

the Light-bringer

Lucifer[®]

For seekers of Truth

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

Esoteric Teachings
Volumes 7 and 8
by G. de Purucker

Who is the Self?

Symposium 2022:
Independent search
for truth

The purpose of goals

SPACE, time and
consciousness

Theosophy in Nature:
Does every individual
being have a unique
character?

Can we repair the
damage we do to
animals?



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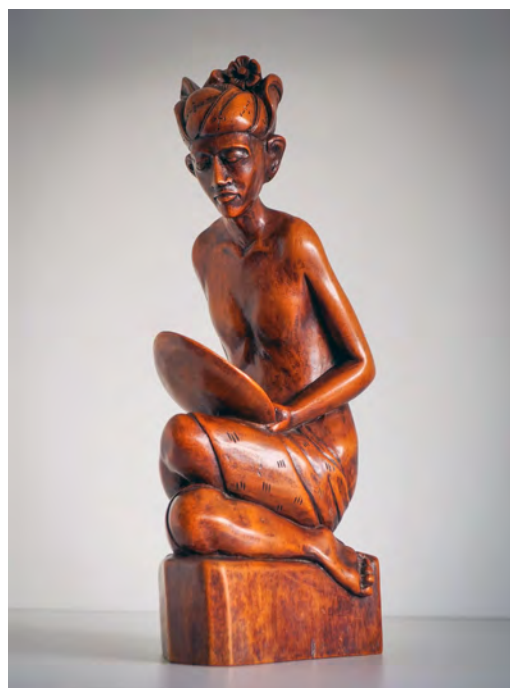
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Editorial

While editing this *Lucifer*, the terrible war in Ukraine broke out. Some people asked us what we, with the knowledge of Theosophia, could do about it. Nevertheless, the editors decided to not yet to pay much attention to the issue of war and peace in *this* edition, which was about to be sent around, because an adequate and thorough analysis and a contribution to a lasting solution, take more time. We will, however, certainly return to this very important subject in the next *Lucifer*, for *Lucifer* is not only a Bringer of Light but also a Bringer of Peace.

This does not mean that you, reader, have to wait to contribute to peace. Thoughts underlie all actions. Hostile and hateful thoughts will, sooner or later, lead to hostile and hateful actions. Therefore, everyone can contribute to peace right now by thinking thoughts of peace, love, understanding and compassion. Moreover, you may support peaceful actions or initiate any activity for peace that springs up in your selfless heart. The articles included in this *Lucifer* will certainly be able to help and inspire you to do so.

It may seem that the articles *Who is the Self?* and *Space, Time and Consciousness* are far removed from the practice of everyday life. However, nothing could be further from the truth. The thoughts expressed in both articles are no easy meal to digest and require deep and thorough pondering. As a result of this process, however – which may take some time – you will look at life quite differently, you see your own personal life in a much larger context and you will live much more in the eternal *Now*. Moreover, a deep sense of kinship and oneness with all your fellow humans arises.

In this edition we continue our reviews of the *Esoteric Teachings* of Gottfried de Purucker. We discuss volume 7, *The Doctrine of the Spheres*, and volume 8, *Gods, Monads and Life-Atoms*. Both volumes are about *cooperation*: volume 7 focuses on the cooperation between the Sun and the beings in the Solar System, and volume 8 shows the marvelous cooperation between the hosts of monads of all kinds of developmental stages.

In the article *The purpose of goals*, one of the Jewels of Wisdom, *Swabhāva* or Selfbecoming, is elaborated. Especially in the current times in which the end is thought to justify the means, this article provides food for thought. A clear goal can give your life direction. But do not strive for goals, *live* them.

It is obvious that we humans have an individual character, but is that also the case for animals, plants, and minerals? The answer to that question teaches us not only more about ourselves, but also about our younger brothers – the animals and plants – and our older brothers: the gods.

Finally, in our questions section, we have included questions about practicing what you preach, the harm we do to animals and the spiritual guidance of nations.

We always end our editorial by saying that we are open to questions and comments — and so we will end now, too. But this time we also invite you to send us any ideas you may have for a more peaceful world. Each idea, no matter how small and insignificant it may seem, is welcome. We will give it attention in the next *Lucifer*.

The editors

Esoteric Teachings Volumes 7 and 8 by G. de Purucker



Key thoughts

» The sun we can see is the outer vehicle of an inner deity. This Hierarchy of our Solar System cooperates with other divine beings who embody themselves in the Planets. From them we derive the cosmic inspiration that we express in our evolutionary journey as a Monad on each of the Planets of our Solar System.

» Each manifestation is a collaboration of monads of various degrees: from an inner god to the life atoms that embody themselves in the physical atoms of a body. With our free will, we can steer the cooperation with our life atoms towards harmony or disharmony. We inherit the consequences of this in this and subsequent embodiments.

In volume 7 and 8 Gottfried de Purucker goes into more detail compared to the previous volumes. In volume 7 we dive deeper into the life behind our Solar System and our evolution within it. Volume 8 is about the spiritual units that make up all life, down to the point of our own bodies. This then touches upon very practical issues such as heredity, illness, and karma in general.

Reading the *Esoteric Teachings* parts 7 and 8 shows again how special the opportunity *was* and *is* to gain first-hand knowledge of the inexhaustible source of Esoteric Philosophy or Theosophy. This *was* the case for those disciples who, under the direction of Gottfried de Purucker (GdeP) as external head of the *Esoteric Section*, could attend the meetings of this higher chela from the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion. But this *is* just as true for the reader nowadays, who can take these parts – based on the stenographic reports of those meetings, and further edited and supplemented by GdeP for publication – in contemplation and as a preparation for passing on this knowledge to those who “ask for more light”, as GdeP puts it at the end of part 8. For as stated in the vow, at the front of every part of the *Esoteric Teachings* and as further explained in part 1, there *was*, and there *is* also here, only one right motive for the students to take note of

these teachings: to train yourself to help and teach your fellow man. And that basically means trying to make these teachings a living force in your life.

The peculiarity of these teachings lies in the fact that they provide crystal-clear answers to many fundamental and everyday questions of life. And this is only a tip of the veil that is being lifted. For GdeP constantly emphasizes that he is not allowed to give more than he does and that many of the teachings he touches upon are too esoteric for this degree.

Below are some questions that GdeP answers in volumes 7 and 8:

- What is our Sun in essence and how do we relate to it?
- Is there life on other planets in our Solar System?
- What does all life consist of?
- What is heredity and how does it work?
- What is disease and how does it work?

- How does karma work?
- What is good and what is evil?

When dealing with these practical questions, GdeP always starts with the fundamental principles of the Theosophia. In it, the spiritual or the principle of consciousness is always central: everything manifested is an expression of the One Life and *is* the Boundless in essence. This may sound big and far off, but GdeP shows how you can come to true insight into Nature and into yourself based on this fundamental premise. In doing so, he connects the universal teachings of Theosophy with contemporary scientific facts, provides a solid philosophical foundation for each teaching, and illustrates how you can find these teachings in the symbolism of the major world religions.

Developing cosmic* consciousness

The teachings brought forward into the twelve parts of the *Esoteric Teachings* are not separate, stand-alone theories, whether it is about the life of the chela or student, the structure of the cosmos, or the processes after death. There is no single theosophical teaching that does not relate to every other one. Everything forms a coherent, integral whole. And because we humans are also an integral part of that whole, every teaching is also indirectly about us.

The teachings show us that we are just as much children of the Earth as children of the Sun and the stars. That the total Cosmos is our home, and that we can develop a cosmic consciousness during our cyclical pilgrimage across the planetary chains and their spheres.

In parts 7 and 8, GdeP goes into more detail compared to the previous parts. In parts 1 and 2, focus lies on the motive that needs to be considered before the student becomes acquainted with the esoteric teachings. Parts 3 and 4 sketch the broadest picture of boundlessness and the twelve forces that can be distinguished in the cosmos, as far as we can grasp it. In parts 5 and 6, GdeP shows how a cosmos is born or emanates and from which spheres it is made up. In part 7 we dive deeper into the life behind our visible Solar System and our evolution within it. Part 8 is about the spiritual units that make up all life, right down to our own bodies. This then touches upon very practical issues such as heredity, illness and karma in general.

The Mysteries of the Twelfold Sun

Part 7 starts with the teaching about our Sun. The very

title of this first chapter of part 7 “The Mysteries of the Twelfold Sun” already raises questions with us. Why a twelfold? And that is just one of the Mysteries. But here too, the Mysteries begin to gradually dissolve as we reason from the point of view of consciousness. The Sun, like all other manifestations, is a living being. And the external shining sun that we see is only a reflection of the vehicle of the inner cosmic deity that resides in our Day Star. A being that extends its spiritual influence over the entire Solar Chain with its twelve spheres, of which only one is visible to us.

The sun as the heart and brain of our solar system

Thus, the external sun is merely a vehicle, or rather, an organ in the body that we know as our solar system. It is the heart and brain of this body, with the other planets functioning as organs as well. And just as our body is the lowest part of a seven-, ten- or twelve-fold constitution (depending on the detail and scope you choose), so too is the Solar being seven-, ten- or twelfold. Or actually the other way around: on a smaller scale we are constructed exactly like the living cosmic being in which we have our existence and ultimately, we also have the same potential. Just like the Sun, we *have* a body that we can perceive externally. But we *are* essentially an immortal spiritual-divine being who expresses his individual character in a body, through all kinds of intermediate parts: mental, psychological and emotional.

H.P. Blavatsky already wrote in *The Secret Doctrine* that the sun is the beating heart of a living being and that the sunspot cycle can be seen as the solar heartbeat. GdeP further illustrates this quote with a scientific analysis by one of his students. It compares the relation of the solar cycles, expressed in the Yugas – time periods of thousands of years – with the heart cycle. In both cases, these turn out to be multiples of the mystical number 432. Our heart pumps blood through our veins in ratios similar to how cosmic cycles relate to each other, such as the messianic cycle of 2160 years and the precession of the equinoxes of 25920 years.

GdeP gives many more details in this chapter about, among other things: the origin of the mind-blowing energy of the sun, in which he does not leave out the discussion on current scientific theories, what the auroras

* In this article we stick to the spelling of GdeP where cosmos with a c refers to the solar system and cosmos with a k to the galactic system. Moreover, if the word is capitalized, it refers to the consciousness behind the manifestation. Without a capital letter (sun, cosmos or kosmos), it concerns only the outer, physical part: that which we perceive of it.

(northern and southern lights) exactly are, and how in different traditions (such as Egyptian, Hindu, and Christian teachings) there are triads that refer to the essence of the Sun. With at the end the ethical and perhaps most important message for us: how we, eventually through initiation can learn to enter the spiritual Sun via our own spiritual Solar part.

The Twelve Sacred Planets

The next chapter discusses the characteristics of the Twelve Sacred Planets. Nowadays, modern science only recognizes 8 planets and a number of dwarf planets in our solar system, but GdeP indicates before (in part 4) that what we observe is only an external cross-section of the Solar System. We observe only one of the seven, ten or twelve cosmic planes it actually consists of (for the distinction between seven, ten and twelve see the previous note above). So, there are countless more planets in our Solar System, at for us invisible planes, than are known to us. This immediately leads to modesty about our external knowledge of our Solar System. If we want to understand more about our “cosmic home”, we will have to tap into other possibilities of perception within ourselves. And we have those possibilities!

As monads or eternity pilgrims, we develop these abilities during our long evolutionary journey over the Sacred Planets of our Solar System, where we have now arrived at the stop point planet Earth.

Life waves and the inner rounds

In the third and final chapter of part 7, life waves and the “inner rounds”, or the evolution of the classes of monads over the different spheres of the Earth-Chain are a central topic. Here you will find a special feature of the process as explained earlier by GdeP in his book *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*. This chapter first discusses the building of the spheres of the planetary chain during the first round, with the upper classes collaborating with the lower elemental kingdoms. Then GdeP dwells on the so-called śiṣṭaṣ or the most advanced who stay behind during a period of obscurity (rest period between two rounds or large phases of evolution on a planet) to provide the life wave with the right “seeds” so that it can manifest itself again when returning to this sphere.

Part 8: Gods, Monads, Life Atoms

In part 8, GdeP shows how the consciousness, or the Light-side of life or nature is formed by gods, monads, and

life atoms, again consistently reasoning from the consciousness point of view.

Of these, the term Monad is in fact the most common one. As also stated in the second fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*, every being is essentially a “spark of eternity,” or Monad. On their long evolutionary journey these Monads go through different phases, expressing more and more of the boundless potential. Depending on the extent to which they express a certain level of consciousness, we speak of, for example, an astral Monad, an animal Monad, a human Monad, a spiritual or a divine Monad.

The term “god” refers to a Monad that expresses divine consciousness at the highest cosmic plane. This can be at an unconscious level or at a self-conscious level. When it comes to gods of the first level, it refers to the elemental divine sparks that are at the very start of evolution in our hierarchy, and that are divine at an unconscious level. Gods of the second level are those beings who express the divine stages of consciousness completely self-consciously. The term life atom refers to an astral Monad which is in fact a ray of the spiritual Monad on the astral plane. This astral Monad can be seen as the consciousness behind the physical atoms we perceive. In other words: the physical atoms that we know from chemistry and physics are the vehicles of life atoms.

If you ponder over these teachings about gods, monads and life atoms, a grand picture arises in which you see that all manifestations consist of cooperation between consciousnesses on different levels. The relatively most advanced monads, the gods, give, through intermediate stages of monads of different levels, existence to the relatively least advanced monads, the life atoms, to develop themselves.

GdeP clarifies again and again that everything is essentially one with the Boundless and that everything in manifestation is relative. Just as a god is a hierarch for the many consciousnesses that evolve within the sphere of influence of his vitality, so we are a god for all our life atoms who evolve within our dominant vitality. At the same time, the god who is the Hierarch of our Solar System is in his turn just a life atom of an even more advanced super god and we are only one of the countless life atoms of our Solar System. As above, so below, Nature repeats itself everywhere.

Heredity and the cause and cure of disease

With the introduction of the terms gods, monads and life

atoms, a lot of practical questions can now be addressed. For example, when it comes to heredity. At each of its incarnations, a Reincarnating Ego re-attracts its own life atoms to itself, through its parents. This immediately shows that in the reincarnation process nothing is accidental and that everything proceeds entirely through the law of karma or cause and effect. Each being that re-embodies itself, re-attracts the consciousnesses with whom it has collaborated in previous embodiments. If there has previously been disharmony in that cooperation, then there is a chance that this disharmony has its effect during this life in the form of disease.

This immediately shows the cause and the possibility to prevent disease. Since nature forms a living, cooperating whole, all forms of selfishness lead to disharmony. GdeP warns us not to judge those who suffer from diseases. The cause of a disease may have its origins many lifetimes in the past and who could say about himself that he is completely harmonious and unselfish in life right now?

Karma and good and evil

With the teachings we just pointed out, GdeP unmistakably shows how rightful Nature really is. There is nothing that happens to us that does not have its cause in this or a past life. With every decision we make, every action we take, yes, even every thought we think, we can take life's unity as a starting point or just assume our own self-interest or the interest of our immediate environment. The consequences will be in accordance with the motive and the deed. Karma is therefore not something that is outside of us. It is the interplay of all expressions of the wills of living beings that continuously interact with each other.

This also brings GdeP to the last important topic: that of good and evil. He immediately clarifies that according to the theosophical teachings, there can be no such thing as good *per se* or of evil *per se*. What we call evil is only the result of the conflicting expressions of the wills of beings on their way in their evolutionary journey to express themselves more and more. Since these beings, including ourselves, have not yet completed their evolution, their actions are still imperfect and disharmonious. The same applies to the good. Whatever is perfect or harmonious in our eyes we call good. However, starting from the infinite pilgrimage that all monads go through, perfection always remains relative. For us, the gods are the perfection of the good, but for the super gods above them, their goodness is still far from perfect. This relativity of the concepts of

good and evil is a consequence of the premise of boundlessness. Absolute perfection would suggest that there is an end point somewhere and GdeP emphasizes that this can never occur. We quote GdeP himself about this with the ending of part 8:

That is why the ancient Books of Wisdom state that THAT is neither good nor bad, neither intelligent nor non-intelligent; neither alive nor dead; neither long nor short nor high nor low. All these are attributes of limited things which we cannot predicate of the Unlimited Boundless. If it were long, however vast the length might be, it would have an ending and a beginning. Similarly with intelligence, kindness, goodness, compassion, harmony — all these things are attributes of limitation, albeit of spirit. IT is beyond them all, encompasses them all, enwombs them all. From IT they all spring; to IT they all will return. I would not weigh so frequently and so heavily on these thoughts, were I not keenly sensible of the fact that they comprise questions of high metaphysics, questions of high philosophy, questions of high religious import which some day our Theosophical exponents will have to deal with. They will have to give an account of our sublime Wisdom to the keenest minds of the world. We shall be asked to explain our convictions, no longer to kindly audiences such as we gather in our halls and auditoriums; we shall then need trained and polished minds, capable and capacious intellects, men and women fully acquainted with our sublime Thought-Wisdom, so that they can make statements in exposition which will have clarity, succinctness, and persuasive power to those who come to us and ask for light.



Who is the Self?

Key thoughts

- » The human being is a stream of consciousness with numerous aspects with which we may or may not identify ourselves.
- » Suprapersonal aspects have us live in the sense of connectedness, personal aspects have us live with the idea that we are separate from others.
- » The self is not a constant; it is always changing. Yet we are always becoming ourselves.
- » We are relatively immortal: we are in a process of continuous growth.
- » The lower self is a reflection of a reflection of the Higher Self.
- » We can choose which self we want to be.

Who am I?

Isn't that the most essential question we can ask ourselves, but perhaps also the most difficult to answer? This article attempts to provide some clues that may lead to an answer.

Students of Theosophy often struggle with the concepts of lower self and Higher Self. Raised with the idea that we are one character, one human being and therefore one self, people marvel that there are two selves. Are we then simultaneously the lower and Higher Self?

This question is obvious. After all, if man is a composite consciousness, if man is a Higher Self and a lower self, then the question immediately arises, "Who am I?" "Am I my Higher Self or my lower self?" How do the two relate to each other?

The teachings of the composite nature of man sometimes confuse us, sometimes cause us to wonder. Even for those who have studied this issue for years, it remains a mystery.

A mystery is an unsolvable riddle for the one who thinks no further. However, if you continue to ask yourself these questions, the inner light will begin to shine within you more and more. Confusion gives way to wonderment. You feel or know that there is much more of which you know nothing at present. But you are also

convinced that there are answers, even if you do not know them now. If you continue to think without prejudice and calmly, putting aside personal opinions and trying to be intuitive, then more light will certainly come.

Many aspects within us

All of us can easily observe in ourselves and in others that there are many aspects within us. Virtually no one is the same all the time. We can have an emotional mood. Sometimes we desire something very strongly. At another time of day, we are absorbed in an intellectual issue. And perhaps when we read the newspaper in the evening and are confronted with the suffering in the world, an urge to help arises within us and we resolve to shape more love and compassion in our lives.

We may not realize it, but we are always another "self". In other words, we are always identifying with something else within us.

Western philosophy and psychology have a poor system of concepts at

their disposal. There are often no terms to name those different aspects within us. We do speak of the “heart” and “head”, whereby “head” we mean our reason or intellect. Sometimes what we mean by this is that you are constantly worrying about something. You shouldn’t be in your head; we say to someone who is worried. Everything that does not belong to the domain of the “head” we conveniently classify under the “heart”. But what we mean by “heart” in everyday language is a collective term for many very different aspects.

If we had names for the various forces and faculties within human consciousness, we might have figured out earlier that “self” is an extremely vague term. To give an example, are humans themselves when they commit a cowardly, selfish act? Or are the same people themselves when they commit an altruistic act? And that some selfish people can sometimes commit an act of compassion, or conversely, someone who is usually selfless suddenly commits a cowardly selfish act, is common knowledge.

Stream of consciousness

With our point of view, you can explain all these different aspects in a human being very well with the help of Theosophia. Theosophia assumes that consciousness – life – is operating behind or in the outer vehicle — the body. If you accept this idea as a hypothesis, the following picture of a human being emerges.

A human being is a stream of consciousness, which contains many faculties and aspects, with which we may or may not identify ourselves. All of those aspects are the shadows or reflections of the source from which that entire bundle of consciousness flows. So selfish, unselfish or neutral characteristics that we can recognize in ourselves and others are facets of the consciousness that we are, but which actually we only really are when we identify ourselves with one or more aspects. Someone can have a musical talent, but if he does nothing with it, never listens to music, has never noticed his own musicality within himself, then his musical talent remains latent and in his everyday life he is not musical at all.

That source from which that stream with all those aspects flows, we call the Higher Self. (Later on, we will dwell a little longer on that Self.) Every being identifies itself with a bundle of those characteristics in the stream of consciousness. When a human being connects with such a bundle – says “I” to it – he speaks of that bundle of characteristics as if it were himself.

Let’s try to explain this idea with the example of musi-

cality: once someone has noticed his inner musical ability, develops it and starts living it, he says of himself: I am musical. He has identified himself with this ability in such a way that he assumes to be it. Of course, nobody identifies himself with just one characteristic. In addition to being musical, someone may also be good at languages, be friendly but somewhat naive, and so on. He speaks about that whole set of traits and skills from the essentially boundless stream of consciousness as about himself. And because many people during just one day often connect themselves with aspects that are different in character, people are often vessels full of contradictions; happy and full of good cheer one moment, aggressive and moody the next.

Hierarchy of consciousness

These different abilities do not lie randomly in the stream of consciousness that we are. On the contrary. There is a hierarchy of consciousness.

The place in the hierarchy that any being occupies is determined by the scope of consciousness. In other words, the more an aspect of consciousness gives us a broader understanding of the processes and character of Nature, the higher it is in the hierarchy. So an aspect that helps us realize that our life is connected to other beings and that our present life is a continuation and consequence of the previous one and a prelude to the next one, is above an aspect that has us live with the sense that we have nothing to do with others and that our present life is separate from others. It goes without saying that when we activate that first aspect within us, we have a more universal vision of ourselves and the world than when we live in that second. Without going into details, we can call the more universal aspects suprapersonal. In other words, those suprapersonal aspects cause us to rise above the sense of being a personality. By living in the suprapersonal aspects we realize that we are connected with other humans and other beings. We may even experience that we are essentially one with all others.

The aspects that make us believe that we are a self-contained being, separate from others, are called personal aspects. Those personal aspects prevent us from finding out who we really are.

No permanent self

People who identify themselves with their personality usually do not ask themselves who they are. They think that they are what they are and that this will always be so.

However, if one were to observe oneself more than superficially, one would know that the self is always moving, always changing. It is because of a mental blindness that we do not perceive this simple truth.

When we show a picture of our first school class to another person, we often point to one of the children in that picture and say, “Look, that’s me.” But if you think a little harder, you know that this is not true. You should have actually said, “Look, that was me.” And even that is still a relative truth, because in the picture you only see the outside, the body, and a child does not identify with that all the time.

No matter how young you are, when you look back at your life, you know that every new experience, every new insight, even if it is very small, makes us change. Something within us is constantly “dying” while something else is “being born”. Therefore, experiences can never be repeated. You cannot step into the same river twice, Heraclitus once said.⁽¹⁾ Every next time you step into the river, that river is different, and you have changed. And this is true of all experiences. Every experience makes us change.

So the self is not a constant. It is in motion. It acts, reacts to other selves. In fact, it exists only through and because of other selves, in which it is engaged in an incessant dynamic process.

Swabhāva

Paradoxically, in this incessant process of change, we become ourselves again and again. But we are becoming a different self. That new self may arise from the old self – it is the child of it – but it is different, even if it has changed only a little bit.

This continuous process of becoming oneself is called swabhāva. Swabhāva means self-becoming. It means that any being can never become anything else than what it has developed in powers and capacities. Nor can it ever be less than the faculties it has developed. So all the abilities and qualities that we have developed, we will have at our disposal again in each subsequent manifestation. We always become ourselves.

But it also means that all the latent faculties and qualities that are within us – qualities which we have not yet developed – we also become in due course. We will increasingly shape the deepest essence that we are in an ongoing process.

Relative immortality

If we always become what we are inwardly, then the self is

nothing but movement and change. It is therefore an illusion. And by the word “illusion” we do not mean that it does not exist, but that it exists because of something else, and therefore is not durable. It’s like a shadow on the wall. Or to put it in the words of one of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion:

... But what is Self? only a passing guest, whose concerns are all like a mirage of the great desert ...⁽²⁾

It is this image of an ever-changing, growing self that is difficult for people who are not schooled in these metaphysical matters to understand. Gautama the Buddha had an insight into this. When asked if there is an unchanging self in man, he was silent. Similarly, when he was asked if there is no unchanging self in man then, he was silent as well. Later he explained to his initiated disciple that any answer he might have given would have been cause for misunderstanding. If you say that there is an unchanging self in man, you might think that there is something within us that remains eternally the same, which is not true. If you were to say that there is no unchanging self within us, you might think that with the death of the body our self-consciousness ceases to exist, which is also not true.⁽³⁾

The reality is that there is SOMETHING, which is the source of all our selves, of all our abilities, all our characteristics. And from that source we continuously draw, so that, without there ever being a moment of immobility, we go from one phase to another. We are immortal in this mutability. Absolute immortality means that our self never changes. Then we would have reached an end point. However, there are no end points. There is boundlessness. We are relatively immortal. This means that without an absolute beginning or end point, we are in a process of constant growth, never ending movement and change. If there is nothing, nothing can change. We are in the heart of our hearts that SOMETHING. That SOMETHING is the deepest thing within us. It is a spark of boundless eternity.

The Higher Self

Generations of mystics have tried to understand that SOMETHING. They knew that in it was to be found the key that opens the gate to all the mysteries of life. In that SOMETHING is to be found the answer to the question of the origin of things, the meaning of life and where everything ultimately goes to.

Men tried to give a name to that SOMETHING. One speaks

of Ātman, Paramātmān, the Monad, the inner god, the Higher Self. The name, however, is unimportant. The important thing is to realize that we are dealing with a divine Essence, pure consciousness. The Higher Self has always been there, will always be there, and is essentially boundlessness itself.

This pure consciousness is the same in every being. Unlike the ego, it does not express itself as “I am I”, but as “I am”. This is a state that is almost impossible for us to imagine, accustomed as we are to identifying ourselves with our illusory self. Since the Higher Self has no egoic consciousness, it seems to our limited mind that it is unconscious. This can be compared to the child who looks at his reading father and thinks that he is not doing anything, while in his mind his father is traveling along with the adventures of the hero of the book he is reading.

Although we have little or no idea of it, we are that Higher Self. We are the boundlessness. TAT TWAM ASI, says the wisdom of the Upanishads, the sacred books of India. THOU ART THAT. Thou art the Boundless.

We are the Higher Self, but we are primarily expressing what you might call its radiation or emanation. Those emanations are the egos. It is with such an emanation, which has a certain characteristic, a certain color, that one identifies with. It is the developed consciousness of a being. It is that which out of the Higher Self has been “unpacked”, brought to activity.

Each ego is reflected consciousness. It has its own individualized characteristics. Egos see themselves as separate. They do not realize, or only partially realize, that they are an outgrowth from, and therefore in essence, the Higher Self, just as a ray from the sun is that sun itself.

The lower self

The reflected consciousness with which most people identify themselves is the lower self. So the lower self flows from the Higher Self. It is also called the personality. That word that comes from the Latin persona, which in turn is derived from personare, which means “to sound through”. So behind the person is something, which sounds through that person. Hence it got the meaning of mask. After all, behind it hides “the true voice”. Actors in ancient times wore a mask that corresponded to the role they played in the drama.

It is precisely this status that the lower self has. It is the role on the external plane, the transmitter of the forces working behind it. Emerging from Ātman or the Higher Self, the ātmic ray shines to the lower self, albeit extremely

weakly. This is because it is veiled. These veils are formed by the thoughts and feelings which are directed toward the outer world and which cause the lower self to live in the delusion that it is separate from others. The mind that takes the outer world as the only reality is the great obstacle to seeing who we really are.

The lower self is a reflection of the SELF. Or more sharply, it is a reflection of a reflection of a reflection. In the hierarchy of consciousness, there are reflections of the Higher Self that reflect much more purely the flow of divine consciousness, and thus channel it into less elevated areas.

In comparison, we might call the Higher Self a golden sun, a ray of which is reflected on earth by a golden object to a silver object. That silver object reflects the same ray of the sun towards a copper instrument. It is the same sunbeam, but its luster is diminishing.

Anyway, the lower self is reflected consciousness. It is the “temporary guest,” as the Master of Wisdom and Compassion calls it, whose concerns are like a mirage in the desert.

All personal characteristics, which we think we are, are like the “worries” of the lower self. They are nothing but mental images that we form and identify with. We attribute excessive importance to them, while they are shadows, a mirage.

To give an example, when we say, “I am happy”, we are mistaking a mental image for reality. We believe this happiness to be reality. In fact, we should say, “I experience happiness”. Similarly, we may say, “I am an engineer, or cleaner”, “I am Brazilian or German”, but actually we should say, “I play the role of engineer, cleaner, Brazilian or German”.

Quality of the lower self

Is the lower self evil? Is it naturally inclined to evil?

No, it certainly is not. Proceeding from the Higher Self it has everything in it that the Higher Self also has. Only when it turns away from the source from which it springs, and thereby detaches itself from the rest of life, selfishness arises: a focus on, a complete identification with its own limited consciousness.

We should use the lower self as its function in the hierarchy of consciousness dictates: a vehicle that serves us to become universal consciousness. We should therefore learn to conceive of it as an instrument. It is the temporary guest, transient, but something that can make us realize who we really are.

The question is how many more temporary guests do we

have to receive, or how many more “roles do we have to play, before we realize that we are more than what we are manifesting now. In other words, how many lives do we need to see through the illusion of the outer life? As we understand the essential nature of these illusory selves, we get closer to the Higher Self . Then we free ourselves from the sense of separateness and learn to discover that the SELF within us is the same as that within any other being.

For which self do we choose?

Perhaps after these considerations, the reader still feels that he has not received an answer to the question of whether he is his lower or Higher Self, and whether the Higher Self is something different than what you are now.

However, an absolute answer to that question cannot be given. After all, that depends on the extent to which an individual human being expresses the inner aspects in the stream of consciousness that one is.

It is not for nothing that the message of all the Teachers of Humanity can be reduced to the advice that sounds so simple but is so difficult to realize in practice: man know thyself.

Therefore, let us try to answer these questions summarily and as concretely as possible.

If there is an essential unity underlying everything that exists, then all selves are fundamentally equal. So then we are also our Higher Self. Whether we express it is another question. But even if we don't, we still are, exactly in the same way that the acorn is potentially the giant oak tree.

But if we think of our self as nothing more than what we are now, then our Higher Self is something else. Then we limit ourselves to be a separated being, one who imagines itself apart from others and whose concerns are like a mirage in the desert of external life. Not only do we make our own self, we also make our own truth. So if we recognize our personality as the only truth, then we are not our Higher Self.

But we can also make a different choice. Therefore, think about the universality of the Higher Self. Focus your thoughts on that and you will become it. We can make that choice.

Man is a mystery. He has everything within him. Or to put it in the words of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola:

To you is granted the power of degrading yourself into the lower forms of life, the beasts, and to you is granted the power, contained in your intellect and judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, the divine.⁽⁴⁾

If we want, we are our Higher Self.

References

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2. A.T. Barker (ed.), *The Mahatma letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Letter 45. Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, 1979, p. 264.
3. *Ānanda Sūtra*, see: <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2021/08/ananda-sutta-on-self-no-self-and-not-self/>.
4. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration On the Dignity Of Man (De hominis dignitate)*.

Announcement Symposium 2022

For the 2022 TSPL Symposium, we will build on the themes of 2020 and 2021, which focused respectively on the three Fundamentals of *The Secret Doctrine*, and the seven Jewels of Wisdom and the seven Pāramitās. The title of the 2022 Symposium is:

Independent search for truth

*Find your way in the world of “fake” and “illusion”
Discover who you are, be who you are*

The reports of the 2020 and 2021 Symposia can be found on our website *Lucifer the Light-bringer*, No. 4 – 2020 and No. 4 – 2021. <https://blavatskyhouse.org/magazine/magazine-archive/>

This year's and last year's symposium lectures are also on our YouTube channel.

See: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/symposium/archive/symposium-2021/videos/>

and: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/symposium/archive/the-secret-doctrine-the-theory-of-everything/>

Overview of all symposia: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/symposium/archive/>

In preparing for the symposia, the following works were used in particular:

H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*

This booklet contains excerpts from “The Book of the Golden Precepts” translated and annotated by H.P. Blavatsky. This is a book for the daily use of Lanoos, disciples or students on the Path of spiritual growth. In the third fragment, the Pāramitās are discussed in detail in a very inspiring way.

G. de Purucker, *Fundamentals of Esoteric Philosophy*.

This book is a verbatim account of lectures given by G. de Purucker in the years 1924-1927 to members of the Esoteric Section. The lectures appeared in print for the general public in 1932. In *Fundamentals of Esoteric Philosophy*, De Purucker explains all the essential teachings covered in *The Secret Doctrine*. In this work, for the first time in the Western world, the seven Jewels of Wisdom are given in a fixed order. Each of these Jewels can be found in the work of H.P. Blavatsky and in other philosophical and religious writings of antiquity, but not in this regular order.

G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Teachings, Volume 1*. This first of twelve Teachings for students of the Esoteric Section delves deeply into the ethical aspects of chelaschap (student on the Path of spiritual growth). The Pāramitās are discussed and explained in detail.



Lucifer the Light-bringer, issue 4, 2020 – *The Theory of Everything* and issue 4, 2021 – *Help to build the mentality of the future*.

The 2020 Symposium of the TSPL, Dutch Section, discusses the three Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* and considers the implications if you apply these Propositions. The 2021 Symposium focuses on seven steps of character transformation: the seven Jewels of Wisdom and the seven exalted virtues, the Pāramitās, combined.

You can order these books from our webshop (<https://blavatskyhouse.org/home/webshop/>). *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy* and *Lucifer the Light-bringer* can be downloaded for free.

The purpose of goals

Swabhāva: real goals come from within



Life is full of them: goals. There are goals at school, goals or targets at your job, governmental goals, United Nations' "Sustainable Development Goals" and goals in life. You can spend your whole life pursuing goals. But is that really the point? And are all these goals different? What are goals anyway and what is the purpose of goals? A theosophical analysis.

Key thoughts

- » Everything in nature has a purpose. In theosophical terms, we speak of Swabhāva. Ultimately, the purpose of everything is to contribute to the whole.
- » If we do not see or recognize the purpose of something or someone, we tend to impose our own goals or ends.
- » Through ignorance of true purpose, people often mistake a means for an end.
- » Goals can help give your life direction, provided they are unifying and you can internalize them.
- » Do not strive for your goals, but live them.

Unity in diversity

What does Theosophy say about purpose? The Theosophia has three basic ideas: boundlessness, cyclicity and the fundamental identity of all life. The conclusions of these ideas are far-reaching. They not only explain, but also guide. Like the conclusion that all life is essentially one. Every being has the same boundless potential. Everything is alive. And every being learns to realize more and more of unity in close cooperation with all other beings. Another conclusion is that there is unity in diversity. This means that each being has a certain purpose in relation to the whole. Each being possesses a unique characteristic to support the whole. He is a "necessary entity," but only insofar as he serves the whole, to paraphrase Katherine Tingley.⁽¹⁾

Nature charged with purpose

According to Theosophia, nature is loaded with purpose. There is nothing that is without purpose. Everything is alive and contributes to everything

else. Just as every cell in our body has its function, so every natural kingdom has a function on earth or every planet functions as one of the organs of our solar system. As above, so below. That purpose or function is not something predetermined, predestined or precisely defined, but something that is innate within the deepest Self of each being and to which it continuously expresses.

Swabhāva: the natural "intention" of every being

Here we can refer specifically to the theosophical teaching of Swabhāva. This is a Sanskrit word that can be translated as "self-becoming". It has two meanings.

The first is self-realization or self-generation. This means that we are not brought forth by something outside of ourselves in a random mechanical way or by creation of a god or gods. We develop ourselves from within, based on the inner strength and will that is within us.

The second meaning is: that each being becomes what it is in its own

higher spiritual nature. This refers to a certain unique character. A rose becomes a rose and not a thistle or a tulip. Its Swabhāva brings forth what it itself is, its essential inner nature or characteristic.

This unique characteristic or purpose is not merely something individual that is separate from all other forms of life. Rather, purpose is expressed in relation to the whole. Ancient India spoke of the concept of *Dharma* which can be translated as “duty” and “law” and which comes from the root *dhri*, meaning “to support,” “to sustain”, “to carry”. And according to Plato, everything exists for the benefit of something else and ultimately for the benefit of the whole:

I hold that all ingredients, as well as all tools, and quite generally all materials, are always provided for the sake of some process of generation. I further hold that every process of generation in turn always takes place for the sake of some particular being, and that all generation taken together takes place for the sake of being as a whole.⁽²⁾

So ultimately, humanly devised means, tools or materials are also meant to serve others – and ultimately the whole. A tool like a fork is a tool with the purpose of allowing us to eat with it. Eating is a “process of generating” our body. And our body is there as a vehicle for us as human beings. And our uniqueness is expressed in our relationship with others and the larger whole of which we are a part. Plato also defined justice as the degree to which each can fulfill his unique function or purpose for the benefit of the whole. The cobbler makes shoes, the teacher teaches, the captain steers the ship. In that way, everyone receives exactly what they need: because in Plato's republic, the revenues of each work are also distributed equitably.⁽³⁾

A purpose is not static

Now this can seem a bit compelling. Is everyone then doomed to fulfill their purpose and nothing else? Suppose we are good at making shoes, do we want to be the shoe-maker for the rest of our lives?

That fear is unfounded if you consider three points. First, Plato described a city-state in which the focus is not on the happiness of the individual, but on that of the entire republic. And if all the individual members of the republic realize that they are an inseparable part of the community and they are always working for and with each other, then nothing will make them happier than doing what they can for the benefit of the whole.

Second, a life is not limited to the work we do for the material prosperity of the state. A human being is a learning soul, who can make an active contribution in many areas of life. The examples of professions above indicate only a single aspect. The purpose of a human being transcends his profession. Moreover, if the work in the state is focused on fulfilling the basic needs, there is ample time left over to develop more broadly as a human being on the mental or spiritual level.

Third, a purpose is never something static. It can always broaden and deepen. We broaden our purpose by looking at the bigger picture and doing what is needed at the time. Like a good team player helps with the defense, although he is lined up as an offensive player. And we deepen our purpose by not just doing what is expected, but by connecting with the underlying intention. Just as a craftsman always continues to discover how things can be done better in order to be of even better service to his fellow man. A good example is a company that makes stairs. They do not present themselves as a manufacturer of stairs, but as a company whose purpose is to take people from one floor to another. To fulfill their purpose, they develop stairs, but also elevators or other means for elevation.

How to find your purpose?

Our “purpose” is not predestined or determined or described from the outside. We can only realize it from within. It is not a fixed thing, but something that we can continuously experience deeper and deeper as we evolve as consciousness and become our Self. And we write Self with a capital letter on purpose to distinguish the universal Self from our personal self. The Self which in essence is the boundless force or source working through or behind every being. And which in fact is the essence of every being.

Every human being has two motives for doing something: do you do something for yourself and act selfishly or do you do something for the whole and act unselfishly. Starting from unity in nature, we can better understand our purpose if we broaden our consciousness. The paradox is that we are more likely to achieve this by limiting or disciplining the will of our own personal self or “me”. For when we are only concerned with our own self-interest, we narrow our vision. We then no longer see what is needed and what our place is in the whole. In other words, by forgetting our self, we find our Self, the universal Self that is also the essential Self of every other person.

Goals and purposes in practice

Let's return to our main theme: goals. We begin by pausing to consider what goals are. A goal is described, among other things, as a certain point: a target, an end point, or a certain result. In sports, a goal can be a target point, as in soccer, hockey or golf. The goal can also be an end point, such as reaching the top of a mountain with climbing or crossing the finish line in a marathon. Or it may be a result: winning by scoring more goals than the opponent, for example, or being the fastest in a race.

A goal can also be something we strive for. For example, walking at least an hour each day, or getting up early, or reading a book. Often these aims also conceal other goals: to lose weight, to follow a study or to broaden your interests.

We formulate a goal or aim to give direction to our actions or to give ourselves a certain challenge. It is an expression of a certain desire, something we want to achieve.

Our view on purposes, influences how we set goals. Do we assume that there are purposes in nature, which ultimately benefit the whole, and derive our goals based on that view? Or do we not assume that there are purposes in life? Or do we only see limited purposes in nature — for example the survival or maintenance of our species? In our current society, we generally assume the latter, and the theosophical doctrine of Swabhāva is still unknown to many people. Because this concept is unknown, people usually do not derive goals based on the grander purposes in nature, but instead invent goals in life just for themselves.

A pitfall then is that we start setting goals based on self-interest or – at best – on limited perspectives. In doing so, we ignore the purposes of ourselves, others, our organizations, important social functions and even the function of the state as a whole. We will give some examples.

The “purple crocodile”

A mother stands at the reception of a swimming pool with her daughter. The girl has lost her purple inflatable crocodile. To their relief, the mother and daughter see the crocodile standing against the wall behind the receptionist. The mother asks if they can take the purple crocodile back with them. The gruff gentleman turns toward the crocodile, but instead he grabs a form. He insists that she first fill out a double-sided form and turn it in the following day at a certain department between 9 and 10 AM. “But it's right there!” says the mother. “Yes, it is right there!” he answers without taking action.

Since this 2004 Dutch advertisement, the term “purple

crocodile” has taken hold. In English these forms of redundant bureaucracy are described as “red tape”. It is a telling example of what happens in many organizations. The attention is twisted from the original purpose – to be of service to the whole in one way or another – to the internal procedures and rules of the organization.

“Twisted organizations”

This is visible in many organizations. They lose sight of their purpose. In order to control the variable living world in carrying out their purpose – adding value for their customers – they have created a system with rules, procedures and standards. This system is absorbing more and more attention. Are the figures correct? Are the protocols being followed properly? Are we achieving our targets? The original purpose is getting further and further out of sight. Means have been promoted to ends in themselves.

Means become ends

If you take a broader look you will see that in many areas means are confused with ends, for lack of insight into purposes.

Companies focus on targets, profit and shareholder value instead of adding value to their customers. Manufacturers no longer make products of the best quality, but products that *appear* to be of the best quality. Products are manufactured for the least cost and sold at the highest price. The customer is no longer the focus. Sometimes the customer himself has become the product, for example because companies earn money from the data traces that the customer unknowingly leaves behind.

In education, schools focus on success rates, parents send their children to exam training, and students study only to pass the test. The conversation about what makes good education is only held at the margins.

Hospitals are funded (partly) based on the number of operations. Healthcare facilities select the clients for whom they get the most money. Does this really make people healthier?

We use the growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of a country's prosperity, and political parties govern with the upcoming elections in mind, implementing policies that add to their popularity. Does it contribute to the welfare of all?

In all of these examples, means are elevated to ends and original purposes are lost out of sight. Abstract figures, which indicate turnover, profit or a success rate, overshadow the real purpose. In fact, these numbers serve as a

means to represent “progress” in something. What that “something” is, most people have forgotten, but they do strive for these numbers. The means have become ends and the people have become means. They have become subservient to the system – be it an organization, a sector or a state – rather than the other way around. And in the end, the systems we have created to be subservient to ourselves can alienate us to the point where we start fighting each other over them, like capitalism versus socialism or the private against the public sector.

Why means become ends

Ignorance

What is the cause of this? It is the lack of understanding of the purposes that exist in nature, a lack of knowledge about Swabhāva. And that in turn stems from ignorance of the unity of all life, in which everything is ultimately subservient to everything else, just as every cell in the body has its function. In other words: if you do not look at life from this fact of interconnectedness, you do not assume at all that everything has a purpose. You can quickly mistake certain ideas for reality then, such as thinking that education is about getting your degree, work is about making money, and life is about accumulating possessions. The easily measurable targets that catch the eye in the short term then get the attention. Those become our goals.

In addition, selfishness lurks. Goals and results are expressions of desire. And if that desire is directed only at one's own benefit, or that of the individual or one's own group, then it comes at the expense of the whole.

Distrust

By focusing on our own (make-believe) goals rather than purposes, we also fail to recognize and acknowledge the purpose of others. We are then more prone to distrust. For how do you know if someone or an organization is fulfilling his or her function well, if you do not know exactly what this function is? We then impose superficial standards or goals on others. We think teachers should meet an hours standard, have healthcare staff describe what they do up to the minute, and give civil servants targets for fraud prevention. There is no longer a profession that is not expressed in terms of money and time.

This is contrary to the meaning of the word “professional,” which comes from the Latin word “*professio*”: “I make a vow.” Think of the vows or oaths taken by doctors, civil servants and lawyers, for example. They explicitly promise to serve the whole and thus earn trust.

Moreover, research has shown that measures related to human actions and behavior are counterproductive.⁽⁴⁾ For example, you can use a grade-average as a measure to see how schools are performing. But once this measure becomes known, schools may start focusing their teaching on raising grades. Instead of a grade as a means of indicating or feedback for progress in learning, a high grade becomes an end in itself. And at that point, the measure loses its value. In short: once a measure becomes a goal, it ceases to be a good measure.⁽⁵⁾

It is also referred to as the “cobra-effect”. This term is based on a story of the British who, during the colonial rule of India, wanted to combat the growth in the number of cobras. They therefore offered a reward for each cobra killed. This initially had a good effect, until people started breeding cobras as they saw the reward as a form of income. When the British realized this, they stopped rewarding. The cobra breeders then released their cobras, leading to an even greater increase in cobras than before. Translated to the example of grades: if you use a grade average as an indicator of school performance, it is not inconceivable that higher grades will be given — consciously or unconsciously. If you then see a grade average that has progressed or stayed the same, then the quality seems to have improved or stayed the same, while in reality it has declined.

Goals are means!

There are no real measurable goals as absolute end-points in nature, which in its essence is infinite. Nature always shows growth. There are relative end-points, though. They are certain stopping points, points at which you outgrow something, or points at which you enter other realms of consciousness, such as during sleep, death, or birth. However, they are nothing more than the peaks and valleys in the infinite cyclic spiral motion that we as consciousness go through. Goals as targets or as expressions of a particular striving are devised by us as humans to provide direction. So that means that these kinds of goals are actually a means! They are a means behind which there is a higher end, and ultimately an underlying purpose. So do these goals as measurable targets or aims make sense? Yes, they can indeed help as a means to give direction. We mention two criteria below.

Toward meaningful goals

As described above, true purposes come from within. We can increasingly realize this Swabhāva by (a) turning in-

ward, and (b) simultaneously keeping sight of the greater whole, seeing coherence, forming understanding, and thus taking our place within that whole. That also means that we make our personality, our self-interest, subservient to that greater whole, to a broader purpose. Goals can be helpful in this. They help us, for example, to develop more discipline. For example, if we strive to get up early every morning to find time to study, play sports or fulfill some other duty. Getting up early is then not an end in itself, but a means to develop yourself. And you develop yourself to be of better service to the whole again.

So following this meaning of Swabhāva or purpose there are two criteria for testing a goal or an aim to prevent that you lose sight of the purpose:

1. Does the goal stand in the light of the purpose, a contribution to the greater whole? Or in other words, does it work towards unity?
2. Does the goal motivate us to act on it now and continue to act on it in the future, so that it becomes part of ourselves? Or in other words, can we internalize it?

Does the goal work in a unifying way?

Every purpose of something is to serve something else, which is broader or greater than that something itself. This is true of an individual, an organization, or a state. And, starting from the connectedness that is inherent in nature, the real purpose of any being or group is ultimately to serve the whole.⁽⁶⁾

So a goal must always be seen in light of the purpose. A goal that is only aimed at one's self or one's group, such as "I want to become the best ...", "our family first" or "our country first", distracts more from the purpose than to bring it closer. Based on such a limited goal, others are competed against, fought over or subjugated, resulting in more hardening and separation. A vicious cycle, as this can encourage others to engage in the same behavior. The same is true for goals that stem from distrust of others. You reap what you sow.

Goals such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals – which include eliminating poverty, hunger or inequality or promoting sustainability, peace and justice for all⁽⁷⁾ – unite rather than divide. They are the formulation of a shared ideal, do not exclude anyone, nor do they evoke selfish desire or distrust.

But do goals inspire if we all share the same goals? Doesn't it then become very boring and uniform? Won't we then lapse into a kind of totalitarian regime in which every devi-

ation is punished in the light of the great shared ideal?

This will not be the case if goals leave room for everyone's unique character or intention. And this brings us to the second criterion: to what extent do goals stimulate our independent inner development?

Can you internalize the goal?

True motivation is intrinsic, always comes from within. Another person can inspire or even "drill" you to do something, like a trainer. But it doesn't really motivate if you yourself don't see the purpose.

We spoke above of the distinction between our personal or lower self and our supra-personal higher Self. If we identify with our personal self, we believe we are separate from others. If we identify with the higher or universal Self, then we think from the whole.

Unifying goals can be directed in two ways, analogous to these two parts in ourselves. They can be aimed at disciplining our lower nature so that we learn to put aside our personal interest and thus give more space to the common good. For example, think about getting up early to create time, regular physical exercise to stay healthy, or practicing patience when you find yourself wanting to react emotionally to something. On the other hand, goals can also appeal to our higher nature, such as developing wisdom, compassion, and a peaceful attitude. A goal or aspiration helps, if it inspires us to act on it now and continue to act on it. And because as consciousness we are always learning and growing, it helps to formulate these goals not in an absolute, but in a relative way, and to relate them not to a fixed point but to a process, often indicated by a verb. So for example, instead of speaking of the "biggest", "fastest" or "strongest" organization, person or state, you can then speak of a "bigger", "stronger" insight or "right" awareness or action. Formulated in this way, it can be true for everyone at every stage and continue to be true, because it can be internalized further and further.

An example of this is the Eightfold Path from Buddhism which speaks of "right striving, right speaking, right acting" et cetera. Or the five objectives of the Theosophical Society Point Loma where, among other things, it is about promulgating a knowledge of the essential unity of all that is, and forming an active brotherhood among men.⁽⁸⁾

These formulations make you turn to look inwards, because you can always keep asking "what is right?" or "how do we form a brotherhood?" The relative formulation prevents us from placing an aspiration outside of ourselves, in the sense of: once I have that job, or once we have that

government, or once I reach that level, then I'm going to focus on... et cetera. We are fooling ourselves if we want a sustainable world, but do not want to change ourselves until others are 'sustainable'. A meaningful goal prompts us to shape it now, without preconditions. To start now and then row with the oars we have. As the Dalai Lama once seems to have answered, when asked how he would get China to recognize Tibet, "We'll do that one Chinese at a time."

The bottom line is that rather than striving for our goals, we must live them.

The end never justifies the means

From the foregoing it also becomes clear why the end never justifies the means. You cannot truly unite by separating, even if it is just separating from a small part. Even though there may be people who turn against unity or give priority to their own interests, you will never get them permanently on the right path by fighting, imprisoning or punishing them. Such actions have never made anyone a better person. Setting a good example yourself, while looking for the best ways to awaken the higher Self in the other person, whether or not in combination with disciplining the lower self, really help another person find their purpose again.

And neither as any form of separation helps to unite, nor will placing something outside yourself help you internalize something. Suppose, for example, that you give in to an urge to eat something tasty before getting down to work. You then place the solution to an emotional problem – dreading to start your work – not within yourself, but outside yourself. You hope to find your motivation in sweets. Thus on the one hand you neglect the opportunity this situation offers to reconnect to the purpose of your work, of the ideal you serve. And on the other hand, you add another problem: your growing dependence on something external. You then strengthen your personal part by focusing on that. As a result, it only becomes more difficult to detach from it, or to prevent your personality from stubbornly demanding its attention at other times. By the way, the solution to this does not lie in an extreme implementation of disciplining the lower nature by, for example, applying ascetic practices, such as hardly eating anything at all. Because even then you place the problem outside of yourself. This can actually increase the focus on the lower part.

So the means and ends you use must be in accordance with the purpose. Inferior means, such as trying to achieve

peace through violence, evoke corresponding reactions and sooner or later only lead to more disharmony.

The road to success

We end with a paradox of the sage Lao-Tse, explained by Gottfried de Purucker, the fourth Leader of the Theosophical Society:

(...) great Lao-Tse of China taught: to wit, that the way of Tao – often translated Heaven – is not to strive. Half-understanding Occidental scholars, studying these our Oriental scriptures, make fun of the idea that the way to succeed is by not striving to succeed: that the way to progress rapidly is by hastening more with mind and heart, but without the idea of speedy accomplishment: that the way to health is in the attainment of harmony rather than in the mere practice of formal rules.

But Lao-Tse was right. Quiet are the places where growth takes place. Still are the chambers where light enters the heart. Nature's most majestic processes are silent, peaceful, quiet. The rattling drum and the blaring brass-band may stand as ideals for the little boy, but for the Sage — no! All growth is quiet, takes place without striving, in the silence. Battle, strife, activity, hustle, bustle — all these things are signs of human imperfections, and of a lack of knowledge of the Wisdom of the Heart-Doctrine. It is indeed the way of Heaven not to strive.

(...) we are workers, very busy, very active, very earnest, very devoted, very intent; but we are peaceful; we do our work quietly, efficiently, easily. It is the way of Heaven. Therefore be still and grow; be as active spiritually as you are quiet outwardly.⁽⁹⁾

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SPACE, time and consciousness



A galaxy is a cosmic cell.

Key thoughts

- » Galaxies, stars, and planets are living beings.
- » A space is by definition limited and relative.
- » Absolute abstract SPACE is boundless and immeasurable.
- » Duration is immutable; time exists because of movement and change. Each consciousness interprets time according to its character.
- » SPACE : a space = DURATION : time.
- » A space is a plenitude of life.
- » There is a space-time-consciousness-continuum.
- » Any space – and therefore time – is illusory because it exists due to something else; it has a beginning and therefore an end.
- » Past, present and future are interconnected. The future comes upon us from behind.

How do space, time and consciousness relate to each other? Will this mysterious extensiveness of space ever reveal its secrets to human consciousness?

We are a child of the cosmos. Therefore, if we dig deep within ourselves, we may be able to lift a tip of the veil.

Sometimes the editors of a digital newspaper have put the reading time above an article. *Reading time: 5 minutes* is then communicated as a kind of service to the reader. However, readers will have experienced that those *five minutes* last longer for one article than for another. This has to do with interest and state of mind. And if you read the article standing up in the train, those five minutes will probably be longer in your experience than if you lay stretched out on the couch. This is because time is relative and dependent on consciousness and space.

This also means that space and consciousness are relative. These three concepts have everything to do with each other; they are *related* to each other and are variable. Space, time, and consciousness can therefore only be considered in relation to something else.

“Absolute” is the opposite of “relative” and means that something must be considered separate from everything else. To clarify “relative” and “absolute” with an example: the

length of daytime – the period when the sun shines – is relative. After all, during the winter we have fewer hours of sunshine than in the summer. Each day always has 24 hours. You could call that an absolute. Now, the division of time is related, among other things, to the movement of the earth around its axis and if it turns out that this is variable, then those 24 hours in a 24-hour period are not really all that absolute. So, on closer inspection, apparent absolutes prove to be relative after all. So, although space, time and consciousness are relative concepts, you can also consider these concepts in an absolute way. If you consider the relative view and the absolute view, you get a clear picture of the cosmos and of life. Moreover, you can draw conclusions from this with regard to your own life and learn to live in accordance with those cosmic laws.

Relative space

When we speak of “space” in our everyday language, we usually refer to the vastness of the cosmos. But

actually, we are talking about *a* space and although it may be immeasurably large to us, it does not really differ in principle from other spaces, such as that of our solar system. Every space is part of something bigger. For example, our solar system is one of the many solar systems of the Milky Way.

We can still build up an image of the sun and its planets, although the distances are enormous to our understanding. The distance from the sun – “our” star – to the earth is about 150 million kilometers. Light takes 8 minutes and 19 seconds to travel that distance. That is 0.000016 light year. Not counting our sun, the closest star is Proxima Centauri. That star is already at a distance of 4.25 light years, or more than 40 trillion kilometers, a distance that is barely imaginable to us. Other stars are at even greater distances. These stars form a whole: the Milky Way, a system with a diameter of 100,000 - 120,000 light years and with an estimated 200 billion stars! I don't think many people can get a concrete picture of this.

The Milky Way is just one of many galaxies. Scientists cite numbers of 100 billion to 200 billion of those galaxies, all consisting of billions of stars and their planets. By the way, these are only estimates, because no matter how good our instruments are, no matter how much the observations have improved with all kinds of modern equipment, including space probes like Hubble, and perhaps now the newly launched James Webb Space Telescope, there is still so much we cannot perceive.

Now this unimaginably vast space, which we may or may not be able to observe, is a *relative* space and not the abstract absolute SPACE. For all those billions of galaxies are not limitless. They may be immeasurably large to us, yet they have limits. They have limits in size and in duration. They were born at some time and therefore will die at some time as well. Current science, always the best friend of Theosophy in these matters, has also discovered that stars can be born; that out of great nebulae stars are born. Scientists speak of nurseries of stars. And what is born will one day die. This too is confirmed by science, which speaks of dying stars.

Relative consciousness

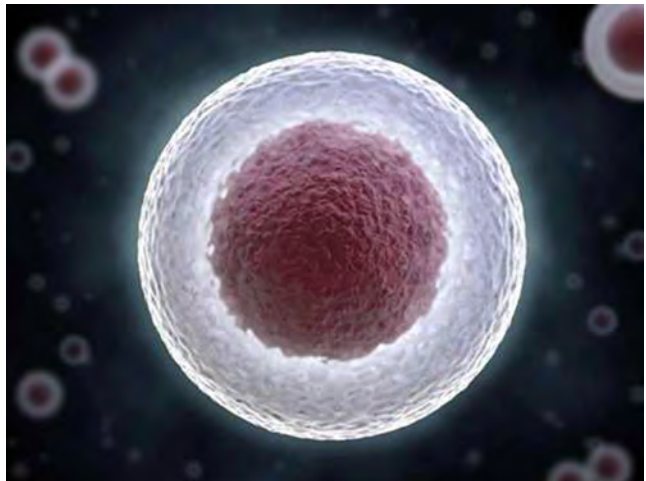
The birth process of a cosmos is, according to Theosophia, not a mechanical process. On the contrary, it is guided by consciousness. The characteristics of life are acting, reacting and being the object of actions of other entities. These characteristics are met by planets, stars, and galaxies. The space that such a cosmic being – this cosmic conscious-

ness – occupies or actually *is*, as will be shown later, is always in relation to other spaces. That's why you can also speak of relative consciousness. It is never separate from other consciousnesses and is constantly changing.

What we can perceive, with the naked eye or with the most powerful telescope, is actually only that part of a being that corresponds to the physical world we live in; we often perceive only their outer body.

All these beings have their own lifespan and lifecycle. They may seem like immutable entities to us, but they all relate to each other, react to each other, move, and change all the time. Although a cosmos may exist for billions of years, it will have an end. A cosmic being – the consciousness – never permanently envelops itself in a cosmic body, even if that body, like our Milky Way, consists of billions of stars. It has a temporary manifestation period.

How relative everything is, is shown by the fact that an immense galaxy is very similar to what in the small world, in our human body for example, is called a cell, which can only be observed with a microscope (see photo). A cell is



made up of molecules. A molecule is made up of atoms. An atom is much like a solar system. A solar system has a nucleus – the sun – with planets revolving around it. An atom also has a nucleus, with electrons circulating around it. The scale is quite different, of course, but that is relative. After all, if everything in the boundless universe were to get a hundred thousand times bigger or smaller at the same time, no one would notice. In other words, all processes proceed in the same way. As above, so below.

An immense galaxy, like our Milky Way, is nothing but a cosmic cell in a larger body, just as a cell in our left little finger, is a part of the human body.

In short, any manifested cosmic being – galaxy, sun, planet – is never the absolute, unchanging boundlessness.

Therefore: no matter how large and vast a space is, it is never SPACE *per se*. It is never the Boundlessness.

Abstract Absolute SPACE

In its absolute abstract sense, SPACE (written in capital letters) is in fact the same as boundlessness. We are not speaking of *a* space, but of the unbounded infinity of the Boundless. SPACE is not the concrete place in which any being manifests itself, but it is the force working in or behind or through all spaces. It is LIFE itself, Conscious Be-ness that is borderless, eternal, has no beginning or end, is unchanging, and from which all limited, relative spaces emanate, and in which they are embedded.

SPACE has no dimensions: you cannot measure its height or width or depth, which you can do with a space. SPACE is by definition immeasurable. In fact, we cannot say anything about it, because it is beyond our comprehension.

Hence, in ancient religious and philosophical systems of thought, SPACE was described with metaphors such as THE ABYSS or OCEAN. Mystical Buddhists used the term: Śūnyatā or EMPTINESS. By this they did not mean that there is nothing, but that the highest parts of life, of a *space*, of manifested living things, are imperceptible to us, yes, even unimaginable, and thus appear *to us* as emptiness. If we do not understand something, it is vague to us, but if it is even beyond that vagueness, if we do not understand anything about it at all, yes, if we do not even understand that we do not understand because it simply goes beyond our imagination, then it is empty to us.

Emptiness, then, is the boundlessness and endlessness that underlies every being. In other words, every being is boundless at its deepest core. It is a spark, a ray, a corollary – and actually these words are not adequate, but we have no other – of this boundlessness, of SPACE, of Śūnyatā.

Although we cannot fathom the deepest meaning of SPACE, this concept does give us tremendous inner peace, because we know that we can never be lost. It is as Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

Never did I not exist, nor thou, nor these princes of the earth, nor shall any of us hereafter cease to be.⁽¹⁾

Boundless Principle

In *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P. Blavatsky gives this idea of abstract borderless SPACE, the name of PRINCIPLE. She then speaks of an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutability PRINCIPLE. In her explanation of this she says that this “Be-ness”, is symbolized from two points of view:

absolute abstract SPACE and abstract Motion. That Motion, *The Secret Doctrine* says, represents Unconditional Consciousness.⁽²⁾

Both abstract SPACE and unconditional Consciousness are impossible for us to imagine. For us, consciousness always implies a limitation because it is related to other consciousnesses. We need to be able to mirror ourselves in some way, and you cannot mirror yourself to boundlessness. There is no such thing as a self-contained, isolated consciousness. Consciousness acts and reacts to other consciousnesses and is the object of the actions of others. That is why it is always changing and growing. For every consciousness, there is more to discover, more to develop. After all, you are never aware of everything, else you would be everything. Then you could mirror nothing.

Abstract Movement or unconditional Consciousness, on the other hand, is inconceivable to us. It is Conscious Be-ness *per se*: Consciousness without limits, infinite in its potencies, faculties, and scope. It is, like abstract SPACE, boundlessness itself: the rootless root, or the causeless cause, the necessarily unnamable and unthinkable that is nevertheless the source of all that exists.

Elsewhere in *The Secret Doctrine*, Helena Blavatsky cites an esoteric catechism:

“What is it that ever is?” “SPACE, the eternal Anupadaka.” [parentless; B.V.] “What is it that ever was?” “The Germ in the Root.” “What is it that is ever coming and going?” “The Great Breath.” “Then, there are three Eternals?” “No, the three are one. That which ever is is one, that which ever was is one, that which is ever being and becoming is also one: and this is SPACE.”⁽³⁾

That abstract SPACE is like a coastless OCEAN OF BEING, without bottom or surface, into which everything is rooted, out of which everything springs, in which everything takes place, but which is nothing in particular, although it is everything. Nothing in it has any privilege or takes a special place. Every universe, every sun, every planet, every entity, every human being, every animal, down to the tiniest microbe, yes, every molecule, every atom, every particle of an atom is nothing but a ripple in that figurative OCEAN OF BE-NESS. Every being, every consciousness, is therefore essentially that OCEAN itself, just as a wave is made up of the same elements as the whole Ocean of which it is a part.

As long as that ripple exists, and a being is thus manifested, there is time.

DURATION

This boundless principle, the borderless Ocean of Be-ness, however, knows no time. It only knows duration. In other words, the abstract SPACE that exceeds our consciousness, is duration to us. To much more advanced beings who have a grander consciousness, what we call “endless duration”, to them will be changing time.

Duration cannot be grasped by us, because manifested beings cannot comprehend boundlessness itself. For manifested beings, duration knows no change, whereas manifested life is nothing but change.

Sometimes, to us, something manifested seems durable. For example, we can look at a certain nebula in the firmament at the same time of night for several months and not perceive any change. However, when we observe that nebula with very powerful telescopes that greatly enlarge the limit of our range of consciousness in the physical realm, it often turns out that this immutability does not exist, because yet we observe some minute changes. There is always a larger space with its own experience of time that is perceived as duration by the minor consciousnesses, living within it.

In abstract SPACE we can never perceive change. Therefore, there is eternal duration, which appears to us as nothing but deep darkness.

Time

With time, on the other hand, we are very familiar. Time is related to movement, to cyclicity and exists therefore as a result of change. Time can always be quantified: can be divided into phases, into periods, into cycles. We can observe this, we notice these changes. Time always relates to manifested beings, who attach a certain value to the changes that occur.

Thus we humans living on planet earth, have made certain agreements with regard to time. The perception of time is therefore always dependent on a perceiving consciousness. That perceiving consciousness can experience time from a personal attitude, but time can also be related to a larger phenomenon, such as the rotation of the earth. That rotation of the earth around its axis determines our day and night rhythm, which we have divided into 24 units, and those again into 60 smaller units. The earth's rotation around the sun determines our year.

The sun moves cyclically in our galaxy and that too determines our time. However, that period is so great that only the wise can take it into account.

Beings from other planets or cosmic worlds have to deal

with other cyclic movements and they will therefore have different time divisions, which in our experience can be very short or very long. For example, the time for elementary particles, which have a very short life span, will be incredibly fast to us, while the cosmic time of a star that lives for billions of earth-years, is very slow in our perception. Perception of time, therefore, is not an objective fact. In other words, the interpretation of time, the value we assign to it, is entirely dependent on perceptive consciousness, on how and who we are, what our character is like and with what we identify ourselves. Therefore, time is dependent on individual consciousness. If there is no manifested consciousness, there is no time.

So, when consciousness has withdrawn from manifestation – at sleep or death – time ceases to exist for that moment. Perhaps it has happened to you on occasion, that after dinner you doze off for a moment, then you wake up and have no idea whether you have slept one hour or eight hours. For your partner, however, who in the meantime has cleared the table and done the dishes, there was definitely time.

Even in the period of the great sleep, death, there is no earthly time. Some people sometimes marvel at the great span of time between two earthly lives. They forget, however, that for the human being who has died, there is no such time. After death there are no clocks.

In conclusion, one can say that each sentient consciousness has its own time. Duration and time relate to each other in the same way as SPACE and a space. Duration and abstract SPACE are, for a perceiving consciousness, immutable and boundless; time and space have beginnings and endings, are changeable and therefore, as we hope to make clear later, illusory.

Manifested space: fullness

When stated before that SPACE is a Void, we were not talking about manifested space, for a space is, paradoxically, a fullness. While SPACE *per se* is dimensionless and unlimited, a space has dimensions that are measurable and therefore limited. Of any space you could measure the length, width, and height, although in the case of cosmic manifestations this is almost impossible for us; we use the unit of measurement “light years”. The microworld of the atom is also almost impossible to measure, as tiny as that atomic world is.

Every space is the manifestation of consciousness, of a living being. Space, in other words, is a property of a

manifesting consciousness. Such a space, however, does not stand alone. Every being lives within the space of another being. Everything lives, moves, and has its existence within a larger being, while in turn it is composed of the spaces of smaller beings. For example, we humans live in the space of the earth and of our solar system, or if you think of it even more universally, in that of our galaxy, while we form the space for the cells and atoms in our bodies.

The different spaces, therefore, relate to each other hierarchically. Consciousness and space are identical to each other. So, a more advanced consciousness that creates its space, thereby also creates the possibility for other, less advanced consciousnesses, to create their space. And since each space has its own time, time-spaces also relate hierarchically to each other.

Since every being lives in a space, you cannot imagine a being, without imagining a space in which that being lives. A space is therefore not a void in which a being manifests itself. This outdated notion was fueled by the assumption that the vast distances between sun and planets, and especially between suns themselves, are a kind of vacuum. Improved observations, however, have established that so-called interstellar space is full of particles. The Hubble telescope has further shown that parts of the universe that until recently seemed black and empty through telescopes on Earth, turn out to be bursting with stars, galaxies, and nebulae.

A space, according to Theosophia, is a fullness because it is the manifestation of a being. Each manifestation – whether we are talking about a galaxy or a flea – is to be found, of course, at a particular location in another space, but by being born within it, it has created its own space. So, each being *is* its own individual space. To a perceiving consciousness, the abstract, dimensionless SPACE has many, indeed infinite numbers of divisions, from very rarefied and ethereal ones to coarse and crude ones. There are thus innumerable spaces in SPACE. Some of these spaces are so much more advanced than we are, as noted above, that they appear to us as emptiness.

A space is always a fullness of life. This is because, as mentioned, each being *is* its own space. This idea becomes more understandable when you realize two things. First, that in a cosmos there are different “departments” that differ in etheric degree from each other. After all, the cosmos is a hierarchy of consciousness. The higher up the hierarchy, the more ethereal the space is. Secondly, that what we call substance or matter is not dead but alive.

Theosophia knows no dead matter.

A cosmic being has, in other words, a number of cosmic robes, made up of living building blocks, different in etheric degree that fill its space, yes, actually *are* its space. This idea is the background of the ancient Greek doctrine of the Aether, or that of Ākāśa of the Hindus. Ākāśa is not merely the substance that fills a space, but it is the life itself that constitutes that space.

From the theosophical point of view, the fullness is of elemental nature. Science, in its investigation of the coherence of the cosmos, has discovered various particles that represent all kinds of functionalities here. For example, the discovery of the Higgs particle and the Higgs field – named after the theoretical physicist Peter Higgs – appears to be a major step forward. This field points to the fact, that all so-called empty space is a fullness. The Higgs field permeates the entire cosmos and causes elementary particles to have mass. Theosophia teaches that those Higgs particles are living beings and furthermore, that not just in our physical realm, but in all realms of the cosmos – in all spaces – there are beings that perform this function.

Perhaps the idea of fullness becomes more understandable if we take the human being as an illustration. A human is also a particular space: the microcosm. His whole constitution, his spirit, soul, and body, is a fullness of life. Take the lowest part of that human cosmos: the body. There is no place in our body that is not a living building block, whether a cell, a molecule, or an atom. Man is a fullness of living beings. Accordingly, in every layer of our consciousness, in our feelings, our desires and thinking, in our idealism and aspiration, we are a fullness of living building blocks belonging to each of these areas.

Similarly, the great cosmos is a fullness, a *Pleroma*, as the ancient Greeks or Gnostics used to call it.

Space-time continuum

In every space, time exists. Time is therefore also understood to be a kind of dimension that, like length, width, and height, you can measure. There is no space without time. And of course, the reverse is also true: there is no time without space.

Therefore, you cannot imagine space without time. If you start from two dimensions – length and width – you can still imagine this two-dimensional image as one moment. If, however, you add depth, the time component comes into play anyhow. After all, then you get a space in which you can move, and it always takes a certain amount of time to go from one side of that space to the other.

If time were not connected to space, space could not exist for two moments in succession, for that succession – that is, the change – is precisely what we call time. In the same way, time can only exist because of the changing space, which represents time. Take as an example a person in a certain situation. He or she is at work or is listening to music, is on vacation, or whatever. You always imagine that person in a space. Moreover, you know that the state in which he or she is, is constantly changing, so that there is one moment after another: so, there is time. Time and space form a unity: a space-time-continuum.

Space-time-consciousness-continuum

In every instance of a human being in a space, there is, in addition to time and space, a third factor: that human being itself. In other words, consciousness. It is consciousness that manifests itself in a space, yes, actually *is* that space, in which there is time. Therefore, there is not only a space-time-continuum, but a consciousness-space-time-continuum.

In other words, space-time is identical with manifested consciousness. If there is space, there is also time and consciousness. The same is true of time and consciousness: so, when there is time, there is also space and consciousness, and when there is consciousness, there is also space and time. You could call it a trinity.

Consciousness or life is actually the same as self-movement: acting, reacting to other consciousnesses. Movement – and particularly that of the heavenly bodies – has therefore been associated with time since time immemorial. To give an example: the days of the week were not without reason named after the planets, the “moving stars”, which orbit around the sun, and that are closely linked to the planet earth.

Illusion

Time was always associated with movement in antiquity. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) defined time as *a number of motion with respect to the before and after*.⁽⁴⁾ Other philosophers, such as Plotinus (ca. 204/5-270 CE), also associated time with movement, especially the dynamism and motion of souls. After all, movement can only take place, if there is something that moves. That “something” is a consciousness – a soul – in a particular space. Because of that constant movement in time and in a space, every manifested phenomenon – from atom to Milky Way – is constantly in a different state. Each phenomenon is constantly changing.

It is change that underlies the idea of *Māyā*, or illusion. *Māyā*, which literally means “the measured” does not imply that a manifestation does not exist. It does exist, but it exists as a projection, as a consequence of a greater reality behind it. That projection, by definition, is temporary. So, all manifested things have an end. The existence of a human being, animal, plant, atom, sun is not denied, but their existence as a manifestation is temporary and the result of something more real, just as a shadow on a wall exists because something more real projects it.

Everything appears, changes, disappears. It never remains itself. There is state after state. Time is therefore an illusion, because it is produced by the succession of our states of consciousness, as we travel through eternal duration.

What then is the deepest underlying Reality that lies behind the phenomena? That is the boundless, abstract SPACE, that Ocean of Be-ness, of which every being is an inseparable part, and in which every phenomenon is nothing but a temporary and therefore illusory, ripple.

Past, present and future

Because of these changing states in which manifestations constantly find themselves, there is what we call in our human language *past*, *present* and *future*. When Aristotle speaks of a number of motion with respect to the before and after, he is talking about the past and the future.

In Duration there is no present, past and future. There is an eternal NOW, but as soon as any being is manifested, and there is consciousness, space, and time, then there is also present, past, and future. These three concepts are illusory concepts because they refer to things that are passing and therefore have no permanence. In fact, to quote a Master of Wisdom and Compassion, these concepts are “about as ill adapted for the purpose as an axe for fine carving”.⁽⁵⁾

For us humans, living in the temporality of manifestation to which we attach so much importance, it is extremely difficult to imagine timelessness. The first Stanza of *The Secret Doctrine* speaks of such a state. This Stanza describes the state of *Pralaya*: a state of rest, of sleep, of death; the cosmos is not manifested. In that state there is no time, because:

Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration.⁽⁶⁾

As soon as time awakens, which means that there is a manifestation, a space, a cosmos, consciousness, then there

is also past, present, and future. However, those are illusory concepts because reality is duration.

Time can be imagined as a line, separating that part of the eternal duration that we call the future, from the part we call the past.

We exist in the present moment, of course, but we are the product of our past, for what we have done and thought determines who we are today. But we are also our ideals and our future plans. We are a totality of memories of the past and ideals for the future. This totality that we are, lives, grows, and changes NOW, in the space where we are now, yes, that we actually *are*. And while we are thinking about this, the state we are in has already become the past. Nevertheless, the past does not mean that something has disappeared. If you have read this article, it may have implications for the far or near future. The thoughts in it may be so new and interesting that they lead to a whole new direction in your life. These thoughts were not invented by the writer of this article. In fact, they are as old as mankind, though for many they disappeared for ages. They were given back to the world by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and later, among others, by Gottfried de Purucker, spiritual Teachers who gave birth to their books at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century respectively.

So, we are simultaneously our past – all that we have thought and done – and our future, which is, after all, the result of our thinking and acting, while we live in the NOW. The future, therefore, is not waiting for us, but comes upon us from behind. Life must therefore be understood backwards and lived forwards.

Live now!

Past, present and future are not isolated quantities, they form the eternally living trinity of the illusory world. Like everything that is manifested, these three faces of time are related. If you think of them as isolated quantities, you reinforce their illusory nature. So, the more you live in the past or the future, the more you immerse yourself into illusion. Impersonal human beings may live in the outer, temporal world, but they do not identify with it. The personal man does. As a result, attachment arises. In other words, the more we identify with the outer manifestation, the greater importance we attach to the past and the future. Then we may have traumas because of the past; or we may be afraid of the future.

However, we can also live from the enduring part in ourselves. For although we live in an illusory world, we need

not identify ourselves with that illusion. We should try to rise above the temporality of the outer life and turn inward, to that within us that lives in the duration and unity of life. For within us there is an aspect that sees through the outer illusion and already lives in the enduring NOW. This Higher Self has a deep awareness of the background of all beings, who are nothing but ripples in the same boundless Ocean of Life.

When we develop this vision of life, it obviously has many consequences. The most important one is that we will learn to see our fellow human beings as “time-travelers” with whom we have cooperated in the past and with whom we will cooperate in the future. Yes, we will regard every living being as a companion, who travels with us on the eternal pilgrimage and with whom we will always remain connected in the “eternal NOW”.

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Theosophy in Nature

Does every individual being have a unique character?



It is obvious that we humans have an individual character, by which we distinguish ourselves from our fellow human beings. Is this also applicable for individual animals, plants, minerals and elementals? And for “gods”: the beings that are more advanced than humans?

What is “character”?

Our starting point is the basic theosophical idea that all things are alive, are conscious. ONE boundless Life flows through all that is. In that immeasurable Ocean of Life, every mathematical point is a being, a point of consciousness. Every being is in essence just like that Ocean, eternal. It has always been and will always be. And every being, like that Ocean, carries boundless possibilities within it. During its evolutionary journey, it gradually expresses more of its possibilities, in its own way.

Each being has the inner urge to express its dormant capacities. Re-embodiment plays a crucial role in this process. During each period of physical life, a being activates a little more of its latent abilities. Each embodiment, each life cycle, is therefore a stage of the inner evolutionary journey.

The qualities in its consciousness that it has now activated, are called in their totality “its character”. It is the grand-total of the abilities and habit patterns, tendencies, and aspirations, which it has unfolded up until now.

The daily lessons it learns, provide that being with the opportunities to unfold its character further and further.

The gradual unfolding of our individual characteristics

If you reflect on the theosophical principles, you realize that every being must have had a boundless development behind it: a history without a starting point. During that boundless time, it has walked the path of inner growth in its own unique way. Subsequently, every being, without exception, far or not far developed, has a unique, self-created character.

But this does not mean that each being, in its present stage, fully expresses its individuality. That depends on its level of development. We can demonstrate this by looking at the ten stages of inner growth in a Cosmos, the ten kingdoms of Nature, which together form the Ladder of Life. This is the path of development for all beings in our Cosmos. In the box below, Gottfried de Purucker

Key thoughts

- » The qualities in its consciousness that a being has activated, are called in their totality “its character”.
- » Every being has a unique, self-created character. Our character is therefore not “given” to us; we are continuously developing it.
- » The more developed a being, the more individualized its character.
- » But even beings that have hardly developed, already have an individual character. But we often lack the senses and the insight to discern it.

describes some of the characteristics of these ten kingdoms of nature.

These descriptions clarify, that in the lowest realms all beings still act “as integral parts of one big group”. During the process of evolution, the beings express more and more of their own individual characteristics. And in the spiritual realms, all beings self-consciously keep their character attuned to the Unity behind the whole Cosmos. These beings deploy their fully developed individuality for the benefit of all that lives.

If we oversee this Ladder of Life, we conclude that all beings ascending this Ladder, gradually unfold their individual characteristics — which are latent when they start their present Cosmic journey of inner growth.

The kingdoms of nature up to man

Let us give some more explanation about these natural kingdoms. As we have already said, the individuals in the elemental kingdoms behave as “one wave”, “one body”.

An elemental being does not have a “form of his own”. Its form is determined by beings who are more advanced. It can take on any shape. An example of this are our thoughts. Our thoughts are in fact mental elementals, elementals on the thinking plane of existence. And we humans give them their character and form.

In the mineral kingdom we see that beings take a physical form, appropriate to their own characteristics. Their individuality becomes stronger. So, even in these early phases, some slight individualization is taking place.

Among the lower plants, the individualization is stronger than within the mineral beings. Yet it is not easy to tell when a plant is one individual or many individuals. Think of tussocks of moss or grass, or the offshoots of brambles. With shrubs and trees, there is one individual form, which is nevertheless composed of semi-independent parts. If you stalk a plant, is it still the same individual? Animals are generally behaving as one individual. Their unique character can be clearly seen in dogs, cats and many higher wild

Description of the ten kingdoms of Nature⁽¹⁾

a. First Elemental Kingdom

Ethereal and highly fluidic in type or character, with relatively unmanifest and unindividualized monadic corpuscles, or rather units, possessing a common vital organic existence.

b. Second Elemental Kingdom

Separation into droplets, so to say, of quasi-particularized entities which are nevertheless still held together in union by an identic vital stream or flow.

c. Third Elemental Kingdom

Beings yet more highly particularized, although still bound together by, and functioning in, one common vital organic existence.

1. The Mineral Kingdom

Quasi-individualized corpuscles, or particulars, functioning in organic unity. Simple unism as a body.

2. The Vegetable Kingdom

Simple communism. [In the general sense of “communal organization”, “communal living together of units”; HB] The pressure towards individualization increases.

3. The Beast Kingdom

Dawning of distinct individualized units.

4. The Human Kingdom

Efflorescence of individuality. Dawning of a common or general consciousness.

5. The Great Ones

Full-grown individuality. Self-conscious realization of a unifying general underlying consciousness.

6. Quasi-Divine Beings or Lower Gods

Perfected individuality merging, without diminution, into the general underlying consciousness. Dawning of cosmical consciousness.

7. Gods

Emergence into conscious realization of cosmical consciousness, without loss of a perfected impersonal individuality.

animals.

In humans, the capacity to think – a capacity which is still dormant in lower beings – has been awakened. The fact that every human being thinks differently, we notice every hour of the day. Gottfried de Purucker writes about this:⁽²⁾

It has been said, and probably said with perfect truth, that no two leaves in a forest are exactly the same; for if they were, they would not be two leaves but the same leaf. With how much greater force can this be said of so highly individualized a being as Man! And, despite the formal individualities even of the leaves in a forest of trees, they are as a single entity when compared with the marvelous development of what is popularly called individuality as found in Man.

In summary, the fact that an individual elemental being or mineral being does not yet show unique characteristics, does not mean that it does not have them in the deepest core of its being. Its individual character, its swabhāva as it is called in Theosophy, is built up in the boundless past, but does not express itself yet – at least not yet to our imperfect human eyes and physical instruments. The more developed a being is, the more it shows its individual character.

And what about divine beings?

Does this mean that beings belonging to kingdoms that have developed further than man, have developed their unique characteristics even further than in the human phase? While finding a theosophical answer to this, we must take several things into account.

In the description of the kingdoms of Nature (see the box above), we read that we humans are growing towards a realization of a “general consciousness”. This in no way implies that we as individuals ever “dissolve” or “disappear” into the totality. On the contrary, our individuality continues to exist in full — albeit focused on serving the whole Community of Life. It is a logic corollary, that this same development will continue during the evolutionary phases after mankind.

Furthermore, the theosophical principles point to the fact that the highest beings behind Suns and Planets have progressed way beyond our present human stage. And each such Cosmic being has apparently a unique character.⁽³⁾ This is easily ascertained. For example, each star has its own unique spectrum of rays. And the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, represented by twelve groups of stars, radiate, as groups, their own specific characteristic. And

each planet within our Solar System, also expresses its own character.

This knowledge was already well known by ancient civilizations. And as these Cosmic Entities emanate their own worlds, being the source of a complete Hierarchy of Beings, their individual characteristics are reflected in their own Hierarchy. The endless diversity in the cosmos that we see around us, reflects the diversity of the gods.⁽⁴⁾

Free will

The free will, which we humans can use to make our choices in life, is even more powerfully unfolded in more advanced beings. Why? Because their vision is not so limited by illusions, and their actions are much less restricted by lack of self-discipline. So, the more developed your consciousness is, the more developed is your free will to blaze your trail.

This free will is used by all divine beings for the spiritual well-being of the whole. They, long ago, chose to do this, because of their understanding of the unity of all life, and their immense compassion for all that lives. That is why the gods choose self-consciously to take up their own specific task – determined by their individual character – in the great Cosmic Unity of Life.

This knowledge can also be found in the Borobudur in Indonesia. The relief galleries of the Borobudur depict Buddhist texts. One of these texts is the Gandavyūha, teaching us that enlightened beings have developed unique, mutually different qualities.⁽⁵⁾



Each star in the Milky Way is the expression of a Cosmic consciousness. The uniqueness of that Cosmic being expresses itself in the dominant color of its radiation.

To understand more, we must expand our consciousness

In our effort to uncover the individual character of other beings, we should realize that our current human consciousness has its limitations. First of all, most of us are not accustomed to accurate and prolonged observation. We hear from those who study, for example, flocks of jackdaws, that they learn to discern the individual birds. This



Humpback whales recognize each other individually among other things, by their songs.

enables them to study the unique social relationships among them.

In addition, our current physical senses have a limited scope. For example, we cannot see ultraviolet and infrared colors. Yet, some of these colors are perceived by certain animals and play a role in their lives. Scientists have figured out beautifully how birds see the world in a different way than we do.⁽⁶⁾

And then there is the limitation of our understanding, our present insights. In principle, we are able to completely identify ourselves with other beings and therefore know them “from inside”. We are able to do that with our higher, universal thinking named *buddhi-manas* in Sanskrit. But that needs a lot of training and an unselfish motivation. Most people still have great difficulties to understand their fellow human beings, let alone, fishes or buddhas. But we can learn to use our *buddhi-manas* more and more.

Do the scientific theories approach Theosophy?

Is the theosophical picture, sketched above, confirmed by science? The general answer is “yes”. Animal researchers have observed pronounced differences in individual attitudes and behavior among the higher mammals such as monkeys, elephants and whales. The same is true for a

number of bird species. This individuality we already recognize in the animals we keep ourselves.

But do individual fish, insects, worms and unicellular organisms also have unique traits and thus individual ways of responding? Little research has been done on this important question, as far as we know. Something that is already well-known: some octopuses are more able to use objects than others. But here too, we deal with a relatively highly developed animal.

But when we talk about beings that are much less developed, like the beings that ensoul chemical atoms and molecules, we might expect that all react exactly the same. But even that is not a hundred percent true. Very interestingly, an experiment showed that individual molecules could react somewhat differently under the same conditions.⁽⁷⁾ Even on this level! This clearly confirms the theosophical principles.

Can animals and plants recognize each other individually?

All beings, then, are individual consciousnesses each with their own characteristic. This raises the question: which animals can recognize their conspecifics as individuals? Scientists know many examples of higher animals that recognize each other as unique beings: usually birds and

mammals. Not always by sight: sometimes they recognize each other by sound (the song of the humpback whale for instance) or smell (dogs). The astral senses, that are more active in animals than in most men, may also play a role. In a herd of elephants, each animal knows each other personally. In lower animals, this is not observed as yet. It seems logical that an animal can only distinguish his conspecifics individually, if it has already some dawning realization of itself as an individual being, and its own specific place in its social group. You can only perceive those things that are active elements in your own consciousness: inner potencies that you have already developed. Otherwise, there is no “resonance” possible.

Each being expresses the boundless Unity in its own way

So, our conclusion is: yes, each being has built up an individual characteristic, and will continue to do so throughout all its subsequent evolutionary stages, during eternity. All beings are integral parts of ONE Universal Life, and – a fundamental paradox – express that Universal Life always in their own, unique, individual way. That is the basis of Universal Brotherhood.

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Questions & Answers

Can we repair the damage we do to animals?

Animals in bio-industry are unable to express their faculties. What are the consequences of this? And how can we humans repair those consequences?

Answer

It is true that pigs and chickens kept in huge numbers in stalls, can hardly express any of their natural behaviors. Think of their social interactions, their care for the young, their biorhythms, their tendency to explore their environment, their ability to adapt to all kinds of changes. As a result, these animals suffer. They cannot be themselves, cannot express their character.

Expanding their qualities of consciousness – remember that every being in the cosmos has the fundamental urge to develop its latent abilities – is completely impossible in the bioindustry.

As a result, their ability to live independently is diminished. A muscle you don't use also deteriorates. What would happen if we were to release a dairy cow or riding horse into a natural savanna? The animal cannot make such a transition unless it would first learn to use its own abilities again through years of training and connection with a wild herd. So, opening the doors of a mink farm to “free” these animals is never a solution. Nor do we place an urbanite suddenly in the middle of the Ama-

zon Forest.

By the way we usually keep animals, we make them (livestock, pets, race-horses and so on) more and more dependent on us. That means that when these animals are reborn, they either go back to living in such an artificial environment – if available – or get into trouble, if they are reborn more or less in the wild.

How do we change this situation? We will first have to achieve a fundamental reform of our view of animals (and of ourselves!). It must start from here, because only then will we realize how we should treat animals: that animals are cosmic beings who are completely equal to us, and thus are no objects, no means to fulfill our outer and emotional desires.

The cosmos is a unity, a grand living whole, and all beings are indissolubly connected. We cannot do without each other on the long path of expanding consciousness. The more advanced beings need the lesser advanced ones, and vice versa.

We humans have an explicit responsibility within that community of life. This is related to our present capacities to think, and thus to understand, to foresee, and to be ethical. It is our task as humanity to promote the inner growth of all other beings where we can. This has great implications for the principles on which we build our civilization. It has an effect on all parts of social life, including animal husbandry, because we build from a fundamentally different starting point. Everyone can shape this independently in their lives, even *now*, or especially now.

Is it possible to undo the consequences of what we once did? No one can erase what was once done, not even the “gods”. Cause and effect rule throughout the cosmos. Every one of our positive or neutral or negative acts has its corresponding influence on other beings, eventually even on the entire cosmos. And sooner or later those causes rebound on us as effects. Harmony will have to be restored by us one day.

What we humans can do at the moment is to think and act from a different characteristic, by sowing other seeds for the good of all beings with whom we interact. In doing so: acting ever wiser, ever more compassionately.

In some countries laws have been passed, or are being prepared, regulating that the natural behavior of the animal is given some space. This will lead to practical improvements, such as piglet tails no longer being cut off, sufficient swimming water for ducks, and rabbits no longer being confined in wire mesh cages. These measures will not yet abolish the bioindustry, but they are nevertheless a step forward. It is the result of an increasingly widespread vision that recognizes the intrinsic right of animals to a natural life.

Of course, there are those who object to this new animal welfare policy and say that the measures are expensive or impracticable. However, in our opinion it is the logical consequence of the growth of insights of us humans. That growth can continue forever. We can develop an ever deeper understanding of consciousness and



Reforestation in the “Cloudbridge” nature reserve in Costa Rica.

growth of consciousness. We will then be increasingly able to give the beings whose evolution we have delayed extra guidance in the form of wise stimuli. Just as we return to an urban neighborhood we have neglected, to give it the opportunities its residents deserve. Or just as we give other cultures we once wronged, additional space for independent growth. Or just as we assist people we once treated unfairly, even if they now behave toward us in a hostile manner.

So yes, we can compensate for each self-created disharmony, for instance towards animals. Even if it takes a very long cycle. In fact, it is our duty, we will have to do so at some point to continue our evolution. That is one of the inspiring aspects of the teachings of re embodiment and cause and effect.

Question

If you take away one or more animal or plant species from an ecosystem, it can have a big effect on the whole chain. Is that also recoverable?

Answer

Certainly, ecosystems can also be restored, with more or less effort. So we restore ecosystems simply by stopping our detrimental actions – environmental pollution, for example – and giving more space for these ecosystems to develop themselves. Usually, it is widely known what we need to do to achieve this. Only by actually doing so will these ecosystems be able to attract again the species that we once (locally) eradicated. We must be prepared to overcome certain material attachments and desires of ours and act from our sense of responsibility for all living things.

That recovery process can be short or long. If we have destroyed or polluted an ecosystem to the point of desertification, such a recovery process may take many centuries. Consider, for example, what Spain did to its forests several centuries ago. The consequences are still noticeable and visible in several provinces. If it were just a matter of reintroducing the wolf, that process could be much faster.⁽¹⁾

When we completely destroy ecosystems, we deprive the animal beings who had their learning school in them of the opportunity to embody themselves in that school and learn from their experiences. We thereby slow down their inner development. Nowadays it is generally understood that mankind should establish a harmonious relationship with the animal, vegetable and mineral beings of our Planet in order to keep their own physical conditions livable. Although that is a fact, Theosophia gives us a much more unselfish and inspiring basis for our lives, a much more enduring basis: all beings following us on the long path of inner growth are completely equal to us. Exactly as a child of 6 is completely equivalent to a child of 12 or 18, because all three carry the same cosmic abilities within them. They differ from one another only in the degree to which they have “unpacked” those inner qualities. Therefore, animal and vegetable beings, although very dissimilar as far as their present expression is concerned, are equivalent. Universal brotherhood is a fact of Nature.

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5. To support the developing of everyone's own view of life and its application in daily practice.



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