karma, so all results flowing from sincere work will be right, if you are detached.<sup>(1)</sup>*

### Question

Karma is the law of cause and effect. And I understand that Ātman is the Self, the relatively highest aspect of consciousness in a human being. But what is the connection between the two?

### Answer

Ātman is indeed the relatively highest aspect in human beings, but that is not all there is to it. In fact, Ātman is a word that cannot be translated. The Sanskrit root of this word is unknown. And if we translate it as Self, it is only because we have no better word for it. We capitalize Self for a reason, because it is this Self that is not only the core of a human being, but also the core of the Cosmos, of which that human being is an inseparable part. It rarely manifests

itself in humans, but when it does, we experience it as an all-encompassing sense of unity.

Ātman is pure universal consciousness and therefore the same in every being. In Vedic philosophy, Ātman is identified with Brahman or Paramātmā, the Self of the Cosmos. The Self of man is therefore the same as the Self of the Cosmos. It is the core of all that lives. That is why it evokes in us the idea of essential unity. You cannot therefore speak of *my* Ātman or *your* Ātman. Ātman differs only in the degree to which any being recognizes it within itself. Everything in the Cosmos is intertwined and interpenetrates, because everything has the same primordial ground and is built from the same Life.

What does this essential unity of all that exists have to do with the law of cause and effect? That is an important question. And the short answer is: *everything*. For if you have a clear picture of that unity, you understand that precisely because of that unity, every cause must lead to a corresponding effect. The entire Cosmos is like an immense web of life, in which every thread is connected to the whole.

Every thought or action causes the entire web to vibrate. This will ultimately lead to the restoration of the balance disrupted by the act, which means that the person who performed the action must reap its consequences. So because Ātman is the core of every living being, it is also the connecting element of all that exists. And precisely because everything is connected, every action is followed by a characteristic corresponding consequence.

Of course, very few people can comprehend the enormous scope of this cosmic web of life in detail and thus trace every consequence back to its cause. For them, it is crystal clear that Ātman is Karma.

Yet even we, who are far from having such an expansive range of consciousness, can try to form a mental picture of that unity. And although that will undoubtedly be far from perfect, it does give rise to an understanding that karma can only exist because there is unity in life.

When we think a thought and perform an action, it creates a disturbance in the cosmic unity, and the result of that disturbance returns to us when balance is restored. When we experience this, we will never complain about our fate and we will know that every selfless thought or action can never remain without influence. Karma exists by the grace of the totality of Life.

### Question

But then I still don't understand why the Mahātma links this statement to brave soldiers who don't need encouragement or orders?

### Answer

We do not know when this letter was written, but what is known is that Judge faced many great challenges. He was one of the founders of The Theosophical Society, and when Henry Steele Olcott and Helena Blavatsky left for India in 1878, he was left virtually alone in America. This did not prevent him from continuing the theosophical work in any way, even though he initially failed to gain a foothold and



gave lectures to empty halls.

Thanks to his enormous dedication and energy, the Theosophical Society grew tremendously in America, but that also brought its share of difficulties, especially after Helena Blavatsky's death. I believe Master Morya's letter was written during this period, or at least after 1888, the year in which *The Secret Doctrine* was published. After all, the Master referred to it.

This letter encourages Judge to continue the work. In fact, he encourages everyone who wants to spread Theosophy, without expecting a result. A little further on in the quoted letter, the Master says:

*Be wise and prudent, and expect nothing, for this is an age of darkness. Thou my Son, cannot be too careful. Beware of the "iron rule." You are to sow seed. Pay all your attention to that and force not the growth. Be ever gentle with the rebellious disciples in your care as we with you.*

### Question

And did Mr. Judge follow this advice?

### Answer

Undoubtedly. I think he is an example

for every Theosophist who wants to cooperate in the dissemination and living out of Theosophy in the line of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion.

Judge faced many challenges and difficulties. He was wrongfully accused of fraud. Friends and colleagues turned away from him and betrayed him. But like a rock in the surf, he calmly continued the Work: sowing the theosophical seed.

There is a well-known letter from him to one of his students, in which he describes a very practical meditation exercise. In fact, he tries to form an image of Ātman, the unity, which he calls Brahma in this letter. "I am Brahma," he writes, "and Brahma is everything." Then he tries to become aware that he is his friends, his enemies, and every human being. In fact, he is every being, large or small, highly developed or not developed. That letter ends with this sentence: "But shall I not take heart, even if a dear friend deserts me and stabs me deep, when I know that he is myself?"<sup>(2)</sup>

Isn't this exactly the lesson of Master Morya, albeit phrased differently? Everything is Ātman and everything is karma. Even the friend who betrays you is a consequence of a cause that partly lies with yourself. After all, there is unity in life. Couldn't you draw strength from that?

And wouldn't such an attitude inspire your friend who betrayed you? Remember that we can never separate the choices we make in our lives from the well-being of all humanity.

Despite his serious physical ailments, William Quan Judge sowed the seeds of Theosophy until his last breath, knowing that every sincere deed will bear fruit in time.

The lesson we can all learn from this is that we should not let anything stop us

from doing altruistic work. Karma is Ātman. There is unity. Nothing can be lost. Even if we are thwarted, every sincere effort will have a corresponding result.

### References

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1. William Quan Judge, *Echoes of the Orient. Volume I*. California, Point Loma Publications, Inc.; or: Pasadena, California, Theosophical University Press, p. liv (facsimile) and lvi.
  2. W.Q. Judge, *Letters that have helped me*. Letter 4. (Many editions.)
-

# Agenda

## Lectures on Sunday, March - June 2026

Every week there is a livestream lecture on Sunday at 19:30 CE(S)T. On the day of the lecture, a message in red will appear on the homepage that a lecture can be followed live. Click on this message and you will be redirected to the livestream on YouTube. After each lecture, there will be an interactive study session via ZOOM. If you would like to participate in this study, please register on our website so that we can send you the ZOOM link. More information at: [www.blavatskyhouse.org](http://www.blavatskyhouse.org)

### Four spiritual traditions

In our previous issue of *Lucifer – the Light-bringer* we gave a comprehensive preview and explanation of the next lecture series, which presents the Universal Wisdom in four important spiritual traditions: the Egyptian-African, the Eastern, the ancient Greek tradition and that of original Christianity. All four contain a treasure of wisdom, that has direct and great implications for us, in our present era. It is enlightening to delve into all wisdom traditions, because this will lead to a better understanding of their source: Theosophia or Divine Wisdom.

### Universal Wisdom in the Egyptian-African Tradition

#### 01 Mar – Where did the ancient Egyptians get their profound knowledge?

The culture of ancient Egypt appeals to the imagination of many people. The many known facts show that there was a highly advanced culture. The question is: where did this profound knowledge come from?

#### 08 Mar – The mystical relationship between the Great Pyramid and the Egyptian Book of the Dead

In the religion of ancient Egypt, eternal life was assumed. This was expressed in many mythological stories and in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. The key to understanding these stories can be found in the mystical side of Egyptian religion. That same key also provides more clarity about the real function of the Great Pyramid.

#### 15 Mar – The present-day value of the Hermetic tradition

Many of the Hermetic writings, with the so-called *Books of Thoth* as their source, have been lost over time, but their remains show evidence of the profound knowledge of the ancient Egyptians. What values has brought this to us?

#### 22 Mar – I am because we are: living by Ubuntu

Although this is hardly known, the Ubuntu philosophy of southern Africa has its roots in ancient Egypt. This philosophy has now become known in the West. This is important, because the Ubuntu principles offer many opportunities for restoring harmony in society, even when that harmony was seriously disrupted.

### Universal Wisdom in the Eastern tradition

#### 29 Mar – The Mystic East

When people symbolically speak about the Mystical East – ‘there where the spiritual dawn begins’ – they are not referring to a location but an inner state of consciousness. What does this state imply? And how can we awaken it within ourselves?

#### 12 Apr – The Buddha: the cyclic messenger

Who or what exactly was the Buddha? Was his appearance on earth a one-time event? Or does he return cyclically? If so, in what capacity, and is his message the same? What is the relationship between the Buddha and other world teachers?

#### 19 Apr – Lao-Tsu’s Tao Te Ching: now

Lao-tsu’s *Tao Te Ching*: 2,500 years old and still as relevant as ever. How is it possible that this little book still carries such power? How can we get to the heart of its original meaning?

#### 26 Apr – Lessons from the Mahātma Letters

The Mahātmās are *humans*, yet far ahead of average

humanity in terms of development. They are involved in all spiritual impulses known to humanity, including that of Helena Blavatsky in 1875. Unique to this last impulse is that the Masters have left behind correspondence. What valuable lessons can we learn from these leaders?

## Universal Wisdom in the Greek tradition

### 03 May – The Greek Mysteries

Greek philosophers like Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato were initiates into the Mysteries. What do we know about the Greek Mysteries? What was their source, and does their influence still exist today?

### 10 May – Wise lessons from Plato's Academy

Plato founded his own Mystery School: the Academy in Athens. The many myths in his dialogues indicate that Plato taught a Secret Doctrine. They conceal mystery teachings about us humans, life and death, our evolution, and the origin of the universe.

### 17 May – Inspiration from the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria

In the 2nd century AD, the city of Alexandria was a meeting place for wisdom from India, Egypt, Greece, and the Middle East. Then, the Neoplatonic School was born. Its inspiring influence continues to this day.

### 31 May – How to dethrone the tyrant? In yourself and in the world

How do you find wise leaders in the world? Plato already pointed out that tyrants create the illusion that problems arise from other people, instead of ourselves. Must we not first dethrone the tyrants within ourselves in order to recognize true wisdom?

## Universal Wisdom in original Christianity

### 07 June – The Roots of Christianity

Christianity is not only rooted in the Jewish religion, or the result of the appearance of the Avatar Jesus of Nazareth. What are its many roots, and how can we recognize these?

### 14 Jun – Gnosis, Divine Knowledge

Christians believe that *faith* is the core of their religion. In original Christianity, however, *Gnosis* was central: divine knowledge – the knowledge of the heart – obtained by actively penetrating behind the veils of the outer world. How does someone who lives according to Gnosis, think and live?

### 21 Jun – Recognizing the Ethics of the Sermon on the Mount

Forgive and do not strike back. Do not resist evil with evil. For 20 centuries, these compassionate lessons were dismissed as impractical. Why? Was the author of the Sermon of the Mount a naive fool? Or is there another explanation?

### 28 Jun – The Religion of the future

Different faiths have divided humanity. They have led to enmity and war. How is that possible, if the core of all these religions is the same? Will the Religion of the future be able to develop a new mentality, that unites all of humanity?

## International Theosophy Conferences (ITC)

*Announcement of the 2026 conference:*

**Honoring Truth by Practice  
Living the Theosophical Life**

Date: July 23-26

### Programme, with daily lectures, workshops and Plenaries:

- Day 1, July 23: Living the Life
- Day 2, July 24: Hearing the Song of Wisdom – *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment One
- Day 3, July 25: Choosing Unity – *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment Two
- Day 4, July 26: Compassion: the Law of Laws – *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment Three

See: [www.theosophyconferences.org](http://www.theosophyconferences.org)

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Henk Bezemer, Rob Goor, Nico  
Ouwehand, Erwin Bomas, Bouke van  
den Noort.

Chief editor: Herman C. Vermeulen

Editorial office:  
De Ruijterstraat 72-74, 2518 AV Den  
Haag, tel. +31 (0) 70 346 15 45  
email: luciferred@isis-foundation.org

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The price of our “paper” issues will be  
about € 5,00 and € 10,00 for a double  
issue, excluding postage.  
Payment by Internet – creditcard (see  
website).

Publisher:  
I.S.I.S. Foundation, Blavatskyhouse,  
De Ruijterstraat 72-74,  
2518 AV Den Haag,  
tel. +31 (0) 70 346 15 45,  
email: [luciferred@isis-foundation.org](mailto:luciferred@isis-foundation.org)  
internet: [www.blavatskyhouse.org](http://www.blavatskyhouse.org). On  
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VAT number 003417190B01

## I.S.I.S. Foundation

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

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

The Foundation endeavors to accomplish this  
object by giving courses, organizing public and  
other speeches and lectures, issuing books,  
brochures and other publications, and by  
drawing on all other resources available to it.

I.S.I.S. Foundation is a non-profit organization,  
which is recognized as such by the tax  
authorities in The Netherlands. For the purposes  
of the tax authorities, I.S.I.S. Foundation has  
what is called ANBI status.

ANBI stands for General Benefit Organisation  
(Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling).  
The most important requisites in obtaining this  
ANBI status are:

- It is a non-profit organization, so it has no  
earnings. Any profit earned from for  
example book sales, must be fully used for  
general beneficial activities. For I.S.I.S.  
Foundation, this is spreading the Theo-  
sophia. (We refer to the statutes, aims and  
principles for further information.)
- Board members must meet integrity  
requirements.
- The ANBI must have a separate property,  
whereby a director or policymaker cannot  
dictate over this property as though it were  
his own.
- The remuneration of board members may  
only consist of a reimbursement for  
expenses and attendance.

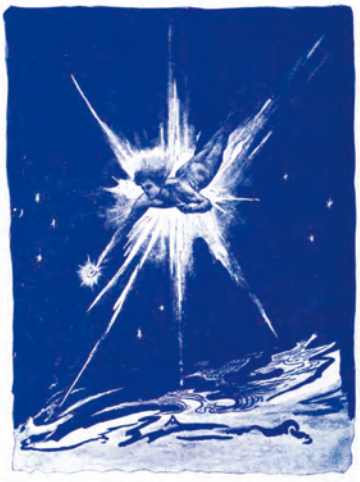
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## I.S.I.S. Foundation

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

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



## Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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

For these people this journal is written.

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

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

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