

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
volume 11 and 12
by G. de Purucker

**Lightbringers in our
society: Zaz**

**The example of the
Bishnois**

**Peace education in
schools: learned
young, done old**

Cosmopsychism

**The esoteric back-
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It is encouraging that many examples of peace education already exist in practice. But peace education is now often seen as optional, as something extra in the curriculum. Taking a theosophical approach, we build a vision of integrated peace education and highlight examples. When peace education is woven into education, children develop into peacemakers.

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Example of education material used in a Fröbel Kindergarten.

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Some scientists explore the proposition that cosmic consciousness is the foundation of nature. What ideas are they developing? And which theosophical thoughts can supplement their views?

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The word Kindergarten and the so-called Fröbel gifts have their origins with Friedrich Fröbel. This German pedagogue is sometimes spoken of pityingly, as if his work for the little ones were not really serious. However, the opposite is true.

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Editorial

In these troubled times, a messenger of light is needed more than ever. *Lucifer – the Lightbringer* is trying to shine a bright light, by standing against the pessimism prevalent in society and showing the true background of life. There is One Life that flows through everything. And if you realize that in some measure, it not only gives you great peace of mind, but you also radiate peace to your fellow men.

The idea that there is One Life implies that behind this outer world, there is an operating force. That premise makes you look at life completely differently. The outer world, the outer human, is nothing but an extension of that force behind it. That means that human beings are not a one-day wonder, but they are essentially boundless consciousness, embodying themselves, again and again, to grow in consciousness.

In volumes 11 and 12 of the *Esoteric Teachings* of Gottfried de Purucker, which deal with the dying process and the states after death, this is explained in greater detail. With the review of these two volumes, we conclude our series reviews of the *Esoteric Teachings*.

This premise also completely changes the idea of education. Two articles address this: an article on Fröbel shows that, because this educator adopted this spiritualistic premise, his method of education is very inspiring for young children.

Furthermore, we have included an article on peace education. In these times of war, it is of the utmost importance that a worldwide counter-movement be launched, showing that peaceful methods, which everyone can apply, ultimately lead to world peace. How important it is to start teaching this to young children and adolescents!

It is encouraging that also in science there is a cautious exploration of whether this idea of consciousness behind phenomena offers a better solution to all kinds of issues. The article “Cosmopsychism” gives some examples of brave scientists who dare to walk a different path.

By the way, you don't have to be a great scientist to realize that this outer world is the garment of the force behind it. The Bishnois, a people from northern India, have assumed this for centuries, leading to a harmonious and happy society.

The French singer Zaz also shows in her own way that human beings are capable of so much more; and that if everyone does their duty, we are capable of great things. She is our second example in the column “Lightbringers in our society”, started last *Lucifer* edition. Finally, in our question-and-answer section, we address the question of the outer and inner Master.

We hope with this issue to have contributed to a little more light in the world. The light will shine all the brighter as the thoughts in this *Lucifer* are thoughtfully discussed and disseminated. You can always send your comments and questions to the editors. We answer all letters and emails we receive.

Esoteric Teachings volume 11 and 12 by G. de Purucker

The thoroughness and level of detail with which the subject of death and the subsequent journey of the monad through the Cosmos is discussed in these last two volumes of the *Esoteric Teachings* is not matched anywhere else in theosophical literature.

There is probably no subject of thought in the modern world about which so little of value is written in our days and which nevertheless is held so deeply and intimately in feeling and speculation as that of Death.

With these words Gottfried de Purucker begins the last two volumes of his *Esoteric Teachings*.⁽¹⁾ Both parts cover the subject of Death and the Circulations of the Cosmos. Although more publications on the subject have appeared since his words from the thirties of the last century – think, for example, of the books by the psychiatrist Dr. Raymond Moody and the cardiologist Pim van Lommel about near-death experiences, or of the studies of psychiatrist Ian Stevenson and his successor Jim Tucker on children’s memories of past lives – GdeP’s remark (the abbreviation for Gottfried de Purucker as Teacher and as Outer Head of the Esoteric Section) is still quite topical. About death itself, especially from the perspective of consciousness, hardly anything of value has been added since his publications.

The value of these two parts is therefore unique. The thoroughness and level of detail with which this subject is discussed in these two volumes is not matched anywhere else in theosophical literature. Especially if you consider these two parts of the *Esoteric Teachings* as the final piece of all previous ten parts instead of stand-alone works, in which, moreover, many loose ends from earlier theosophical works by Blavatsky, Judge, Tingley – and De Purucker himself – come together.

In this short discussion we touch upon several topics that are particularly explained in these last two volumes about Death and the Circulations of the Cosmos and finally we will discuss where this knowledge comes from.

The Oneness of all Life

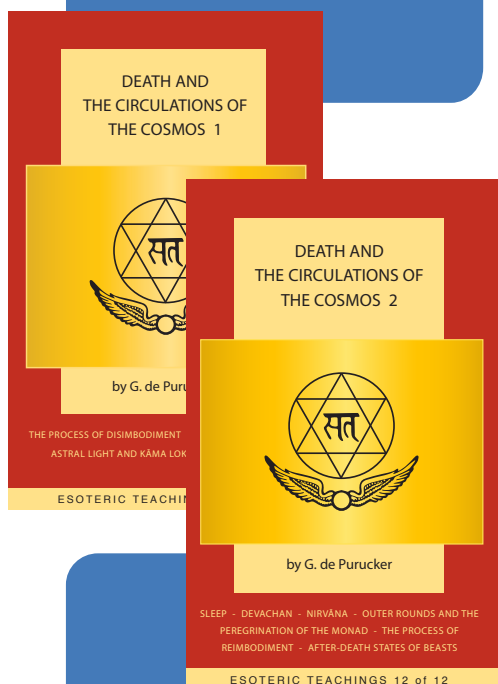
Volume 11 begins with the thought of the Oneness of all Life, the fundamental principle of Theosophy. The direct conclusion from this is that everything is alive, everything was, is and will always be there, and therefore nothing can disappear. With

Key thoughts

» Death is not an absolute end but a phase of the One Life or consciousness that is eternal in essence.

» After death, we meet ourselves. Just as our sleep is a reflection of our thought world during the day, so we experience those states of consciousness after death with which we have built up an affinity during life.

» It is possible to consciously experience the states of consciousness after death.

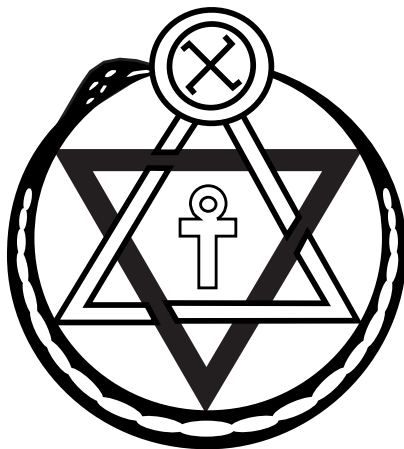


this, GdeP immediately disproves a first persistent myth about death: that it would mean an absolute end or a permanent disappearance of a being. In other words: death as the opposite of life.

Theosophy offers the broader picture of death as nothing but a phase of life. A phase of the One Life or consciousness that is essentially eternal. Dying is only an *apparent* disappearance, a transition from the egoic consciousness to another, more inner plane, where the average person is not yet actively conscious. And, as consciousness makes this transition, the vehicle decomposes into all its composite parts. And here, too, this is a decomposition into parts that do not disappear individually, but they continue their own journey within the plane on which they are active. The entire process of birth and death is therefore a cyclical process of letting go and picking up again. All parts of man decompose. Only those parts that are of corresponding quality can be active in the higher and lower areas respectively. Theosophy speaks in this context of the various monads and the life atoms, the smallest living units of consciousness or building blocks our vehicle is composed of.

The moment of death and the panoramic vision

There are not many things more certain in life than that each of us will have to deal with dying one day. These parts of the *Esoteric Teachings* give us certain teachings that each of us can also apply in his or her life. This is especially true regarding knowledge on the boundary of life and



This is the seal of The Theosophical Society. The snake biting its own tail symbolizes the eternal sequence of cycles in Nature. This is one of its meanings. As integral parts of the Cosmic Unity, we humans also follow these Cosmic cycles, of which that of life and death – of rebirth – is one.

death: the moment of death and the panoramic vision.

GdeP describes the moment of death as that moment when the so-called “golden or silver life cord” snaps. This cord is a contraction of the – apart from the physical body – most physical aspect of the Auric Egg, also called the ākāśic aura by GdeP. At the moment of death this ākāśic aura is contracted into a single cord or thread departing from the body of the dying man.

This moment, the snapping of the cord, only takes place *in its entirety* after the last breath and the last heartbeat. Before that, as long as the panoramic vision lasts, there is still a small filament visible, for those who are able to perceive it. For those who cannot perceive this, it is observable that death is only complete when the body loses its heat and certain fluids flow out of the various body cavities.

The panoramic vision takes place just before this final moment of death. The duration of this can vary considerably per individual: from a few hours for very spiritual people, to even ten, twelve hours or more, writes GdeP. During this panoramic vision, all impressions of the past life pass by the inner eye of human consciousness in all their detail. GdeP: “... it is the result of instinctive or automatic action on the part of the human monad, which, almost unconsciously to itself, as it were, dislodges from every secret recess of its inner records, imprinted as these are on its own vital substance, all the details of the life just past; and due to the spiritual forces at work, which are strictly harmonic and rigidly karmic, consciousness functions, again automatically, in opening up the panorama by beginning with the first incident that memory has recorded in the life last past, and thereafter proceeds in stately pageantry of imagery until the last thought is reached, the last emotion felt, the last intuition had — and then comes unconsciousness, complete, sudden, and infinitely merciful. This is true death.”

The reincarnating ego, the higher part of the dying man, thus sees the whole past life pass by one more time and can draw the balance from it. All thoughts, emotions, actions, both done or undone, pass by. When the panorama has ended, the reincarnating ego sees the justice of it all. From this vision he can see what karma will await him in the next life and he will know that it is right.

This panoramic vision is, so to speak, the ethical conclusion of the past life, and in that sense perhaps the most important moment in our lives. That is why it is advisable to leave the dying person alone for the time needed after the last heartbeat and the last breath, so that this process can proceed as undisturbed as possible.

Kāma-loka and the Second Death

Volume 11 ends with the next important stop point in the dying process: the phase of Kāma-loka and the so-called “Second Death”.

Man is a composite being. We do not only have a physical body, but also an astral vehicle, a “desire-body”, an intellectual part, a spiritual nature and a divine essence. At death, the flow of consciousness or the ray of life, which binds all parts together, withdraws. All composite parts return to their own sphere, including the aforementioned life atoms of different quality of which they are composed. In other words, when dying, the composition of man disintegrates into three parts:

1. a lower part, consisting of the physical body, the astral vehicle and the lower prāṇa or vitality streams;
2. an intermediate part, consisting of the desire body and the psychic-intellectual mind;
3. a higher part, consisting of a spiritual nature and our divine essence.

After the physical death, the lower part decomposes rather quickly. The other two parts remain connected and intact for some time, until also the higher part has detached itself from the intermediate part. Or in other words: until the most spiritual part of the intermediate part, the “spiritual aroma” of the mind is absorbed into the higher part.

This process is analogous to the dying process, and that is why it is also called the “Second Death”. Just like the physical body is being left behind during the dying process on earth, the “desire-body”, also called Kāma-rūpa, is left behind in Kāma-Loka. And this too, comes with a panoramic vision.

All this takes place in Kāma-loka, which literally means “area of desire”. When man passes through this area after death, all the desires, attractions and earthly tendencies of the past life are extinguished. Their energy is exhausted.

Kāma-loka is not so much a specific place, it is more a state of consciousness characterized by desire. Usually, the average person experiences this quite unconsciously, or perhaps as a kind of restless dream, but this depends on the extent to which the human consciousness is attracted to that area. If the attraction is more powerful, there may even be some degree of self-awareness, according to GdeP. The duration of this process also varies per individual and depends as well on the degree of focus. Spiritually minded people go through it in a flash and the Second Death will soon follow. For people with a strong materialistic focus, the process can take decades or even hundreds of years (although there is a totally different experience of time in

these areas).

GdeP describes in much more detail what this process looks like and furthermore how it is described in other traditions, such as that of ancient Tibet. When all desires have worn off in this state and the Second Death has occurred, then the reincarnating ego is absorbed into the bosom of the monad and enters Devachan.

Devachan

Volume 12 begins with a detailed description of Devachan. Devachan literally means “territory or land of the gods or spiritual beings”. Where Kāma-loka is more a state than a place, this is even more true for Devachan. It is a state in which the reincarnating ego, stripped of all material and earthly attractions, processes the more mental, spiritual experiences and lessons of the past life, and weaves them into its character.

Everyday human existence, in all its dynamics, leaves little room to realize our spiritual ideals, our ethical insights, our ideals of beauty, peace and bliss. Our spiritual energy is continuously limited in its expression during daily practice. We often fail to realize our ideals in the way we imagine them internally with our spiritual imagination.

Once detached from the physical existence, and apart from all personal desires that have already been exhausted in Kāma-loka, this spiritual energy in Devachan now has ample opportunity to manifest. Our consciousness allows all unfulfilled spiritual aspirations to be fulfilled. Although they are our own images that we surround ourselves with, we would be shortchanging the experience if we compared it to just a beautiful dream, writes GdeP. It is an experience that we would qualify as much more real than any experience during incarnated life. Moreover, the experiences in Devachan are of spiritual quality. GdeP writes: “The man who has devoted his whole life to unfulfilled aspirations of a philosophical nature, or of a scientific character, or of a religious or musical nature, will experience devachanic circumstances in which he sees himself engaged in solving the most complex philosophical problems with great success, or will achieve in his imagination astonishing scientific success, or will dream that he fully understands the most difficult religious thoughts, or will be surrounded by the most refined musical harmonies — always corresponding to the most important root tone of his consciousness.” A state that we would rather experience as “heavenly”, a state of complete bliss.

What is immediately clear from this is that each Devachan is an individual state, based on the spiritual aspirations

that man has had in the past life. The duration is also related to the amount of spiritual energy, but GdeP does write about an occult law stating that man usually does not reincarnate on earth until a period of hundred times the number of years that his life on earth lasted, has passed. Blavatsky previously gave an average duration of 1500 years between two incarnations, which is completely consistent with this rule in a time when people lived on average, including infant mortality and premature death from all kinds of causes of death, only fifteen years.

However, there are a lot of exceptions to this rule on an individual level, which makes people reincarnate earlier than this duration. In addition to the age, it is, amongst other things, about the degree of materialistic orientation or, on the contrary, about compassionate motives that can bring man back to incarnation on earth. The latter involves unfulfilled spiritual aspirations for others and not so much for oneself and this shortens Devachan.

The analogy with sleep

In volume 12 there is also a chapter devoted to sleep, to dreams and how this process relates to death. There, GdeP explains in detail an important theosophical teaching, namely that death and sleep are analogous processes. They can even be called identical, with sleep being seen as an incomplete death and death as a complete sleep. It is like in the myth of the ancient Greeks: *Hypnos* (sleep) and *Thanatos* (death) are twin brothers.

From the analogy of sleep and death, important ethical conclusions can be drawn. For example, that death is in fact not an unfamiliar territory for us. After death we meet ourselves, just as our sleep is partly a reflection of our thoughts during the day. This immediately removes the fear of death as something unknown. Another conclusion is that man does not disappear forever when he dies, but he just enters a great sleep. Moreover, he will return in a next life and re-establish his ties with his relatives, albeit perhaps in a different relationship. This knowledge can help relatives saying goodbye and may offer a lot of comfort.

Sketch of the value

The above is only a sketch of the content of these two volumes, with many details omitted. Furthermore, in these volumes, you will find knowledge about topics that we have not yet mentioned in this short sketch, such as the Circulations of the Cosmos, the journey of the monad after death through the Solar System – the so-called Outer

Rounds – and the conditions after death for animals. The aforementioned sketch on various details in volumes 11 and 12 including the processes of dying, sleep, and the conditions after death, already show why these *Esoteric Teachings* are so valuable. The sketch can however also raise questions with the reader about where this knowledge comes from and how we are able to independently prove this knowledge. Legitimate questions, for every disseminator of Theosophy will emphasize that it is not a matter of faith, but of knowledge that must be tested in the practice of life, both on scientific, philosophical, and religious grounds.

States of consciousness and experiencing the dying process

Let us start with the last question about how to prove this for ourselves, after which we can answer the question about the origin of this knowledge. When it comes to the possibility of proving or independently experiencing these teachings, these two volumes talk about four states of consciousness. These states of consciousness are described, among other things, in the *Mandukya Upanishad*, a holy book from Hinduism to which H.P. Blavatsky also refers in the description of the first proposition in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*. In short, it is about the waking state or *Jāgrat*, the dream state or *Swapna*, the state of dreamless sleep or *Sushupti* and finally *Turiya*, the highest state of consciousness that you could call fully enlightened. This last state is very rare in our human consciousness and is rather a condition attributed to Buddhas. The first three states we experience more or less during our sleep. As an average person, we are only aware of the first two states. However, we call Sushupti dreamless, because the experiences are so clear that they are even too clear for us to hold on to and leave an impression on our brain.

That is why we call it dreamless and experience it as unconsciousness. Yet, we can occasionally experience something of this state in moments of insight, flashes of intuitive understanding or coherence. By controlling and locating our daily thinking in this higher state of consciousness, or in other words, by identifying ourselves with the thought aspects that correspond to the higher three of the seven principles – the intellectual aspect, the aspect of insight, and the sense of unity – we can learn to be conscious in this state. With this we are also able to consciously experience these higher states both during sleep and during death. These possibilities are still a long way off for the average person. But this ability can be trained

under the guidance of a Master, someone who already mastered this, and brought it under control through initiation. However, this is reserved only for those who are willing to apply the wisdom they gain from it for the common good. And that brings us back to the attitude towards life of the student, which is described in the first two volumes

of the *Esoteric Teachings*. And with this, the cycle closes.

Reference

1. G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Teachings. Volumes 11 and 12*. The Hague, I.S.I.S. Foundation, 2015 (last authorized edition).
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Sleep, death and initiation

I cannot impress it too strongly upon the mind of the student of the School that Death and Sleep and Initiation are not three different and radically distinct things, but are different phases or operations of consciousness, which in their degree of importance in a rising scale may be placed in serial order as Sleep, Death, Initiation. Sleep is largely an unconscious or rather automatic functioning of the human consciousness, and takes place because men's evolutionary development through the past has made the sleep-function of consciousness to become automatic; death is precisely the same, but in immensely larger degree; and, likewise because of man's past evolutionary development, death has become a necessary and wholesome "habit" of the consciousness in order that it may gain for the psychological part of the constitution a resting and an assimilation and digestion of experience, which is to be bracketed with the smaller but similar kinds of resting and assimilation that sleeps give to the human physical body. Initiation is a "death" of all the lower man for the time being; a "sleep" of the lower psychological apparatus; and a magical awakening to intense consciousness of the higher psychological part upon which is then radiating the inner light of the man's Monadic Consciousness. Thus it is that Initiation comprises the former functions of consciousness and uses them in order to "free" the "inner man" for the marvelous experience on inner planes that Initiation brings about.

G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Teachings*, volume 12, footnote 33



Barend Voorham

Lightbringers in our society

Zaz

Lightbringers do not dwell on whether their contribution to a better and more just world is large or small. They do not hesitate. They do what they inwardly know they should do. They act for the sake of the action itself. Their motto is: be the change you want to see in the world. Therefore, they do not hide behind the excuse that they are alone and that the "others" are not cooperating anyway. It is all about actions.

The singer Zaz is a shining example of this. Zaz is the stage name of Isabel Geffroy, a highly successful singer of French chanson and the swinging Gipsy jazz, the so-called jazz manouche. Initially, she sang in bars and the streets of Montmartre in Paris. In her first big hit - Je veux - she sings that money, luxury and prestige do not make people happy and that honesty and love are much more important. In the lyrics of her songs, Zaz shows her commitment to what is happening in the world, such as the refugee issue, the insecurity people have about themselves and how society is enriched by all the different "colors" of all those different people. But the commitment to the world extends beyond her songs. Zaz sees herself as an artist who is responsible for what happens in the world.

She says that from the beginning of her success she looked for a way how she could contribute to a better world with her fame as a singer. From her childhood, she wanted to make herself useful to those around her. The urge to help others led her to donate the receipts from three concerts she gives in Turkey to the victims of the earthquake there. But such occasional support is not enough. Zaz wants to contribute structurally.

She came in contact with Pierre Rabhi, a Tunisian-born writer, farmer and environmentalist who is considered a major figure in French agroecology. Zaz noted that by doing what he felt he had to do, he could achieve good results. That inspired her. She knew she had to do something as well. In this she drew inspiration from an ancient Mayan legend from Central America.

The Hummingbird

According to legend, one day there was a terrible fire in the forest. All the animals fled the forest in terror. But suddenly the jaguar sees a small hummingbird flying in the opposite direction. He flies as fast as he can toward the burning forest. A moment later, the jaguar sees the little bird flying out of the forest again

only to return after a short time. The jaguar is so surprised to see the hummingbird flying up and down all the time that he asks him why he is acting so strangely.

"I go to the lake," says the hummingbird, "I scoop water with my beak and throw it on the fire to put it out."

"You're insane," says the jaguar. "Do you really think such a minuscule bird like you can put out that huge fire?"

"No," replies the hummingbird, "but I'll do what I can."

And, the legend continues, by not backing down, the hummingbird inspires the jaguar, the monkeys, the marsupial, the toucan and all the other animals to do their part. Not only does this allow the fire to be extinguished, but it also creates a close bond between all the forest dwellers.

Zazimut

Zaz is like a human hummingbird. She sang in a song about this hummingbird, talks about it at her shows and addressed a children's book on the subject. But she does more.

She founded the organization Zazimut in 2017. This is an organization that develops and promotes projects that pursue a society in which there is more respect for life in all its forms. Zazimut focuses mainly on education and sustainable development. The organization supports educational, cultural, social, and environmental projects around the world.

Zaz uses her music as a connection between the public and local projects. That's why she took the initiative for several music projects. Thus, a two-hundred-person choir called Co-Legioa, which gives two concerts a year, was formed around Zaz. Musical education, Zaz believes, is a decisive factor for social and academic success.

Another educational example is the collaboration with an elementary school, which resulted in the joint development and production of the board game Ronchonchon for children. Ronchonchon teaches the basic principles of nonviolent and thoughtful communication and is designed to support young players in becoming aware of their opponents' behavior. It is a game that has no losers.

Furthermore, Zazimut supports numerous ecological activities, often also combined with education. Thus, Zazimut brings together sustainability, music, and culture. One example is the Crussol Festival in Ardèche, France, held annually since 2017, which features concerts by renowned artists and free public access to the festival village. On site, visitors can meet and exchange ideas about sustainable solutions in an informal atmosphere. All kinds

of groups will have the opportunity to offer workshops and promote their cause. The goal is to convince each individual to contribute to sustainable development.

The activities are certainly not limited to her homeland, France. She says herself on her Instagram account:

"As my career took me further and further abroad, I was able to meet and listen to extraordinary people every evening. Committed citizens, from cultures completely different from mine but who also carried projects, with the hope, the desire, sometimes the rage, to make things happen. I gave them a piece of the stage every evening sometimes in the middle of my show, all over the world, to offer them my very modest platform, and so that they can explain their desires, their challenges. Always different from one country to another, but always driven by the same fervor and this desire to be together to share a vision. And why not try to turn lead into gold."

One of Zazimut's purposes is to appeal to the fame of artists to also promote local projects during international tours.

Meanwhile, Zazimut collaborates with more than a hundred projects spread across the globe.

Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitspreis (DNP)

Living by your own principles sometimes also creates difficulties for instance during the Covid 19 pandemic. Zaz knew deep down inside that she did not want to be inoculated against the corona virus. This did result in her not being able to enter Canada and having to cancel some concerts there. It hurt to disappoint her fans, but she could not compromise on what she knew inwardly.

So being true to your own ideals sometimes places great challenges before you. But you also stand out. And Zaz's activities have not gone unnoticed. In the autumn of 2022, she was awarded the prestigious Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitspreis (award for sustainability).

"This award," says Zaz, "I dedicate to all those people I met along the way. We are the change we want to see in the world. The prize is an incentive to keep going, no matter how hard it is sometimes".

The hummingbird is no longer the only one whose tiny beak throws a few drops of water on the forest in flames. Zaz is confident that her activities will bear fruit. "Man is capable of so much beauty," she says in her acceptance speech for this ecological award. "So, what prevents us from going to the light".



Dealing with nature

The example of the Bishnois

We are still failing to solve our environmental problems. The basis for a sustainable solution is lacking. We could take inspiration from peoples close to nature, such as the Bishnois of India.

The loss of nature is taking place all over the globe. Urbanization and especially new farmland are causing forests to disappear and biodiversity to decline sharply. The way we farm, and ranch also raises questions. Around the world, the need to produce our food differently is being felt. Although technological developments and the use of artificial fertilizers have greatly increased the yield of agriculture and stock farming, the adverse effects appear to be almost insurmountable. There is sometimes an absurd imbalance. Take a small country like the Netherlands. This country has a space problem and there is a huge housing shortage. Despite this, the Netherlands is the second food exporter in the world.

Intensive farming has its price because agriculture and especially animal husbandry causes a lot of damage to the environment. Therefore, more and more people believe that a change is needed. There is a major crisis of nitrogen emissions, resulting in a serious impoverishment of species diversity in nature. CO₂ emissions, to which livestock farming in particular contributes greatly, is

the biggest environmental issue worldwide. There is also the threat of groundwater pollution or a lack of drinking water. Not to mention the immense suffering inflicted on animals by factory farming.

Some farmers and policy makers want to solve these problems through even more technical developments. The question, however, is whether it is not precisely the continual application of technology in agriculture, and the often accompanying scale-up, that causes the problems. Can you solve a problem caused by a certain way of thinking using that same way of thinking?

Now new techniques do not always have to go hand in hand with scaling-up. Organic farmers and ranchers are also open to new techniques, as long as they further their goals and do not counteract them. What matters most is that crops, animals, and the environment receive more attention. This requires a new way of thinking. Indigenous peoples often have a very different way of thinking and their way of farming – or food supply – is therefore very different from that of the more industrialized countries.

Key thoughts

- » Twenty-nine rules of life provide a simple but prosperous life in the desert.
- » Starting from unity and respect for all life solves our environmental problems.

Perhaps we can get some ideas from them.

Dynamic harmony

Although there are many regional differences among what we delusionally call ‘primitive’ peoples, there are also many similarities, especially regarding how they interact with the nature that surrounds them. Whether we look at the Native Americans, certain tribes in Asia or Africa, there are too many similarities in their view of nature and life to dismiss them as coincidence.

While Western man views nature as the fauna and flora outside of human society, indigenous peoples see nature as a unit of living beings that are inextricably connected and humans are emphatically part of it. For them, nature is not something outside their society. Consequently, there are peoples who do not even have a word for nature. After all, everything is nature. For them, all life forms one whole, and the sense of responsibility that flows from this as a matter of course is reflected in the way they treat nature.

Moreover, they do not limit other life to only the animal and plant world, but also include the beings living “above” the human realm — call them the gods. Nature, as they see it, extends from “above” to “below”, as a grand hierarchical unity. Does it stop at the plant world? Certainly not. There are also creatures that are less developed than plants. They are called by different names.

Most important of all: all these beings form one dynamic harmonious whole. Man is a part of it. When a being demands more than they need, disharmony arises.

Ecology

In fact, these close-to-nature peoples practice a kind of scientific philosophy we now call ecology, albeit usually with a much broader and more comprehensive view of all living things than the modern scientist.

Ecology studies the relationships and connections among the living elements in nature. In the word ‘ecology’ you recognize the Ancient Greek *oikos*, which means household or environment. Just as humans in a household are attuned to each other and each performs its own tasks, you can also consider a particular area (biotope) as a household. In other words, this branch of science studies the interactions between the living organisms in a given biotope and the influences that come from outside. Those influences would come from the non-living environment, such as soil conditions with its chemical constituents, hydrological and atmospheric conditions such as climate.

Although Theosophia assumes that everything is alive, and

therefore the non-living environment does not exist, ecology is nevertheless a great step forward because it studies the various organisms in connection with each other. The realization that everything is interrelated and interacts with each other allows this branch of biology to provide a clearer picture of the life that surrounds us and to better identify the connections between all these organisms. Moreover, time and again it turns out that these interrelationships reach much deeper and much further than expected. For example, each biotope is undoubtedly related to other biotopes. In fact, the entire Earth, from the poles to the equator, is one big ‘household’ in which everything is interrelated.

However, what ecology does not yet consider to be its field of activity are the living organisms that we cannot perceive sensorially, such as the ‘gods’ and the ‘elementals’, or that which is still today considered the ‘non-living’ environment. In this, this modern branch of science differs from the vision of the so-called primordial peoples.

Bishnois

Let’s take a closer look at one such people: the Bishnois. This community of six hundred thousand people lives in northwestern India, in a harsh, rather barren region, the desert and semi-desert of Rajasthan. Their origins go back to Guru (teacher) Jambheshwar (1451-1536), who gathered a group of followers around him within the widely spread religious group of Vishnu devotees in India. Jambheshwar had observed in a vision that the drought



The holy Khejri tree.

and associated misery, which the region was already suffering from, even then, was caused by human intervention in nature. He drew up 29 rules, which these followers were to follow. ("Bishnoi" means twenty-nine in the local dialect.) Those 29 rules related to various issues, such as personal hygiene and basic health conditions; social behavior; religion; conservation of biodiversity and animal welfare. It is mainly because of these last rules that the Bishnois have attracted attention. That said, these other rules are also important, and the total package should be seriously considered.

Vishnois

The Bishnois are also known as Vishnois because of their devotion to the god Vishnu. Vishnu is one of the three gods of the Hindu trinity, symbolizing creation, preservation, and destruction. Vishnu is the preserver or custodian. It is an intelligent cosmic force that is present in everything that exists. There is no human being, animal or blade of grass in which you cannot find the Vishnu power. For the Bishnoi in particular, living from animal husbandry and agriculture, this cosmic power is essential because it makes them realize that all of nature is imbued with this divine potency. The entire manifested world can

continue to exist thanks to Vishnu power.

To what extent the Bishnois represent Vishnu anthropomorphically is not entirely clear. According to one of the 29 rules, one must pray to the deity at least in the morning and evening, and on Wednesdays one fasts. But serving Vishnu also involves modesty, patience and purity, and cherishing feelings of love and devotion for all life. Ethics flow logically from the vision of life. The rule that one should forgive others and be kindhearted fits seamlessly with this.

Good for animals and plants

It is because of this religious basis that the Bishnois are able to implement the rules relating to lower realms of nature without noticeable difficulty, which is quite surprising to many. Some of the rules to be observed are: be merciful to all living beings and love them. Do not cut down green trees, save the environment. Provide shelters for abandoned animals to avoid slaughtering them in slaughterhouses. Don't sterilize bulls. There is even a rule that you should not wear blue clothes because that color is extracted from the indigo plant, and for that you would have to destroy many bushes. And as a rule already quoted shows, you should not cut down green trees. Although it is



A Bishnoi man plants a Khejri tree in the dry desert. During two years he will share his water with this tree. After this period, the tree can grow on its own.

not reflected in the 29 rules, it is good practice that every Bishnoi plants at least one tree a day.

Probably because all these rules are embedded in a religious cosmic concept, and because the Bishnois can understand the simple truth of them, they are followed with glee. Indeed, it is also not so difficult to understand that all living beings have the right to life and should share in the produce of the earth.

Of course, practicing these rules comes with some inconveniences. For example, women sometimes have to walk for hours to look for fallen branches to use as firewood for cooking their food. After all, they do not take branches from living trees. Before setting the wood on fire, they check carefully to make sure that no small insects are hiding in it. The scarcity of dead wood also means that the Bishnois cannot cremate their dead, which is a very old tradition among Hindus. After all, even for cremation of dead bodies you need firewood. And for that you would have to sacrifice a living tree, or mutilate it, which is what you do when you cut off living branches.

Of course, the Bishnois are strictly vegetarian. Furthermore, they will never harm their surrounding nature, the home of wildlife. Indeed, often those animals are helped. For example, part of the harvest is given to wildlife, such as birds. Some 10 percent of the harvest is shared with the animals. It seems odd that a Bishnoi farmer would scatter a whole bag of harvested grains on the ground for birds to eat, but he does it with a happy mind and takes visible pleasure in the birds feasting on the grain. Everywhere in the settlements and villages you see gazelles, which, like pets with us, belong to the family and yet enjoy complete freedom. Young animals abandoned by their parents are bottle fed and supplemented. There are even cases of a gazelle cub suckling with a Bishnoi woman.

Protecting your family

Those you love, you protect. There are some rules that protect women, for example, if they are pregnant or have recently given birth to a child. If you also love animals and plants, and consider them members of your family, you will also protect them. The history of the Bishnois has a brilliant example of this.

In the year 1730, the maharaja of Jodhpur in Rajasthan wanted to build a new palace. He sent out some soldiers to cut down some sacred Khejri trees in a village. A woman, Amrita Devi, hugged a tree to prevent it from being cut down. The soldiers offered her that they would leave the village if Amrita paid them a bribe. However, Amrita per-

ceived bribery as contrary to her religion and she reluctantly rejected this proposal. She told the soldiers that their actions were an affront to her religion and that she was willing to die to save the trees. Indeed, the soldiers killed her. Her act inspired her three daughters and other fellow villagers to the same heroism. They too embraced trees and were killed. Eventually, apart from Amrita, 363 other Bishnois were killed. Only then did this atrocity reach the maharaja, and he ordered the slaughter to stop. The trees had been saved.

This story continues to inspire today's Bishnois. Every year this event is commemorated. And the same spirit of protecting your family leads to an active policy of taking action in many ways against hunters and poachers. Even once a lawsuit was filed against a film crew from Mumbai who had gone hunting for a black buck in the area. Following their tradition, the Bishnois stopped employees of the film crew and filed a complaint against two of them at the local police station.

Prosperity

Perhaps the Bishnois' policies seem to be at the expense of their own prosperity. Strangely enough, the opposite is true. All basic needs are met. There is no lack. Even today, the Bishnois live in their simple prosperity. By all appearances, modern times have little or no impact on the rules of life and their way of life.

Prosperity is a relative term, and if you measure the earthly possessions of a Bishnoi family against the number of material possessions accumulated by the average European or American, the latter obviously own much more. But compared to other groups living on the edge of this barren, scorching hot desert, the Bishnois are decidedly prosperous. In fact, they do so well that they are sometimes the envy of other communities living there.

Of course, whether the Bishnois always follow the 29 regulations is impossible to judge. A video on YouTube shows that not everyone abides by not using drugs, which one of the precepts also calls for. In short, they are not saints, but like us, learning human beings. But their religious awareness and the resulting ethical rules, shaped into 29 precepts that can be understood by everyone, lead them to have no material lack and to live harmonious and meaningful lives.

What lesson can we learn?

There is a huge gap between our society and that of the Bishnois. Of course, we cannot mindlessly copy the 29



During the dry season the Bishnoi women dig canals and wells to collect the rain of the forthcoming monsoon.

rules to our modern society. But its spirit we might well consider and apply in our lives, especially regarding the plant and animal kingdom.

First of all, let us also consider the deeper background of life. There is an all-embracing Oneness in life. Whether you call that Oneness Vishnu, God, Nature, or a Principle is not important, as long as you realize in your mind that everything is alive and inseparable.

This will inspire us to humility. The pursuit will no longer be to obtain as much earthly prosperity as possible. Human happiness will not be determined by how much stuff one has. Rather, we will ask ourselves what we really need and which of our actions are not at the expense of other life: human, animal and plant life. If that realization is there, then the prescription to be “good” to animals will not be so difficult to follow. By this we do not mean that we should often cuddle animals and give them lots of food, but rather that we should respect their natural instincts and let them live their own lives as much as possible.

Again, the point is to understand the spirit of these precepts. For example, the Bishnois have a rule not to castrate bulls. The background of this, of course, is that you should let animals live natural lives as much as possible, so that they can learn their own animal lessons. Apply that thought to animals kept in rich countries. Would newborn calves be taken away from their mothers because it would be at the expense of milk production? Would we keep pigs in barns where there is no way for them to live a natural life? Would we coop chickens up in “apartment buildings” and cull them by the tens of thousands as a preventive measure to avoid economic damage in the event of bird flu? Would factory farming exist at all?

The rule not to cut down green trees directly benefits the Bishnois. After all, ignoring this rule leads to the fact that the desert would advance further. But the deeper background is that people must respect the creatures of the plant kingdom. Humans and animals cannot live harmoniously without the plant kingdom.

If we had the mentality of the Bishnois, would we ever use economic arguments as a necessary reason for the destruction of nature. When in Germany entire villages are wiped off the face of the earth for the extraction of the most polluting fuel, lignite, this is justified by the fact that otherwise electricity cannot be generated. Would a Bishnoi woman ever cut a branch from a tree with the argument that otherwise she would have to walk farther for firewood?

Above all, it is the consciousness of connectedness between all realms of nature that we need to develop. If that consciousness had grown further, would we destroy a forest for highway construction or deplete the soil through fertilizer?

It is our own greed that we must curb. Only then will the destruction of nature, the pollution of the environment, the mistreatment of animals cease. The spirit of the 29 rules of the Bishnois can certainly help us do that.



Pupils of the *Golden Link College* in the Philippines, during their studies.

Peace education in schools: learned young, done old

In the peace special of *Lucifer, the Lightbringer*, we wrote about sustainable peace resulting from a dynamic harmony within ourselves.⁽¹⁾

Education is an important part of the educational development of children and young people where they learn to get along with one another. It is encouraging that many examples of peace education already exist in educational practice. But the current state of the world shows that something is structurally missing. Peace education is now often seen as optional, as something extra in the curriculum. Taking a theosophical approach, in this article we build a vision of peace education and highlight examples in education. When peace education is woven into education, children develop into peacemakers.

Key thoughts

- » In Theosophy, peace education is synonymous with education.
- » This is aimed at developing all aspects of the child. In doing so, the higher aspects take charge of the lower ones.
- » This takes place in an atmosphere of universal brotherhood where everyone has a responsibility.
- » Learning to think independently and working together are key elements.
- » When children receive peace education from an early age, they become resilient and naturally contribute to peaceful cooperation.

In current education, we see different types of peace education. One part is about peace and war in the context of history or current events. Another part is about developing skills such as conflict resolution and mediation. For example, cultural diversity lessons should lead to mutual respect and understanding. In the offerings around peace education, the focus is often more on the instrumental side. What is often overlooked, or even missing, is a vision on the essence of education as given by Theosophy. That is, to promote the noble qualities of a developing human being, as a member of a universal brotherhood. We will first elaborate on this premise and then go deeper into important facets of peace education: building the right environment, developing independent thinking, and learning cooperation and conflict resolution.

What is there to develop?

In education and pedagogy there are different ideas about what a person is, what should be developed in a child and how this should be done. There is often an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and competences. In many cases, the basic idea is that all sorts of things should be “put into a child”, that a child comes into the world as a “tabula rasa”.

In Theosophia, we presume a cyclical process of life and death where, at a new birth, all qualities are re-developed from within, from the core of consciousness. In essence, education is about assisting in character formation.

The ideal image of education from a theosophical perspective is to help develop the potential of man’s higher nature. That higher nature includes his higher thinking qualities, such as

reason, intuition, compassion and sense of oneness.

In previous lives, every child has already learned more or less spiritual and ethical lessons. It is born with that storehouse of accumulated wisdom. By appealing to it, this acquired wisdom from previous lives has a chance to become a living force in this life.

At the Theosophical Society Point Loma, the principles of Rāja-Yoga are used to design education effectively. Katherine Tingley explains this as follows:

The term education has a much wider significance at the Raja Yoga School at Point Lorna than is usually given it. The basis of this education is the essential divinity of man, and the necessity for transmuting everything in his nature which is not divine. To do this no part can be neglected, and the physical nature must share to the full in the care and attention which are required. Neither can the most assiduous training of the intellect be passed over; it must be made subservient, however, to the forces of the heart. The intellect must be the servant, not the master, if order and equilibrium are to be attained.

The truest and grandest thing of all as regards education is to attract the mind of the child to the fact that the immortal Self is ever seeking to bring the whole being into a state of perfection. The real secret of the Raja-Yoga system is rather to evolve the child's character than to overtax the child's mind. It is to bring *out* rather than to bring *to* the faculties of the child. The grander part is from within. ⁽²⁾

Even today, there are schools with a theosophical foundation. In the Philippines, a theosophical school, *Golden Link College*, was founded in 2002. Its founder Vicente Hao Chin junior summarizes the purpose of education as follows: *Transformative education must involve the awakening of the higher nature of a person, and the aligning of the personality to such higher nature. This awakening is not through conditioning but rather insight.* ⁽³⁾ Hao Chin has established a complete education system for developing all facets of consciousness. It is distinguished from traditional education by its focus on self-discipline, self-knowledge and character development, among other things.

Inner peace arises when our various aspects of consciousness function harmoniously. ⁽⁴⁾ In this process, the higher aspects give guidance to the lower ones. The higher aspects are universally focused for the benefit of the totality. The lower ones are focused on personal and outer matters. They have their natural place and function, but when these lower aspects dominate, it leads to one-sided orienta-

tion, towards self-interest and personal comfort, resulting in suffering.

An example of harmonious guidance is one who directs emotion on the basis of reasonability. Or when one sees the cause of a conflict from intuition and can then temper and transcend one's impulses of retaliation. And with a sense of unity, one can stand above the parties and ensure a rightful place and role for all involved.

The learning process of the growing child consists of disciplining the lower aspects by the higher ones. As a result, a person develops resilience and abilities to cooperate harmoniously. We will elaborate later on the preconditions and how to properly initiate this learning process.

Key note for right atmosphere: fraternal cooperation

An important prerequisite in the learning environment is building the right atmosphere for thinking. That is an atmosphere that contributes in an optimal way to harmoniously expressing all aspects of the growing child, and in particular the higher, more noble qualities. The basis for such an atmosphere is the realization that humanity and the individual human being (!) are an integral part of the living planet, nature, the universe. A core teaching in Theosophy is the idea of unity. All beings are inseparable and work together in one grand organism. Fraternal cooperation is therefore the natural way of living together. This is the basis for a peaceful society.

The atmosphere in and around a school is built mainly by ideas. So teachers as well as parents must have a philosophy of life in which compassion and cooperation are central. The learning environment is not limited to the school, but also includes the home and forms a bridge to society.

In Lomaland (see frame on page 17), children who started learning to read were taught the following fundamental idea: "Helping and sharing is what brotherhood means." ⁽⁵⁾ The focus on helping and sharing creates an atmosphere in which everyone counts and can make their unique contribution to the harmonious growth of the whole (in more noble qualities).

Also among current Dutch schools, we find examples where fraternal cooperation is seen as the foundation of education. The Wings Agora school in Roermond, for example, actively works to build a good atmosphere for cooperation. This school considers it important that children learn how to actively contribute to a better life for others. They form a "Living House" for pupils and staff. There

Lomaland

An example of a community in which a harmonious atmosphere for peace education was built is Lomaland. This is the theosophical community founded by Katherine Tingley in Point Loma, San Diego, California (1898-1942).⁽⁶⁾ This community focused on character development and social contribution based on the ideal of universal brotherhood. Education began as early as newborn children. Over the years, education was also developed for higher levels, up to university. The starting point for education were the principles of Rāja-Yoga education.⁽⁷⁾

A distinctive feature was that the pupils of different age groups spent the whole day together with the teacher in an atmosphere of brotherhood. Everyone had their roles and tasks. Older children helped the younger ones. There were communal meals. Theory was interspersed with practical lessons, such as research in nature. There was a lot of involvement in drama and music. For example, there were big stage productions performed together, where everyone – down to the smallest – had a role. Playing a stage role or a piece of music was at the heart of education, because of its essential contribution to character development. And working on a play is a good exercise in attunement and cooperation.

Lomaland was a sheltered community, and at the same time one that was at the center of the world. An atmosphere of practical brotherhood had been built up. It was focused on serving humanity. Under the leadership of Katherine Tingley, global peace initiatives were undertaken for decades. And much work was done, for example, to support prisoners and make the detention regime more humane. Students participated in all these initiatives. This too was part of character education.

The foundation for education at Point Loma was Rāja-Yoga. This is the *outward leading* (this is the literal meaning of the Latin *e-ducare*) of the reincarnating part of man, so that he is able to master his personality as an instrument. We need to empower the heart to lead the head.

On this, Katherine Tingley said: “Raja-Yoga is an ancient term meaning simply “royal” or “kingly union”. I selected it as best expressing the aim and object of true education, namely, the perfect balance of all the faculties, physical, mental and spiritual — in a word, *character*...”⁽⁸⁾

are working arrangements in which respect is a central element. Respect for each other, but also respect for nature and the earth. In this example, it is clear that there is a vision of embedding the school in society and nature. Agora education is provided in over twenty schools.

Role of teachers and parents

Teachers have the important task of creating the right atmosphere. This of course requires certain qualities. Above all, they are living examples and must possess love, enthusiasm and educational skills, which they use to help lead children's inner potential outwards.

In addition, it is important that cooperation in building the atmosphere does not only take place within the school. Parents also have an important role to play. It is important that they are actively involved in school and cooperate with teachers. In today's society, we often see education being largely “outsourced” to school. This creates a break in the sphere in which the child grows up. It lives in separate worlds, which do not smoothly intertwine and it receives conflicting examples and messages while growing up. When parents and teachers have a good alignment, the child benefits. The vision of the Agora education mentioned above includes the idea from an African proverb:

“It takes a whole village to raise a child.” Within these schools, parents have an active and visible role. They contribute social knowledge and close the circle around the pupil.

The content of the curriculum is also important. If children receive a sufficiently varied curriculum with, in addition to cognitive subjects, ample attention to, for example, creativity, music, drama, independent research and philosophy, this contributes to a good learning climate in which all aspects of a child are addressed. In the Agora education mentioned, “the world is the source of balanced learning content and competences to be acquired”. As the basis for each child's development and growth, it focuses on exploring five worlds: scientific, artistic, civic, social/ethical and spiritual. Here, therefore, a bridge to society is also built through educational content. Encouraging independent enquiry is an aspect we will return to in a subsequent section on independent thinking.

Collaboration between pupils

Besides cooperation between teachers and parents, it is of course important that pupils also learn to cooperate. An important key here is that children learn to deal with differences and that they can make use of those differ-

ences. This can be shaped in education in various ways. One of these is pairing pupils who help each other in the learning process.

Something similar is done at Montessori primary schools in the Netherlands. There are three “level-groups”: the lower level (groups 1 and 2), the middle level (groups 3, 4 and 5) and the upper level (groups 6, 7 and 8). So each child belongs to the youngest, middle and oldest groups once. Moreover, children from the lower grades visit the middle grades, and those from the middle grades visit the upper grades. The older pupils then teach the younger ones.

Something like this was also done this way in Rāja-Yoga education in Lomaland. It is a practical elaboration of the teacher-pupil principle. We are all both teacher and student.

The atmosphere of brotherhood and mutual cooperation is the training for the different aspects of consciousness to function harmoniously. Because in cooperation, we are challenged and can learn to let the higher aspects be lead-

ing (also by taking an example from parents and teachers who have that mindset). In short, cooperation as training to maintain inner peace in all situations.

In the section on conflict resolution, we go into a little more detail on the importance of cooperation and learning to deal with differences. First, we will go into developing discernment.

Thinking independently

A foundation for development is learning to think independently. This includes teaching a child to ask questions, engage in dialogue and investigate things. This leads to discernment and it prevents assuming things indiscriminately and living from unconscious motives. A crucial element here is developing self-knowledge. This is, first of all, understanding how thinking works. And *real* independent thinking is actually synonymous with inner peace. It is learning to recognize and distinguish the different ways of thinking within yourself and knowing how to focus that consciously.

There are many frames of thought in our society that are unconsciously assumed to be true by large groups of people. In several schools in which peace education is shaped, learning to think independently is central. This means that a child must learn to investigate independently and distinguish between truth and an opinion or fallacy. The following example from a primary school in Northern Ireland illustrates what beneficial effects this can have in our polarizing society.

There is a strong religious split in Northern Ireland that has led to bloody conflict. To this day, children are brought up from home with polarizing ideas about “the other”. At *Holy Cross Boys* primary school in Belfast, active work is being done to teach independent thinking and debunk myths. Using the wisdom of ancient Greek philosophers, children’s critical thinking is encouraged. This helps them to see beyond the boundaries and limitations of their own communities. The pupils experience how philosophy can encourage them to question the usefulness of war and violence and question the stories they hear from their parents and peers. The documentary “Young Plato” paints a wonderful picture of daily practice at this school.⁽¹⁰⁾ If a pupil comes into conflict, he is invited to the philosophy classroom. Here, he is helped by the teacher to reflect on the incident using, for example, the Socratic method. In this way, a foundation is laid for a more peaceful future in this country plagued by discord and violence.

An important element in learning to think independently

Janus Korczak

A historical example is the way Janus Korczak set up education in a Jewish community in Poland. Janus Korczak (pseudonym of Henryk Goldszmit, 1878 - 1942) was a pediatrician, pedagogue and writer.⁽⁹⁾ He founded a number of orphanages and created a community there in which children’s responsibility and rights were guaranteed and encouraged as much as possible. His orphanages are occasionally described as “Republic of Children”. Each child has his or her own tasks in the orphanage; the children help each other. For example, Korczak’s basic ideas are: “Children are full human beings who can take initiative and responsibility”. They should “not be formed according to the ideas of adults, but development comes from within and space must be given for it”.

He felt it was important that there was harmony in daily life, that children would not bully each other. In addition to a children’s parliament, there was also a children’s court, in which children participated in thinking about “a just punishment someone should receive”, or in other words how a child should compensate, make up for an incorrect act.

Korczak’s work and ideas continue to inspire child psychologists and educational innovators to this day, and he is considered a forerunner in the field of children’s rights.

Practising with Pāramitās in class

An example of material for teaching children to know themselves and develop socially is the work of Douwe Hoitsma, who draws his inspiration from Buddhism. He has written two children's books. One on the "Six Skillful Means", or *Pāramitās* and one on the heart qualities, or *Brahma Vihāra*. This is material for young children to gain insight into different "I's" in themselves (and others). For example, there are exercises in "being happy with each other and for each other" (this is *Muditā*, loving-kindness) and in helping each other (this is *Karunā*, compassion).

The teaching aids are used in several primary schools. One form of work involves a teacher using singing to create an atmosphere of cooperation, for example by reciting "we belong together". And there are materials for pupils to explore and experience themselves.⁽¹¹⁾

is discussing certain subject matter with each other. As a result, children learn to work together by sharing their views and jointly arriving at a richer or better understanding. In addition, they enrich each other by asking each other questions. So an atmosphere of fraternity, enthusiasm and encouragement is also important in the learning process around independent thinking. And in that atmosphere of mutual respect, a safe learning environment can also be found to learn to deal with differences of insight.

Learning to solve conflicts sustainably

Many peace education programs place an emphasis on conflict resolution skills. In an ideal society, conflicts would not arise and therefore would not need to be resolved. This is not the case, so there is a great need for mediation and conflict resolution. In light of the theosophical view of education laid out above, there is a risk here of symptom control. It is easily said that if children learn to resolve their disputes together then it is "learned young, done old". However, if children learn this from a hodgepodge of basic beliefs, it does not lead to lasting peace. Thoughts with which children are surrounded, and which create all sorts of tensions, include "competition", "the right of the strongest", "YOLO" (You Only Live Once), et cetera. This causes a confusing human and world view and makes it difficult for the child to learn to deal with differences and cooperate. And of course this also causes areas of

tension in the schoolyard, the sports field or in the home situation, when a child is confronted with different worlds of thought with their particular set of values.

The essence of learning to cope durably with differences is rooted in the idea of oneness. When children learn to proceed from essential equality, they learn to get along well. This is also necessary in mediation.⁽¹²⁾ Some schools have child mediators who help resolve conflicts in the classroom or schoolyard.

Achieving a *sustainable* outcome in mediation actually requires everything we have covered in the previous sections, that is:

Activating and making all aspects of the human being work harmoniously, with the higher, "nobler" aspects in control of the lower, more "instinctive" aspects.

Learning to cooperate in a fraternal atmosphere of essential equality, where helping each other and contributing to society are central.

Learning to think independently, allowing discernment to prevent young people from slavishly following ideas and impulsive tendencies.

Learned young, done old

And so we come back to the essence of education, as represented in Theosophy. At its core this is synonymous with

A few examples of peace education

A good example in Dutch education is the "Peaceful School program", which has been introduced in about a thousand schools. This "is a complete program for primary schools for social competence and democratic citizenship. It considers the classroom and the school as a living community, in which children feel heard and seen, are given a voice, and in which children learn to make decisions together and resolve conflicts. Children feel responsible for each other and for the community, and are open to the differences between people."⁽¹³⁾ This concept does not stop at school boundaries because parents are also actively involved.

There is also peace education for adults. An international school specializing in peace education is the "University for Peace" in Costa Rica.⁽¹⁴⁾ It has branches in several parts of the world. Its curriculum includes master's programs for people working in international relations and working on peace and conflict mediation.



Students of the *University of Peace*.

peace education. As this article shows, there are many initiatives to shape peace education in schools. This is sometimes done on a fragmented basis, so it has yet to gain in effectiveness. Theosophy offers us some fundamental ideas to build peace education cohesively and in the right atmosphere.

Inner peace arises when our various aspects of consciousness function harmoniously. At the core, we are all a peacekeeper as well as a peacemaker, and true human education aims to bring that out. When children receive peace education from an early age, they become resilient and naturally contribute to peaceful cooperation.

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According to the researcher Itay Shani, all individual beings are born in an omnipresent field of consciousness, like swirls arise in an ocean.

Cosmopsychism

Some scientists investigate the thesis that cosmic consciousness is the basis of nature. They are pioneers in a field of inquiry that few modern scientists have yet entered. What ideas are they developing? And which theosophical thoughts can supplement their views?

Key thoughts

» A small but growing group of scientists are exploring the idea that consciousness is the foundation of nature. Some of them assume cosmic consciousness to be the source of all beings.

» These pioneers are trying to find alternatives to the present materialistic scientific theories: theories that prove no longer satisfactory.

» Sometimes they draw their ideas from the writings of the great philosophical thinkers of the past.

» Their pioneering work can have an enduring impact on the future of science.

Interesting developments ...

Over the last fifty years, there has been a growing circle of scientists discussing "what is consciousness".

Several universities have established research departments for this purpose. These researchers believe that science cannot ignore something that is an integral part of the lives of every human being, including the scientists themselves. And this is the question: what is consciousness?

Most attempts made to crack this very hard nut – to solve this fundamental question – search the origin of consciousness in material workings. For example, that consciousness could be produced by networks of nerve cells, or by microstructures in cells, or by quantum mechanical processes in atomic particles.

Sometimes the solution to the riddle is sought in abstract approaches. For instance, one tries to identify consciousness with "information processing", so that one can make comparisons with computers and all other systems in which information is exchanged. Another abstract approach is "systems theory". Con-

sciousness would then be a "self-regulating and self-learning system", resembling artificial intelligence. But who processes that information, or who is regulating itself, remains an open question. The theories tell little about the intrinsic character of consciousness, but only about some of its properties.

Universal ideas are being taken up again

Within the group of consciousness researchers, there is a smaller circle that explores the idea that consciousness is the fundamental factor rather than physical brains or physical atoms. We can view this development as a resurgence of the universal theosophical ideas which have been taught in all the great philosophies and religions of the past, and which have been spread, since 1875, by the Theosophical Movement.

In the nineteenth century in Europe there were some philosophers, including the so-called "idealists", who put consciousness first. Most of them derived their ideas from classical Greek and Roman thinkers and

sometimes also from the holy texts of India, which became available in the West in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the ideas of these thinkers had little impact on the general mentality during that century. The nineteenth century was a period of excessive economic gain, continual fighting for territory and resources, and rigid sectarianism. In the twentieth century, there were a few progressive scientists who saw consciousness as more fundamental than substance. We name some of them: Max Planck, Sir Arthur Eddington, Conrad Hal Waddington, Ervin László and Rupert Sheldrake. These scientists went against the strongly materialistic tendency of the twentieth century — a tendency that was only gradually questioned seriously around the 1970s.

The term nowadays most commonly used to represent the idea that consciousness is leading and matter is following, is panpsychism, meaning: everything (“pan”) is animate (“psyche” stands for egoic consciousness). Some major proponents of panpsychism over the last fifty years include: David Chalmers (he was one of the pioneers), David Ray Griffin, David Clarke, Freya Mathews (who draws her ideas from Schopenhauer), Galen Strawson and Donald Hoffman.

They test their proposition with a top-down approach: they start from the main thesis and then investigate whether its logical consequences can answer some important philosophical and scientific questions. This deductive method, which in the West we often call the Platonic method, is a very valuable approach. For each person, scientist or not, can thus independently test a basic presupposition.

Cosmic consciousness as the foundation of everything

Within the group of scientists with panpsychism views, there are some who assume cosmic consciousness as the foundation of everything. This position is often called cosmopsychism. The idea is, that an all-pervading cosmic consciousness is the ultimate source of all individual consciousnesses.⁽¹⁾ Researchers following this direction include Itay Shani, Bernardo Kastrup, Andrew Lohrey, Bruce Boreham, Joachim Keppler, Philip Goff, Freya Mathews, Ludwig Jaskolla, Alexander J. Buck, Yujin Nagasawa and Khai Wager.

By the way: no author has the pretension of sketching a complete worldview — which indeed would be a super-human ambition. What is interesting is the direction in which these authors think. Their current views can be seen

as attempts, that may be reformed in the many years to come.

Interesting are the thoughts of Andrew Lohrey and Bruce Boreham. Together they wrote an article entitled: “The nonlocal universe.”⁽²⁾ They unfold a vision in which meaning, mind and one all-encompassing cosmic consciousness are the foundations.

We would now like to pay attention to two other theories: that of Itay Shani and Bernardo Kastrup. Shani is a true representative of cosmopsychism. Kastrup has a theory that has some features in common with cosmopsychism, yet also differs from it. Hence Kastrup prefers to call his view “idealism” rather than “cosmopsychism”. We choose these two theories because they both make some strides toward basic ideas of Theosophy.

The views of Itay Shani

Itay Shani proceeds entirely from a cosmopsychism view. He defines it this way: the cosmos (seen as an overarching whole) is conscious and is the one foundation for all that exists. Sometimes he puts it this way: there is an “omnipresent field of consciousness” in which every manifested being has its origin and temporary existence.

Shani does not hide the fact that he derives his ideas partly from the Hindu Vedānta, and from Buddhism. Indeed, he openly advocates an integrated science:

What is needed, we submit, is a fresh outlook. Inclusive of consciousness and the intrinsic dimension of things but, at the same time, hospitable to objective findings and to rigorous scientifically based analysis. In this respect, the contribution of philosophy is vital. Philosophy’s quest is maximally comprehensive in that it seeks to understand reality as a whole.⁽³⁾

We will not describe his current views in detail, but only its broad outlines. In these outlines we recognize some similarities to Theosophia, which is the universal wisdom of all spiritual teachers of humanity. But this is not the case when we start to look at details of his views, which Shani derives from quantum theory. So, we only picked out a few highly interesting general statements made by Shani.

Shani on how the one becomes the many

The cosmic field, he argues, carries within it all possible characteristics, that is, all possible aspects of consciousness. He compares these different characteristics with colors,

with a color palette, and their corresponding frequencies. All frequencies are contained. That is why such a variety can be seen in individual beings, each being expressing a part, a selection of the total palette.

The picture Shani sketches about the emergence of the individual consciousness within that field is somewhat vague. It can be compared, he says, to the emergence of vortices in an immeasurable ocean. This point somewhat approaches Theosophy: in its core, every being is a droplet of boundless life, and therefore has the same boundless potencies as the boundless Ocean of Life itself. Just as every drop of water, and every swirl of water, carries within it all the properties of the ocean of which it is a part.

What we – as far as we can ascertain now – did not find in Shani's views is the theosophical basic idea that each center of consciousness has always existed and will always continue to exist.⁽⁴⁾ Thus, the beings within the cosmic field are not the creations of a cosmic consciousness, but are independently evolving beings. They all are eternal, uncreated. They unfold their capacities during a never-ending series of rebirths.

And indeed, each entity that is born again in the outer world emanates from its own core a "force field" influencing its environment. This force field may be described as a vortex, a swirl, if you like the symbol. That vortex exists until this individual being retreats again into the inner realms, in short, until it "dies". Its cooperation with all the lower beings who build up its body then temporarily ceases, and all those lower beings then go their own paths. The "swirl" disintegrates, and its elements spread again in the Ocean of Life.

Shani on the two poles of existence

Another building block of Shani's view is, that the cosmic field of consciousness carries within itself two aspects. It has two poles, an inner conscious pole and a more material pole. These two poles express themselves in the manifested cosmos, which shows a conscious side and a physical nature. These poles also express themselves in each individual being within that cosmos. For each being also has a consciousness and material side.

We also find this basic idea in Hindu philosophy, in the two terms Parabrahman and Mūlaprakṛiti. In one of his publications, Shani refers to this source.⁽⁵⁾

These two poles cooperate, which means that they are attuned to each other in a certain way. Shani sometimes seems to say: a material body is a projection of consciousness. In other places he gives a description in which the

physical body exists first, with its characteristic frequencies, and then draws to itself "consciousness aspects" from the cosmic field with the same frequencies.⁽⁶⁾ What is cause and what is effect remains unclear.

According to Theosophy, our consciousness is the cause, is the leading factor, and its material instruments, vehicles, are effects. Every human consciousness that is reborn, attracts cellular and atomic beings appropriate to its own character, which gradually build up his physical body. So, our body (which consists of many beings) reflects our character.

Shani further seems to say that matter is "non-living", not-conscious. This is in contrast to Theosophy, which assumes that everything is alive, that everything is part of Boundless Life. Spirit (the relatively more developed beings) and matter (the relatively less developed beings) are the two poles of the same ONE Cosmic Life.

What dimension can Theosophy add to this picture?

Shani's picture does not include basic Theosophical ideas such as the hierarchical structure of the cosmos. In Theosophy, we would never talk about a cosmic consciousness as "omnipresent without limits", but as the apex of its own hierarchy of beings, comprising no more than one cosmos (out of many). Each cosmos is part of an even larger cosmos. It is, as it were, a "living cell" within that greater being. Also, in our human constitution live numerous less developed beings; we human egos are also cosmic beings to them. And this same principle applies to an atomic being, which is the head or apex of a microcosmos, a micro solar system. Life within life ...

So we humans are a microcosmos. This means that in principle we carry within us all cosmic faculties and forces and substances, whether already unfolded or not. And that we therefore possess more than just a subset of the properties of the cosmos (as Shani says).

The vision of Bernardo Kastrup

In Kastrup's vision, there is also one all-encompassing cosmic consciousness.⁽⁷⁾ But he gives another definition of "individual consciousness" than Shani. He draws an analogy between the cosmic origin of individual entities, and – this may sound somewhat surprising – a particular psychological disorder, dissociative identity disorder. People with this disorder regularly switch identities. When their consciousness coincides with one such personality, they seem to think, feel and act according to the pattern of that

personality, in all respects. These alternating personalities seem to exist independently of each other, although they all stem from one psyche.

Some extreme examples of dissociative identity disorder are known. For example, there was a German woman of whom one of her personalities was blind, while the others could see. When she was dominated by the blind personality, she actually did not see. When she underwent a brain scan during such periods, the doctors could see that all the brain regions which are normally active in seeing, were temporarily switched off, so, completely non-active. Psychologists sometimes call these various personalities alter egos. Kastrup adopted that term. All individual consciousnesses, according to him, are the alter egos of the one cosmic consciousness. Differing from the dissociative identity disorder, we are now dealing with alter egos that exist simultaneously, and which are countless in number. And all these individuals are temporary, according to Kastrup: they come and go.

Kastrup argues that an individual entity has no independent consciousness, but IS that one cosmic consciousness, expressing itself as an alter ego for a while. It is like one bulb shining through a lampshade with many holes. Kastrup considers each being to be a temporary aspect of the one cosmic consciousness, showing a small part of all the characteristics of cosmic consciousness.

This view is quite different from that of Theosophy. According to the latter, each being is an eternal center of consciousness. It is boundless in its core, so, it has never been created. It exists, so to say, “on itself”: it has its own consciousness — although inseparably connected with all other beings. This applies to all beings: to a cosmic being, a human being, and for instance to an atomic being. All individual beings are independently developing centers of consciousness, on different steps of the ladder of spiritual evolution. Each being unfolds its own characteristics. We do not owe our character to another being, for instance a cosmic being.

Kastrup’s view of animate and inanimate nature

In Kastrup’s view, only humans, animals, plants and single-celled creatures have a singular consciousness. According to him, minerals and atoms are unensouled, that is, not driven by a singular consciousness, because it is not easy to indicate the precise boundary between one entity and another in the mineral realm. They often seem to operate as one mass, as one stream. Therefore, he says that

mineral beings are not “alter egos”.

If this is true, how then does Kastrup explain the origin of minerals, of physical nature? According to him, all external forms and physical things only exist within the cosmic consciousness — and thus also within the consciousness of all its “alter egos”. On this point, Kastrup is an absolute idealist. He argues that the external world does not exist, but only appears to exist. It seems to be there only within a consciousness, comparable to images in our mind with no objectivity whatsoever.

To say it in another way: in Kastrup’s philosophy, there is consciousness but no matter, there are conscious beings but there are no material vehicles through which these beings work. While in Theosophy, spirit and matter, the consciousness-side and the matter-side, are the inseparable and necessary roots of all manifested things. Just like Shani said.

We also assume that the external world is, in a certain sense, an illusory appearance. But then we do not mean that it does not exist, but that we only see its outer appearance, and not the causal forces that work behind it. And that leads our thinking astray. To properly understand what we see, we must learn to understand the true being behind. This view is called in philosophy objective idealism, in contrast to absolute idealism.

Kastrup thus denies the minerals and atoms not only consciousness, but also any real existence. According to Theosophy everything lives, without exceptions, also mineral and atomic beings. What we call atoms, or atomic particles, are the bodies of beings with a – in this case very undeveloped – consciousness.

Kastrup on the relationship between the alters and the whole

When Kastrup next discusses the question why all these alters, with all their diverse personalities, nevertheless experience the outer world generally as one and the same world, he unfolds a line of reasoning in which there is an interaction between the one cosmic consciousness and all its alters. Because we are all living in the same “ocean”, we experience the universe in much the same way: we all experience the same laws of motion, the same electromagnetic laws, and so on.

Here, Kastrup’s view has an ethical dimension. All alters are divided by a kind of boundaries. They live in their own bubble. This gives each of them the impression of being a separate “I-ness”. But, Kastrup says, they are not separate from each other and from the cosmic consciousness, but

they only live under the assumption – illusion – that they are. And they can see through that illusion, by understanding that they are part of something bigger than themselves. This basic idea seems to align, to a certain extent, with the message of all sages, of the universal Theosophia, that is, that there are inseparable bonds between all living beings, however highly or less developed they may be.

What dimension can Theosophy add to Kastrup's ideas?

As we already said with Shani's theory, from the point of view of Theosophy it is impossible to create a being. Therefore, the basic starting point of Shani's and Kastrup's views seem to resemble the orthodox church view, that an omnipotent Deity creates a soul at the birth of each human being – without explaining why this soul was created, and why this soul is born with the specific character that it has.

Cosmopsychism and panpsychism

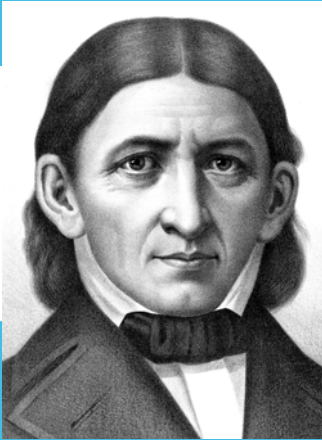
Cosmopsychism theories are, as said, one of the variants of panpsychism: that reality is grounded in consciousness. Other variants of panpsychism have also been put forward by various researchers. One group of them we describe very briefly in footnote 8.⁽⁸⁾ We will not go into those ideas now, because most of them are quite far from the basic ideas of Theosophy.

Promising

We deem discussing these scientists search for the origin of consciousness important, because it expresses a scientific attitude with a very open mind: the researchers seriously discuss the value of the basic propositions of present day scientific theory, and dare to suggest alternatives. Furthermore, and perhaps most important to say while ending this review: thinkers like Kastrup are aware that their ideas are closely intertwined with ethics. Every teacher of universal wisdom points out that our ethical sense rests on the fact that all beings are at their core ONE. That all beings are fundamentally connected, and equal. And it is precisely in this direction that some of these scientists are thinking.

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The esoteric background of Fröbel's Kindergarten

Key thoughts

- » Fröbel assumed a divine unity underlies life and a divine essence exists within every living being.
- » According to Fröbel, the purpose of education is to develop this divine essence from within into a conscious and independent activity.
- » With children, this should be done through play, given that “play is the only free expression of the child's soul.”
- » By *actively* engaging with universal objects, children develop their inner universal abilities accordingly.
- » Fröbel's ideas and ideals are not unique but fit seamlessly into a tradition of enlightened thinkers who have already made more of the universal wisdom or Theosophia their own.

Someone is tinkering in a somewhat clumsy, noncommittal way. “You have outgrown the age of kindergarten anyway,” they are told. For kindergarten is often associated with meaningless tinkering and keeping the children a little occupied. But the derogatory tone is very much in error. For if you search the background of Kindergarten, you will discover that this so-called non-committal tinkering is by no means fiddly or meaningless.

The Kindergarten concept was founded by Friedrich Fröbel. In 1837, he opened the first one in Bad Blankenburg. Up until this time, there were daycare centers for toddlers, but what made the Kindergarten unique is that Fröbel introduced the element of *education*. Kindergarten literally means garden for children, “that the children may but grow like cabbages”. But by growth, Fröbel had in mind not so much the physical body, but the *inner abilities* of the child, the inward unfolding of what is already internally present.

Divine unity in nature

Indeed, Fröbel's educational theories were based entirely on the premise that there is *a divine unity underlying all life*. Fröbel assumed that every being had a divine essence, therefore a fundamental principle in his education was to give shape to that divine unity in man through spiritual training. By activating the divine faculties essentially present in the child lead-

ing to the outward expression of these divine faculties. In the case of toddlers, according to Fröbel, this was to be done through play, for “play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul.”⁽¹⁾

The Kindergarten was a place where preschoolers could develop corresponding universal qualities in themselves while playing with universal objects and forms. For the goal of education – in Fröbel's own words – “is to stimulate man as a conscious thinking and perceiving being to a pure, perfect and conscious representation of the inner law of the Divine; and education should show the ways and means that lead to that goal.”⁽²⁾ For, Fröbel further states, “The special destiny of man as a being endowed with reason, is to bring his divine essence to full consciousness, to living knowledge, to clear insight, and to have this independently exercised and operative in his own life.”⁽³⁾

Inner development through outer stimuli

As mentioned above, this was to take place in a playful manner in childhood. Here Fröbel focused on three conditions: a fun environment, children's own activity and physical exercise.

Fun, to begin with, because the prerequisite for development requires intrinsic motivation. Development comes from within and therefore can only take place when the child experiences an inner stimulus of pleasure and is drawn to it. When this is the case, a child will naturally get down to work, the self-activity that is indispensable according to Fröbel. This results in self-activity by which the child develops his independence and willpower to control himself.

Finally, physical movement serves to maintain balance between mind and body.

In his nearly five-hundred-page life's work, Fröbel describes in detail his vision, principles and methods.⁽⁴⁾ But the fundamental principle on which his teaching method is based, is the interplay of external stimuli and inner development. Being inspired from the outside combined with a self-efficacy of the child to internalize that outer inspiration, to make it inwardly active, so to speak. Fröbel did this on the one hand by offering universal forms while simultaneously letting the children actively work with them. The aforementioned self-efficacy of the child being a necessary condition. The combination of these two aspects, according to Fröbel, was crucial in order to stimulate the inner universal qualities of the child allowing them to flourish.

He distinguished the two aspects as “gifts” – the universal object being offered – and “appeals”, in the sense of “appealing to,” the practical engaging of the object by the child.

The first three gifts children received were a sphere, a cube and a cylinder.

The sphere, the cube and the cylinder

“External reality must be understood playfully in its structure and internal laws,” Fröbel said. And one of the best-known methods of introducing children to those universal structures and laws through play was the paper folding of a sphere, a cylinder and a cube.

Nor were the sphere, cylinder and cube randomly chosen shapes. Fröbel considered the sphere to be the most universal form and as such was to be the young child's first play element. In his book, Fröbel devotes pages to it, but some key thoughts regarding the sphere are that “the

spherical is the first manifestation of the diversity that rests in unity and arises from it, and of the return of all diversity to unity.”⁽⁵⁾

By allowing the child to come into contact with it, it is encouraged to manifest unity within itself, because “once it acts in accordance with its intuition and the law of the spherical, it expresses in its behavior this relationship that it has internalized, and thus it harmonizes the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ (...) with the goal of achieving unity.”

After the sphere followed the cube and cylinder. And even these shapes were not arbitrarily chosen. Fröbel regarded the cylinder as the transitional form, the connection between the spiritual or dynamic, and the static or material of which the cube is the symbol.

Gradually, in line with their developmental stage, children were given different so called “gift boxes”, which contained the wooden geometric shapes. And we also recognize Fröbel's legacy in the form of the wooden building blocks for children — of which the gift box is the precursor.

But perhaps the application of universal forms brings to



According to Fröbel, fundamental geometric figures like spheres appeal to the universal intuitions of young children.



mind something else: that is, the Platonic bodies, Plato's five regular polyhedra of which the cube is also a part. Like Fröbel, Plato related the five regular polyhedra to cosmic elements, namely the five cosmic building blocks of the world: ether, fire, air, water and earth. Plato also considered the sphere to be the ideal form. But if we look at the universality of Fröbel's ideas, we must conclude that it does not just stick to Plato ...

Ageless Wisdom of Theosophy

For those who are already more familiar with Theosophy and particularly with the Rāja-Yoga teaching as practiced by Katherine Tingley at Point Loma, it will not have escaped their notice how similar Fröbel's philosophy is to this. Like Rāja-Yoga, Fröbel focuses on the unfolding of the inner being, the divine essence that must be "led outward". And like Tingley, Fröbel emphasized here the importance of developing a powerful spiritual will and a pure, harmonious atmosphere in the family. Another element that played a fundamental role with both of them is the cultivation of self-discipline and a sense of responsibility through cooperation.

At first this may seem surprising, considering that Fröbel was proclaiming his insights and principles even before the impulse of 1875, when the Theosophical Society was founded. But it is not so surprising when one considers that Blavatsky was "merely" a messenger of Theosophia,

the ageless universal wisdom that has been disclosed periodically since time immemorial by the Great Ones, the progenitors of humanity. Ageless wisdom that is an inex-

[Excerpt from the preface of "On the Education of Man" in which W.T. Harris sets forth Fröbel's view of the two "selves" in every child — his lower and his higher, divine nature]

But there are two selves in the child: one is peculiar, arbitrary, capricious, different from all others and hostile to them, and is founded on short-sighted egotism. The other self is reason, common to all humanity, unselfish and universal, feeding on truth, beauty and holiness. Both of these selves are manifested in play. There is revelation of bad as well as of good. Fröbel accordingly, attempts to organise a system of education that will unfold the rational self and chain down the irrational. He wishes to cultivate selfhood and suppress selfishness. This must be done, if done effectively, by the pupil himself. If he does not chain the demon within him, external constraint will do it, but at the same time place its chains on the human being who has permitted his demon to go loose. Self-conquest is the only basis of true freedom.⁽⁷⁾

haustible source of inspiration, which has been drawn from at all times by those who have made themselves fit to receive it.

Anyone who dives into history with the “right glasses on” will discover countless enlightened thinkers, inspirers who all assumed the fundamental spiritual unity of nature. Consider, for example, Kepler (1571-1630) and Newton (1642-1727), who assumed a living and ordered universe, and who both in turn revived the universal wisdom of the Ancient Greeks. Kepler did so by relating the Platonic bodies to the structure of the solar system.

Another example, closer to home, is the philosopher Spinoza (1632-1677) who was convinced of an infinity and a universe based on ethics, in which such laws as cause and effect (karma) prevail, to which we as human beings are subject. Or contemporary and fellow philosopher Leibnitz (1646-1716), who reintroduced the concept of *monad* from the ancient Greeks, which Madame Blavatsky later adopted in her book *The Secret Doctrine* to describe the notion of the imperishable center of consciousness that every living being essentially is. And the transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau, who emphasized the relationship of man and universe, assumed the essential goodness of man and nature, and aspired to an ideal society in which all men are independent thinkers.

An ethical and moral anchor coupled with independent thinking is a clear common denominator among all these great thinkers. So too with the German philosophers Fichte and Schelling – co-founders of German Idealism – who in turn served as inspiration for Fröbel. Indeed, it were the universal ideas of these two philosophers, along with writings by Novalis, on the basis of which Fröbel acquired his first conceptions of the divine essence of nature. In addition, the Swiss philosopher and philanthropist Pestalozzi was another important source of inspiration for Fröbel, especially concerning the theory of the globular sphere. Pestalozzi also carried universal values, such as his educational goal of improving the living conditions of the “lower classes”. The philosopher Karl Popper later noted the importance of Pestalozzi’s educational idea of “Selbstbefreiung durch das Wissen” (self-liberation through knowledge) in Switzerland in the fight against poverty and social injustice. Through his unwavering concern for disadvantaged children, he also played a distinguished role in social pedagogy.

Those who search for it will discover a common thread in history of enlightened thinkers, some greater than others. Each of whom brought, and was able to bring, a piece of

the *same* universal wisdom, because – entirely according to Fröbel’s principle – they had unfolded in themselves those universal qualities that enabled them to receive and transmit that wisdom.

Fröbel’s influence today

What remains today of Fröbel’s inspiring thought? Is there more left than just the coining of the word kindergarten? Certainly, for Fröbel’s legacy, fortunately, has not only remained. It is widely recognized that he laid the foundation for contemporary pedagogy with his ideas. And even today – despite their prohibition during World War II – there are so-called Fröbel schools, where children are educated according to the same principles.

But also in the field of adult education Fröbel left a valuable contribution. Throughout his life he continued to develop himself to make himself suitable for his work as an educator through study. Among other things, he studied philosophical disciplines, anthropology, physiology, ethics and theoretical pedagogy in order to use them in his teaching. This was later joined by the study of oriental languages, chemistry, physics and mathematics.⁽⁶⁾

In 1892 this led to the establishment of Fröbel College, located in London, which today is still part of the University of Roehampton as a didactic research center. Here teachers continue to be trained according to the philosophy that has been taught since its foundation in 1892 and could be called rather radical at the time. Indeed, according to Fröbel, education for adults also had to be a creative and dynamic process in which all aspects of the human being had to be developed together and in harmony. That is, social, moral, aesthetic, spiritual and scientific.

Fröbel was thus not “merely” the man of the Kindergarten. Let us hope that his ideas may still inspire many.

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Questions & Answers

The historicity of the Masters of Wisdom, our inner Master and how do you find your Master?

You state that one should not accept anything from blind faith. So why should we accept the existence of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion, if there is no historical evidence of them?

Answer

It is often impossible for us to determine with certainty whether a historical person existed or not. To cite an example from literature: not a single fact about the person Shakespeare is known. Consequently, there are historians who claim that Shakespeare never existed. We do, of course, have plays and sonnets attributed to him. No one can doubt the existence of *Hamlet* or *The Tempest*, but whether its author was really named William Shakespeare, we do not know.

Similarly, there are countless other "historical personalities" about whom we know very little and about whom one can legitimately wonder if they ever existed or if they sprung from popular imagination. We mention Wilhelm Tell from Switzerland, Robin Hood from England, Tjil Uilenspiegel from Flanders and Germany and many others.

Careful gathering and consideration of all evidence needed

We also have little or no biographical data about many saints. About Jesus there are no historical sources. And the first biography of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, appeared more than

hundred years after his death. According to some critical Western scholars, Muhammad never existed. By the way, in our opinion, this in no way diminishes the teachings attributed to these two saviors. We cannot attribute more truth to the Sermon on the Mount if we would know that it was uttered by a person called Jesus; and the Quran does not become better or worse if we have certainty that its verses were indeed revelations to Muhammad.

It is difficult for us to establish the historicity of virtually all people of the past. But this is true of a lot of things. If you have never been to the North Pole, its existence is spoken of strictly hypothetically. But because you trust people who have been there, and because its existence fits within your geographic view of the earth and its climate zones, you may assume that it exists. The same is true of the historicity regarding people from the past. What do we personally know of the "Dutch father of the fatherland", William of Orange? What do we know of Tiradentes, the freedom fighter who wanted to separate Brazil from Portugal? Did Columbus really discover America? Were the Vikings robbers or traders? We must rely on the historians who have studied the existing sources. And if you want to improve your view, you should study several sources. For example, the Western descriptions of Alexander the Great are quite different from those of Persian writers. We must compare the data with our general knowledge and draw our – careful – conclusions from it.

Did the great Teachers exist?

Turning now to the great spiritual

teachers: of some the historicity is undisputed, like Gautama the Buddha and Plato. In other cases, it is doubtful, like Jesus. We therefore think that each person must decide for themselves if there is proof enough to say that these teachers really walked the earth. For example, read what H.P. Blavatsky says about the figure of Jesus. After establishing that his Gospel story is an allegory, she writes:

The legend of which I speak is founded, as I have demonstrated over and over again in my writings and my notes, on the existence of a personage called Jehoshua (from which Jesus has been made) born at Lüd or Lydda about 120 years before the modern era. And if this fact is denied – to which I can hardly object – one must resign oneself to regard the hero of the drama of Calvary as a myth pure and simple.⁽¹⁾

From this short excerpt, you can see that in Esoteric Philosophy, which has sources other than the usual ones, the existence of Jesus is not doubted, but we would never raise any objection if people denied his historicity. This is equally true of any spiritual teacher, including those whose existence was made known by H.P. Blavatsky. Anyone can study the Theosophia without assuming the factual lives of the great spiritual Teachers. One can even deny their existence and still fully experience their teachings as true. Nevertheless, because of the presence of ample circumstantial evidence, it would be more obvious to acknowledge that they have indeed lived and are living. But the "proof" for this can only be provided by

each person for themselves, by their own thinking.

Evidence for the reality of the Masters of Wisdom

Regarding the Mahātmās or the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion, as they are called, there has been controversy about their existence for many years. There are people who, without providing any evidence, believe that Mrs. Blavatsky would have invented them. We assume that they do exist. However, we do not do this from blind faith, but based on numerous facts verifiable by everyone.

In the first place, their existence is consistent with the widespread teaching that there is a group of human beings who are far ahead of their fellows in wisdom and compassion, and who are known as helpers and protectors of humanity. If you conduct a study of different civilizations, you will find that this “belief” was always there. For example, Muslims speak of Aulijāa, friends of Allah. Hindus speak of Rishis or Mahātmās, Buddhists of Bodhi-sattvas, in Central America they spoke of “feathered serpents” (Quetzalcoatl), in Greece of Christoi or Hierophants, and so on. So, the idea of a group of much more advanced human beings has always existed. Moreover, you can experience for yourself that there is a hierarchical structure in the Universe, including among humans.

Furthermore, two of these Masters wrote a large number of letters. Of some, we no longer have the originals, but dozens of their original letters are kept in The British Library, Euston Road, London. Those who want to, can convince themselves that they are really there. Experts have determined that the manuscripts of these two Masters are authentic. There are also letters

from them addressed to other people – in the same handwriting – held in the archives of The Theosophical Society at Adyar in India.

In addition, there have been several people – not always members of The Theosophical Society – who have met one of the Masters. A recent book by Daniel H. Caldwell, *A Casebook of Encounters with the Theosophical Mahatmas*, describes 58 cases of men and women who have met a Mahātmā face to face and, in many cases, have also spoken with them.

Finally, there are the testimonies of theosophical teachers such as Helena P. Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott, Damodar, William Q. Judge, Katherine Tingley and Gottfried de Purucker, which are not included in Caldwell's book. In any case, the existence of these witnesses cannot be denied, and unless you believe that all of them violated the truth, the existence of the Mahātmās is at least a very plausible theory. There are historical people whose existence no one doubts, about whom less is known.

In short, we do not think we are inconsistent if we believe that our Teachers have lived or are still living. There are numerous arguments to support this. Nevertheless, we stress that each one must determine for themselves whether this is true or not. No Theosophist will ever demand another person to believe something, even if he himself is convinced of a truth.

In conclusion, we wish to underline again that the existence or non-existence of these Teachers should in no way affect the message they proclaim. Test the teaching for its intrinsic value and not for the existence of the one who proclaimed it.

Reference

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Chrétien.” Article in: *Le Lotus*, volume II, April 1888, p. 3-19. In: H.P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings, Volume IX*. Wheaton, The Theosophical Publishing House, 1986, p. 225-226.

Question

In Theosophy, we hear not just a lot about the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion but also about the “inner Master”. Are the two the same? Is the knowledge of the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion knowledge within yourself?

Answer

The Masters of Wisdom and Compassion are living human beings. However, they are people who are quite a few classes ahead of the average human being in the school of life. They have developed their spiritual capacities much further. Therefore, they possess wisdom and abilities that the average person can hardly imagine.

But these abilities and this knowledge also reside within us, yes, in every human being. Every human being carries in his consciousness, in his deepest spiritual core, boundless potentialities. Every human being has an immortal and a mortal part. Our immortal part is our inner Master. It is spiritual in nature and is the source of all our noble impulses, of our humane disposition, of our wisdom, deeper insights, and our conscience. If we focus on our inner Master, we will be greatly stimulated and inspired.

Our conscience consists of all the spiritual and ethical lessons we have learned in our previous incarnations, as a result of our experiences. It alerts us when we tend to go against our own ethical understanding and is therefore very important because it can keep us on the best ethical track in all our daily choices. The mortal part we rebuild with each reincarnation, for it is nothing but the

instrument we utilize in this one incarnation. If we focus only on our mortal part, then the inner guidance from our immortal part cannot reach our daily thinking, for we are not open to it.

The outer Masters of Wisdom have this title because they have developed themselves in such a way that they are constantly aware of the influence of their inner Master and can express it more or less fully. Now the purpose of these outer Masters is to stimulate and inspire their fellow men so that they in turn discover and give form to the inner Master in themselves. And again, an outer Master can only inspire us if we have made at least some contact with our inner Master. Then, for example, we are able to draw profound inspiration and wisdom from the wisdom books of the Teachers of Humanity. Our task is to awaken the inner Master into being. He must be born within us. This is the appeal found in all religions,

such as in the Bible, where St. Paul says, that you should work diligently for a good cause "until Christ is formed in you".⁽¹⁾

Reference

1. *Galatians*, 4:18-19. See also, for example, 2 *Corinthians*, 13:3-11 and *Romans* Ch. 12-15.

Question

How can you know you are in contact with a Master of Wisdom and Compassion?

Answer

The contact between a Master of Wisdom and his disciples is the most natural contact there is. It is a contact from Human to Human. Not between the pretensions of people, but between what they really are.

When does that contact come about? It depends on us. When we have unfolded from within ourselves the characteristic of "Master-ness" and have

become Master to some extent, in the full practice of life, this will be noticed by the Masters of Wisdom. Then there is already contact, even though we usually do not know it. We may live years and years, perhaps more than one life, before we realize that contact is there. But if we continue faithfully on the Path of Compassion, there will come a time when we are ready for the direct guidance of a Master of Wisdom and Compassion. Then we will meet him in the outer world. At that time, we will know that this great and noble man is our outer spiritual Teacher, because "wisdom recognizes wisdom" and because we have felt his influence for years. Then we will recognize our Master as a very old acquaintance and dearest friend. Our relationship will be familiar from the beginning. There will be few moments in life so exalted and blissful as those in which the disciple meets his Teacher for the first time in the body. _____

Upcoming Activities

Lectures and study meetings on the Sunday evenings, 19.30 – ca. 21.30 CEST

See: <https://blavatskyhouse.org/lectures/>

Theme: Universal symbols, the language of the soul

30 april Lecture: Heroes, dwarfs, giants, snakes and dragons

07 mei Study meeting on previous lecture

Almost every myth, worldwide, speaks of a hero who tries to defeat a dragon or giant. What is the meaning of this? We can discover it by turning our gaze inward.

Book presentation *The Hierarchy of Compassion* in Portuguese

On April 23, 3 p.m. (CEST), the book presentation of the Portuguese translation of *Esoteric Teaching vol. 10, The Hierarchy of Compassion* by Gottfried de Purucker will take place. It is the first translation of a book by De Purucker into Portuguese, so it is truly a mile-

stone. The presentation is in Portuguese.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82063977341?pwd=cSsy-cUlaYnJHN2tySTE2ZW1PSGxydz09>.

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The title this year is:

Universal Symbolism of Theosophy. Unveiling the Language of Divine Thought

Date: July 19 – July 23, 2023

On July 20, 21 and 22 we will focus on the following subthemes, respectively:

- Universal Symbols
- Man the Symbol of Nature
- Symbols as Preservation of Divine Thought

The conference is held online.

Colophon

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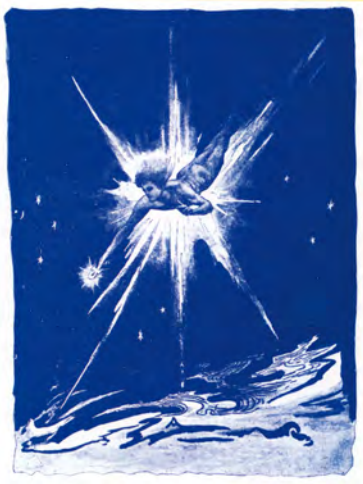
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2. By reason of this unity: brotherhood as a fact in nature.
3. Respect for everyone's free will (when applied from this idea of universal brotherhood).
4. Respect for everyone's freedom to build up their own view of life.
5. To support the developing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



Why this journal is called *Lucifer*

Lucifer literally means Bringer of Light.

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

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